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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 Vayishlach 5768

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?????Anyone who would like to ask Rav Aviner a question may do so by e-mailing [mororly@bezeqint.net](mailto:mororly@bezeqint.net). The question will be brought to the Rav and I will e-mail you the answer.?????

## **Text Message Responsa**

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week.

Here's a sample:

Q: Is there a concept of "stealing sleep" in Halachah?

A: This is not stealing, but it is forbidden to distress another person. Love your fellow as yourself.

Q: Is it permissible to read the Book of the Hasmoneans?

A: Yes. Even though it is not one of the books of the Tanach and it was not written with divine spirit, it is still full of awe of Hashem.

Q: Is it permissible to get up early to exercise before davening?

A: No, it is forbidden to be involved with other activities before davening.

## "I Buried Her on the Way"

The death of Rachel is not a simple matter. It is a complicated issue which Yaacov Avinu carried with him every single day of his life. On the day of his death, Yaacov makes a request of Yosef: "Please do not buried me in Egypt. For I will lie down with my fathers...and bury me in their tomb" (Bereshit 47:29-30). Yaacov knows that his request will arouse surprise in Yosef, since Yaacov buried Rachel – Yosef's mother - on the way. He did not bring her to the Cave of Machpelah, and he did not even bring her to Beit Lechem. Rashi explains: "And I buried her there - and I did not even carry her to Beit Lechem to bring her into the Land [of Israel] and I know that you have [a complaint] in your heart against me...And do not say that the rain prevented me" (Rashi to Bereshit 48:7). Yaacov did not look for excuses or justifications for his action. This is not the reason that he left her there.

Yaacov knew that Yosef Ha-Tzaddik (the Righteous One) was one of the greatest locators of merit in others, as we see when he comforted

his brothers: "Although you intended me harm, G-d intended it for good" (Bereshit 50:20). This is what the Master of the Universe wanted. Everything is a divine plan: I now have the

ability to save everyone. Yosef never told his father when he arrived in Egypt. Our Sages stated that Yosef avoided being alone with his father so that he would not ask him, and he would be forced to tell him what his brothers did to him (Pesikta 3 - Be-yom Ha-shemini). Yosef was among the greatest guardians of the tongue, and he would not have any revengeful pleasure in relating to Yaacov what his brothers did.

Yaacov Avinu, who recognized this quality in his son, says to him: You certainly think that I buried her on the way because of the frequent rains in the month of Cheshvan. This is not the reason. It was a divine plan. "By Divine command I buried her there" (Rashi to Bereshit 48:7). Why "on the way"? In order that when Nebuzaradan (the Chief General of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia) would exile the Nation of Israel, and when caravan after caravan of thousands of Jews including the women, children and infants would leave, and they would be broken, downtrodden and suffering from the enemy's maltreatment, Rachel would depart from her grave and weep and beseech G-d's mercy upon them as it says: "A voice is heard on high...Rachel weeping for her children" (Yirmiya 31:14). The Holy One, blessed be He, will respond: "Your work will be rewarded...and your children will return to their border" (ibid. 15-16). This burial was not accidental. Rachel is the active power in the Nation of Israel in whose merit the Nation remains steadfast even in the most awful of situations, and her children will even return to the place. This return is not a natural process. Another nation, after suffering calamity and persecution, murder of the body and burning of the soul, would certainly have disappeared. The Nation of Israel, however, has a special power which is called "The power of Rachel" by which it is sustained. It is true that we are not all the children of Rachel. This is only Yosef and Binyamin. Most of us are the children of the Tribe of Yehudah, but all of us say: "Rachel Imeinu - Rachel, our Mother." Sarah and Rivka are definitely our mothers; and while from a precise biological perspective Rachel may not be our mother, from the perspective of her spiritual power, she is our mother. The geography of her burial on the way is connected to Rachel helping her children to remain steadfast on the way and to arrive home.

Not everything in life is simple. We are not always at home, a place which protects us both physically and spiritually. Sometimes we are located on the way, and the way is presumed to be fraught with danger (Yerushalmi, Berachot 4:4 and Rosh, Berachot 9:3). The Nation of Israel is located on the way. The entire world is still on the way. Before departing to travel on the way everything is pleasant and good, the end is also wonderful, but the way itself is very difficult. What is to be done so that we do not stumble and survive so we can return home? We need a special Divine power, and the Nation of Israel is equipped with it: This is the power of Rachel. [Sefer Eishet Chayil, pp. 73-74]

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## **Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi**

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

### Disparaging Torah Scholars

Our Rabbi taught us to revere all Torah scholars. One of his students once disparaged Charedi (Ultra-Orthodox) Rabbis and blamed them for Jews dying in the Holocaust. Our Rabbi castigated him: "Before all else, you must learn the meaning of treating Torah scholars with respect!" He spent the next several hours explaining this to him. (Rav Aviner in Be-Ahava U-be-Emuna Parashat Nitzavim 5765)

### The Redemption in the Torah

When our Rabbi would be asked, why isn't the Redemption explicitly mentioned in the Torah, he would quote from the book "Leshem Shevo Veachlama" that the Torah was given for us and not for Hashem. It includes things that we need to perform, not things that Hashem will perform. The Redemption is what Hashem does, it is therefore only mentioned in hints.

## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

### Waiting for the Rabbis to Finish Shemoneh Esrei

Q: When the yeshiva is davening the silent Shemoneh Esrei, should we wait for all or some of the Rabbis to finish before beginning the repetition?

A: You should begin when the first Rabbi finishes.

### A Place in the World to Come

Q: Do only observant Jews have a place in the World to Come?

A: The Rambam clearly lays out in the Laws of Repentance who does not have a share in the World to Come: the most heinous sinners. We otherwise learn that every Jew has a portion (see the introduction to each chapter of Pirkei Avot). At the same time, the spiritual level which one reaches in this world will determine one's spiritual level in the World to Come. It only makes sense that one who reaches high levels here is prepared for higher level in the next world. Pirkei Avot says that we do not know the reward for each of the mitzvot. Most Jews – Baruch Hashem - fulfill many of the mitzvot and will have a place.

### Book of the Week Written by Rav Aviner



## **Eishet Chayil Woman of Valor**

This work takes a look at the lives of the women of the Tanach who shaped our Nation. It was first published in 5760 and has become very popular. Today it can be purchased separately or as part of the book "Bat Melech." Eishet Chayil has been translated into English by Lazar Sarna and is entitled, "Women in the Bible." The Hebrew edition can be purchased through [www.havabooks.co.il](http://www.havabooks.co.il)

Rav Aviner's article from the parashah sheet "Be-Ahava U-Ba-Emuna" of Machon Meir from Parashat Vayetze 5768 (Translated by Rafael Blumberg)

### Character Improvement

The history of character improvement can be divided into two periods: before the appearance of the book "Mesillat Yesharim" and after. Mesillat Yesharim is a summary of all the books that preceded it, and the foundation of all the books that follow. Its author, the illustrious kabbalist, blessed with ruach hakodesh [divine intuition], Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto [Ramchal], was also a special divine emissary to attend to Israel's character improvement.

Indeed, the Vilna Gaon loved Mesillat Yesharim (Tosafot Ma'aseh Rav 179): "There is an oral tradition that when Mesillat Yesharim was published, and the author was no longer living, the Gra read the book and pronounced, 'A great light has gone forth to the world.' He learned it by heart 101 times, and he paid a sizable sum to purchase it. In the case of most holy tracts, the Gra would say that the book was greater than its author. In this case, however, he recognized that the author was many times greater than the book."

Elders of the previous generation have told their children that when the book came before the Gra, he enthusiastically uttered, "If only Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto were alive I would trek to him on foot to learn morals and character improvement." (ibid.) In that same book, small in quantity and enormous in quality, several fundamental assumptions are laid out before each character improvement:

The first principle – There are no shortcuts. A person cannot change his nature overnight. He can change his deeds overnight, and then he will be greatly praised for having conquered his evil impulse. But as far as changing his personality, matters do not proceed so quickly. We must arm ourselves with patience, and ascend slowly. In such a manner did Ramchal build us a ten-step ladder, in accordance with our sages' words.

The second principle – it is possible to ascend high. The way is open to every Jew to ascend very high. Every Jew must be a tzaddik, righteous, i.e., he must fulfill his duty, but what will bring contentment to G-d is that he should be a chassid, in other words, he should possess an enormous inner longing to serve G-d. Moreover, he can climb still higher, up to kedushah [holiness] and ruach hakodesh [prophetic intuition]. How does he do so? Each spiritual level sets before him the pathways to climb to the next level.

The third principle – Be careful not to fall. Even when, with G-d's help you have achieved a particular level, you have to realize that you are just a person. Hence you are liable to fall. This we have learned from Adam, who was in a physical and spiritual Eden, and still fell. Hence one must ever stand vigilant and never fall asleep at one's post.

The fourth principle – The intellect is a tool to self-improvement. According our great master Ramchal, it is the chief means towards that end. Obviously, this does not mean that neither emotion nor imagination nor any of the other mental force can be tools to character improvement. It only means that intellect is the main force. The intellect serves a dual role: 1. It enables us to learn well what is good and what is bad. 2. It enables us to examine well our situation on a daily basis, to see what is good and what is not, and to figure out ways to make amends.

Ramchal has many additional principles, but we shall focus on this principle, which is interlaced throughout Mesillat Yesharim, expressed in various ways. Ramchal again and again stresses that the divine task of character improvement must have our full attention and supervision. The great enemy of the intellect is the imagination. The intellect toils and strives hard to reach the truth, whereas the imagination, which is not interested in the truth at all. True, the intellect errs as well, yet it is always examining itself and correcting its errors, because its goal is to recognize matters

as they really are. Not so the imagination, which depicts matters the way the person would like them to be.

People therefore love the imagination greatly, and the world is full of superstitions, tricks and ruses, harmful foolishness. The intellect tells you, "Your married life is limping along because you do not relate properly to your wife." The imagination tells you, "No! Your wife is responsible for all the problems." If so, surely the imagination is much more convenient and beloved. It tells you, "You are not conceited. You neither get angry quickly nor are full of lusts nor are lazy. How nice!"

Obviously, there is also a constructive imagination, which advances the world and human thought, but that happens after the imagination is examined by the intellect, which then gives it permission to make itself public. Therefore, already Rambam waged a violent battle against the cult of the "mitakalmin", the "talkers". They hold that every thought we imagine is necessarily the truth, and will certainly not fool us. Unfortunately, this struggle is still contemporary to our own times, in which we bear witness to the phenomenon of "the escape from reason". The intellect has developed so much in our world yet people are still disappointed with it. And why is this so? Because it does not provide immediate solutions but is like "the slow-moving waters of the Shiloah Spring" (see Orot, "Yisrael U'Techiyato"). For example, a person, seeing that modern medicine did not solve the problem of a particular patient, might then turn to someone who engages in quackery, forgetting that modern medicine has solved the problem of millions and billions of people. Unfortunately, in politics as well, people dream about wonder-solutions that fix nothing, but only ruin things all the more.

Rectifying character traits is built on the intellect vanquishing the imagination, and on that same duel recognition regarding what is truly good and where a person truly stands. Each day we wage a struggle of the intellect against the imagination, and we win. When and how? By way of confession: We confess that we have sinned. Admitting guilt is the height of divine fortitude. It opens the way to all salvation. If the guilt for my having sinned lies with me, that signifies that I have the strength not only to sin but to make amends. How much joy and strength confession gives a person, and with its help he climbs higher and higher, improving his character and bringing joy to his G-d.

***Family Matters*** - Ha-Rav writes weekly for the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

***My Mother-in-Law is Not so Bad Anymore***

*I also have a mother-in-law who is always critical. She has something to say about everything I do, but I have found a solution: I pity her. Instead of being happy with her wonderful children and grandchildren, she finds every real or imagined deficiency, and makes herself miserable. I don't blame her. It is forbidden for me to judge her. I am not in her place. Maybe she had a difficult life which made her bitter or a problematic childhood in which her parents withheld love from her. At the moment I decided to have compassion for her, all of the insult, anger and frustration which resulted from her criticism dissipated. I have to admit that it was not so easy at first, but from the moment I understood that this was the correct path, I stuck with it. I continued to respect and love my mother-in-law and I responded to her criticism with a warm smile. Then an amazing thing occurred: Over the months and years, she became less and less critical. I realized that behind the veil of criticism, she thirsted for a loving relationship.*