



Text Message Q&A #217 Ask Rav Aviner: toratravaviner@yahoo.com

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

Left-Winger

Q: According to Halachah, is it permissible to be a left-winger?

A: Left-wing socially – yes. Left-wing nationally – a mistake.

Cherishing Eretz Yisrael

Q: Is it permissible to refer to a place in Eretz Yisrael as a "hole in the wall"?

A: No. This is not cherishing Eretz Yisrael. See the end of Ketubot (112a-b. And see the end of the first introduction of the book "Em Ha-Banim Semeichah", that there is even great benefit in just mentioning Eretz Yisrael).

"I don't know"

Q: Sometimes when a Rabbi is asked a question, he responds: "I don't know" or "I am not familiar with that". Is this an answer, or a way of avoiding taking a position?

A: It is a type of answer and of taking a position (The Chazon Ish said: "I don't know" is also part of the Torah, meaning that when a person reviews his learning, he need to point out I know this and I don't know that. Sha'arei Aharon vol. 1, p. 44 in Kuntres Sha'arei Ish. And the Steipler complained to a great Rabbi: When I say that I don't know, the world explains it as if it is a doubt. Orchot Rabbenu vol. 1, p. 38 in the additions at the end. And Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski was asked: When Ha-Rav answers a question with "I haven't heard". Does this mean that he does not agree with that position? He answered: It is the simple meaning of the words. She'eilat Rav Vol. 1, p. 22 #8. Segulot Raboteinu, p. 257 note #319).

Visiting a Grave during the First Year

Q: Is it forbidden to visit a grave during the first year after a person dies?

A: It is permissible. But only pray for the soul of the deceased to ascend and not for anything else. Pnei Baruch 37:2 (And the Vilna Gaon refrained completely from visiting graves. And Beit Brisk followed this tradition, including Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik. Nefesh Ha-Rav, p. 257. When Rav Soloveitchik's parents died, he did not visit the cemetery. When his wife passed away, however, he violated the family tradition and began to visit her grave each week, but – in the end – it paid off. He related that he once went to visit her grave before Rosh Hashanah. When he was leaving to get the taxi to bring him home, some people came along and thought he was a Shamash, waiting at the cemetery to make a little money. They asked if he could say a prayer at their father's grave. Rav Soloveitchik agreed, went with them and said "El Maale Rachamim". Then they asked him to come to another relative's grave, and he went with them, and so too to a few other graves. In the end, they gave him \$20. He said: No thank you, and did not take it. They thought he wanted more

money and offered him \$100, but again he did not take it. He wished them Shana Tova, and left. They saw him get into a taxi, having refused the \$100, and therefore asked in the office who he was. They said: "The Chief Rabbi of the United States, Ha-Rav Solovietchik." After Yom Kippur, Rav Soloveitchik received a check for \$1000 for the Maimonides School, which he established. And these very people sent a \$1000 check each year after that. Rav Soloveitchik said: "I violated my family tradition, but it paid off..." Rav Soloveitchik told this story to Ha-Rav Nachum Lamm, President of Yeshiva University, and Rav Lamm replied: "No one ever gave me \$1000 to say 'El Maale Rachamim'". Heard from Ha-Rav Herschel Schachter).

Honoring the Prime Minister of Israel

Q: Is there a special prohibition against saying insulting things about the Prime Minister of Israel?

A: Yes. There is a prohibition against saying such things about any person, and it is all the more severe regarding the Prime Minister, since some of the laws regarding a king also apply to him. See Shut Mishpat Cohain #143 and onward.

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