



Behar-Bechukotai 5769

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Pope Benedict XVI's Visit to Israel

[Talk given in the yeshiva during lunch]

"And the bad angel will say: amen" (see Shabbat 119b). This is the Church which has been obligated to admit, reluctantly, that the State of Israel exists, since the fundamental claim of the Catholics is that they are the true Israel - "Verus Israel" in Latin. It is for this reason that they have murdered us throughout the entire course of their history: thousands of Jews, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. They have never been our friends. They say that they are the true Nation of Israel and all of the prophecies concerning returning to Zion therefore refer to them. But with Hashem's kindness, we returned to Eretz Yisrael. In fact, before the establishment of the State of Israel, the Pope (Pius VII) sent a letter to all of the Christians in the world – Catholics and non-Catholics – urging them to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel because it would be the destruction of Christianity and a slap in the face to the fundamental theological principle of Christians that they are the Nation of Israel. Nonetheless, the State of Israel was established and was victorious. But they said that the State of Israel does not exist.

During the last visit of the Pope (John Paul II) in 5760, he already acknowledged the State of Israel, and many Catholic communities, such as in Poland, threatened him, that if he were to take another step in the direction of the State of Israel, they would disassociate from him and make a separate Pope. When Golda Meir was received by the Pope (Paul VI) at the Vatican in 5733 with the flags of the State of Israel, he was essentially acknowledging that we have a State, as it says in Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah (Yehadut Ve-Natzrut, p. 44) that this was a fulfillment of the verse "for darkness shall cover the land" (Yeshayahu 60:2), which is their shame at having to acknowledge us.

But this same Pope (Paul VI) did not acknowledge the State of Israel at all during the first visit of a Pope after the establishment of the State in the year 5723. The newspaper of the Vatican, L'Osservatore Romano, publicized that the Pope was preparing to visit the holy places. There was no mention of the State or the Prime Minister, but that he was coming to visit the holy sites. And how did he arrive? By

way of Jordan. But there was no passageway from Jordan there, so they made a special hole in the border near Megido in order for the Pope to enter. He went in a roundabout way, as it is written: "The wicked go around" (Tehillim 12:9), and he entered the State through his hole and all of the heads of the State waiting for him there. At that time, there was only one Chief Rabbi of Israel, the previous Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi had passed away and his successor had yet to be chosen. There was therefore only the Sefardic Chief Rabbi: Ha-Rav Yitzchak Nissim. They told him: In the position of Chief Rabbi, you need to come and greet the Pope. He said: I am not going. If he wants to come to my office, I accept any visitor. I am not going to Megido to greet him. They said: you are obligated. He said: I am not obligated. They pressured him through Mafdal (a Religious-Zionist political party). He would not be pressured. They hinted to him: If you do not go there, they will replace you. He said: Let them replace me. In short: he did not go. The Pope entered through Megido and all of the heads of the State waited for him, but he did not greet them and did not even look even look at them. After he left the country, he sent a letter to the President and not the Prime Minister, and he sent it to Tel Aviv and not Jerusalem: thank you for hosting me. People said: Ha-Rav Nissim preserved the honor of the State of Israel. This is similar to: "Mordechai did not kneel or bow down" (Esther 3:2) – Mordechai did not bow down because he was from the offspring of Binyamin, who did not bow down to Esav (see Me-Am Loez ibid.). Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, sent him a letter: Yashar Koach!

Even before the previous story, there were all sorts of terrorist activities and we blew up some planes in the airport in Beirut. The Pope (Paul VI) wrote in L'Osservatore Romano that this was the blackest day in world history since we were brazen enough to penetrate the sovereign territory of another nation and cause desolation. Ha-Rav Nissim responded: Destroying planes is the blackest day, but them entering here and murdering people is fine! They said to him: You need to be gentle. One cannot express himself this way to the Pope. He said: one can express himself this way. They asked him: Write that your words were misunderstood and taken out of context. He said: My words were understood correctly and were not taken out of context. The media in Israel attacked him but the media outside of Israel attacked the Pope. In the end, the Pope released a statement that his words were misunderstood and were taken out of context.

May we be strong and strengthen ourselves in the merit of Ha-Rav Nissim!



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 go to a standup comedy night during Sefirat Ha-Omer?

A: No. It is forbidden all year because of "moshav leitzim - frivolity," and all-the-more-so now.

Q: I am about to be married and I had a dream that my grandparents told me that I should not get married. What should I do?

A: It does not mean anything. Get married. If you are concerned, recite the "Hatavat Chalom" (improvement of a dream) which is printed in the siddur before three friends.

Q: I saw an extremely immodest picture on the cell phone of one of my Rabbis. I am shocked and do not know what to think about him.

A: He is righteous, but not an angel – a person is judged by the majority of his deeds.

Q: Should an "Oleh Chadash" (new immigrant) say Shehechyanu on receiving his Tehudat Zehut (identity card)?

A: Yes. Wonderful news!

Q: A person who learns Torah and performs mitzvot but speaks Lashon Ha-Ra, do his merits remain with him when he arrives in heaven?

A: His merits will be transferred to the person/s about whom he spoke ill. Chovot Ha-Levavot.

Q: To my distress, I spoke Lashon Ha-Ra about someone and that person do not know about it. How do I fix it?

A: Fix it with those who heard.

Q: Is it permissible to eat fish with cheese?

A: Some are strict, but it is permissible.

Q: I truly want to wake up early, but I do not succeed.

A: Use the aid of a radio or friend. Exert yourself! The beginning is difficult, but it will get easier after five times.

Q: At which holy place should a groom daven on the day of his wedding?

A: The Kotel.

Q: Is it permissible to write a verse from the Tanach on the glass which will be broken at the wedding?

A: No. It is erasing a verse.

Q: Should one engage in "Hitbodedut" (secluded meditation) and what does one do?

A: "Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh" - personal accounting. Mesilat Yesharim, chap. 3.

Q: A father of an extremely sick child said that he is willing to be in the child's place. Does he need to do anything or will heaven not judge him for something said in a time of pain?

A: He spoke well and does not need to worry at all.

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

Our Rabbi & the Kotel – Part 2

Our Rabbi only went to the Kotel on foot, and even from the yeshiva (which is quite a far walk), and said: "We only go to the Kotel on foot." Only in his later years, when he was already unable to walk, did he agree to travel by car.

Students who lived outside of Yerushalayim came to visit him and told him that they wanted to travel to the Kotel. He said to them that he would have spent more time with them, but he cannot "compete with the Kotel."

At a time of distress a student requested from our Rabbi to pray for him. Our Rabbi hurried to go to the Kotel, because things are heard there.

Our Rabbi would not simply go to the Kotel at any opportunity. He said: "I do not go to the Kotel every day, but only when there is a need and a feeling, the Kotel is a special place, a place from which the Divine Presence does not depart."

Mechitza at the Kotel

After the Six-Day War, when the discussion arose about erecting a mechitza to separate men and women at the Kotel, Our Rabbi said that in the place where a person comes to seclude himself with his Creator in Heaven and to turn his eyes upward in prayer, it is simple logic that we must remove any seduction that might force him to turn his eyes downward and disturb his focus (The book "Rav Ha-Kotel of Rav Simchah Raz pg. 239 and see Sichot Rabbenu 9, Ish Ve-Isha 15).

Excavations of the Kotel Tunnels and Finding the Temple Implements

After the liberation of the Old City during the Six-Day War, there were extensive excavations of the Kotel Tunnels, which extend under the Temple Mount. Ha-Rav Meir Yehudah Getz, Rav of the Kotel, asked our Rabbi, is it permissible to excavate under the Temple Mount to find the Temple implements? Our Rabbi answered, "No, do not dig." Our generation is still not ready to merit discovering the treasures of the Temple. (The book "Rav Ha-Kotel" p. 306)



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Cherry Tree and Tomato Plant

Q: I have a cherry tree which is about two meters high growing outside my house in a large flower pot with a plate underneath resting on concrete. I would like to plant in the same pot a tomato plant that I bought. Can I do this or is this "Kilayim" (forbidden mixtures)?

A: It is forbidden to plant a tree and a vegetable together.

Affection between Married Brother and Sister

Q: Is it permissible for a married brother to kiss his married sister by way of greeting when they see each other from time to time?

A: No, based on Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 152:10.

*From Rav Aviner's Commentary on Birkat Ha-Mazon,
entitled Shir Ha-Ma'a lot*

Zimun – Invitation

"Three people who ate [bread] together are required to join in a zimun [the collective invitation to bless together after eating]" (Mishnah Berachot 7:1). What did our

Rabbis see in the mitzvah of blessing after eating to establish that it be performed in a partnership? Ha-Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch explained that the daily struggle to survive is liable to transform people into enemies, and when a person rules over his fellow it is to the first person's detriment. Therefore, particularly after people have pleasure from the goodness of this world, it is proper that they unite together to give gratitude to God with love and fraternity without jealousy or rivalry. When they remember that the source of goodness is the Master of the Universe, people will be reminded that all of us have one Father and we will be bound together in friendship (commentary on the siddur). The earliest source of the zimun is our forefather Avraham himself, the island of kindness, who would generously provide from his goodness to anyone who passed by. Our Sages relate that after they ate and drank and were ready to bless him, he would say to them: Did you eat of mine? Thank, praise and bless He who spoke and the world came into being (Sotah 10b).

By the way, the opening of the zimun, "Rabotai nevarech – Gentlemen, let us bless," or similar phrases, do not have their source in the Talmud but in the Zohar, based on the idea that all matters of holiness require invitation, and that anything that involves holiness requires preparation (Zohar, beginning of Devarim). Something involving holiness is not to be done casually, such as people performing commandments by rote (see Yeshayahu 29:13), rather one must prepare one's soul: Know before whom you stand.

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