

# THE LEGACY OF RAV YEHUDA AMITAL זצ"ל

EXPLORING ASPECTS OF HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

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I. Fear of Heaven - PWP 5/10'

### III. The Fear of Punishment in This World

Thus far, we have been speaking about the fear of punishment in the world-to-come. In contrast, the fear of punishment in this world – the fear of disease, misfortune, and the like – is indeed very easily attained. But a word of caution is necessary: a small measure of such thinking may be beneficial, but when it comes to dominate a person's outlook, it is liable to lead to trouble.

It is a mistake to think that the entire world is built on immediate and clearly evident reward and punishment. Only the righteous merit this level of Divine intervention, as in the case of Rabbi Elazar ben Parta and Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon, who knew precisely which transgression had led to their arrest (*Avoda*

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It is legitimate to think about recompense in this world, but certainly such thinking can not serve as a basis for faith. We sometimes see how little children who never even tasted sin suffer afflictions and diseases, no less than grown adults. Thus, the idea of the fear of punishment cannot be taken too far in this direction. In the end, such an attitude is liable to bring a person to complain to God why such-and-such happened to this person and not the next, or the like.

Rabbi Simcha Zissel Broida (the Alter of Kelm), a student of Rabbi Itzele of Petersburg, no longer spoke of the fear of punishment. In Slobodka, as well, they spoke about the grandeur of man, appreciating the fact that the fear of God cannot be founded upon the fear of punishment alone.

### IV. The Problem Today with Basing the Fear of God on Fear of Punishment

It seems to me that in today's world, in addition to the educational problems mentioned above, there may even be something inherently wrong with the Torah community's basing their worship of God on the fear of punishment. At a time when people sacrifice their lives on behalf of national, social and moral ideals, it would be degrading to say that we serve God only out of the fear of punishment.

This is the way Rabbi Kook described his generation in his "*Ma'amar Ha-Dor*" (*Eder Ha-Yakar*, p. 111):

It also fails to fill him with fear and dread, for he has already elevated himself to the point that he does not allow his life to be determined by fear of any type, whether concrete or imagined, physical or spiritual. Terrible hardships and troubles have made him tough and strong, to the point that horrors and terrors do not move him... He is unable to repent out

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### VI. The Basis for Fearing God in Today's World

It seems to me, therefore, that the worship of God in today's world should be founded in large part upon a feeling that stands somewhere between the fear of punishment and the fear of God's exaltedness. In order to make this more understandable, let us draw upon what the Torah itself compared to the fear of God – the mitzva of fearing one's parents (*Kiddushin* 30b):

The verse states: "You shall fear every man his mother and his father" (*Vayikra* 19:3), and another verse states: "You shall fear the Lord your God, and serve Him" (*Devarim* 6:13), thus comparing the fear of one's father and mother and the fear of the Omnipresent.

The very possibility of comparing the fear of flesh and blood to the fear of Heaven follows from the words of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai to his disciples (*Berakhot* 28b):

"May it be [God's] will that the fear of heaven shall be upon you like the fear of flesh and blood." His disciples said to him: "Is that all?" He said to them: "If only [you can attain this]! You can see [how important this is], for when a person wants to commit a transgression, he says, I hope no one will see me."

The fear of one's parents is based neither on the fear of punishment nor on the fear of their exalted nature. It stems from a natural feeling present in every healthy person, who feels obligated to listen to his parents, to avoid contradicting them, to bring them pleasure, and to act on their behalf with full devotion. He expects no reward, nor does he fear punishment; his attitude does not even stem from the mitzva to honor one's mother and father. Rather, he follows his natural feelings. The same is true about the feelings of

obligation and loyalty that a person has to other members of his family, to his people, and to the values of justice and morality.

The basic level of the fear of God is a similar feeling. We nullify ourselves in the face of His great exaltedness as our Creator and as our Father, because of whose abundant love we are called His children, and upon whose loving-kindness we rely in every step that we take. Thus, there arises within us a feeling of absolute commitment to God, to obey Him and accept His commands as self-evident, and to do whatever finds favor in His eyes.

Obviously, this feeling requires constant nurturing, and it is our obligation to take steps to intensify this feeling of commitment. It must be emphasized, however, that we are not dealing here merely with a decision to accept commitment, for our goal is that this sense of commitment be transformed into a natural feeling that is constantly with us, this being the fear of God. The more deeply we experience this feeling, the closer we will come to loving and fearing Him.

### VII. Overly Exacting Observance

In Yiddish, the term "*frumkeit*" is generally associated with a sense of heaviness and an overly fastidious observance of the *mitzvot*. In both the Chasidic and Musar movements, there were those who saw in *frumkeit* an important value; others dissociated themselves entirely from it, as in Slobodka and in Kotzk. The negative aspects of *frumkeit* generally include a greater emphasis placed on "turning away from evil" than on "doing good," and strictness that is applied primarily to others. The fear of sin occasionally leads to a certain passivity – a fear of taking action – which leads to a freezing of the creative process and an avoidance of all struggle. Thus, so-called "fear of God" can lead to self-nullification, which can

## II. <sup>אמת</sup> Authenticity in Service of God

### iv. "Purify Our Heart to Serve You Sincerely"

Naturalness is valuable not only in contrast to coerced observance of *mitzvot*, but also in contrast to artificial observance. The importance of serving God naturally is included in our prayer, "Purify our heart to serve You sincerely." Artificiality constitutes a flaw in the sincere worship of God. The meaning of this prayer is that a person's performance of *mitzvot* should correspond to his internal state of loving God, fearing Him, and seeking His closeness. There should be no disproportion between the quantity of his actions and his internal values. The prayer is directed at filling in what is missing, not in the execution of God's service, but in its spiritual backing.

Rambam (*Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, positive precept 8) understands that the verse, "And to serve Him with all your heart" (*Devarim* 10:13), is the source for the mitzva of prayer. Ramban (in his strictures, ad loc.) disagrees, arguing that prayer is a mitzva of rabbinic origin. He offers a different interpretation of the verse:

The essence of the verse, "And to serve Him with all your heart," is a positive commandment that all of our service of God, may He be blessed, should be with our entire heart, that is to say, with perfect, desirable intention, directed to His name, and without evil thoughts. We should not perform the *mitzvot* without intention or based on the uncertain premise that perhaps they will lead to benefit... Since He commanded us something new in the verse, "with all your heart," namely, that our hearts should be directed exclusively to Him, may He be elevated, in the performance of the *mitzvot*, as I have explained - it is possible that this mitzva should be included among the 248 positive precepts.

In other words, according to Ramban, there is a separate mitzva that a person should have full spiritual backing for his performance of the *mitzvot*.

Thus, simplicity and wholeness are also values in mitzva observance; there should be no difference between a person's service of God in the privacy of his own home and his worship in the public arena. These are connected to the trait of modesty, for a person whose outward behavior does not match his conduct at home suffers from the flaw of external pride.<sup>3</sup> There is a famous saying that it is lucky for the Jews that the mitzva of *lulav* and *etrog* is fulfilled in public, whereas the mitzva of *maror* is fulfilled in the privacy of a person's home. Were the opposite true, then many people would not be so fastidious about their *lulav* and *etrog*.

### *Jewish Values in a Changing World*

Considering this to be a piece of arrogance on his part, they took him and placed him in prison. He said to them: "I am a great man."

Here, too, we see that certain stringencies are appropriate only for people of particularly high spiritual standing. Eliezer Ze'ira's justification for acting stringently in this case was that he was "a great man." Were this not the case, his stringent conduct would have been tainted with arrogance.

I was once asked by one of my students why I do not observe a particular stringency, which the *Mishna Berura* recommends that a God-fearing person should practice. I replied: "When you read a section in the *Mishna Berura* that is directed at 'a God-fearing person,' you are convinced that he is referring to you. I have no such presumptions." It should also be noted that the *Mishna Berura* says that it befits one who fears Heaven to practice stringency; but he does not say that such stringency leads a person to

## III. Normalcy - אמת Humanity

The worship of God, in whatever form, cannot wipe out simple human feeling. The Rebbe of Kotzk would say about the verse: "And you shall be holy people to Me" (*Shemot* 22:30), that God, as it were, is saying here: "Angels I have in sufficient quantity; I am looking for *human beings* who will be holy people." [*Jewish Values*, 193]

There has been a tendency in recent years to idealize great rabbis, to the point of total disregard of their human feelings and weaknesses. The Torah presents the opposite approach: every person has a human side, which must not be denied. Even the prophets had doubts and difficulties. The Torah recognizes that man lives in this world, and it has no expectation that one behave as if he were living in an ideal and unreal universe. [*Jewish Values*, 195]

A person who reads the story of the *Akeda* (Binding) of Yitzchak (*Beresheet* 22) superficially thinks that it portrays only the acceptance of God's command in silence and submission. Avraham is commanded to slaughter his son, and out of his recognition that nothing stands in the way of God's command, he nullifies his will before the will of the Holy One, Blessed be He. All at once, everything else is set aside; everything is nullified. There is no paternal love for his son, no mercy, no human sensitivity, no considerations

### Humanity

of morality. Everything is silenced, dissolved; it disappears in the face of the Divine command. To my mind, such a view is completely mistaken. I believe that the father's love for his son did not disappear, nor did it dissolve. Quite the opposite: its power was a prerequisite for the entire *Akeda*. ["Grace and Mercy and Compassion," *Alon Shevut Bogrim* 15 (5762), 9]

## IV. Natural Morality - 1876 - 70N

Rambam speaks of people who have difficulty ascribing reasons to the *mitzvot*, preferring that they should have no rational explanation. Rambam understands that these people think that anything having an explanation is human, and therefore cannot derive from God. The same applies to the matter under consideration: there are those who prefer that all obligations be derived solely from the Torah and that no significance be attached to any human element.

This approach weakens natural morality. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook viewed this as a very negative development (*Orot Ha-Kodesh* III, *rosh davar*, 11):

Fear of Heaven such that, without its effect on the living, people would be more inclined to doing good and realizing that which is beneficial to both the individual and the community, and because of its effect this active force diminishes – such fear of Heaven is unfit.

Even after the Torah was given, natural morality retains its special role of guiding man in all his paths. Elsewhere, Rabbi Kook writes as follows (*Orot Ha-Torah*, chapter 12, 2–3):

Morality in its natural state, with all its profound splendor and might, must be fixed in the soul, so that it may serve as a substratum for the great effects emanating from the strength of Torah... Every element of Torah must be preceded by *derekh erez* (natural ethical behavior). If it is something agreeable to natural reason and uprightness, it must pass in a straight path, with the inclination of the heart and consent of the pure will implanted in man, just like [we observe the laws of] theft, illicit sexual relations, and modesty, which can be learned from the ant, the dove, and the cat, and all the more so those things which are derived from the internal cognition of man himself and his spiritual sense...

This natural inclination of the heart is found in animals as

Even though regarding all the *mitzvot* [we apply the principle that] "He who is commanded and performs [the mitzva] is greater [than he who performs the mitzva without being commanded]," and we recite the blessing [which includes the words,] "and [He] commanded us" – in the case of *mishloach manot*, it is better that a person give of his own free will out of a feeling of love for his fellow Jew. If he gives only because God so commanded, he diminishes the measure of love [embodied in the mitzva]. The same applies to charity; if a person gives out of compassion or love for his fellow Jew, it is better than one who gives because of the command and out of coercion... It may be [also] on this account that we do not recite a blessing over respecting one's father and mother.

This idea is stated explicitly in *Dor Rev'i* on *Chullin*, written by Rabbi Moshe Shermuel Glasner, great-grandson of the Chátam Sofer, who was a great Torah scholar and grandfather of my revered teacher, Rabbi Chayyim Yehuda Halevi, *Hy"l*. This is what he writes regarding the matter under discussion (*General Introduction*, 2):

You should know that as to all the loathsome things that man finds despicable, even if the Torah had not forbidden them, anyone eating such things would be regarded as being far more abhorrent than one who violates an explicit Torah prohibition...

But tell me now, if a dangerously ill patient must choose between eating meat from an improperly slaughtered or congenitally defective animal and eating human flesh – which should he choose? Do we say that he should eat the human flesh, which is not forbidden by a Torah prohibition – even though it is forbidden by the moral code accepted by civilized man, so that anyone eating or feeding another person human flesh is cast out from the community of men – rather

moral code in order to save ourselves from violating a Torah prohibition?<sup>5</sup>

Rabbi Glasner brings additional instances of this dilemma, for example, the case of a person who is lying naked in bed, when suddenly a fire breaks out in his house, and he has only two choices: running outside naked or putting on a woman's clothing. Rabbi Glasner assumes that it is certainly preferable to put on the woman's clothing, even though this involves violating a biblical prohibition, rather than run out naked, even though this is not explicitly forbidden by Torah law. He invokes the same argument: "It is obvious to me that running out naked is a greater sin... because it is a sin agreed upon by all intelligent people, and one who violates it excludes himself from the category of man who was created in the image of God."

Similarly, he argues that when the aforementioned Gemara says: "[If the choice is between] untithed produce and an improperly slaughtered animal – he is to be fed the improperly slaughtered animal," it is talking about a case where the animal was slaughtered, but in an improper manner. If, however, the animal died without having been slaughtered, he should certainly not eat it, for even non-Jews refrain from eating such animals "because of the rules of proper behavior and general morality." Proof for this position may be brought from the Gemara in *Chullin* (92b):

These ["thirty pieces of silver"] are [an allusion] to the thirty

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## II. Finding One's Personal Way of Worshiping God

In his commentary to *Mishlei*, the Vilna Gaon comments on the verse, "The Lord has made everything for His own purpose" (16:4):

Each and every individual has his own path to follow, for the minds of two people are not the same, just as their facial features and natures are not the same. When there were prophets, people would go to the prophets to seek out the Lord, and the prophet would advise the individual on the basis of prophecy about the path he should follow, according to the root of his soul and the nature of his body...

Even when prophecy ceased, the holy spirit remained in Israel. Each individual would be advised by his own spirit how to conduct himself, the holy spirit being found in each and every person. But "blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (*Yehillim* 32:2)...

If, God forbid, there is iniquity in his heart, there will be guile in his spirit if he conducts himself according to his spirit; his ways will be clean and righteous in his own eyes, but he will fall from heaven to earth until he is unable to rise; he will stray from the ways and commandments of God, and not know himself. This is the meaning of the verse: "Commit your works to the Lord" (*Mishlei* 16:3). In other words, now we are not to act according to wonders and marvels, but only to direct our actions to the Lord... Because "the Lord has made everything for His own purpose" (*ibid.* verse 4), i.e., God's will finds primary expression in the Torah and the *mitzvot*.

According to the Vilna Gaon, when there was prophecy in Israel, the prophet would show each individual his own special way of serving God. Even after prophecy ceased, the *ruach ha-kodesh*, or holy spirit, in each individual could still advise each person about his personal path. But not every individual is afforded that

insight, and there are certain people who do not act according to the *ruach ha-kodesh* within them, but rather according to personal interests and social considerations. Such people fool themselves into thinking that they are acting for the sake of Heaven. Today, therefore, a person must give up his aspiration to find his own personal way in the service of God, and instead follow the general path of Torah and *mitzvot*.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, however, notes in many places the need to find one's personal path in the service of God, even today. In *Orot Ha-Kodesh* (*sefer rishon*, no. 19), Rabbi Kook relates to the price paid by one who fails to discover his own special way of worshiping God:

Each individual must know that he has been called upon to serve [God] according to his own unique understanding and feeling, based on the root of his soul, and that he will find the treasure of his life in this world, which embraces innumerable worlds. Let him not be confused by what flows into him from alien worlds, things that he cannot properly understand, that he is not able to assimilate into his life. These worlds will find their perfection in their own place, by those who are able to construct and improve them. He, however, must concentrate his life within his own worlds, within his internal worlds, which for him are filled with everything and encompass everything. A person must say, "It is for me that the world was created."

This humble greatness affirms man and brings him to the heavenly perfection that awaits him. As he steps along this way of life, in his own special lane, in the path of the righteous that is unique to him, he will become filled with the might of life and spiritual joy. The light of God will reveal itself to him, from the letter in the Torah that is especially his, from which his light and strength will issue forth.

According to Rabbi Kook, every person is required to find his own unique path in serving God, and not to assimilate into

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Elsewhere (*ibid.*, 19, p. 115), Rabbi Kook writes:

Someone with a lyrical and poetic soul must understand his nature, his special yearnings and desires, the ways of his soul, and the special spiritual food that is needed to satisfy his spiritual life like air for breathing. Even if he participates together with people of other talents in fulfilling other spiritual demands, he must never forget that he is called upon to stand on his own at his spiritual station. Upon all facts, discussions, teachings, investigations, argumentation, and thoughts, he should sprinkle something of his pure and strong spirit, which is replete with holy song, alive and pure – a pure sprinkling of streams of light, poetic thoughts and nobility of soul that yearns always for its beloved Redeemer, the living God.

There are certain people whose emotional and lyrical sides are highly developed. Such people must find a way to express their special qualities, this being true even if they live their lives among people whose personalities have developed in different directions. Whatever one chooses to do, one's spiritual character will shine its special light and have its special impact in accordance with one's unique personality.

According to Rabbi Kook, this perception also defines a per-

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where so many young Israelis go in search of peace and spirituality, there is an enormous social gap and an absolute disregard for the performance of righteousness and justice. Someone who is seeking out his unique path must consider how he can best contribute to society in his own special way, and must guard himself against the danger of extreme individualism.

It must, therefore, be emphasized: With all the importance of a person finding his own special path in life, this choice must come only after years of investing efforts in the service shared by all and within the context of the community. Beginning students sometimes despair of studying Gemara, declaring that such study is not suited for their personalities. *Chazal* designated a time period of five years for reaching such a conclusion (*Bamidbar Rabba* 6:3):

A Levite does not enter the Temple courtyard to perform the service unless he has studied for five years, as it is said: "This is that which belongs to the Levites: from twenty five years old and upwards" (*Bamidbar* 8:24). And below it says: "From thirty years old and upward" (*ibid.* 4:3). If it says: "From twenty five years old" – why does it say: "From thirty years old"? And if it says: "From thirty years old" – why does it say: "From twenty-five years old"?

He would study for all those years between twenty-five and thirty, and from then on, he would be brought in for the service. From here [the Sages] said: Whoever fails to see a sign of blessing in his study within five years will not see it later.

It is inappropriate for a person to decide at the outset that the generally accepted way of learning is not suited for him. One may reach this conclusion only after years of hard work alongside the rest of the community.

# VI. The Holocaust

In 1996, I was asked to participate in a panel discussion. At one point, one of the participants asked me: "Is it still possible to refer to the State of Israel as 'the dawn of our redemption' now, after four cities were given over to the Palestinians as part of the Oslo Accords?" Immediately, a rabbi, one of the leaders of the religious Zionist camp, stood up and replied, "It is an *a fortiori* argument: if, seventy years ago, Rabbi Kook in his correspondence could refer to the embryonic State of Israel as 'the dawn of our redemption,' certainly we can, all the more so, do likewise today!" Yet, in my mind, a question remained: "All the more so"? Is that really true? Was not our world destroyed in the intervening seventy years? Did the most terrifying event not happen in the meantime? This approach, found among some members of the religious Zionist community, also ignores the *Shoah*, springing from a personal inability to deal with it. [A World Built, 144-45]

## Holocaust

We stand silent before the enormity of the *Shoah*, and we have no answer. "And Your faithfulness in the nights" (*Tehillim* 92:3) – even when it is darkest, we believe that God is faithful to us. This is one of the tests with which God tries us. Despite everything, we continue to cling to God, echoing the ironic lament: "We fled from You – to You." But as for a reply, there is none. [A World Built, 143]

Shortly after I arrived in *Eretz Yisrael*, I visited Kfar Etzion and chanced upon a friend whom I had known during those dark days. When he saw me, he cried out, "Yehuda – is it you? You were saved? You, who always preached to us that we have no hope and should prepare to die as martyrs sanctifying God's Name – you were saved!" His next question was: "Did you remain religious?" I replied, "Had I not stayed religious, would all of the questions have been answered? Would the whole phenomenon then be understandable?" [A World Built, 149]

I clearly experienced the hand of God during the Holocaust – only I did not understand its meaning. It was so clear – so abnormal, so unnatural, so illogical. I was not in Auschwitz, but I saw Jews being taken there. I saw regiments of Germans who were not going to the Russian front, but rather guarding the trainloads of Jews that were headed to the death camps. It went against all military logic and interests. Can one possibly begin to understand such madness? I saw the hand of God in everything. It was not natural; it was not human. I saw the hand of God, but I did not understand its significance. [A World Built, 138-39]

## העלמת השואה מעבודת ה'

נקודה שלישית שברצוני לעמוד עליה קשורה ביטוי עבודת ה' בזמן הזה.  
בעל חובות הלבבות מיתח את יסוד עבודת ה' על בסיס הכרת הטוב. 'שער הייחוד' ו'שער הבחינה' קודמים ל'שער עבודת ה'. ב'שער הבחינה' מרחיב רבנו בחיי בעל חובות הלבבות את הצורך בהתבוננות בחסדי ה'. החיוב בעבודת השם נובע מאמונת הייחוד ומהכרת הטוב, ורבנו בחיי מתייחס לכן גם במתח 'שער העבודה'.  
לא מעט דרשנים ורבנים בני זמננו ממשיכים להציג את הכרת הטוב כיסוד עבודת האלוהים. כך, למשל, התבטא הרב זסלר וצ"ל לפני השואה. השאלה היא, כמובן, האם גם לאחר חורבן הגורא שעבר על עם ישראל בשואה, עדיין ניתן לומר שעבודת האלוהים שלנו בנויה על הכרת הטוב?

ביום הכיפורים שלאחר המלחמה נתכנסנו לחפילה באחד המרתפים. איני יכול לתאר את סערת הרגשות שחוותי אז במלואה, אך משהו חימנה אגסה לשחור.  
הייתי צעיר. לא היו לי ילדים. היו שם יהודים שאיבדו הורים, ילדים, בני זוג, אחים ואחיות. הם התפללו ואני אָתם. האם עבודת האלוהים שלהם אכן נתבטסה על הכרת הטוב של הקב"ה? האמנם יהודי שאיבד את אשתו וילדיו מסוגל לעבוד את ה' על בסיס הכרת הטוב? האם יהודי שתפקידו היה הוצאת גופות שרופות מכבשניה של אושוויץ יכול לעבוד את ה' כשהכחרה העומדת בבסיס העבודה היא הכרת הטוב? בשום פנים ואופן - לא!

"הן יקטלני - לו אייחל"

איתא בגמרא:

דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: למה נקרא שמן אנשי כנסת הגדולה? שהחזירו עטרה ליושנה.

אתא משה אמר: 'האל הגדול הגביר והנורא' (דברים י, יז).

אתא ירמיה ואמר: נכרים מקרקרין בחיכלו, איח נוראותיו? לא אמר 'נורא'.

אתא דניאל אמר: נכרים משתעבדים בבניו, איח גבורותיו? לא אמר 'גבור'.

אתו אינוהו ואמרו: אדרבה זו היא גבורת גבורתו, שכובש את יצרו שנותן ארך אפים לרשעים; ואלו הן נוראותיו, שאלמלא מוראו של הקב"ה, היאך אומה אחת יכולה להתקיים בין האומות?

ורבנן היכי עבדי הכי, ועקרי תקנתא דתקין משה? אמר רבי אלעזר: מתוך שיודעין בהקב"ה שאמתי הוא, לפיכך לא כיזבו בו (יומא סט ע"ב).

עבודת ה' הייתה להיות בנויה על אמת, לא על כזב וחגופה. לכן, נביאים שלא חשו שביטויים כמו 'הגדול', 'הגבור', 'הנורא', מתארים את הקב"ה - נמנעו מלעשות שימוש בביטויים אלה, למרות שבכך שינו לשונם מלשון תורה ומנוסח שתיקן משה רבנו.

כך גם בענייננו. אי אפשר לבסס את עבודת ה' שלנו על יסוד של 'הכרת טוב', בתקופה שבה אירע החורבן הגדול ביותר בתולדות העם היהודי.

בעל חובות הלבבות מציע בשער העשירי, שער 'אהבת ה', דרך אחרת בעבודת ה':

כמו שנאמר על אחד מן החסידים שהיה קם בלילה ואמר: אלהי הערבתני ועירוס עזבתני, ובמחשכי הלילה הושבתני, ועוון וגדלך הוריתני, אם תשרפני באש לא אוסיף כי אם אהבה אותך ושמחה בך. דומה למה שאמר: 'הן יקטלני לא [לו קרין] אָנְטל' (איוב י"ג, טו). ואל העניין הזה רמז החכם באמרו: 'צרוך המר דודי לי בין שדי ילין' (שה"ש א, ג), ואמרו רז"ל על דרך הדרש: 'אף על פי שמיצר ומימר לי דודי - בין שדי ילין' (שבת פח ע"ב).

במדרגה האחרונה של חובות הלבבות, 'שער אהבת ה', מבטס רבנו בחיי את אהבת ה' לא על הכרת הטוב אלא על אמונה, שקיימת ועומדת אפילו בתקופה של הסתר פנים.

זהו גם פירוש הפסוק "לולי תורדתן שְעָשְעִי או אבדתי בעיני" (תהילים ק"ט, צב). הפסוק אינו מכוון רק כלפי שעשוע של לימוד תורה, 'לומדות', הכוונה היא לדבקות בקב"ה. איננו יודעים כיצד להטביע דבקות זו, אבל מדובר בדבקות שורשית.

המשנה בסוטה אומרת:

בו ביום דרש ר' יהושע בן הורקנוס: לא עבד איוב את הקדוש ברוך הוא אלא מאהבה, שנאמר 'הן יקטלני לא [לו קרין] אָנְטל' (איוב י"ג, טו) (סוטה פ"ה מ"ח).

# VII. The Jewish People - Zionism - The State of Israel

There is a hierarchy of values in Judaism, and anyone who fails to differentiate "bein kodesh le-kodesh" (between one level of holiness and another) will end up unable to differentiate "bein kodesh le-chol" (between the holy and the profane), as we say in the *Havdala* prayer. The proper order is: the nation, the Torah, the land. Chazal address the importance of this hierarchy in *Tana De-vei Eliyahu Rabba*, Chapter 14: "He said to me, 'My master, there are two things in my heart which I love greatly - Torah, and [the nation of] Israel, but I do not know which of them takes precedence.' I said to him: 'People usually say that Torah takes precedence

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over everything else, as it is written: "God acquired me at the beginning of His way" (*Mishlei* 8:22), but I say that the holy [nation of] Israel takes precedence, as it is written, "Israel is holy to God; the first of His produce" (*Yirmiyahu* 2:3)."  
The interests of *Am Yisrael* certainly take precedence over the interests of *Eretz Yisrael*. ["A Political Message or an Educational Message," *Alon Shevut* 100 (5743), 42]

## Commitment and Complexity

the development of humanity as a whole, on the basis of which he foresaw the moral development of the Jewish collective. Unfortunately - or rather, tragically - this development never occurred. We have to assess the Jewish State as it is, not as Rav Kook wanted it to be, and only then determine where it belongs within our world view. ["The Religious Significance of the State of Israel," *Alei Etzion* 14 (5766), 14-16]

In the past, very grave opinions were expounded regarding the Holocaust. Some people claimed that the Holocaust was a sort of price that the Jewish People had to pay in order that the Jewish State could be established. There are those who claimed that the State of Israel is the Divine compensation for the destruction of the Holocaust. There were even those who claimed that the *Shoah* was the only way - or, at least in practical terms, became the impetus - to compel the Jews of Europe to immigrate to the Land of Israel. These are very difficult claims, approaches that I find hard to countenance at all. [*A World Built*, 145]

Despite the many problems the State faces, we may not ignore the great miracles we experienced at the time of its establishment. Analogously, although the Hasmonean state was far from perfect, its establishment (and the return of Jewish sovereignty, albeit limited) was nevertheless a cause for celebration, as the Rambam emphasizes. The Rambam (*Commentary to the Mishna, Yoma* 1:3) knew very well the inauspicious character of the Hasmonean kings.

<p>מגיד משנה</p> <p>הלכות הנזכה פ"ג</p> <p>מגיד משנה</p>	<p>א בבית שני כשמלכו זכו ספור המעורב הם פסוע וזוהו עתה חייבין וזס מפורש שח"י פטורין ז"י הרי הלא כתיב: והמדייק אוחה וכו'. עס עימיה נמולתה ולמרו נה הווסה מנרד שמים וסיקו רעט הרואה אוהה ולא בירך דעמו ז"ל עמי' עילת מן המעיו כגון שהוליקו עליו כחוד כיומו מברך וזה דעה קטת הגמוריס ז"ל והרשב"א ז"ל ככתב מתבררם בעלם הקליק וכל הדייקו עליו כחוד ביום ולחיו עתי' להוליק היללה ה"ה כתיב אלו לרין לכך דלע מיעו קלם ון האלון וחור ומכרף על הרשעה ויל מרכבוה לפרש' עמי' שמועליקין עליו כחוד הילת לייך לכך על הרשעה ויל לרס על מה שמוערי' עליו וכל רלומו כענו העשור' שככל וחול' וקס' שמוע' כחוד' או ככפיעה עלו הדייק' כליהו, וכן פירשו מפרשי' חלוקים, ולעון הגמור' שהכיר' רוח' סתם יומר נאות לדעם רכיש:</p>	<p>א בבית שני כשמלכו זכו ספור המעורב הם פסוע וזוהו עתה חייבין וזס מפורש שח"י פטורין ז"י הרי הלא כתיב: והמדייק אוחה וכו'. עס עימיה נמולתה ולמרו נה הווסה מנרד שמים וסיקו רעט הרואה אוהה ולא בירך דעמו ז"ל עמי' עילת מן המעיו כגון שהוליקו עליו כחוד כיומו מברך וזה דעה קטת הגמוריס ז"ל והרשב"א ז"ל ככתב מתבררם בעלם הקליק וכל הדייקו עליו כחוד ביום ולחיו עתי' להוליק היללה ה"ה כתיב אלו לרין לכך דלע מיעו קלם ון האלון וחור ומכרף על הרשעה ויל מרכבוה לפרש' עמי' שמועליקין עליו כחוד הילת לייך לכך על הרשעה ויל לרס על מה שמוערי' עליו וכל רלומו כענו העשור' שככל וחול' וקס' שמוע' כחוד' או ככפיעה עלו הדייק' כליהו, וכן פירשו מפרשי' חלוקים, ולעון הגמור' שהכיר' רוח' סתם יומר נאות לדעם רכיש:</p>
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החורבן השני : ב וכשגברו ישראל על

### State of Israel

Nevertheless, he felt that the establishment of the Hasmonean monarchy constitutes the main reason behind the celebration of Chanukka (*Hilkhot Chanukka* 3:1-3). The Second Temple period thus serves as a legitimate model by which we may assess the contemporary Jewish State, a half-century after its establishment. However imperfect, one cannot overlook the many positive elements of our independent national existence. Our leaders today are no worse than the Hasmonean kings, and our country is no worse than theirs was. On the contrary, our leadership and society often exhibit moral qualities far superior to those of the Hasmonean dynasty. ["The Religious Significance of the State of Israel," *Alei Etzion* 14 (5766), 16-17]

How can we not thank the Almighty for all the kindness that He has showered upon us? First and foremost, the State of Israel serves as a safe haven for five million Jews. After the nightmare of the Holocaust, hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees wandered around the globe, finding a home and refuge only in Israel. The State has contributed an incalculable amount to the restoration of Jewish pride after the devastating *chillul Hashem* (desecration of God's Name) caused by the Holocaust. Today, too, the State plays an enormous role in the Jewish identity of our brethren throughout the world. For so many of them, the emotional attachment to the State remains the final thread connecting them to the Jewish people and to the God of Israel. ["The Religious Significance of the State of Israel," *Alei Etzion* 14 (5766), 17]

## Religious Zionism

Religious Zionism was once the bridge between all sectors of the public. Are we now consigned to being, God forbid, a divisive wall? ["The Nation Grows Mighty While Its Discourse Grows Weak," *Ammudim* 563 (5753), 204]

Classic religious Zionism has not collapsed. What has collapsed is the superficial, perverted view that dominated religious Zionism over the past twenty years. There is hope for religious Zionism. There is also hope for Zionist settlement in the liberated territories. In no other period has religious Zionism been so vital to the State as it is today, with the State's Jewish identity in danger. The State of Israel cannot under any circumstances forgo religious Zionism, which is orientated towards the nation with love for fellow Jews and ways that are pleasant. Perhaps, in order for religious Zionism to continue to exist, we must declare the existence of a different religious Zionism, in which there is a more precise hierarchy of values, and in which there is more responsibility and circumspection. We must project a world view that combines hope and security with responsibility and faith. ["Challenges of a New Reality," *Alon Shevut Bogrim* 1 (5754), 74]

The voice of religious Zionism must be heard in the state sphere and in the social sphere. Thank God, *Am Yisrael*

### Religious Zionism

already has a home. The question that is being asked today is, "What sort of house will you build for Me?" (*Yeshayahu* 66:1) What will be the character of that home? ["Not Everything is Halakha," *Alon Shevut Bogrim* 13 (5759), 95]

It is astounding how the vision of redemption espoused by Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, *zt"l*, the crux of which was the spiritual revival of *Am Yisrael* in its return to the land, has become limited, in recent years - among those who regard themselves as his students and disciples - to the commandment of settling the land exclusively. Everyone should take a look at his masterwork *Orot* and note how much space is taken up by the subject of *Eretz Yisrael* (not to speak of the specific issue of the boundaries of the land), as opposed to the subject of "the spiritual reawakening of *Am Yisrael*." Interestingly, the nation's moral and spiritual deterioration since the Six-Day War has created no crisis for those who lived in a messianic euphoria; only the possibility of a territorial withdrawal creates such perplexity and crisis. This is a truly puzzling phenomenon. ["Challenges of a New Reality," *Alon Shevut Bogrim* 1 (5754), 74]

The question of *Eretz Yisrael* which is currently under discussion involves sanctification of God's name. There are various opinions, pro and con. Those who wish to see the speedy establishment of Jewish sovereignty are driven by a great yearning to sanctify the name of Heaven before the eyes of the nations, to show them that even after thousands of years have passed during which the Jewish people have wandered across the earth, they have not given up hope and they will yet live. (*Chiddushei Ha-GRMZ*, no. 54)

Rabbi Menachem Ziemba interprets the position of those who were ready to accept the partition of *Eretz Yisrael* as stemming from the desire to sanctify the name of Heaven in the eyes of the nations and counter their claim that God has forsaken the Jewish people. Rabbi Ziemba further argues that the position of those who oppose the establishment of a Jewish state is also based on the desire to sanctify God's name. They, too, agree that the establishment of a Jewish state sanctifies God's name, but they maintain that it should be put off to a time when the sanctification of His name will be even greater:

Those who oppose [the establishment of a state], their intention is also to sanctify God's name... For the primary sanctification of God's name is when God is exalted and sanctified in the midst of the Jewish people. Therefore, they maintain that, while the establishment of Jewish sovereignty at this time indeed would be a sanctification of God's name in the eyes of the nations, it would be an even greater sanctification of God's name amidst the Jewish people if we would have the courage to throw away [the establishment of a state] and clearly show the Jewish people our strong confidence and true faith in the complete redemption accompanying the coming of the Messiah. This would illuminate the hearts [of the Jewish people] with one of the principles of our faith, namely, the belief in the coming of the Messiah, at which time God's name will be sanctified also among the nations.

As stated above, these words were pronounced shortly before the Holocaust, which was the greatest desecration of God's name in all of history. These words are all the more meaningful after the Holocaust. The fact that a calamity unparalleled in all of history befell, in *Yechezkel's* words, "the people of the Lord" constitutes a terrible desecration of God's name.

I believe that we merited a Jewish state only because of God's desire to sanctify His name in the aftermath of the terrible profanation of His name during the Holocaust. The establishment of the state and its victories in war against the Arab armies that rose up against it constitute a response involving the sanctification of God's name.

Precisely for this reason, the obligation to sanctify God's name has special significance in our time for those of us who live in the State of Israel, the entire establishment of which stemmed from the principle of sanctifying God's name. This is why on various occasions over the years I felt obligated to protest against instances of the desecration of God's name. This was the only cause for which I felt a need to speak out publicly.

The way to deal with the desecration of God's name is through the sanctification of His name, as described in the Gemara. This occurs on two levels. First, on the personal level, every individual, both while learning in yeshiva and afterwards, can act in a manner that sanctifies God's name. Second, on the national level: the State of Israel can sanctify God's name if it is governed according to the principles of justice and morality. This would fulfill the words of Scripture (*Yechezkel* 36:23-27, in the continuation of the prophecy cited in the aforementioned passage in *Yoma*):

And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified by you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, and gather...