



Text Message Q&A #211 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:

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.

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).

Failing to Pay Shul Dues

Q: If someone refuses to pay Shul dues, is it permissible for the board to not to give him an Aliyah or allow him to be a Shliach Tzibur when he is a mourner?

A: Yes. A Shul is maintained by its board, which establishes the rules. If the person does not agree with these rules, he should go to a different Shul. And if it is on account of a lack of money that he has not paid, he should request an exemption or discount. See Rama, Orach Chaim 153:16 (Shut Tzitz Eliezer 2:22).

Visiting Two Graves

Q: When I visit my father's grave, is it permissible for me to visit other graves as well?

A: Some are strict to refrain from doing so. Pnei Baruch 37:3. But is it permissible according to the basic Halachah.

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.

Driving Lessons

Q: Is a father obligated to teach his child how to drive, just as he is obligated to teach him a trade, since it is also essential?

A: 1. A father is not obligated to teach his child a trade. While it is mentioned in the Gemara, it does not appear in the Halachah. It is therefore not an obligation, but a recommendation. 2. There is also a recommendation to teach one's child how to drive, but it is much less, since driving is not as important as a trade (This is also the opinion of Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik. Divrei Ha-Rav, p. 201).