



Text Message Q&A #103

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

Theological Discussions with Christians

Q: I heard that Ha-Rav Soloveitchik permitted theological discussions with Christians. What is the source?

A: Incorrect. He opposed it. An article was just published about it by Professor David Berger, Dean of Yeshiva University's Bernard Revel Graduate School. Makor Rishon from 3 Kislev 5773.

Church

Q: Is it permissible to look at a Christian Church in order to see its beauty and not because of idol worship?

A: It is forbidden to look at the beauty of idol worship (This is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Kav Ve-Naki #260).

Damage Parents' TV

Q: Is it permissible to damage my parents TV like Avraham Avinu and Rachel Imenu did with their parents' idols?

A: No. It is not the same (And this is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Moshe Sternbuch. 1. Only a Beit Din or with permission of a Beit Din can one destroy someone else's property. 2. It will cause one's parents to be more distant from the Torah. 3. Yaakov Avinu did not agree with stealing the idols, as he said: "Whomever you find with your gods, he will not live". Bereshit 31:32. 4. And what Rav Ada Bar Ahavah did when he ripped immodest clothing off a woman, he himself said that he should have patiently waited. Berachot 20a. Shut Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot 1:368).

Modesty at Work

Q: If women and men work together is there a place for friendship between them?

A: Certainly not. Only a working relationship. See the Mishnah at the end of Kiddushin (4:14) how much our Sages warned against such things.

Offering Food to Someone who will Not Make a Blessing

Q: There is a Halachah that it is forbidden to offer food to someone who will not recite a blessing on account of "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind". Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 169:2. What should I do if I am hosting a non-religious person in my house?

A: It is clear that if you are able to ask in a pleasant manner if he will recite a blessing, you should certainly do so. This however is not always possible. Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach permitted one to give food to a person even if you know that he will not recite a blessing since the entire prohibition is based on "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind," and if you refuse to give him, you will cause him to violate an even greater prohibition of hating the Torah and religious Jews (Shut Minchat Shlomo 1:35. Shut She'eilat Shlomo 1:498. And Ha-Rav Chaim Kanieski stated that this was also the opinion of the Chazon Ish. Igrot U-Ketavim Derech Emunah, p. 32).

Talit for Cohain

Q: If one lends his Talit to a Cohain for Birkat Cohanim, is this considered an interruption causing him to have to recite the blessing again when he gets it back?

A: No (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 8:14. Taz #12. Magen Avraham #18).

Q: Is it proper for an unmarried Cohain who does not wear a Talit to have one for Birkat Cohanim?

A: Yes, in order not to trouble other people (see Piskei Teshuvot 128:53).

Birkat Cohanim for someone with Prosthetic Legs

Q: A Cohain who has prosthetic legs that are not noticeable when he is wearing shoes, but will be when he removes them, even when wearing socks, is it permissible for him to ascend to say Birkat Cohanim? Should he remove his shoes?

Q: Ha-Rav Meir Kahane asked this question of Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein, who answered that there is room to permit such a person to ascend, whether he removes his shoes or not. This is because if he does not ascend, there is a concern that people may call into question his status as a Cohain. And the reason Cohanim do not wear shoes when Duchaning is because there is a chance that his shoe will rip and he will sit down to tie it while the rest of the Cohanim are reciting the blessing - and because he has not ascended, people will call into question his

status as a Cohain). So better that the person ascend, even with shoes, than not. Shut Igrot Moshe (Orach Chaim 2:32. And there is a Teshuvah in Shut Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 4:36 to Ha-Rav Kahane regarding celebrating a Bat Mitzvah in Shul. Both Teshuvot were written on the same day – 2 Sivan 5719 – when Rav Kahane was serving as a Rabbi in New York. And see Piskei Teshuvot 128:66).

Atheist and the Mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael

Q: Does an atheist who builds Eretz Yisrael fulfill a Mitzvah?

A: Yes. The Mitzvah of settling Eretz Yisrael is also fulfilled without Kavannah. King Omri merited three offspring as Kings because he built a city in the Land of Israel, even though the city was for the purpose of idol worship (Sanhedrin 102b. Tana De-Bei Eliyahu 9. Eim Ha-Banim Semeichah, p. 57 in the Pri Ha-Aretz edition).

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