



Text Message Q&A #233 Ask Rav Aviner: toratravaviner@yahoo.com

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

Driver Talking on Cell Phone

Q: Should one report to the police a driver who is holding a cell phone and talking on it?

A: Certainly. It is a life-threatening situation (This is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv based on Sanhedrin 72 and Ketubot 35. Kav Ve-Naki #676).

Ripped Shirt

Q: During a disagreement in school a friend grabbed my shirt and it ripped. Is he obligated to pay for the damage?

A: If he acted in a regular way during the disagreement, he is exempt. Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 421:13. And this is all the more so if he is under the age of Bar Miztvah. Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Misphat 424:8. But you should check the school's rules in such matters.

The Taste of Pork

Q: Is it permissible to eat a Kosher spice that has the taste of pork?

A: Yes. Like the brain of a Shibuta fish which tastes like pork (As Yalta says: "For everything that the Torah forbids, something similar is permitted". Chullin 109b).

Ad of Shabbat Desecration

Q: Is it permissible for a newspaper to accept an ad for a company which violates Shabbat?

A: Certainly not. It is aiding and strengthening transgressors. And if it encourages Jews to participate in the Shabbat desecration, it is also forbidden on account of "Mesit" (enticing Jews to sin), as Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein writes (Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:99).

Bill with Divrei Torah

Q: Is it permissible to bring into the bathroom the news 200-Shekel bill which has Hashem's name and Divrei Torah on it?

A: Only if it is in one's pocket, since the words are legible to someone with good eyesight. See Shut Tzitz Eliezer 16:31 (Ha-Rav Moshe Soloveitchik was strict not to enter a bathroom with American bills since they contain the phrase: "In G-d we trust", but his son, Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik, was lenient regarding this issue. Nefesh Ha-Rav pp. 160-161).

Cities Given Over by King Shlomo

Q: King Shlomo gave 20 cities to the King of Tzur in exchange for his help in building the Temple. Can't we learn from here that it is permissible to give away parts of Eretz Yisrael in negotiations?

A: He only gave away the produce. Rabbi Yitzchak Abrabanel.

Long Pe'ot

Q: I cannot get a job because of my long Pe'ot, but there is no way that I will shorten them. This is ripping me apart. What should I do?

A: Gird yourself with patience. Or put them behind your ears (For another opinion, see Orchot Rabbenu vol. 1, p. 236 that the Chazon Ish and Steipler were particular not to put Pe'ot behind one's ears, since it appears as if one is ashamed of them).

Sefer Torah or Shul

Q: Which is preferable – donating money to write a Sefer Torah or establishing a Shul in a secular community?

A: Establishing a Shul, since we write a Torah NOT so it can sit in the Ark but rather to fulfill what is written within it, including the Mitzvah to Daven. The Chayei Adam (Hilchot Sefer Torah Klal 31) similarly writes that it is preferable to donate money to those who learn Torah than to the writing of a Sefer Torah (And this is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef that one should prioritize donating to building a Shul in a secular community over the writing of a Sefer Torah).

Drinking Contact Lenses

Q: A student came into a room, took a glass from the table, filled it with water and drank. It turned out that he drank his friend's contact lenses, which were in the glass soaking in their solution. Is he obligated to pay?

A: No. He had no reason to think that contacts might be in the glass (This is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Kav Ve-Naki #671).

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