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Text Message Q&A #106

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

Open on Shabbat

Q: Is it preferable (on a weekday) to buy from a Jew who has his store open on Shabbat or from an Arab?

A: Certainly a Jew. "When you buy from the hand of your fellow (Jew)" (Vayikra 25:14. And this is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Shlomo Goren since a person who violates Shabbat today is doing so for his pleasure and not to rebel against Hashem, i.e. "Tinok Shenishba" [literally a Jewish child captured and raised among non-Jews; meaning a Jew who did not receive a proper Jewish upbringing and education]. As a result, it is clear that buying from a Jew is preferable on account of "Your brother should live with you". Vayikra 25:36. Terumat Ha-Goren vol. 1 #27).

Shehechyanu on Voting in Israeli Elections

Q: I have heard Ha-Rav tell the story that the Chazon Ish was asked: Should one vote in the Israeli elections? He answered: It is a Mitzvah. They asked him: A Mitzvah like Matzah? He said: No, a Mitzvah like Maror. Ha-Rav says that it is indeed a Mitzvah like Matzah since we have independence and our own State. Is it a Mitzvah to the extent that someone who votes for the first time in Israel should recite a Shehechyanu?

A: It is permissible. It is the first time he performs the Mitzvah (Shut Orach Mishpat, pp. 268-269). And it is a good tiding. The Bach opened a gate for one who is joyous to recite Shehechyanu, since he said that one does not violate taking Hashem's name in vain by reciting it, even in a case where it is not certain that it should be recited (Orach Chaim #29. However, it is brought in the name of Ha-Rav in Kuntres Oleh Chadash that one should not recite Shehechyanu for two reasons: 1. The State of Israel is not the fulfillment of establishing the Kingdom of Israel, but rather a quasi-Kingdom of Israel, as stated by Maran

Ha-Rav Kook in Shut Mishpat Cohain, p. 338. We therefore do not recite a blessing on an act which is a quasi-Mitzvah. 2. And even if we say that it is a full-fledged Mitzvah, no one performs the entire Mitzvah by voting, but only a part of the Mitzvah, which is similar to building the Temple in which many people take a part. In our ruling, however, Ha-Rav gives permission for one to recite the blessing if one wishes to do so).

#### Ashkenazic Pronunciation

Q: Did Maran Ha-Rav Kook and Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah daven and give classes in Hebrew with Ashkenazic pronunciation?

A: Davening – yes. Classes: Maran Ha-Rav in Ashkenazic pronunciation, Rabbenu in modern Hebrew pronunciation.

#### Role of a Rabbi

Q: What is the role of a Rabbi?

A: To learn, to give Halachic rulings and to perform acts of loving kindness (To this question, R' Refael – Reb Chaim Brisker's father-in-law - said: A Rabbi should only sit and learn Torah day and night. The Aruch Ha-Shulchan said: To give Halachic rulings. And Reb Chaim Brisker: There are judges and halachic authorities to give halachic rulings, rather he should perform acts of kindness for his community. See the commentators on Parashat Yitro. Meged Givot Olam, p. 57).

#### Contradictory Rulings

Q: Ha-Rav is sometimes asked a question and gives a different ruling than appears in his books. It is rare, but it happens. How do we relate to this?

A: There are times when a question can be answered in various ways and a person is obligated to rule according to his intellectual inclination at that moment. Sefer Ha-Chaim of Rebbe Chaim ben Bezalel, brother of Ha-Maharal (A halachic question once came to Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein and he gave a ruling which was unlike a ruling published in his Shut Igrot Moshe. His family members asked in surprised: If Ha-Rav changed his mind then why do we republish Igrot Moshe each year without changing it? Reb Moshe answered that there are two opinions, and both are the words of the Living G-d. Meged Givot Olam, p. 56).

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