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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 Vaetchanan 5768 - #48

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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.

From the Mouth of our Rabbi

Rav Tzvi Yehudah

On Jerusalem, the Temple Mount and the Temple

[Sefer Le-Mikdash Tuv, pp. 11-14]

1. When I asked our Rabbi the well-known question whether the content of the prayer "Nachem," which is recited on Tisha Be-Av [in the Shemoneh Esrei in the prayer for rebuilding Jerusalem,] is speaking falsely in our time because of the passages of the "bitterness of our situation," he responded: "Jerusalem is still scorned and desolate, since the essence of Jerusalem is the Temple. Furthermore, the Old City of Jerusalem is in a state of desolation without inhabitants. It is impossible to approach the Old City and see piles of stones of synagogues and not burst into weeping!" (Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, addendum at the end of the talk "U-le-minim al tehi tikvah - And for the slanderers let there be no hope").
2. When I came to request permission from our Rabbi (see Sanhedrin 5b, Eruvin 63a and Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah 5:3) and a blessing to establish a yeshiva in the heart of the Jerusalem, he rejoiced with great joy and encouraged me.
3. In the twilight of his years, when I asked him - in the name of my colleagues - if we should request that the guarding of the gates of the Temple Mount be placed in the hands of Tzahal and not in the hands of non-Jews, he did not see this as a pressing matter; he responded: "Slowly, slowly [Redemption arrives]" (see Jerusalem Talmud Yoma 3:2).
4. When I continued and asked if should we request the presence of our army on the Temple Mount, he again cooled with his glance what he considered as an impure burning desire and said sternly: "Slowly, slowly [redemption arrives]."

5. At the same meeting, when I mustered the courage, I asked - in the name of my colleagues who greatly pressed me to do so - if should we request that the flag of the State of Israel be flown on the Temple Mount, he looked at me with a dreadful glance of pain and amazement that I had sunk so low to the point of asking such questions, and he said forcefully: "We will raise a banner in the Name of our G-d!" (Tehillim 20:6). Despite this, "It is Torah and I need to learn it" (Berachot 62a), I therefore asked again, "Certainly, we will raise a banner in the Name of our G-d, but won't it be by way of the flag of the State of Israel?" Our Rabbi patiently repeated: "I told you: we will raise a banner in the Name of our G-d," with his absolute rejection of all the comparisons between any infringement of the holiness of the Temple Mount and the building of the Land of Israel.

6. At the end of this meeting, I told our Rabbi how we are continuing with the acts of redeeming the heart of Jerusalem, house after house, and then the stern and dreadful facial expression disappeared, and a full smile of eternal kindness enlightened his face. When I detailed the names of the streets, he said that I need not bother, because all of these places were etched in his memory from his youth.

7. When a Torah scholar brought to our Rabbi researchers of the Temple Mount, whose purpose was to identify the boundaries of the Temple, (since in their view it was permissible to enter there without fear of harming the sanctity of the Temple), our Rabbi said to the scholar: "What is all this for?!" He compared this to a rabbi who gathered many proofs for the existence of G-d, and the Aderet tz"l [Rav Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim, former Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem and father-in-law of Maran Ha-Rav Kook], said about this rabbi's book: "For what do we need proofs? (and he quoted the words of our Sages, "Any matter which is not clear, bring sources from the Talmud for it" - Jerusalem Talmud, Berachot 2:3, Eruvin 10:1). We believe in Hashem above all proofs" (Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, sidra 2 Tazria, Parashat Ha-Chodesh 3-4; Emunah, sichah 15, 8). And so too in our matter: Behold, the Temple Mount's boundary is surrounded by a wall. We do not traverse it, and we have no need for researchers.

8. When a Torah scholar mentioned to our Rabbi the custom of placing notes in the Kotel, our Rabbi said that one should not do this, and one should even refrain from putting one's fingers into the Kotel [since it is forbidden for an impure person to enter the air of the Temple Mount in even the slightest way]. The Torah scholar said to him, but this is the custom of Israel [minhag Yisrael]. Our Rabbi responded, the word "minhag" [custom] contains the same letters as "gehinom" [purgatory].

9. When it became known to our Rabbi that archeological excavations were being performed under the Temple Mount, he responded with great distress: "What is all this for?! For what purpose should one fuss there?"

10. When they asked our Rabbi if there is a need to organize tours which encircle the Temple Mount in order to strengthen the fact that it belongs to us, he responded: "The Temple Mount is in our hands - there is no need for tours." They said to him that not everyone knows that the Temple Mount is ours. To this, he responded that if this is so, there is positive value in the tours in order to strengthen the proof of our ownership.

11. After the Six-Day War, when a Torah scholar and professor came to our Rabbi and asked him why he did not then begin to build the Temple, he responded, "The mitzvah of building the Kingdom of Israel takes precedence, according to the ruling of the Rambam at the beginning of the Laws of Kings" (Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, chapters of Messiah 4, Talmud Torah 1 addendum 2). Later, this was extensively explained by our Rabbi in the article "From Behind the Wall" (Mei-Achar Kotleinu) in which he said that only after great improvement in the building of the Nation, both physically and spiritually, can we enter into the holiness of rebuilding the Temple (see Le-netivot Yisrael vol. 1, #23).

12. When a delegation of public figures came to our Rabbi with the request to work with all force against the threat that the Government of Israel was prepared to sign an agreement with the Country of Jordan, which included surrendering the Temple Mount to their control, our Rabbi reacted: "What about the entire Land of Israel?" They repeated their words many times, as did he.



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: Is it permissible to wash clothing for Shabbat during the Nine Days?

A: Only if you do not have Shabbat clothing.

Q: Is it permissible to buy an air conditioner during the Three Weeks?

A: Yes, if it is necessary. You should try to do so before Rosh Chodesh Av.

Q: Is it permissible for a boy to make spikes in his hair?

A: No.

Q: Can a boy put gel in his hair when his hair is messy and he cannot keep it neat?

A: It is permissible to put only the minimum required so it will not be messy.

Q: What should I do if my finance's name is the same as my father's name?

A: No problem. If you want to be strict, add a name.

Q: If someone did not recite "Ha-Gomel" until when may he do so?

A: A long time, as long as he is happy.

Q: Is it permissible to change the truth so that my mother does not worry?

A: Yes, it is like changing it for the sake of peace.

Q: Is it permissible for a boy to wear a bracelet on his ankle?

A: It is forbidden on account of the prohibition of "Lo Yilbash" (not to dress as a woman), since it is feminine.

Q: I am looking for a match who is really beautiful and I cannot free myself from this. What should I do?

A: You must know "Grace is false and beauty is vain" and beauty is fleeing. There is not love because of beauty, but on the contrary, there is beauty because of love.

Q: Is it permissible to shop in a store (on a weekday) that is open on Shabbat (This is particular to Jewish-owned stores)?

A: It is preferable not to do so, but the basic Halachah is that it is permissible, since you are aiding desecration of Shabbat in a far-off and indirect manner.

Q: After I finished my coffee, I gave the mug to my friend to read the coffee stains. Is this permissible?

A: It is forbidden on account of "Darchei Emori" (superstitious practice, close to idol-worship).

Q: Is the prohibition of boys and girls touching (Shemirat Negi'ah) in order to keep them from having relations?

A: There is a double prohibition: A. It is a prohibition in and of itself, deriving benefit from the opposite sex outside of marriage. B. It is also a protection from succumbing to temptation.

Q: Is it permissible to eat at a secular person's house who says that he keeps kosher?

A: No, we must be 100% certain that everything is kosher.

Q: Is it permissible to put on a temporary tattoo?

A: There is no problem since it is just on the surface of the skin and goes away.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Love of Israel – Part 2

Human dignity

It once happened that a respected man, who occasionally davened at the yeshiva, said harsh things about either Maran (our revered teacher) Ha-Rav Kook or our Rabbi. On Shabbat night, one of the students approached him and told him to leave the yeshiva. The man refused and an argument erupted until one of the Rabbis told the student to leave the man alone. The man made a claim against the student to our Rabbi. The student stated that our Rabbi said: Someone who shames a Torah scholar, we should throw him out of the window. Our Rabbi said: "I never said that!" And he said to the man: "If you shame the Rosh Yeshiva within the walls of the yeshiva, what response do you expect from the students?!" A half a year later, on Erev Rosh Hashanah, our Rabbi said to the student: "Go and ask forgiveness of him." The student went to the man, and received the answer: "I will only forgive you if you ask forgiveness in the same forum in which you embarrassed me." On Shabbat night at davening, the student banged on the table and asked his forgiveness. (Ha-Rav Eliyahu Mali – Iturei Yerushalayim #22)

Personal concern

One year when Tisha Be-Av fell after Shabbat, a student escorted our Rabbi from the old building of the yeshiva to his house and was going to the new building of the yeshiva. For some reason the student stopped in Geulah and sat at a bus stop. The student suddenly saw our Rabbi coming towards him. Our Rabbi said: "It is after Shabbat now and you do not have any money to ride the bus; I brought you money for the ride." During this time our Rabbi suffered from indescribable pain in his feet and he still walked all of this way to bring the money to the student. (Iturei Yerushalayim #22)

Concern for each student

A student was traveling in a taxi with our Rabbi to Selichot at the yeshiva. They passed a student walking on the sidewalk, but the student in the car thought that he should not stop to pick him up so he would not waste our Rabbi's time. Our Rabbi also saw him and insisted that they pick him up. (Ha-Rav Eliyahu Zohar – Iturei Yerushalayim #22)



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Cheating (translated by Rabbi Uri Cohen from Itrueti Cohanim #49)

Question: I heard it is permissible to cheat, since it isn't "genevat da'at" (deception), as the teachers know that cheating occurs, and also it would be "a decree that the community cannot live up to [and which therefore is not binding]." In our institution, there's a hidden competition among the students to be accepted into a particular program, for which math, English, and Talmud are the main subjects, and the students are accepted based on their relative ranking of grades. Since there's mass cheating in all the subjects, I am asking if I may cheat, since it is likely that I'll be harmed otherwise.

Answer: G-d forbid that it is permissible to cheat on tests and the like! It is "genevat da'at" (Rambam, Hilchot Deot 2:6), which is a Torah prohibition according to most authorities (Smag, negative mitzvah #155), which is included in the prohibition of "Do not steal." This is because "mind-stealing" (i.e. deception) is considered stealing, as it says [when Lavan accused Ya'akov], "You stole my mind" (Bereshit 31:26), and "Avshalom stole the mind of the people of Israel" (Shmuel 2 15:6). Furthermore, it is possible that one is also violating "Stay far from a matter of lying," which is a much broader prohibition than "Do not lie," and also includes indirect lying, various strategies, and even indirectly causing a misunderstanding by one's silence -- as we see from all the examples in the Talmud (Shevuot 30-31). In addition, even without any verse, it is clear that this is a lack of integrity. For a person to study Torah, he must first have integrity -- an ethical character trait that is elementary and general -- and only on its foundation can one build all the holiness of Torah. The claim that "teachers know students cheat" does not permit it, just as the knowledge of the police that there are thieves does not permit theft. In fact, it is the opposite -- the police force uses this knowledge to prevent theft. Similarly, a teacher's knowledge of cheating does not mean approval, but rather the opposite -- he tries to prevent the cheating, and is not happy with it. The proof is that if he discovers a student cheating, he will punish him. Also, the claim that the prohibition of cheating is "not a decree the community can live up to" does not apply, because this is not a new decree, but an old decree of the Creator who commanded us to have integrity. Thank G-d, many students do not cheat -- especially girls. As for the concern that you will be harmed if you do not cheat, this is not grounds for permission. Many times people of integrity get harmed, but "It is better for me to be called a fool all my life than to become evil in front of G-d even for a moment" (Mishnah, Eduyot 5:6). Other people's stealing does not permit you to steal. In the end, the truth will win and people of truth will be the leaders of the world.

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