



From the teachings of the
Rosh Yeshiva of Ateret Yerushalayim
Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

Parashat Tetzave 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

Each Drop is a Mitzvah

[From "Ma'anayei Ha-Yeshua" – Parashat Mishpatim 5769]

If global warming continues, we can expect difficult years of a lack of water ahead. Although water covers two-thirds of the earth's surface, it does not help us since it is mostly salt water. Only 2.5% is not salt water. Of this amount, two-thirds is found in icebergs and frozen rivers and one-fifth is found in desolate areas. And even the water found in settled areas, the majority comes at the wrong time or in the wrong way, i.e. monsoons or floods. In sum: mankind only uses 0.09% of the earth's water.

As a result, 20% of humanity does not have access to clean water. 50% of them live without minimal hygiene – on account of a lack of water. A lack of water also hurts agriculture which requires huge quantities of water. For example, in order to grow a ton of wheat in China, they need 1000 tons of water. As a result, there are 850 million hungry people on the face of the earth. 30,000 children under the age of five die every day, i.e. almost a million a month on account of hunger or sicknesses which is easily preventable with the help of hygiene. Three million people die every year from drinking contaminated water. Three million babies die during childbirth because their mothers drink contaminated water during pregnancy. If we continue in the same direction, the situation will become even more severe. During the next 20 years, the need will rise by 20%. In the next 10 years, there will be 20% less water for agriculture. Millions more will be hungry and thirsty.

Blessed is the One who has given us life, sustained us and brought us to this time that we are in our Land. But even here the situation is not simple. Because of the small amount of rain, the Kinneret – the central reservoir of the country – not only does not reach the lower red line which warns of danger, but does not reach the black line in which it is no longer possible to draw water for the national pipeline, the life-giving artery of the country. The wells are also become more salty because of the penetration of ground water. Baruch Hashem, there are various solutions: desalination of sea water. This is an expensive solution, but we hope it will develop. So too, reusing purified sewage water for agricultural needs, which is less expensive than new water or desalinated water.

How to solve the national and - all the more so - the global problem of water is not our issue. But we as Jews must conserve water. It is possible to conserve water in our daily activities. We can obviously fill mikvaot and wash "netilat yadayim" with a full cup. But do not waste water. Here are a few general principles:

The Kitchen (20% of household needs - 30 liters a day per person): Close the tap when between rinsing the dishes. Lessening the quantity of water without effecting comfort can save a third of the water. Also, do not run the dishwasher until it is full.

The bathroom (35% of household needs - 55 liters a day per person): Flush with the smaller flush capacity (most toilets in Israel have two options for flushing). This saves 18 liters a day per person. When possible, change from a 9 liter water tank to a 6 liter tank.

Washing and showering (35% of household needs - 55 liters per day): Close the tap when soaping your hands or brushing your teeth. Do not take long showers.

Washing machine (5% of household needs - 8 liters a day person): Only run it when it is full.

Do not water your garden in a wasteful manner. Furthermore, design a water-conserving garden.

Washing a car: Only with a pail of water and not with a hose (it is forbidden according to law and there is a fine).

Leaky faucets: this is a huge waste of water without realizing it. In order to verify it, shut off the taps in the house and the lawn and see if there is a difference in the water meter. Leaking can be fixed by changing the washer. A leaky toilet can be checked by placing toilet paper under it. If it is wet, change the sealant.

Reuse the water which drips from the air conditioner for watering plants.

Dear children, do not have water fights. This is not the time.

Reporting: If you see water being wasted by government authorities or institutions, please report it.

The water level is getting lower and lower, and each drop we save adds up to be a huge amount. We love the mitzvot, we rejoice in fulfilling them and we search for ways to fulfill them. And now, we have an available mitzvah at every moment - the mitzvah of settling the Land is equivalent to all of the other mitzvot in the Torah. Each drop is a mitzvah.

And as in everything, we must combine action and pray. We should therefore pray for rain in our Land: both as individuals and publicly. Bless us with a year of goodness and give us dew and rain as a blessing.



Text Message Respon



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 for a girl to touch a brother-in-law or cousin?

A: No. There are laws of modesty which apply to all relatives except for parents and grandparents. There are also leniencies for siblings.

Q: Should one stand for an elderly or an important woman?

A: For a woman over 70, a woman who is a Torah scholar, or the wife of a Torah scholar.

Q: Is it permissible to give directions to a Jew who is driving on Shabbat?

A: No, it is aiding one who is transgressing, unless there is potential danger. You should politely avoid answering by saying that you do not know.

Q: But isn't there a concern that if he does not know the way, he will drive more and thus increase his transgression?

A: But we do not perform a mitzvah through of a transgression.

Q: What is the minimum price for an engagement ring?

A: There are no rules since there is no obligation to give one. It is a new practice. On the contrary, one must be careful that it is not the betrothal itself.

Q: What is the Halachic source for the prohibition of leaving the Land of Israel?

A: Rambam, Melachim 5:9. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 531:5.

Q: Is it permissible for a man to groom his eyebrows or remove hair from between them?

A: It is forbidden because of "Lo Yibash" (men may not wear women's clothing or accessories or perform cosmetic acts of women), since this is the custom of women.

Q: I had a cut on my finger and when I was kneading dough a little blood was absorbed into it. What is the status of the dough?

A: Human blood is only forbidden when recognizable. Since it is absorbed and unrecognizable, there is no prohibition.

Q: I have heard that the Redemption is going to occur this year. It is true?

A: No one knows the future in this area. But the Redemption began more than one hundred years ago with the building of the Land, the ingathering of the exiles, the establishment of the State, the military victories, and the return of the Torah to the Land of Israel.

Q: I live on a settlement in the Shomron and leaving involves driving through a dangerous area. Is it permissible to recite "Tefillat Ha-Derech" on a short distance?

A: Yes, even for a very short distance.

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

Advice

Our Rabbi did not force his opinion on his students, rather he would suggest, explain and attempt to convince. During the period of major settlement activity, he never instructed anyone to participate, but sent a note which emphasized its importance and added: "One who feels a need," it is proper for him to work for the sake of Eretz Yisrael. Even those who requested his personal advice, our Rabbi would not force his opinion on them, but explain the essential principles according to the Torah so that they could decide on their own. (Ha-Rav Elisha Aviner)

Our Rabbi would not respond to those who turned to him for advice with specifics, but would discuss the general issues to help them to decide. He did not want to create Chasidim who hung on his every word, but that each person should create his own individuality. (Ha-Rav Tzefaniyah Derori)

A student asked him if he should accept a rabbinic position in a certain place. He did not answer positively or negatively, but counseled him to travel there to see the reality. The student returned and reported to our Rabbi that people told him that there is nothing to do there. Our Rabbi responded: If that is so, you must go there. (Ha-Rav Tzefaniyah Derori)

A student asked our Rabbi which political party he should vote for. Our Rabbi did not answer him but explained at length the different perspectives. The student repeated his question, but our Rabbi explained the different advantages of each party. The student did not receive an answer, and our Rabbi asked the student to decide on his own. (Ha-Rav Mordechai Sadeh)



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Blessing when seeing one of the great Rabbis of our generation

Question: Has Ha-Rav ever recited the blessing of "Blessed is He who apportioned from His wisdom to those who fear Him" when seeing a Torah scholar (Berachot 58a and Shulchan Aruch 224:6)?

Answer: There is a dispute whether this blessing should be recited. Some refrain from reciting the blessing over Torah scholars because no one reaches the level of a Torah scholar as defined by our Sages (see Aruch Ha-Shulchan ibid. #6), but the Chayei Adam (63:8) ruled that it should be recited over the leading Torah scholars of each generation. The Piskei Teshuvah (vol. 2, siman 224 ,note 17) quoted many sources which indicate that this blessing was indeed recited by our great Rabbis: Ha-Rav Shimon Menashe – the Rav of Hevron - recited it for Maharil Diskin when he came to visit Ma'arat Ha-Macheplah (beginning of the book "Melo Ha-Omer). Ha-Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld recited it upon seeing Ha-Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, Rosh Yeshivat Hevron, when he visited Yerushalayim (Marbitzei Torah U-Musar vol. 1, p. 325). In Shut Shevet Ha-Levi (10:13 #3), Ha-Rav Shmuel Wosner said that he remembers that it was recited for the Rogachover when he came to Vienna. In Halichot Shlomo (Tefillah – chap. 23 note 157), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach related that he saw it recited for the Chazon Ish and the Chazon Ish smiled and did not say anything. In Orchot Rabbenu (vol. 1, p. 227), the Steipler Gaon told his son, Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski, that the blessing should be recited for the Griz (Rav Velvele Soloveitchik - Rosh Yeshivat Brisk). And in Tal Re'iyah (p. 87), our Rabbi Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah said in the name of Maran Ha-Rav Kook that the Netziv recited it for the Aderet (Rav Kook's father-in-law) when they visited in Warsaw. Rav Aviner said that he remembers hearing this blessing recited twice: for Ha-Rav Avraham Shapira (Rosh Yeshivat Mercaz Ha-Rav) and for Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef when he visited Moshav Keshet in the Golan (where Rav Aviner served as Rabbi).

It is also worthwhile to mention what Rav Aviner adds in Shut Sheilat Shlomo (vol. 1 #117) regarding the visit of Rav Ovadiah to Moshav Keshet: Someone asked me: "Why does Rav

Ovadiah Yosef wear clothing with silver embroidery?" I answered: "This is the traditional dress of the Sefardic Chief Rabbi throughout the generation, as we see in pictures, and why should he change the custom of those who preceded him?" I saw that he was not satisfied. I said: "Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef's humility is well-known," but he was still not satisfied! I told him a story, and even though it is not exactly the same, it is similar: "Before Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk made aliyah with his student in order to establish a Chasidic settlement in the Land of Israel, he went to visit Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonne, a great student of the Baal Shem Tov. He arrived in Polonne with a coach harnessed with three horses, which was considered glorious. This act greatly upset the Chasidim of Polonne, since their Rebbe was accustomed to a modest and frugal lifestyle. This was even more so when they saw Rabbi Menachem Mendel enter the house of their Rebbe dressed in bejeweled clothing with a long incense in his mouth. Everyone expected Rabbi Yaakov Yosef, who was known as to be stern, to expel the visitor from his house. But the Rebbe went out to greet his guest, received him at the entrance to his house with great love, kissed and hugged him, and spoke with him in private for several hours. When Rabbi Menachem Mendel departed, the students asked their Rebbe: 'What did our Rabbi see in this man who was brazen enough to come to the Rebbe's house in a coach harnessed by three horses, with a long incense in his mouth and with shoes bejeweled with silver inlays?' The Rebbe said: 'It once happened that a king went out to war and hid all of his treasures in a safe place, and he buried the most precious jewels of his fortune in a pile of dirt, being certain that no one would look for them there. So too, Rabbi Menachem Mendel hides his humility under a pile of dirt of arrogance so that the forces of evil will not touch it.'" He was satisfied.

Blessing when seeing a non-Jewish scholar

Question: Has Ha-Rav ever recited the blessing of "Blessed is He who gave from His wisdom to flesh and blood when seeing a non-Jewish scholar? (Berachot 58a and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 224:7)?

Answer: I was going to recite it once when I was studying in university. Prof. Louis De Broglie, who won the Nobel Prize for postulating the wave nature of electrons, one of the bases of quantum physics, was coming to give a lecture. I was unable to attend and therefore did not recite it.

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

