



Text Message Q&A #101

Ask Rav Aviner: mororly@bezeqint.net

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

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Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day! Here's a sample:

Shehechyanu for the Birth of a Child with Down's Syndrome

Q: If someone has a baby with Down's Syndrome, does he recite Shehechyanu? After all, he is sad.

A: He is both sad and happy. He therefore recites "Shehechyanu" and "Dayan Ha-Emet." This is similar to a case in which one's wife gives birth but dies during the process, or one's father dies but leaves him an inheritance. He recites both blessings since he has both feelings (Berachot 60a. This is unlike the ruling of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, who rules that Shehechyanu should not be recited in our case, since the parents are not joyous but sad. Kav Ve-Naki #70).

Recycling Bottles

Q: Is one obligated to throw plastic bottles in the recycling bin, or is it permissible to throw them in the trash, even though it pollutes nature?

A: It is permissible to throw them in the garbage. There are also researchers who claim that recycling bottles pollutes more than throwing them in the trash, and the green ideology sometimes exaggerates (By the way, American law requires recycling).

Helping a Blind Woman across the Street

Q: Is it permissible for a man to help a blind woman across the street by holding her hand?

A: One should hold her sleeve, and this is on condition that there is no woman to help her (see Shut She'eilat Shlomo 2:350).

Tefillin on the Street

Q: Is it permissible to put Tefillin on people in the street when perhaps their bodies are not clean?

A: This is a very distant concern.

Calling Hashem: "Tatte"

Q: Isn't it belittling Hashem to call Him: "Tatte" – "Father" in Yiddish?

A: No. The Master of the Universe is our Father, on condition that we remember that He is also our King. We are sons and servants of Hashem. But it is belittling to speak in Yiddish, as if Hashem doesn't understand Hebrew. But it is also possible to call Hashem: Mommy, since the Kabbalists refer to Hashem as both Father and Mother. He is above both male and female, but reveals Himself as both a Father and Mother.

Segulah against Traffic Accidents

Q: Is there a Segulah against traffic accidents?

A: Driving carefully and performing kindness to those who need a ride (And the Belzer Rebbe – Ha-Rav Aharon Rokeach – also gave the Segulah that if one follows the traffic laws with the strictures of the 10 Commandments, and also gives rides to those who need them, in the merit of these kindnesses which he does on the road, he will be saved from any bad occurrence. Shut Shevet Ha-Kehati 5:241).

Messiah returning from the Dead

Q: Is the Lubavticher Rebbe the Messiah?

A: The RCA, the Rabbinical Council of America, decided that a Rabbi who holds that the Messiah will come from the dead may not be part of their Rabbinic organization.

Choosing a Teacher

Q: What is preferable – a Torah teacher with a beard, or a Torah teacher without a beard who can explain better?

A: The one who explains better, since learning Torah is a greater Mitzvah than having a beard (This is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Yosef Shlomo Elyashiv. Kav Ve-Naki #306).

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