COMMANDMENTS (MITZVOT)

Precedence of Mitzvot

A frequently performed commandment generally takes precedence over a less frequently performed commandment, but ONLY:

- Regarding the order in which they are to be performed, and
- If there is no specific reason to do the less frequent one.

If you are only able to do one of several commandments, do the most important one.

EXAMPLE If you can only put on either *talit* or *tefilin*, you would put on the *tefilin* since that is the more important commandment, even though putting on a *talit* is the more frequently performed one.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE Friday before sunset when *Chanuka* will be on *Shabbat*--lighting *Shabbat* candles is done more frequently, but we light the *Chanuka* candles first since if we lit the *Shabbat* candles first, it would already be *Shabbat* and we could not light the *Chanuka* candles at all.

How Much Money to Spend on a Mitzva

You are never required to spend more than 1/5 of your liquid assets on any positive *mitzva*.

How Far To Go To Do a Mitzva

There is no need to go to different town in order to fulfill a *mitzva* (a different town can be defined as out of your local business district).

Follow National Law as Enforced

Follow national law as enforced. *Halacha* requires that national and secular law be obeyed. However:

- If a law exists but is not enforced, it is not considered by *halacha* to be a valid law.
- If a law states one condition but is enforced only in a different condition, the actual enforced law is the valid one.

EXAMPLE If a posted speed limit is 60 mph, but drivers are actually allowed to drive up to 70 mph, then 70 mph is the valid speed limit.

Unintentional Violation; Receive No Benefit (Psik Reisha...)

Psik reisha d'la nicha lei (*halacha* whose violation you don't intend and from which you receive no benefit) is not permitted.

EXAMPLE

You open the refrigerator door on *Shabbat* and the light comes on. This is forbidden on *Shabbat* and *Jewish festivals*, even if you don't want or need the light.
However, you may ask a non-Jew to do an action for you that will be *psik reisha d'la nicha lei*.

EXAMPLE

You may ask a non-Jew to get your jacket from the car on *Shabbat* or a *Jewish festival*, even though a light will go on, but only during the daytime; if it is night and the light would be needed to find the jacket, you may not ask.

Fence (Syag) around the Torah

Making a “fence” (“*syag*”) around the *Torah* means to avoid activities and situations that might lead to actions that are improper or not allowed by *Torah* law.

PREPARATION FOR DOING MITZVOT

Intention/Kavana

Mitzvot that are from the *Torah* (*tzitzit*, *tefilin*, *sukka*, etc.) require having the intention (*kavana*) to fulfill that commandment. But with many such *mitzvot*, it is inherent in doing the *mitzva* that you are doing it for the *mitzva* and therefore you do not need to have a special intention (for example, you would not put on *tefilin* to keep yourself warm).

VaYehi Noam, L'Shem Yichud, Yehi Ratzon

You do not need to say *Va'yehi noam*, *L'Shem yichud*, or *Yehi ratzon* before doing commandments.

What Is a Mitzva/What Is Halacha

A *mitzva* is a commandment. A *halacha* is how to do the *mitzva*.

Purposes of Commandments/Mitzvot

Commandments/*mitzvot* (plural of *mitzva*) have three main purposes:

- Most importantly, to do what we are commanded by God to do;
- To bring us close to God;
- To earn reward for us in the future world (*olam ha'ba*).

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