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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

The Torah of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Parashat Bechukotai 5768 - #37

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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.

Redeeming Houses in Yerushalayim

[Part 2 of 3]

Sefer Le-Mikdashech Tuv, pp. 223-228

[Dealing with the question if there is an obligation to redeem land in Yerushalayim]

5. Especially interesting is the response of Maran (our revered teacher), Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook, regarding the question of if it is permissible to support the Jewish National Fund, since not everything done by them is in accordance with proper Shabbat observance: "...The mitzvah of acquiring lands from the non-Jews into the possession of Israel is a simple matter: It is a complete obligation...is this less than what exists in acquiring a house in the Land of Israel in which the Rabbis permitted a Rabbinic prohibition (of the non-Jews writing the deed of sale), even if the punishment for violating the mitzvah is Karet (divine excision)? Therefore, even the Jewish National Fund, the essence of its efforts being to purchase parts of land in the Land of Israel, removing them from the possession of the non-Jews and placing them into the possession of Israel, is certainly in the category of the mitzvah of conquering the Land of Israel, which is equivalent to all of the other mitzvot in the Torah. The proof is that according to the basic law the Torah obligates us to engage in this [mitzvah] even by means of war. The nature of war is that there is always danger to life. Regarding all of the Torah mitzvot, it is written about them 'and live by them' which is not the case in conquering [the Land]." Maran Ha-Rav Kook adds that we should obviously exert all of efforts to influence them to observe the mitzvot, but even if there are concerns, we should not invalidate their activities on account of this: "For the the most serious mitzvah of conquering our Holy Land and acquiring it" (Chazon Ha-Geulah, pp. 221-223). It is true that in his time purchasing land was the only way of conquering the Land, but now with the loving-kindness of Hashem a huge part of our Land is in our possession, including Yerushalayim. Everyone understands that increasing settlement and acquisition of houses and fields is the assurance of standing firmly against all of the evil plots of our enemies who surround us, and of those who try to disconnect the Jewish connection from within, to have us retreat, G-d forbid, from the inheritance of our ancestors.

6. We have now arrived at the question of if there is a special mitzvah in the settlement of Yerushalayim. Although we do not find a special mitzvah of building Yerushalayim, aside from the Temple, it is certain that if we are commanded to redeem all of the lands and houses of the Land of Israel, this is all the more so the case regarding the heart of the Land of Israel. Yerushalayim is unique: "Yerushalayim is built as a city which is connected together" (Tehillim 122:3), and our Sages explain, "It is a city which makes all Israel one [connected to each other]" (Yerushalami, Baba Kamma 7:7). And Yerushalayim is not divided among the Tribes (Megillah 1). The special aspirations and yearnings for the building of Yerushalayim, within the building of the entire Land, is the string threaded through the entire Tanach and all of the statements of our Rabbis. "Who says to Yerushalayim, you shall be inhabited, and to the cities of Yehudah, they shall be rebuilt, and their ruins I will raise up" (Yeshaya 44:26). "For Hashem will comfort Tzion, He will comfort all of the ruins and make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Hashem" (ibid. 51:3). "Elderly men and women will yet again dwell in the streets of Yerushalayim...And the streets of the city will be full of boys and girls playing in its streets" (Zechariah 8:4-5). "If I forget you Yerushalayim, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not set Yerushalayim above my chief joy" (Tehillim 137:5-6). Our Rabbis said that the Holy One, blessed be He, swore that He would not enter Yerushalayim of Above until His children would enter Yerushalayim of Below (Ta'anit 5a). When our Rabbis wanted to increase the joy of a groom and a bride, "As if they built one of the ruins of Yerushalayim" (Berachot 5b), although they certainly yearned for the rebuilding of the ruins of all of the Land of Israel, as the verse which they brought as a proof attests to, "For I will cause the captivity of the Land to return, as in earlier times, says Hashem" (Yirmiya 33:11), which relates to the entire breadth of our Land, they surely saw the gift of particularly building Yerushalayim. And Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Levi concluded his book, "The Kuzari," by saying "that Yerushalayim will not be built until the Jewish People yearn for it with a genuine longing, until they cherish its stone and its dirt."

7. And so too the distress over the destruction of Yerushalayim arose over the destruction of our Land, thus when they decreed that one who sees the cities of Yehudah in their destroyed state says (Yeshayahu 64:9), "Your holy cities have become a wilderness," and he tears his garment. But they decreed a special and addition statement over Yerushalayim (ibid. 10), "Tzion has become a desert, Yerushalayim a desolation" (Moed Katan 26a). And it was not in vain in that the members of the Great Assembly established a remembrance of the destruction in the Shemoneh Esrei (in the addition for Tisha Be-Av), behold they place the essence of their yearning towards the consolation of Yerushalayim, "Console the mourners of Tzion and the mourners of Yerushalayim, and the city that is mournful, ruined, scorned, and desolated, mournful without her children, ruined with her abodes, scorned without her glory and desolated with her inhabitants. She sits with covered head..." and they concluded the blessing, "who consoles Tzion and rebuilds Yerushalayim."

[B"H – final installment will appear next week in honor of Yom Yerushalayim]



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 received a wedding invitation and it has a verse on it. Can I throw it into the garbage?

A: The verse must be placed in a "geniza."

Q: Is one obliged to ritually wash hands (netilat yadayim) after using the restroom?

A: No, it is enough to wash your hands.

Q: What is the proper place for Tefillin on the head, because I see many people with the Tefillin on their forehead?

A: This is a serious mistake. When it is on one's forehead it is called "the way of apostates" (Megillah 24b). The Tefillin must be on one's head, above one's hairline, and not on one's forehead. It is therefore preferable to place the Tefillin somewhat back since there is room for two pairs of Tefillin on one's head. One should also not have Tefillin which are too large.

Q: Should I stop dating someone because of her external appearance?

A: Do not search for external beauty! The essence is to find someone who is pleasing to you.

Q: May I place schnitzel on the blech on Shabbat which I remove from the freeze and was not baked before Shabbat?

A: No, since it is not baked and will bake on Shabbat.

Q: Is it permissible to mix garlic and onion for cooking?

A: Yes.

Q: Is it permissible to buy new clothing during Sefirat Ha-Omer? If it is permissible, when may I wear them for the first time?

A: The basic law is that it is permissible, and you may recite "Shehechyanu." But it is preferable to wear it for the first time on Shabbat.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Gematria

One of our Rabbi's students visited our Rabbi in the hospital during the last year of his life, the year 5742. The student said that the gematria (the numerical value) of "Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook" is also 5742. Our Rabbi did not respond as was his way regarding gematria. A few weeks before our Rabbi's passing, when this student visited our Rabbi, our Rabbi pointed at him and said: "You are the one who told me the gematria!" (Yitzchak Viel - Iturei Cohanim #140)

Be cautious of advertisements

When Chabad advertised that they were writing a Torah which would help advance the coming of the Messiah, our Rabbi was asked how to relate to such a pronouncement. He responded: "One needs to be careful about such pronouncements which they make." (Ha-Rav Avraham Remer – Iturei Cohanim #83)

Electricity

Our Rabbi related that Maran (our revered teacher) Ha-Rav Kook once received a long letter which included reasons to be lenient in certain forms of use of electricity on Shabbat and Yom Tov. He briefly responded that it is forbidden since electricity is fire. Our Rabbi asked his father about this since his usual way was to respond based on the length of the letter (i.e. if the letter was lengthy, he would respond at length), but here he did not respond in kind. Maran Ha-Rav responded: "When issues are clear, there is no reason to be lengthy." (Ha-Rav Avraham Remer – Iturei Cohanim #83)

Eilat

Our Rabbi was once asked: is it permissible to travel to Eilat for a trip (since some authorities state that it was not settled and sanctified by the Jews who returned from Babylonian Exile)? He responded that there are different levels of holiness in the Land, and even if Eilat was not sanctified by the Jews who returned from Babylonian Exile, it still contains holiness. He also added that such a trip would encourage and strengthen the place and its residents. It is therefore permissible, although there is reason for cohanim to be strict (since outside of Israel is considered impure). Our Rabbi was asked about the Torah scholars who only escorted their colleagues until Acco (and not beyond since north of Acco was also not settled by the Jews returning from Babylonia – Gittin 76b). He responded that this was a stricture which they took upon themselves. (Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Neriya in the book "Afik Ba-Negev," p. 233 – Iturei Cohanim #83).



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Birchat Ha-Gomel

Q: I recited Birchat Ha-Gomel in shul after flying from Eilat to Tel Aviv. Afterwards someone asked me why I recited Ha-Gomel. When I told him the reason, he asked me whether I say Ha-Gomel after driving from my home in Efrat to Jerusalem. I responded that I do not. He then said to me that statistically it was more dangerous to drive from Efrat to Jerusalem than to fly from Eilat to Tel Aviv. I thought to myself that this man was probably correct because of Arab terrorism and that on average ten deaths per week in Israel from road accidents and many more injured, while there is a much smaller number of deaths and injuries from flying in commercial airplanes. Can you please clarify the Halachah for me?

A: You are both correct, since there is a dispute over whether one recites "Birchat Ha-Gomel" after flying. According to the opinion which says that one does not recite a "Ha-Gomel" after flying it is because it is statistically a low risk. But Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 2:59) says that when one is flying in the air it is considered dangerous since if there is a problem or accident there is also certain danger which is similar to travel by ship (the case mentioned in the Gemara). Driving in a car, however, does not include this type of risk since it is done on secure, dry land. Someone actually told me in the name of Rav Feinstein that one should say Tehillim while flying and not learn Torah, since if someone is in danger he should not learn but recite Tehillim!

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