



וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם מֵאֵד לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם

I opened the book "A Guide to the Complex. Contemporary Halachic Debates" by Rabbi Shlomo M Brody, and read the chapter "Smoking - Is this dangerous habit justifiable?" I realized that in this week's portion there is a verse related to the topic of smoking so I took it as a sign and changed the topic I had originally planned for my article. I have always been an advocate for not smoking. On meeting my elementary school principal some 35 years after graduating, he reminded me that he had stopped smoking because I had nagged him about breaking the habit.

Just today, when walking out of the Kotel area after Tish'a b'Av prayers, a beggar who was smoking asked me for some money. I took a coin from my pocket, and before handing it to him I lifted it in the air and told him "this coin is not to buy cigarettes with". He thanked me and assured me that it would be used to buy food. One never knows when what they say might actually influence some- one for the good.

So what does the Halacha say about smoking? Is it allowed or asur? Rabbi Brody's two and a half page article, in the book on this topic, explains in a very clear straightforward way the different Rabbinical opinions towards smoking throughout the ages. He

starts from the 1500s when doctors thought smoking was healthful (in warding off digestive and respiratory diseases). He tries to answer the question how so many pious Jews can indulge in this addiction when the Torah warns us in our portion to "guard yourselves very carefully" (D'varim 4:15). In other words - to avoid dangerous behavior. Rambam says that anyone who disregards warnings related to dangers should be punished with lashes (Hilchot Rotzei'ach 11:5), but the Rabbis taught that risks taken by the majority are permissible, since "God protects the foolish" (Shabbat 129b). So we must decide what kind of "dangerous activity" smoking is.

While only a few doctors expressed concern over smoking in the 18th and 19th centuries, by the 1950s there was research that pointed to the harmful effects tobacco had on smokers and those around them. There were already signs that it was linked to lung cancer.

In 1976, Rabbi Hayim David HaLevi, Sephardic chief rabbi of Tel Aviv, released his landmark responsum, banning smoking, stating that previous generations would never have allowed such an activity had they known its dangers. (Asei L'cha Rav 2:1). His decision received widespread attention in Israel and around the world and was even written up on page 2 in the New York Times. He even forbade buying cigarettes for others (e.g. in duty free or even when requested by one's own parents) (Asei L'cha Rav 6:58). He even stated that in light of anti-smoking campaigns around the world, it was a chilul Hashem if people continued smoking in Israel.

In 1982 Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg also forbade smoking (Tzitz Eliezer 15:39). Most other Rabbis did not forbid smoking, since the negative effects of smoking were not immediate, but they did discourage it as an unhealthy habit. As more research regarding the negative effects of smoking have surfaced, rabbis from across the spectrum have forbidden smoking. For example: Rav Ovadia Yosef, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Rabbi Brody concludes by saying " ...one can confidently say today that every Jew has an obligation to help smokers kick the habit and prevent others from starting.

His article on smoking is just one of many interesting and easy to read and understand articles on practical contemporary Halakhic topics.

SINCE WE SPOKE about smoking, here's a recipe for a simple summer salad that uses smoked meat.

SMOKED TURKEY BREAST SALAD

- 1 kiwi, pureed
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 1 tsp mayonnaise
- 1 lb. smoked turkey breast
- 6 sprigs dill
- 1 small lettuce, sliced
- 1 to 2 medium ripe avocados, peeled and sliced
- 3 medium tomatoes, diced
- Kiwi slices for garnish

Mix the kiwi puree and curry powder into the mayonnaise; refrigerate. Mix the remaining ingredients. Serve with kiwi fruit mayonnaise and garnish with sprigs of dill, 1 or 2 pieces of kiwi. [A](#)