



Text Message Q&A #203 Ask Rav Aviner: toratravaviner@yahoo.com

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com

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

Eliyahu Ha-Navi

Q: Does Eliyahu Ha-Navi appear in our times in the form of a regular person?

A: No. Eliyahu Ha-Navi only reveals himself to the holiest of individuals (see the book Chayei Olam, chap. 30, where Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski records many places in the Gemara, Yerushalmi, Midrash, holy books and among great Rabbis where Eliyahu revealed himself).

King Shlomo and Chess

Q: Is it true that King Shlomo invented Chess?

A: This is only a story. See the book "Otzar Yisrael" of Rav Eizenstein, entry on chess.

Prayer for Captured and Missing Soldiers

Q: Should we add Jonathan Pollard's name into the prayer for captured and missing soldiers?

A: Certainly. He is a great hero who displayed self-sacrifice for the sake of the Nation of Israel.

Younger Child

Q: Why does the younger child favored a preference in the Tanach? For example, Kayin and Hevel, Yishmael and Yitzchak, Esav and Yaakov, Leah and Rachel, Menashe and Ephraim, David and his brothers, etc.

A: One gains favor through his efforts, not through his relative age.

Mermaid

Q: How do we relate to the Gemara in Bechorot (8) which discusses a fish that is half human?

A: It does not say that such a creature exists, but only what would in theory be the law if it did (see Netivot Olam, Netiv Ha-Torah, Netiv 14. And the book "Be'er Ha-Golah").

Learning the Satmar Rebbe's Books

Q: Does one receive the reward for learning Torah when learning the Satmar Rebbe's books?

A: Certainly.

Picture without Permission

Q: Is it permissible to take someone's picture without his permission?

A: Certainly not. You must be sure that he agrees (Shut Mishneh Halachot 4:114. See, however, Shut Be-Tzel Ha-Chochmah 4:85. There is a famous picture of Maran Ha-Rav Kook sitting in an arm chair, which was taken when he was in London during the First World War without his knowledge. At the moment it was taken he was waiting for a Brit Milah to take place. The photographer later came to Maran Ha-Rav, brought him the picture and said: Although I brazenly took his Honor's picture without his permission, I now request a favor from Ha-Rav: please allow me to publish this picture as a source of livelihood. Maran Ha-Rav responded with a smile on his face: Isn't it an explicit verse in the Torah [Shemot 21:16]: "One who steals a man and sells him"! Maran Ha-Rav Kook ztz"l of Ha-Rav Z.A. Rabiner, pp. 110-111).

Merits and Demerits

Q: It is written that if a man speaks Lashon Ha-Ra his merits are transferred to the person he spoke Lashon Ha-Ra about and that person's demerits are transferred to him. Is this correct?

A: Yes. It is in the book "Chovot Ha-Levavot", brought in the Chafetz Chaim's "Shemirat Ha-Lashon," and is also found in the Zohar.

Pre-Natal Testing

Q: Should one have pre-natal testing or is it preferable to trust in Hashem?

A: Trusting in Hashem is only where Hashem explicitly informed you that He will take care of you without you having to exert any effort. He did not say such a thing in this area, and He commanded that one should follow the instructions of doctors (see Rabbi Avraham ben Ha-Rambam, Ha-Maspik Le-Ovdei Hashem, Sha'ar Ha-Bitachon. Kovetz Teshuvot of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv vol. 1).

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