



Parashat Beha'alotecha 5770

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On the Parashah... I've Fallen and I Can Get Up!

Immediately upon traveling into the desert, the Nation of Israel begins to experience all types of difficulties. The people began complaining, they became dissatisfied with the manna, there was the crisis with Miriam and Aharon, the sin of the Spies, Korach and his band, the waters of Merivah where Moshe Rabbenu struck the rock, etc., all of these internal crises. Then there were the problems with the non-Jews: Edom, Sichon, Balak and Bila'am. The path was full of stumbling blocks.

After the Six-Day War, there was a conference of Arab professors held at "El Azhar" University near Cairo, on the meaning of the theology of the State of Israel. They all agreed that the State of Israel should be wiped out, but there were different opinions as to what should be done with the Jews. Some said that if they accepted Palestinian authority, they could be "fixed". Others said that there was no way to save them, since they are corrupt at their source, the dross of humanity, and one must be freed from them. One professor wrote an article attempting to prove the corrupt nature of the Nation of Israel based on the Torah. He brought as proof all of the failings of the Nation in the desert.

It is true that we have fallen, the Torah does not hide this fact. So what? Erring is a phenomenon of humanity. "For there is no man in the world who is righteous, who performs good, and does not sin" (Kohelet 7:20). We fall, but we arise and are encouraged. It once happened that a teacher, who just completed teaching school, received a position in a twelfth grade class in a school for juvenile delinquents. He was a thin, weak and pale young man and the students – experienced in theft and violence – were hoodlums. On the first day, he sat in the teacher's room shaking from fright and his heart was pounding. Suddenly the bell rang and he headed towards the class, almost drunk from fear, to the point that he did not notice that there was a step on the doorway. He tripped on it and fell face down on the floor. The entire class burst out in laughter, making fun of him and throwing paper and chalk. He got up slowly and said: "It happens that a person falls. The question is does he know how to get up. This is our first lesson." The students understood the lesson and gave him a round of applause. It is true that we fall and arise, fall and arise ("For a righteous

person will fall and arise seven times" – Mishlei 24:16). The path is full of stumbling and complications, but we perfect ourselves little-by-little.

Rav Aviner on... Maran Ha-Rav Kook would Return Books to their Places

[Talk given during lunch at the Yeshiva]

Maran Rav Kook said: "If you want to be like me, act like me." This means that if someone wants to internalize the Torah which someone teaches, he should first imitate his positive character traits. Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, pointed out that one of Maran Ha-Rav Kook's positive character traits was that he never burdened another person to return the books which he used. He would not leave them on the table or elsewhere, but would return the books to the place from which he took them. Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, actually made a ruling in Yeshivat Mercaz Ha-Rav, a condition for using the Yeshiva's books: If someone uses a book in the Yeshiva and did not return it, he is no longer allowed to use the books of the Yeshiva. Maran Ha-Rav was so strict regarding this matter for four reasons:

1. One who does not return books burden others.
2. If someone does not return a book, perhaps someone else who is looking for it and cannot locate it will wander around searching for it and waste his time which should have been dedicated to learning Torah.
3. The Egyptians forced the Jewish People to perform "Avodat Parech" – cruel, busy work which had no purpose. There is a prohibition of forcing others to perform this type of frustrating work, which essentially makes them into a slave. It is permissible to have an employee perform "Avodat Parech," since if the employee does not like it he can quit and find other work. Forcing others to put your books away, however, is a violation of the prohibition of "Avodat Parech."
4. Leaving the books around is also disgracing holy books. It is written in the Chasidic books that one of the signs of a person's Fear of Heaven is how he relates to holy books.

Based on these reasons, a person should be vigilant to return books to the location in which they were found.

There are two times in which one could return a book: Immediately after its use or at the end of a Seder (learning session). If the book is a single copy or there are only a few copies, it should be returned immediately after use since perhaps someone is looking for it. If there are multiple copies, however, the book may be returned at the end of the Seder. If one finds books laying around, which others did not return, he is not obligated to return them, but it is an act of kindness to do so.

By having the opportunity to return books, one should be happy that he can perfect a character trait, honor holy books, consider others and perform acts of kindness for another people.

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

Herzl

One who shamed Herzl

Our Rabbi related that when he was learning in Yeshivat Torat Chaim (in the place where Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim is now located, and where generations of Rabbinic leaders, such as Jerusalem's Chief Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Ha-Rav Aryeh Levin and Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv learned), Ha-Rav Yitzchak Nissenbaum, who was the secretary and right-hand man of Ha-Rav Mohiliver (one of the founders of the Religious-Zionist movement called "Chibat Tzion") and famous for his Derashot, was invited to give the Derashah one Shabbat. This fact testifies to the position of the Rosh Ha-Yeshiva, Ha-Rav Yitzchak Winograd: He did not fear the zealots of Jerusalem at that time and he invited a well-known Religious-Zionist figure to give a Derashah in the Yeshiva. Hundreds of people, include many wearing shtreimels, filled the Yeshiva and listened to the gifted speaker. When he began discussing the foundations of Religious-Zionism, a screaming voice interrupted his words: "Is that what Herzl also says?," which caused a commotion among the listeners. Rav Winograd ascended the Bima, silenced the crowd, expressed his dismay and demanded the removal of the brazen person. Rav Nissenbaum adds in his book "Alai Chaldi" that he saw arms lifting the brazen man above the crowd and taking him out through the window. At Seudat Shelishit, Rav Winograd told him that one of the zealots came to him on Friday demanding that he not allow a talk about impure Zionism in the holy Yeshiva. Rav Winograd responded that the Yeshiva was his and anyone who disturbs the talk would be paid back in kind. He then hired two guards for the yeshiva who stood near the window for the proper moment. When the brazen man began to yell, the young people next to him grabbed his arms and legs and lifted him up to the guards. His comrades were shocked and did not dare to make a disturbance.

Herzl's picture which hangs in our Rabbi's home

It is well known that along with pictures of the Netziv, the Aderet, Maran Ha-Rav Kook and others, our Rabbi had a picture of Herzl hanging in his home.

Three stories about the picture:

Rav Avraham Romer related: "The picture of Herzl once disappeared from our Rabbi's house and there was a suspicion that one of the students wanted 'to teach him a lesson.' When I suggested that perhaps the picture fell behind the desk, he permitted me to look there. When I found the picture, he was extremely happy and saw a need to comfort me because he saw that I had been distressed. He told me wondrous stories about Herzl and his position. He repeated the opinion of Reb Aharon Marcus z"l who said that Herzl was a descendant of Mahari Titzak (a famous Rabbi) and was from a Sefardic family. (Gadol Shimusha, p. 54)

When a particular Jew from the neighborhood of Geulah would come to our Rabbi's house, he would flip over the picture of Herzl. Our Rabbi once caught him in the act and asked him: Why are you doing this? Doesn't he have all five corners of his beard [which may not be shaved according to the Torah]?! (Iturei Cohanim #212)

A student of our Rabbi saw Herzl's picture hanging in the room where our Rabbi taught classes in his house, and it was hanging among the pictures of our great Rabbis. He asked for an explanation and our Rabbi gave an entire class on the fact that Herzl was the agent of the Master of the Universe in returning independence to Israel in this generation whether we like it or not. (ibid.)

Our Rabbi encouraged one of his students who was a baal teshuvah (a Jew who returned to being observant) to read Herzl's diaries. (Iturei Yerushalayim #6)

Herzliyah (a city on the coast of Israel named after Herzl)

When the Yemenite Chief Rabbi of Herzliyah was installed, our Rabbi said: Secular Zionism marches with Herzl, and we march with Herzl and Herzliyah (Herzl plus "Kah" – one of Hashem's Names). (Iturei Yerushalayim #6)

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Tzedakah Priorities

Question: I received an e-mail message from a Rabbinic group in my former community in the States, the substance of which was to urge the Jews in that area to give 75% of their Tzedakah money to local causes. While a good deal of the funds raised there are for worthwhile causes, many millions of dollars are being raised and spent to make shuls a little larger and a lot fancier. As the future of the Jewish people is here in Israel, would it not be more useful to invest more of the money here?

Answer: Both are important, and one who lives there should divide his money according to his wisdom and desire.

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

It's Not Funny

My dear friend, do not make jokes at your wife's expense. We love jokes, obviously in a limited manner, but not at someone's expense, and certainly not at your wife's expense, and all the more so not in public.

Yesterday you said in front of everyone: I have already suffered from my wife for ten years! Even she laughed, but realize that deep down she was hurt. Here is an idea: Since you love to make other's laugh, say: My wife has already suffered from me for ten years.

It is even possible to make a positive joke: I feel for ten years to have merited joy like the King of England. Or: I hope that I succeed in making her as happy as the Queen of England. – What am I saying?! More than the royalty of England.

Baruch Hashem, the gates of humor and creativity are not locked, and it is possible to make jokes NOT at your wife's expense. On the contrary, make her happy with your jokes.

Text Message Responsa

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:

Comforting Mourners

Q: What should I say to a friend who lost his father?

A: First listen, then you will know what to talk about (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 376:1).

Sperm Donation to a Single Woman

Q: Is it permissible for a forty-year old, single woman, who has given up on getting married, to have artificial insemination from a sperm bank?

A: No. This is giving birth to an orphaned child. Turn to a good Shidduch agency and freeze eggs in the meantime (Shut She'eilat Shlomo 4:277).

Growing a Beard

Q: Why should one grow a beard?

A: 1. It is the glory of a Jew's face. 2. There are serious halachic problems with electric razors (see the book "Hadrat Panim Zaken").

Evil Inclination

Q: Why doesn't the Torah destroy the evil inclination? I have learned Mesillat Yesharim and the works of Rav Kook for years and fought against it and it is still just as strong.

A: Our job is to struggle against it all the time. Shemoneh Kevatzim 8:36.

Facebook

Q: Is it worthwhile to use facebook?

A: One's gain is offset by his loss.

Suntanning on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to suntan on Shabbat?

A: It is permissible. This is not the type of "coloring" which the Torah forbids (Shut Az Nidabru 2:30. Not like the ruling in Shut Minchat Yitzchak 5:32 and Shut Chelkat Yaakov 4:17).

Interruption during the Shemoneh Esrei

Q: I discovered in the middle of the Shemoneh Esrei that pages were missing from my Siddur and I do not know the davening by heart?

A: It is permissible to go get a different Siddur. This is not considered an interruption in this case (Piskei Teshuvot #104. Shut Be'er Moshe 3:13).

Conditional Marriages

Q: Is it worthwhile to establish conditional marriages which are annulled retroactively if one of the members of the couple wants to get divorced in order to solve the problem of those who refuse to give a "Get"?

A: Our Rabbis already dismissed this proposal since we will not nullify the holiness of Jewish marriages and turn them into a doubtful cases of prostitution on account of a few horrible instances (see Shut Igrot Moshe Even Ha-Ezer 4:106-107).

A Piercing in One's Bellybutton

Q: Is it permissible to have a piercing in one's bellybutton? It would obviously be covered?

A: It is forbidden. "Chukot Ha-Goyim" – imitating non-Jewish practices (see She'eilat Shlomo 1:339 #2).

Kashrut of Medicine

Q: What is the law regarding medicine without kosher certification? And what if it has a meat or dairy base?

A: Any medicine which lacks taste is kosher (Halichot Shlomo – Moadim vol. 2 4:6 and notes).

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