



# Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

## This Issue Contains:

1. Straight Dope
2. Watch the Birdie
3. Yiddle Riddle



[Name and email address withheld] wrote:

*What does Judaism have to say about recreational drug usage? I know what Judaism has to say about putting anything harmful into the body, but what about certain drugs that do not hurt the body? Is altering one's state of consciousness ok or not ok from a Jewish standpoint?*

*PS If you post this message to the Ask the Rabbi listserve for everyone to see, please make sure that my name and e-mail address are confidential.*

Dear Confidential,

Your question was asked of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *zatzal*, regarding Marijuana. The following is a summary of his answer:

The Torah teaches about a 'Ben Sorer Umoreh' — a rebellious son. A *Ben Sorer Umoreh* is a youth who steals meat and wine from his father and gobbles it down. The Torah calls for the death penalty in such a case. Since he is addicted to physical pleasures, he will ultimately do anything to support his habit, even rob and kill. The same is true of drugs, and more so. People who use drugs usually acquire a strong hunger to maintain their habit, and can develop physical and/or psychological dependence.

In general, using drugs is unhealthy. But even if no harm is done to the body, drugs lead to a lack of concentration needed to pray, fulfill *mitzvot* and learn Torah properly.

Parents are usually distressed by a child's drug usage, so using drugs could lead to violating the commandment to "Honor your father and mother."

And finally, the Torah says "*Kedoshim Tihiyu*" — "You shall be holy" — meaning that you should not seek out and indulge in excess pleasures. Based on all the above reasons Rabbi Feinstein prohibits Marijuana [and urges educators to do all they can to dissuade people from using it.]

Now if you ask, "But what about alcohol? Don't all the above reasons apply equally well to it?" The answer is... "Yes!" In the words of the Rambam, "Someone who gets drunk is a sinner." Alcohol, when used for the purpose of getting intoxicated, would be in the same category as drugs.

Another point: Using drugs, even for 'recreation', brings you in contact with 'professionals': Users and — unless you 'grow your own' — dealers. So, as they say: "If the drugs don't getcha, the company will..."

Sources:

- Igrot Moshe, Yoreh De'ah 3:35

'Confidential' responds:

*Dear Rabbi, I want to thank you for your response. It was greatly appreciated.*

Ahron Einhorn <ajeinhorn@CCGATE.HAC.COM> wrote:

*In Ask the Rabbi #83 you wrote how the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird applies only to eggs that are ownerless. You wrote an anecdote about the bird's nest in your awning where you said: "the mitzvah didn't apply, because the nest was on my property." Here in LA we do the mitzvah with birds on private property as long as the owner says he doesn't want to acquire the birds. You may also want to caution people that they need to be able to recognize the bird's gender.*

Dear Ahron:

People generally want to acquire anything of value found on their property. But you're right: If you declare "I don't want to acquire eggs laid on my property" then the eggs remain ownerless and you can fulfill the *mitzvah* of 'sending away the mother bird.'

Actually, most city-dwellers today would probably see the eggs more as a nuisance than a valuable asset. They would much rather do the *mitzvah* than acquire the eggs. I asked Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, *shlita*, who agreed that today one would not necessarily acquire nest eggs automatically.

As you mentioned, the *mitzvah* is to send away the mother, not the father. Another limitation: It applies only to kosher birds. Sending away the father or sending away an unkosher bird for no reason would be a transgression of '*tza'ar ba'alei chaim*' — causing pain to living creatures.

## Yiddle Riddle

Which Tractate of the Talmud fits the following description:

The Aramaic translation of the name of this Tractate is the name of a different Tractate?

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