



Text Message Q&A #120 Ask Rav Aviner: toratravaviner@yahoo.com

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

Woman and Talit

Q: Can a woman wear a Talit?

A: No. The Shulchan Aruch rules that it is "Yuhara – religious arrogance" (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 17:2). And if it is a men's Talit, there is a problem of "Lo Yilbash" - the prohibition against cross-dressing (Targum Yonatan on Devarim 22:5).

Q: But Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein writes in Shut Igrot Moshe (Orach Chaim 4:49) that although she is not obligated a woman is permitted to fulfill the Mitzvah of Tzitzit, with two conditions: 1. Her intention is not to rebel against Hashem and His Torah, but for the sake of Heaven. 2. The garment is different from a male garment, to avoid the prohibition of "Lo Yilbash".

A: In order for this to be for the sake of Heaven and not "Yuhara", she needs to wear the Talit in private and no one should know. And it needs to be a Talit specifically for women (It is told that a woman once asked Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik if she could wear a Talit during davening. He responded to her: "Since this is a major change in traditional practice, we must proceed gradually." He suggested that she wear a four-cornered garment without Tzitzit for three months and then come back. She returned after three months and said that this was the most meaningful religious experience of her life. Ha-Rav Soloveitchik said: "For three months, you have been wearing a garment without any religious or halachic value, it is thus clear that your feeling comes from a source outside of the Mitzvah", and he did not grant her permission to wear a Talit. Rav Aryeh Frimer and Rav Dov Frimer. Tradition 32:2).

Women and Tefillin

Q: Can a woman put on Tefillin, as did Michal bat Shaul (Eiruvin 96a. See Tosafot, Rosh Hashanah 33a d.h. Ha Rebbe)?

A: You are not Michal bat Shaul. In any event, it is written in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 38:1) that if a woman puts on Tefillin, we should protest. Furthermore, Michal bat Shaul put on Tefillin in private and not in public in a protesting manner. Besides all of this, there is a problem of "Lo Yilbash" - the prohibition against cross-dressing (Targum Yonatan on Devarim 22:5). Before we add to our Mitzvot, we must fulfill the obligations we already have. See Mesilat Yesharim (see also an interesting comment by the Kaf Ha-Chaim [ibid. #9], that based on the Kabbalah, one may not use Michal bat Shaul as a proof, since she had a unique soul!).

Q: I heard that Rashi's daughters put on Tefillin?

A: We have not seen a reliable source for this. Nonetheless, there is a long way to go before we reach their level.

Teacher or Doctor

Q: I have the ability to be a doctor or a teacher. I am in doubt. Which is preferable?

A: Teacher. A teacher is for the soul while a doctor is for the body.

Tax Evader as Witness

Q: If someone evades taxes is he invalid as a witness at a wedding?

A: No, since he deceives himself that it is permissible. See Tosafot to Sanhedrin 25b d.h. Me-Ikra. But it is in fact theft. Shut Chatam Sofer, Choshen Mishpat #175. Shut Yechaveh Daat (4:60, 5:45. Shut Aseh Lecha Rav 1:70. And see Nefesh Ha-Rav, p. 269).

Woman Delivering Dvar Torah in Shul

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to deliver a Dvar Torah during Davening?

A: Certainly not. 1. It is forbidden for men to gaze at a woman (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 152:8-9). 2. It is forbidden to change the accepted order of prayer (Shut Ha-Rashba 1:323. See Orach Mishpat #35. And Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein forbids it even not during Davening. Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 5:12. And Professor Nechama Leibovitz strongly refused to deliver a talk in a Shul).

Teaching a Daughter a Profession

Q: Is a father obligated to ensure his daughter learn a profession?

A: Even regarding a son there is no obligation, since it is not brought in the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch, rather it is a proper and important directive. And the same applies to a daughter.

Kiddush by a Woman

Q: Can a woman recite Kiddush for her husband?

A: Yes. If he is sick and unable to recite it himself (Mishnah Berurah 271:3).

Q: And if there are other men there?

A: Certainly not. 1. It is forbidden to gaze at a woman. 2. It is forbidden to hear a woman sing. 3. It is forbidden to change the accepted order of prayer (see Mishnah Berurah ibid. #4. Ha-Rav Yaakov Ariel also forbids this and adds that doing so is in inappropriate form of social protest. Yeshivat Beit El website).

Kashrut of Toothpaste

Q: Does toothpaste require Kosher certification?

A: No. 1. If there is something not Kosher in it, the taste is spoiled and is within a mixture. Shut Har Tzvi Yoreh Deah #95. 2. It is not eating, but rather tasting. 3. This is not the manner of eating (It is related that Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik was once asked if toothpaste requires Kosher certification for Pesach. He responded: No, it is inedible even to a dog. The person said: But I gave it to my dog and he ate it! Rav Soloveitchik said: Who are you going to believe, me or your dog?).

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