



Text Message Q&A #125 Ask Rav Aviner: toratravaviner@yahoo.com
Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com

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Screaming Ceremony

Q: When young people go out into the wilderness in order to scream to Hashem: "Please, Hashem, save us" or similar things, it is considered idol worship? Is it preferable to going to a discotheque?

A: This is an invention of Breslov Chasidim. It is not idol worship, since they are not worshipping a foreign god, but Hashem, and it is a type of prayer. It is surely better than a discotheque. but it is obviously preferable to Daven in the normal manner (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 582:9 and the commentaries there).

Eating Etiquette

Q: Are there guidelines for polite eating?

A: Certainly. Use utensils, don't lick one's fingers but use a napkin, don't put too much food into one's mouth, don't get food on one's clothing or beard, don't chew too quickly, don't make noise when chewing, etc. Piskei Teshuvot 170:14.

Q: Does this apply even when one is eating alone in his house?

A: Yes. Ibid.

Blessing the State of Israel in Birkat Ha-Mazon

Q: Did Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah say in the Birkat Ha-Mazon: "May the Merciful One bless the State of Israel, the beginning of the blossoming of our Redemption" and "May the Merciful One bless Tzahal, who stands guard over our Land"? Can I add it?

A: Rabbenu did not say it. You can add it but it is preferable not to make changes. After all, you see that Rabbenu did not add it and you are not more of a Zionist than him. The State of

Israel and Tzahal are included in the blessing over the Land and the food (and see Shut Beit Mordechai #28 and Shut Be-Ohela Shel Torah 4:5 who explain that there is no blessing for the Mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael since it is included in this blessing in the Birkat Ha-Mazon).

CPR Course

Q: What is preferable – a CPR course or learning Torah during that time?

A: Learning Torah, which resuscitates the soul. Learning Torah is equal to them all. Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein wrote that while it is a Mitzvah to save people, there is no Mitzvah to study medicine (In his Teshuvah on whether or not it is permissible for a Cohain to study medicine. Shut Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:155).

Transgender

Q: If a man undergoes an operation to become a woman, or visa-versa, what is his/her status?

A: There is doubt whether one is a male or female, and that person is required to be strict in Mitzvot in both directions (It is written in Nishmat Avraham, Even Ha-Ezer 44:3, that such an operation is certainly forbidden. And see Shut Tzitz Eliezer 10:25 which discusses all of the issues involved).

Flag of the State of Israel

Q: Does the flag of the State of Israel possess holiness? Does one have to kiss the flag if it falls on the floor? Must it be put in the Geniza if it is worn out?

A: No. It does not contain holiness. But one must treat it with respect (see Nefesh Ha-Rav, pp. 99-100. Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:46. We heard from Rav Aharon Rakefet that Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein once said that he did not regret any of the Teshuvot he wrote, except for the one about davening in a shul which has the flag of Israel, in which referred to those who had made the Israeli flag as "Wicked").

Asking a Rabbi

Q: Must one ask a Rabbi regarding everything in his personal life?

A: No. There are things which one can solve by himself and there are things for which one needs help. See Orot Ha-Torah, Chapter 5.

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