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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 Lech Lecha 5769

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Would you like to ask Rav Aviner a question? E-mail mororly@bezeqint.net.

Open Letter to the Honorable President of the United States Regarding Jonathan Pollard

[from parashah sheet "Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah" – translated by Rafael Blumberg]

Dear President Bush,

I hope this letter finds you well as you successfully complete your second term as President. First of all, we would like to say to you that we, the Nation that dwells in Zion, greatly admire the manifold efforts you made on behalf of our security over the years. Your good works, in assisting Israel, the Nation that exists forever, shall be to your eternal credit and shall bring you everlasting blessing. Your record of good work renders us certain that you understand the motives of Jonathan Pollard when he acted on behalf of our security, passing on to us information about unconventional Arab weapons against us and about preparations for Arab terror activities against us – information that saved many lives in Israel. It is true that through his actions he committed crimes against the United States, but he received his punishment, serving twenty-three years of prison under very difficult conditions. Jonathan Pollard is the only man in the history of the United States to receive a life sentence for passing on intelligence information to a friendly U.S. ally, with the maximum punishment for such a crime being ten years, and the average time served being between two and four years. And indeed, the President of the United States is entitled to grant a pardon without providing any explanation, although in this case, certainly, there is a logical basis for doing so. Moreover, his Honor is certainly aware that top-echelon figures in the United States, who previously were opposed to Pollard's release, now support a pardon. For example, during the winter of 2006, James Woolsey, a former head of the C.I.A., stated at the Herzliya Conference on Iran and the Second World War: "When I was in the American Government, we examined Pollard's whole file. At the time I was against his early release, because he really did steal secret materials from the American Government, and in defense of the

privileged information of the American People, I thought such a person should be punished. Now, after he has spent twenty years in prison, my opinion, which I already expressed in the Jerusalem Post, is that twenty years is more than enough. We have to consider U.S.-Israel relations.” Therefore, we are therefore turning to your exalted self, entreating you not to conduct yourself with strictness, but with mercy and forgiveness towards a man who has already paid twenty-three years, with great suffering, and who is suffering from very poor health. Please bring this episode to a humanitarian close. In reward for this, G-d will bless you and will bless America.

Sincerely,
Rabbi Shlomo Aviner



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: What is Ha-Rav's opinion about smoking "nargilah" (a hookah which is used for smoking tobacco or marijuana) in yeshiva where there is no sinful environment?

A: It is a severe prohibition and a more severe danger than cigarettes.

Q: Is it permissible to make chocolate balls on Shabbat?

A: No because of the prohibition of "boneh – building."

Q: According to Kabbalah, are there certain stones for specific purposes? And if there are, where can I buy them?

A: There are none, it is nonsense.

Q: What is the idea of a siyum when completing a Massechet of the Gemara?

A: Joy over the service of Hashem. But it is possible to do so alone.

Q: Is it permissible to have a local anesthesia for a regular brit milah on the eighth day?

A: There is no need and it is sometimes even dangerous.

Q: What is the significance of the black stripes on a talit?

A: A remembrance of the techelet.

Q: What is the Torah's stance regarding the Separation Fence?

A: It is a mistake. All of our Land belongs to us.

Q: Is it permissible for the State of Israel to sell weapons to other countries (Rambam, Avodah Zarah 12:12)?

A: If the weapons are not murderous.

Q: What is the law concerning an electric urn and blender which require immersion in a mikveh but the instructions say that it is forbidden to immerse them in water?

A: Immerse them and then dry them with a hair dryer or disassemble them a little in a professional manner and reassemble them.

Q: Do utensils of an Israeli company who produce them outside of Israel require immersion in a mikveh?

A: No, since the factory is Jewish owned. The owner is the deciding factor.

Q: For what reason should one be happy in life?

A: There is freedom to serve Hashem.

Q: Must a non-Jew who cleans the yeshiva wear a kippah?

A: He does not need to.

Q: How can I love someone who I hate?

A: Find good things in her.

Q: I know that if I ask my uncles and cousins not to touch me they will make jokes in front of the whole family, not to hurt my feeling but because that is the way they are. Should I still ask?

A: Yes, and do it in a humorous way, such as: "I am saving it for my husband."

Q: I hear it is forbidden to say Shemoneh Esrei and say birkat ha-mazon barefoot. What about other blessings before eating and other prayers?

A: It is permissible for the other blessings and prayers.

Q: 1. We have a TV in our house and it is hard for me not to watch, do you have advice? 2. Should I pressure my dad to get rid of it even though no one else wants to?

A: 1. Reduce the amount gradually, a little less each time with strength and courage. 2. Yes, you should pressure, it is good for everyone.

Q: After Sukkot, is it permissible to stick cloves into my etrog which has kedushat shevi'it (holiness of the Shemita year) to use for Havdalah?

A: No, because it will no longer be edible.

Q: Is it permissible for me (a girl) to talk with boys on the internet?

A: It is certainly forbidden. You should stay very far from this. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 152:8-9.

Q: Before Shabbat I light two candles: one for me and one for my serious boy friend. Every Shabbat, my burns out first and it is starting to bother me. Is there a meaning?

A: It has no meaning. May Hashem bless you.

Q: I follow a certain Rabbi, but it is not the same Rabbi as my father. What should I do when they have differences of opinion?

A: You can have a different Rabbi, but follow your father's Rabbi in the house.

Q: Can I sleep on a bed, including the sheets, which belonged to someone who died?

A: There is no problem.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

The Younger Years – Part 2

Yeshivat Torat Chaim

Maran Ha-Rav Kook was appointed Rav of Yafu and the surrounding settlement in the year 5664, and our Rabbi made aliyah with his family shortly after his bar mitzvah.

When our Rabbi was fifteen, he ascended to Yerushalayim to learn in Yeshivat Torat Chaim in the Old City. Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Rav of Yerushalayim, Rav Yitzchak Herzog, Chief

Rabbi of Israel, and Aryeh Levin, the Tzadik of Yerushalayim, also learned in the famous Torat Chaim Yeshiva.

On Ta'anit Esther 5728, after the Six-Day War, the students of Mercaz Ha-Rav went to daven at the Kotel. A student of our Rabbi, who had a car, took him home as usual. It was in the middle of the day and our Rabbi asked: "Don't you have a class now?" He answered: "Yes, but our Sages say that serving Torah scholars is greater than learning." Our Rabbi agreed by his silence. When they were near Sha'ar Shechem, our Rabbi asked to stop. Without saying a word, our Rabbi got out on the car and he began to quickly march on the bridge to go through Sha'ar Shechem when two students escorted him, one on each side. When he was close to Sha'ar Shechem, he began to run down the stairs and the students followed him. He momentarily stopped where the street splits and he continued on Ha-Gai Street. During that period, there were many Jews on the streets of the Old City. Our Rabbi recognized from a distance a Jew who he knew. They stopped, talked and our Rabbi pointed toward a particular spot. The Jew said: "I am certain that it is here" and pointed to the entrance of Yeshivat Torat Chaim (which is now the location of Ateret Yerushalayim – formerly Ateret Cohanim). Our Rabbi ran in the direction of the yeshiva and ascended the stairs. The students asked him: "Ha-Rav, what is going in?", but he did not answer. He stopped in the hall in front of the window, held the bars, pulled himself up as much as he could and looked into the main room for a few minutes. When he came down, the students asked what this was all about. He responded: "I learned Torah here when I was young. This was the yeshiva of Rabbis Epstein and Winograd. Abba Ha-Rav ztz"l sent me to learn Torah here." It was possible to make out some shtenders and tables with books on them. Everything was covered with ten centimeters of gray dust which had accumulated over the last ten years in this place since it had been abandoned. Our Rabbi was completely moved and slowly returned to the car. On the way, he related stories about the period he learned in the yeshiva. For example, the Rabbis complaining to the Turkish authorities that the muezzin was bothering the learning in the yeshiva, and as a result, the Turkish silenced the muezzin during the classes in the yeshiva.



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Tzedakah from Aliyah Money

Question: Is one required to give "ma'aser" (a tenth to the poor) from money received from Nefesh B'Nefesh as part of their Aliyah assistance? Similarly, is one required to give "ma'aser" from money received as part of their Sal Klita (money given by the State of Israel to help with the expenses of aliyah)?

Answer: Absolutely. There is a requirement to give "ma'aser" from all money which one receives. This however is based on one's ability to do so. If one is a "benoni," i.e. makes an average income, than one should give ten percent. If one earns less than he should give according to his ability.

Sending an e-mail overseas after Shabbat

Question: Can a Jew in Israel after Shabbat or Yom Tov send an e-mail to a Jew in the US who may then read (either on the computer or blackberry) and respond to it while it is still Shabbat there?

Answer: If you are certain that the person will answer the e-mail and thereby desecrate Shabbat or Yom Tov, it is forbidden to send them an e-mail on account of "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind" (Vayikra 19:14). If you are uncertain if they will read it, it is permissible to send an e-mail and we are "tolim" (literally "hang" on the assumption) that he will not violate Shabbat or Yom Tov. We learn this principle in the Mishnah Shevi'it (end of chapter 5) regarding lending different types of utensils and agricultural equipment during the Shemitah year.



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

Give Me My Due

Question: *My husband is extremely busy and has no time for me. I do not have complaints against him. He often plans to be with me, but an unexpected task suddenly pops up. The result, however, is that I suffer from loneliness. What should I do?*

Answer: *Everything is important. Work is important. Learning Torah is important. Being married is important. And each should get its due. Already in the time of our Sages, they divided up one's time so that one's wife is not deprived, G-d forbid. After all, she did not get married so that even after the wedding she would since be frustrated by "It is not good for man to be alone." Our Sages calculated the amount based on whether the husband works for someone or is self-employed, works in the same city as his home or in another city, etc... It is not possible, however, that a man neglects his wife, even if he is the most important person or is the busiest person. It is therefore preferable to establish from the beginning the times you will be together for all sorts of things includes time on Shabbat, one night during the week when it is as if the rest of the world is dead from their perspective, etc... They say in Tzahal that every plan is a basis for change, but this is not Tzahal. It is people who want to live their lives in love, fraternity, peace and friendship and to raise children in an atmosphere of joy.*

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