

Oct 83 Prize

(don't read)


FOR SPEECH AT KATZ PRIZE JERUSALEM

Theme: i"r

Rabbi Dovid Lifschitz tells me the following on behalf of his late father-in-law, Rabbi Joseph Yosselevitch. When the latter spoke in Suvealk at the 50th anniversary of the Hibat Zion meeting (it was a very Zionist town), he said the following:

According to Halakah, that when one recites the grace, Birkhat Hamazon, there should not be any uncovered knife on the table. This is for two reasons. The first is, that the table is the same as the Altar in the Temple, and no steel or metal could be used in the Temple because steel is meant for war, and the Altar is meant for peace. The second reason is because of an actual historic incident about a poor Jew who had nothing but a dry piece of bread for his meal. When he was reciting the Birkhat Hamazon, he came to the third blessing, that of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. He suddenly thought to himself how desperate our situation is that Jerusalem is destroyed, that he gave up hope, and in this mood of terrible despair he took the knife in front of him and plunged it into his heart and died. The Rabbis therefore ordained that no one should ever recite the blessings of the Grace with an uncovered knife.

Such, Rabbi Yosselevitch concluded, is the forerunner of the Hibat movement. It is not fifty years old, but several thousand years old. It is based upon this overwhelming love for Zion and Jerusalem, to make the Rabbis sensitive to the possibility that out of despair issuing from love of Zion, one may yet commit

suicide...  can add to this what I heard from Rabbi Issac Bernstein about Birkhat Hamazon -- the difference between the first and second blessings, the first being third person and the second being second person, even though Moses authored the first and Joshua the second -- because Joshua was in Israel whereas Moses was not... Try to connect the two items.