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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

From the Teachings of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Parashat Behaalotecha 5768 - #40

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archived at www.ateret.org.il/new/home.php

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.

Encouraging the non-observant Jews to make Aliyah

(Q&A from Ha-Rav's radio call-in show)

Question: The book "Lev Eliyahu" of Rav Eliyahu Lopian (vol. 3, pp. 38-39) mentions a story which he heard from a trustworthy source about Maran (our revered teacher) Ha-Rav Kook ztz"l, who he does not mention by name but as the Rav of Yafo. When Rav Yitzchak Blazer visited Rav Kook, Rav Kook explained the verse from Yirmiyahu (2:7), "You came and defiled My Land" as meaning "If only My children would come and defiled My Land." Rav Blazer responded that there is a verse in Parashat Acharei Mot (18:28) which says "Let not the Land vomit you out when you defile it," if this is so than what is the benefit of coming and defiling the Land – they will be exiled again?! What then does Rav Kook mean when he said "If only My children would come and defiled My Land"?

Answer: The statement "If only My children would come and defiled My Land" was not invented by Rav Kook, it is the words of our Sages in the midrash in Yalkut Shimoni (Eichah #1038) when Hashem says: If only my children, my Nation, would be in the Land of Israel, even though they make it impure. Our Rabbis mean that the essence is for the Nation of Israel to return to the Land of Israel, even though they are not observant. The question is: should a non-observant Jew make aliyah or not? According to this midrash, a non-observant Jew should certainly make aliyah. But won't he transgress and defile the Land? The logic is that even though the Land will suffer, Be-Ezrat Hashem – with the help of Hashem, he will repent over time. This means that when there is a meeting between the hidden holiness of the Nation of Israel and the hidden holiness of the Land of Israel, the Nation of Israel will repent. We in fact see in our times that the Jews in Exile are assimilating and disappearing, while the Jews in Israel are repenting and strengthening themselves.

There is a story that after the establishment of the State of Israel, Jews from North Africa and Yemen made aliyah and were abandoning traditional observance. The person who headed the Department of Aliyah at the Jewish Agency was a Torah scholar named Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Shragai, and he was being eaten up inside by this fact. He did not know whether it

was proper to continue to bring Jews to Israel under such circumstances and he turned to the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon Tzvi Pesach Frank, and asked him what to do. Rav Frank said to him: Can you do me a favor and hand me the Yalkut Shimoni? He opened it and showed him the words of the Yalkut Shimoni on Megillat Eichah: "Hashem says: If only my children, my Nation, would be in the Land of Israel, even though they make it impure." And he continued: What do you want from me - to transgress the words of our Sages?! You are not guilty for what is occurring. You must bring Jews to Israel and make every effort to connect them to Torah. Rav Shragai continued to bring Jews to Israel and he mentioned this story various times. I printed a letter which Rav Shragai sent me in my book "Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah – Eretz Yisrael" (p. 57, 221-222) describing exactly what happened. It is even more severe in this case since we are not discussing unobservant Jews outside of Israel, but observant Jews who made aliyah and then were no longer observant. If this is so, what was Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank's calculation? Rav Shragai once visited France in a place where many North Africa Jews, who did not make aliyah, settled and he saw their situation. They did not only abandon traditional observance, but abandoned Judaism altogether – complete assimilation. He then understood that Ha-Rav Frank was correct that we should bring the Nation of Israel to the Land of Israel and we should know that everything will work out in the end.

We can also recall that a certain Rav once explained the line in the Haggadah, "If we received the Torah, but did not enter the Land of Israel – it would have been enough," that it would have been better for the non-religious pioneers to have remained outside of Israel rather than to commit sins in the Land of Israel. These words caused much consternation and when the students came to class, they told our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, what they had heard. They thought he would discuss this issue at length, but he responded briefly: "See Yalkut Shimoni #1038" and taught the class as usual (Iturei Cohanim #181).



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: A friend told me that it is permissible to drink alcohol since the Torah does not say that it is forbidden. Why doesn't the Torah discuss alcohol?

A: It is included in "And you shall follow in His ways," which is upright behavior (Rambam, Hilchot Deot chap. 1).

Q: I have been attending a Rabbi's class for a long time, and this week he said that the last Lubavitcher Rebbe is the Messiah. I have heard that this statement is heresy. Is it permissible for me to continue attending the class?

A: It is permissible, but do not pay attention to what he says about the Messiah.

Q: If I hear a blessing or Kaddish on the radio, do I say "Amen"?

A: It is permissible if it is a live broadcast.

Q: Last week Ha-Rav was asked if it permissible to marry a young woman who will not cover her hair and the response was: the essential thing is a good heart. But the Shulchan Aruch (Even Ha-

Ezer 115:4) rules that one should divorce a woman who does not cover her hair. Doesn't this mean that one should not marry her?

A: I wrote: "The essential thing is a good heart, then everything will work out," which means that she will cover her hair.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Prayer – Part 2

One of the students was shaliach tzibur (leader of the prayers) and prayed quickly. He related that our Rabbi called him into the side room, and said to him: "If you spoke with such haste to your friend, he would certainly say to you that you are crazy. And you turn to the Master of the Universe in this way?!"

Our Rabbi did not admonish another student who acted this way: "He is a Torah scholar, I am obligated to tolerate him", he said

It once happened that a shaliach tzibur rushed through his prayers. Our Rabbi said to him: "In my family, it is an accepted tradition to lengthen one's prayer. It is related about my paternal great grandfather [Rabbi Dov Ber Yafeh from Tuaratz] would sometimes lengthen Maariv the entire night during the nights of Tevet (when there are long winter nights) on account of his great cleaving [to Hashem], and it is related about my maternal grandfather that would lengthen Shacharit so much that he would begin with the first minyan and finish with the last minyan."

Our Rabbi would greatly lengthen his silent Shemoneh Esrei, and on the High Holidays because of its great lengthen and his awesome cleaving [to Hashem] they could not wait for him.

In his final years, when he was sick, he said that sometimes in pressing situations one need to know to pray quickly.

One Shabbat, an elderly Jew, who lived in our Rabbi's neighborhood, came to daven Minchah. Our Rabbi asked him to lead the davening, since he was the senior member of the group, being that the students were young and single. He refused, and our Rabbi insisted a few times. In the end, he agreed and said that he would borrow a suit jacket from one of the students. Our Rabbi said to him: The clothing is not important, the man is the essence. (Iturei Cohain #57 from Meir Eizman)

On the night of Yom Kippur 5726 [or 5727], it rained in an unusual quantity. It was a major storm, and they recited the blessing on the lightning and on the thunder. Our Rabbi prepared to leave at the end of the prayers. The students suggested to him that he wait a little until the rain stopped. Our Rabbi was surprised: "Is it raining?" The

students said to him: "But we recited the blessing on the lightning and thunder?!" Our Rabbi responded: "I do not know, I did not hear it or see it." The room was illuminated from the lightning, but our Rabbi was so engrossed in his prayer that he did not feel a thing.

On Yom Kippur 5734, the day on which the Yom Kippur War broke out, at 2:00 PM, when the center of the city shook from sirens and megaphones, some students, who were called to the Army, ran to depart from our Rabbi. At that moment he was engrossed in the repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei of Musaf. They called and yelled to our Rabbi, but he was engrossed in prayer and did not respond, until a Torah scholar was somewhat brazen to shake his shoulder, and informed him that the war broke out. Our Rabbi turned with teary eyes and said: "Go to an obligatory war to sanctify Hashem's Great Name. There is no doubt that you will be victorious, the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, and His word will not return empty, the Redemption continues on."

Our Rabbi would enter the Study Hall quickly despite his difficulty in walking and leave very slowly. He would remain among the last ones. He would fix the tefillin of students who did not put them in the proper place and he would also fix the tefillin straps which had turned over. He would also listen to the words of Halachah which were said at the end of Shacharit by one of the students.

Even in the hospital, when the doctors or nurses wanted to check our Rabbi or care for him before Shacharit, our Rabbi was adamant to pray first, and only afterwards would he agree to receive them, even though his refusal upset their schedules.



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Crossing one's legs during davening

Q: I about learned a month ago that it is forbidden to daven in shul with the legs crossed. I have been doing this with great discomfort since I automatically cross my legs and I find it much easier to daven that way. Is there any permission to allow me to daven as I used to and as I am more relaxed?

A: The prohibition of crossing one's legs is not a problem in and of itself, but that one should sit in "chadrat kodosh - trembling of the holiness" before Hashem and not as if one is on a sofa or at a cafe. If you have this outlook when you are sitting with legs crossed, it is no problem and you can continue to sit that way.