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Parashat Netzavim-Vayelech 5770

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## On the Parashah... To Stand Upright

[Tal Chermon]

"You - all (of the Nation of Israel) stand UPRIGHT today before Hashem, your G-d"

Kedushah (holiness) does not mean that we should constantly bow our heads, and particularly not before non-Jews. The Torah teaches us to hold our heads high. On the verse, "When you raise up the heads of the Children of Israel" (Shemot 30:12), the Or Ha-Chaim HaKadosh comments, "For sin causes one to lower his head, evil is rooted in earthly concerns, and is lowly. Kedushah leads one to raise his eyes on high - to become elevated both in quality and in quantity" (see his commentary, *ibid.*). A lowering of one's profile is analogous to sin. Our Parashah says, "You - all (of the Nation of Israel) stand UPRIGHT today before Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 29:9). One who stands before Hashem, stands straight and not bent over. The Or Ha-Chaim explains: "The farther anything is from Kedushah, the lower its profile, the more bent its head. Therefore the Torah tells us that when we stand before G-d, we stand upright with our heads raised" (*ibid.*).

## Rav Aviner on...

### On Accepting Contributions from Christian Groups

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Ki Tetzei 5770 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Question: I don't understand why the Rabbis have forbidden accepting money from Christian institutions such as the Christian "Friendship Fund". After all, that's a Christian organization that loves Israel, and I don't feel like the money I received influences me the least bit in the direction of Christianity.

Answer: First of all, I am puzzled by your great enthusiasm about living off the money of others. Have you suddenly become a beggar, what in Yiddish is called a "schnorrer"? Even to be a schnorrer from Jewish money is a shame, but to be one from non-Jewish money is already a disgrace, a profanation of G-d's name.

Observe what our Sages wrote: "Those who eat 'something else' are disqualified as witnesses" (Sanhedrin 26b). Generally speaking, in the Talmud 'something else' [davar

acher] connotes pork. Here, however, Tosafot proves that it should not be interpreted that way (d.h. "Ochlei"). Rather, Rashi explains that here it is referring to "People who accept charity from non-Jews, this being a profanation of G-d's name for the sake of monetary gain. Such people are classed as 'Rasha Dechamas' – avaricious evildoers."

If we were a poor country it would be one thing. I would yet understand this enthusiasm. I wouldn't justify one's being an "avaricious evildoer," but I would understand it. Yet we are a wealthy country, amongst the wealthiest on earth, and all of this money is a tiny percentage of the national budget. And for the sake of this you degrade yourself? Shame on you! And the worst is that it is non-Jewish money.

Let me explain. The Evangelical Protestant missionary institutions try to infiltrate anywhere they can by whatever means possible. Now they have found the golden pathway – financial support. The sums they contribute are for them nothing. They just make a big impression on us and arouse our craving for more. In the United States there are fifty million Fundamentalists. If every one of them contributes ten dollars every year, you've got half a billion dollars right there, which looks like an enormous sum.

Financial support is their present method of slowly infiltrating us. It doesn't happen all at once. Not everyone who accepts their money immediately becomes a Christian. Yet their influence involves a seepage process that can spread over years. Those people are very patient and gradually they make inroads.

When a simple Jew hears the word "Christianity," he is filled with abhorrence. He immediately thinks of the blood of millions of Jews tortured to death by the Christians. He recalls the Inquisition. He remembers everything. Therefore, he will never want to listen to them.

Faced with that, what do we find in the internal memos of those organizations that hunt souls? "We have to break down the barriers between ourselves and the Jews. We have to rehabilitate their trust, which has been totally destroyed. We have to operate slowly and patiently. We have to show that we are friendly, and who is more friendly than He that distributes money to those who crave money?!"

They use data to infiltrate every community. For example, in order to penetrate the Charedim they dress up like Charedim and keep tabs on their poor. If someone falls ill or passes away, they come to visit, help out, provide money, offer an encouraging word – without a single word about Christianity, obviously. They come again and again until a connection is formed. They talk from the heart. When they see that the time is ripe, they say, seemingly as a side comment, "Certainly Christianity is something bad, but Jesus the Christian was all-in-all a good person." In the first stage, that one sentence is enough. Later on comes another sentence, and then another sentence, via the slow-seepage approach.

In one place, a missionary dressed as a Lubavitcher gave some Chabad women a series of lectures on Tanach in a style that was totally Chabad. The series went on for two years without one word about Christianity, until one day he mentioned that "That Man" wasn't so bad.

Everywhere there are missionaries sporting knitted yarmulkes. The missionary's son learns in a yeshiva high school, and he is a little missionary. His daughter studies at a girls' Torah high school, and she is a missionary as well.

They're all very nice. They don't give themselves away. The main thing is to slowly build a connection, to foster trust. That is their approach. We know them and we know exactly how they operate. There's a story about a man who picked up a hitchhiker, an officer, a lieutenant colonel, with a knitted yarmulke, who lived in Gush Katif. Certainly, all the elements of a fine person. They conversed at length, yet that same lieutenant colonel let slip a comment about "That Man." Since the driver was personally involved in combating missionaries, he immediately sensed who this was and he reported it to the army. The army investigated and threw him out, because they don't want missionaries there. The officer turned to the Supreme Court, but lost in court. The army has enough headaches without that.

That's their secret. They wait until we say, "All in all, the Christians are fine people. They give us money. Hats off to them!" That's how they break down the barriers. Sometime later, we say, "Maybe we'll meet with them. Maybe we'll talk with them."

Dear friend, you are no expert in the strategies employed by the Christians. Were the donor an individual Christian, there would be room to deliberate from a halachic standpoint on whether one could accept his gift. At the same time, it is no great honor to be a schnorrer, as noted above. If, however, the donor is a Christian organization, then under no circumstances is one allowed to accept even one cent!

It's true that if you, as a private individual, accept their gift, one can hope that you won't be influenced towards Christianity. Yet we are talking about the public agenda of the Jewish nation, that it is forbidden for us to develop a dependency on them.

Here is a terrible case in point. Unfortunately, there are tens of thousands of Christian missionaries working in Israel. Already a number of times a new Knesset law has been recommended: "One is not allowed to persuade someone to convert. Jews cannot persuade Christians or Muslims, Christians cannot persuade Jews or Muslims, etc." Yet this law fails every time, because those same Christian organizations that support Eretz Yisrael and distribute funds to the settlements and to the poor threatened, "If you enact this law we will cease our financial support. We will also consider ceasing our political support." Money demands something in exchange. It ensnares you.

Don't mistakenly say, "They're Christians, not missionaries." Every Evangelist Protestant is a missionary, even if he hides it. Also, we haven't learned Greek, so we don't realize that the word "evangelist" means "missionary." At all the pro-Israel Christian marches and demonstrations, the Christian Lovers of Israel walk hand-in-hand with the missionaries. It turns out that because of the money that you receive, Jews become Christians! For the missionaries, hundreds of millions are a pittance, but to us it looks like a lot. To refuse to accept millions is a temptation that you can, indeed withstand. Yet once you start to accept it, it's hard to stop.

About twenty-six years ago, such a Christian approached me, declaring that he greatly loved my yeshiva, because we were building the Temple. I told him that we're not building the Temple. "But you want to build it, right?" "Certainly we long to build it," I replied. "And what are you doing on that score?" he asked. I answered, "We learn Torah and strive to improve our character." "Great! Very good!" he said. "We are fifty million fundamentalist Christians in the U.S.A. Every one of them will give one dollar a year, and you will have fifty million dollars a year, and that will be our contribution towards building the Temple." And what did I answer to his generous offer? "No!"

Since, then, I reckon that I have lost out on a billion three hundred million dollars. No big deal. Small change.

There's a settlement in Judea and Samaria that received a million dollars from them. Now, in that settlement there's a Christian worship service in their Town Council building! A prayer service of Christian missionaries and Jews for J. – right there in the Town Council building! Nowhere is it written that the one was in exchange for the other, but that is precisely the result. Let's not be naive.

How fortunate you are, through G-d's grace, to have been born in Eretz Yisrael, such that you don't know what Christians are, how they operate and how sophisticated they are. You should bone up on your history.

By the way, there are two other types of Christians. First, there are liberal Protestants. They are against the State of Israel, because we, allegedly, committed an injustice against the Arabs. Second, there are Catholics, who presently are not engaged in missionary work. Yet, they, too are against the State of Israel, because they think that they are the true Israel, and it was they who were supposed to have established the State. Right now we are talking about the Fundamentalist Protestants who love the State of Israel and who are associated with the missionaries. The common denominator is that we suffer fusillades from all of them, and not just today but throughout history.

Let us be strong and courageous. Let us not accept from them even a penny. Let us not run away after their dollar crusade.

## Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #8

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

In Birkot Ha-Shachar we bless Hashem: "Who has not made me a slave." Slaves have no control over their time. We are fortunate that we do have control over our time, and can use it to serve Hashem. Often slaves have no control over their own minds. Sometimes today when people cannot think for themselves, they are like slaves. If they have to do what everyone else does to "be cool" or "fit in," that means they cannot think for themselves. They've become a slave to the group, to peer pressure or to society. But as Jews were want only to be servants of Hashem.

### **Elul/Tishre**

From Rosh Chodesh Elul through Hoshana Rabba we add the Psalm "Le-David Hashem Ori ve-Yishi - Hashem is my Light and Savior - at the end of davening. King David wrote this in reference to everything that could have caused him fear. With Hashem as his protector, there was truly no need to fear any of his enemies. In this Psalm, there is what may be the most important verse in all of Tehillim. "There is one thing I ask of Hashem, one request I shall have, to dwell in the House of Hashem all of the days of my life..."

Do we really only ask one thing of Hashem? We ask so many things. But they all come down to one central request. We wish to be close to Hashem. This means we want to recognize Him, understand Him as best as we can and to do what Hashem wants. Everything else that we ask for is to be able to accomplish the goal of being close to Hashem.

At the end of the Psalm we say, "Trust in Hashem. Make your heart strong and brave and trust in Hashem." Rashi explains that we trust in Hashem when we pray. And when we don't seem to get what we requested, we continue to trust in Hashem. We don't always seem to get what we want when we want it. Hashem has his own time schedule. But when we are close to Hashem and when we trust Him, we truly have nothing to fear.

### *Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for*

*the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships*

#### A Kiss

*A kiss is a physical connection, but of all the physical connections in the world, it is the most spiritual. And why is this? Because those are the same lips which help us to talk together, the same lips which help us to smile and the same lips through which we breathe.*

*The connection between me and my wife comes before all else, above all else and after everything else – spiritually. There are many expressions to utilize, but they do not adequately describe it.*

*The essence is that I speak to my wife, listen to my wife, try to understand my wife, make an effort to express myself to my wife, and to unfurl the map of my soul before her and to read the map of her soul. My wife is my breath and my soul. Therefore, when I come close to my wife, I do so with love and reverence, with my lips, in the place of my speech and my breath.*

## 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:

### Faith and Problems

Q: There are all types of problems in the world. Doesn't this contradict faith in Hashem?

A: On the contrary, when everything is good, it is not so hard to have faith. The test is when it is a time of distress. Mesilat Yesharim 19. The foundation of faith is to know that all the deficiencies we see in the world are only according to our limited grasp, but in truth, they are not deficiencies. One must also recite a blessing on the bad, since everything is for the best.

### Helping Others Repent

Q: Is it permissible to lie in order to help someone repent?

A: Someone who does this believes that the Torah is not true, and therefore lies in its name so that it will find favor in others' eyes.

### Praying with a Microphone

Q: Is it permissible to say Tefilat Ha-Derech with a microphone on a bus?

A: No, one must hear it directly from the person, unless each person is reciting it on his own (Shut Minchat Shlomo 1:9).

### Zohar

Q: Is it permissible to learn the Zohar?

A: No. The Zohar is for special individuals (Rama, Yoreh Deah 246:6).

### Old and New

Q: Are the words of Rav Kook old or new?

A: When our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, was asked this question, he said that it is the oldest of the old and newest of the new, i.e. old in a new form. And, in fact, our Rabbi added the source for every line written by Rav Kook.

### Torah and Politics

Q: Does Torah have what to say about politics?

A: Yes. The Torah includes everything. According to Christianity, religion relates to G-d and politics to Caesar – not G-d, i.e. Satan. This is one of the differences between us.

### Davening while Traveling

Q: If one is on a long trip and there is no choice, it is permissible to daven Shemoneh Esrei while seated, or is it preferable not to daven at all?

A: While seated (Shut Be'er Moshe 3:14).

### Taxes

Q: I work for myself, and if I pay taxes, I will be in poverty.

A: One who has a lower income pays a very minimal amount of taxes. But based on what you wrote, there is no permission to steal.

### Cemetery at Night

Q: Is it permissible to visit a cemetery at night?

A: Some are careful not to do so, but it is permissible. Nitei Gavriel (Avelut 82:10).

#### Impure Thoughts

Q: Since I began learning in yeshiva, impure thoughts overcome me, even in the Bet Midrash?!

A: The good inclination is increasing, and the evil inclination is also getting stronger against it. Tanya, chap. 28. Be strong and have courage!

#### Maaser Kesafim

Q: Can I give Maaser Kesafim to my father?

A: If your father is poor and you are poor, since Maaser Kesafim is for the poor, and your father takes precedence before others. If you are not poor, you should support your father with your money and not Maaser Kesafim (Ahavat Chesed of the Chafetz Chaim, 19 and Aruch Ha-Shulchan Yoreh Deah 251:8).

#### Learning Out loud

Q: Is it permissible to learn Torah out loud in the Bet Midrash if it is bothering others' concentration?

A: It is certainly forbidden to bother others (based on "Love your fellow as yourself").

#### Oedipus Complex

Q: Is Freud's theory about the Oedipus Complex correct?

A: It has not been scientifically proven. Perhaps it was true in his house, since his father's second marriage was to a woman twenty years his younger, i.e. the same age as Freud's brother...

#### Postpartum Depression

Q: I gave birth and instead of being happy, I am depressed and want to cry. Maybe I am not normal?

A: You are normal. Approximately 15% of women suffer from Postpartum Depression, and the reason is not known... You can cry and express what you are going through to those close to you. Relax, enjoy and, if need be, see a psychologist.

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