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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

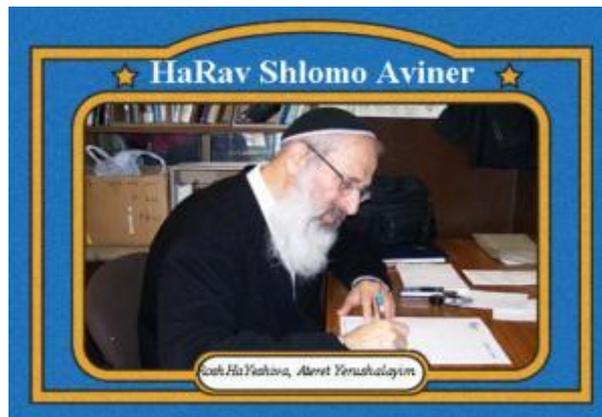
Parashat Vayera 5768

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Rav Aviner Playing His Cards Right



HaRav Shlomo Aviner
Rosh HaYeshiva, Ateret Yerushalayim

HaRav Shlomo Aviner is the Rosh haYeshiva of Ateret Yerushalayim (in the Kotel Quarter of the Old City of Yerushalayim) and the Rav of Bet El. Previously, he was the Rav of Kibbutz Lavit and of Moshav Keshet in the Golan Heights. Rav Aviner has written over 50 books and countless articles. One of the greatest students of HaRav Tzvi Yehuda Kook zt"l, he is famous for teaching (and living by) Ahavat Chinam and total love for all of Klal Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael. When he teaches about how important it is to make aliyah and live in Israel he speaks from experience. He was born in German occupied France in 1943/ 5703, and made aliyah in 5726/ 1966.

famous quote: "Division of opinion yes...division of hearts, no!"
website for more information: www.havabooks.co.il
text and design by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon, www.rabbijablon.com

Rabbi Shmuel Jablon of the Mizrachi School in Cleveland has created Religious Zionist Rabbi Cards. For a long time there have been Rebbe cards, but now there are cards of Religious Zionist Rabbis: Rav Kook, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, Rav Goren, Rav Soloveitchik, etc... and Rav Aviner has a card!!! Your kids can now play with cards of Rabbis that represent your Torah views. To view the cards, which can be ordered, see: www.rabbijablon.com/rabbicards.htm

PRAYING FOR SINNERS

In this week's parashah, Parashat Vayera, Hashem informs Avraham that He is going to destroy Sodom. Avraham, while obviously repulsed by them, is still concerned about their welfare. He hopes that they can be turned to the path of righteous and goodness, and he prays to save them. Avraham is our model of the appropriate perspective we should have towards prayer. He did not pray for their demise, but their rehabilitation. In this vein, we present a talk given by Rav Aviner in the yeshivah in Tevet 5766 (a little less than a year ago) after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had a stroke. There were mixed feelings about praying for him, since he expelled Jews from Gush Katif and the Northern Shomron. It is a question which still persists today, and focuses our attitude toward prayer in general.

Text Message Responsa

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

Q: Is it true that someone who speaks "lashon ha-ra" (speaking ill about another person) has his merits taken from him and given to the person about whom he is speaking?

A: It is true. This is found in the book "Chovat Ha-Levavot – The Obligation of the Hearts."

Q: It seems that my family is cursed, can the Rabbi bless us?

A: There is no such thing as a curse. Nonetheless, Hashem should bless you.

Q: Does mineral water require kosher certification?

A: No, it is all kosher.

Q: Should we pray for Ariel Sharon to live or die?

A: Perhaps we should leave it up to Hashem. How does He decide? Alone.

1. The Middle Path – Pray for him to Repent

What should we do in complex situations like this one? One can certainly pray that Ariel Sharon no longer serve as Prime Minister. You do not need to pray that he dies, you should leave this to Hashem. It is preferable, however, to take the middle path, and pray that Ariel Sharon repents. It says in the Gemara in Yoma, "Those who are insulted but do not insult back, who hear themselves slandered but do not respond, who act with love and rejoice in suffering, of them the Tanach says, 'Those who love Him are like the sun rising with all its might' (Shoftim 5:31), and keep it in one's heart" (Yoma 23a). Rashi explains the phrase "keep it in one's heart" that if someone else comes to exact revenge against the person who wronged you, you should remain silent. The Ein

Yaakov says that if Hashem decides to punish him, you should remain silent. If Hashem wants to punish him - fine, but we should not take revenge, bear a grudge or hate. A person is not obligated to act this way, it is an act of piety. Let Hashem conduct a Divine accounting. King David, who was among the most humble, forgave his enemies and said, "When they are sick, my clothing is sackcloth" (Tehillim 35:13). He was sick because his enemies were sick. This is also an act of piety. We also see in Tachanun that it says, "May all of my enemies be shamed and utterly confounded, they will repent and be shamed for an instant." An instant is enough. You do not need to shame them, having them shamed for a short time suffices. Again, one is not obligated to be so benevolent, but it is an act of piety. The Gemara in

Berachot records that Rabbi Meir prayed for the death of certain lawless men in his neighborhood who caused him trouble. Beruriah, his wife, asked, how can you pray for such a thing? It says in Tehillim, "Sinners will cease from the earth, and the wicked will be no more" (Tehillim 104:35), which she explains, when sins cease from the earth, because sinners repent, sin will no longer exist. She then suggests that Rabbi Meir pray for these sinners repent instead. He does, and they repent (Berachot 10a). We learn that it is preferable to take a middle path: Pray for him to repent. A person can also be happy when the wicked fall, he does not have to pray for a recovery. They can rely on the verses, "When the wicked perish, there is joy" (Mishlei 11:10) and "And joy went through the camp" (Melachim 1 22:36 and see Sanhedrin 39b and Megillah 10b). He can also pray for a full recovery based on the verse, "When your enemy falls, do not rejoice" (Mishei 24:17 and see Megillah 16a). In the book "Ye'arot Devash," Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz writes that you can pray for an evil Jew to recover since he is still part of the Nation of Israel (Ye'arot Devash p. 15). It is, preferable, however to take the middle path and pray for him to repent.

2. Ariel Sharon – A Complex Man

This is a complex issue because Ariel Sharon has both a positive side and a negative side. On the positive side, he was responsible for building many settlements in Yehudah and Shomron, he had great success in the Yom Kippur War and he bought a house in the so-called Muslim quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. On the negative side, he expelled the Jews of Gush Katif and the Northern Shomron and destroyed the communities. Even when he expelled Jews, though, he thought he was doing something good, either because he was afraid of the demographic threat or of the Americans. At the same time he was doing that, he was also fighting against our enemies. Rabin also thought he was doing something good, and in reality he hardly did anything. Sharon did do something. It is complex. During the Yom Kippur War, he certainly saved us, but when he received orders, he would disregard them. His commanding officer said: I command you to do this. He responded and everyone heard: I'll piss on you. Our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, said to Arik Sharon: Guard your tongue. What is this? This is how you speak to your commanding officer?! The negative side, however, does not nullify the positive side. The Talmud in Berachot says that Yochanan the Cohain Gadol served for eighty years as the Cohain Gadol and then became a "Tzeduke" (Sadducee - who denied the Oral Torah of our Rabbis) (Berachot 29a). Although he became evil in the end, the many merits he had were not canceled out. Thus, the question regarding Ariel Sharon is complex.

3. Do not Dictate to Hashem

We do not tell Hashem what to do. We always pray in the general. When we recite the prayer "Refa'enu - Heal us" in the Shemoneh Esrei, we do not instruct Hashem how to heal us, which medicine or therapy to use. We leave it up to Him. We do not enter into details, but pray in general. We do not tell Hashem what to do. There was once a man who had no livelihood. He came to a Chasidic Rebbe and told him: I bought a lottery ticket. The Rebbe said: I'll pray that you win the jackpot. The man got cold feet, however, since the ticket was so expensive and he sold it. The ticket won. The Rebbe took this as a rebuke from Heaven for the way that he acted and he went to his Rebbe and told him that he was leaving the Rabbinate. His Rebbe told him: No, no, but don't dictate to Hashem how to solve problems.

We pray in general. We do not have to pray for Sharon to die, we do not get involved with the details.

4. What do we Tell the Community to do?

There is an organization called Tzohar (Rabbis of Religious-Zionist who promote Jewish identity). There are four leading Rabbis who often sign pronouncements to encourage people to do certain things and these Rabbis represent a wide spectrum of the community. They are: Rav Aharon Lichtenstein (Rosh Yeshiva of Har Etzion), Rav Yaakov Ariel (Chief Rabbi of Ramat Gan), Rav Chaim Drukman (Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Etzion) and me. They wanted to put out a pronouncement that people should pray for Ariel Sharon to heal. I said that I would not sign this, but would be willing to sign a document calling to pray that Ariel Sharon be able to repent (In the end, no pronouncement was made).

5. How should School act?

Schools ask me: What should we do? I said, if you pray that he should recover, half of the parents will kill you, and if you pray that he should not recover, the other half will kill you. This is therefore an issue of "piku'ach nefesh – saving a life" – for the administration, the teachers and the parents. One does not have to give a ruling on every matter. In matters like this, our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah, would often times not say, "Do this," but would analyze the issue. I told the schools: Every student should pray for what they wish. Tell them that we have a few minutes and everyone should pray for what they wish. I have received over a hundred text messages asking this question, I already have a prepared answer in my cell phone. Praiseworthy is the Nation who asks such questions! People are not asking about how to make more money or how to be more beautiful, but how to pray correctly. Praiseworthy is this Nation!

6. Summary

There are therefore opinions on both sides. One who wants to pray that he recovers should do so. One who wants to pray the opposite should do so. One who does not want to pray at all can do so. I recommend praying that he repents – this is always good and fits with all opinions. All of the followers of Rav Ovadiah Yosef who are going out into the street to pray with self-sacrifice for his recovery do not need this discussion – they have their Rabbi. In sum: Every person should pray for what he wants as long as it is for the sake of Heaven, and what I said – this is the middle path.

Book of the Week Written by Rav Aviner



Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Eretz Yisrael

This book printed in 5765 (three years ago) includes talks given by our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, on the subject of The Land of Israel and Redemption. These were many of the speeches which captured the hearts and minds of those who would settled much of the Land. The book was arranged and footnoted by Rav Aviner.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

In the Midst of Pain

A horrible tragedy befell the family. Our Rabbi's nephew, Ha-Rav Nosen Ra'anan Kook's son, Reb Avraham Yitzchak, fell from a cliff across from Bat Yam, and drowned in the sea, at the age of 18 or 19. He was loved by everyone. In the eulogy, our Rabbi said that when his grandfather called him to come, this young man would first go to the mikveh to immerse. Suddenly, in the middle of all the people comforting the mourners, our Rabbi said to Reb Nosen: "We need a fence," and he repeated the word "fence" a few times. Reb Nosen also repeated the word "fence." Our Rabbi explained: "We need to make a fence where he fell from the cliff so that another tragedy does not occur." Two Torah scholars sat in horrible, indescribable pain, but one thought also bothered them: Repairing the community. (From Ha-Rav Mordechai Piron in Iturei Cohanim Av 5766 #263 p. 48)

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

STANDING FOR ONE RABBI WHILE ANOTHER RABBI IS SPEAKING

Question: I attended a memorial at Yeshivat Mercaz Ha-Rav for the end of shiva for Rav Avraham Shapira ztz"l where many great Rabbis gave eulogies. During some of the eulogies, Rabbis entered the yeshiva and everyone stood up to show them respect. For example, Rav Ovadiah Yosef entered during the eulogy of Rav Avrum's son, Rav Yeshoshua Shapira, the new Rosh Yeshiva, and everyone stood up. While it is a sign of respect to stand for a Torah scholar, it also seems like a lack of respect to rise in the middle of another Torah scholar's talk. What should one do in such a situation?

Answer: It is a problem - if you do not stand it is disrespectful to the entering Rabbi, and if you do stand it is disrespectful to the Rabbi who is speaking. This is the reason I try not to enter talks in the middle. Nonetheless, it seems that one should stand, and the Rabbi who is speaking will forego his honor, since standing for a Torah scholar is explicitly mentioned in the Halachah (see Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 244).

Jonathan Pollard Count: 8006 Days in Jail



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