



Parashat Ki Tavo 5770

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On the Parashah... Joy in the Observance of Mitzvot

[Tal Chermon]

Our Parashah warns that we will be punished: "Since you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy and with a good-heart, from so much of everything ...," (Deut. 26:1).

"Joy in the performance of Mitzvot is in and of itself a Mitzvah..., this joy constitutes pure service of G-d and is of greater significance than the Mitzvah itself, as is written, 'Since you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy.' We are punished for not serving Him joyfully, as is written, 'Serve G-d with joy, appear before Him with jubilation,' 'Righteous people - exult in G-d;' 'Exult in G-d, be joyful, righteous people, and be gleeful, you who are upright,' 'I revel in Your words as one who has found a great treasure' (Tehilim), and 'I praised joy' (Kohelet). Our Sages interpreted these verses as speaking about the joy in the performance of Mitzvot" (Rabbeinu Bachayei, Kad HaKemach, "Simcha").

"The Torah blames us for serving G-d joylessly, because one is required to rejoice in the performance of Mitzvot. This joy is in itself a Mitzvah. In addition to the reward one receives for performance of a Mitzvah, he is rewarded for this joy, and therefore he deserves punishment if he has no joy ...," (ibid.).

"The Holy Ari confided in a friend that that all the wisdom and Divine understanding which he had received was a reward for the joy he had when fulfilling any Mitzvah - tremendous, unbounded joy. He too cited the verse, 'Since you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy and with a good-heart, from so much of everything ...,' meaning more than all worldly pleasures, more than all the gold and precious stones in the world" (Sefer Charedim).

Sometimes it is difficult to serve G-d with joy because of the burden of one's sins. One who is always conscious of his spiritual deficiencies and his guilt cannot take joy in anything. There are many and varied methods to find a way out of this dilemma, as many as there are complex emotional states due to feelings of guilt and wrong-doing. One of these methods is to "forget past sins" (Maran Ha-Rav Kook, Mussar Ha-Kodesh, 250), to wipe the slate clean and begin every day anew, disregarding any past burdens. Of course, this must be done "with good intentions and to enable him to serve G-d with joy" (ibid.).

One who succeeds in forgetting about past sins in order to "develop his capacity for Torah knowledge and wisdom" and "to bring more light and joy of G-d in his endeavors" (ibid.) will

be rewarded in kind by Divine Providence - "These too shall be forgotten" (Yeshayahu 49:15).

Rav Aviner on... A Rabbi Can Make A Mistake?!

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah vol. 3 #21]

Question: I have been teaching Torah and serving in the Rabbinat for twenty years, and I belong to the Ultra-Orthodox sector. I happened upon a book from one of the students of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, I read it out of curiosity and also in order to publicly prove his mistake, but the opposite occurred and I saw that he speaks the truth. I learned other books from his stream of thought, and I reached the clear conclusion that during all of the years I was mistaken in my relationship to the Land of Israel and Zionism. One question bothers me: How can I follow a different path than my Rabbi, for I am full of respect and love for him, since I owe everything to him? Moreover, how can it be possible to imagine that so many great Ultra-Orthodox Rabbis erred? I am willing to say this about myself, but not about them.

Answer: I commend you for your integrity. It should only be that we should all learn how to admit the truth. To get to the heart of the matter, this question has been dealt with in many books, among them "Geulat Yisrael" by Rabbi Avraham Yelin, who was a brilliant Sage, although not well-known. Yet for his book he had approbations from the Admor of Ostrovitz and from Maran Ha-Rav Kook. In addition, his book "Erech Apayim" was very well-known. Rabbi Yelin wrote: "Some claim that once someone has accepted a particular person as his rabbi, and that rabbi is opposed to Zionism, one must teach in accordance with that view so as not to violate the prohibition against "straying to the right or to the left from what they tell you" (Devarim 17:11). That is a mistake, however, for that verse is referring to the Great Sanhedrin" (Geulat Yisrael, page 15). Quite the contrary, if it appears to a disciple that his rabbi has erred, he must ask him about this and argue with him until his rabbi changes his mind (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 242). There are numerous examples in the Talmud and the Poskim [Halachic decisors] of disciples disagreeing with their rabbis (page 15). Regarding the issue of Eretz Yisrael itself, we find that Rabbi Yehudah was one of the illustrious giants of his generation, and he ruled that it is forbidden to move from Babylonia to Eretz Yisrael (Ketubot 110a). His disciple, Rabbi Zeira, disagreed with him and moved there (ibid.), as did his disciple Rabbi Abba (Berachot 24b and Geulat Yisrael, pp.15-16). He points out in the name of Rabbi Akiva Eiger that in our times, following the invention of the printing press, books have been disseminated throughout the world, and it is possible for there to be a student who studies books that his rabbi never studied, such that the student knows more than his rabbi (page 16). He likewise quotes Maharal Mi-Plotzk who said that if an illustrious rabbi knows the whole Torah, yet has not toiled to understand a particular law, and a lesser rabbi does not know the whole Torah yet has toiled to understand that particular law, the latter can better arrive at the truth, such that we will rule according to the lesser rabbi (Shut Meshivat Nefesh 16 and Geulat Yisrael, page 3).

As far as your wondering how it is possible for so many great rabbis to err regarding something so simple, our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook, wrote to a great Charedi Rabbi: "I was pained by what your esteemed self wrote some time ago in regard to G-d's great and awesome deed in rebuilding His Nation and inheritance and gathering in His scattered ones, and in regard to the Zionism that is associated with this. It is clear that you are absolutely mistaken regarding those matters. What you wrote is like what Ra'avad wrote in

Hilchot Teshuvah, chapter 3, about the many rabbis greater than himself who followed a particular line of thought" (Le-Hilchot Tzibbur #6).

Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, is referring to Rambam's words that whoever says that G-d has a body is a "min" (an apostate), and to Ra'avad's response that Rambam is reacting too sharply to the great rabbis of Israel who thought that way. Here we have great rabbis who made an enormous error.

A question obviously remains: What made these illustrious rabbis err regarding the rebirth of our Nation? Rabbi Yelin responds that the true reason is found in the words of the illustrious and holy Rabbi Eliyahu Gutmacher from Greiditz, who was blessed with "Ruach Ha-Kodesh," Divine intuition. Rabbi Gutmacher was among the first to raise the idea of agricultural settlement in Eretz Yisrael. He wrote to the illustrious saint Rabbi Elazar Wachs, suggesting the reason for the opposition: "The main cause of the opposition is that even in the greatest saints evil takes control to nullify this goodness. The whole force of evil is dependent upon this" (from a letter quoted in the book "Nefesh Ha-Chayah"). The author of "Chidushei Ha-Rim" wrote similarly regarding the sin of the spies ("Sefer Ha-Zechut" in Parashat Beshalach and "Geulat Yisrael," pp. 8-9).

Rabbi Yelin mentions that sometimes even the prophets erred.

Moshe erred regarding the goat of the sin offering, and as a result of that, he became angry with Elazar and Itamar (Vayikra 10). Yehoshua bin Nun erred regarding the Givonim (Yehoshua 9); the Prophet Shmuel erred when he was going to anoint one of the sons of Yishai and he wished to anoint the wrong one (Shmuel 1 16). Yerovam ben Navat succeeded in tricking the Prophet Achiyah Ha-Shiloni into giving his approval to idolatry (Sanhedrin 102a and Geulat Yisrael, p. 9).

Regarding settling the Land itself, the Torah says that "the whole community threatened to stone [Yehoshua and Calev] to death" (Ba-Midbar 14:10), and Rashi on 14:1 says that the phrase "the whole community" connotes the Sanhedrin. As Chiddushei Ha-Rim of Ger explains, the Sanhedrin argued that Eretz Yisrael would corrupt them (Geulat Yisrael, p. 9). During Ezra's times, the vast majority of the great rabbis opposed his going up to the Land on the pretext that Eretz Yisrael would cause the Jews to worship idols (Midrash Rabbah on Shir Ha-Shirim 5:3).

"The greatest saints handed over the Rambam's works to Christian priests to burn... Many illustrious rabbis fanned the flames of controversy, persecuting and inciting against our master Rabbi Yehonatan Eibschutz, the holy Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto and our teacher the Ba'al Shem Tov" (Geulat Yisrael, p. 9).

"We have likewise heard about one mistake put in writing by a brilliant, holy rabbi. Due to the author's greatness, the Charedim struggled to understand what he had written, and the holy Rabbi Menachem Mendl of Kotzk, who was a great lover of truth, said in this regard that the truth that emerged from here was that it showed the author that even he was only human" (ibid.).

Rabbi Yelin was apparently referring here to what the Maharal Mi-Prague wrote, that there is a difference between two Hebrew words that both mean "with him": "Imo" and "Ito", and that when Abraham took his two lads "with him" the Torah refers to this with "Imo," whereas when Bilam took his two lads "with him" the Torah uses "Ito." Truthfully, however, in the Torah it is the opposite (see Bereshit 22:3 and Ba-Midbar 22:22). The Maggid Rabbi Yisrael of Koznitz wrote an answer to this problem (printed in "Be'er HaGolah," p. 155). Yet the Kotzker Rebbe, who had enormous admiration for the Maharal, said that even an illustrious rabbi can err.

Rabbi Yelin concludes, "From all this we can conclude that even a great and saintly rabbi can make a mistake... The truth is that even the greatest rabbis amongst the opponents have no correct knowledge on this issue" (Geulat Yisrael, p. 9). Thus, how fortunate you are to have merited to attain the truth from great rabbis who did not err, faithful emissaries of the Supreme King of Kings.

Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #7

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

In Birchot Ha-Shachar we bless Hashem "Who has not made me a non-Jew." Here we are not talking about an individual, we are talking about a nation. Even though a non-Jew can also choose the path of righteousness and merit life in the World to Come, we thank Hashem that we are part of the Nation of Israel, who have been given the Torah which guides us on the right path, and helps us avoid the many obstacles which prevent a person from fulfilling his mission in life. This is what makes our Nation holy.

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:

Waiting between Meat and Milk

Q: If someone eats a tiny bit of meat, it is permissible to eat dairy right after?

A: It is forbidden (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 89:1).

Army Service

Q: I can get out of military service in a legal way and I am inclined to do so because of what happened in Gush Katif and Amonah. Is it permissible?

A: It is a great mitzvah to protect the Nation and Land.

Temple Mount

Q: Is it permissible to visit the Temple Mount?

A: It is forbidden to ascend the Temple Mount as is the opinion of the majority of Rabbis and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. We must increase holiness among the Nation and the time for the building of the Temple will arrive.

Giving a Hug and Kiss to a Non-Jewish Father

Q: Is it permissible for a Jewish woman to give her non-Jewish father a hug and a kiss?

A: Yes.

Buying Items before Birth

Q: Is it a problem to buy items for a baby before he is born?

A: There is no problem.

Affection between Parents

Q: Is it permissible for parents to show signs of affection in front of their little children?

A: It is permissible and proper.

Divorcee Covering her Hair

Q: Must a divorcee continue to cover her hair?

A: Yes, except in the rare case that it is preventing her from remarrying (Shut Igrot Moshe Even Ha-Ezer 4:32 #4).

Male Hair Stylist

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to go to a male hair stylist?

A: It is forbidden, whether she is married or single.

Medical Clown

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to learn and work as a medical clown?

A: Yes, for women.

Health Club

Q: Is there a prohibition for a woman to work out at a health club?

A: It is permissible with the condition that it is completely separate from the men.

Waitress

Q: Can a woman work as a waitress?

A: Yes, if she does so with modesty. And the same applies when she serves guests in her home.

Ankle Bracelet

Q: It is permissible for a woman to wear an ankle bracelet?

A: With the condition that it is modest and does not draw attention.

Outposts

Q: Is there a difference in our struggle between a legal and an illegal outpost?

A: The evacuations are illegal but the struggle must be conducted without sinning, i.e. without violence, without insults and without hatred.

Economic Situation

Q: Will my economic situation improve?

A: We do not know, but there is hope with prayer, repentance and Tzedakah.

First Year of Marriage

Q: Is it permissible during my first year of marriage to go on a trip for a few days with two friends while my wife stays at home?

A: If she wants.

Q: Meaning, if she agrees?

A: No, if she wants it.

Good and Evil Inclination

Q: Do the good and evil inclinations exist within a person, i.e. the decision which way to direct his powers, or is there an external spiritual reality which acts upon a person, such as

angels?

A: Both of these are explanations of our Rabbis, the Sages of the intellect and the Mystical Sages. Igeret Ha-Musar of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, printed at the end of Mesilat Yesharim. And see Orot Ha-Kodesh 3, 135. 235.

Messiah

Q: When will the Messiah come? We suffer so much. We pray every day but he does not come!

A: He has already come a little.

Q: What does that mean?

A: Building of the Land. The Return to Zion. The establishment of the State. The wars of Israel. Jerusalem. The return of Ahavat Yisrael. The return of the Torah to Eretz Yisrael.

Wedding Ring on Credit

Q: Is it permissible for a groom to buy the bride's wedding ring on a credit?

A: Most authorities permit it, but it is proper to be strict and either put some money down or if paying in installments to make the first payment before the wedding. Otzar Ha-Poskim #80.

Clothing for Davening

Q: Is this permissible to daven while wearing shorts?

A: If in that time and place, people stand dressed in that way before a king (Shut She'eilat Shlomo 1:40).

Kivrei Tzadikim (graves of the righteous) outside of Israel

Q: Is it permissible to leave Israel in order to daven at Kivrei Tzadikim, and then immediately return?

A: Rav Kook forbids it. Mishpat Cohaim #147. There are greater Tzadikim here.

Kivrei Tzadikim

Q: Is it preferable to travel to the grave of Rebbe Nachman in Uman or Maarat HaMachpelah?

A: With all of his importance, our Forefathers are great than Rebbe Nachman.

Continuous Mitzvot

Q: Do the six continuous Mitzvot apply when one is in the bathroom?

A: Yes. See Chochmat Shlomo, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 80:5.

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