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# Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

## The Torah of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

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Parashat Beshalach 5768

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



### What do you see when you see a tree in Israel?



When you are walking along and you see a tree, what are you actually seeing? While it is certainly correct to say that you are seeing a tree, you are actually seeing much more than that, much more.

One hundred and seventy years ago, the French writer Alfonse De Lamartine wrote: “(Outside the walls of Jerusalem) we saw nothing living. We heard no sound of life. We found that same emptiness, that same silence that we would have expected to find before the buried gates of Pompei or Herculanium...total silence reigns over the city, along the highways, the villages... the whole country is like a graveyard.”

One hundred and thirty years ago, the American author Mark Twain visited the Land of Israel and he wrote: “There is not a solitary village throughout its whole extent -- not for thirty miles in either direction. One may ride ten miles, hereabouts, and not see ten human beings. We traversed some miles of desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds -- a silent, mournful expanse. Desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action. We safely reached Tabor...We never saw a human being on the whole route. There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country. Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies. Palestine is desolate and unlovely. And why should it be otherwise? Can the curse of the Deity beautify a land? Palestine is no more of this work-day world.”

Did you hear that? There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere, not even an olive tree!

Therefore, when I see a tree, I see the Jewish People rising to rebirth in our Land. For almost two thousand years, this Land was angry at us and would not smile at us. Obviously, and by no coincidence, “because of our sins we were banished from our country and distanced from our Land.”

As we know, our Sages objected to making Messianic calculations. They even said, “Let the bones be blasted of those who calculate the end of days!” (Sanhedrin 97b). If so, how can we know that the end is near? They answered, “We have no better sign of the end of days than that of Yechezkel (36:8): ‘But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel; for they are at hand to come’” (Sanhedrin 98a). Rashi comments, “If you see the Land of Israel yielding its fruits plentifully, be aware that the end of the exile has arrived.”

Indeed, one hundred and twenty years ago, the Land began to blossom, and since then this sign has not proven to be a disappointment. Our country is being built up, and despite all the harsh shortcomings visible in our public lives, we have to admit that we are rising up to rebirth, and we have to be happy, hold on and look forward.

[Parashah sheet "Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah" of Machon Meir – Beshalach 5767]



### **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: I was a witness when one car backed up into another one that was parked. The driver who backed into the other car did not leave a note. What should I do?

A: Ask the driver to inform the other person. If he does not, then you should inform that person.

Q: Is it permissible to raise small animals in the Land of Israel today? [This is based on the Mishnah in Bava Kamma (79b) that one may not raise small animals, i.e. goats and sheep, in the Land of Israel, to prevent the destruction of crops due to the animals' grazing (Rashi)].

A: On condition that the animals are well guarded, so there is no damage to your neighbors.

Q: Is it permissible for a teacher to snoop around and look at a student's cell phone?

A: Only in an exceptional situation in which there is potential physical or spiritual damage to the student would we override the decree of Rabbenu Gershom (which forbids reading other people's correspondence).

Q: It is permissible to read the New Testament in order to know it, but not to believe it?

A: It is definitely forbidden. Rambam, Hilchot Avodah Zarah 2:2.

Q: Is it permissible to sort and organize pictures in an album on Shabbat?

A: No, it is selecting.

Q: What should one do if the radio accidentally turns on on Shabbat, and the neighbors can hear it?

A: Do not turn it off. Turn the dial of the volume down in an unusual way.



## Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

### Feeling the pain of the community

When our Rabbi heard the news that a minister of the Government of Israel committed suicide, even though he himself was hospitalized, he suddenly cried out: A horrible thing has occurred!

Our Rabbi was very distressed when the Israeli athletes traveled to the Olympics in Germany. He said: Why are they traveling to an impure land? When he heard what happened and that some of them were murdered, however, he was so alarmed that the doctors were frightened and some of them fled from his room.

When the doctors examined our Rabbi, they saw that he experienced terrible pain, but they could not find a cause. The students explained that our Rabbi is pained over the Nation of Israel. He experienced actual pain based on what was happening to the community. (From Ha-Rav Yosi Bedichi)

### Reciting the Shema

During the recitation of the Shema, Our Rabbi would raise his voice when he said: "And you shall perform ALL of the mitzvot." (From Ha-Rav Yehudah ben Yishai)



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

### The Custom of Eating Fruit on Tu Bishvat

[Shut She'eilat Shlomo vol. 1 #212]

Q: There are those who say that we are obligated to eat fifteen different fruits on Tu Bishvat, since Tu Bishvat is on the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat. Is this a custom or a law?

A: There is no mention in the Mishnah or Talmud that Tu Bishvat is a day of joy, rather it is the new year for trees. This means that it is the date that differentiates between the fruit of the past year and the coming year in terms of the obligation to tithe the produce (Rosh Hashanah 15). Among the Rishonim (Earlier Authorities), Tu Bishvat is mentioned as a day on which Tachanun is not recited (Minhagei Maharil), and this is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 131:6). The Magen Avraham mentions the Ashkenazic custom to enjoy many fruits (brought in the Mishnah Berurah ibid. #31), and this is also the Sephardic custom (Pri Eitz Hadar – seder limud le-leil Tu Bishvat). The quantity of fifteen fruits, however, is not mentioned. Our master, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook, writes, "As is customary, there is on it [Tu Bishvat] an impression of a festive day, the first indication of the revival of the settlement in our Holy Land (Igrot Ha-Re'eiyah vol. 2, p. 61). It says in the Jerusalem Talmud (end of Kiddushin), "Rav Bon said: In the future a person will have to give an accounting for all that his eyes beheld, but he did not eat." Rav Bon's intention was not that a person should be a glutton and eat everything in his sight; rather he should endeavor to taste everything (obviously everything that is permissible) at least once. And it also relates

that Rabbi Eleazar was concerned about this idea, and he would save his money in order to eat each of the year's new produce. Similarly, the Mishnah Berurah (Orach Chaim 225:19) writes, "It is meritorious to eat a little from each year's new produce. The reason is in order to demonstrate the preciousness of Hashem's creation." He does not mention, however, that one must eat fifteen types of fruit.

Summary: It is an ancient custom to enjoy many fruits on Tu Bishvat. And it is praiseworthy to eat fruits which one does not normally eat during the year.



Rav Aviner's article

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

### We have strange fruits in this country...

"Happy Tu Bishvat, Sabba Eliezer!" the children said bursting into the house. "Happy birthday Grandpa!" The old kibbutznik seated his guests with a glowing smile, and with his rough hands the old farmer offered them the fruits of the Land. "Yes, indeed! How hard we worked and slaved until the Land brought forth its fruits! All my youth, all my life I devoted to this, but... -- and here he raised his eyes – I am not sorry. I am proud..."

"Why are you proud, Sabba?" asked Yochanan the economist. "Fruit can be imported from abroad...."

"Nonsense, Yochi! Our fruit is sweet! The sweet product of our own labors! I built this land and I was built through it, and I am still building and being built. The connection with my land is like a man's connection to his wife." Grandma smiled and said, "It's nice to know that you've got another wife."

"That's not what I meant, Mirele! I am married only to you, forever! Yet the Jewish People and their land are like a man and his wife. It's a duty and a pleasure."

"I agree with you, Sabba," said Yossi, whose lieutenant-colonel bars adorned his shoulder. "I, too, devote my life to the Land and I am happy."

"What are you so happy about?" asked Yochanan. "I sit in an air-conditioned office from 9:00 to 5:00 and have frequent vacations. You run around after terrorists, crawl through thorns, go to sleep at midnight, get up at 3:00 A.M. and in the middle you get woken three times. Sabbaths and holidays are nonexistent for you..."

"Cut it out. I'm happy, because I know that I am defending the people and the Land, as well as the glory of Israel, what the religious call... what they call..."

"Kiddush Hashem, the sanctification of G-d's name," said Rav Aharon.

"Yeah, that's it. Kiddush Hashem. Look, I'm very happy. Thanks to me and to my soldiers you're able to sit here quietly in your air-conditioned office, talking all you want about money, money, money..."

"Now just wait a second! I'm just money, money, money?" Didn't I just complete a month of reserve duty as a volunteer? Didn't I help out Sabba for two weeks with his harvest? I just know one thing: Without money we don't have a thing – not an army nor education nor a kibbutz nor Rav Aharon's yeshiva! How fortunate we are that we have a well-to-do country, but money doesn't grow on trees. It requires planning. It requires calculations..."

"And where does the money go?" Nadav interjected. "There are so many poor people who have nothing. This country is very beautiful, but for me it's just a means, so that we can build a just society here, a society of integrity, of brotherhood."

"And do you think there's no justice in our country as it is?" asked Sabba Eliezer.

"Not enough. It needs a lot of improvements. That's what it say in your Torah, Rav Aharon,

that Avraham was chosen in order that his seed should perform deeds of charity and justice."

"My Torah? It's EVERYONE's Torah," pointed out Rav Aharon.

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Yossi. "You're sitting there quietly the whole time, the family pietist."

"I'm here because it's a mitzvah, even a great mitzvah," answered Rav Aharon.

"And in your view, the rest of us are NOT doing a mitzvah?"

"Hmmm... You are doing one, you're just not aware of it..."

"We're not aware? I lie in wait to conduct a military ambush and I don't know it's a mitzvah?" wondered Yossi.

"Enough! Enough! Please don't fight!" said Sabba Eliezer. "You're all sweet, just like these fruits are sweet. Just like this land is sweet... We are one family and a lot of brothers. Each one has his talents, each one has his special mission, each one fulfilling through his life a particular trait of the entire Jewish People."



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

"Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

*A wife who makes your life bitter*

*You have a wife who makes your life bitter? It is possible, but have you asked yourself whether you make her life bitter. Have you done a spiritual accounting regarding what she gives to you and what you give to her? Perhaps you think that you do not have to give her anything and that she is your possession? Perhaps you think like some Chinese people that a woman does not possess a soul, and you act accordingly? Perhaps you shame her? Perhaps you do not know that the Sages of Kabbalah (mysticism) teach that understanding, courage, and kingship are connected to the feminine side? Perhaps you do not know that the Sages of the Talmud explain that a woman gives her husband six things: Joy, blessing, goodness, wisdom (Torah), protection, and peace (Yevamot 63)? If you think that you are permitted to use her without worrying about her, do not be surprised that she has turned bitter. This is therefore the solution: Love her, and see that she returns to you. Try! And please tell me.*

Special thank you to Fred Casden for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parshah Sheet