



Balak 5769

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Response from Ha-Rav Aharon Ziegler

In the parashah sheet for Chukat in the Text Message Responsa, Rav Aviner was asked: Is it preferable for a woman to daven in shul or at home? And he answered: It is a personal decision.

We received the following responsa from Ha-Rav Aharon Ziegler (author of "Halakhic Positions of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik" vol. 1, 2, 3 and 4): "My learning with Rav Yosef B. Soloveitchik taught me that women who daven (pray Shemoneh Esrei) in the Ezrat Nashim (Women's Section) of a shul where there is a minyan of ten men are part of the "Tefila Betzibur" (communal prayer). So why shouldn't women strive to be part of that?"

Rav Aviner's response: It is a "ma'ala" (spiritual benefit) for a woman to daven in a shul where there is a minyan, but it is not an obligation. Therefore, it is a personal choice for a woman - based on all sorts of factors - whether she wants the "ma'ala" or not.

Shehechyanu on Being Drafted into Tzahal

[Sefer Al Diglo pp. 162-164 and Sefer Me-Chayil El Chayil vol. 1, pp. 320-322]

Question: When a person is drafted to serve in Tzahal, and is exceedingly joyful, is he obligated or permitted to recite the blessing Shehechyanu (which is recited at a joyous occasion)?

Answer: The Gemara in Berachot (37b) and Menachot (75b) states that if one is standing in Jerusalem in the Temple and offers menachot (meal-offerings), he recites Shehechyanu. Rashi explained that this refers to an experienced cohan who has not offered this sacrifice for a substantial period of time. Tosafot wrote that this refers to a cohan who serves in the Temple only twice a year, and therefore performs this

mitzvah at specific times. The Rambam (Hilkhos Temidim U-Musafim 7:18), however, is convinced that the same passage is talking about a cohen who has yet to offer such a sacrifice in the Temple and Shehechianu is thus recited on a mitzvah that is performed for the first time. Similarly, the Rokeach (#371) maintained that any mitzvah performed for the first time is accompanied with a Shehechianu. While there are some who disagree with the Rambam and Rokeach, the Rama in the Shulhan Arukh (Yoreh Deah 28:2) ruled that one recites Shehechianu when one fulfills the mitzvah of covering the blood of a sacrifice for the first time, and the Yavetz (in his siddur) ruled that it should be said when lighting the Chanukah menorah for the first time.

When the Gerrer Rebbe (Ha-Rav Avraham Mordechai Alter known as the Imrei Emet) visited Israel, he purchased wheat for Pesach for Shemurah Matzah, and merited fulfilling the mitzvah of separating Terumah and Ma'aser (different types of tithes). Maran Ha-Rav Kook, who at the time was Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim, pointed out to him that since this was the first time he was fulfilling this mitzvah, he should recite Shehechianu. He further reasoned that the joy of coming to Eretz Yisrael adds to the joy of fulfilling this mitzvah for the first time, making it certain that he can recite Shehechianu. After a discussion, the Gerrer Rebbe followed Maran Ha-Rav Kook's instruction and recited Shehechianu, since Ha-Rav Kook was the "the Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim" and the leading authority on the Laws regarding the Land of Israel ("Chayei Ha-Re'eiyah" pp. 117-119, "Moadei Ha-Re'eiyah" pp.215-217 and "Likutei Ha-Re'eiyah" vol. 2, p. 140). In Shut Orach Mishpat (pp. 268-269), our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, discussed his father's ruling, and enumerated the many authorities who hold that Shehechianu is recited the first time a mitzvah is performed. Thus, the great mitzvah of being drafted into Tzahal, which protects the Land of Israel and the People of Israel, is certainly worthy of a Shehechianu.

Furthermore, the Tosafot (Sukkah 46a) wrote that when a person fulfills a mitzvah which has an aspect of "simcha - joy," he recites Shehechianu (the Tur, Orach Chaim 223, also brings this ruling). The Rambam (Hilkhos Berachos 11:9) limited this to dwelling in the sukkah, lifting the lulav, reading the megillah and lighting the Chanukah menorah since these are mitzvot which are performed periodically. But Rav David Abudraham (Hilchos Berachos, sha'ar 3) disagreed with the Rambam and wrote, in the name of the Geonim, that one recites Shehechianu for any mitzvah that contains both joy and a physical benefit. And we see this idea in the Tosefta that Shehechianu is recited by one who separates Terumos and Ma'asros (different types of tithes) since he is joyful over gathering the fruits (Berachos, chap.7 and see Talmudic Encyclopedia vol. 4, p. 442 note 131), as does one who celebrates on Purim and Chanukah since there is the joy of salvation, one who lifts up the Lulav since there is joy and a physical benefit from its pleasant smell, and one who blows the shofar since our remembrance ascends before Hashem. Similarly, in our case, there is

great joy since we have a country, independence and an army to protect our people and our Land.

Rav Chaim Palagi (19th-20th c., Izmir, Shut Lev Chaim vol. 3, #33) was asked whether one should recite Shehechyanu upon making aliyah, and he concluded that one should not recite the blessing for two reasons: we do not recite a blessing over a mitzvah which is not performed at specific times and one only recites this blessing when there is joy. However Jews in the Land of Israel are overcome with grief even more so than outside of Israel. For example, when they pray musaf [on holidays] at the Kotel and say, "Because of our sins we were exiled from our Land," they burst out weeping. But this reason no longer applies in a rebuilt and flourishing Israel, a reunited city of Yerushalayim, and with the Kotel and Temple Mount under Jewish sovereignty. Moreover, the first reason (as we saw) is a dispute. Therefore, Rav Mordechai Fogelman, former Rav in Kiryat Motzkin, Haifa (Shut Beit Mordechai, siman #28) ruled that one should recite Shehechyanu upon making aliyah, and similarly (ibid. siman 23), the first time one visits the Kotel after its liberation. This is also true in our case of being drafted into Tzahal.

Further proof can be brought from the fact that Shehechyanu is recited over new clothes, and the soldiers, after being drafted, receive their Tzahal uniforms. While most of the clothing is lent to the soldier, there are some which are given permanently, such as towels, shoes and, sometimes, extra uniforms. While these are given solely for military use, they are under the ownership of the soldier. Even though towels and shoes are not especially important (and would therefore not merit the blessing of Shehechyanu for new clothing), one could say that the fact that they are part of a Tzahal uniform gives them importance. Also, perhaps they are considered important since they are given to the soldier for a lengthy period of time. A similar idea is seen in the halachah that one who rents an apartment in the Land of Israel is required to affix a mezuzah immediately because of the mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael - settling the Land of Israel (Menachot 44a - unlike in exile where one has thirty days to affix it when renting) (this does not follow Rashi's explanation). Similarly, in the Pesachim (105a), the students of Rav were eating a meal on Friday afternoon and they asked Rav Hamnuna Saba to check whether nightfall had come. If it had, they would recite Bircat Ha-Mazon, remove the tables (to indicate the change from the weekday to Shabbat), and recite Kiddush in order to start the Shabbat meal. Rav Hamnuna Saba replied that there was no need to check if nightfall had come, because the very onset of Shabbat makes the meal designated for Shabbat (and nothing need be done). The Rashbam explained that because of delight of eating on Shabbat, even a light meal is designated for Shabbat (See Beitzah 34b in which this same idea is used in designating foods for tithing on Shabbat). Thus, the importance of Shabbat can transform the temporary nature to something of permanence, i.e. a snack being considered a full meal. The importance of serving in Tzahal can therefore transform the temporary lending of a Tzahal uniform into a more permanent possession.

Finally, the Bach (Orach Chaim #29) wrote that there is a major difference between the blessing of Shehechyanu and all others blessings: since the Shehechyanu is recited over joy, one does not violate taking Hashem's name in vain by reciting it, even in a case where it is not certain that it should be recited. And even though there are those who disagree (Pri Megadim, chap. 225), it is possible to rely on the Bach's opinion.

Therefore, a soldier who is drafted into Tzahal, and receives a uniform, and is exceedingly joyful is permitted to recite the blessing of Shehechyanu.



Text Message Response

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 feel that there is no love between my parents, and it hurts me. If I point it out to my mother I think she will be angry. What should I do?

A: It is worthwhile to ask your mother and talk about it.

Q: When I was a kid I stole 20 shekels from a store and I now regret it. The store is long gone and I have no way of locating the owner. What should I do?

A: In a case such as this, you should give Tzedakah.

Q: I want to overcome my trait of anger. What should I do?

A: Read a lot of Mesillat Yesharim.

Q: I want to live in Eretz Yisrael in every sense. What should I do?

A: In a spiritual sense, you should learn the Torah. In a physical sense, you should live in the Land, help build and develop the Land, and guard the Land by serving in the army.

Q: How does one acquire a friend?

A: A friendship is created gradually building a connection, step-by-step.

Q: Is it permissible to enter a monastery or church during a trip?

A: Certainly not. It is idol worship.

Q: There are those who hold that Torah learning protects the State more than the army?

A: We need both. Not one without the other. See Niddah 70b.

Q: Is it permissible to daven on a plane in the aisle when it bothers others who need to pass?

A: One should not fulfill this mitzvah when as a result it bothers others. This is also the ruling on Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach that we should not daven with a minyan on a plane if it bothers other.

Q: Is it permissible to learn Yoga?

A: The technique is permissible since it is like other types of relaxation, but not the faith behind it which is based on idol worship.

Q: If I am in the middle of davening and my Rabbi or father enters. Do I stand in his honor?

A: Yes. One should fulfill this mitzvah even in the middle of davening.

Q: Is it permissible for me to nurse my baby where there are people if I am covered?

A: Yes, you should be on the side as much as possible.

Q: Is there truth in telling the future through tarot cards?

A: Nonsense. It is forbidden because of "Do not engage in sorcery" (Vayikra 19:26).

Q: Does one have to wash "netilat yadayim" when leaving the bathroom?

A: No, it is an act of piety. It is enough to wash your hands.

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to ride a bike?

A: Yes, with a modest skirt.

Q: Is there a source for not buying anything before birth?

A: No, it is superstition.

Q: Is it permissible for a mourner during Shiva to take a shower?

A: Quickly and with lukewarm water if he is suffering.

Q: Is it permissible to carry a bus pass on Shabbat to use after Shabbat?

A: No, it is muktzeh and preparing on Shabbat for a weekday.

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

"And His mercies extend to all of His works" - Part 3

Once at the beginning of our Rabbi's class, a small bug jumped on to his book. On account of his righteousness, he did not want to hurt it, did not begin the class and stared at it. He pointed out that it is interesting that something so small has a will and can decide whether to move forwards or backwards. We not only have the concept of "How great are Your works, Hashem" (Tehillim 104:24) but also "How minute are Your works, Hashem." And he mentioned how Rabbi Yochanan was amazed by an ant (Chullin 63a and see Kol Yehudah on Sefer Ha-Kuzari 1, 68b). The class was therefore delayed. One of our Rabbi's students, a Rabbi and Torah scholar, who was sitting next to him, seeing the continued delay, took the book and removed the bug by blowing on it. Our Rabbi did not respond or say anything, and began the class.

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

May it please You - addition for Shabbat

Shabbat is a day of pleasure on which we are saved from distress, grief and lament in three ways as mentioned by the prophet Yeshayahu: "On the day Hashem will give you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear, and from the hard work which you were made to perform" (Yeshayahu 14:3). Before anything, one needs a rest for his body because of difficult physical work. There are people however whose work is

easy, but it takes a heavy burden on one's soul, and it requires a psychological rest "from your fear." Furthermore, it is possible that the work is not a burden on a person either physically or emotionally, but it does not fill him with spiritual meaning, and he therefore feels alienation and deep frustration. The Shabbat therefore comes to liberate him "from your sorrow." Shabbat is an intimate day between a person and his Creator, "Between Me and the Children of Israel, it is an eternal sign" (Shemot 31:17).

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