



Parashat Tzav-Pesach - #275

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"The Time of our Freedom"

[Ha-Rav's commentary on the Haggadah]

Question: What is the connection between freedom and the prohibition of chametz (leaven)? The entire process of ridding ourselves of chametz seems like a heavy burden which robs a person of his freedom. In fact, all of the mitzvot seem to deprive a person of his natural freedom of movement!

Answer: Rav Kook explained that true freedom includes two aspects:

- a. Freedom of the body: Physical freedom from any foreign subjugation: Anything which forces the image of G-d within a person to be subjugated to any other power lessens that person's worth.
- b. Freedom of the soul: Spiritual freedom from anything which turns it from the straightness which is its essential existence. G-d created man upright, and He cleanses man from any refuse which sullies his inner holiness.

Each morning we recite the blessing, "who has not made me a slave." The mitzvot are not foreign entities which are forced upon a person, rather they are commands that reveal his inner essence. Before the mitzvot were engraved on the tablets that were given at Mount Sinai they were written on the "tablets" of every Jew's soul. Our Sages therefore said: They were "charut" (engraved) on the tablets – do not read the word as "charut" (engraved) but as "cherut" (freedom) (Pirkei Avot 6:2). By slightly changing the vocalization of the word, we learn an incredible lesson: in order to truly be a free people, it is not enough to be liberated from physical slavery. On the contrary, it is possible to have an enlightened slave whose spirit is full of freedom, and a physically free person whose spirit is enslaved. We were transformed into free people on Pesach, but we do not become truly free until we rid ourselves of anything which robs us of our natural essence. This is the reason for destroying the chametz, which symbolizes the evil inclination and is called "the yeast in the dough," since it ferments in the heart of people and causes them to transgress (see Bereachot 17a). The destruction of our internal chametz is what allows us to raise the flag of freedom (Olat Re'eiyah vol. 2, pp. 244-245).

Rav Aviner on...

Religious Zionism between Two Worlds

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Vayikra 5773 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Question: What is the path of Religious Zionism? How is it possible to be hanging between two worlds?

Answer: Seemingly, the one world is Zionism and the other world is religiosity, and Religious Zionists are torn between the two. It is true that in practical terms, these represent two different worlds. There are irreligious nationalists and there are non-nationalist religious Jews. Truthfully, however, it is all one world, for what is the essence of Zionism? **The Jewish Nation's rebirth in its Land.** This includes the Jews' moving to Israel, settling the Land and taking sovereignty over the Land. Obviously, sovereignty over the Land includes having an army. Yet all this is written in the Torah countless times – that Eretz Yisrael is our Land, that we have to live there, build it and occupy it. In other words, we must fashion national ownership over it, or in other words, a state and an army.

See Ramban in his Addenda to Rambam's Sefer Ha-Mitzvot, Positive Precept 4, where Ramban reduces the Mitzvah of Eretz Yisrael to three parts: 1) living in the Land 2) not leaving the Land desolate, i.e., settling the Land, and 3) not leaving the Land in the hands of any other nation, i.e., occupying the Land and establishing a state.

The essence of Religious Zionism is **the rebirth of the Jewish Nation in its Land, living according to Torah law.** And truthfully, it is all one. Yet since we were prevented from dealing with the nation's rebirth for two thousand years, we forgot. There is nothing new here. Rather, there is something old that has been forgotten. Our sages, at the beginning of Tractate Megillah coined such an expression: "They forgot about it, and then they once more established it."

There is nothing new here. It is all old. It is just that we have to re-acustom ourselves to it, since we forgot it. It is true that at the start of the renewal of settlement in the Land, between the nationalists and the Charedim reigned not only hostility but apathy – what occupied the one did not interest the other.

Yet gradually, through their living together, they began to know each other and to admire each other, and to cooperate. The Zionists became more religious, and the religious became more Zionist, and the Religious Zionists stand in the breach and represent the fulfillment of the Torah to perfection. Perfection! "All that G-d has said, we shall do and obey!" (Shemot 24:7).

Also in Religious Zionism, itself, there are various hues. Some are more Zionist and some are more religious.

That is the proper path. It can be likened to the relationship between body and soul.

One cannot survive without a body, otherwise the soul will depart. Neither can one survive without a soul. The body will be lifeless.

The truth is, however, that when a Jew says, "I am religious," that itself makes him a Zionist, even if he is unaware of it.

The Charedim are Zionists, even if they are unaware of it. And when someone says, "I am a Zionist," that itself makes him religious, even if he is unaware of it.

All of this is explained in depth in Rav Kook's work "Orot".

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Halachot of Visiting Museum

Visiting The Israel Museum on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to visit The Israel Museum on Shabbat if it is permissible to enter without paying or if one can pre-purchase a ticket before Shabbat?

A: It is forbidden since keeping it open involves Shabbat desecration (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 318:1).

Museum during 9 Days

Q: Is it permissible to visit a museum during the 9 Days?

A: Yes (see Shut Aseh Lecha Rav 2:35. Shut She'eilat Shomo 1:207).

Natural History Museum

Q: Is it permissible to visit a Natural History Museum which has exhibitions about the Big Bang, Evolution, dinosaurs, etc.?

A: Yes. These are not issues of faith but of science. The Maharal says that the purpose of science is to describe reality, while the Torah describes what reality should be, i.e. what is good and what is bad (Netiv Ha-Torah, Netiv 14). It is possible that there was a Big Bang: And in the beginning, G-d created heaven and earth through the Big Bang. Maran Ha-Rav Kook said that Evolution does not contradict the Torah. He also said that the theory of Evolution needs to evolve. And regarding that the dinosaurs being a few million years old, when according to the Torah the world is 5773 years old, Maran Ha-Rav Kook explains that Hashem created worlds and destroyed them before creating our current world (Bereshit Rabbah 3:7, 9:2 and Kohelet Rabbah 3:11). The worlds were destroyed but certain remnants remained (Igrot Ha-Re'eiyah vol. 1 #91. "Derush Or Ha-Chaim" by the Tiferet Yisrael found in Mishnayot Nezikin after Massechet Sanhedrin).

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