



Text Message Q&A #104

Ask Rav Aviner: mororly@bezeqint.net

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com

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

Cohain who Embarrassed Another in Public

Q: One who embarrasses another person in public is considered as if he murdered him. If so, if a Cohain embarrasses someone in public can he recite the Birkat Cohanim, or is it forbidden since a Cohain who murders cannot recite Birkat Cohanim?

A: In this case, it is permissible for him to recite it. Piskei Teshuvot 128 note #332.

Faith and the Holocaust

Q: How can one still believe in Hashem after the Holocaust?

A: Faith is something which is stronger than horrible suffering. Research has shown that at the time of the Holocaust, the percentage of people who lost their faith was less than the same phenomenon before and after the Holocaust. And see Chovot Ha-Levavot, Shaar Ha-Ahavah, end of Chapter 1.

Learning Torah or the Kotel

Q: Which is preferable – learning Torah or going to the Kotel?

A: Learning Torah is equal to all of them [the Mitzvot]. One should only go to the Kotel for special occasions (And our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, would not simply go to the Kotel at any opportunity. He said: "I do not go to the Kotel every day, but only when there is a need and a feeling. The Kotel is a special place, a place from which the Divine Presence does not depart." Rabbenu, p. 306. And when Ha-Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg was asked this same question, he answered: The Kotel is holy, but the Shtender is the holy of holies. Meged Givot Olam, p. 1).

Praying for Something More than Twice

Q: Is it permissible to daven for a match and a livelihood on a regular basis, even though it is said that one should not ask for something more than twice?

A: There is no such halachah. It is permissible.

Counting Jews

Q: It is forbidden to count Jews. Magen Avraham 156:2. What then is the solution when it is necessary?

A: It is permissible under two conditions: 1. If it is for the sake of a Mitzvah. 2. If one counts not the people, but something else, i.e. fingers (Yoma 22b) or pieces of paper. Piskei Teshuvot 156:24. And the custom is to say the verse (Tehillim 28:9): "Hoshia Et Amecha" (which has 10 words) to count a Minyan. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 15:3 (And the Kaf Ha-Chaim, Orach Chaim 55:11 in the name of Chesed Le-Avraham writes that many people mistakenly think that it is only forbidden to count: 1, 2, 3... but it is permissible to count: Alef, Bet, Gimmel...They should, rather, count in their thoughts and not aloud).

Honor of the Torah

Q: The Rabbi of our community made a mistake and permitted the Eruv which was damaged on Shabbat. Should I inform the people in my Shul not to carry?

A: No. Ha-Gaon Rav Avraham Dov Auerbach, Av Beit Din (Head of the Rabbinic Court) of Tiveria, once told me about this exact incident that occurred in the past in Tiveria. The Eruv was damaged, and Ha-Rav Yaakov Chai Zereihen, the Sefardic Rabbi of Tiveria, ruled that the it was Kosher. On Motzaei Shabbat, Ha-Rav Moshe Kliers, the Ashkenazi Rabbi of Tiveria, invited Rav Zereihen for Havdalah and to learn Torah. They learned Massechet Eruvim, and suddenly the Rav Zereihen said, "Oy Va-Voy! If so, I ruled incorrectly today!" Rav Kliers said, "It appears so." Rav Zereihen asked, "Did his honor announce in his Shul not to carry on Shabbat?" "No," he responded, "since carrying in this place is a rabbinic prohibition, but honoring a Torah scholar is a Torah Mitzvah. I therefore did not say anything" (This is unlike the ruling of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv who said that one is obligated to publicize that the Eruv is invalid, and there is no great embarrassment for the Rabbi to have erred and changed his ruling. This is based on the Gemara in Gittin 43a where Rabah bar Rav Huna said: "This stumbling under your hand" [Yeshayahu 3:6] - one understands words of Torah only after stumbling in them! And he himself admitted: I erred and now I understand and changed my ruling. Rashi ibid. Kav Ve-Naki #312. Ha-Rav Kliers and Ha-Rav Auerbach, however, do not hold like Ha-Rav Elyashiv).

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet