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Parashat Korach 5772 - #238

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## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

### **Number of children**

Q: We have two boys and two girls. I want to continue to enlarge the family, but my wife does not. What is Ha-Rav's advice?

A: After you have a boy and girl, one should continue to have children as it says: "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand" (Kohelet 11:6 and Yevamot 62b). But we are not told how many children to have. The guiding principle is to have the most children possible based on one's ability – one's physical ability, one's emotion ability, and one's financial ability. One's ability is a personal decision. You cannot force your wife - she would like to have more children, but for whatever reason is unable. This reminds me of the words of the Mesech Chochma on the mitzvah of "Be fruitful and multiply" (Bereshit 9:7). As is known, women are not obligated in this mitzvah. But how can a man have children alone? The Mesech Chochma explains that women are not obligated in this mitzvah because pregnancy can be quite difficult, childbirth is difficult, and taking care of a baby all of the time is difficult – and the Torah does not command someone to do something which may be beyond his ability. But if Hashem does not command women to have children, how will children come into the world? Because Hashem implanted a desire for children within women, as we see with Rachel: "Give me children or I will die" (Bereshit 30a). A woman therefore has children because of her desire for them. There is a balance between the desire and the difficulties, and a woman navigates between them. This appears in the Torah, not when Hashem commands Adam: "Be Fruitful and multiply" (Bereshit 1:28), but after the Flood when he commands Noach: "Be fruitful and multiply." The first command was before the curse of "You shall bear children in pain" (Bereshit 3:16) and there was therefore no reason to be lenient. But now there is the difficulty of the curse. I therefore recommend that you not pressure your wife. Let her decide on her own.

## Rav Aviner on... Visiting Kivrei Tzadikim

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah- Shelach 5772 – translated by R. Blumberg]

**Question:** Should one make pilgrimages to Kivrei Tzadikim (the Graves of the Righteous)? Is it important?

**Answer:** There is no commandment, either from the Torah or from the Rabbis, to go to Kivrei Tzadikim. It's not mentioned anywhere. But it is a national practice, is one of the customs of the day before Rosh Hashana, and even has a holy source relating to Calev ben Yefuneh, who went to Ma'arat Ha-Machpelah Hebron in order to ask the Patriarchs and Matriarchs to save him from the scheming of the spies (Sota 34b). Thus, there is no mitzvah, but there is spiritual benefit.

Obviously, the intent is not to pray to the Tzadikim themselves, which would be idolatry.

Rather, it is akin to what, for example, appears in the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch regarding visiting Kivrei Tzadikim on Erev Rosh Hashana:

"It arouses the holy Tzadikim who are in the Land to serve as our advocates on the Day of Judgment." And it is not only the Tzadikim who are holy, but also, because of them, the actual ground in which they are buried. And so our prayers benefit further from being offered up on holy ground. G-d thus performs His kindnesses thanks to the virtue of the Tzadikim and the holiness and purity of their graves.

"Do not, however, think that one's prayers should be directed to the dead buried there. That verges on the prohibition against séances to contact the dead. Rather, one should address one's prayers to G-d to have mercy on him by virtue of the Tzadikim buried there" (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128:13).

Thus, there are two reasons to visit Kivrei Tzadikim: 1) to ask the Tzadik to advocate on your behalf, and 2) to be in a place where prayer is more accepted, due to the merit of the Tzadikim. The Mishnah Berurah (581:27) likewise, mentions the second rationale: "The cemetery is the resting place of the Tzadikim, and prayer is more accepted there. Yet one should not address one's prayers to the deceased. Rather, one should ask G-d to show one mercy through the merit of the Tzadikim interred there."

Rabbi Yosef Albo likewise provides a similar rationale (Sefer Ikarim 4:35).

The question often asked is whether one may leave Israel for this purpose. According to Rambam, who permits leaving Israel temporarily only for two major mitzvot (learning Torah or getting married [Hilchot Melachim 5:9]), it is certainly prohibited. Yet even according to Tosafot, who permits leaving for the sake of any mitzvah (Tosafot Avodah Zara 13a, d.h. "Lilmod Torah ve-lisa isha"), as does the Mishnah Berurah (531:14), the serious problem remains that going to Kivrei Tzadikim is not classified as a Mitzvah. Were it a Mitzvah, our Sages would have had to define for us whether it should be done once a week, once a month, or perhaps once a year. They also would have had to define for us how great one has to be in order to be considered a Tzadik whose grave may be visited in fulfillment of this Mitzvah. We would also see Torah scholars going to Kivrei Tzadikim. But this is not the reality.

True, we said above that visiting Kivrei Tzadikim contains the spiritual benefits of prayer, yet, as Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook asks (Shut Mishpat Cohain #147), is there proof that for the sake of this one is allowed to leave the Land? And, in any case, are there no graves in Eretz Yisrael? Can anything compete with Ma'arat Ha-Machpelah or Kever Rachel?! After all, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah are certainly greater than the various Kivrei Tzadikim in the Diaspora. Rav Kook wrote: "In my humble opinion, it is not clear to me at all that one can say that one's love for the saints slumbering in Hebron does not suffice such that one must leave Eretz Yisrael for the

Diaspora... The major holiness of those first Tzadikim beloved by Israel is here in our Holy Land.”

Yet even in Eretz Yisrael, itself, everyone should consider whether it is not better to invest one's time and money on matters that according to the Torah clearly benefit a person, like doing kind deeds or learning Torah. This kindness, learned from Avraham, and Torah, learned from Moshe, have the power to atone even for sins so severe that a person has incurred a death sentence from heaven (Mishnah Berurah 315:3, Sha'ar Hatziyun #5-6).

By way of example, G-d said regarding the sin of Eli's sons, “Assuredly, I swear concerning the house of Eli, that the iniquity of the house of Eli will never be expiated by sacrifice or offering” (Shmuel 1 3:14). Even so, our sages said that their sin can be atoned for by way of Torah learning and performing kind deeds.

Moreover, whether one's trip abroad will cost a lot or a little, there, as well, the money is better spent on the hungry and the poor. That is a clear mitzvah of the Torah, and our sages said, “Charity shall save one from death”, as in the famous story of Rabbi Akiva's daughter, who was saved from death thanks to her having given charity (Shabbat 156b).

Thus, each person should carefully clarify for himself the best path by which to bring G-d's light to rest upon us.

A story is told about Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. One time he left his home in the Sha'arei Chesed neighborhood of Jerusalem for the Kol Torah Yeshiva in Bayit Ve-Gan. He stopped and faced Mount Herzl with its military cemetery and said, “These are the Kivrei Tzadikim, the graves of the saintly.”

Certainly, even if a soldier, killed in action, was no saint during his lifetime, he becomes a tzaddik when he gives up his life for the sake of the Jewish People.

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

### Surrounded by Immodesty

When Yeshivat Mercaz Ha-Rav was in its original building on Rav Kook Street, to our embarrassment and disgrace, there was a specific place right outside where people would wait for prostitutes. Every time a student left the study hall for any reason, he encountered this disgusting behavior, which was the complete opposite of the sanctity and holiness of the Yeshiva. The students complained to Rav Tzvi Yehudah and asked him to move the Yeshiva to a different place, but he told them that at the present time it was not possible. He did however offer a solution: The students need to be strong. And even though he agreed to move the Yeshiva when it became possible, this was not because they were running away or avoiding the problem, but rather because of self-respect and courage. Rav Tzvi Yehudah told the students not to go into seclusion. He advised them to continue to act normally, training themselves not to look at the behavior that was occurring outside. The Tur writes about this in his introduction to Orach Chaim: "Be as light as an eagle' (Pirkei Avot 5:20), refers to avoiding immodest behavior and actions that your eyes can see - just as an eagle swiftly glides through the air, you must be swift to close your eyes to prevent yourself from seeing immodest behavior, because the sight of negative behavior constitutes the beginning of sin. The eyes see and the heart desires and the organs capable of action culminate the sin." (From Taharat Ha-Brit by Rav Aviner, translated into English "Pure Again" by Melech Peltz pp. 125-126).