



# ERETZ HEMDAH ASK THE RABBI SERVICE

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## AI for Halacha

**Question:** To what extent is it responsible and wise to use AI models for guidance or information on questions of practical Halacha?

**Answer:** This discussion is for those for whom AI is already part of their practical, intellectual, and/or professional lifestyle. What follows is in line with the broad consensus amongst *rabbanim* in our communities. Hopefully the presentation will clarify somewhat and highlight distinctions and nuances.

**A futuristic possibility** – Someday, machines might surpass humans in sheer memory, analysis, and application of Halacha (if they do, it will happen later than for most other intellectual endeavors). We must distinguish between halachic information and *p'sak*

*halacha*. When a *halacha* is clearly established and a non-expert does not remember facts or know how to “connect clear dots,” the future AI will be trusted. For time immemorial, we do not ask our *posek* such questions, but ask a more knowledgeable acquaintance. However, when a new question or a unique dilemma including conflicting factors or personal sensitivities arises, this requires a *p'sak halacha*. The process that the Torah describes for deciding such matters (Devarim 17:8-11) involves human *talmidei chachamim*, which outweighs even a divine omen (Bava Metzia 59b). There is also something to be said for *siyata d'shmayta* of a *yarei shamayim* toiling over an answer.

**Current AI capabilities** – As many know, while AI does certain things in the realm of Torah impressively, its level of **reliable** scholarship pales in comparison to even a basic-level *talmid chacham*. AI summarizes straightforward, basic halachic text well. (One AI model retrieved for me my positions on a variety of topics quickly and impressively.) Some of its most impressive feats are plagiarism – summarizing articles by *talmidei chachamim* without citing them. It can follow Talmudic and halachic logic and notice distinctions. One **can** get a broad, brilliant answer on a halachic question.

**However**, it is totally **unreliable**. It can “quote” non-existent sources. It can “miss” a part of the question and apply an answer in its “grasp” about a similar case; i.e., the answer is wrong for the actual case. It can give an answer based on one source it understood correctly, but fail to realize that most

opinions disagree. I compare it to having an absolutely brilliant *chavruta* who is new to the world of Torah. When it gets something right, it can be breathtaking. However, when that lack of proper background causes it to err, it can say things that sound great but are totally off. My impression is that on “cookie-cutter” clear matters, where there is little complexity and no *machloket*, it usually gets things right. The chances are higher when one knows how to ask AI in the right way. Moments ago, I asked three AI models the *berachot* on 7 foods (quite straightforward). They all were accurate about the foods that have one correct answer. The answers for foods upon which there are *machlokot* differed from model to model, as did the level of accuracy.

Here is my practical summary. A *talmid chacham* who lacks encyclopedic knowledge, but knows how to check everything before believing anything, can, if he desires, use AI to get to opinions and approaches. He can be aided faster and sometimes more efficiently than by using a Google search to find and read articles or reading through classical sources,

which he might find “the old way” or with the help of Bar Ilan Responsa, Otzar Hachochma, etc. It serves more like a halachic anthology *sefer* with an “automatic index” when you don’t look up the sources cited in footnotes. The researcher must avoid the danger of falling into the horrible habit of believing too much, which already exists regarding some anthology *sefarim*; it certainly exists for AI. To quote one AI model’s disclaimer: “XXX is AI and can make mistakes. Please double-check cited sources.”

For those who are not *talmidei chachamim*, using AI to get Torah information is usually **highly irresponsible**. (This is true for non-experts regarding other intellectual or professional fields.) ■

## Having a dispute?



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