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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 Matot 5768 - #45

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Would you like to ask Rav Aviner a question? E-mail [mororty@bezeqint.net](mailto:mororty@bezeqint.net) and the answer 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.

### Listen to Your Doctor!

From the parashah sheet "Be-Ahava U-Be-Emuna" – Parashat Pinchas 5768

Translated by Rafael Blumberg

Blessed be G-d, who has granted us life and sustenance and permitted us to reach this age of modern medicine, which is achieving unbelievable wonders. Yet in ancient times as well there were physicians, and while they certainly were not experts, the Torah still commanded us, "He shall provide for his complete cure" (Shemot 21:19), i.e., that physicians had a duty to cure people, and that patients had a duty to seek cures. As is well-known, seeking a cure even overrides prohibitions of various types within Halachah. This is not the place to be strict.

Regarding a sick person who needs to eat on Yom Kippur and wishes to be strict, the Torah states, "Only of the blood of your own lives will I demand an account" (Bereshit 9:5 and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 618, Mishnah Berurah #5). Any time reliable physicians tell someone not to perform a mitzvah or to commit a sin, the patient should do as they say and not seek ways around it (Shut Minchat Yitzchak vol. 2, 102:2). A person does not own his body. It belongs to G-d (Le-Ohr Ha-Halachah, Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin).

As is well-known, if someone strikes his fellowman and wounds him, he must pay his medical expenses, as it says, "He shall provide for his complete cure" (Bava Kamma 85b). Yet Ba'al Ha-Turim raises a new consideration: "This applies unless the patient violates the doctor's orders." In that case, the aggressor need not pay the additional expenses incurred through the patient's negligence.

If someone takes risks against doctors' orders, he violates a Torah prohibition of, "Watch yourselves very carefully" (Devarim 4:15). Whoever does not follow medical principles of preventative medicine, health and hygiene, violates the positive precept of "Walk in His ways" (ibid. 28:9). As Rambam taught regarding good character traits: "We are commanded

to follow the middle course. That is the straight and upright path one should follow. As it says, ‘Walk in His ways.’” (Hilchot De’ot 1:5). He adds, “Keeping your body healthy and fit is amongst the pathways of G-d” (ibid. 4:1).

Consider how much our holy Sages toiled in the Talmud to extract the best of medical knowledge from their day in order to preserve our health. Our great master Rambam, besides his numerous medical writings, devoted an entire chapter to this in his legal code (Hilchot De’ot, Chapter 4). Yet he remarks (4:31), “All of the fine practices described above should only be followed by the healthy.” Rav Yechezkel Michel Tukatzinsky wrote: “The physician is only the emissary of the Curer of All Flesh, who granted him permission to pursue his calling. Yet once the physician does his part, prescribing to the patient medicines, foods and behaviors, the patient must follow the doctor’s orders, not less and perhaps more than the laws of the Shulchan Aruch regarding permissible and forbidden foods, as the Torah commands, ‘Watch yourself very carefully’” (Gesher Ha-Chaim vol. 1, 1:2).

In what follows, all quotations are from the work, “Tenu’at Ha-Mussar, by Rabbi Dov Katz, pp. 315-316: The illustrious Rav Yisrael Salanter was exceedingly strict regarding all mitzvot. “This likewise brought him to his fastidious caution regarding his health, under the aegis of one’s duty to ‘watch oneself very carefully’. True, such caution has not been codified as law, and few practice it, but Rav Yisrael was exceedingly puzzled by this and he would often say: A patient is exempt from all mitzvot except for one, ‘Watch yourself very carefully,’ and the evil impulse incites us, casting scorn even on that one mitzvah.” “A medical professor in Baden, Germany would customarily relate that of all the thousands of patients who came to him throughout his life he found only one who related with total seriousness to all his instructions, fulfilling them with 100% precision, and that was Rabbi Lipkin [i.e., Rabbi Yisrael Salanter] of Russia...One time, when he was living in Halberstam, people came into his room and found him standing before an open German book, doing physical exercises with great precision according to the principles and illustrations in that book, as his physician had ordered him to do.” Rav Yisrael viewed the command to “watch yourself very carefully” as constituting as much of a duty as any other mitzvah, and he treated the orders he received from his physician, the professor, as rulings of the Shulchan Aruch regarding permissible and forbidden foods, which must be fulfilled down to the last detail. One time he was seen standing at dusk staring up at the sky, determining how much time there was until dark. It turned out that his physicians had ordered him to rest three days from his Torah learning. Obviously, Rav Yisrael obeyed their orders, and when the third day was ending, he stood waiting for the precise moment of nightfall. He explained, “Just as the mitzvah of Talmud Torah makes it forbidden for one to delay one’s Torah learning for even a moment, so too, his obligation to ‘watch himself carefully’ made it forbidden for him to start learning even a moment early.”

Regarding the verse, “Man became a living creature” (Bereshit 2:7), the Rabbis taught, “As for the spirit that I placed within you, give it life!” (Ta’anit 22b).



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: Is it permissible to say that if Hashem heals someone that I will begin to perform a meritorious act?

A: Yes, this is a proper oath, which people make at times of distress, but we are obligated to fulfill them.

Q: Is there a blessing on a flavored toothpick? If there is, what is the blessing?

A: There is no blessing since it is not food and not designated to be food.

Q: When I hear Kiddush on Shabbat, am I obligated to drink some wine or is it sufficient to hear it?

A: There is no obligation to drink.

Q: I have a serious looking face, but I want to be someone who smiles. How do I succeed?

A: Practice five minutes a day before a mirror, and begin to smile in stages, first at your family and friends.

Q: Is it permissible to use tzedakah money to pay the bus fare to travel to volunteering?

A: Yes, tzedakah is for the poor and volunteering is for the poor.

Q: Is it permissible to use a counterfeit coin which I received. If not, what should I do with it?

A: It is forbidden to use it – it is theft. There is nothing you may do with it. May Hashem fill your lack.

Q: Is it permissible to throw a parashah sheet of the Messiahists of Chabad in the garbage?

A: No, there are words of Torah in it and it must be placed in the "geniza." In general – just because we do not agree, there is no permission to shame another.

Q: Why do we have so many troubles in our Land? What is Hashem trying to tell us?

A: We actually have very few troubles, and on the contrary, Hashem is revealing to us that He is redeeming us.

Q: Can I be forced to wash the yeshiva when it causes "bitul Torah" (taking time from learning Torah)?

A: This is obligatory so it will be clean. The Rosh Yeshiva decides. If this bothers you, you can change yeshivot.

Q: If one of my family members illegally connected a television to a cable, is it permissible for me to watch?

A: It is certainly forbidden. It is theft. In general, TV is forbidden.

Q: Is it permissible to go to the mall on Shabbat if I am not going to buy anything?

A: No, this is a place where people are transgressing. There are many other reasons as well.

## Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

### Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

#### Prayer (Part 1)

##### The Gates of Prayer

Regarding the "shetibelach" (small shuls) in Meah Shearim, our Rabbi would jokingly say that the gates of prayer are never locked there, since it is always possible to find a minyan there. (Ha-Rav Avraham Remer – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

##### Silence during repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei

Our Rabbi was extremely particular that people not speak during the repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei, and this is how they acted in Yeshivat Mercaz Ha-Rav. One time, some students were talking because of some pressing matter. Our Rabbi knocked on the table until they were quiet. Afterwards, he explained: It is written in the Shulchan Aruch that one who speaks during the repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei, "his sin is too great to bear" (Orach Chaim 124:7) and he added that the Shulchan Aruch also says that we are to rebuke one who

speaks (ibid.). Despite the fact that our Rabbi did not like to make such comments, he rebuked them in this case since it was written in the Shulchan Aruch. (Ha-Rav Zalman Baruch Melamed – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

#### Learning during davening

Our Rabbi saw a student learning during davening. Afterwards, he approached him and showed him the Gemara: "There is a time for Torah, and there is a time for prayer" (Shabbat 10b). (Rafael K. – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

#### Davening in a minyan

A student asked our Rabbi: which is preferable – davening with a minyan or learning Torah? He responded: One must first be a normal Jew who davens with a minyan.

#### Shacharit

Our Rabbi did not daven "vatikin" (davening so that one arrives at Shemoneh Esrei precisely at sunrise), but he did daven early in the morning. When he did not daven in the yeshiva, he davened in Meah Shearim and explained: They are Torah scholars, idealistic people, the first settlers who went outside the wall (of the Old City of Jerusalem),. (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)



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

#### Love your fellow as yourself?!

Question: I do not understand how it is possible to "love your fellow as yourself," and for that matter, my closet "fellow" in the world, i.e. my spouse. After all, a person is closer to himself than to anyone else, how is it possible to love another like himself? Furthermore, some people do not even know how to love themselves. Most people teeter between two extremes: accepting themselves as they are without condition and criticizing themselves bitterly to the point of self-hatred and despair. Under these circumstances, how is it possible to love one's fellow and spouse?

Answer: Your question is the answer: he must love himself as well as his spouse. If he hates himself, he will transfer this feeling to his spouse. And, conversely, if he loves himself in the proper way, he will share this emotion with his spouse. A person must love himself with joy for his positive traits and despite his deficiencies. The same is true for how he treats and views his wife.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk had the custom to say brief Divrei Torah with a minimum of words. And sometimes he wouldn't even add a word when the meaning of a verse was hidden in its inflection. He would say: "And love your neighbor!?! – As yourself!" The explanation: "Love your fellow?!" How is it possible, since the other person has traits which anger me, and traits which are negative and damaging? Answer: "As yourself!" – You are also like this, and you nevertheless love yourself, because you understand yourself. Therefore, relate in the same way to your fellow.

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