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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

The Torah of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Parashat Vayechi 5768

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Would you like to ask Rav Aviner a question? E-mail mororly@bezeqint.net and the question will be brought to Ha-Rav and I will e-mail you the answer.

If you will it, it is not a dream

Question: Once again a sense of dizziness confounds our leaders, who raise the idea of giving up part of our Land, G-d forbid. How should we struggle for our Land?

Answer: If we want to cure an illness it is not enough to focus on its external signs, we must understand its cause. What is the reason for all of this weakness? Fear. Fear of enemies both from within and from without. Fear of all types of problems and difficulties. If this is the case, what is the medicine? Strength and courage. How do we attain strength and courage? From love of the Land of Israel and understanding the value of the Land. When we love and understand, we will be ready for great toil and self-sacrifice, and we will not fear anything. General Yitzchak Sadeh, one of the founders of the Palmach, wrote that a truly courageous person is not necessarily someone who abandons his feelings of fear, but an idealistic person who understands the greatness of his mission, and therefore a physically weak person can say, "I am courageous." The Rebbe of Gur, the author of "Sefat Emet," explains at the beginning of Parashat Shelach that the Land of Israel is acquired through desire and toil. We are not denying that building the whole length of our Land did not involve great toil, but when there is desire, people are ready for any amount of toil. He writes that the same applies to learning Gemara. We can add that this is also the case with marriage.

We therefore know the solution: To fill the Nation of Israel with the desire for the Land of Israel. This desire certainly exists, because without it, there would be nothing here: No building of the Land, no return to Zion, no establishment of the State and no founding of the army. We should therefore be more precise: We must strengthen the desire of the Nation of Israel for the Land of Israel.

We have already learned this from Yaacov Avinu. Hashem said to him: "The Land upon which you are lying, I will give to you and your descendants" (Bereshit 28:13). This is surprising: This is an extremely small area?! Rashi explains: "The Holy One, Blessed be He, folded up the entire Land of Israel under him. He hinted to him that it would be easily conquered by him like the four amah (six feet) which is the place of a person." If a person knows that the Land of Israel is his place, it is easy for him to conquer. If a person "lies down" on the Land of Israel, i.e. displays self-sacrifice for it, it is easy for him to

conquer. And if "this is the stone upon which he lays his head" (Bereshit 28:18), then it is easy for him to conquer.

Why exactly is the detail of Yaacov Avinu putting the stones there important? Answer: These stones are the stones of the Land of Israel and they were very dear to him. At the end of the Kuzari (5, 27), the Jewish spokesman is asked, when will the Redemption arrive? He answers: "When they yearn for the fundamental yearning, as it says: 'For Your servants hold her stones dear, and cherish her dust'" (Tehillim 102:14). The love of the stones by the Nation will bring Redemption. The Gemara relates that Rabbi Abba would kiss the stones of Acco and Rabbi Chaim bar Gamda would roll in the dirt of the Land of Israel, as it says: "For Your servants hold her stones dear, and cherish her dust" (Ketubot 112a-b). There is something strange in Rashi's commentary on this Gemara. He simply copies the verse, without offering an interpretation. I saw an explanation – I believe in the name of the Vilna Gaon – that those Rabbis who kissed the stones and rolled in the dirt did not do so to fulfill the above-mentioned verse, but because they loved the stones and dirt of our Land in the depths of their souls. This is the secret: To strengthen love.

Avraham Avinu was told: "Arise, walk in the Land, its length and its breadth, for I am giving it to you" (Bereshit 13:17). Our Sages explain: "In order that the Land would be easily conquered by his children" (Baba Batra 100a). The love of the journey makes the conquering easy. Yitzchak Avinu was told more: Do not only "Arise, walk in the Land," but "Dwell in the Land...live in the Land" (Bereshit 26:2-3). And Yaacov Avinu even more so: He laid down on the Land, he clung to the Land. Even if he had only laid down on four amah he would have been able to spring forth and conquer the entire Land, as is written in the commentary "Da'at Zekenim Mi-Ba'alei Ha-Tosafot": "The Land upon which you are lying' means that I will give you that upon which you lay, and you will spread out in every direction by yourself and conquer all of your surroundings, as is the case with important horsemen. They give them a little land and they conquer all of the surrounding with their courage."

If we strengthen the love of the Land of Israel, we will then hold on it with self-sacrifice, and even spread out to the west, east, north and south. If you will it, it is not a dream.

[From the parashah sheet "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'a" – Parashat Miketz 5768]



Text Message Responsa



Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah" and "Olam Ha-Katan." Here's a sample:

Q: What should I do if there is a contradiction between what my husband wants and what my mother wants?

A: You should confer together with your husband.

Q: Is it a problem of "Yuhara – religious arrogance" to grow long pe'ot if great Rabbis do not grow them?

A: There are many great Rabbis who grow long pe'ot. There is therefore no problem of "yuhara," but if your Rabbi does not have long pe'ot, ask him or your Rabbi's students.

Q: Many of my friends who are young married couples act affectionately in public. It makes me uncomfortable. Is there a halachic problem with this?

A: According to Halachah, a married couple should not act affectionately in front of others (Shulchan Aruch 21:5 and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 152:11).

Q: Is it permissible to study for an exam on Shabbat?

A: The Rambam rules that it is forbidden to study secular subjects on Shabbat, and the Ramban rules it is permissible. The Halachah is like the later opinion, but one who is strict and chooses the first opinion – may a blessing come upon him. In sum: It is permissible.

Q: I decided to change from a knitted-kippah to a black-kippah. Is there a difference?

A: There is no difference. All kippot are good.

Q: What is the proper size of a kippah?

A: It should be seen from all sides, but it is proper if it covers the majority of one's head, since a kippah is for awe of Hashem.



Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Mourning the Holocaust over and over

Our Rabbi was unable to mention the word "Holocaust" or to talk about the subject without shedding tears. He felt the great loss every time anew, even years after the Holocaust (Yosi Bitan).

Students asked our Rabbi: The Chief Rabbinate of Israel established the 10th of Tevet as a remembrance of the Holocaust to recite Kaddish for the Kedoshim (holy ones) who perished in the Holocaust, but their date of death is unknown. If so, why did the Government of Israel establish the 27th of Nisan as Yom Ha-Shoah? Our Rabbi responded: One should mourn for the Holocaust every day.

A Eulogy for the Telz Yeshiva

A student who was caring for our Rabbi once sat next to his bed while he slept. Our Rabbi woke up in the middle of the night, sat on his bed and began to sob. The student asked him: "Why is Ha-Rav crying?" Our Rabbi answered: "I dreamt about the Telz Yeshiva which was destroyed in the Holocaust." The student asked: "But Ha-Rav always speaks about the Torah of the Land of Israel..." Our Rabbi sobbed even harder and said: "What do you know? Were you in Telz? Did you see the greatness and power of Torah?!" Our Rabbi cried until he finally asked for a pen and paper, and he wrote a eulogy for the Telz Yeshiva. He then calmed down and went back to sleep (Ha-Rav Eli Horvitz hy"d in Me-Emek Chevron, 2 Elul 5762, p. 94).

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

A talk given after lunch at the yeshiva -

Being Drafted into Tzahal – Israel Defense Force

Q: It is a mitzvah to be drafted into Tzahal?

A: Absolutely. It is a mitzvah for three reasons – just as everything in the army is in threes:

1. Pikuach Nefesh - The army protects the lives of millions of Jews; we have many enemies. Saving a life overrides just about every mitzvah in the Torah except the most severe ones.
2. Conquering the Land – The army safeguards the Land of Israel. There is a mitzvah to conquer the Land and then to hold onto to the Land. At the end of the book "The Kuzari," the King of Kuzar asks, is the reason you do not make aliyah to Israel is that it is dangerous? The Jewish spokesman answers that it is not dangerous, and even if it were dangerous, it is not more dangerous than an obligatory war which we are also required to fight.
3. Sanctification of Hashem's Name - When the Nation of Israel is low, pitiful and oppressed; it is a desecration of Hashem's Name. When we are strong and settled in our Land it is a sanctification of Hashem's Name. Rav Nisenbaum – who was a major Zionist – once said: What is sanctification of Hashem's Name? It is not when it is written on a Jew's tombstone that he was murdered sanctifying Hashem's Name.

Some say that the army is no good. It does not protect modesty, it expels Jews, etc... Don't exaggerate! It is true that there are immodest things which occur, but it is not completely immodest. It is true that it was used to expel Jews, but do not say that it is the "Israel Expulsion Army." We struggle against these things, but just as a person is judged on the majority of his acts, so is an army. "There is no righteous person in the world who does good and does not sin" (Kohelet 7:20). The army is judged on the majority of its acts. Yes, there are problems, but what do you suggest? No army. If we did not have an army, we would have no immodesty problems – all Jews would be dead. If we did not have an army, there would be no expulsions, because all Jews would be dead. On the whole the army is good, and it is an army of Hashem.



Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for the parashah sheet

"Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

To be objective

When a person marries he becomes objective. This means that he becomes capable of seeing things from the point of view of his spouse. A young child is not capable of being objective. He is egotistic and sees himself as the center of the world.

Story #1: "Why are you crying?" "Because my brother has two candies and he won't give me one." "But they are his." "So what? He could give me one." Next day: "Why are you crying now?" "I have two candies and my brother wants one." "So give him one!" "It's mine, why should I give him?"

Story #2: "Do you have any brothers?" "Yes, two." "And do your brothers have brothers?" "Yes, one!" He is not anyone's brother. He alone is the center of the world.

Story #3: His father is angry. He thinks it's because of him. His father is happy – same thing. From the age of approximately ten years old, a child begins to develop the ability to see things in an objective manner; i.e., from the perspective of someone else. This trains him for marriage. It is not an easy labor to become objective, but it is necessary for marriage as well as being pleasant and exalting.

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