



Parashat Re'eh 5770

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On the Parashah... Upon Entering the Land

Our Parashah focuses on the community. "Look! I place before you [plural] today a blessing and a curse" (Devarim 11:26). Eretz Yisrael is the location where the blessing of holiness appears. The first act which the community of Israel must do when it enters Eretz Yisrael is to destroy idol worship (Devarim 12:2-3). Entering the Land and destroying idol worship is in fact one and the same. There is even a special blessing recited when seeing a spot where this occurred: "Blessed is Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe, who uprooted idol worship from our Land." This Land cannot bear to have idolatry within it. The Rambam explained in Hilchot Melachim (6:5) – based on the words of our Sages (Yerushalmi, Shvi'it 6:1) – that when Yehoshua conquered the Land, he sent three letters to the non-Jews: 1. If you want to flee, you can do so and we will not pursue you. Our Sages explain that the Girgashi fled to Africa. 2. If you want to wage war, we will wage war against you. 3. If you want to make peace and remain here, you can do so under two conditions: A. This Land is ours, and will be under our sovereignty as the Ramban says (Additions to Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of the Rambam, positive mitzvah #4). You must accept our authority. B. You must rid yourself of all idol worship. Here, in this Land, there is no place for idol worship.

Question: Why then don't we destroy all the idol worship which is in our Land at this time?

Answer: There is a midrash which says that one must have much deliberation in this matter, lest we destroy it and others rebuild it, such as a weak government that gives into political considerations (Midrash Tana'im Devarim 12:2 p. 58. Avot De-Rebbi Natan 52, 11. And see Ha-Tekufah Ha-Gedolah pp. 260-271).

Rav Aviner on... The Laws of Uprooting Jewish Settlements [Written approximately five years ago in 5765]

In the course of the suffering accompanying the Divine process of our Redemption, we are once more encountering this terrible conflict between brothers involving the uprooting of Jewish settlements. We are not exempt from clarifying it in the light of Torah, which

illuminates the proper path for both the individual and the Nation, both in healthy situations as well as in morbid ones. There are three parties involved here: the government, civilians and soldiers.

1. The Government

When it comes to long and short-term urban planning, it is certainly the government which must make decisions, but as far as the ideological question of whether a particular location belongs to the Nation of Israel or to another nation, that question transcends governments, for the answer to that question was provided by the Master of the Universe, by the Torah, by Jewish tradition, by history. Even the government was commanded regarding Eretz Yisrael: "We were commanded not to abandon it to any other nation, or to desolation" (Ramban, (Additions to Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of the Rambam, positive mitzvah #4). This command transcends the government. Quite the contrary, the government draws its strength and authority from it. Uprooting a Jewish community is a terrible crime with no parallel throughout Jewish or world history. All the more so that establishing a foreign state in the very midst of our own country is a national crime which surpasses all the bounds of reason and ethics. Likewise, the illustrious Rabbis who head the "Rabbinic Union for the People and Land of Israel" recently issued a proclamation absolutely rejecting the establishment of a foreign state within Judea and Samaria, or otherwise abandoning part of Eretz Yisrael to foreigners. Let us hope that our government will speedily free itself of the present agreement, returning to the path of truth and valor.

2. Civilians

Every Jew has to struggle to nullify these terrible decrees. The entire nation must rise as one man with one heart and struggle against this dysfunctional government that is leading us down the path of destruction. Obviously, as with any other mitzvah, this must not be performed by means of a sin. Before the founding of the State, our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook, established red lines as far as political struggles between us: No violence, no insults, no hatred ("Et Achai Anochi Mevakesh" in Li-Netivot Yisrael, vol. 1). Likewise, in the struggles over the completeness of the Land, our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda never instructed us to use violence, to insult or to hate anyone. Therefore, please do not insult policemen or soldiers, let alone their officers. When a soldier takes hold of your hand, don't use physical force to resist. Don't hold on to boulders. You might get hurt, or the soldier might get hurt. And don't play freeze-tag with the soldiers either. The evacuation of a Jewish settlement is a terrible desecration of G-d's Name. Don't make it worse before the television cameras of Israel and the whole world, which will show Jewish soldiers dragging Jews out of a Jewish settlement. If you force a soldier to drag you, don't yell: "Why are you hurting me?" Don't hurt his heart! When the Jewish Community of Hevron was just starting out, some of our group danced with an Israeli flag at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and soldiers ordered them to stop. When they didn't listen, the soldiers grabbed at the flag, some pulling in one direction and others pulling in the other, until the flag got ripped. Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda, responded: "What you did was more treif than pig. You put our friends, the soldiers, in an unpleasant situation in order to advance the cause."

We see for ourselves that many soldiers feel horrible at being asked to evacuate outposts. Many themselves live in settlements and outposts. One must also be very careful of provocateurs who let their mouths spill out hatred and incitement to evil, but then report to the police what they saw around them. Don't send children. It is hard for them to digest simultaneously a love of the Land and the Nation of Israel, with a love of the army.

Remember this: Our Rabbi stood at the head of the war over Judea and Samaria and loudly proclaimed: "Over Judea and Samaria there will be a war!" "Over our dead bodies!" Yet he never, never instructed anyone to use force against a soldier, a policeman, or even to insult them.

Whoever has learned Halachah knows the major principle: "We do not learn practical law either from abstract study alone, or from hearing isolated cases alone. Rather, we must learn it from a combination of abstract study with its practical applications. Once someone has

asked questions and received such practical guidance, he can go and act accordingly” (Baba Batra 136b). The utterance that “there will be a war over Judea and Samaria” is in the realm of “abstract study.” It may be profound and holy and sublime and powerful, but it is not practical Halachah. Our Rabbi rejected anything that would create a rift amongst the Nation, and he said, “I do not want a civil war.”

The halachic conclusion of the illustrious heads of the “Rabbinic Union for the People and Land of Israel” was as follows: “To behave with great caution; to avoid all physical or verbal violence against our soldier brethren... and let it be said to the credit of the public that all of them but rare exceptions are following the guidance of our Rabbis.”

3. Soldiers

Soldiers as well, as part of the Nation of Israel, must struggle devotedly to keep our Land intact, all the more so if a soldier is a high-ranking officer with an influence on the workings of the army and the government. Yet even he mustn’t fulfill a mitzvah by means of a sin. To cause the disintegration of the army is a grave sin. Our army works on the basis of unity – one for all and all for one. If the army disintegrates, it is no army, and that places the Nation in danger. The army is not rightist or leftist, middle-of-the-road or any other category. Otherwise, the Nation would be in danger. The country and the Jewish State would be in danger. The army is where the aggregate soul of the Jewish People is being renewed in all its glory. Driving a knife into that is the opposite of the whole process of our rebirth.

Remember this! Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda, stood at the head of all the ranks of settlers in Judea and Samaria, yet no soldier ever heard from him the words: “Refuse orders.” The soldier does not become partner in a sin, emissary to perform a sin or collaborator in a sin. The government’s sin was already performed and is now nothing but water over the bridge. Our Rabbi wrote numerous flyers against abandoning parts of Eretz Yisrael, yet he never wrote: “Refuse orders!”

“Many are the thoughts in a man’s heart, yet it is G-d’s counsel that will endure” (Mishlei 19:21). They keep presenting the same program, each time by a different name. We overcame 242, Gunnar Jarring, 338, Kissinger, the Geneva Pact, the Autonomy Agreement, the Reagan Program, the Shultz Initiative, the London Accord, Madrid, the Biltmore talks, James Baker, Oslo I, the Mitchell Report, Oslo II, the Sharm a-Sheikh Pact, the Camp David Summit, the Taba Talks, Clinton, George Tennen, General Zinni and the Saudi Plan.

We will overcome!

Stories about Leaving the Land of Israel - #9

Before Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach underwent surgery on his head - which was obviously difficult, dangerous and complex - people exerted great pressure on him to travel outside of Eretz Yisrael for the surgery. This was more than fifty years ago when the medical services in Israel were not as advanced as today. But Ha-Rav Auerbach remained firm in his refusal to leave the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael. To those who worried about his wellbeing, he said: "If there is one doctor in Eretz Yisrael who agrees to operate on my head, I will not leave Israel" (Chico Mamtakim vol. 1, p. 54-55).

Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #4

[adapted for middle-schoolers by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon from Rav Aviner's three-volume commentary on the siddur "Tefilat Amecha"]

When we continue in Birkat Ha-Torah, we say that we want the words of the Torah to be not only in our mouths, but in our children’s, and their children’s, and their children’s, and so on forever and ever. And we want this for all of the Jewish People. The Torah is our

"Morashah" - our sacred inheritance. Both the Torah and Eretz Yisrael are called "Morashah." They belong to the Jewish People forever, but every individual Jew must work hard to claim his share and to help Klal Yisrael be strong in this area. And notice that Hashem is willing to help. "He teaches Torah to His Nation Israel." Hashem is a teacher, and indeed the greatest teacher, in the world. All we need to do is listen.

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

"We Got Married for This?"

- "Shalom, dear Chaim, I've waited so long to eat dinner together."
- "It's not important, Rina, I could have eaten alone. You don't have to wait for me."
- "But, Chaim, I want to eat together with you. Why were you late?"
- "I was at a Torah class. It's important."
- "And I'm not important?"
- "Of course you are important. But one also needs to add wisdom. If one does add wisdom, he is like an animal."
- "So, I'm an animal?"
- "Don't be insulted, Rina. That is not what I meant to say. Okay, let's eat."
- "Why are you eating so fast, Chaim?"
- "..."
- "You don't like it. I worked hard to make something you like!"
- "I like it all..."
- "But why are you rushing?"
- "I have an important meeting."
- "For what?"
- "For the benefit of the community."
- "And I am not part of the community?"
- "Why are you insulted? You are certainly a part."
- "To you, I am only a part?"
- "Rina. I am in a rush. Shalom."
- "We got married for this?"

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:

Mourner at Brit Milah

Q: Is it permissible for a mourner to attend a Brit Milah?

A: Yes, but without the festive meal (Pnei Baruch 20:23).

Doubtful Debt

Q: What is the law if I am in doubt whether I paid a debt, but I think that I did?

A: You are exempt, but it proper to check with the person to whom you owed the money.

Immodest Clothing Donation to a Gemach

Q: Is it permissible to donate immodest clothing, such as pants, to a Gemach? It is possible that a woman would wear them under a skirt, although it is not certain.

A: It is permissible. Regarding the prohibition of "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind" (Vayikra 19:14), we "tolim" (literally "hang" on the assumption) that a person will act in the proper way (Mishnah Shevi'it, end of chap. 5).

Singles

Q: Is helping singles get married important, like Eretz Yisrael?.

A: Certainly.

Prayer

Q: I am a woman and I have a very difficult time davening from a siddur. When I am forced to do so, my Kavanah is very minimal. Does prayer such as this have any value?

A: Yes, it has value. You should daven part of it, according to your strength (Shut Ha-Rashba 1:423).

Engagement Ring

Q: My parents bought me a ring, which looks like an engagement ring, as a present. People say that I should exchange it, since it is preventing me from getting married.

A: Nonsense.

Laws of Sacrifices and the Temple

Q: Should Cohanim start learning the Laws of Sacrifices and the Temple?

A: There are other subjects which take precedence (Li-Netivot Yisrael 1, 23).

"May his name be blotted out"

Q: Is it permissible to say "May his name be blotted out" for an evil Jew for a policeman or soldier who expelled Jews?

A: It is forbidden. If a man dies childless, his wife must marry the brother of her deceased husband ("Yibum"). The Torah says that the reason for "Yibum" is so that "his name is not erased from Israel" (Devarim 25:6). But what should I care if his (the evil Jew's) name is erased? If I say "may his name and memory be blotted out," what is the problem if his name is erased from Israel? There is no halachah, however, which eliminates the need to perform "Yibum" for a sinning Jew (Shulchan Aruch, Even Ha-Ezer 157:3). This therefore means that I must be concerned that his name not be erased from Israel (In the name of the Sochachover Rebbe, the author of "Avnei Nezer").

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