



Re'eh 5769

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Swine Flu

[From Ha-Rav's Video Blog]

Because of the outbreak of Swine Flu, one doctor requested that we ask the public not to kiss the mezuzah on the door of the health clinic (which many have in Israel) since it may transmit the illness. If this is so, then we should also refrain from kissing the mezuzah in hospitals and, in fact, everywhere. There is no halachah that we must kiss the mezuzah. It is an expression of our love of the mitzvah. Kissing the mezuzah is not mentioned in the Shulchan Aruch. What is mentioned is placing your hand on it when leaving and entering (285:2 in the Rama). It is possible that there is no concern of transferring the illness by simply touching it but one should not put his hand to his mouth afterwards. The essence is not kissing or touching the mezuzah, the essence is fulfilling what is written within it as the Rambam says at the end of Hilchot Mezuzah (6:13) that one should distance himself from the vanities of time and cling to the Master of the Universe. And may the following be fulfilled through us: "Heal us, Hashem and we will be healed, save us and we will be save" (from the "Shemoneh Esrei").

The Holiness of the State of Israel

[Sefer Al Diglo #33]

Question: I have seen various times that the State of Israel is referred to as a holy entity. It is not clear to me, however, why it is not enough to say that the State is the beginning of the Redemption (Atchalta De-Geulah). Why do we also have to call it holy, something which does not seem correct in reality?

Answer: The State of Israel is a holy entity, because it is a mitzvah, as the Ramban explains that it is incumbent upon us to possess the Land, and not abandon it into the hands of other nations (positive mitzvah #4, addendum to Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of the Rambam), i.e. that we are required to establish a state and a mitzvah is holy, as evidenced in the formula of the blessing, "Who sanctifies us with His commandments." Even though there are problematic aspects in the State, which need to be corrected with all our might, this does not diminish the holiness of the State,

which in its essence is the dominion of the Nation of Israel over its Land. For example, the mitzvah of tzitzit remains holy, even if the man who is wearing it is discussing frivolous matters.



Text Message Responsa

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah," "Olam Ha-Katan" and "Be-Ahavah U-Be-Eumnah." Here's a sample:

Q: Hasn't the time come to change the wording of "Nachem" (which we recite on Tisha Be-Av) which describes Jerusalem as the destroyed, shamed and desolate city?

A: Please come and visit our yeshiva "Ateret Yerushalayim" which is located in the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem, in the so-called "Muslim Quarter," and you will be convinced on the spot to leave it as is (since on the way you can see that much of the Old City is still in a state of destruction, shame and desolate of Jews).

Q: Is it permissible to recite Tehillim on Tisha Be-Av?

A: According to most opinions, they should not be said but postponed until the next day.

Q: Why is it so difficult to be a Jew?

A: If we do it gradually, it is easy, as is explained in Mesilat Yesharim.

Q: Does every autistic child have the ability to prophesy?

A: Rabbis have already publicized that this is nonsense.

Q: Is it permissible to draw with a pen on your body or write something on your body or is it forbidden because of the prohibition of having a tattoo?

A: It is not a tattoo since it is on the surface and temporary. It is therefore permissible if it does not draw attention.

Q: Must I give food to an animal which "asks" me, such as a cat?

A: If you are responsible for it.

Q: Is the number 13 unlucky?

A: This is a superstition of the Christians.

Q: Is it permissible for me to nurse in a place where there are people if I am covered?

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

Q: I am not succeeding in getting married. Is it possible that it is because someone is upset with me?

A: No. There is no such thing. You should pray, repent and give Tzedakah and find a good matchmaking organization.

Q: I am completing teaching at a school and it is possible that I offended some of the students. Should I ask their forgiveness?

A: Yes, from all of them together while you say your goodbye and bless them.

Q: Is it better not to put on Tefillin at all than to recite a blessing, put them on and quickly remove them?

A: You should put them on. Even a few minutes is sufficient.

Q: "Do not speak to a woman excessively" (Pirkei Avot, chap. 1) – why is it forbidden for me to talk to my wife a lot?

A: A quality conversation – yes, but not frivolous, extraneous and tiring talk.

Q: I made a match and the couple gave me a respectable amount of money. They broke it off. Do I have to return the money?

A: Certainly, there was no match.

Q: Is it permissible to take a jog before davening in the morning?

A: No, one should not engage in his own needs before davening.

Q: Will a woman who drinks the Havdalah wine grow a mustache?
A: Nonsense. But women do have a custom not to drink unless they are alone and reciting Havdalah.
Q: I have friends who ridicule Rabbis. If I protest, they will ridicule more.
A: Do not protest, but show on your face that you object.
Q: Do three women who eat together recite the "zimun"?
A: We do not act this way.
Q: Is it permissible for a woman to be on a beach just for women when there is male lifeguard and sometimes an additional man who is not a lifeguard?
A: With a robe until she reaches the water.
Q: Can a man with long hair lead the davening for a community where everyone has normal length hair?
A: It is improper. After all this is a severe Torah prohibition.
Q: If a man accepts upon himself all of the mitzvot but continues to believe in Jesus is his conversion acceptable?
A: G-d forbid. He is a Christian.
Q: What should I do with a Book of Tehillim that I received from the Friendship Fellowship of Christians and Jews?
A: Throw it in the garbage.
Q: Can I go to a mixed beach if I remain fully clothed?
A: G-d forbid. The place itself is forbidden, and the intermingling is forbidden.

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

A student related: On Simchat Torah (5728), our Rabbi and the entire yeshiva danced around the Chief Rabbis as was our custom. Ha-Rav Nissim Shilt"a – Chief Sefardic Rabbi – said that he was extremely distressed by the words publicized in the name of an important Rabbi that the question of returning conquered territories is not a matter for Rabbis but for politicians and military experts, and he forcefully spoke against this idea. Our Rabbi agreed with him and said that maybe the newspapers distorted this Rabbi's words.

Ha-Rav Nissim added that he spoke with an American fundraiser for Israeli causes and told him that all of the Jews of America need to make aliyah. The fundraiser responded: If everyone makes aliyah, who will donate the money to the support the State of Israel? Ha-Rav Nissim answered: "It is written that Eretz Yisrael is the "Land flowing with milk and honey" and she is similar to a nursing mother: just as she produces milk when her children nurse from her, so too is Eretz Yisrael flowing with milk and honey when all of her children return to her – "And we can send it to America!"

Our Rabbi related to him that in the period of the Arab riots before the establishment of the State, there was a call for Jews to sign a document stating that we do not have any rights to the Kotel, and the National Committee was inclined to agree with the thinking that it would stop the killing of Jews. But Maran Ha-Rav Kook forcefully opposed it, explaining that capitulating in matters relating to Eretz Yisrael does not bring peace and security but the exact opposite. And the same applies now (this was right after the Six-Day War). (From the booklet "Arba'im Le-Binah" by Ha-Rav Yitzchak Shlita, pp. 27-28)

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Opening Bag of Milk on Shabbat

Question: Is it permissible to open a bag of milk on Shabbat by making a small hole with a knife or scissors as per during the week?

Answer: It is permissible with the condition that the hole is made in a imperfect manner without using scissors or a knife. If you must, you may start the tear with a scissor or knife and then continue with your hand or teeth (see Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 9:3).

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

"May The Merciful One break the yoke from our necks and lead us upright to our Land"

On the verse, "And I will lead you upright" (Vayikra 26:13), our Sages explain, "With upright posture, so that you do not fear any creature" (Sifra). One can raise the difficulty: Doesn't the Shulchan Aruch rule, "It is forbidden to walk with upright posture" (Orach Chaim 2:6), which the Mishnah Berurah (#9) explains: "Because you will press against the feet of the Divine Presence of the Omnipresent"?! This is not a difficulty: one refers to the individual who is required to be humble and modest, while the other refers to the entire community which is require to walk upright, and through this the honor of the Divine Presence will be revealed. Rabbi Yaakov Chagiz (Shut Halachot Ketanot #185) was asked: Should an individual living in the Land of Israel say, "and lead us upright to our Land (le-artzenu)" or change it to "and LED us upright IN our homeland (be-artzenu with the letter bet)"? He responds, "This is how people customarily recite it [and LED us upright IN our Land], but if one says "le-artzenu - to our Land," he does not lose out." In practice, the prayer books in Israel say, "le-artzenu - to our Land," but this also includes upright posture for the Nation.

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