



Parashat Tazria 5771 - #182

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On the Parashah... Speaking Lashon Ha-Ra about secular Jews

Question: Is it permissible to speaking Lashon Ha-Ra about secular Jews?

Answer: The Chafetz Chaim wrote that it is permissible to speak Lashon Ha-Ra about an "apikoros" (a heretic). Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, agreed that this is correct, but he also said that this creates a dangerous opening for every person to decide for himself who is an "apikoros." I will decide that anyone who does not think exactly like me is an "apikoros." The entire House of Israel will then be full of Lashon Ha-Ra. It is permissible for me to disagree with a G-d-fearing Jew, but I do not have to consider him an "apikoros." Further, while secular Jews certainly seem to be heretics, many authorities have already ruled that they are "Tinokot She-nishbu" (literally Jewish children captured and raise among non-Jews), i.e. Jews who did not receive a proper Jewish upbringing and education. In order to be an "apikoros," one must be knowledgeable. Someone once came to our master, Rav Kook, and said all sorts of thing against the Tanach. Rav Kook said: You are right. He said: I am?! "Yes," replied Rav Kook, "if the Tanach is as you say then what you are saying is correct, but the Tanach is something else." The person was not denying the Tanach - he simply did not know it. This is not an "apikoros," it is an unknowledgeable Jew. Secular Jews in general are not heretics; they are simply "Tinokot She-nishbu." They have not learned and do not know, therefore do not speaking ill against them. It is possible that a particular secular Jew is an "apikoros," but it is not so simple, because the "spirit of the time" is extremely strong. It may be that a person did learn Torah, but there are all sorts of influences. The Rambam (Hilchot Mamrim 3:3) defined someone with a corrupt education as a "Tinok She-nishba." Today, however, one's education is not limited to one's parents, but includes the "street." What is the "street"? These are all of the possible "foggy" influences: radio, TV, the internet, books, etc... We build walls around us, but things still enter. There is a saying that the apple does not fall far from the tree. The Chief Rabbi of Israel, Ha-Rav Yitzchak Herzog, was once asked: what happened with your son Chaim, who became the President of Israel and who was secular? Ha-Rav Herzog said: "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree" only applies with a usual wind, but an unusual wind can carry it far away. He was referring to the Tosafot on Baba Kamma 27b. It is therefore even possible for the son of the Chief Rabbi to receive a

corrupt education -- not from the Chief Rabbi, but from what is going around in the "street." In short: Do not be quick to apply the term "apikoros".

Rav Aviner on... Maran Ha-Rav Kook and Vegetarianism

Question: Must one be a vegetarian according to Maran Ha-Rav Kook?

Answer: Maran Ha-Rav Kook wrote in "Kovetz Tzimchonut Ve-Ha-Shalom" – "Vegetarianism and Peace" – that vegetarianism is a future vision. Its importance is real, but not for today. Why not? Because it is impossible to skip stages (in human development). Some vegetarians explain that they do not eat meat in order to be compassionate to animals. That is certainly important, but we first need to master compassion towards human beings, which we have not yet done. After we finish being merciful and righteous to human beings, we will move on to animals. We cannot skip stages. We are not criticizing those who are vegetarians. If a person wants to be a vegetarian, he may do so, but it is impossible to define it as a mitzvah or even as a stringency. Someone once asked me: I am a vegetarian and I have decided to stop. Do I need a "hatarat nedarim" (annulment of vows), since someone who performs a proper custom a few times and wants to stop must perform a "hatarat nedarim"? I said that there is no need for a "hatarat nedarim," since vegetarianism is not a mitzvah or a stringency. It is a good, compassionate, and a proper character trait for one who wishes, but it is before its time. It is fine if an individual desires to be a vegetarian, but this cannot be – as Maran Ha-Rav Kook refers to it – a "communal" practice. Maran Ha-Rav Kook also warns in the same article that vegetarianism can actually be a hijacking of the feelings of compassion. This means that sometimes there are people who are cruel to other people, but because their Divine souls cannot bear this cruelty, and need to be pacified, they say: we will be vegetarians and be compassionate to animals. In fact, there were Nazis in the concentration camps who were vegetarians and some say that Hitler himself was a vegetarian!

Maran Ha-Rav Kook ate meat, as did our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah. Among the letters of Maran Ha-Rav Kook is one that he wrote to our Rabbi, when he was young and not eating meat. He asked: Why aren't you eating meat? You need to eat meat, it is not our level to refrain from doing so. You know that there are many cruel people in the world and many vegetarians who are cruel. Maran Ha-Rav further wrote: A Torah scholar, along with other things, needs to know how to slaughter animals. There are certainly Torah scholars who do not know how to slaughter, but it is good and proper to know. Please learn to slaughter (Igrot Re'eiya vol. 3, letter 780). Then, in another letter (ibid. letter 784) he asks: Did you learn to slaughter? And in yet another (ibid. letter 799): So, are you learning to slaughter? And finally, in a later letter (ibid. 839): I am happy that you learned to slaughter. Now that you have learned, you need to do so. So, did you slaughter yet (see letters 852, 853 and 860)? Maran Ha-Rav Kook pressured our Rabbi so that he did not possess an ideology that it was forbidden to slaughter or eat animals.

So it is clear to us that eating meat is a vision for the future. How can we prepare for this higher level in the meantime? Slowly, in stages, through all types of Halachot which teach us that we need to respect animals, not be cruel to them, not cause

them undue pain, etc...Thus we begin the process in a proper way, without completing it before its time.

Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #46-47

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

#46

When we say "Mi Ka-Mocha" - "Who is like You, Hashem," we are saying the same words that we all said together at Kriyat Yam Suf. This was an amazing miracle by itself. After having this incredible experience, every member of the Jewish People sang the same praise, word for word, together! How could this happen? At that point the entire Jewish People had Ruach Ha-Kodesh. Everyone believed what they were saying with all of their hearts and minds. And so everyone sang together "They made Hashem our King." Hashem rules forever over us. This isn't just about the past, it's about the present and future. The Nation of Israel is promising that Hashem is our King forever.

#47

We end the blessings of Kriyat Shema with the blessing of Ga'al Yisrael. The first blessing is about Hashem ruling over nature. The second is about Torah, Mitzvot and Hashem's love for us and choosing of us. In the Shema itself, we accepted Hashem as our King, Hashem's Mitzvot and that he took us out of Egypt. Now we are saying that Hashem freed the Jewish People, and will do so once again. The original freeing from Egypt was the beginning. It has continued and will eventually result in the Complete Redemption.

The Halacha is that we must connect "Geulah" to "Tefilah." This means that once we say the blessing of "Ga'al Yisrael" we must immediately say the Amida. We cannot speak, think about anything else or do anything else. They must be connected. This reminds us that everything we daven for in the Amida, both for ourselves and for Klal Yisrael, is part of asking for the Complete Redemption. We don't just focus on ourselves. We focus on all of Klal Yisrael and the whole world, and that means asking for the Complete Redemption.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Practicing with Music during Sefirat Ha-Omer

Question: Our Bnei Akiva Shelichim would like to do have Israeli dancing leading up to a Yom Ha-Atzmaut celebration. Is it permissible to have the classes with recorded (not live) music during Sefirat Ha-Omer?

Answer: No. They should either practice before Sefirat Ha-Omer with music or during with accapella.

Woman and Talit

Question: Can a woman wear a Talit?

Answer: No. The Shulchan Aruch rules that it is "Yuhara – religious arrogance" (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 17:2). And if it is a Talit of men, there is a problem of "Lo Tilbash" - the prohibition of cross-dressing (Targum Yonatan on Devarim 22:5).

Question: But Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein writes in Shut Igrot Moshe (Orach Chaim 4:49) that a woman is permitted to fulfill the Mitzvah of Tzitzit although she is not obligated, with two conditions: 1. Her intention is not to rebel against Hashem and His Torah, but for the sake of

Heaven. 2. The garment needs to be different from a male garment to avoid the prohibition of "Lo Tilbash".

Answer: In order for this to be for the sake of Heaven and not "Yuhara", she needs to wear the Talit in private and no one should know. And, it needs to be a Talit for women (It is told that a woman once asked Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik if she could wear a Talit during davening. He responded to her: "Since this is a major change in traditional practice, we must proceed gradually." He suggested that she wear a four-cornered garment without Tzitzit for three months and then come back. She returned after three months and said that this was the most meaningful religious experience of her life. Ha-Rav Soloveitchik said: "For three months, you have been wearing a garment without any religious or halachic value, it is thus clear that your feeling comes from a source outside of the Mitzvah", and he did not grant her permission to wear a Talit).

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

Maybe you're upset?

When you decide to punish your child, you have to ask yourself: Do you truly think that you are educating him, or is the punishment perhaps merely an outlet for your anger? Maybe your're upset? Just revenge?

At first glance, it seems strange to blame you with taking revenge against your beloved child, but perhaps you feel he is ruining his life, and you harbor conscious or subconscious stress, which bursts out in a certain way.

Check yourself carefully, lest the punishment be the fruit of your upset or an inner inclination towards violence, conscious or subconscious. To a certain extent, perhaps the animal within human beings resides within you?

Baruch Hashem, within the Nation of Israel, this "animalism" has largely been sweetened over the generation. But remnants certainly still exist and we must free ourselves from them.

While there is a place for punishing, there are limitations and conditions, and it should not be the central tenet in building a child. Therefore, before educating your child, educate yourself.

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