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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 Eikev 5768 - #49

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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.

Get Up and Volunteer for National Service

[from the parashah sheet "Maayanei Ha-Yeshua" – Parashat Devarim 5768]

The first concept which does not require explanation: The army is for men and National Service is for women, and never the opposite. But there is an exception to every rule. Of course, not that women should go to the army, and we see that more and more secular women are performing National Service. But there are some men, to our distress, who are prevented from being drafted into Tzahal because of physical or emotional health or on account of political reasons and - Baruch Hashem – today there are close to one thousand male volunteers for National Service.

Do not say that this is nothing. It is a lot. It does not matter if one does a lot or a little as long as his intentions are for the sake of Heaven (Berachot 17a). It is possible that a person does a little, but for him it is a lot because it requires great effort. The essence is that a person does what he can. The Master of the Universe values effort and not the results. We therefore follow His ways and say: "Way to go!" to a man who volunteers for National Service. Justifiably, he deserves the rights of soldiers.

Perhaps you will say: who needs men for National Service – aren't there enough women? It depends on the role. There are some jobs which are specifically for men, such as working in hostels, in hospitals, elderly homes and Zionist Kollels outside of Israel.

Therefore, if you are exempt from military service, get up right now and volunteer for National Service. It is your merit. It is your obligation. Not only will you build, you will also be built.

It once happened that a young man from a family of army officers, who was obviously expected would to the army ranks and was in fact accepted to an elite unit, had these plans cut short by a car accident. He was seriously injured, in a coma for a few years and completed rehabilitation with incredible willpower. Today, he volunteers in education while battling great physical and emotional difficulties. He is subject to ridicule and what he does is not valued, but he does not falter and continues on with his holy work. We say about him: he is a hero!

And it once happened that a young man volunteered to help a man who suffered from degeneration of the muscles, and he could not move or talk. Their relationship became so close that he was the only one who could take care of the man. We say about him: he is more precious than gold!

And it also once happened that a young man was blind and hard of hearing and he volunteered against the recommendation of family and friends. He completed two years of National Service and even received a recommendation of excellence. It appears that he sees what he needed to do better than others. And hears better too!

And another young man with difficult emotional problems, from a broken home where he was abused during his childhood, decided to raise himself up. He volunteered, even though he was a broken vessel with little chance of succeeding; after a few months of working with children with difficulties, he is a new person. He says: "Volunteering saved my life and I have a reason to live."

Therefore, my dear friend, my beloved friend, my cherished friend, if you are prevented from being drafted into Tzahal, volunteer immediately (02-659-1000 – in Israel).

May Hashem bless you and may you be blessed.



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 study math in shul?

A: It is forbidden in shul. It is permissible in a Beit Midrash for people who learn Torah there all day with the permission of the Rosh Yeshiva.

Q: A friend told me that it is permissible to drink alcohol since the Torah does not say that it is forbidden. Why doesn't the Torah relate to drinking alcohol?

A: It is included in "And follow in His ways" (Devarim 28:9), i.e. upright and healthy behavior (Rambam, Hilchot Deot chap. 1 & 4).

Q: Must I love the Prime Minister? Why?

A: Yes, every Jew.

Q: Is it permissible to watch a TV program after Shabbat which began on Shabbat or on Friday if the program will continue on Shabbat?

A: No, because you strengthen one who is transgressing, i.e. you are legitimizing Shabbat desecration (this is an answer particular to Israel).

Q: Can I point out something to my sister about dressing modestly?

A: First ask if she is interested.

Q: You were quoted on the TV show "Serugim" (literally "knitted" and refers to Religious-Zionists) that a woman is permitted to date two men at the same time. Is this true?

A: Certainly not. This is unethical. Only in exceptional cases is it permissible, such as an older woman whose clock is ticking and the man is delaying his decision, and the other choice is to break it off with him. But in general, it is not permissible, upright or ethical.

Q: May I recite the morning blessings (Birchot Ha-Shachar) in my pajamas?

A: It is permissible, only the Shemoneh Esrei requires clothing as one would wear before a king.

Q: Is it permissible to read a book or newspaper in the bathroom?

A: Yes, with the condition that it is not Torah learning. Some authorities forbid Hebrew letters in the bathroom, but this is a stringency.

Q: I had gum in my mouth when I was eating meat and only threw it out later. When do I begin counting the 6 hours before I can eat milk products – from when I spit the gum out or when I finished eating meat?

A: From when you finished eating the meat.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Love of Israel – Part 3

Sensitivity

Our Rabbi would originally pass out the mail to the students. How would the students know to come to our Rabbi? He would pass out a list, alphabetically ordered, with the students who received mail. Why did he put the list in alphabetical order? So no one would be insulted by their place on the list. He did not, however, put the letters in alphabetical order to make the list. He went through the letters and ordered them in his head with the help of his exceptional memory. (Ha-Rav Shmuel Yaniv – Iturei Yerushalayim #22)

Shehechyanu

When our Rabbi did not see a beloved person in thirty days, he would recite the Shehechyanu with Hashem's Name and Kingship when he saw them. For example, when a student returned from the army, our Rabbi would cry and recite the blessing. (Ha-Rav Mordechai Sadeh – Iturei Yerushalayim #22)

Love of people

Ha-Rabbanit Chavah Leah, our Rabbi's wife, met a couple in the street who had just made aliyah and only had the clothing on their backs. She asked our Rabbi if they could stay at their house. Our Rabbi replied: Of course. They divided their apartment into two rooms for two and a half years. This couple was not religious, and during this entire time, our Rabbi never tried to convince them to become religious, but only acted with friendship. (Iturei Yerushalayim #22)

Not to bother

After our Rabbi visited the grave of his nephew, R' Avraham Yitzchak Ra'anan, there was not any water to wash netilat yadayim. The students said: "Maybe we should go to the house next to the cemetery and ask if we could do netilat yadayim?" Our Rabbi said: "If there is no lulav, we do not take the lulav," i.e. do not bother other people.

(Rafael K. – Iturei Yerushalayim #22)

Tizke Le-Mitzvot – May you merit performing other mitzvot

When our Rabbi would hear a student respond to someone's kindness with "Tizke Le-Mitzvot," he would ask: "Don't you know how to just say thank you?" (Ha-Rav Mordechai Sadeh – Iturei Yerushalayim #22)

Influencing others

A student in twelfth grade came to our Rabbi and said that he needed to go throughout the country and influence others and not just to stay closed up in the yeshiva. In response, our Rabbi asked him to pour him a glass of water. The student did not understand what he meant, but he began to pour. When he almost reached the top of the cup, he looked at our Rabbi, who said with full confidence: "Continue, continue." The water obviously overflowed onto the floor. Our Rabbi said to him: "Do you understand? When you yourself are full and overflowing, only then will truly influence others" (Ha-Rav Mordechai Elon – Iturei Yerushalayim #22)

Doctor

When people would ask our Rabbi to pray for a sick person, he would first ask: "Has he been to the doctor?" (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald – Iturei Yerushalayim #22)



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Question: I have heard in the Rav's name that when a person is sick he should seek advice from a doctor and not a Rabbi. Why then if a person is in the army should he listen to Rabbis and not military experts?

Answer: A person should ask medical questions to doctors and not Rabbis, but regarding questions of medical ethics, a person should ask Rabbis and not doctors. A question of which medicine a woman should take in order to help her become pregnant is a question for doctors and not Rabbis, but if there is a mitzvah to have child or not is a question for Rabbis and not doctors. The same applies to the Land of Israel. Which tank to use and how to shoot it is a question for military experts and not Rabbis, but if there a mitzvah to hold on to Gush Katif with self-sacrifice and to invest great military effort there is a question which must be referred to Rabbis.

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