



Text Message Q&A #239 Ask Rav Aviner: toratravaviner@yahoo.com

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

Falun Gong

Q: Should we protest the horrible abuses which Falun Gong is undergoing in China? After all, we are a small country and cannot solve all of the world's problems.

A: We cannot solve them, but we are obligated to protest as well as to act. The fact is that their government fears this and denies it.

Q: Why do we care? They are idol worshippers!

A: It does not appear that Falun Gong or Falun Dafa is idol worship. It is a technique of exercise with a little meditation and perfecting of one's character traits, such as truth and compassion. And we should certainly save them from injustice.

Q: But there is a swastika in their symbol, like the Nazis.

A: G-d forbid, they are not Nazis. The swastika is an ancient symbol from the Far East which the Nazis adopted. They are good and ethical people.

Q: Is it true that in China they take organs for transplant from members of Falun Gong against their will and they die from this? This is horrible! This is like what the Nazis did! Why are we silent?!

A: Some researchers make this claim but it has yet to be proven by international organizations. What is certain is that they abuse them in an extremely cruel manner, make false arrests and torture them to death.

Talit which Falls Off

Q: Does one have to recite another blessing if his Talit falls off?

A: No. Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata 1:69. Not like the opinion of the Mishnah Berurah 8:15.

Segulot

Q: Is there value in Segulot?

A: It depends on which. But the best Segulot are learning Torah and performing Mitzvot (When Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv had a great-great grandson – he merited having a great-great-great grandson in his life, which is extremely rare! – people told him that one who is the Sandek for a great-great grandson will not see Gehinom [see Leket Yosher Yoreh Deah 52]. Ha-Rav Elyashiv replied: "I worked my entire life to enter Gan Eden through the main entrance, not the side door!" Gedola Shimusha of Ha-Rav Tzvi Weisfish, p. 230).

Blessing the State of Israel in Birkat Ha-Mazon

Q: Did Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah say in the Birkat Ha-Mazon: "May the Merciful One bless the State of Israel, the beginning of the blossoming of our Redemption" and "May the Merciful One bless Tzahal, who stands guard over our Land"? Can I add it?

A: Rabbenu did not say it. You can add it but it is preferable not to make changes. After all, you see that Rabbenu did not add it and you are not more of a Zionist than him. The State of Israel and Tzahal are included in the blessing over the Land and the food (and see Shut Beit Mordechai #28 and Shut Be-Ohela Shel Torah 4:5 who explain that there is no blessing for the Mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael since it is included in this blessing in the Birkat Ha-Mazon).

CPR Course

Q: What is preferable – a CPR course or learning Torah during that time?

A: Learning Torah, which resuscitates the soul. Learning Torah is equal to them all. Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein wrote that while it is a Mitzvah to save people, there is no Mitzvah to study

medicine (In his Teshuvah on whether or not it is permissible for a Cohain to study medicine. Shut Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:155).

Transgender

Q: If a man undergoes an operation to become a woman, or visa-versa, what is his/her status?

A: There is doubt whether one is a male or female, and that person is required to be strict in Mitzvot in both directions (It is written in Nishmat Avraham, Even Ha-Ezer 44:3, that such an operation is certainly forbidden. And see Shut Tzitz Eliezer 10:25 which discusses all of the issues involved).

Flag of the State of Israel

Q: Does the flag of the State of Israel possess holiness? Does one have to kiss the flag if it falls on the floor? Must it be put in the Geniza if it is worn out?

A: No. It does not contain holiness. But one must treat it with respect (see Nefesh Ha-Rav, pp. 99-100. Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:46. We heard from Rav Aharon Rakefet that Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein once said that he did not regret any of the Teshuvot he wrote, except for the one about davening in a shul which has the flag of Israel, in which referred to those who had made the Israeli flag as "Wicked").

Asking a Rabbi

Q: Must one ask a Rabbi regarding everything in his personal life?

A: No. There are things which one can solve by himself and there are things for which one needs help. See Orot Ha-Torah, Chapter 5.

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