



Text Message Q&A #212 Ask Rav Aviner: toratravaviner@yahoo.com

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

Gemara Learning in Korea

Q: In South Korea, there is much interest in learning Gemara. Is this worthwhile?

A: Certainly not. It is forbidden to teach Torah to non-Jews and it is forbidden for a non-Jew to learn Torah. The Torah is betrothed to us and not to them. One does not learn Gemara for an intellectual experience – which is their interest – but out of Yirat Shamayim – fear of Heaven (Chagigah 13a).

Coca Cola

Q: Is Coca Cola Kosher in all countries?

A: Not necessarily. There are many ingredients. It requires certification (See the amazing Teshuvah regarding the Kashrut of Coca Cola in Shut Karnei Ha-Hod, end of Volume 2, of Ha-Rav Tuvia Gefen, who served as Rabbi in Atlanta, where Coke is produced in America. He discusses the secret ingredient in Coke).

Q: Is it true that Coca Cola is unhealthy?

A: This is a medical question. All soft drinks cause damage on account of the sugar. And some claim that Coke causes damage on account of the phosphoric acid which causes continuing damage to one's kidneys.

Tzedakah to a Criminal

Q: A person evaded taxes and is now having a trial which could end up in jail-time. Is it possible to give him Tzedakah for an expensive attorney who could save him?

A: This has nothing to do with Tzedakah. But it is a kindness. Kindness is according to the need and ability. But it seems that there are other persons who are more in need of a kindness (Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was once asked regarding a Jew who stole a significant amount of money and was serving a jail sentence in America. Is it proper to collect large sums of money to help free him because of the Mitzvah of Pidyon Shevuyim – Redeeming Captives? Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman said: "Pidyom Shevuyim?! What does this have to do with Pidyon Shevuyim? Pidyom Shevuyim is when non-Jews kidnap a Jew for no reason, and put him in jail. According to my understanding, they don't kidnap Jews in America in order to extort money. After all, the Torah says 'Do not steal', and he stole. On the contrary, it is good for him to sit in jail a little and learn that it is forbidden to steal." Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman added that if they wanted to collect money for his wife and children, however, it would obviously be a Mitzvah. Ve-Alehu Lo Yibol Volume 2, pp. 113-114).

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).

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? Another version: "Dogs do not hold by 'Nifsal Mei-Achilat Kelev'" – the principle of inedible even to a dog").

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