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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

From the Teachings of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

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Parashat Pinchas 5768 - #44

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Would you like to ask Rav Aviner a question? E-mail [mororly@bezeqint.net](mailto: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 notes of Ha-Rav's answers to questions. 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.

### How Do We Help Others Repent?

Maran (our revered teacher) Ha-Rav Kook clarifies this question in his book "Eder Yakar." He asks: what causes heresy? He provides two answers, one a standard explanation and one that is unusual. The first is that the development of science is to blame. This is what is called "Scientific Heresy." There appears to be contradictions between the scientific description of the world and the religious description. Since people learn and rely on science, faith suffers. We will not discuss the question of who decided that such contradictions exist. It is enough for us to understand that these contradictions are imaginary and stem from a surface understanding of both science and faith. If one examines in depth, he can see that they work together.

Maran Ha-Rav Kook's second reason is what is called "Ethical Heresy." Contemporary man, armed with a critical sense, sees that the daily life of religious people is not so ethical. He therefore decides that religion lacks any benefit and that he can be an upright and ethical person outside of religion just as within religion, and actually even more so. We cannot respond to this problem because there is simply no answer. It is the greatest desecration of Hashem's Name.

Truth be told, this answer of Maran Ha-Rav Kook is not new at all. It is mentioned by our Holy Rabbis in the Gemara in Yoma (86a). They say that if a person learns Torah, but he is not careful about how he speaks – he insults and speaks ill of others, he is not honest in his business practices – he deceives and lies, people will say: "Woe is the person who learns Torah. Woe is his father who taught him Torah. Woe is his Rabbi who taught him Torah. See how corrupt are the ways and how ugly are the acts of this person who has learned Torah." As a result, Hashem's Name is desecrated.

So how do we deal with this terrible problem?!

We also know the way to help others repent: increase sanctification of Hashem's Name. The same Gemara explains: If, however, a person learns Torah and he speaks pleasantly, and he is honest in his business practices – he pays his obligations and does so on time, people will say: "Praiseworthy is the person who learns Torah. Praiseworthy is his father who taught him Torah. Praiseworthy is his Rabbi who taught him Torah. See how pleasant are the ways and how sweet are the actions of this person who learns Torah." We understand: we do not get others to repent, but bring ourselves to integrity, truth, good relations with other people and good character traits. The Gemara (ibid.) tells us that through this we sanctify Hashem's Name as it says, "You Israel, I am praised through you" (Yeshayahu 49:3).

Almost all of those who repent and become observant are not the fruit of some front-line, explanatory onslaught, but the fruit of a meeting with holy people living in their lives.



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: Who is greater – one who fell and got up or one who never fell?

A: Each is greater from a different perspective, the former because he overcame and the latter because he remained far from sin. This is the dispute of who is greater – a completely righteous person or a repentant person. But according to all opinions, it is forbidden to sin and one must take great precautions.

Q: Is it permissible to use dental floss on Shabbat?

A: Yes, unless it keeps breaking. If it does not generally break and does so, it is an unintended act (note: it must be ripped off before Shabbat).

Q: Is it permissible to poison an unleashed dog which bothers people and frightens children?

A: After warning the owner about this if he does not watch his dog, we place food with poison in the area in which he roams around.

Q: I want to be drafted into a combat unit, but my parents object. Is there an issue of honoring my father and mother?

A: There is no issue of honoring your father and mother. It is permissible to join the combat unit since the mitzvah of honoring father and mother involved the concern for their needs, and this is what you want to do with your life. You should obviously present this with modesty and humility.

Q: Is it permissible to rub baby oil on my hair on Shabbat?

A: Yes, but without squeezing your hair. This means that you must apply it gently.

Q: Is it true that a girl should fast the three fasts before her bat mitzvah?

A: It is correct. If she has the ability, she should fast from the age of 11, especially on Yom Kippur.

Q: Is it permissible to read a secular newspaper on Shabbat?

A: It is not even permissible on a weekday (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 307:16). It contains "lashon ha-ra", gossip, heresy, insults, lies and impure language. By the way, religious newspapers also contain problems.

Q: I am invited to a wedding which will not be performed by a Rabbi, but a judge. Can I attend?

A: You should not attend because of the prohibition of "strengthening the action of transgressors," i.e. giving legitimacy.

Q: Is eating in a park not proper and similar to eating in a market which the Talmud says "One who eats in the market is similar to a dog" (Kiddushin 40b)?

A: It is permissible because it is a place designed for these types of activities.

# Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

## Torah learning

### Repetition

Our Rabbi would repeat his teaching many times, hundreds and thousands of times at different occasions without tiring. He explained: "The truth does not tire." And each time he would say them with passion as if it was the first time he was saying them. (Ha-Rav Yosef Zini – Iturei Yerushalayim #20)

Our Rabbi emphasized that one should review his learning a hundred and one times (Chagigah 9b), not necessarily out of a need for great understanding but in order to cleave to the Torah and love it. (Ha-Rav Tzion Tevil – Iturei Yerushalayim #20)

### If it was taught, it was taught

Our Rabbi was asked: The Mishnah Berurah rules that the blessing of bread does not cover cooked fruit which is not eaten with the bread (Mishnah Berurah 167:4 and see Biur Halachah and Shaar Ha-Tziyun), but it is related in the name of Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Eliyahu Lopian that the Mishnah Berurah changed his mind toward the end of his life. How should we act? Our Rabbi responded that it is impossible to reject the explicitly written word based on what is heard orally. He was asked much later: It now brought in writing in the name of Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Mendel Zaks, the son-in-law of the Chafetz Chaim, that he changed his position (Sefer Chafetz Chaim, p. 213)? Our Rabbi then agreed and said: "If it was taught, it was taught." (Iturei Yerushalayim #20)

## Questions

Two students who were "Baalei Teshuvah" (became observant) through their professor, came to our Rabbi with many questions concerning what the professor told them, and he answered them. At the end, our Rabbi said to them: "Don't you have any questions of your own?" (Ha-Rav Hillel Gefen – Iturei Yerushalayim #20)

## Relationship to students

A yeshiva student, who was a Holocaust survivor, came to learn with our Rabbi, but did not connect with his style. He was used to a different style when learning outside of Israel. One day, our Rabbi and his students went to Mt. Zion, as was the custom before the Six-Day War, to look at the Kotel. It was a military site on the border and it was forbidden to enter on that day. One of the officers recognized our Rabbi and gave permission for him to enter. He said: "I will not enter on my own without my students." They allowed them all to enter. When they returned to the yeshiva, our Rabbi turned to the students: "I want to apologize for calling you 'students.'" At that moment, the yeshiva student was transformed into his student and was connected to him with great love. Our Rabbi did not relate to his students as a rabbi, but as a father. (Ha-Rav Yehudah Melamed in the name of Ha-Rav Yehoshua Rozen – Iturei Yerushalayim #20).

## Lech-Lecha

The founders of a Talmud Torah asked our Rabbi to explain his instruction to begin teaching the children Parashat Lech-Lecha and not Vayikra as it says in the midrash. He responded: do

you follow every statement that is written by our Sages? (Ha-Rav Oded Valensky – Iturei Yerushalayim #20)



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

#### Torah and science

Q: Did the Rabbis of the Talmud know all of science based on the Torah, as it says: "Turn it and turn it, everything is contained in it (Pirkei Avot 5:22)?"

A: They did not know it all. Most of their scientific knowledge was from scientists of the world (Moreh Nevuchim), and a minority was from oral traditions given to Moshe Rabbenu at Mt. Sinai (for example, Hilchot Treifot – Rambam, Mishneh Torah). The Torah is not a science book which describes reality. The Torah teaches the proper and improper path (Maharal, Netivot Olam, Netiv Ha-Torah 14). In this sense, "everything is in it," i.e. spiritual, ethical, legal and educational concepts. (Iturei Yerushalayim #20)



*Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships*

#### Beauty

My dear friend, do not go around looking for the most beauty girl to marry. Do not be enslaved to beauty. There is obviously a need for emotion before a couple is married, but there is no need for instantaneous pleasure like looking at an art object.

How much emotion? It is a personal issue. But here is a basic litmus test. Have you fulfilled "Love your fellow as yourself"? Imagine that the young woman you are meeting goes for plastic surgery and is transformed into a real beauty. Will your feelings change? If they do, isn't that complete vanity?

We are not angels and we do pay attention to the external, but there is no need to exaggerate. Remember that the essence of a person is the interior and not the outer wrapping. Do not be so external! Teach yourself to love what is inside because this will build a happy marriage for you in particular and a happy life for you in general.

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