

Text for introduction to P'sak for Non-poskim

Shalom Aleichem, rabbosai. My name is Rabbi Daniel Mann; I am a ram at the Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim, and I have been leading there for more than a decade a unique chabura, which we affectionately call P'sak for Non-Poskim. Let me very briefly explain what its premise is and how we do it.

Sometimes people think that there are rabbis, and there are poskim, and most rabbis are not poskim, and they answer only the easy halachic questions whose answers they have learned. Life is not so simple, and as rabbis out in the field will tell you - while there are questions you should and do ask your rabbeim and other Poskim, non-poskim also pasken their fair share of questions.

In our chabura or little workshop, if you will, we work, as non-poskim, on learning skills and building experience needed to know what to pasken, how to research a topic, how to come to basic halachic conclusions from the sources, and how to tailor make halachic indications into a p'sak for an individual or a community. We do this through discussion and giving the participants the chance to give it a try themselves, with guidance from me and feedback from their peers.

It works like this. I share with the group real questions that I have received within the Ask the Rabbi service for which I work and for the column I write weekly under the name the OU Vebbe Rebbe (I didn't pick the name), which is read by tens of thousands, mainly in Israel. Each week a different talmid will prepare, after picking from a list of potential questions, and with guidance from me, to the extent he is interested – a 45 minute chabura and a one page written answer to the question based on the basic sources and analysis. He presents the topic to our whole chabura, usually along with a source sheet, and we all learn the topic along with him, politely asking questions here and there. At the end, I present a 15 minute discussion of highlights of the chabura and how I answered the question perhaps slightly differently and why.

It is hard work, but it is a unique experience which those who have felt it was for them and tried it have thoroughly enjoyed. I hope you will too.