



Parashat Bo 5769

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com

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

First Be a Person

[From "Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah" – Parashat Vaera – translated by R. Blumberg]

I have to improve in many realms, and I can't fight on all fronts at the same time. If you try for too much, you end up with nothing. So every year I pick an area to concentrate on. This year I've decided not to add Shabbat, Kashrut or proper concentration in prayer, but in order to be a person, you must be more ethical. Each morning we recite the words, "Always be a person who fears G-d in private and in public." First comes, "Always be a person" - this takes precedence. Only then, "Fear G-d in private and in public." And there as well, fearing G-d in private comes before fearing Him in public. We shouldn't just be putting on a show. Both morality and holiness are Divine, but morality comes first. You enter the lobby before you enter the palace.

I want very much to draw closer to G-d. I want very much to draw close to the verse, "Hashem, who will stay in Your tent, who will dwell upon Your holy mountain?" (Tehillim 15:1). The answer follows: "He who walks uprightly and creates justice, and speaks truth in his heart. He does not slander with his tongue. He does no harm to his neighbor; neither does he take up reproach upon his kinsman. A base person is despised in his eyes, and he honors the G-d-fearing; he takes an oath to his own detriment and does not retract. He does not give his money with interest, nor does he accept a bribe against the innocent; he who does these shall not falter forever" (15:2-5) I once heard a great rabbi from America say, "Before glatt kosher [perfect kashrut], one has to have glatt yosher [perfect integrity]." When I hear about religious people who cheated on income tax and were involved in all sorts of other dark monetary episodes, I am so embarrassed. When I hear about G-d-fearing people who are sunken in gossip, hatred, falsehood, base controversies, hypocrisy, insult, I just want to hide under the floor boards. I cannot say, "Hear, O Israel, Hashem is our G-d. Hashem is One," before I first mention G-d who "loves His people Israel," or who "lovingly chooses His people Israel."

And in fact, the Arizal ruled that one should not start praying until he says, "I undertake to fulfill, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

There's a story about a Jew who ran to catch a prayer service. Afterwards Rabbi Yisrael Salanter told him, "While you were running, perhaps you stepped on somebody's toes? Was it worth it?"

I know of a very respectable settlement in which the greatest number of traffic accidents occur during the minutes before minchah. That's worse!

There's another story about Rav Yisrael Salanter. It was his father's yahrzeit, but he passed on leading the prayers in favor of a Jew who was having a yahrzeit for his daughter. They asked him, "What about honoring your father?" and he answered, "Doing what I did is the greatest honor I could show him!"

I have therefore decided, "People come first." By such means, I shall reach holiness.



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 received a Shabbat challah cover with Hashem's Name (Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey) on it. Is it permissible to use it?

A: Yes, in a respectful manner. And wash it gently on its own by hand.

Q: Many bad things have recently happened to me and my wife: our baby is sick, we were both fired from our jobs and we fight a lot. As a result, our faith is weakening. How can we improve ourselves?

A: The essence is that you should be good friends. You will then have the strength to overcome anything.

Q: I have been observant for two years and I have been dating a man who has been observant for four years, and we are discussing getting married. My parents say that I need more time, and it is also often difficult for me to make decisions. I know that are they right, but I also know that a future with him looks good. How do I take into consideration what my family is saying without destroying what I have with him?

A: Four months is enough time. If you have doubts, go to a marriage counselor who is objective and he will help.

Q: Why does the younger child have a preference in the Tanach? For example, Kayin and Hevel, Yishmael and Yitzchak, Esav and Yaakov, Leah and Rachel, Menashe and Ephraim, David and his brothers, etc...

A: One needs to acquire preference through his efforts.

Q: Is it permissible occasionally or always to daven alone if I have greater concentration doing so?

A: You should always daven with a minyan. The advantage of davening with a minyan is greater than all other advantages.

Q: If someone break one of my things and I bought it for a certain price but it now costs more, how much does he have to pay?

A: It is a dispute. According to the Rambam – the price at the time of the damage, and according to the Raavad - the price at which it was bought.

Q: I sometimes see religious people who desecrate Hashem's name in public with their behavior, such as at the supermarket, on buses, etc... Can I point it out to them?

A: You should first gently ask them if they are interested in listening.

Q: Is it permissible to be a lawyer?

A: Yes. This is one way to help the downtrodden. Everything must obviously be done with uprightness and truth.

Q: If I see a cat attacking a bird, should I stop it?

A: You can but there is no obligation, it is the nature of the world.

Stories of Rabbenu — Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Our Rabbi and the Hebrew Date

"I received your letter with a date which I do not know or understand, since I am unfamiliar with the counting of time from the year of the birth of 'that sinner of Israel whom the non-Jews made into idol worship' [the words of my father, my teacher and my Rabbi, Ha-Rav Kook ztz"l in 'Igrot'], who practiced sorcery, enticed and led Israel astray (Sanhedrin 107), who caused Israel to be destroyed by the sword and its remnants scattered in humiliation, who exchanged the Torah and deceived the majority of the world to serve a god other than Hashem (Rambam, Hilchot Melachim chap. 11)." (Igrot Rabbenu from 24 Adar Rishon 5727)

Our Rabbi was particular that one should not write the Christian date, and when he was invited to a wedding and the Christian date appeared on the invitation, he would not attend the wedding. (Gadol Shimushah p. 91 #31)

A rabbi of a community outside of Israel visited our Rabbi, and during the conversation our Rabbi asked about the date of a particular event. The guest answered with the date according to their count. Our Rabbi said: "Excuse me, I did not hear." He raised his voice and repeated his words. Our Rabbi again said to him: "I did not hear," and again a third time. On the fourth time the guest understood what our Rabbi did not hear, and he told him the Hebrew date. Our Rabbi heard and smiled, and the guest apologized.

Our Rabbi agreed to participate in an important ceremony on behalf of the Municipality of Jerusalem, but when he saw that only the Christian date and not the Hebrew date, was on the announcement, he refused to attend, and all of the attempts at persuasion did not help.

When the ruling of Rav Ovadiah Yosef was publicized that there is no prohibition in using the Christian date and those who use it have what to rely on (Shut Yabia Omer vol. 3 Yoreh Deah #9), our Rabbi expressed deep pain. (see Le-Netivot Yisrael vol. 2 p. 239. From Shut Sheilat Shlomo 3:14)

He was amazed every time he saw a stamp on a letter in Israel which was marked with the date from the Creation of the World. (Gadol Shimushah pg. 93 #34)

A student once read a printed sentence "the seventeenth century" and added: "May they be blotted out," and it got good laugh from our Rabbi. (Iturei Coahnim #242 in the name of Ha-Rav Menachem Ha-Cohain)



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Early Davening

Question: I need to be at work early, requiring me to daven before the earliest time to put on Talit and Tefillin. Which is preferable – to put them on without a blessing and before Barechu move them and recite the blessing or put them on before Barechu?

Answer: Either way is acceptable. This exact question is discussed by Rav Ovadiah Yosef in Shut Yechaveh Da'at vol. 2 #8.



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

Be Strict About Loving Your Spouse

A great Rav said: Jews have a tendency to take upon themselves all sorts of stringencies, but the essence is to be strict about loving your spouse. In fact, the Arizal said that the main fulfillment of the verse "Love your fellow as yourself" is between husband and wife. This verse is brought numerous times in the Gemara, and the majority of them are in connection to a husband and wife. Certainly "the friend of a person" - with the definitive - is one's spouse. Before a person does kindnesses for the rest of the world, he is obligated to do good for his spouse. Everyone knows the halachic principle in the laws of Tzedakah: the poor of your city take precedence over the poor of another city. And the members of your family take precedence over the members of other families. And above all, one's spouse takes precedence over everyone else. This is the fundamental ethical obligation of a person. The fulfillment of this requirement should appear naturally and not in the category of a give and take, because the two of you have turned into one. Therefore, when a person gives to his spouse, he feels as if he is giving to himself. But on account of people's egos, this natural characteristic becomes distorted or is lacking, we must therefore support it with the aid of a deep, ethical recognition: your spouse takes precedence over the rest of humanity, and being strict in this mitzvah takes precedence over all other strictures.

Special thank you to Fred Casden for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parshah Sheet



Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim P.O.B. 1076 Jerusalem 91009 Tel.02-6284101 Fax.02-6261528

www.ateret.org.il To subscribe, send e-mail to: mororly@bezeqint.net

