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Parashat Behar-Bechukotai - #280

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## On the Parashah... "And I will lead you upright" (Vayikra 26:13)

Question: Should an individual living in the Land of Israel say in the Bircat Ha-Mazon, "and lead us upright to our Land (le-artzenu)"?

Answer: I have seen three answers to this question:

1. Rabbi Yaakov Chagiz (Shut Halachot Ketanot #185) was asked: Should an individual living in the Land of Israel say, "and lead us upright to our Land (le-artzenu)" or should he change it to "and led us upright IN our Land (be-artzenu)"? He responds, "This is how people customarily recite it [and lead us upright IN our Land], but if one says "le-artzenu - to our Land," he does not lose out" (Rabbi Chagiz also rules that this is the correct wording in the blessing recited before the Shema in the morning, "Ahavah Rabbah," i.e. it should read "And lead us upright in our Land" instead of "And lead us upright to our Land." This ruling is also quoted in Minhagei Eretz Yisrael of Rav Yaakov Galis, p. 31). And Ha-Rav Dov Lior, Rav of Kiryat Arba-Hevron, was once asked the correct formula to recite in the Bircat Ha-Mazon, and he answered: "In Israel, we recite 'in our Land.'"
2. When asked this question, Ha-Rav Chaim David Halevy (Shut Aseh Lecha Rav 3:13) expressed surprise that people ask about this sentence in the Bircat Ha-Mazon, whose recitation is not obligatory, but do not ask it about a phrase in Musaf, which was established by our Sages in the Anshei Knesset Ha-Gedolah (the Men of the Great Assembly during the Second Temple) and of which one may not omit even one word: "May it be Your will Hashem...that You bring us up in joy to our Land and plant us within our boundaries." Ha-Rav Halevy explained that this prayer was established for the entire Nation. As long as the majority of Jews remain in the Exile, it is possible to say "And lead us to our Land," "plant us within our boundaries," etc. since it applies to the entire Nation and not only to those of us who dwell in Eretz Yisrael. The same idea applies to the phrase in the Bircat Ha-Mazon (i.e. we continue to say "and lead us upright to our Land").
3. In this week's parashah, as part of the blessings we will receive for following the Torah, Hashem promises: "And I will lead you upright" (Vayikra 26:13). Our Sages explain this verse: "With upright posture, so that you do not fear any creature" (Sifra).

But there is something problematic here: Doesn't the Shulchan Aruch rule, "It is forbidden to walk with upright posture" (Orach Chaim 2:6), which the Mishnah Berurah (#9) explains: "Because you will press against the feet of the Divine Presence of the Omnipresent"? However, this is not a contradiction: The one refers to the individual who is required to be humble and modest, while the other refers to the entire community which is required to walk upright. Through this posture the honor of the Divine Presence will be revealed. In practice, the prayer books in Israel say, "le-artzenu - to our Land," since it also means that Hashem should lead the Nation to act in an upright posture.

Conclusion: Even in Eretz Yisrael, one should recite "lead us upright to our Land" in the Bircat Ha-Mazon since it also refers to all of the Jewish People and to the upright posture of the Nation. One who wishes to change it to "and led us upright IN our Land" may do so, however, since its recitation in the Bircat Ha-Mazon is a custom and not an obligation.

## Rav Aviner on... Not Everyone is Beit Hillel

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

It is fashionable amongst Rabbis to present themselves as following in the path of "Beit Hillel", the School of Hillel the Elder, which is described as being easy going, lenient, going with the flow, lending an ear, facilitating, and not like Beit Shammai, which is stricter, makes life hard, renders life unrealistic, etc. There are also international student organizations that have adopted this name for themselves, as well as organizations of the Reform Movement. One must be very careful regarding this practice, which involves a three-fold insult: an insult to other Torah scholars, an insult to Shammai, and an insult to Hillel.

1. As far as the insult to Torah scholars, it is as though the Rabbis who say they are like "Beit Hillel" are implying that the other Rabbis are the opposite: they do understand, do not strive to be as helpful as they can, are harsh and unbending, etc. It is as if those who associate themselves with Beit Hillel, claim an exclusive monopoly on his path. As is well-known, we follow the rulings of Beit Hillel. Hence, a collective accusation is implied here: an entire array of Rabbis does not follow the path of Jewish law, the path of the Torah, and deny the divine voice that proclaimed that the law follows Beit Hillel.

2. As far as the insult to Shammai, it is true that the Talmud states, "One should always be gentle like Hillel and not severe like Shammai" (Shabbat 30b), but Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook explained that this does not constitute criticism of that spiritual giant. Rather, the point is that his approach is appropriate only for the very greatest Rabbis. If a simple person tries to be like Shammai, he won't succeed.

Instead, he should be like Hillel. As a rule, in order to build our Nation, there is a need for both approaches (Ein Aya on Shabbat Chapter 2, 112).

"Shammai's severity threatens to banish us from the world, whereas Hillel's gentleness brings us under the wings of the Divine Presence" (Shabbat 31a). Here, as well, Rav Kook explained that it unimaginable that Shammai's trait has no place or

need in reality. Rather, it involves a highly developed approach deriving from a sober mindset.

In practice, both approaches are needed together, and which is to be used at a given moment depends on context. If there is a need to fight against those who want to destroy the good things we have, and to preserve that which has already been achieved by individuals and by the Nation, then the severity and productive anger of Shammai can be called upon to distance any looming threats. If, however, we as individuals or as the collective, wish to cover new spiritual ground, or to restore what was lost or weakened, then we must operate like Hillel, gradually drawing others nearer to the divine presence” (Ein Aya, Shabbat, Chapter 2, 152).

This recalls the words of Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Tzvi Schechter, who once said that Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik was more like Shammai than like Hillel: exacting and conservative regarding every halachah in the Torah. We have to understand his words in the sense of a war against all those who set out to destroy the Torah.

3. The sort of comment quoted at the start of this article is likewise an affront to Hillel, as though he does not understand that sometimes the reality is complex, and there is a need to be strict. I am not talking about Tractate Eduyot, which relates that on thirty occasions, Beit Hillel was strict where Beit Shammai was lenient, for those are exceptions to the rule. Rather, I am referring to the eighteen decrees in which Beit Shammai forced their view on Beit Hillel (Mishnah Shabbat 1:14). What were those eighteen decrees? Rav Kook explains that their theme was to curtail unbridled expressions of joy that were the accepted cultural channels of the non-Jews. Shammai feared that this type of joy would draw one in negative directions, hence “Rejoice not, O Israel to exultation, like the peoples” (Hoshea 9:10). Beit Shammai was thus pulling Israel in the direction of rejoicing over Mitzvot.

By contrast, Hillel, saw all of life positively. He saw the pure human spirit and held that expanded joy would do no harm (Ein Aya, Shabbat Chapter 1, 76-81). This controversy resembles one in our day regarding whether we should taste Western culture, taking the good from it without fear, or whether we should distance ourselves greatly from it. In any event, despite Beit Hillel’s usually authoritative position, in this exceptional situation Beit Shammai enforced their rulings: they did not allow Beit Hillel enter the room in which they were learning (Shabbat 17a), and according to the Jerusalem Talmud, they even threatened them with weapons (Jerusalem Talmud Shabbat 1:4; and see the Korban Eda). Another account tells that the wise men of Beit Shammai convinced the wise men of Beit Hillel not to enter (see Chatam Sofer on Shabbat 12a).

In any event, these rulings were passed in accordance with Beit Shammai, and were seen as crucial decisions bearing on the fate of the Nation. They therefore used sharp measures, without parallel: “They struck a sword in the floor of the house of study!” (Shabbat *ibid.*). As for Hillel himself, “that day Hillel sat before Shammai, subject to him like one of the students” (*ibid.*). In other words, according to Rav Kook, they surrendered that day to Shammai, and that one time agreed with his approach that we must be exceedingly cautious regarding the evil inside a person that is liable to burst forth and to cause ruin, if there are no severe limitations amongst the Jews on the culture of joy (Ein Aya, *ibid.*, 80).

“That day was as hard for Israel as the day that the Golden Calf was fashioned” (Shabbat, *ibid.*). What was the connection to the Golden Calf? The sin of the Golden Calf proved that even after the high level we had merited at Sinai, we still had not been purified in the depths of our souls. We were liable to behave frivolously (Shemot

32:6), to behave wildly (ibid., v. 25), to fall prey to idolatry, sexual sin and bloodshed, as our Sages said (Shemot Rabba 42a). Just as then, so too now we must maintain our vigilance, since we have not reached the ideal level of inner purity. Even Hillel accepted that and agreed to it (Ein Aya, ibid., 80).

Thus, one mustn't insult the honor of Hillel as though he did not understand that sometimes one has to operate like Shammai.

Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook was once asked by his students: how is it that sometimes he is all softness, gentleness, patience and smiles, while other times he is very harsh and severe. He explained: "Hillel could allow himself to be Hillel because there was also a Shammai, and Shammai could allow himself to be Shammai because there was also a Hillel. But I have to be both Hillel and Shammai..."

We all remember the man who wagered that he could anger Hillel, calling out, "Who here is Hillel? Who here is Hillel?" (Shabbat 31a). In his wake we can say: Indeed, not everyone is Hillel, and not everyone who wants to claim the name Hillel for himself should claim it. Likewise, not everyone who wants to claim the name Shammai for himself should claim it.

Let us not forget that it was Shammai who said, "Greet everyone graciously" (Avot 1:15).

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

### **Sneezing in Halachah**

"Li-Beriyot" on Shabbat

Q: Should one wish a sneezer "Li-Beriyot" on Shabbat?

A: Belzer Chasidim refrain from saying "Li-Beriyot" on Shabbat to someone who sneezes since we refrain from crying out and making requests from Hashem on Shabbat (Shulchan Raboteinu, p. 267). But it is permissible according to the basic Halachah (In the book "Chicho Mamtakim" vol. 2, p. 186, it is related that there was a custom among some in Yerushalayim to wish his fellow: "It should be for a healing" when he came out of the Mikveh. A Rabbi once asked Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach: Is it was permissible to say this on Shabbat as well? He responded that it is permissible, and it is not considered making a request).

Man saying "Li-Beriyot" to Woman

Q: If a woman sneezes, it is permissible for a man to say "LiBeriyot" to her, and the other way around?

A: Yes, this is not considered exchanging greetings but rather a blessing and prayer, just as it is permissible for a man to wish a woman "Mazal Tov" (see Chazon Ovadiah – Dalet Ta'aniyot, p. 331).

"Li-Beriyot" to Mourner

Q: Is it permissible to say "Li-Beriyot" to a mourner?

A: Yes, just as Ha-Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank writes that it is permissible to say "Chaim Aruchim" (May you have a long life) to a mourner (Shut Har Tzvi Yoreh Deah 290).

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