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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 Masei 5768 - #46

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Would you like to ask Rav Aviner a question? E-mail 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.

A Collection of Quotes About the Love of the Land of Israel

Parashat Masei includes the verse: "You shall possess the Land and dwell in it, for I have given the Land to you to possess it" (Bamidbar 33:53) from which we learn the obligation to conquer and dwell in the Land of Israel (Ramban, positive mitzvah #4 in additions to Rambam's Sefer Ha-Mitzvot). Rav Aviner collected quotes which express the love of our Land (Tal Chermon – Torah, p. 451):

“And this is the land which you shall inherit (by lot)” (Numbers 34:2), “The Holy One Blessed Be He said: ‘The Land of Israel is Mine and the Nation of Israel is Mine, it is fitting that I give what is Mine to those who are Mine’” (Midrash Tanchuma ibid.).

“There is no Jew who does not own four amot of the Land of Israel. But you will say: the Ishmaelites took possession of it, while we are in Exile? We have the right of possession: land cannot be stolen and it is still belongs to us” (Rabbi Nachshon Gaon).

“We have not taken control of a foreign land and we have not taken away property which is not ours. This is the inheritance of our forefathers, which had once been unlawfully conquered by our enemies” (Hasmoneans 1:15).

“It is fitting that this Nation, which is the embodiment of the world, dwell in the Land, which is the cornerstone of world, since the Land of Israel is holy and it is fitting that it is inhabited by the Holy Nation. When the Children of Israel dwell in it, this is what gives life to the Land of Israel (Maharal of Prague).

"May Hashem give me the merit of planting fruit trees near Jerusalem with my own hands, in order to fulfill the mitzvah (Vayikra 19:23): 'When you come to the Land, you shall plant'" (The Vilna Gaon).

"I am from the Land of Israel, but because of our sins we were exiled from there, and I must live in Ostrovtza. Any man who is asked where he is from must answer, 'I am from the Land of Israel, but at the moment I am temporarily in the Exile'" (The Admor of Ostrovtza).

"Anyone who lives in the Land of Israel should always be happy" (Rabbi Elazar Azkari).



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: Are we obligated to wear a white shirt on Shabbat or is it permissible to wear a colored shirt?

A: Wear what is considered respectful for the honor of Shabbat in that time and place.

Q: If a Bedouin says "Shalom" to me, should I respond?

A: Of course. There is even an idea that one should say "Shalom" first to a non-Jew in the marketplace.

Q: I work in a store which plays background music. What should I do during the Three Weeks?

A: Try your best not to listen, and this is called a benefit that comes to a person against his will.

Q: Is it permissible to have mixed dancing at a wedding in order to bring joy to a groom and bride?

A: It is forbidden, because we do not perform a mitzvah through a transgression, and this exact example is found in the book "Ahavat Chesed" of the Chafetz Chaim.

Q: Is it permissible to jump on a trampoline on Shabbat?

A: Yes.

Q: Why must we recite a blessing over gum when we do not swallow it?

A: We must recite a blessing before eating it because we swallow some of the taste. There is no blessing after it because we do not eat the requisite amount.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Prayer (Part 2)

Sheliach Tzibur (the one who leads the davening)

After our Rabbi's class in his house, they would daven ma'ariv, and before the davening he would say: "One who does NOT want, he should approach [to lead the davening]," by which he was pointing out that one should not ask to be the Sheliach Tzibur. (Ha-Rav Achyah Amitai – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

Torah reading

During the Torah reading, our Rabbi would sit, as was the custom of Maran Ha-Rav Kook. (Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Avraham Shapira ztz"l – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

Kiddush while standing

Near the end of our Rabbi's life, his foot was amputated and he was confined to a wheelchair. When the time arrived to recite Kiddush, our Rabbi could not recite it while seated. He tried to stand, but was unsuccessful. He requested from a student to help him stand and he stood on one foot in honor of Kiddush. (Ha-Rav Yosef Bedichi – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

Zemirot

Our Rabbi only sang the zemirot which are printed in Olat Re'eiyah (Rav Kook's commentary to the siddur). He said that the rest of the zemirot mentioned food too much, such as swans, quail and fish. (Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

Prayer for the sick

Our Rabbi would relate that when the Netziv's wife was extremely ill, those in the yeshiva wanted to recite Tehillim for her, but the Netziv was opposed because it was "bitul Torah" (taking time away for learning Torah). At the end of a major disagreement, he agreed that they could recite Tehillim for five minutes and not any longer. (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

When people would ask our rabbi to pray for a sick person, he would ask the name of the doctor. (Ha-Rav Achyah Amitai – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

Blessing

When people would ask our Rabbi for a blessing, he would brief respond: "A blessing!" or "All of the blessings mentioned in the Torah." (Ha-Rav Yosef Kelner – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)

Shemoneh Esrei

Our Rabbi said that even though the "blessing against apostates" (Birchat Ha-Minim) was added to the Shemoneh Esrei and there are now nineteen blessings, the name of the prayer was not changed: it is still "Shemoneh Esrei – eighteen" since these eighteen prayers are the essential ones and the "Birchat Ha-Minim" is secondary and temporary. When apostasy is uprooted, may it be speedily in our days, the "Birchat Ha-Minim" will be unnecessary and will be uprooted as well. (Netiv Binah on the Siddur of Rav Yaakovson vol. 1, p. 261 – Iturei Yerushalayim #21)



Shat She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Fighting against the enemy

Q: Why do we need to go to the army? After all, Hashem wages war against the evil doers!

A: The Torah says "From twenty years old and upwards, all that are able to go out to war in Israel" (Bamidbar 1:3). And in the war with Amalek, Moshe Rabbenu commands Yehoshua bin Nun: "Choose men for us and go wage war against Amalek" (Shemot 17:9). Similarly, in the war with Sichon and Og, Moshe Rabbenu leads the war, and he himself kills Og. Yehoshua bin Nun led the war to conquer the Land against the thirty-one kings. Why didn't they just sit back in all of these cases and Hashem would do the work? The answer is simple. In the Gemara in Niddah (70b-71a), our Sages ask: What should a person do in order to grow wise? They answer: He should spend much time learning and minimize business. They said: Many did so, and they did not become wise. Rabbi Yehoshua says that he should just pray. The Gemara says: One must both learn and pray because neither will work without the other. Question two: What should a person do in order to become wealthy? Answer: He should engage in business with integrity. They said: Many did so, and it did not work. Rabbi Yehoshua: He should pray. The Gemara says: One must both work and pray because neither will work without the other. Question three: What should a person do in order to have male children? Answer: He should sanctify himself at the time of relations. They said: Many did so, and it did not work. Rabbi Yehoshua: He should pray. The Gemara says: One must both sanctify himself and pray because neither will work without the other.

The same applies to war: neither will work without the other. We are obligated to wage war and Hashem will send His blessing. We are agents of Hashem in order to bring victory, as it is written "For by you, I run through a troop" (Tehillin 18:30), as an agent on the Master of the Universe.



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

Between My Mother and My Wife

Question: There is a major disagreement in a certain issue between my mother and wife, and they have been unable to reach a compromise. This has caused great tension between them, and I am stuck between a rock and a hard place. I don't know which way to turn. What should I do?

Answer: Your question is not phrased properly. From the moment that you were married, you and your wife become one personality. "A man therefore leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife" (Bereshit 2:24). This is not a "leaving" which disregards the honor due to parents, G-d forbid. It means that now you two which are one. It appears as if you are still connected by the umbilical cord. Therefore, the correct question is: My wife and I, who are on one side, are asking you how to solve a problem with my mother – our mother. I am sure that you will now find the answer together after we have correctly phrased the question, since "she'eilat Rav – chetzi teshuvah" – a question posed to a Rabbi is half of the answer.

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