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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 Vayetze 5769

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Would you like to ask Rav Aviner a question? E-mail [mororly@bezeqint.net](mailto:mororly@bezeqint.net).

### The Current Satmar Rebbe is Visiting Israel

[A talk given in the yeshiva when the previous Satmar Rebbe visited Israel]

Question: Is it obligatory to go and greet the Satmar Rebbe?

Answer: A person is not obligated to greet every single Torah scholar, especially since – Baruch Hashem – there are so many Torah scholars today. A person is only obligated to greet his Rabbi, i.e. "Rav Muvhak" - the Rabbi from which he has gained the majority of his knowledge. Additionally, even if a Rabbi is not his main teacher, but is the "Gadol Ha-Dor" (the leading Rabbi of the generation), he is considered one's "Rav Muvhak." Therefore, if the Satmar Rebbe is one's "Rav Muvhak," he is obligated to go and greet him, and if he is not one's "Rav Muvhak," he is not obligated, although it is certainly permissible.

Regarding the question if the Satmar Rebbe is the "Gadol Ha-Dor" - there is a dispute. Who is the "Gadol Ha-Dor"? The answer for us is simple: the "Gadol Ha-Dor" is Maran (our revered teacher) Ha-Rav Kook. In fact, he is not only the leader of this generation, but the leader of generations. But it is possible that there is a dispute. One person says that this rabbi is the "Gadol Ha-Dor," while another says that another rabbi is the "Gadol Ha-Dor." Surely some thought that the Rambam was the "Gadol Ha-Dor" and others thought that Rabbenu Tam was the "Gadol Ha-Dor." It is even possible that each is the leading rabbi in a different sense. The Gerrer Rebbe said that there is no need to find out which holiday is most important. On Pesach – Pesach is the most important, on Shavuot – it is Shavuot, etc... on each holiday that one is the most important. So too here, it is possible that there are different types of leading Rabbis of the generation. Nonetheless, the students of the Satmar Rebbe consider him the "Gadol Ha-Dor," and others do not agree. Thus, one is not obligated to greet him as the "Gadol Ha-Dor."

Question: It is forbidden to greet him?

Answer: Why would it be forbidden? Some say that if Yitzchak Rabin was a "Rodef" (literally "pursuer" – a case in which one is permitted to kill a pursuer so that the pursued

person is saved from harm) then the Satmar Rebbe is all the more so a "Rodef" on account of his virulent anti-Zionist views. We reject this position, since according to all halachic opinions, Rabin was not a "Rodef" and thus neither is the Satmar Rebbe. It is certainly not forbidden to greet him.

The question of a rabbi who ridicules and insults the State of Israel, others Rabbis, etc... is a very sensitive topic. On the one hand, the transgression of a Torah scholar who shames other Torah scholars is very severe. On the other hand, we need to give the Rabbi as much benefit of the doubt as possible. For example, there was a "Gadol Ha-Dor" of the previous generation who shamed all of the other Rabbis. Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin said about him: He is insane – he is not normal. This was giving him the benefit of the doubt. There are also Torah scholars who have extremely harsh styles of speaking. They refer to everyone as apostates, heretics, etc... Explaining that this is someone's style of speech is also a type of giving the benefit of the doubt. We are not saying that this is proper but we are trying to see others in the best possible light.

In any event, quite simply, it is extremely important to honor all Torah scholars. One should not shame them, even if there is a harsh communal dispute. The Gemara in Sanhedrin (99a) explains that one great Rabbi, Rabbi Hillel (not Hillel the Elder who was a contemporary of Shammai), said that the Messiah would not come. This is certainly a severe statement. Everyone is waiting for and anticipating the Messiah and in his opinion: "No – there is no Messiah." Rav Yosef said to him: "May Hashem pardon his error" (as explained by Rashi). We clearly see that despite the severe nature of Rabbi Hillel's comments, Rav Yosef did not shame him. Based on this, there is a teshuvah of the Radvaz (4:187) that even a great Rabbi who has expressed himself heretically should not be ridiculed even though one should argue against his ideas with all forcefulness. Maran Ha-Rav Kook explained this law based on the Jerusalem Talmud, which compares disgracing a Torah scholar to a structure of stones; that is, if one stone is shaken, the entire structure is shaken (Jerusalem Talmud, Sanhedrin 10:1). Thus, one who scorns a Torah scholar knocks over the entire building of the Torah in Israel (see "Perek Tzibbur" by Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohain Kook, Ma'amrei Ha-Re'iyah 55). Scorning Torah scholars is similar to sitting on a powder keg; we do not know when it will blow up and who will be injured. Shaming Torah scholars cannot be controlled and we do not know where it will end. If someone disgraces one Torah scholar, he disgraces them all.

We saw this with our own eyes: Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, the first Satmar Rebbe, made extremely harsh statements. Our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, never scorned or denigrated him even though their stances were diametrically opposed. Our Rabbi once heard a severe ruling in the name of the Satmar Rebbe, and all he said was: "This is not correct." Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah also admonished students who expressed a lack of respect to the Satmar Rebbe, and he would not allow them to continue to speak. Once Ha-Gaon Rav Moshe Feinstein issued a ruling that in pressing situations it is permissible to be lenient in a regarding the height of a mechitzah between men and women in a shul,. The Satmar Rebbe came out against him. Our Rabbi said: "It is known that our paths are separate and different, but in this issue he (the Satmar Rebbe) is correct." Even though they were polar opposites regarding the Redemption of Israel and Klal Yisrael (the entirety of Israel), our Rabbi never said one negative word about him.



## **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: It is permissible to read non-holy writings which are written in Hebrew in the bathroom?

A: Some are strict, but it is permissible according to the basic Halachah. See Shut Ha-Rambam.

Q: What should a person do if he goes on a cruise and he is on the boat on Shabbat?

A: One should not go on a trip which involves violations of Shabbat, but if he has already gone, he should avoid all Shabbat desecration, except for a life-threatening situation.

Q: Is there something special about eating fish on Shabbat?

A: Yes, but the essence is that it adds pleasure to Shabbat. Therefore, if you do not like fish, there is no obligation.

Q: How late can one light Shabbat candles?

A: One should light at the time noted on the calendars, but after the fact one can light until ten minutes before sundown.

Q: If I have non-observant guests staying in my house on Shabbat, am I obligated to prevent them from violating Shabbat in their room?

A: No. One should not interfere in their lives. They obviously should not do in an overt way.

Q: I daven "vatikin" every day. Am I also obligated to do so on Shabbat?

A: No, not if the custom you took upon yourself is only for during the weekdays and not on Shabbat. In general, for all proper customs which a person takes upon himself, he should say "bli neder – without taking an oath."

Q: I do not have challot for Shabbat. I only have sliced bread. What should I do?

A: Take two pieces of bread.

Q: My parents blamed me for something, and since then I broke off my connection to them. What should I do?

A: In an instance such as this we say: do not be right, be wise. It is worthwhile to renew the connection.

Q: Is it preferable in our day to wash "netilat yadayim" without the cup being completely full in order to save water?

A: Wash with a full cup, this is a negligent amount of water.

Q: Should one be particular to have special clothing for Shabbat?

A: It is proper but not obligatory. The essence is that they are respectable and beautiful.

Q: My (Jewish) partner at work and I are working on a joint project. He wrote his part on Shabbat. Is it permissible for me to use it?

A: Yes. Even intentional Shabbat desecration is permissible for other people (i.e. not the Shabbat violator) after Shabbat, even if it was performed for your sake. But you should request that he cease from doing so in the future.

Q: Is it permissible for someone without a kippah for recite a blessing?

A: It is preferable that he recite a blessing without a kippah than not to recite a blessing at all.

Q: How should a group decide about using the air conditioning or heat in a room or class when some people are cold and some are hot?

A: First criteria: the regular usage. Second criteria: the majority.

Q: Why do inappropriate thoughts always come into my head even though I am growing in Torah and mitzvot?

A: Do not pay attention. Ignore them. It is a known phenomenon that an animal soul is waging war against your holiness. Tanya, chapter 27-28.

Q: Is it permissible to sit on a table or is it consider like an "altar"?

A: It is preferable not to do so, but it is permissible.

Q: Is it forbidden for a young woman to have a male driving instructor? Sometimes the classes end at night and we travel through places where there are no people.

A: It is permissible, but a female teacher is obviously preferable. It is no problem since people will eventually pass.

Q: Is there an obligation to wash "mayim achronim" (after eating)? What about women?

A: There is an obligation if one's hands are not totally clean. The same applies for women.

Q: What should I do if the person leading the davening is repeating the Shemoneh Esrei and is up to Kedushah and I have not finished davening?

A: Stop and listen. "Shome'a ke-oneh – one who listens is as if he is saying it."

## Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

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

#### Consistency

In the year 5715, a student would learn with our Rabbi articles which he cut out of the newspaper "Ha-Tzofeh." Our Rabbi once told him that he feels like his colleague. One night, after Ma'ariv, the student went to his room and saw our Rabbi. He asked: where did you come from? Our Rabbi responded that he had left a wedding in Tel Aviv early to make sure that they could learn together. (Ha-Rav Menashe Komm)

#### Knit Kippah

A woman once asked our Rabbi if it is okay that her husband wears a knit kippah. He answered:

- "What is the problem? Doesn't it cover his head?"
- "Yes."
- "Then what is the problem?"
- "I don't know. I have a feeling that it is not good enough."
- "It is totally fine."

#### Reb Shlomo Carlebach

Reb Shlomo Carlebach would sometimes come to daven in Yeshivat Mercaz Ha-Rav in the old building. Our Rabbi asked him what he teaches Jews who are far from Torah in order for them to give up drugs and transgression and to come close to Torah. He responded: The

writings of Rebbe Nachman of Breslav and the Izbitzer Rebbe. Our Rabbi warned him: These teaching are themselves drugs.

When our Rabbi was asked about Reb Shlomo Carlebach's overly close connection to women, he responded that he is a kosher person on a personal level, but we should not learn anything from him in this area.

#### Respect for others

Our Rabbi once entered a taxi and the driver accidentally closed the door of his fingers. It was clear from our Rabbi's face that he was in great pain, but he did not say a word. (Ha-Rav Eliyahu Mali)

#### Benefiting from sin

"Why were the haters of Israel (this is a euphemism) of that generation worthy to be destroyed? It was because they benefited from the evil one's (Achashverosh's) meal (Megillah 12a)." It does not say they were worthy to be destroyed because they ate at the meal but because they benefited from it, because there are times that the benefit from a severe transgression is more damning than the transgression itself. Our Rabbi had a gem of a teaching regarding this idea from an incident involving the Chafetz Chaim. A group of Jewish soldiers who were forced to serve in the Russian Army once came to the Chafetz Chaim and had a serious question. The Russian Army forced them to eat non-kosher meat, and without this meat they would starve and be in serious danger because army service is difficult and breaks the body, and it is impossible to survive without eating the meat. They asked how they should act? The Chafetz Chaim thought and responded: "Dear sons, this is truly life-threatening and you can eat. But please remember, when you eat the non-kosher meat, don't suck the bones." (Ha-Rav Yitzchak Dadon, Nishkafah Kemo Shachar, p. 26)



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

#### Ha-Motzi or Ma'ariv

Question: At a wedding, I washed "netilat yadaim" and said the blessing. On my way back to my table for "Ha-Motzi," the minyan for Ma'ariv was starting. What should I have done - continue to the table for "Ha-Motzi" and not daven Ma'ariv with a minyan or stay and daven with the minyan and then go wash again?

Answer: You should first recite "Ha-Motzi" and then go and join the minyan.

#### Sharing a taxi

Question: If a couple and another person share a taxi, does the couple pay 50% or two-thirds of the fare?

Answer: The couple should pay two-thirds of the fare.



## **Family Matters** - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

### Conversation Stopper

*Question: I have met with a young woman to see if she would be a good match to marry, but we do not have a deep connection or, more exact, any connection. When we are together there are long periods of silence. We talk a little and then the conversation quickly stops. Does this mean that we are not compatible?*

*Answer: Not necessarily. Not every person is talkative and not everyone can express himself. This does not mean that he does not have a rich and deep world. Sometimes people are very much in love and do not have what to talk about. Someone told me that he once visited a kibbutz and sat in the dining room. He saw people filling the tables but they sat in silence. He asked: "You do not greet each other?" They answered: "We greet each other with our eyes." This means that we are true friends and do not need external devices; our eyes express what is in our souls. Nonetheless, there is advice to penetrate the perplexing silence: prepare a note with a list of subjects to discuss and there is no reason to hide the note. Perhaps you will say: isn't this artificial? Many things in life are artificial, and we still enjoy them, since they bring much blessing. Furthermore, they are artificial at first, but they will be transformed into second nature.*

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