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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 Netzavim 5768

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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.

### Tzedakah will Save you From Death

From "Be-Ahava U-Be-Emuna" – translated by Rafael Blumberg

“Be very careful that you not have an irresponsible idea and say to yourself, ‘The seventh year is approaching, and it will be the remission year.’ You may then look unkindly at your impoverished brother, and not give him anything. If he then complains to G-d about you, you will have a sin. Therefore, make every effort to give him, and do not feel bad about giving it” (Devarim 15:9-10).

One might ask, “Why should I forfeit my money on Rosh Hashanah night? It’s my money, isn’t it?” The truth is that it is not really yours. “Mine is the silver, and Mine the gold – the word of Hashem of Hosts” (Chagai 2:8).

All the great Mussar [morality] giants have said: Man is only the treasurer. How fortunate you are to have merited this exalted post. Yet you certainly would never consider betraying your task and taking all the money for yourself! Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook was asked by Ha-Poel Ha-Mizrachi, the Religious Zionist Labor organization, according to the Torah, what is the proper economic system, and he replied: Without deciding on this question, certainly a system based entirely on private ownership is impossible and unprofitable if one is to fulfill the entire Torah lawfully. After all, the Torah commands us to take care of our poor brethren and to give them “everything they are lacking” (Devarim 15:8; see Rambam, Hilchot Matanot La-Evyonim 7:3).

And how much is he lacking? How do we define it? It means his vital needs, in accordance with the time and the place. The Torah does not demand of us a socialist system of equal division of all profits, but rather profit-based capitalism with taking care of the needy.

A fine and important project has been initiated by Machon Ha-Torah Ve-Ha’aretz, Nedivei Aretz and the Chessed Organization “Pa’amonim”. The idea is to give a loan (up to 26 Elul / September 26) and not to demand its return by way of Pruzbul. Thus, the money will go to tzedakah, and one will be fulfilling two mitzvoth at once – the Sabbatical remission of loans, and giving tzedakah. Pa’amonim is a reliable organization – which cannot be said about

every single charity organization. With some of them, their staff salaries and expenses top eighty percent of the money people give them. Some rabbis demand that this sum not top 49%. By the way, according to Israeli law, non-profit charitable organizations are not allowed to have the figure top 20%. It is therefore fitting that the sum should not surpass 10%. All of this is without talking about people claiming falsely to be poor. According to rabbis' estimates, 90% of beggars are charlatans. According to police estimates, a beggar at the Western Wall collects about 7,000 shekels per day, and some of them show up for "work" in luxury cars. The police are well acquainted with them all. Yet in the matter at hand, thank G-d, I am talking about honest, reliable organizations.

Still, one might ask, "How will I be able to afford to forego the money owed me? I, myself, am not wealthy, and I have no money reserves!" The answer is simple: Decrease your luxuries. Your life comes before the life of your fellow man, but **YOUR LUXURIES DO NOT COME BEFORE THE LIFE OF YOUR FELLOW MAN**. Such is the ruling of the Ba'al Ha-Tanya (Igeret Kodesh 16 at the end of the Tanya); the Aruch Ha-Shulchan (Yoreh Deah 251:5); the Chafetz Chaim (at the end of his "Ahavat Chessed") and Rav Kook, who wrote, "Be careful regarding tzedakah! One must realize that according to our holy Torah, the poor man's life precedes all your own luxuries" (Shut Orach Mishpat 188:54).

This has a source in the Talmud: If there is a spring in my city, my drinking from it takes precedence of people from other cities drinking from it. Yet using the water for my laundry does not supersede my fellow man's having drinking water (Nedarim 80b. Others hold that laundry is essential due to avoiding disease). It doesn't bother us that there are rich people. It doesn't bother us that some people live lives of luxury. No one has to cut himself off from luxury. To do so is to fulfill the trait of "perishut", abstinence, which is not for everyone (Mesilat Yesharim, Chapter 13). Yet the existence of people who lack vital necessities is scandalous. Day and night people look for all sorts of segulot, spiritual remedies. Every day all sorts of new ones are invented, and people even spend a fortune on them, forgetting the main point, what the Torah commanded, a segulah greater than any other.

The story is told of Rabbi Akiva's daughter, who was told that she would die on the day of her wedding. She still got married, and she did not die. The next morning, however, she pulled a pin out of a hole in the wall that she had stuck into the wall the night before, drawing out a dead, poisonous snake that had been stabbed in its eye by the pin and had died. Her father asked her, "What mitzvah did you do [that saved your life]?" and she answered, "At the wedding, a poor man was standing at the door and no one noticed him, so I got up and gave him my plate of food." Rabbi Akiva responded, "You performed a mitzvah!" and he expounded, "Tzedakah shall save from death" (Mishlei 10:2; Shabbat 156b).



## **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: Can a woman who is hitching a ride (which is popular in Israel) take up two seats so that a man does not sit next to her?

A: The driver arranges the seating since it is his vehicle and the hitchhiker then decides if it is proper to get in.

Q: Can I buy religious books in a store if I do not know whether they pay sales tax?

A: Ask for a receipt.

Q: If I hear a blessing or kaddish on the radio, do I say amen?

A: If it is a live broadcast, it is permissible to say amen.

Q: A person really insulted me in the past and I cannot free myself from the anger.

A: Know that it is nothing and not truly important.

Q: Is it permissible for a man to wear a wedding ring?

A: Yes, to remember his wife.

Q: When one sees a supermarket cart which it has signs that it belongs to a particular supermarket, and it is quite a distance from the supermarket, does he need to return it?

A: If it is not difficult, since the basic Halachah is that if one returns a lost object, he can ask for payment for his time and effort.

Q: Is it permissible for a cohein to enter Ma'arat Ha-Machpelah for selichot?

A: It is a dispute. Ha-Rav Kook did not enter.

Q: Can an Ashkenazi recite the Selichot of the Sefaradim if he is more connected to them?

A: Before the fact, he should not. One should not change from the custom of his forefathers.

## Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

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

#### Maran (our revered teacher) Ha-Rav Kook

##### The father and the son

Our Rabbi related that when they moved to Jerusalem, Maran Ha-Rav said to him regarding the desk upon which he did all of his writing: "Until now it was mine, now it will be yours" – i.e. our Rabbi was his spiritual continuation.

Our Rabbi also related: "Abba Ha-Rav, may his memory be a blessing, wrote his great response to the Ridvaz on this desk (regarding the Heter Mechirah – Igeret #555, Igrot Ha-Re'iyah vol. 2, pp. 184-198). He received the letter close to evening and after Ma'ariv he began to write and continued throughout the night in one flow until his hand hurt."

Our Rabbi related that Maran Ha-Rav once dreamt about David and Shlomo and in the morning told our Rabbi: "This dream is for you," – i.e. our Rabbi is the continuation of Maran Ha-Rav as Shlomo was the continuation of David.

Our Rabbi described himself as one who licks the dust of the feet (Yeshayahu 49:23) of Maran Ha-Rav. He also said that his voice was his father's voice. (Rafael K.)

##### I am the servant of Avraham

At the dedication of the new yeshiva building of Mercaz Ha-Rav in Kiryat Moshe, our Rabbi defined himself as: "I am the servant of Avraham" (Bereshit 24:34) – i.e. his entire life was committed to his father Maran Ha-Rav." (Rafael K.)

##### Editing

Our Rabbi did not simply edit Maran Ha-Rav's writings, i.e. correcting mistakes, punctuation, etc..., but engaged in creative, "high" editing.

## Orot – "Lights"

Our Rabbi said that he gave the name "Orot" to Maran Ha-Rav's books (Ha-Rav Achyah Amitai).



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

### Maran Ha-Rav Kook's writings

Question: What is Ha-Rav's opinion about publishing the many writings of Rav Kook which are still in manuscript?

Answer: Spreading Rav Kook's writings without proper editing and arranging is similar to answering halachic questions from the Mishnah, which destroys the world, since one lacks an overall and clear picture (Sotah 22a). We cannot be arrogant to teach a certain path based on a specific article of Maran Ha-Rav Kook. Perhaps it is a "hava amina" (lit. you might say, i.e. musings) and not a conclusion. Perhaps it is a general thought and not practical Halachah. Perhaps it is personal and speaks about Maran Ha-Rav Kook himself. Perhaps it was said about the greats of the world and passed on to them. Therefore, do not be smarter than Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah and Ha-Nazir. They were Torah giants and knew what to publish and what not to publish. An important saying: not everything which we think should be said, not everything which we say should be written, and not everything which we write should be published. This is the general rule: when things appear in their completeness, they bring blessing, but an unedited, unarranged individual article is capable of doing damage. Our Sages wanted to hide the books of Kohelet and Yechezkel, since they found a few unclear verses – in the end they resolved the contradictions. And we can ask: isn't it a shame to lose a whole book on account of a few verses? Why not publish the books without these verses? Answer: It is one complete work, and deficient without these verses. Maran Ha-Rav Kook's writings are a mixture of revealed and hidden Torah. The reader may think that the hidden is revealed and the revealed is hidden and be seriously confused. Some say that this is a dispute whether the writings should be published in an edited and arranged fashion or in a flowing manner. This is not so. When a few youngsters disagree with Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah and Ha-Nazir, it is not considered a dispute, but nonsense and arrogance.

(taken from parashah sheet "Maaynei Yeshua" – Parashat Ki Tavo)

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