



Parashat Masei 5771 - #196

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On the Parashah...

Based on the recent discussions by Rabbinic organization in the US and Canada regarding reporting child abuse, we saw fit to reprint this article:

One's Duty to Immediately Report Child Abuse, at all Costs

When children are battered, whether sexually or "just" physically, anyone who knows about it has to report it to the authorities. The child, after all, is helpless and has no defenses. According to Jewish law, the primary loyalty of anyone who knows what is happening must be to the battered child, and this duty is absolute. Allow me to add that from a legal standpoint, if the person who knows about it is a professional in an associated field, for example a social worker or psychologist, and he does not report it, he is liable to go to prison for half a year.

Cruelly hitting children is alien to the world of Jewish law. Our halachic authorities viewed the matter so gravely that Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon Yosef Shalom Elyashiv ruled that outside of Israel in the case of a battered child, one must assist the authorities to remove him from his home – even if the child will be moved to a non-Jewish family. The reason is that such treatment could threaten the child's life (see Shut Tzitz Eliezer 19:52 who discusses abused children in Israel and considers the abuser a "Rodef – pursuer" who must be stopped).

The desire not to report it in order to spare the perpetrator may derive from sincere motives, but one must first take pity on the helpless child. His fate comes before all else. In the Crisis Center for Religious Women, it is reported that there are more children who suffer from beatings and sexual abuse among the religious public than among the secular public. This is not because the religious are more violent, but because more often the religious public avoids reporting such incidents, and they make reports only when the matter goes to extremes. Until then, the battered child suffers terrible harm.

It is important to note that there is only one situation in which one is exempt from reporting. If the perpetrator is aware of his problem, is willing to go for appropriate treatment, steadfastly shows up for treatment sessions, and the responsible authorities supervise this

process, then the perpetrator is doing what he would be ordered to do anyway. In all other instances, without exception, there is an obligation to report abuse, and quickly. The child's fate depends on us.

I recall a story in which I was personally involved. Someone saw his neighbor kick his small daughter in the head when she was lying on the floor. The man hesitated about whether or not to report what had occurred, when it was clear that he would pay for his deed with a fight with the neighbor. I ruled that he was obligated to report it, and immediately. During the talk it became clear to me that the person asking the question was a social worker. I had trouble believing this and I asked him, "How can it be that you, as a social worker, would ask me such a question?"

He did report what he had seen, and as he feared, he got into a fight with his neighbor, as well as with much of the neighborhood in which he lived, since the violent father incited them against him. I heard about that and I talked to him. I told him, "It will all be worth it. Think about the fact that you saved a Jewish life."

Rav Aviner on... I've Got a Name

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Matot 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

I've got a name. Or, more precisely, I had one. When I was a little girl, I had a name – Leah. As a teenager, as well, that was still my name. Then I got married. My husband affectionately called me Leah. Later on, he hated me, but he still called me Leah. After a long struggle, with the help Rabbis, I succeeded in getting divorced, much the worse for wear, but I still had my name -- Leah.

I get divorced at age 23, but I was so worn out that it felt like I was 30. When I received my get [divorce document], I radiated happiness before the judges, and I felt like I was 25. I said to myself, "Leah, you've been through the wringer, but you're still young. Your world is before you. With God's help you'll find a nice bridegroom, build a new Jewish home, and your future happiness will eclipse your past sorrow. Mazel Tov, Leah!

Yet I was so wrong! I fell into an even darker abyss than that of my awful marriage.

Why? Because previously I had suffered, but I had hope, and I waited for the morrow full of light. Yet now the horizon seems bleak.

You will certainly ask why. The answer is simple. I have no name. When I was a child, I read a story about an unfortunate man who lost his shadow. And I have lost my name. I am no longer Leah. I am no longer an occupational therapist. I am no longer my parent's daughter. I am no longer the graduate of a religious high school and a post-high school seminary. Instead, my entire personality has been consumed by a terrible black hole that is swallowing up everything: I am a divorcee.

All the fine young men to whom my name is suggested as a match listen appreciatively to all of my virtues, and when they hear the expression, "She is divorced," their faces turn somber, and they end the conversation coldly. This awful guillotine knows no mercy.

Rabbis have told me, "It's very simple. Don't tell!" In other words, don't say it immediately, but when a bond is formed. That is what I've started doing, but now I face a new scenario. Everything is going great. There is chemistry. There is understanding. There is a bond. And then, after three or four dates, I get up the courage, and in a trembling voice I say, "I am divorced." Then my world turns dark before my eyes, and I add, "Ask the Rabbis. They will tell you all: that I don't have horns, that the divorce was not my fault, that I was a wonderful wife, that something was wrong with my former spouse, that I invested above and beyond to save the marriage, then I gave in on everything, really everything! But the end was

unavoidable, because my life was hell. As the Hebrew saying goes: 'Better a terrible ending than for things to be terrible without end.' You can ask all the Rabbis in the world." The boy listens with lack of interest, with obvious boredom, and then he says with forced politeness: "I'll check."

And indeed he does check, and within several days I receive a laconic SMS: Not interested. Thanks.

I stop my crying and feel profound disappointment. Leah! Leah! I say to myself – for at least in my own eyes I'm still Leah – you are silly, you are naïve, you are innocent, you forgot that you're divorced. Get this deep into your thick skull: You are divorced! You thought Moshe, a wonderful boy, steeped in Torah, a lover of the Jewish People and of the Land of Israel, very God-fearing with fine character, would want you. Wake up! True, he's full of the love of Israel -- but that only goes so far. Try to understand, Leah, you've got Rabbis, but so does he, and they said to him, "Why expose yourself to trouble?" I am trouble? I'm a great catch! That's true, but Leah dear, in our false world, you are used goods. You hear me? Used goods! That's it! I'm finished! I'm divorced! I'm used goods! So well-meaning souls with a smile full of mercy come to me with rickety proposals: one leg a little shorter, one arm a little longer, etc.

By the way, I have no trouble marrying a boy with a problem. He could very well be pure gold. But I am insulted that he is being offered to me just because I'm divorced. Apparently, he, too, is insulted that he is being offered a divorcee, just because one leg is shorter than the other and one arm is longer than the other. That, however, offers me no consolation.

But don't think that I've given up, that I am broken, that I'm depressed, that I've lost hope. No way! I haven't given up on my name! I'm Leah forever, with my character, with my positive traits, which make me a good wife and a good mother. I'm the same Leah with the fine traits that I always was. I haven't gone down in value just because I'm divorced. Quite the contrary, my stock has gone up. The crises have exalted me, refined me, strengthened me. Out of the pain, I have continued to grow. I am happier than ever. I go to singing classes and dance classes. I go to Torah lectures and do benevolent deeds. I am waiting for a boy on my level, looking and waiting. Nothing has changed. It's just harder. I know that a lot of boys are frightened off by the word divorcee. They should live and be well! I don't need them.

And anyway, I won't be able to marry a lot of boys -- I need just one. One boy who knows how to value a person according to what he really has, and not based on a tag stating his category. One boy who is open and genuine. One who is wise and happy. I will find him.

Mazel Tov, Leah!

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

Rabbis and Politics

When our Rabbi, was asked his opinion regarding the involvement of rabbis in politics, he answered as follows: "Rabbis are obligated by the Torah to involve themselves in politics, and if they refrain from doing so they are guilty of betrayal. It is written in the Torah: 'Do not fear any man!'" Once, when, as a result of the words of our Rabbi, a public commotion arose, and many claimed that rabbis should not deal in politics, our Rabbi responded: "I am not asking anybody's permission. I am obligated by the Torah to proclaim and publicize that which is just and true. The political issues of the Community of Israel are themselves Torah. They are sacred." Shemirat ha-lashon After the Yom Kippur War, during the time of "The War of Generals," our Rabbi warned Arik Sharon about guarding his tongue (Iturei Cohanim Elul 5766 #264 p. 48 in name of Rabbi Yitzchak Shilat).

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