ROCKET HALAKHIC MAN: CAN MITZVOT BE KEPT IN OUTER SPACE?

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DOES HASHEM WANT US TO GO TO SPACE?

(1) SHUT TESHUVOT V'HANHAGOT 5:84

זמן שבת בחללית באטמוספרה

בזמן האחרון שלחו חללית מחוץ לכדור הארץ, ועל ידה אדם מגיע עד לחלל העולם, ומסתובב סביב העולם כולו כשש עשרה פעמים ביום, ואין שם מושג של זמן כפי שרגיל בעולם, ומאחר שנתפרסם שישנו יהודי בכלל הנוסעים, חקרו חכמים מהו דין תורה בנסיעה זו בחלל לענין זמן שבת ומועדים ותפלה וכדומה, ואף שאינו נוגע כעת למעשה, מ"מ ראוי לעמוד על האי דינא...

Recently, a spaceship was sent off of the planet, which will bring a person to outer space and revolve around earth around 16 times each day, and where there is no concept of time as it normally applies on earth. Since it became publicized that there is a Jew among the travelers, sages have analyzed what the Torah law would be on this voyage regarding the times for Shabbat, Yom Tov, prayer, etc. Even though this is not currently practical, nevertheless it is fitting to determine this law.

והאמת שבלאו הכי יש כאן בזבוז נורא של מאות מליארדים דולארים מתוך כוונה להראות את גדולת אמריקה, וגם אם יש בזה תועלת לאנושות, הרי היא מעטה מאד, אלא שמוכנים לשלם כל מחיר כדי להתפאר ולהתחרות במדינות אחרות, ובכסף שמשקיעים היו יכולים להציל רבבות שגוועים מרעב, ואין לעם ה' להתחבר או להשתתף עמהם, שאין זה דרכינו לבזבז כ"כ על ראוה לבד, ואין לנו להוכיח בהשתתפותינו את הסכמתינו לכגון דא.

Truthfully, without [these Halakhic reasons to avoid space travel], this is a huge waste of hundreds of millions of dollars with the goal of showing the greatness of America. Even if there is a benefit to humanity, it is very small, yet they are willing to spend any amount to glorify themselves and to compete with other countries. With the money they are investing, they could save tens of thousands who perish in hunger. Hashem's nation should not join with this, as it is not our way to waste so much for mere exhibition, and we should not suggest as much by joining our approval to these things.

(2) PESACHIM 94A-B

אָמֵר רַבָּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאי: מָה הְשׁוּבָה הֱשִׁיבַתּוּ בַּת קוֹל לְאוֹתוֹ רָשָׁע בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁאָמֵר ״אֶצֵלֶה עַל בָּמֵתִי עַב אַדַּמֶּה לְעֶלְיוֹן״, יָצְתָה בַּת קוֹל יְאַרָה לוֹ: רָשָׁע, בֶּן רָשָׁע, בֶּן בְּנוֹ שֶׁל נִקְרוֹד הָרָשָׁע, שֶׁהִמְרִיד אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלְם כּוּלוֹ עָלִי בְּמַלְכוּתוֹ. כַּמָּה שְׁנוֹתִיו שֶׁל אָדָם? שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה, וְאָם בִּגְבוּרוֹת — שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה, שֶׁנָּאֶמֵר: ״יִמִי שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָהָם שִׁרְעִים שָׁנָה וְאָם בִּגְבוּרוֹת שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה, שֶׁנָּאֶמֵר: ״יִמִי שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָהָם שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וְאָם בִּגְבוּרוֹת שָׁנָה, וְעוֹבְיוֹ שֶׁל רָקִיעַ מַהָּלַךְּ חָמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה, וְעוֹבְיוֹ שֶׁל רָקִיעַ מַהָּלֹךְ חָמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה, וְבִן בִּין כָּל רָקִיעַ וְּכָּתִי בִּוֹרְאַל תִּוֹּרָד אֶל יַרְקִּעִ בּוֹר״.

Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai said: What response did the Divine Voice answer to that wicked man, Nebuchadnezzar, when he said: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14)? A Divine Voice emerged and said to him: Wicked man, son of a wicked man, the disciple in corruption of Nimrod the wicked, who caused the entire world to rebel against Me during his reign by advising the generation of the dispersion to build a tower in order to fight the Hosts of Heaven, how many are the years of a person altogether? Seventy years, and if he is with strength, eighty years, as it is stated: "The days of our years are seventy years and with strength eighty years" (Psalms 90:10). In contrast, from the earth to the first firmament of seven (see Hagiga 12b) is



a walking distance of five hundred years, and the thickness of the firmament is a walking distance of five hundred years, which is equal to approximately 1.8 million parasangs, and between each firmament is another walking distance of five hundred years, and so too between each and every firmament. Therefore, how can you, Nebuchadnezzar, hope to reach the heavens in your lifetime, such that you say: "I will be like the Most High"? Rather, as the verse continues: "Yet you shall be brought down to the netherworld, to the uttermost parts of the pit" (Isaiah 14:15).

(3) RAV HERSHEL SCHACHTER, BEIT YITZCHAK V. 26 PP. 193-194, QUOTING RAV SOLOVEITCHIK

"שמים וארץ" - כשנשאל על דעת היהדות לענין נסיעת האדם אל

בית יצחק - כו / ישיבת רבנו יצחק אלחנן / עמוד 198 הנדפת מאתר אוצר החרמה

הירח והשואל חשש שיש בזה איסור מפני שכתוב השמים שמים לה'
והארץ נתן לבנ"א השיב רבינו דיש לחלק בגדר שמים וארץ, דיש לפרש
שמים בב' דרכים או כדבר גבוה ו/או רחוק וכמש"כ לא בשמים היא, או,
חומות גדולות ובצורות בשמים, אשר לפי"ז הירח באמת הוא בגדר
"שמים." אך יש לפרש ששמים כולל כל מה שמעבר ליכלתו של האדם
להשיג כולל כל העולמות הרוחניות [ה' בשמים ישכון] אשר לפירוש זה
הכוכבים והגלקסיות הכי רחוקות - וודאי הירח - הם בגדר "ארץ" ולפי"ז
אין בנסיעות בחלל או במחקרים מדעיים בקוסמוס שום סתירה לפסוק
השמים שמים לה' והארץ נתן לבנ"א.

בית יצחק - כו / ישיבת רבנו יצחק אלחנן / עמוד 199

"The heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1) – [R. Soloveitchik] was asked about Judaism's view of man's traveling to the moon, with the questioner suspecting that it might be forbidden because it is written "The heavens are the Lord's but the land He has given to mankind" (Ps. 115:16). [R. Soloveitchik] responded that one can distinguish in the definition of heavens and earth. The term "heavens" can be explained in two ways — as something high and/or distant, as it says "It is not in the heavens" (Deut. 30:12), according to which the moon is considered a part of the "heavens." Alternatively, the term can be defined as including everything that is beyond human understanding, including the entire spiritual realm. According to this second understanding, the stars and most distant galaxies — and certainly the moon — are considered part of "earth." Therefore, [according to this latter interpretation,] there is no contradiction between traveling in space or scientific studies of the cosmos and the verse "The heavens are for the Lord and the land for mankind."



(4) RAV JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK, "MAJESTY AND HUMILITY," TRADITION 17.2, PP. 27-28

The basic dialectic of man and his morality was beautifully captured in two midrashic homilies quoted by Rashi. In his comment to the verse "מיצר ה' א' את האדם עפר מן האדם עפר "And God created man dust of the earth," Rashi says:

צבר עפרו מכל האדמה מארבע רוחות וכו'.

God gathered the dust [from which man was fashioned] from the entire earth — from its four corners.

ד"א: נמל עפרו ממקום שנאמר בו: מזבח אדמה תעשה לו

He took the dust [from which man was made] from that spot which was designated by the Almighty, at the very dawn of creation, as the future site of the altar. As it is written: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me."

Man was created of cosmic dust. God gathered the dust, of which man was fashioned, from all parts of the earth, indeed, from all the uncharted lanes of creation. Man belongs everywhere. He is no stranger to any part of the universe. The native son of the sleepy little town is, at the same time, a son of parts distant and unknown. In short, man is a cosmic being.

He is cosmic in a threefold manner:

First, man is cosmic through his intellectual involvement. His intellectual curiosity is of cosmic, universal dimensions. He wants to know, not only about the things that are close to him as, for example, the flowering bush in his backyard, but also about things far removed from him, things and events millions of light years away. Human cosmic inquisitiveness borders almost on the arrogant. Man is restless because he has not yet resolved the mysterium magnum of the cosmic drama. Remoteness magnifies, rather than diminshes, man's curiosity. The farther the

object, the greater and more hypnotic the curiosity. Man asks himself: to whom does the universe belong? The answer was given by the Psalmist: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" —הארץ ומלאה 'To whom did God entrust this earth and its fulness? To man who studies and comprehends the cosmic drama. Ownership of the stars, the planets, the dark interplanetary or interstellar spaces, is granted by the Almighty only to those who make the effort to understand them, to those who are curious about them. Man owns the world through his intellectual involvement in it. The old Aristotelian and Maimonidian theorem about the unity of the subject-knower and the object of inquiry, gives man the credentials of cosmic citizenship.

Second, man is cosmic through his experiential involvement; man is cosmos-oriented not only intellectually, but emotionally as well. He loves the cosmos. He, in person, wants to be everywhere. Man is questing, not only to know the universe, but also to experience it. Explorer and adventurer, he feels bored by the monotony and the routine of familiar surroundings. He is out to "see the world." Man is not satisfied sending up unmanned vehicles to gather scientific data. He is eager to do it himself. He wishes to move, with the velocity of light, into a world of the unknown. Man wants to experience and to enjoy vastness. This quest, in contrast to the first, is of an aesthetic rather than an intellectual nature. If we ask again: Who owns the stars? the answer is: Whoever loves them.

Third, man is cosmic through his mobility. Man is a mobile being. He can easily detach himself from native surroundings and adapt himself to new environs. His adaptability to new conditions transcends that of the plant and the animal. The verse in Deuteronomy: כמ המרם עץ השדה לבא מפניך במצור 5 contains a rhetorical question: "Is man like the tree of the field?" Is the tree as mobile as man? Certainly not! Man's greatness and distinctiveness find expression in his ceaseless mobility. The tree is inseparable from the soil. Man can, and does, move away from home.



ARE MITZVOT APPLICABLE IN SPACE?

(5) INTERVIEW WITH R' SHLOMO GOREN, HA-TZOFEH, JULY 25, 1969



(6) R' BEN-TZION FIRRER, "OBLIGATION OR EXEMPTION IN THE FULFILLMENT OF MITZVOT ON THE MOON?", NOAM V. 13 (1970)

אמנם יש לומר שאין חיוב לקיים התורה ומצוות על הירח. אחרי עיון במקורות אפשר להתרשם כך. הנה "אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי בשעה שעלה משה

אמנם אין משיבין על אגדות וכן אין משיבים תשובה לשאלה הלכתית מאגדות. אולם אגדה זו שהובאה לעיל, משמשת לנו רק הזדמנות להסברת הדברים ולא מקור להם. כי קביעה זו שיש מצוות רבות שבמתכונתן זו שבידינו אין להן מקום בירת, אינה צריכה ראיה. היא מדברת בעדה.



ואם תאמר, אם אין מקום על הירת לכל המצוות, הרי יש מקום למקצתן והן תהייבנה בני אדם שיגיעו לשם.

יש לומר, אין תורה לחצאין. כי "דרש רבי שמלאי שש מאות ושלש עשרה מצות נאמרו לו למשה" (מכות כג). תרי"ג מצוות אלו הן שלמות אחת. פחות ממספר זה או יותר ממנו איננה כבר תורה. "לא תוסף עליו ולא תגרע ממנר" (דברים יג, א). כי אז אין התורה תורה. וכבר נפסקה הלכה: "מומר להכעיס אפילו לדבר אחד וכו' דינו כעובד כוכבים" (יו"ד סי" ב ס"ה). כי מי שאיננו מודה במצוה אחת, כמוהו כמתכחש לכל התורה כולה. כי אין תורה אלא בשלמותה. כשאין היא שלמה, מאבדת היא את כל ערכה.

הוכחה: "אלה החקים והמשפטים אשר תשמרון לעשות בארץ אשר נתן ה' אלקי אבתיך לך לרשתה כל הימים אשר אתם חיים על האדמה. אבד תאבדון את כל המקומות אשר עבדו שם הגוים אשר אתם ירשים אתם וכר" (דברים יב, א"ב). ועל זה "תנו רבגן וכו' בארץ יכול כל המצות כולן לא יהיו נוהגין אלא בארץ, תלמוד לומר כל הימים אשר אתם חיים על האדמה. אי כל הימים יכול יהיו נוהגין בין בארץ בין בחרץ לארץ, תלמוד לומר בארץ. אחר שריבה הכתוב ומיעט צא ולמד ממה שאמור בענין, אבד תאבדון את כל המקומות אשר עבדו שם וגר מה עבודת כוכבים מיוחדת שהיא חובת הגוף ונוהגת בין בארץ בין בחרץ לארץ" (קדושין לז). ואם יש צורך בלמוד שכל המצוות שהן חובות הגוף חיובן ככל מקום וה אין לחייבן כי על מקום זה אין למוד.

מובן שהדברים האמורים במאמר זה הם רק בבחינות הרהור ראשון. התחלה צנועה של דיון בשאלה שלא ירחק היום והיא תנסר בתלל שני עולמות.



(7) R' J. DAVID BLEICH, "SURVEY OF RECENT HALAKHIC PERIODICAL LITERATURE," *TRADITION* 11.3 PP. 68-69

In a report of an interview granted by Rabbi Shlomo Goren... Rabbi Goren is quoted as asserting that theoretically *mitzvot* contingent upon "time" cannot be performed on the moon since "time" as measured by twenty-four hour day-night sequences does not exist on this celestial body. *Keriyat shema*, for example, is obligatory only during certain time periods. Since such time periods do not exist on the moon, a necessary condition for the incurrence of this obligation is absent... However, argues Rabbi Goren, in practice man is obligated to perform such *mitzvot*. Since natural atmospheric conditions on the moon cannot support human life, man will be able to exist only be creating an artificial atmosphere composed of elements transported from Earth. In light of his continual dependence upon Mother Earth, man living on the moon will continue to be governed by laws operative on Earth.

(8) R' MENACHEM KASHER, *HA-ADAM AL HA-YAREI'ACH*, CH. 5 (TRANSLATION COURTESY OF ASTRORAV.COM)

The question: is it correct what was publicized in the name of one rabbi "on the moon there is no meaning to the Torah of Israel" and also that "one cannot keep it [the Torah] on the Stars."

The answer: What was written in the name of Rav S. Goren, shlit"a, is not precise [i.e. not correctly quoted] for I have seen the body of his work and there he also delves into the question of keeping Shabbat on the moon; how one can calculate [when Shabbat occurs]? Hence he thinks that there is a requirement of keeping the Torah. And by his words "cannot keep it", his intention is as he says there "there is no possible way to keep the Torah there."

However I have seen that R. B. Firrer, shlit"a, who has understood this Rabbi in his article in Noam (above), and this is what he said: I have read the words of R. Shlomo Goren, [here is] a condensation of his words etc: "that they would be required to fulfill time-bound mitzvot according to the time and they kept on Earth". "In my opinion there is no requirement on the moon of mitzvot even inside a closed sphere of Earth". "And therefore there is no place for the Torah on the moon even for human beings." "It is possible to say that there is no requirement to keep the Torah or mitzvot on the moon". "A person of Israel who uproots themselves from the Earth to the Moon without intention to return would be considered according to his new place and he would be exempt from the mitzvot". I was stunned to read such a statement touching on the question of keeping of the entire Torah!

In my humble opinion it is clear without a doubt that the requirements of halacha is that the requirement to keep the mitzvot is a personal requirement and any Jew is required to keep the Torah any place that they live in the heavens above, on the moon, or in the water under the Earth; in the Arctic circle or the Antarctic circle, where half the year is daylight and half dark, or on an airplane – as long as they are alive and capable of keeping the mitzvot of the Torah they are required to keep them and it is forbidden to violate any prohibition and if they are unable to then [ones] rachmana patrei [lit. Heaven exempts those who are unable].

But for that which one is able, it is clear that he would be required to keep it and there's no place whatsoever to say that a Jew could become exempt from the mitzvot of the Torah because we don't learn



halacha from words of agadda, as he himself said, and especially when there is a way to explain them – when it is impossible to keep the Torah – that we should not learn proof from them at all. And there is a lot more to be said about this about all the details that were mentioned but here is not the place to discuss it at length.

... I think that this important author, who wrote in his own article that it was merely "first thoughts", will, when he arrives at "second thoughts" decide differently.

(9) SOME HALAKHIC TIMEKEEPING OPTIONS (COURTESY OF RABBI ANTHONY MANNING)

- 1 HALACHIC TIME DOES NOT EXIST AT ALL!
- 2 THE HALACHIC 'DAY' ALWAYS RUNS FROM ONE SUNSET TO THE NEXT
- 3 THE HALACHIC 'DAY' ALWAYS LASTS 24 HOURS BUT WE CAN'T KNOW FROM WHEN
- 4 THE HALACHIC 'DAY' ALWAYS LASTS 24 HOURS INDEPENDENT OF DAY/NIGHT
- 5 JEWS SHOULD NOT LIVE AT THE POLES!