

The JEWISH Spin on Current Events

STEROIDS

*Is one permitted to take steroids in order to do Hagbah
(lifting of the Torah)?*

c OVERVIEW d

1. DOESN'T MY BODY BELONG TO ME TO DO AS I PLEASE?
2. IS CARELESS OF YOUR BODIES HEALTH A PROHIBITION?
3. WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO TAKE STEROIDS?
4. WHO IS CONSIDERED 'REALLY' STRONG?
5. WHEN AND WHAT TYPE OF DRUGS ARE PERMITTED?

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c SOURCES d**1. Doesn't my body belong to me to do as I please?****c 1A d**

MIDRASH RABO, 34:3

Hillel the Elder ... when he concluded his studies with his disciples, walked along with them. His disciples asked him: 'Master, where are you going?' He answered them: 'To perform a religious duty.' 'What,' they asked, 'is this religious duty?' He said to them: 'To wash in the bathhouse.' They replied: 'Is this a religious duty?' 'Yes,' he replied; 'if the statues of kings, which are erected in theaters and circuses, are scoured and washed by the man who is appointed to look after them, and who thereby obtains his maintenance through them, and even more, he is exalted in the company of the great of the kingdom--how much more I, who have been created in the Image and Likeness; as it is written, For in the image of God made He man' (Genesis 9:6).

2. Is careless of your bodies health a prohibition?**c 2A d**

DEUTERONOMY 4:15

And you should take very good care of yourselves.

c 2B d

MAIMONIDIES, LAWS CONCERNING ETHICAL CONDUCT, CHAPTER 4 LAW 1

Since maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the ways of G-d - for one cannot understand or have any knowledge of the Creator, if he is ill - therefore, he must avoid that which harms the body and accustom himself to that which is healthful and helps the body become stronger.

They are as follows: a person should never eat unless he is hungry, nor drink unless thirsty. (*Maimonidies continues this chapter by giving a full list of proper eating habits*).

c 2C d

MAIMONIDIES, LAWS CONCERNING ETHICAL CONDUCT, CHAPTER 4, LAWS 14-15

They [the medical authorities quoted in the previous law] have given another principle with regard to physical well-being: As long as one exercises, exerts himself greatly, does not eat to the point of satiation and has loose bowels, he will not suffer sickness and he will grow in strength. [This applies] even if he eats harmful foods.

[Conversely,] whoever is idle and does not exercise, or does not move his bowels when he has the need, or is constipated, even if he eats the proper foods and takes care to

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follow the rules of medicine, will be full of pain for all his days and his strength will fade away.

2D

LEV AVROHOM, PAGE 3

The intake of narcotic drugs in any form, unless on specific medical instructions is a most grave offense.

2E

HAYOM YOM, PAGE 18

When my grandmother, Rebbetzin Rivka, was eighteen (in 5611, 1851) she fell ill and the physician ordered her to eat immediately upon awakening. She, however, did not wish to eat before praying; so she prayed very early, then ate breakfast. When her father-in-law, the Tzemach Tzedek, learned of this he said to her: “A Jew must be healthy and strong. The Torah says about *mitzvos*, ‘Live in them,’ meaning bring vitality into the *mitzvos*. To be able to infuse *mitzvos* with vitality, one must be strong and joyful.” Then he concluded: “You should not be without food. Better to eat for the sake of praying rather than to pray for the sake of eating;” he then blessed her with long life.

3. Why would you want to take steroids?

c 3A d

PIRKEI AVOS 2:11

Rabbi Yehoshua said: The evil eye, the evil inclination, and hatred of one’s fellow, drive a man from the world.

c 3B d

PIRKEI AVOS 4:21

Rabbi Elazar HaKappar said: “Envy, desire, and honor-seeking drive a man from the world.

c 3C d

GENESIS 4:3-8

After a period of time, Cain brought an offering to Hashem of the fruit of the ground; and as for Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and from their choicest.

Hashem turned to Abel and to his offering, but to Cain and to his offering He did not turn. This annoyed Cain exceedingly, and his countenance fell.

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And Hashem said to Cain, “Why are you annoyed, and why has your countenance fallen? Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven. But if you do not improve yourself, sin rests at the door. Its desire is toward you, yet you can conquer it.”

Cain spoke with his brother Abel. And it happened when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

c 3D d

MAGN AVOS OF THE RASHBATZ, COMMENTARY TO PIRKEI AVOS 4:21 (CITED IN #1B)

There is a jealousy that is a positive one. One who is jealous of someone smarter than you, and as a result, you work hard to become like him. Regarding this the Talmud says: “Jealousy of the scholars increase wisdom”.

However, even this jealousy, though it is good, it would be far greater if he can accustom himself to study because of his love for learning, without jealousy. Regarding this says King Solomon o.b.m., “And I saw that all labor and all skillful enterprise spring from man’s rivalry with his neighbor. This, too, is futility and an evil spirit!” (Ecclesiastes 4:4) Meaning, even when it results in positive behavior, when jealousy is mixed in to it, it is very evil.

4. Who is considered ‘really’ strong?

c 4A d

PIRKEI AVOS 4:1

Who is strong? He who subdues his personal inclination.

5. When and What type of drugs are permitted?

c 5A d

TALMUD, TRACTATE ERUVIN 65B

When wine enters, secrets come out.

c 5B d

HAYOM YOM, PAGE 32

In responding to *l’chayim* there are two versions:

(a) *L’chayim tovim ul’shalom*, “for good life, and for peace.” The reason for this blessing is that the first time drinking wine is mentioned in the Torah, there were undesirable results. “Noach began etc.” (Genesis 9:20); also, the Tree of Knowledge was a grapevine. Therefore we extend the blessing that this wine be for a good life.

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(b) The Maggid of Mezritch used to respond *l'chayim velivracha*. Once at a *farbrengen*, the Alter Rebbe responded *l'chayim velivracha*. After the *farbrengen chassidim* discussed this expression, which they heard then for the first time. One *chassid* proposed: Since "When wine enters, the secret comes out" (Talmud Eiruvim 65a), which in *avoda* signifies that the emotions are revealed, we need a *b'racha* for this; the expression is *l'chayim velivracha*, and "*livracha*" may be read, *leiv racha*, a sensitive heart...

c 5C d

THE CHASSIDIC APPROACH TO JOY, PAGE 85

Holelus [frivolity] means letting go by becoming less than what I really am. The person forgets about himself and about anything that has meaning, content and purpose. In the extreme, this means becoming drunk, or taking drugs that rob one of control. But it has far more common expressions. A person thinks that the only way he can be happy is by getting about everything but the sensory pleasure that he is receiving at the time. He lives for the moment.

This can be very destructive. For when a person ignores responsibility, he is likely to hurt himself, his family and the people around him.

Simcha, joy, also involves letting go, but it is a very different type of letting go. One does not lose control - one transfers control. When a person experiences true joy, he lets go of himself, but then connects to something higher, G-d. He lets go of his petty ego and makes it possible for a dimension of his identity that is far deeper and far truer to surface.