

HAMA'YAN

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Abstracts

Rav Uri Redman: Two letters from Rav Yechezkel Abramsky ז"ר addressed to the citizens of Petach Tikva

In 1927 Rav Yechezkel Abramsky (who had served as Rav in Russia) was elected as chief Rabbi of Petach Tikva, which was just about to celebrate its 50th anniversary. The election itself did not materialize, as the communist regime did not permit the Rav to leave Russia. Subsequently Rav Abramsky was arrested and then exiled to Siberia, until his release a few years later. He then emigrated to London. Two of the Rav's letters addressed to the citizens of Petach Tikva are published here for the first time. These letters are a testimony of Rav Abramsky's deep Ahavat Am-Yisrael and Ahavat Eretz-Yisrael.

Rav Chaim Rappaport: The high esteem of a person who earns a livelihood

Rabbi Chaim Rappaport, Rosh Kollel in London and Rabbi in the local Lubavitch community, attempts to resolve an apparent contradiction in the Rambam. In one Halacha Rambam rules that a person who intends not to support himself by working but chooses to live on Tzedaka, has committed a Chillul Hashem and put the Torah to shame. Yet in the following Halacha Rambam praises a person who supports himself by working, and emphasizes that this is the pious way of Chassidut of previous generations, as if supporting oneself from work is merely a high degree of a faithful way of live, but not an obligation. Rabbi Rappaport suggests that the main intention of Rambam, in the second Halacha is, to praise the virtue of being satisfied with little (Histapkut Be'muat). Rambam does not deviate from his previous ruling that it is forbidden to rely exclusively upon support from Tzedaka.

Rav Yaakov Ch. Charlap: The suicide of Shaul HaMelech according to the Halacha

Rav Yaakov Charlap, Rav and educator in Yerushalayim, addresses an historical and contemporary dilemma: the issue of one's self-sacrifice under special conditions. Rav Charlap presents various views of by our Chachamim to explain and justify the action of Shaul Hamelech – including an opinion that this self-sacrifice was actually not in accordance with Halacha. This despite the fact that Chazal did not explicitly condemn Shaul HaMelech's action.

Eitan Markovitz: "Do not plant an Ashera, any tree" – The view of the Rambam

Eitan Markovitz, resident of Dolev in the hills of Binyamin, elaborates on the

view of the Rambam regarding the prohibition to plant an Ashera tree mentioned in Parshat Shoftim. Eitan Markovitz discusses what is included in this prohibition and where this Halacha applies. Interesting conclusions related to the opinions and rulings of the Tanna Rabbi Elazar ben Yaakov are presented.

Rav Mordechai Bareli: Does the non-performance of Mitzvot of a Ger retroactively revoke his conversion?

A few months ago a storm arose in the wake of the decision of the supreme Rabbinic Beit Din disqualifying Giyurim performed by Rav Druckman and his Beit Din. Without directly relating to this ruling, Rav Mordechai Bareli, the Rosh Kollel of Psagot, analyzes various situations where a Ger does not keep mitzvot he took upon himself at the time of the Giyur. Rav Bareli concludes that the halachic authorities in most cases did not disqualify the Giyurim – surely not “en bloc”. This does not challenge nor minimize the fact that arranging fictitious conversions [in which candidates for Giyur a-priori do not have in mind to keep all the Mitzvot], constitutes a very grave and difficult problem for the Jewish future.

Dr. Yaakov Altman: The greater the person, the greater is his temptation – analysis of the sixth chapter of the Shemona Perakim of the Rambam

Dr. Altman, a psychologist and researcher, deals with the saying of the Rambam in regard to Chazal’s statement that “anyone who is greater than his friend, has a greater temptation to sin (yetzer)”. Dr. Altman suggests that each person must clarify to himself if he should obey the mitzvot whose reason is not apparent (such as the prohibition of mixing meat and milk) solely because of the command of Hashem, or should his personal emotions be part his Leshem Mitzvah. On a parallel level, in regard to mitzvot whose reasons are obvious (e.g. bloodshed or not to disrespect one’s parents) do the natural ethics of the individual detract from the demand that all of our actions must be for the sake of Heaven (Leshem Shamayim)? Dr. Altman dwells on the opinions of the Ramban and of Rav Kook, and leaves ample material for further thought.

Dr. Mordechai Meir: The explanatory role of the annotation (Nikkud) of the Text of the Mishnah

Dr. Meir, an alumnus of Yeshivat Sha’alvim, illustrates that questions of annotating words in the Mishnah are no less important than a question of the text. He provides examples and details, and proves his thesis through annotated manuscripts, that one should be careful and attentive to the annotation of the Mishna’s text.

Rav Yoel Amital: My grandfather, Rav Tzvi Yehuda Meltzer זצ"ל – 40 years to his passing

Rav Tzvi Yehuda Meltzer זצ"ל, son of the Gaon Rav Iser Zalman Meltzer זצ"ל, was an outstanding person. As a Talmid of the Saba of Nohvardok branch of Mussar – Rav Yosef Yuzel Horowitz זצ"ל – and of his father, he forged for himself a unique path in Rabbanut and Manhigut. While serving as Rav of Pardes Chana (near Hadera) he established a Yeshiva and strengthened the religious observance in the town and maintained friendly relations with all local residents. He founded “Midrashiyat Noam” which served as the model for future yeshiva high schools. Subsequently he was elected as the Rav of Rechovot, where he was involved in the establishment of various Torah institutions, including “Hesder” – the special army service of yeshiva students. This biography is written with warmth and affection by his grandson, Rav Yoel Amital, a Maggid Shiur in Yeshivat Sha'alvim.

Responses and Comments

Many responses appear in this volume. Rav Dr. Posen proves from an explicit source in the Megilla that Haman was hanged on Pesach. Rav Ariel Bar-Eli rejects complaints in the previous volume that the beit din of Yeshivat Sederot publicized the names of the plaintiffs in a ruling – the names were fictitious. Rav Hoffman writes concerning the importance of maintaining the customs of German Jewry. Rav Meir Bareli responds to the article of Rav Bar Ilan (two issues ago) in regard to corporal punishment of students. He opines that if the blows do not stem from a quarrel no prohibition applies. Rav Bar Ilan respond to his comments. Rav Kinarti proves that there are established rulings according to the Rambam even in matters of Hashkafa. Rav Posen replies to this view. Hagaon Harav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg responds to the article of Rav Dr. Avraham in reference to the principle “These and those are words of the Living G-D, and Rav Avraham wrote his opinion.

About Books and Authors

Rav Klires, a Talmid Chacham from Yerushalayim, presents a lengthy and all-encompassing article concerning the library and literary style of the Maharshal, especially in regard to matters of prayer and the siddur, and Dr. Rigler deals with an educational periodical for orthodox Jewish youth movements in German communities, which appeared during the years before the Shoa. The issue concludes, as usual, with a review of recent Judaica received by HaMa'yan.