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NOTE: This has been Rav Aviner's stated position for years.
See Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah vol. 3 #44 and Am Ve-Artzo vol. 2 #55

Rabbi Aviner in the News:

Visiting Nazi Death Camps Forbidden

By Kobi Nahshoni – from 1 Adar 5769 –

www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3675990,00.html

Prominent Zionist rabbi says leaving Land of Israel not for sake of mitzvah banned, as is helping Poles – who collaborated with Nazis – make living out of death camps

Educational school trips to the Nazi death camps in Poland have become common among most Jewish sectors in Israel, but prominent Zionist Rabbi Shlomo Aviner recently claimed that they are in fact forbidden for halachic reasons, and urged schools to cancel them.

Answering a reader's question on the subject in the religious "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshua" journal, Aviner stated that trips to Poland were "not good" due to the halachic ban on leaving Eretz Israel, and because they "provide livelihood to murderers."

In a conversation with Ynet, [Rav] Aviner explained: "As is well known, leaving Israel is permitted only for the sake of mitzvah, while visiting the death camps is not defined as a mitzvah by the Halacha. There are important figures and great rabbis who have not visited there.

"Clearly what happened in the Holocaust must be remembered, but this can be done using films, books, the Yad Vashem museum and there are even the testimonies of survivors who are still alive," he stated.

And what about the emotional experience?

"I once told educators that in any case the impression vanishes after six months, like any other emotional experience with a short shelf life. They smiled and said that it actually fades away after three weeks."

[Rav] Aviner also said that the trips have not been proven to have an "educational value." "For some this experience is very difficult and they come back utterly distraught," he added.

'Why should Nazi collaborators benefit?'

Another argument against visiting the camps, according to the rabbi, was the fact that the Polish people "collaborated with the Nazis" and were now making a living off of these visits. "I'm not busy holding a grudge against the Poles, but we shouldn't provide livelihood to people who allowed death camps to be built on their land and who are now making a profit out of it.

"They are not my friends and I don't want to support them."

According to [Rav] Aviner, it was not accidental that the Nazis chose to erect the extermination camps in Poland. "They knew that the people would do nothing. One person was enough to blow up the railroad tracks. Why wasn't this done? Because they all said, 'good,' smiled and waited for what needed to be done to be done by the Nazis.

"Many Jews who escaped from the camps were later murdered outside by the Polish resistance. When the Jews came back to the city their houses were inhabited and they faced a pogrom. To this day trials are being held against Poles who stole houses," he concluded.



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