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 Soror Umoreh’ — a rebellious son. A Ben Soror 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 disturbed 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 other drugs] so. People who use drugs usually acquire a strong hunger to maintain their habit, and can develop physical and/or psychological dependence.

Sources:
- Iggrot Moshe, Yoreh De’ah 3:35

‘Confidential’ responds:

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

Ahron Einhorn <aehinorn@ccgate.hac.com>

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, shilta, 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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Ask The Rabbi

This Issue Contains:
1. Straight Dope
2. Watch the Birdie
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