



Parashat Tazria-Metzora 5770

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On Yom Ha-Atzmaut... The Obligation to Make Aliyah at this Time

Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook
[Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah – Bereshit p. 276]

The Pitchei Teshuvah (Even Ha-Ezer 75:10) wrote: "The obligation to fulfill this mitzvah applies at all times, and this is explained by all of the halachic authorities, the Rishonim and Acharonim, based on the ruling of the Ramban (Bemidbar 35:53 and additions to the Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of the Rambam, Positive Mitzvah #4).

There are those who have claimed that there is no mitzvah at this time because of the danger in traveling to Eretz Yisrael, as mentioned in the Tosafot (Ketubot 110b and see Mordechai ibid. and Shulchan Aruch Even Ha-Ezer 75:5). Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Eliyahu Klatzkin wrote a small book of Halachah called "Dvar Halachah" in which he dealt with this strange and even somewhat funny claim, since people make more dangerous trips for business (#38 p. 27a).

And there are those who claim that there is no mitzvah at this time based on what is mentioned in the Poskim that there is no mitzvah to make aliyah when one cannot find a livelihood in Eretz Yisrael (Pitchei Teshuvah ibid. in the name of Terumat Ha-Deshen and Tashbetz). Ha-Rav Klatzkin wrote regarding this idea that in practical terms it is not accurate to say that there is a livelihood outside of Israel but none in Eretz Yisrael. On the contrary, there is a "kosher" livelihood of working the Land in Eretz Yisrael, while the livelihood outside of Israel is through profiteering and the persecution of Israel.

And there are those who claim that there is no mitzvah to make Aliyah since there is a concern that one will become corrupt by being distanced from the Torah. But on the contrary, the Gemara and Poskim explain that one should live in Eretz Yisrael even in a city where the majority of residents are idol worshippers (Ketubot 110b. Shulchan Aruch Even Ha-Ezer 75:3), despite the potential negative influence. Although some authorities write that heretics are worse than non-Jews in this regard and there is a greater chance of negative influence, Ha-Rav Klatzkin explained that the same law applies in a city in Eretz Yisrael where the majority of residents are heretics. His proof is from the Gemara in Eruvin (61b-62a. Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim #385) where the law appears that it is impossible to make an "Eruv Chatzerot" (lit. mixed [ownership of] courtyards, which allows one to carry within the courtyard on

Shabbat) with a Tzeduki (Saducee, i.e. a heretic), and various options are given if one lives in the same house as a Tzeduki. But there is no mention of a prohibition of living in such a place or that one is obligated to live in a place solely populated by observant Jews. He adds that one's failure to observe the mitzvot of Hashem based on a concern that spiritual damage will result is discussed by the Gemara in Berachot (10a) regarding King Chizkiyahu, who did not engage in the mitzvah of procreation since he saw through Divine intuition that unvirtuous children would issue from him. The prophet Yeshayahu said to him: "What you are commanded to do, you must do!" And Ha-Rav Klatzkin added (ibid.): As if there is permission to act wiser than Hashem's mitzvot!

There is a story that after the establishment of the State of Israel, Jews from North Africa and Yemen made aliyah and were abandoning traditional observance. The person who headed the Department of Aliyah at the Jewish Agency was a Torah scholar named Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Shragai, and he was being eaten up inside by this fact. He did not know whether it was proper to continue to bring Jews to Israel under such circumstances. He went to the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon Tzvi Pesach Frank, and asked him what to do. Rav Frank said to him: Can you do me a favor and hand me the Yalkut Shimoni? He opened it and showed him the words of the Yalkut Shimoni on Megillat Eichah (#1038): "Hashem says: If only my children, my Nation, would be in the Land of Israel, even though they make it impure." And he continued: What do you want from me - to transgress the words of our Sages?! You are not guilty for what is occurring. You must bring Jews to Israel and make every effort to connect them to Torah. Rav Shragai continued to bring Jews to Israel and he mentioned this story various times.

When the Belzer Rebbe (Ha-Rav Aharon Rokeach) made Aliyah, he came to Reb Noson (Ha-Rav Shalom Natan Ra'anan Kook, Maran Ha-Rav Kook's son-in-law) and said: You and we had differences regarding the way to bring Jews on Aliyah. We said that they should first be strengthened in Judaism outside of the Land and only then could they make Aliyah in order to build in holiness, and you said that every one of them should quickly come on Aliyah without calculation. After the Holocaust, it has become clear to us that we erred, and we are greatly distressed over this fact.

Rav Aviner on... Women Rabbis

[First half of Responsa translated by Aaron Zvi]

Question: Is it permissible for a woman to serve as a community rabbi? There's presently an upheaval in the US regarding this issue. Perhaps the Rabbi could provide his guidance, so that "the wise may hear and reap benefit." And if the honored Rabbi is inclined to demur, since he is located in the East [Israel] and this debate is in the far corners of the West -- [recall that] the words of the Rabbi-professor who granted rabbinic ordination to a woman also came forth from Jerusalem...

Answer: It is not a good idea, because: what's the purpose? Is the goal that women should be capable of providing guidance? If that's the objective, women throughout every the generations have already been providing guidance. Under the law, anyone who knows the Halachah can issue a halachic decision, and they have no need for rabbinic ordination (Rama on Yoreh Deah 242:17). There are many Rabbis who don't have formal ordination. As you know, the Chafetz Chaim never had ordination until he required it in order to obtain a visa, so

the Gaon, Ha-Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, granted it to him.

It is written in Pitchei Teshuvah (Choshen Mishpat 7:5) citing the book "Bri Af" that even though a woman is by default ineligible to [serve as a] judge, there is no question that a woman of wisdom may indeed issue decisions. That is to say: a woman who knows the Halachah may provide guidance -- which is how it has been done through the ages. It is written in Baba Batra (119b): "The daughters of Tzelofchad were [notably] wise." And in the Gemara, Bruria and Yalta were wise scholars. And it is the same way in our day. Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef stated in Shut Yechaveh Daat (3:72) that it is a mitzvah to stand in the presence of a woman who is wise with the wisdom of the Torah. One should rise in the presence of a scholar's wife, and there are halachic opinions that one should rise for any wise and learned woman (see all the sources cited *ibid.*).

How do people know whether to direct questions to such women (i.e. that they should come to such wise women with halachic/Torah inquiries)? In a natural way. The world just knew, naturally, that it was fitting to ask halachic questions of the Gaonim Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein and Ha-Rav Aharon Kotler. In the same way, a woman is capable of issuing a halachic decision. The majority of questions that Rabbis receive these days are not on new topics, but have already been decided in the earlier texts. In every girls' school, there are wise, scholarly women who teach Halachah to the students. This is nothing new.

Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein writes in Shut Igrot Moshe (Orach Chaim 4:49) that in principle a woman can fulfill the mitzvah of Tzitzit but it is entirely dependent on her motive: "However clearly this only applies when the woman desires to observe the mitzvah although she was not commanded, but when it is not due to this intention, but rather stems from her resentment toward G-d and His Torah, then it is not a mitzvah at all. On the contrary, it is a forbidden act of denial when she thinks that there will be any change in the laws of Torah that she took on, which is even more severe."

This is similar to what Ha-Rav Feinstein wrote regarding appointing a woman to serve as a Kashrut supervisor (*ibid.* Yoreh Deah 2:45). It is entirely dependent on her motive and the essence is if it strengthens the Torah. And even for the purpose of a mitzvah, one needs proper intentions. The Nation of Israel wanted a king, and appointing a king is a mitzvah, but they did not have proper intentions and wanted to be like the other nations (Shmuel I 8:20 and Sanhedrin 20b). There is therefore no need for a woman to serve as the Rabbi of a community. The intention is to equate the genders. "Every person at his camp, and every person at his banner" (see Bemidbar 1:52).

It is possible that there are women with proper intentions but they already have where to go. At Midreshet Nishmat, there is a program for Yoatzot Halachah. They do not receive Semichah but learn and teach Halachah.

In brief: There have been knowledgeable women through all generations who taught Torah but did not need the title "Rav" and did not act like the Reform Jews. And I should add that I am answering what I am answering if people had asked me in Israel but the Rabbis of America need to answer in America.

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

Our Rabbi and the Yeshiva Students — Part 3

When Yeshivat Mercaz Ha-Rav was in its original building on Rav Kook Street, to our embarrassment and disgrace, there was a specific place right outside where people would wait for prostitutes. Every time the student left the study hall for any reason, they encountered this

disgusting behavior, which was the complete opposite of the sanctity and holiness of the Yeshiva. The students complained to Rav Tzvi Yehudah and asked him to move the Yeshiva to a different place, but he told them that at the present time it was not possible. He did however offer a solution: The students need to be strong, and even though he agreed to move the Yeshiva when it became possible, this was not because they were running away or avoiding the problem. Rather, it was because of self-respect and courage. Rav Tzvi Yehudah told the students not to go into seclusion. He advised them to continue to behave as normal, training themselves not to look at the behavior that was occurring outside. The Tur writes about this in his introduction to Orach Chaim: "'Be as light as an eagle' (Pirkei Avot 5:20), refers to avoiding immodest behavior and actions that your eyes can see - just as an eagle swiftly glides through the air, you must be swift to close your eyes to prevent yourself from seeing immodest behavior, because the sight of negative behavior constitutes the beginning of sin. The eyes see and the heart desires and the organs capable of action culminate the sin." (From Taharat Ha-Brit by Rav Aviner, translated into English "Pure Again" by Melech Peltz pp. 125-126).

On one occasion our Rabbi arrived at the Yeshivah for a class in Tanach, but no students showed up. The Rabbi immediately stepped forward and began to lead the Maariv service. He informed the students that he would no longer be coming to the Yeshivah. When they responded: "But Rabbi, you are the dean of the Yeshivah – let the students leave and the Rabbi stay!" The Rabbi said: "I do not believe in religious coercion!"

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

We have Disagreements

I have many disagreements with my wife. It seems to be unpreventable. People have different appearances, different opinions, different feelings, different desires. This sometimes causes much tension. When this occurs, we sit facing one another, and hold hands, i.e. her left hand in my right hand and her right hand in my left hand. We look at each other in the eyes, and we smile. It is so sweet. This alone makes it worthwhile.

And then we talk, taking turns. We hold hands the entire time, and when we switch turns, we stop for a few moments and smile at each other. We go back and forth until we have solved the problem. To this day, we have always found a solution. We do not wait until it grows into a huge issue, but deal with it immediately. I ask forgiveness from the psychologists and marriage counselors who we have never needed. I am certain that they are happy. I promise that this method works. Just try.

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