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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 Ki Teitzei 5768 - #52

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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.

In response to last week's article regarding leaving Israel to visit the grave of Rebbe Nachman, many people have asked about leaving Israel to visit concentration camps. Here is Rav Aviner's opinion on the subject:

### Visiting Concentration Camps

(Collected from Be-Ahava U-Be-Emuna vol. 3 #44

and Am Ve-Artzo vol. 2 #55 [originally appearing in Iturei Cohanim, Tevet 5751])

Question: Is it proper to travel to Poland to visit the concentration camps?

Answer: According to my humble opinion, this is not a good idea. One must obviously remember the Holocaust, "Remember what Amalek did to you" (Devarim 25:17), but in order to do so there is no need to travel there. So much has been written, so many pictures and movies, which in truth is the way to remember: through study.

Perhaps you will say: Experience shows that the young person who travels there returns completely captivated by the powerful experience which deeply penetrates his soul. He is changed into a different youth, with more fear of heaven, good character traits and seriousness. An actual inner transformation occurs, since this is not only learning but also an experience. No, this is a perception of the eyes. An experience effects with great intensity and alacrity, but disappears with the same speed. Please examine this youth in a year or two, everything disappears and evaporates like the morning fog. What they learn through effort and deep thought remains forever. Emotion vanishes. We are not against emotion; we know that emotion is important. We know that it has an advantage in that it grabs an entire person with intensity, but it also has a weakness: it quickly vanishes.

Perhaps you will also say: Prayer is worship of Hashem with emotion. In truth, prayer also entirely transforms the personality, but its effect on the soul also weakens after several hours.

And the solution is to pray again. We therefore return to the same prayer three times a day. This is not the case with learning. Something which is well understood transforms into a possession, and there is no need to return to it incessantly, since it is deep rooted. But every experience vanishes. One who travels to a concentration camp surely returns with an intense experience, but it becomes worn and evaporates over time and it is obviously impossible to travel every half a year.

Futhermore, according to the Rambam, it is only permissible to travel outside of the Land of Israel in order to learn Torah or to get married (Hilchot Melachim 5:9), and with all of the importance of the study of Holocaust, it is not on the level of learning Torah. According to the Tosafot, however, it is permissible to leave for any mitzvah (Tosafot to Avodah Zarah 13a d.h. lilmud), but we do not find that seeing the remains of the Holocaust is a mitzvah. It is certainly a mitzvah to reflect on history, as it is written, "Remember the days of old, understand the years of generation after generation" (Devarim 32:7), but the intent is not to study historical facts but to observe the hand of Hashem which acts in the world. There is no mitzvah at all to see historical places. If there is a youth, however, who is completely distanced from Judaism, and his connection to the Nation of Israel will be aroused in this way, then this can be considered a mitzvah. This is "pikuach nefesh – saving a life," but this is an exceptional case.

We also should not provide financial gains to the extremely wicked Polish, and all the more so the Ukrainians, who allowed the establishment of concentration camps on their territory. They knew that the Germans were annihilating Jews and they looked upon this with joy. They were of one heart with the Nazis; it was therefore not by happenstance that the concentration camps were established precisely there. The Polish fulfilled the verse: "Will you murder and also inherit" (see Melachim 1 21:19). We do not want to give them money.

This program is also intended only for wealthy students. Where have we heard that a school organizes activities for the wealthy and not for the poor?! This is a disgrace like no other. We know that there are wealthy and poor in our country. We are distressed that there are poor but we are not envious of the wealthy. We are not jealous of a wealthy child who enjoys the summer on an expensive vacation. But it is not possible for a school to organize activities only for the rich. It is true that they attempt to support the poor with a scholarship of two hundred dollars, for example, but this is not enough, when the student needs to pay one thousand dollars. This is an intolerable disgrace!

We must approach the Holocaust from the midst of learning, education and deep analysis, and then the matters will penetrate deep within the soul and remain there forever.



### **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: I do not say Shema before going to sleep when I first get into bed, since I am scared that I will not fall asleep right away and then I cannot talk. In the end, I often fall asleep without reciting Shema. What should I do?

A: It is preferable to say the Shema and talk than not to say it at all.

Q: Is it permissible to suck the blood from a finger which was cut and is bleeding?

A: It is only permissible to suck the blood which has not come out yet.

Q: Is it permissible to travel outside of Israel for a trip, to visit family or for work?

A: It is forbidden for a trip. It is permissible to visit family if it is a required kindness and it is permissible for work if it is required.

Q: What is the law about wearing a kippah with a picture of a TV actor on it?

A: It is strange and shameful.

Q: Since we have been engaged, we fight all of the time. What should we do?

A: This is a natural, not infrequent occurrence. But you have to deal with it and go now to a (pre-)marriage counselor.

Q: Does a kippah possess holiness?

A: It is used for a mitzvah, but it is not holy.

## Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

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

#### Separation-Holiness

Our Rabbi acted like Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi (Shabbat 118b) and never put his hands in his pants' pockets, rather he always held his hands up.

Anyone who paid close attention saw that during all of the classes, all of the meals, all of the discussions with people, our Rabbi always had his hands on the table, and he did not take them off and put them on his knees or in his pockets.

Our Rabbi would pray by heart or from a siddur which he took from an inner pocket in the upper part of his jacket, and only from the upper part, since he was extremely careful not to put holy words in lower pockets.

Our Rabbi was once looking for notes he had written on "Orot Ha-Torah." A student said to him: "Maybe it is in a pocket." Our Rabbi responded: "I am not suspected of this," i.e. putting objects under his beltline.

Our Rabbi was once getting off on the bus and an elderly, modestly-dressed woman was getting on. Our Rabbi was glued to the wall and made way until she left.



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

### Sandak at Bris

(Iturei Yerushalayim #22)

Q: It is preferable to have a father who is non-religious or a Torah scholar as the Sandak?

A: If the father is not interested, there is no question. If he is interested, the father is preferable, since this is included in the mitzvah of honoring father and mother. While it is not an obligation, it is a mitzvah, since it will bring him joy. And performing an explicit mitzvah (honoring father and mother) is more important than an act which is a segulah – an act of spiritual significance (having a Torah scholar act as the sandak).

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