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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

On the Air with Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Rav Aviner answers questions of Jewish Law and faith on the radio in Israel on Tuesday & Thursday nights (To listen: www.kimizion.org/shiur/shuf.html). On the Air presents a sample each week.

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******The first question is from a short interview of Rav Aviner by the television station of the Knesset this Wednesday at the Kotel******

Revenge for the Attack on Yeshivat Mercaz Ha-Rav

Q: The news reported that Rabbis gave permission for students to take revenge against Arabs for the attack. What is Ha-Rav's opinion?

A: The Rabbis of the Yeshivat Mercaz Ha-Rav said that such a thing never happened and will never happen, and they are lodging a complaint with the television station for speaking libel against them. Ha-Rav Avaraham Shapira ztz"l never made such statements and his loyal son, student and the current Rosh Yeshiva, Ha-Rav Yehoshua Shapira never made such a statement. It is lashon ha-ra (ill speech) and an attempt to smear the good name of the Yeshiva and our community. Nonetheless, it is permissible to take revenge against non-Jews. The Torah says: "You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge against the members of your Nation" (Vayikra 19:18), and they certainly are not member of our Nation. Do not worry – Tzahal – the Israel Defense Force – will take revenge. This is obviously not the revenge of an individual person, but revenge of the community. It is

forbidden for individual people to go around taking revenge. It is written in the Book of Tehillim (149:5-9) and we recite every morning, "Let the devout exult in glory, let them sing joyously upon their beds. The lofty praises of G-d are in their throats, and a double-edged sword is in their hand - to execute vengeance among the nations, rebukes among the governments." "To execute vengeance among the nations" is not to be performed by an individual. It is interesting that the following verses say "To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron. To execute upon them written judgment..." "Written judgment" means that it has to be exactly what is written according to the law and not beyond it. In this area, there is no place for an individual's initiative. "That will be the splendor of all of His devout ones" - usually a devout one goes beyond what is written, but in the army one must do exactly what is written and commanded and not any more.

Q: But Tzahal is not doing anything?

A: Tzahal is responding. One needs to trust them and have patience. Tzahal responds in the right time and the right place.

Change one's name, changing one's luck

Q: I have a lot of difficulties in my life, and perhaps it is on account of my name. If I change my name, will it change my luck?

A: The Rambam does bring the opinion of our Sages that one can change an evil decree by changing his name. It is not, however, magic. If a person changes his name he will not see miracles and wonders. The Rambam explains that if he repents in a serious way, he changes his name. This means, "I seriously repented and I am no longer the same person." This certainly changes the decree of a person. Rabbenu Nissim - The Ran - has the opposite approach. He says that if I change my name and every time I mention the new name, it inspires me to repent, I can change my situation. The essence of changing one's name is not a trick. The point is to say: I am not the same person, I am someone new.

The details of the Mishkan

Q Why does the Torah discuss at such length and go into such detail about the Mishkan?

A: The Mishkan is the most important of things. "Make me a sanctuary and I will dwell among you" (Shemot 25:8). Hashem dwells among us through the Mishkan. The Mishkan is not merely a building, it is the meeting point between heaven and earth. Rashi explains that the Mishkan is the house of holiness. It is a house in this world and it is a divine house. What is greater than this? It is the soul of our entire lives in this world. This question arises because we are far away from the Temple and we have forgotten what the Beit Ha-Mikdash truly is.

A parent's obligation to buy an apartment

Q: What is the law if parents promised to give a certain amount in dollars to newlyweds to buy an apartment in Israel and the value of the dollar has dropped?

A: They should give what they promised. If the dollar fell, it fell. In general, parents are not obligated to give a dollar. Nowhere is it written that parents are obligated to give their children money. It is a kindness. It is good. It is wonderful. May more people do so! But it is not obligatory. It is certainly not possible to go to one's parents with claims that the gift was connected to the value of the dollar. If the money is not enough, one may ask their parents to perform a greater kindness, since it is always possible to make a plea.

The ill and blessings

Q: Is a sick person obligated to recite blessings?

A: It is dependent on his ability and the level of his sickness. If he can recite a blessing, he should do so. If he is unable, he is "anus" (in a situation beyond his control). This is unrelated to if the illness is dangerous or not, it is a matter of ability.

Unanswered prayers

Q: Why are there Jews who pray, but their prayers are unanswered? For example, we have prayed and prayed for a child, along with all of the medical procedures, but have not been answered.

A: Prayer is not magic. Idol worshipers believe that if they perform a certain act it will obligate the deity to do what he wants. Hashem makes certain decisions – how many children a person will have, when he will have children, if he will have children, etc... We do not know what Hashem decided so we plead with Him, but this does not obligate Him to do what we want. Hashem has His own calculation. What we think is bad, He thinks is good. When we pray to Hashem, we plead with Him, but we do not pressure. Our Sages tell us in the Gemara (see Berachot 55a) that if we pressure it is called "iyun tefillah – analyzing prayer" in the negative sense. This means that Hashem remembers a person's transgression when he prays and says: Nu, nu, nu, where is the overcome? Hashem said: You are pressuring and you should know that everything you received up to now is not necessarily because you deserved it. I provided you with kindnesses, but you are beginning to pressure and demand. Perhaps I will take them away. We therefore plead before Hashem. You can see in History that many great and holy people prayed and prayed and prayed and did not have children, since Hashem decided that this was good for them.