

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva of Ateret Yerushalayim
Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a

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

Brief Torah Learning

Q: If I have half-a-minute free to learn Torah does it have worth?

A: Certainly. Every word of Torah a person learns is the fulfillment of a Mitzvah. Ha-Gra in Shenot Eliyahu on Peah Chapter 1.

Blessing on Chocolate

Q: What is the blessing on chocolate?

A: It would have been proper to recite Eitz, but the custom is to recite Shehakol since it contains various ingredients aside from cocoa, and its form is changed and unrecognizable. Piskei Teshuvot (Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein was once asked about the blessing on chocolate, and he responded that people have the long-standing custom to recite Shehakol, and we must clarify why this is so, since it is impossible for us to say that Klal Yisrael acts improperly. Reshumei Aharon of Ha-Rav Aharon Felder, p. 24. And this was Rav Feinstein's opinion in general. Someone once told Reb Moshe that the Sanzer Rav, author of Shut Divrei Chaim, ruled that over a potato one recites Shehakol, because the potato does not really grow from the ground, rather it grows from air around the ground. Reb Moshe said that even if such reasoning was correct, which it is not, didn't the Sanzer Rav know that the custom of the world is already to recite Adamah, and thus it does not make sense to rule otherwise. See Chullin 136b. Mesoret Moshe p. 50. And Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach also ruled that one should recite Eitz on chocolate, but since the world did not accept his ruling, he said that in practice one should recite Shehakol. See Shut Minchat Shlomo 1:91. And Ve-

Zot Ha-Berachah p. 101, for a discussion of why the blessing is not "Borei Pri Ha-Eitz").

Netilat Yadayim after Donating Blood

Q: After donating blood should one wash Netilat Yadayim as one would after blood-letting? What about after a blood test?

A: No. Since these are spiritual matters, we only do what is written in the Halachah and do not add to it. Halichot Shlomo 20:19. Some authorities however do say that donating blood is similar to blood-letting, and that it is proper to be strict. Piskei Teshuvot Vol. 1 p. 58. But certainly not after a blood test (And this is also the ruling in the Halachic-Medical Encyclopedia of Rav Steinberg Vol. 2 pp. 525-527, Vol. 3 pp. 429-430. It is also the opinion of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, since the amount of blood extracted when donating blood is equivalent to that in blood-letting while a blood test requires only a minimal amount of blood. Be-Dama'ich Chayi - collection of Halachot regarding blood donation pp. 51-54).

Military Discount

Q: I receive a 30% discount from various stores for being a soldier. Is it permissible to use this discount to buy something for a friend?

A: You should ask the army.

Utensil in Right Hand when Immersing in Mikveh

Q: When immersing utensils in a Mikveh, should one hold the utensil in his right hand?

A: Yes, just as one holds the food or object in his right hand when reciting a blessing over it or for a Mitzvah. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 26:2. Mishnah Berurah #17-18 (And this is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski in Kuntres Ish Iter #38).

Selling Transgressions

Q: I heard of a case where one person was willing to take on another person's transgressions for \$500. Is there such a thing?

A: Nonsense. See Sefer Chasidim, edition of Ha-Rav Reuven Margoliyot, p. 591.

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