

1. Rabbi Avraham Shapira, 1914-2007; Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi 1984-1993



2. Rabbi Yitzchak Steinberg, Eulogy at <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/775436/>, 20-22 min.
Rav Shapira was the *oz haTorah*. His might, and the strength he had, through the Torah he learned... In Rav Shapira we felt his strength in Torah was so powerful, so strong, that he wasn't afraid of anything. His *psak halachah* was clear and cut. לא תגורר מפני איש – he wasn't afraid of people around him, of those who were usually more appreciative of him, of his circles and so on, and he wasn't afraid of anyone from the outer circles, from those, from politicians and those who control the country. Yet he wasn't afraid of them at all...

Biography

3. <http://www.mercazharav.org.il/?pg=17>

In one of his first days in Yeshivat Chevron, during a lecture by the great Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Epstein zt"l to the entire student body, he asked a great question against the entire flow of the lecture. Rabbi Epstein halted the lecture for a few seconds, thought about it, and then continued the lecture as if nothing had been asked. At the start of the next general lecture, Rabbi Epstein asked, "Where is the little one (our master was both young and short in those days) who asked the question in the previous lecture?" After he found him, he continued with a lecture which revolved around the question he had asked in the previous lecture. From that time, his name spread in Yeshivat Chevron as a great prodigy.

4. Ask the Rabbi with grade school students <http://www.marechoen.022.co.il/BRPortal/br/P102.jsp?arc=1380304>
When I see you thus, I remember that I was also young like you – can you imagine? It seems unlikely! At this age, each individual has a special power of prayer. If you could grant me something small from your age – pray first for yourselves, and I can promise that nothing bad will come of it. And I ask you, if you can, to pray for me as well on Rosh HaShanah, to ask the angels to give something small to me – I would be most grateful. And in gratitude to you, I am obligated to grant you something small. Nu, ask me something.

5. <http://www.mercazharav.org.il/?pg=17>

Our master had a great power of prayer. For the last four years of his life, he ceased eating bread on weekdays. When his wife the Rabbanit asked why, he replied that he doesn't eat bread, because he feels that his concentration for the blessing after meals is not what it once was.

6. Relating to non-observant Jews, <http://www.marechoen.022.co.il/BRPortal/br/P102.jsp?arc=1403778>

This is a difficult and highly complex area. It includes great laws of Torah, regarding great matters – patience, love of the Jewish people, the unity of the Jewish people, and defending the Jewish people. These are the essence of Torah and the actual kiln of the world. Ruling in such matters is given, in every generation, to rabbi who are involved with the community, and who bear the yoke of the community. To great rabbis, who know the pain of the generation and its points of confusion...

Gd forbid, one may not abandon any aspect of Torah, and the nation has only the belief in Torah and its completeness, and one cannot limit that, Gd forbid – but this is also Torah! How to instruct, how to draw near, how to produce value from that which seems worthless, how to distance from division and strife to the extent possible.

Division of Jews is what caused the length of our slavery in Egypt, as our Sages said that Moses asked Gd why the Jews were not redeemed, and then when he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting, he said, "But it is known." Our Sages explained: The reason why we are not redeemed is known. In every generation, and also in our own, and so in our own time, the ethical test is what establishes the quality of our freedom and redemption. If, due to division and lack of unity and selfish desires, we publicly degrade accepted ethical norms, causing desecration of Gd's Name, then the words of Moses return: "But it is known."...

7. Rabbi Shai Hirsh, *HaRav Avraham Shapira zt"l was also concerned for Haredim*, Chadashot Srugim 01/09/13

Once he even sharply rejected the suggestion he received from a religious politician, who proposed that budgetary support be given only to Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav and its satellites, and not to *Haredi* yeshivot. The Rabbi refused, and added in surprise, "Should we declare that these are yeshivot, and not those?!"

Two Contributing Factors

8. Minchat Avraham I 44

According to Nachmanides, who believes it is a biblical commandment (whether Maimonides thinks so, or not), one cannot say that the mitzvah of living in Israel depends on personal desire. Rather, it is a total obligation. The fact that leaders of Israel across the generations were not careful with this is as is written in the responsa of Maharam and Terumat haDeshen, that they had no choice, and were prevented from living in Israel because of the difficulty...

But today, when Israel is now the State of Israel, and by all financial measures in Israel today the [likelihood] of suffering is very low, and especially for single males without the yoke of supporting a family, all are certainly presumed to be obligated...

9. The Sanctity of the Seventh Year

I heard from the Rabbi of Teplik, Rabbi Shlomo Polansky zt"l, who heard from Rabbi Moshe Shochet, the right hand of Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin, that one should seek leniencies for farmers who will not maintain observance of the mitzvah, but there is also a need to publicize opposition to the leniency, lest it become set. All should know that it is only a leniency due to strain and the need of the moment.

The Aderet, Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, wrote in a letter that before he ascended to Israel he was in the strict camp, but when he ascended to Israel and faced the burden of public rulings he changed his mind, and argued for leniency...

10. Minchat Avraham I 1:1

Maimonides did not mean to write a [mere] chronicle in his introduction. Rather, the entire matter of the transmission of Torah is the body of Torah and foundation of faith, and one should learn it as one learns the rest of Torah. The Raavad argued on points in the introduction in seven places!...

11. Minchat Avraham II 16:1

The decisions of the Chief Rabbinate depend not on articles and research by scholars, even if they are Torah-observant or rabbis, but on the words of halachic rulings. The practical verdicts of our masters, the authorities in law for Israel, these are the foundational pillars from which we live and present halachic rulings for the generations. Other texts are estimations...

The rabbis of our generation lack the authority to reject the ruling of Radbaz, who was the leader of his generation, and whose famous students included the holy Ari and Rabbi Betzalel Ashkenazi, and who was one of the great authors of responsa across generations, whose waters we drink. Among those who turned to him were our masters Rabbi Yosef Karo, Mabit, Maharibal, Maharashdam and other generational leaders. Behold, Radbaz wrote that they are Jewish without a doubt; shall we say that they are not Jewish? That would be shocking!

12. Minchat Avraham II 16:9

The fact that [the Ethiopians] have only the biblical text and not the verbal Torah, Radbaz already noted this, and yet he wrote that they are Jews. Therefore, this is not grounds to challenge their Jewishness...

13. Redemption and Temple: An Interview with Rav Shapira, Techumin 5, Part 4

How might one bring closer the vision of the construction of the Temple?

A vision is a matter of faith. A true Jew knows that without a Temple we are not complete Jews. I have already noted Rabbi Kalischer's attempt to return us to our natural state in our own times, via renewal of the Temple service, and all of the leaders of the generation disputed his views. A true Jew cries for the destruction of the Temple, and anticipates its rebuilding. Any who mourn for Jerusalem will merit to see its joy, and those who do not mourn for Jerusalem will not see its joy. (Taanit 30b)

Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin lived in the Old City, near the Kotel. The doctors tried to move him to another dwelling, for whenever he opened his window and saw the Temple in its ruins, he would burst out crying, weeping which harmed his health. Before the Six Day War, we – the roshei yeshiva and its students – would go to Musrara on festivals to gaze upon the Temple Mount to awaken our longing for the Temple.

What about the mitzvot of korbanot?

...A Jew came before the Opter Rav and wept before him for his woes. The Rav comforted and encouraged him. Before he left, the Rav said to him, "An especially great tragedy befell the Nation of Israel today!" The Jew was shocked, and asked, "What happened?" The Rav replied, "They did not bring the daily korban today."

Nonetheless, we must be careful of reverence for the Temple [site]. The longings to build the Temple are desirable and authentic, but we may not break the bounds of law to express those longings. It has already been ruled that we may not enter the Temple [site] today, when we are *tamei* from contact with the dead, and legally we cannot bring korbanot there until the arbiter of righteousness comes, and love does not subvert the legal process.

14. Background on the Disengagement <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/901698/>

15. Rabbi Chaim Avihu Schwartz, *The Land of Israel – Gd's Portion*, Chap. 15

On 14 Adar 5742, our teacher and master died at the height of the battle. Still in Tevet he recorded, with the remnant of his strength, a declaration to all who gather "to guard the integrity of the sacred land of our life, for all Israel." He continued, in a shaking, trembling hand, "All of me is with you and to you in all of your activities for the full strength of the integrity of the entire land of our life, in full, in all of her borders." He signed, as was his way, with added words of encouragement, "Anticipating a complete and great redemption, in full, for all Israel, speedily in our days," and he signed his name. This was the last declaration of our teacher and master, Rav Zvi Yehudah...

16. Rabbi Benny Eisner, *"Increase the light" – "The Revealed End" in the Teaching of Rav Zvi Yehudah Kook*

When they came to evacuate us [from Yamit], Rabbi Zvi Yehudah sent me to tell the group: You must never raise a hand, to oppose... If they come take you, you are taken. [But] you are not going one meter willingly. So they took us; five soldiers took me, and threw me into a truck.

17. Ruling regarding soldiers ordered to participate in evicting Jews during the Disengagement, Tradition 40:1 (2007)

Paragraph after lengthy paragraph on the way of the Torah in these important matters can be written, but at this time I will give you as an answer the brief, practical, halakhic verdict—so that the house of Israel will know the way of the Torah and go in the way of its commandments.

A) According to Torah law, it is completely forbidden to give land in Israel to a non-Jew, due to the prohibition of *lo tehanem* ("Do not give them a foothold in the Land," Deut. 7:2) and due to the nullification of the commandment to settle the land of Israel that is incumbent upon every individual of Israel. This prohibition applies to every Jew, soldier and civilian alike. An order to take part in the evacuation of Jews from their homes in order to give over the land to non-Jews is an order that is against the religion of our holy Torah and forbidden to fulfill. Every order that is contrary to Jewish law and compels one to violate the words of the Torah holds no validity, is forbidden to fulfill and no person has the

authority to deliver it. About such instances Rambam wrote, "It goes without saying that if an order of the king nullifies a commandment, then it is not listened to" (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 3:9). Anyone who violates this prohibition will not be exonerated, not in this world and not in the world to come.

B) In general the prohibition of handing land over to non-Jews includes helping those engaged in the transgression. Therefore, one must not participate in blocking the entrances to Gush Katif or assist, in any other manner, the expulsion of Jews from their homes. Similarly, it is upon every soldier called for reserve duty to refrain from showing up if his service is designated to enable other soldiers to take part in the transgression...

F) It is incumbent upon every Jew to do all he can to stop transgression. Moreover, every single Jew is required to protest. Of course, the use of violent means against soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces or the Israeli police is not permitted.

G) Only great sages of the generation whose decisions are widely accepted in Israel are allowed to adjudicate difficult questions in all parts of the Torah, and are allowed to render such decisions that affect all of Israel. All those who have not reached this level should abstain from rendering decisions on these issues. If he does render decisions on this matter, the Rambam has already called him (*Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 5:4), "An evil person, a fool, and haughty," and it is furthermore said about him, "Many corpses she has made to fall, etc.," and it says about him, "And many are its dead." These are the small students which have not studied Torah sufficiently; and they wish to aggrandize themselves before the ignoramuses and the people of their city; and they leap and sit at the head to instruct Israel; and it is they who increase conflict; and they are the destroyers of the world who put out the light of Torah and who ruin the vineyard of the G-d of Legions. It is about them that Solomon has said in his wisdom, "Small foxes have taken hold of us, small foxes destroying the vineyards."

18. Response by Rabbi Avraham Yisrael Sylvetsky, on behalf of Rav Shapira, Tradition 40:1 (2007)

Many leading *posekim* maintain that the mitzva of conquering and settling the Land of Israel applies even in a situation where individuals are exposed to danger, as long as we are not dealing with a situation of certain *pikku'ah nefesh* to the general community. This position is based, among other things, on the famous words of the *Minhat Hinnukh* (425 and 604) regarding obligatory war...

This assertion is based on the assumption that the normal existence of a civilized country obligates defense of the country's boundaries, even at the cost of the deaths of individuals. This was the justification for establishing a Jewish homeland precisely in the Land of Israel, in a place of danger, even though it would appear that, realistically speaking, from a security perspective it would have been far simpler to establish a state in another place (e.g., Uganda). This is, among other things, the halakhic justification for the Israeli army's waging defensive wars against our enemies even at the cost of the deaths of our finest sons. This is also the justification for individuals to live in the Land of Israel despite the difficult security situation and the threat of terror hanging over it.

I unabashedly admit that, owing to my deficiency, I do not fully understand the position that *Kevod Torato, shelita*, cites in the name of Ha-Gaon Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *zt"l*, that there is no prohibition to hand over portions of the Land of Israel in a situation of *pikku'ah nefesh*, that is to say, in a situation of danger to individuals. In any event, I assume that, after the fact, even *Kevod Torato* is happy that at critical junctures in the history of Zionism, this position was not accepted (the rejection of the Uganda plan, the declaration of the establishment of the State, the continued occupation of certain areas during the Six Day War, such as the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, putting our soldiers in danger even after the danger that hovered over the entire State of Israel was removed). However, go out and see what the people are doing. It seems that the Jewish people, those trained to observe G-d's mitzvot, hold fast to G-d's inheritance even in the face of danger, and do not take into account "considerations of *pikku'ah nefesh*" as a factor that obligates them to move to a more secure community.

During the period that terrorists were shooting relatively frequently on the Tunnels Road leading to Gush Etzion, and even succeeded in murdering a number of local residents, the road undoubtedly fell into the category of a place of danger (the mortars that fell in Gush Katif resulted in fewer fatalities). But nevertheless, we never heard any of the Rabbis, including *Kevod Torato, shelita*, calling upon local residents or the Har Etzion Yeshiva to move to a safer location. Is this not because of the basic halakhic recognition that the mitzva of settling the Land of Israel applies even in a situation of danger?

19. Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, June 2006 letter cited at <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3097304,00.html>
Via this letter, I come to strengthen your hands against this terrible, unethical crime intended to evacuate communities and chase Jews from their homes – it shall not happen!

The Real Issue

20. Rabbi Avigdor Neventzhl, Letter of February '17, available at <https://rotter.name/kolot/think/14098.php>
I have come to strengthen the hands of Rabbi Shemuel Rabinovitch, Rabbi of the Wall, who stands in the breach to guard our sacred camp, who has fought over the years against those who would breach the wall of holiness, who seek to desecrate the Western Wall with practices which are against the Torah and Jewish tradition, and he stands in this like a reinforced wall and he does not capitulate to their requests, all with great understanding and wisdom and commitment to Gd and to His Torah.

21. Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *Minchat Shlomo* 1:35

This is like one who cuts off a person's toe in order to save him from needing to cut off his entire hand; obviously, this is not called harm, but repair! He is performing a mitzvah, not a transgression. So, too, he is not causing this person to stumble; just the opposite, with this deed he is saving this person from the grave sin of hating Torah and its students... Still, the matter requires resolution.

22. Rabbi Yitzchak Halevi Herzog, *Minority Rights in Jewish Law*, *Techumin* 2 pp. 169-179

What should we do? To tell the nations: We cannot accept this condition, because our sacred Torah prohibits a Jewish government from allowing Christians, and certainly pagans, to dwell in our land, and further, it prohibits us from allowing their worship in our land, and it prohibits us from allowing them to acquire land? I cannot imagine finding a Rabbi in Israel with a brain and straight intellect who would think we should respond with this, meaning that this is the Torah's duty for us. Even if we would allow that accepting a State with such a condition would violate a prohibition in upholding that condition, even still I would say that the transgression would be overridden by concern for saving the nation of Israel, noting our nation's position in the world...

23. Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, June 2006 letter cited at <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3097304,00.html>

It is our duty to protest this terrible, unethical crime. As far as blocking roads – one should do this only where there is another route. We will not block a road when there is no alternative route; we will not, Gd forbid, endanger human life.

24. <http://www.mercazharav.org.il/?pg=17>

When cracks developed in the government's commitment to protecting the integrity of the land, he stood powerfully, like a lion, on his guard. As opposed to all those who stammered and were shocked, he fought fearlessly for the integrity of our sacred land. With the same measure, he stood strong after the expulsion, requiring recitation of Hallel on Yom ha'Atzmaut and not changing any part of the prayer for the welfare of the State, since the existence of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel is of great spiritual significance, and through it the mitzvah of settling the Land of Israel is fulfilled.

25. Rabbi Benny Eisner, *"Increase the light" – "The Revealed End" in the Teaching of Rav Zvi Yehudah Kook*

Rabbi Zvi Yehudah could write to Begin that he will enter eternal damnation in Jewish history because of his deed, and one week later, hearing that Menachem Begin is in the hospital, send him "get well" wishes.

When a friend of mine at Mercaz haRav published a caricature of Begin in *Maariv*, wearing a funny *kova tembel*, Rabbi Zvi Yehudah summoned him and said, "This is not the way I relate to the head of the government of Israel. In no way. This is shaming the nation. This is shaming the State of Israel. You are shaming the state. We have a disagreement with him, a deep disagreement with him. We will not give ground to him, but to publish a caricature of the head of the government in such a degrading way? It will not stand, it will not be.