



Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

From the Teachings of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Parashat Vayeshev 5769

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

Violence Against Women

[Opening words from Ha-Rav's radio show before
International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women]

To our great distress, there is violence against woman in this world. This is an international phenomenon which crosses all boundaries. It is a phenomenon among non-Jews and Jews. We would expect that it would not be so among Jews since it is written in the Shulchan Aruch (Even Ha-Ezer 154:3 in the Rama) that one who hits his wife is acting like a non-Jew. But it exists – among the religious and the secular, the ultra-orthodox and the traditionalists, among Ashkenazim and Sefardim, Ethiopians and Yemenite Jews, among the right-wingers and left-wingers. This cursed phenomenon crosses every stratum of society. Every time that I say this, people are shocked and say: "It is impossible!" A well-respected woman once said to me: "I do not believe it." But she later asked her daughters, who are social workers: what is the most difficult problem in Israel? They answered: violence in the family. There are tens of thousands of open files in such cases found among the police and women's organizations.

What then is our message regarding this issue?

We say to men who abuse: This is forbidden! There is absolutely no acceptable reason. I once said to an abuser: "Why do you hit your wife – don't you know that it is forbidden?" He answered: "Of course it is forbidden. I don't want to hit her but she does not obey me." There is no such thing as this! This is no reason. It is forbidden. Any place where men hit their wives, they must be ostracized from the community. They should not be allowed to enter shuls, not given aliyot, etc... After all, he is a sinner and evil!

We say to abused women: Do not give in. Turn to the police, turn to emergency help lines, turn to women's crisis centers which are found in every city. The important thing: do not be silent. Many women say: "If I am being abused it seems that this is my fate and if I oppose it in the here and now, it will afflict me in the future." What kind of thing is this to say?! Who put these lies into their heads?!

When a father hits, insults or hurts his wife, it not only wounds his wife, it also wounds the children. The children are completely destroyed when they see their father hitting their mother, or insulting her, etc... If it is an older child, he understands exactly what is occurring and this is horrible. But if it is a young child it is much worse because he does not understand what is happening. His father and mother are "G-d" in his eyes – how then is there violence between them? He is completely bewildered.

Before our young women meet with young men with the goal of finding a marriage partner, we need to instruct them how to identify red lights which point out domineering personalities. For example, if he pries too much, if he gives too much advice, gives too many instructions, conducts CIA investigations, etc... The young woman can check how he responds if she is late or she suddenly changes her mind – invite him to meet at one place and then suddenly switch to another. There are many ways to identify someone who is domineering.

In any event, we once again say to women: Do not give in! It is obviously always possible to help one's husband. There are family violence clinics in every city. If he repents, this is one thing, but "repentance" is complete repentance. It is not that he hits his wife and asks for forgiveness, hits his wife and asks for forgiveness, and this is how it continues and she has mercy on him, while she and the child pay the price.

Do not give in – call the police and let them throw him in jail. Someone told me: he was once walking down the street and he saw a man hitting his wife. A police officer grabbed the husband and said: "You are arrested." The wife said: "No, I forgive him." The officer said to her: "You forgive him, I don't! You are arrested!" This officer deserves a commendation.

A woman once told me: "My husband hits me. What can I do?" I said to her: "Hit him back." She said: "You always give unrealistic advice." After a few months, she told me that a true marriage counselor – unlike me – advised her: "Hit him back!" She said: "But he is stronger than me?" He said: "Then buy a club." She bought a club and put it in a drawer and the next time he hit her, she took it out and as they say: she fixed his face. She paid him back for all the times he hit her with compounded interest. From then on, he ceased hitting her. This woman deserves a prize.

In sum: Do not give in. We said loud and clear that we need to repair this evil.



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: Is it permissible to study math while wearing Tefillin?

A: Yes. Only light-headedness is specifically forbidden when wearing Tefillin. But our custom is only to wear Tefillin during prayer and learning Torah. Wearing Tefillin other than these is considered "yuhara – religious arrogance."

Q: Is it permissible to lie about the age of an older woman when you are trying to find her a match, since saying her actual age may lead some not to consider her?

A: It is forbidden to lie, but we are not obligated to say everything we know. For example, if she is 39, it is permissible to say that she is above 30.

Q: Is it permissible to be a sandak two times for one family?

A: There is no problem. (Shut Yechaveh Da'at.)

Q: I am frustrated. Men only want skinny women; why am I less worthy because I am big?

A: They are stupid. You have not lost out on anything. You will find a normal man.

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to learn Zohar?

A: A man should not learn it either, unless they are exceptional (Shulchan Aruch).

Q: Is it permissible to take down mezuzot to have them check and leave the house without them for a few days?

A: You need other ones in the meantime.

Q: Is it permissible for sons and daughters to participate in their mother's second marriage?

A: Some refrain from doing so, but this does not have a source. Everyone should therefore act in way to make his/her mother happy.

Q: Does a young woman who receives money for babysitting have to separate "ma'aser"?

A: Yes, from all income according to one's ability.

Q: I want to join a combat unit in the army, but my parents are opposed?

A: There is no obligation to honor father and mother in this, but you should speak to their hearts about it.

Q: Is it permissible to pray to Hashem for a specific person to marry?

A: Yes, but as a supplication and not a demand.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Our Rabbi and Neturei Karta

It once happened that a student did not daven Maariv at the conclusion of Shabbat. He therefore went to find a minyan in Meah Shearim, and he met up with our Rabbi who also had not davened Maariv. Our Rabbi spoke with the student for an hour and three-quarters about the Neturei Karta, who are against the State of Israel and against Tzahal at a time when the Master of the Universe shows us all of the signs of the Redemption and when everything written in Yechezkel chapter 36 is materializing before our eyes. After all of this, our Rabbi brought him to the shul of the Chasidim of Reb Arele Roth (a group known as Toldos Ahron who are intensely anti-Zionist), not by way of the main road but by way of the courtyard. When they entered the large hall, all eyes turned toward him, they finished the blessing after eating and they davened Maariv as if completely on fire. They then stood in line to say "shalom" to our Rabbi. After they left, the student asked, "Before we arrived I heard an hour and three-quarters against the Neturei Karta, and now they stand in line to say "shalom" to the Rav?" Our Rabbi responded, "One can learn from everyone. How to pray - this is here. You should know that when father, Ha-Rav ztz"l, desired prayer of 'all my bones would speak' (Tehillim 35:10), he would come here." Two weeks later, the student was walking in Meah Shearim, a Jew of the Chasidim of Reb Arele ran after him, "Send regards to Rav Tzvi Yehudah from so-and-so." When he related this to our Rabbi, he responded to him, "He is an expert in the writings of my father, Ha-Rav, but he learns them in secret, because if this was

discovered he would be in danger, as he was born into Neturei Karta." In fundamental and principled matters, our Rabbi did not differentiate between this stream and that stream. For example, in protests against autopsies, our Rabbi would always participate with different Orthodox streams. (Iturei Cohanim #248 - in the name of Ha-Rav Binyamin Eisner)



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

One or two chanukiyot

Question: If one has 80 shekel allocated to purchase a menorah for Chanukah, what is the preferable way to spend the money: buy one oil menorah for himself, or buy two candle menorahs - one for himself and give one to a poor person?

Answer: Buy two chanukiyot - one for yourself and one for a poor person.

Stories of our Rabbi

Question: You sometimes print "unsympathetic" stories about Torah scholars as quoted by Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook. Are these "lashon ha-ra"?

Answer: They are certainly not "lashon ha-ra" - it is forbidden to speak "lashon ha-ra." Recognizing the relative levels of Torah scholars is not "lashon ha-ra." There are major consequences for understanding the differing levels of Torah scholars. The Gemara says that we follow Rav in laws regarding to prohibitions and Shmuel in civil law. This is an important principle and it is not disrespect that Shmuel is less of an expert in religious laws and that Rav is less of an expert in civil law. A Jew once expressed his view of one Rabbi in relation to another by saying: "Who distinguishes between the holy and profane" (based on the blessing from Havdalah). He was taken to a Beit Din for disgracing a Torah scholar and he was found innocent. This case in brought in Shut Mahari Bruna. The Beit Din brought the Gemara from Baba Metzia (84b) as a proof: Rabbi Elazar Be-Rabbi Shimon died and Rebbe – Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi – was interested in marrying his widow. She responded: "Should one who was used for a holy purpose now be used for a profane one," i.e. Rebbe is profane compared to Rabbi Elazar Be-Rabbi Shimon. Rebbe said: "How do you know? You know how to learn Torah?" She said: "I did not know if he was greater in Torah - but I know that he was greater in deeds than you." We see from here that Rabbi Elazar Be-Rabbi Shimon's wife could distinguish between different levels of Torah scholar and based on this, Mahari Bruna says that it is permissible to say: ""Who distinguishes between the holy and profane." Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, would not say "Who distinguishes between the holy and profane," he would say: "Who distinguishes between the holy and holy" (based on Havdalah between Shabbat and a Yom Tov). All Torah scholars are holy and he said thousands of times that we must honor and respect all of them whether we agree or disagree with them. Along with this, he taught us that there are different levels of Torah scholars. We need to understand this since sometimes there are disputes and we must decide between the different positions. The Gemara therefore teaches us that there are different levels of Torah scholars.

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