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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 Korach 5768 - #42

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Would you like to ask Rav Aviner a question? E-mail mororly@bezeqint.net and the answers will come from Rav Aviner in 1 of 3 ways: 1. Drawn from his published material. 2. From my own records of questions and answers 3. If the question has not, to my knowledge, been answered in either of these sources, I will ask the question directly from the Rav.

There is Hope for Pollard!

[Opening words from radio call-in show]

Question: Is there hope for Jonathan Pollard?

Answer: This is a question which displays a lack of faith. There is always hope. "A person should not despair of Hashem's mercy even if a sword is resting on his neck" (Bereachot 10a). It is obviously not enough to say in a passive way that there is hope, but you must act to move things along. Maran (our revered teacher) Rav Kook explains that awaiting salvation contains two aspects: 1. When everything appears to be stuck, one must not despair. The Master of the Universe is working and will provide a solution. 2. We must see if there are solutions, and if a solution is on the horizon, we must act. Therefore, there is indeed a solution on the horizon for Jonathan. The President of the United States can pardon him at the end of his term. It is customary for Presidents to pardon many people at the conclusion of their presidency. Obviously, not everyone is happy with each of the pardons, but if he pardons many people, some will find favor in some people's eyes and some will not. President Clinton pardoned one hundred and fifty people at the end of his term. We therefore hope that President Bush will include Pollard in those who he pardons.

We can strengthen this idea based on the words of Ex-CIA Director, James Woolsey. He was originally in favor of incarcerating Pollard and against his early release because in his view

Pollard stole secret material from the United States and he deserved a major punishment. Two and a half years ago, he said: "Now that he has served twenty years in prison, my view is that twenty years is enough. I also think that the close relationship between the US and Israel is also of some consideration, and at this point I think he's served long enough." If we look at the chart of those punished for similar crimes against the United States, which is called "Passing secret material to a friendly country," no one has received the severe sentence of life in prison. The maximum sentence received was ten years and the average sentence was between two and four years. Even James Woolsey who favored a long incarceration for Pollard agrees that he should be released. We therefore see that there is reasonable cause for hope and we must act.

We must first act within Israel, since the United States will certainly not pardon Pollard if the Government of Israel does not make an official request. To this very day, the stance of the Government of Israel regarding this issue has been lukewarm at best. We therefore need to strengthen the Nation's opinion and the Government will then understand that this is the will of the people and it will turn to the United States. How do we strengthen the Nation's opinion?

1. We must talk and talk and talk at every opportunity: during personal conversations, in articles, on the radio, on the TV, in songs – in both English and Hebrew, at gatherings. We need to talk about this issue in every possible place: at home, at work, traveling to work, youth groups, schools, etc.

2. Wear the blue bracelets which say "Free Pollard."

3. Recite a special prayer for Pollard in shuls.

4. Jews have the custom to give out all sorts of things at weddings and bar mitzvahs such as bentchers, but people have a lot of bentchers. We should therefore take the prayer of former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Ha-Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, and print on it "In honor of the wedding or bar mitzvah of so-and-so" and give it out instead. The prayer can be found on Jonathan Pollard's website: www.freepollard.net (Hebrew) or www.jonthanpollard.org (English).

5. People love to print all sorts of verse and rabbinic sayings on wedding invitations which is a halachic problem because people usually throw them in the garbage. Therefore, instead of printing these verses, you should print something about Jonathan's release.

6. You can get stickers on the website which have quotes relating to Pollard's release and you should give them to everyone you know.

7. All of these activities cost money – donate! This is certainly considered tzedakah. Tzedakah is for the poor and Pollard is the poorest of the poor. The Talmud in Baba Batra (8a) says that of all of the tzedakah opportunities, the greatest is redeeming captives.

8. Up to this point, most of those who have joined this cause are religious people, as if this is a religious issue. If you know prominent non-religious people – Professors, Officers in the army, judges – please talk to them about what is happening with Pollard and perhaps they can enlist a large portion of their community for this cause.

9. Write to President Bush, obviously, without insult. If you are making a request to pardon him, it must be politely and with a plea. The address is:

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
USA

10. Please write Pollard to strengthen him. It is a miracle of miracles how he has held on, and not gone crazy or died or crumbled physically. He does not live through the physical, but through the spiritual. He lives by the love of the Nation of Israel, and he lives by the love of the Land of Israel. He also lives through the letters sent to him. Please write in English and not with Hebrew words in transliteration, since the censor will hold things up. The address is:

Jonathan Pollard #09185-016
P.O. Box 1000
Butner, NC 27509
USA

This is an ideal,
this is love of Israel,
this is responsibility,
this is showing gratitude.



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 is the blessing on a fruit shake?

A: "She-ha-kol," since the fruit is not recognizable.

Q: Should I wear the techelet (blue string) which is available today on my tzitzit?

A: Almost all of the great Sages of our generation do not agree with this new techelet and our eyes see that they do not wear it on their tzitzit. We should therefore act in the same way, except for a person whose Rabbi tells him to wear it, as we say, "Get yourself a Rabbi."

Q: To my distress, there are sometimes people, even Torah scholars, who have a bad odor from sweating. Is there an obligation to be particular about cleanliness and using deodorant?

A: Certainly. This applies especially to a Torah scholar since the Talmud says "A Torah scholar who has a stain on his clothing is liable for death" (Shabbat 114a) as it says "Those who hate Me love death" (Mishlei 8:36) which means that he causes others to hate Hashem because he pushes people away.

Q: How many hours should one wait between meat and milk?

A: Six hours, except for Jews from Germany who wait three hours and Jews from Holland who wait one hour.

Q: If I made an oath to do something, what should I do?

A: Fulfill it or go to three Torah scholars who can release you from the oath.

Q: It is deceptive (geneivat da'at) if someone tries to find a ride while his friend hides?

A: This is absolutely deception.

Q: We had an argument during a trip whether we should recite a blessing when seeing the Kinneret. Do we recite a blessing and if we do, which blessing?

A: If you have not seen the Kinneret within thirty days, you should recite the blessing "Oseh Maaseh Bereshit – Blessed is the One who makes the acts of Creation" (From the book "Mor U-Ketzi'ah").

Q: I learn Torah with someone who is not religious and he comes without a kippah. Can I learn with him in this way?

A: It is forbidden to learn with him if he is not wearing a kippah since one needs fear of Heaven, but it is permissible to teach such a person.

Q: I found a Braille Tanach. Can I throw it in the garbage or do I need to put it in the "geniza"?

A: It is permissible to throw it in the garbage. This is not the type of writing which the Torah prohibits us from throwing out. It is similar to acronyms which do not contain holiness.

Q: What is appropriate for a young woman to learn?

A: Tanach, Siddur, Emunah (faith), Halachah.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Tzitzit

Our Rabbi would encourage his students to wear their tzitzit with the tzitzit hanging outside of their clothing, and he made no distinction between Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews. One of our Rabbi's leading students, Ha-Rav David Chai HaCohen, once asked if this ruling to wear tzitzit outside of one's garments applied to him as well, for his family's custom was to wear tzitzit tucked in (Ha-Rav HaCohen's uncle was an important Torah scholar and a faithful follower of the Ben Ish Chai). Ha-Rav HaCohen said that he would abide by whatever ruling our Rabbi gave. Our Rabbi told him that he did not have to wear his tzitzit outside of his clothing. (From the article "The Appearance of a Meticulously Observant Jew" by Ha-Rav Eliezer Melamed)

Our Rabbi would often emphasize the words of the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 8:13) that the essence is that the tzitzit be seen outside of one's clothing. (Gadol Shimusha p. 71)

A newly observant Jew asked our Rabbi for the source for wearing a kippah. He answered that according to the opinion of the Vilna Gaon (Orach Chaim 8:2), there is no ancient source for a kippah, but wearing tzitzit outside of one's clothing is from the Torah. The newly-observant Jew immediately bought long tzitzit, and obviously also wore a kippah. (Gadol Shimusha p. 70)

Tefillin

A student did not have Tefillin. When this was told to our Rabbi, he gave him a pair of Tefillin and said: "These were from Abba, Ha-Rav ztz"l," i.e. the Tefillin of Rav Kook. After the student obtained Tefillin, he wanted to return Rav Kook's Tefillin, but our Rabbi said to him: "You merited!" The student said: "If so, I will give them to my grandson when he becomes a bar mitzvah," and thus it happened. Since the boxes were already old, he replaced the boxes, but kept the parchment. One day [in the middle of Cheshvan 5763] the grandson was traveling on a bus, and sat towards the back. An explosive-laden car of a terrorist slammed against the back portion of the bus and exploded. The young man was thrown from the bus, but was saved. The boxes of the Tefillin were burnt and damaged but the parchment remained without a blemish.



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Giving Gifts on Shabbat

Q: We are joining our daughter and her classmates for a final Shabbat in the Ulpana (Girl's high school). Her teacher asked us to write a "bracha" (blessing) and bring a small gift. May I give my daughter a gift a Shabbat? I was thinking of a silver Magen David on a silver chain?

A: There are two possibilities for giving a gift on Shabbat mentioned in the book "Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata" (29:29): 1. Give the gift to another person and have them acquire it for your daughter before Shabbat. You can then bring it to her on Shabbat. This is based on the principle of "zachin le-adam she-lo be-fanav" – "we can do something for someone else's benefit even without the latter's knowledge or permission." The person will thus acquire the chain for your daughter before Shabbat and you can bring it to her on Shabbat. 2. Lend it to your daughter on Shabbat and she will acquire it from you after Shabbat. Tell her to have this intention in mind.

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