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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 Toledot 5769

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

And the children will return to their borders:

A Blessing for the Holiday of "Sigd"

[From the parashah sheet "Olam Katan"]

[On the 29th of Marcheshvan, Ethiopian Jews celebrate a holiday called "Sigd" by visiting Jerusalem. It commemorates the return of the Exiles from Babylonian in the time of Ezra and Nechemiah and the great National repentance which occurred at that time].

Blessed is Hashem who has kept us alive, and has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this time, that we have merited the ingathering of the exiles from all the corners of the earth – north, south, east and west, and particularly the Exile of Ethiopia which is the longest and deepest. But Hashem does not abandon His Nation, and returns us from every place. And this is in merit of the faith of Ethiopian Jews who never despaired from the Redemption. They always hoped and had faith that they would return to the Land of Israel and Jerusalem. This is our secret weapon during even the most difficult and complex situations: faith!

Therefore, once a year Ethiopian Jews ascend the mountain to learn Torah and remember Jerusalem in order to know that man does not live by bread alone, but he lives by what comes out of Hashem's mouth. It is not for naught that Ethiopian Jewry maintained a remembrance of the ascension of Ezra and Nechemiah. After the miraculous Exodus from Egypt and the first return to Zion, the ascension of Ezra and Nechemiah was a natural occurrence and was the second return to Zion; and we are now living the third return to Zion thanks to the kindness of Hashem.

We are fortunate that we have merited the renewal of our days as in ancient times, and despite all of the difficulties that exist in our communal lives in our Land, we are obligated to thank Hashem that we are being revived. The difficulties which exist are not because the path is incorrect. We are on the right path but it is only the beginning, it is a lengthy journey and we must continue on it. And just as we have merited that Ethiopian Jewry has returned to the Land, may we merit the elevation of the Torah, the army, holiness, the economy, the mitzvot and our talents – and may it be a blessing for the Nation of Israel.



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 have a picture of Rav Kook as the background on the scene of my cell phone. Can I bring my phone into the bathroom?

A: It is permissible.

Q: While I am reciting the "Birchat Cohanim" can I direct the blessing toward a specific individual in the shul?

A: "Birchat Cohanim" is for the entire community, including that individual. You can personally bless that person after the davening.

Q: Why doesn't the Messiah come when we are in such a bad state?

A: We do not know when the Messiah will come. He did not come during the destruction of the First Temple, the destruction of the Second Temple, the Expulsion from Spain, the Chelminski Massacres, nor the Holocaust. In relation to all of these, our situation is great. Not 100%, but 99%.

Q: I often pray but because my prayers are not answered, my faith is weakening.

A: Prayer is service of Hashem in one's heart and not necessarily a medium to attain a request. You should read a lot of Mesilat Yesharim.

Q: What is the problem with gelatin? Is it kosher?

A: It is produced from animal bones. It is kosher on condition that it has kosher certification (this is the majority of Rabbis in Israel, but not necessarily outside of Israel).

Q: It is permissible to walk on Shabbat in a place which has a video camera and everything can be seen on a scene by a guard?

A: Yes. While it is an unintended action which definitely causes a forbidden side-effect (the filming) which is a Rabbinic prohibition, since it is done indirectly (gerama) and while he is preoccupied (mitasek) with another activity (i.e. walking), it is permissible.

Q: Is it permissible to teach Tanach in a school in which Jews and Arabs learn together?

A: Yes, for the benefit of the Jewish children.

Q: Can a cohein be included on a chore rotation schedule or is it a violation of "and make him holy" (Vayikra 21:8)?

A: It is permissible since it is in exchange for what others do for him.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Halachot

Kosher Certification

Sometimes when a kosher product was brought to our Rabbi and he was not familiar with it, he would ask: does it have kosher certification from a rabbi? And when it was answered

positively that Rabbi A. from community B. supervised it, he would be somewhat surprised and say that if it has the certification of A. from community B., who is a Rabbi in Israel, then it is okay and he would eat it. (Ha-Rav Oded Valensky)

Wearing Tzitzit Out

Our Rabbi would say that one should wear his tzitzit hanging outside of his clothing. A student asked: And what about the Arizal (who said that one should wear the tzitzit inside – although there is a dispute regarding the meaning of his words)? Our Rabbi responded with a smile: I know the Arizal. And he added: And do you perform everything that the Arizal says? (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 8:11, Magen Avraham ibid., Mishnah Berurah ibid. Ha-Rav Yosef Bedichi)

Jewish Clothing

Our Rabbi would teach that one should wear his tzitzit out, and that Jewish clothing is not necessarily a kippah, but tzitzit and tefillin. Regarding a kippah, he would quote the words of the Vilna Gaon that wearing a kippah is an act of righteousness (Biur Ha-Gra, Orach Chaim 8). (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald)

Honesty in Payments

It once happened that our Rabbi was wearing his weekday jacket on Shabbat night, despite the fact that he was careful to wear special Shabbat clothing. A student asked him the reason. Our Rabbi did not respond. On Motza'ei Shabbat, the student asked again. Our Rabbi said to him: On Friday, they brought my Shabbat jacket from the cleaners, but I did not have cash to pay them, and I would not take it without paying for it. (Ha-Rav Chaim Shtainer)

"Ve-Shamru"

Our Rabbi said that there is great importance in saying "Ve-shamru" before the Shemoneh Esrei during Ma'ariv of Shabbat, and there is also great importance in not saying it in order to connect "Geulah" (Redemption – mentioned in the prayer "Ga'al Yisrael) to the Shemoneh Esrei. But what should we do, it is impossible to fulfill both of them? Therefore, some minyanim have the custom to say it and some have the custom not to say it, and between the two customs both important acts are fulfilled.

"Ha-Pores Sukkat Shalom"

Our Rabbi was careful not to allow the singing of "Who spreads the sukkah of peace over us, over all of His Nation Israel and over Jerusalem" along with the person leading the davening, since this is an interruption between "Geulah" and the Shemoneh Esrei, and the prayer "Hashkiveinu" was only added between them since it is an extension of "Geulah" (Berachot 4b). Our Rabbi was so strict about this that once when the people sang along, he refused to give a class.

"Amen" on Kaddish

During Ma'ariv of Shabbat, our Rabbi would not say "amen" to "Veyatzmach Purkanei Vekarev Meshichei" in the Kaddish if the person leading was davening "Nusach Sefard." Since he davened "Nusach Ashkenaz" and that phrase is not included, he considered it an interruption between "Geulah" and the Shemoneh Esrei. But he would also ask forgiveness from the person leading the davening for not saying "amen." (Ha-Rav Yerachmiel Weiss)

Garbage

Our Rabbi would not throw papers with Hebrew letters into public garbage cans which are extremely dirty. He would put them in a clean garbage can, even though they would end up in the public garbage in the end, since this was indirect. He did what he could in order to preserve the holiness of the Hebrew letters.

Wine

Our Rabbi would not drink wine with the kosher certification of Badatz (of the Ultra Orthodox) in order to strengthen the stance of the Chief Rabbinate. (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald)

"Modeh Ani" (I give thanks)

Our Rabbi emphasized that because the foundation of everything is to show gratitude of Hashem, a person therefore begins his morning by saying "Modeh Ani" (I give thanks) even before washing "netilat yadayim."

Turning to the right

A student noticed that our Rabbi did not take the shortest route to his house from the yeshiva, but took an indirect route which required much effort. When he asked, our Rabbi responded that our Sages said that a person should always make all turns toward the right. (Ha-Rav Aryeh Horowitz)



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Using a dishwasher on Shabbat

Question: If my parents turn on the dishwasher after the Friday night meal, may I eat off the dishes on Shabbat day?

Answer: There is a dispute brought by the Mishnah Berurah in the Biur Halachah (Orach Chaim 318 - the second comment) whether in a case of a Shabbat violation performed unwittingly and the item does not experience a physical transformation (like cooking) one can benefit from on that Shabbat. The dishes do not go through a physical transformation. Therefore, according to one opinion brought there, it would be permissible to use them. It is preferable, however, to offer to wash the dishes which can be done in a permissible manner. The essence is not to offend your parents. You can say: "My Rabbi is strict about it. What can I do?" which may lead them to think there are other opinions and they will allow you to do what you need to do in order to follow your Rabbi.



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

Insulting Your Wife

Our Sages teach: "A person should always be careful regarding afflicting his wife with words...for her tears flow easily" (Baba Metziah 58b). Do not insult your wife because she will cry. You should obviously not insult anyone, but you should be even more careful regarding your wife. Why? The usual answer is that she is sensitive and takes things to heart and will cry about them. The Maharal of Prague says that this is not correct and the fact is that she does not cry when others insult her. What is the difference? A stranger who insults her is simply acting evilly. But when you insult her, it is betrayal. After all, she puts her trust in you. She married you to be your friend – and you betray her. She is therefore alone in the world with no support; it is not good for her to be alone and so she cries. You are obviously not an angel, and sometimes it occurs. Therefore, ask for forgiveness. How? Do not say: "Why are you insulted over meaningless things? There is no need to be insulted!" By saying this you are just adding transgression to sin. Not only are you hurting her, but you are taking away her right to be hurt. Rather say: "I am sorry, I am stupid. I did not realize how much I hurt you. Forgive me. I will not do it again." Furthermore, plan it so you do not insult her. Think before you speak. Think before you act. This is the reason that you have an intellect.

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