



Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner in the News

8 Kislev 5769

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

To subscribe, send e-mail to: mororly@bezeqint.net

Spiritual divide over use of force to fight evacuation

Appeared on the Jerusalem Post website - 8 Kislev 5769

By Matthew Wagner

As in past clashes such as the Gaza disengagement and the Amona evacuation, settlement rabbis were split Thursday on whether force should have been used against security troops to try to prevent the evacuation of the disputed Beit Hashalom building in Hebron.

Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, head of the Ateret Yerushalayim Yeshiva in the Arab Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City, said after the Hebron house was evacuated that when Jews fight Jews, it causes a desecration of God's name.

"When a secular Jew does not adhere to Halacha, when he desecrates the Shabbat and eats non-kosher food, this is very unfortunate," said [Rav] Aviner, who is also the rabbi of Beit El. "But there is nothing that religious Jews can do about it. However, when Jews fight Jews and they use violence against one another, that is the worst. That is the biggest desecration of God's name. We need to spread love for our fellow Jew and know that in the end redemption will come."

During the Gaza disengagement in 2005, [Rav] Aviner was one of the moderate rabbinic voices that opposed conscientious objection among IDF soldiers and police.

But Harel Kohen, a senior student of Rabbi Zalman Melamed, also of Beit El, said in a telephone interview Thursday that force was the only way to support the continued growth of the settlement movement.

"Behaving nicely has not necessarily proved itself," said Kohen, adding that his opinions reflected the positions of many people living in settlements.

[Rabbi] Melamed does not grant interviews to journalists. Instead, he established his own news service, Arutz 7.

"From its very inception, settlements in Sebastia and in other places in Judea and Samaria were generally not established while maintaining a friendly relationship with governments and a smiling face," Kohen said. "With evil governments, acting nicely does not bring about just results. The same is true about Beit Hashalom, which was bought in a legal transaction. After the fact, it turns out that that the use of force has not always been counterproductive."

For the past 40 years, he said, "governments have not built settlements. At the most, they have helped settlement initiatives. Sometimes governments have blocked settlements."

He concluded that "in the final analysis... grassroots movements, and mostly young people, will be the ones who build the Land of Israel. I think these are the thoughts that are going through the heads of many people right now."