



Text Message Q&A #110

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

Driver Talking on Cell Phone

Q: Should one report to the police a driver who is holding a cell phone and talking on it?

A: Certainly. It is a life-threatening situation (This is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv based on Sanhedrin 72 and Ketubot 35. Kav Ve-Naki #676).

Ripped Shirt

Q: During a disagreement in school a friend grabbed my shirt and it ripped. Is he obligated to pay for the damage?

A: If he acted in a regular way during the disagreement, he is exempt. Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 421:13. And this is all the more so if he is under the age of Bar Mitzvah. Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Misphat 424:8. But you should check the school's rules in such matters.

The Taste of Pork

Q: Is it permissible to eat a Kosher spice that has the taste of pork?

A: Yes. Like the brain of a Shibuta fish which tastes like pork (As Yalta says: "For everything that the Torah forbids, something similar is permitted". Chullin 109b).

Ad of Shabbat Desecration

Q: Is it permissible for a newspaper to accept an ad for a company which violates Shabbat?

A: Certainly not. It is aiding and strengthening transgressors. And if it encourages Jews to participate in the Shabbat desecration, it is also forbidden on account of "Mesit" (enticing Jews to sin), as Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein writes (Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:99).

Bill with Divrei Torah

Q: Is it permissible to bring into the bathroom a 200 shekel bill which has Divrei Torah on it?

A: Only if it is in one's pocket, since the words are legible to someone with good eyesight. See Shut Tzitz Eliezer 16:31.

Shehechyanu for Reaching 70 Years Old

Q: Should one recite Shehechyanu for reaching 70 years old?

A: This does not have a clear source (Shut Chavot Yair #70 writes that one who reaches the age of 70 should recite Shechyanu. And the Mishnat Yaakov 2:225 [brought in Piskei Teshuvot 223 note 50] writes that this was what the Chafetz Chaim did in front of his prize students). The age of 60 is mentioned in the Gemara as a holiday since one passed the time of Karet (Moed Katan 28a, and brought in Ben Ish Chai Reeh #9 and Kaf Ha-Chaim 223:29). But the age of 70 is not mentioned (Pri Megadim, Mishbetzot Zahav 444:9 and the Chatam Sofer, Orach Chaim 225:1 writes that it should be recited without mentioning Hashem's Name and Kingship). Some recommend wearing a new garment on one's 70th birthday and reciting Shehechyanu on both. This is always possible (When Ha-Rav Shlomo Goren was Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, he recited Shehechyanu on the night of Yom Ha-Atzmaut in Shul as was his opinion. One of the people there questioned it, and Rav Goren waved his tie, as if to say that he was wearing a new tie, and so the blessing was on it. After the davening, Rav Goren scolded the man: It is obvious to you that one says Shehechyanu on a new tie, but not on a new State?! Nonetheless, Ha-Rav Aviner did not recite Shehechyanu on his recent 70th birthday).

Cities Given Over by King Shlomo

Q: King Shlomo gave 20 cities to the King of Tzur in exchange for his help in building the Temple. Can't we learn from here that it is permissible to give away parts of Eretz Yisrael in negotiations?

A: He only gave away the produce. Rabbi Yitzchak Abrabanel.

Christianity

Q: Are all strands of Christianity considered idol worship?

A: There are different levels of idol worship, but they are all idol worship, since they claim that the father is the son, and they pray to the son. Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, Yahadut Ve-Natzrut.

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