 **Shailos for Rabbi Willig**

***Conference Call #37***

1. A) What should our policy be when transgender people come to Shul?

B) When a man dresses like a woman is it a Michshol for him to allow him to sit with women?  Is it a Michshol for the men to allow him to sit with the men?

C) When a woman dresses like a man is it a Michshol for the men to allow her to sit with the men?  Is it Maras Ayin to allow her to sit with the women?

D) Would it be best Lichatchela to encourage them to Daven at home?

E) What about shaking hands or other physical contact with someone of the opposite sex who presents themselves as being of the same sex?

F) Does any of this change if the person has been altered surgically?

1. There are certain individuals who are born 'intersex," meaning they have physical manifestations of both genders. In the vast majority of such cases, the doctors render such a baby either male or female, often with a surgical procedure. Is such a procedure halachically effective to remove the baby from the category of אנדרוגינוס and into the gender chosen by the doctors? If such a person were to undergo a surgical sex change later in life to change to their gender to the one the doctors did not choose, would that be halachically effective?
2. I have recently attended shiva homes for several non-frum people, who are only minimally knowledgeable of Jewish customs.  As is the Halacha, I sat and waited to be spoken to before speaking.  The man sitting shiva , while “entertaining” his other non-frum “guests”, who glanced in my way at least once or twice, seemed to wonder “Why isn’t this guy talking?”  He apparently assumed I was shy or something, and proceeded to continue with his other guests, basically ignoring me.   After 20 minutes sitting [uncomfortably] quietly, his wife came and sat down and struck up a conversation with me, to which I responded and then the avel joined in.

Question: In a situation like this, where the avel does not know the “protocol” about speaking first to aveilim, is it still necessary to sit quietly and be ignored because I am not joining into the conversation?  In most cases, my visiting the avel is because I had a real connection to the deceased and want the avel to know, to hear what I have to say, etc.  But without him speaking to me first, I can’t get through the door!

1. What halachos should someone who is in the "year" for a parent be aware of for Purim. Specifically giving or accepting shaloch Manos and the Purim seudah?
2. Some magazines come sealed in a plastic wrapping. Can this wrapping be opened on shabbos?
3. Can an avel in shloshim or the "year" play a musical instrument? Is there a difference if it is a hobby or if it her job?
4. Chosson and Kallah are getting married the Monday before Purim
5. Parshas Zachor is the Aufruf, shuls minhag is to give the aliyah to the Rav, although I am not makpid, my shul is makpid on their minhagim. The Chosson grew up in my shul and would like the aliyah (as would his parents). What should I do?
6. Do they fast for Taanis Esther?
7. Someone in the community is making a simcha. He is concerned that if he doesn't ask his father to speak at the simcha he may be insulted. However, the father is a bit socially awkward and the son feels very embarrassed to have him speak. In addition, his wife feels very strongly that her father in law should not speak as she finds her in laws to be very embarrassing ( I would say that their assessment is right). What should be done? In addition, this issue comes up year round as the parents would like to come for shabbos and feel insulted that they haven't, but the children feel embarrassed to have them around especially as they are in a public role and much attention is drawn to it, nor does it create a healthy chemistry in the home when they are together. How should this be handled?
8. Where is the correct place for the amud for the chazzan to daven from? Is it a problem to have the amud located directly in front of the Aron or must it be to the right or left of the Aron? If it isn't in the right place is it necessary to move it?
9. My synagogue has a Rabbi's Discretionary Fund to give money to individuals in need. Two of the officers of the synagogue want me to divulge the names of the people to whom I give money. Is that appropriate? Shouldn't that be strictly confidential?
10. An officer of the synagogue wants me to divulge to him the names of those congregants to whom I either speak or visit but not the contents of the conversation. Is that appropriate? Should the identity of the people to whom I speak or visit be confidential?
11. May we schedule Mincha on shabbos or a fast day for 10 minutes before Mincha Gedolah as it will take that long to finish laining or does Ashrei and laining have to be after Mincha Gedolah?
12. Bale batim have asked me to speak publicly about the upcoming presidential election and for guidance of whom to vote for. Is this a subject for a Rav to speak publicly about? What would be appropriate to share on this subject and in what venue? A shabbos drasha, during the week in the library?