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Parashat Devarim - #290

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## Rabbi Outside of Israel or a Simple Jew in Israel

Rav Aviner's lunch-time talk at the Yeshiva  
on the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Aliyah of Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

**Question:** Which is preferable – being a Rabbi outside of Israel or a regular Jew in Eretz Yisrael?

**Answer:** Which is preferable – Davening Shacharit with a Minyan, or davening by oneself and attending a Torah class? It is certainly preferable to Daven with a Minyan, since this is the basic Halachah. Learning Torah is a worthwhile addition. The Torah does not state how much Torah a person is obligated to learn, but rather that one is obligated to establish fixed times for learning. Therefore, a person must first be a normal Jew and Daven with a Minyan and then climb to higher levels and attend classes (see Shut She'eilat Shlomo 3:51. Piskei Shlomo vol. 1, p. 55). Making Aliyah is a Torah Mitzvah incumbent on each and every Jew (Pitchei Teshuvah, Even Ha-Ezer 75:6 in the name of the Ramban). This means that it is not enough for a certain percentage of Klal Yisrael to make Aliyah: each and every Jew is obligated to do so. If he does not make Aliyah, he violates a severe positive Mitzvah. There is no obligation, however, to be a Rabbi. This is a worthwhile addition. Therefore, a person must first be a normal Jew and make Aliyah and he then can climb to higher levels and become a Rabbi.

Ha-Rav Yosef Chaim Zonenfeld and Maran Ha-Rav Kook both held that a working person in Eretz Yisrael is preferable to a Torah scholar outside of Israel. In the book "Ha-Ish Al Ha-Chomah" (pp. 157-158), it is related that Rav Zonenfeld's grandson, like many yeshiva students, was in a difficult financial state but had a great desire to continue learning Torah. He received an offer from one of the famous cities in Czechoslovakia to become its Rabbi, which would solve both of his problems. He

went to discuss the matter with his grandfather. Ha-Rav Zonenfeld lovingly looked at his grandson and said to him: "According to my opinion, it is preferable to be a working man in Eretz Yisrael than a Rabbi outside of Eretz Yisrael" (the offer fell by the wayside). Similarly, it is told in "Le-Sheloshah Be-Elul" (Vol. 2 #32) that one of the students asked Maran Ha-Rav Kook about traveling to America to become a Rabbi, and Rav Kook did not agree. He said: "It is better to arrange a business here in Yerushalayim than a Rabbinat in America" (And this is what the student did, and he succeeded).

In Igrot Le-Re'eiyah, amongst the additions at end, is a letter (#28) to Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah from the Rav of Kutna, Rabbi Yitzchak Yehudah Trunk, the son of Rabbi Yehoshua of Kutna. He and Rav Tzvi Yehudah were together in jail after being arrested in Germany during World War One for being Russian citizens. Ha-Rav of Kutna requests: Can his honor help me make Aliyah? I fear assimilation. I know that I am G-d-fearing, as is my son and grandson, but what will be with my great-grandson? At that time it was almost impossible to make Aliyah without a livelihood. One would literally starve to death. He writes: I am a Rosh Yeshiva, Rav of a City, and an Av Beit Din. If his honor can find me a job as an elementary school teacher, I will come right away. It is preferable to be an elementary school teacher here than an important Rabbi there.

One can raise a difficulty: If this is so, why didn't the Amoraim make Aliyah? The Gemara in Megilah (16a with Rashi) was already surprised: Why didn't Ezra make Aliyah with Zerubavel? The Gemara answers that as long as Baruch Ben Ner (Ezra's teacher) was alive, he did not make Aliyah. And it is explained in Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah (5:5) that Baruch Ben Ner did not make Aliyah because he was elderly and ill. In Shut Terumat Ha-Deshen (Pesakim #88), it is explained that the Torah scholars remained in Exile in order to learn and teach Torah. After all, it is permissible to leave Eretz Yisrael to learn Torah (Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 5:9), and all the more so to remain outside of Israel to do so.

If so, this appears to be the opposite of all that we said before: that it is preferable to be a regular Jew in Eretz Yisrael than a Rabbi outside of Eretz Yisrael. But this is not the question we asked. We did NOT ask if it is preferable to be outside of Israel and learn Torah or to be in Eretz Yisrael and not learn Torah at all. Rather we asked whether it is better to be a Rabbi there or to be here and not be a Rabbi, but still to learn Torah. During the time of the Amoraim, it was impossible to learn Torah in Eretz Yisrael. How then was Rabbi Yochanan here? We truthfully do not know... We know that Rabbi Yochanan and Ilfa learned in Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael and did not have anything to eat. They decided to leave Yeshiva for business. On the way, they sat under a delapidated wall, and Rabbi Yochanan overheard one angel saying to another that they should push the wall on to them, as they were leaving eternal life for temporal life. Rabbi Yochanan asked Ilfa if he heard what was said, and he did not. He said: If that is so, it is meant for me, I am returning to the Yeshivah (Taanit 21b).

It was almost impossible to survive. What did Rabbi Yochanan eat? How did he survive? We do not know.

The Gemara (Gittin 6b) relates that the Sages said to Rav Yehudah that one who makes Aliyah from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael "gave children for a harlot's fee" (Yoel 4:3). In other words, one who was here did not make enough to support his children. People made Aliyah and left their families behind, and the family suffered. But now – Baruch Hashem, it is possible to learn Torah here. Most Rabbis who make Aliyah will not function as Rabbis here since there are many Rabbis here. In general, it is extremely difficult for a Rabbi from outside of Eretz Yisrael to become a Rabbi here. Perhaps you will say that if all the Rabbis make Aliyah, there won't be any Torah learning outside of Israel. I once attended an RCA – Rabbinical Council of America – conference. I happened to be in America, and they invited me to come as an observer. Ha-Rav Herschel Schachter gave a class on whether it is preferable to make Aliyah or to be a communal Rabbi. He gave a long class and concluded that it is preferable to make Aliyah (Rav Schachter also wrote this in *Moreshet* vol. 1, 1. Although see *Nefesh Ha-Rac*, pp. 98-99). At the end, he humbly said: "I don't know what I am doing here". I innocently said: "If Ha-Rav abandons his community, they won't have a Rabbi?" He said to me that for every Rabbi in America, there is a line of Rabbis waiting to take his place... (see if this is indeed a condition in *Shut Avnei Nezer Yoreh Deah #454* and *Shut Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot 2:465, 3:281*).

We are not discussing Gedolei Yisrael who have made calculations as to whether to stay in the Exile or make Aliyah. For example, Maran Ha-Rav Kook offered to help Ha-Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski set up a Rabbinate in Eretz Yisrael, but he wrote that it was difficult for him to abandon the orphaned generation in his area and the Yeshivot (*Chayei Ha-Re'eiyah*, pp. 3870388. See *Shut Maharam Shick, Yoreh Deah 225, 227* that many places in the Exile are like a sinking ship and one must save the passengers. The captain cannot abandon the ship). Similarly, Ha-Rav Tzvi Hirscher Kalisher writes that Ha-Rav Akiva Eiger wanted to make Aliyah at the end of his life, but his students told him that if he abandoned the country, the generation would be lost, and this is indeed what happened after his death (*Shivat Tzion, Kitvei Hagartz"ah*, letter #2). And we have heard that Ha-Rav Schachter himself once met the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Ha-Rav Avraham Shapira, and related all of his different responsibilities, and Ha-Rav Shapira told him that he was obligated to remain in America.

A Torah scholar from America once asked Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah: Should I make Aliyah now, or is it preferable to continue in education in America, where I have command of the language, am familiar with the youth and can have more success? Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah answered him: "Make Aliyah, and then ask me." This is in fact what happened: the Torah scholar made Aliyah and then came to ask. Rabbenu answered that the home of every Jew is Eretz Yisrael. When a person

is established here, there is room to consider the possibility of leaving for a few years in order to spread Torah and be involved in education (Masmi'a Yeshu'ah, p. 243).

Therefore, quite simply, it is certainly preferable to be a regular Jew in Eretz Yisrael than a Rabbi outside of Israel, as is says in the Yerushalami (Nedarim 6:3): "The Holy One Blessed Be He says: A small group in Eretz Yisrael is more beloved to me than the Sanhedrin outside of Israel".

Rav Aviner on...

### Gender Separation and Modesty

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

**Question:** I saw in the Shulchan Aruch that men and women have to stay “far apart from one another” (Even Ha-Ezer 21:1). But why? Why can't they coexist in natural, straightforward purity and modesty? Why was it ruled that they have to distance themselves?

Perhaps this was said for people who have unclean thoughts in their heads, but we are serious people with pure hearts, so what is the problem if we mix?

**Answer:** You have asked an important question that touches on a major issue. Indeed, the Mishnah in Succah wrote that during the Temple Period, on the second night of Succot, at the start of the celebrations of Chol Ha-Moed, they “effected a major improvement” in the Women's section of the Temple. And what was that “major improvement”?

The Talmud answers: The men's and women's sections were initially on the same level, so they installed a raised balcony and enacted that the women should celebrate on that raised section, and the men below (Succah 51b).

The Rambam comments: “It was so that the genders would not mix” (Hilchot Beit Ha Bechirah 5:9). Yet the Talmud asks: “How could they do this?” Rashi explains: “I.e., adding a floor to an entire building.” and the Talmud continues: “Doesn't Scripture state: 'All this was in writing, in accordance with G-d's wisdom' (Divrei Ha-Yamim 1 28:19), meaning that the entire plan of the Temple was given by Hashem and may not be changed? How then is it possible to change the Temple? Weren't all its plans handed down by the prophets via prophetic intuition?

The Talmud answers: “They found a verse and they expounded on it: 'The Land shall mourn, every family apart: The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart’ (Zechariah 12:12).

What will the mourning be about? Rashi explains: "Zechariah prophesied that in the future they will mourn Mashiach ben Yosef who will be killed in the apocalyptic War of Gog and Magog. And it says: 'The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart,' that even in a time of sorrow, the genders must be separated.”

The Talmud continues: “We can logically deduce this: if, in the future, when they are preoccupied with mourning and the evil impulse holds no sway over them, Scripture still states that the men and women must remain separate, then now, when they are preoccupied with rejoicing and the evil impulse does hold sway over them, they should surely be kept separate.”

Rashi explains: “When one is busy with mourning, one does not easily fall prey to frivolity. In the future, however, the evil impulse will not hold sway, as it says, 'I shall remove the heart of stone' (Yechezkiel 36:26). In the Temple, however, they were rejoicing, and they verged on frivolity, so they certainly needed separation.”

In other words, there is a double proof of the need for gender separation. Not only (1) will the future mourning for Mashiach ben Yosef be a sad, serious time, but (2) the evil impulse will already have disappeared. Even so, gender separation will be maintained. By

contrast, in the Temple on Succot, they were obviously rejoicing, and the evil impulse still held sway.

We thus derive that gender separation is required even on a very serious, sad occasion, and even if there is no evil impulse.

Additionally, Rambam (ibid.) held that that balcony was maintained all year long and not just for the celebrations of Succot. What, then, was the “major improvement” precisely of that time?

Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook explains that during the Succot celebrations, they would organize the celebration area with even more caution and modesty than usual (Ma'amarei Ha-Re'eyah, p. 513).

So we derive that we must constantly prevent the mixing of genders.

I am not addressing here the question of when you need a Mechitzah, a physical separation, and when you do not, or the question of how high it must be. Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook was not a follower of the Satmar Rebbe. Even so, in the debate between Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein, who said that when absolutely unavoidable, a shoulder-height Mechitzah was sufficient, and the Satmar Rebbe, who said that it must be over the head, Rav Tzvi Yehuda sided with the Satmar Rebbe, and he deduced this logically.

What I am discussing here is the obligation to maintain gender separation and to prevent mixed seating under all sorts of circumstances. We are neither wiser nor holier than our Sages who enacted such separation at the Succot celebration of Chol Ha-Moed, or than the Prophet Zechariah who said, in G-d's name, that this is what will be at the future mourning for Mashiach ben Yosef, despite there being no evil impulse.

May we be privileged to increase modesty and purity.

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

### **Women Reciting Kaddish**

Mourner's Kaddish by a Woman

Q: I once saw a woman enter the Shul to say Kaddish and they Rabbis there did not say anything.

A: It is true that it is occasionally done. Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 5:12 (and see Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik in Darom #57 Elul 5748. Shut Piskei Uziel #3. Teshuvot Ibra #4). But this is discussing a singular occurrence and Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein himself concluded by saying that it requires investigation. In practice, this is not an established practice among the Nation, and we do not change (Shut Ha-Rashba 1:323. See Shut Orach Mishpat #35).

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