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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

The Torah of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner, Rosh Ha-Yeshiva

Shabbat Chol Ha-Moed Sukkot 5768

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The Secret to Protecting the Nation of Israel

Rabbi Eleazar of Mainz (who lived about 800 years ago in Germany), author of the book "Ha-Rokeach," brings a special protection (segulah) to save Jews from any danger and from our enemies.

Text Message Responsa

Rav Aviner answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Here is a sample:

Q: Is it permissible to wear crocks on Yom Kippur?

A: It is a dispute because they are comfortable. One may rely on those who permit them.

Q: If one's wife is scared to sleep in the house alone and she will not be able to fall asleep, is the husband exempt from sleeping in the sukkah?

A: Yes, he is exempt. "Dwelling in the sukkah is like dwelling in one's home."

Q: And what about if he is the one who usually wakes up in the middle of the night to take care of the baby?

A: He is also exempt.

He says that if three hundred cohanim recite the birkat cohanim (priestly blessing) at one time on the Mount of Olives, this will save us from distress. In our days, as well, G-d save us, Jews are killed by our enemies in wars and by terrorist attacks. Some people therefore initiated a mass birkat cohanim on Chol Ha-Moed at the Kotel, since the Mount of Olives is filled with graves and cohanim are prohibited from going there (This ceremony is still performed to this day). When Rav Aviner asked our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, about this practice, he answered that it is nice, but he had two comments: one about the form and one about the content.

a. The Form. An act of Klal Yisrael (the entirety of Israel), like this one, needs to be done through the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, and not by individuals, who take the initiative in matters relating to Klal Yisrael.

b. The Content. There is a better way, and even Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, with all of the trembling of holiness which we have towards him, would agree that the words of our Sages are more important. Our Sages ask, why didn't soldiers in the army of Achav, one of the most evil kings of Israel, fall in battle?

They answered that it was on account of the love and brotherhood that existed between them. They did not speak lashon ha-ra (ill about one another). For example, when Ovadiah hid a hundred prophets in a cave (I Melachim 18), the matter was not leaked and it was not revealed. Similarly, it is written, "Ephraim is connected to idols, leave him alone" (Hoshea 4:17). Even though the tribe of Ephraim was connected to idols, they were also connected to one another, they were united, and they were therefore forgiven by Hashem. "Great is peace, since even idol worshippers who have peace between them, the Almighty cannot reign over them (Bereshit Rabbah 38:10 and Yalkut Shimoni Hoshea #520). In contrast, in the generation of Shaul there was no love or brotherhood between people, rather lashon ha-ra, and when David hid from Shaul, the Zifim informed on him (Tehillim 54), and they therefore fell in battle (Bamidbar Rabbah 14:1).

This is the tried and true "trick" – the way to protect the Nation of Israel. To increase love among the Nation. This is a great teaching for us. We should not grasp at peripheral ways – which when performed for their own sake are great, important and holy, while forgetting about the essence – the love of the Nation. We should not think that we will heal the split in the Nation by adding a stone of holiness here or there, like the birchat cohanim, while not paying attention to the fact that the Nation of Israel is ripped to shreds. The love of Israel – this is the great educational need of the Nation, and also the foundation of the entire Torah. (From Tal Orot – Bereshit, pp. 160-161)

Book of the Week

Written by Rav Aviner



Commentary on Kohelet

Written in 5760 (8 years ago), this commentary on Kohelet (this book is read on Shabbat Chol Ha-Moed Sukkot) is based on 17 talks given by Rav Aviner at Yeshivat Beit Orot. It is based on earlier and later commentators. The talks were delivered at a time when the Government was causing great distress for those who are concerned about the fate of the Land of Israel. It therefore also contains discussions about the proper character of National leadership.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Our Rabbi would remind his students of the importance of sleeping in the sukkah. When he was in Switzerland in the cold and snow, he would not forgo even one night of sleeping in the sukkah.

A student related: "On Sukkot, great Rabbis sat in our Rabbi's sukkah, and I brought my younger girls to visit so that he would know who they were. Suddenly my youngest daughter said out loud: 'What an ugly sukkah, it is not kosher at all!' Everyone stared, and I was embarrassed. Our Rabbi asked: 'Who said that?' I wanted to hide my daughter, but she answered: 'I did!' 'Come here,' the Rav said, 'What do you have to say about the sukkah?' 'This is a sukkah? It is just boards!' 'What do you want?' 'Shach, greenery, trees, leaves. This is not kosher at all!' Our Rabbi said: 'Perfect innocence.' This is what he said about her."

Rav Aviner's article from this week's parashah sheet "Be-Ahava U-Ba-Emuna" of Machon Meir (Translated by Rafael Blumberg)

Save a Life!

About a thousand people are waiting for organ donations. If they don't get them, they will die. In fact, people are dying from this all the time, and good organs that could save them are buried in the ground. It makes you want to cry! Jewish brethren longingly wait for months, and finally die. It's so sad!

You might say, "It's forbidden to kill one person to save another." That's certainly true. Many years ago Ha-Gaon Rav Moshe Feinstein forbade heart transplants, saying, "You're killing two people: the donor, who hasn't died yet, and the recipient, whose body will reject the organ." Yet since then many years have gone by, medicine has advanced. That same Rav Feinstein long ago declared that brain death is considered death. Following his lead, the Chief Rabbis of Israel agreed about twenty years ago, which in principle makes the transplants possible. In other words, there is no longer a need for the heart to die. Rather, it suffices to have the total cessation of brain activity, including the respiratory system.

You might also ask: "But maybe the physicians are scoundrels and falsely declare that someone has died in order to carry out a transplant to increase their own stature or otherwise gain." Such an argument is just plain wicked, pure libel, against good people who are devoting their lives to serving people. And what do they get for their efforts? Blanket condemnation! Surely it's possible to have a physician be a scoundrel, as in any profession, yet that's no reason to engage in blanket accusations like those of the anti-Semites. "If one man sinned, can you be angry at the entire congregation?" (Bamidbar 16:22). It is true that various physicians have been caught behaving corruptly, yet in normal countries, there has not been a single case in medical history of a physician murdering a living patient to use his organs. And anyway, the physicians who determine the moment of death are not the ones who perform the transplant. As a rule, physicians are wonderful people who use transplants to save people from death, and they not only restore life but quality of life. I personally know a case of a woman who was a broken vessel, hooked up to oxygen, and after a transplant she returned to real life and to her work as a nurse in a hospital.

It's not true that people are afraid to donate organs. Thank G-d, there are a lot of people who are not afraid. Sometimes, thanks to one person, seven lives can be saved. What a big mitzvah! The people who donate the most organs in Israel are Arabs, and Jews from Russia. I don't know why the Arabs donate so many, but Jews from Russia do so because they are tough people unencumbered by religious complexes. Here's a marvel for you: people who are irreligious all their lives, and suddenly their bodies become religious! Actually the opposite is the case. They were religious all their lives, and after their death they gave life to others. Surely our Torah is a living Torah. As for those who are unwilling to donate organs but are willing to receive them, I prefer not to speak about them, nor is there any need to. Everyone understands what I think.

Yet what can we do? In the meantime, there are people who are afraid of donating. They are caught in the debate between rabbis who want rabbinic supervision and physicians who don't. And in the midst of all this, people are continuing to die. I therefore suggest to the physicians: Please! Don't be stubborn! If there is a family that demands rabbinic supervision

from outside the hospital system, put your pride on hold and let such a rabbi with the appropriate expertise come in. Then we can hope that everyone will donate.

I say this: a donor card can bring a person blessing. People look for all sorts of spiritual pathways to blessing, and they are constantly inventing bizarre new ones that never existed before and have no basis. Here, however, is a wonderful new pathway: readiness to save a friend from death.

A comparison to soldiers will be illuminating. A soldier returns alive from battle, but he was ready to give up his life! That's a very high level of idealism! Now, a person with a donor card isn't sacrificing his life, but he is still showing readiness to save others, and great merit will accompany him all his life.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Preserving the Four Species throughout Sukkot

(Shut She'eilat Shlomo vol. 2 #87)

Question:

How does one preserve the four species throughout all of Sukkot?

Answer:

This is what one should do to preserve the four species so that they do not dry out:

1) Lulav (palm) - One should store it in a cool place such as on the floor. Do not place it in water after it is open, rather wrap it in a slightly damp cloth. If the cloth is too wet, the lulav will become spoiled. Wrap it around the holder, or else it will become spoiled within the holder.

2) Hadasim (myrtle) - regarding this there are two possibilities:

Place the lower end in water. Wrap in a slightly damp cloth (but not too much, as we mentioned) or in a damp newspaper, and place in the refrigerator or in any cool place.

3) Aravot (willow) - Wrap in up in a damp cloth. Placing the lower end in water will not help.

4) Etrog - Wrap it and keep it in the shade or a cool place.