

Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva

Ha-Rav **Shlomo Aviner** Shlit"a

Text Message Q&A #114

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

Burning PLO Flag on Lag Ba-Omer

Q: Is it permissible to burn the PLO flag on Lag Ba-Omer?

A: Yes. According to the law of the State of Israel, it is only forbidden to burn the flag of a friendly country. The PLO is not a country nor is it friendly.

Pre-Nuptial Agreement

Q: Is it permissible to sign a pre-nuptial agreement, in order to prevent a case where the wife wants to get divorced and the husband impedes it?

A: It is permissible. But one must be certain that it is phrased in such manner that it is not a forced divorce, which is invalid. In America, the RCA – the Orthodox Rabbinic association – recommends a particular formula and it is agreed upon by many great Rabbis in Israel (such as Ha-Rav Zalman Nechemiah Goldberg and Ha-Rav Chaim Gedalia Zimbelist, Av Beit Din in Tel Aviv. See Shut Be-Mareh Ha-Bazak 1:94).

The Cross of the Red Cross

Q: Is it permissible to have items with the symbol of the Red Cross, or is it forbidden on account of idol worship?

A: The symbol of the Red Cross has no connection with idol worship and Christianity. It is therefore permissible (Rama, Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 141:1. And see Shut Yechaveh Daat 3:68). And the same is true for the flag of Switzerland. It is obviously proper, however, to blur it because of the law of distancing oneself from that which is ugly, and from that which is similar to it, and even that which is similar to something which is similar to it (see Chochmat Adam 85:1. Shut Zera Emet 2:45. Shut She'eilat Shlomo 1:326. And Ha-Rav Chaim Brisker was particular to immediately separate a fork and knife which were in the shape of a cross. Nefesh Ha-Rav, p. 230. But this is a big stricture).

Tzedakah or Debts

Q: Which is preferable – to give Tzedakah or sending money to pay off my debt?

A: Certainly pay off the debt. If you give Tzedakah in such a case, it is not a Mitzvah, but a transgression. Pele Yoetz, Erech "Nedivut".

Gluten-Free Food

Q: What is the blessing on gluten-free food?

A: "Shehakol", since it does not contain wheat flour.

Shalom Bayit

Q: If my wife does not cover her hair and wears pants, but we have a wonderful relationship, should I divorce her?

A: Certainly not (After all, a person is judged based on the majority of his actions. Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:1).

Halachic Ruling

Q: Is it possible for a Rabbi to give a halachic ruling for others which he would not follow for himself?

A: Yes. Beit Rabban Gamliel were lenient for others and strict on themselves (Mishnah Shabbat 1:9).

Shaliach Tzibur who Desecrates Shabbat

Q: Can a person who desecrates Shabbat serve as a Shaliach Tzibur or Baal Koreh?

A: Certainly not. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 53:4, 25 (See Meishiv Milchama of Ha-Rav Shlomo Goren #107).

Smoking by Tzadikim

Q: If smoking damages and is dangerous, how is it possible that Tzadikim smoked?

A: In the past they did not know it was dangerous.

Q: But even since it has been discovered to be dangerous, Rabbis continue to smoke.

A: See the book "Michtav Mei-Eliyahu" (Vol. 1, p. 79) where Ha-Rav Dessler relates how he struggled to quit smoking and failed, and then waged war again and again. In the footnotes from his students, it is told that he finally succeeded in quitting.

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