


Singer-Jordan Edition

Behar

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Dedicated for the *refuah shblaimah* of Batya Shoshanah bat Rivkah

 This is a small *parsha* with big messages. The central theme is summed up by this verse:

I am God your God Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be God to you.
(Vayikra 25:38)

which the *Gemora* explains as follows:

All those who dwell in *Eretz Yisroel* are like those who have a God, and all those who dwell outside the land are like those without a God. (*Kesuvos* 110b)

This is why *Shmittah* and *Yovel* only apply in *Eretz Yisroel*, as well as all the laws of tithing produce. We do all of this to facilitate a relationship with God you just can't have outside of *Eretz Yisroel*, especially if there is no reason to be there.

You can certainly learn Torah and do *mitzvos* in the Diaspora, and get rewarded in the World to Come for them. But the doing of them will not enhance one's relationship with God the same way they do in *Eretz Yisroel*. This is why Ya'akov *Avinu* could not wait to get home after 20 years of being away from it.

What is the basis of the difference between *Eretz Yisroel* and the rest of the lands? Is it just because God *says* so, or because it *is* so?

The physical world takes up space, which is why two physical things cannot be in the same place at the same time without damaging one another. It is even harder to be in two places at one time, and for something to be physically higher, it has to be on a higher physical level.

Not so in the spiritual world. The spiritual world is neither bound by time nor space, therefore something can be on the same physical level, even lower, than other things and yet be much spiritually higher. Obviously when the *Gemora* says that *Eretz Yisroel* is the highest land it is not talking *physically*. It can only be talking *spiritually*.

Why does that make such a big difference? Because the higher something is on the spiritual ladder, the closer it is to God. This means that it can receive a higher, less filtered level of Divine light, which makes the reality of God far more real. The sense of *Shechinah* that a person has, goes from being only an idea to a palpable reality and awesome experience.

But more importantly, it means that their *keli*, the “body” that receives the light is more spiritually refined and therefore more capable of receiving higher levels of Divine light. This in turn further refines the body and spiritually strengthens it, making it even more capable of even higher levels of Divine light. This elevates Torah learning to a higher level, and *mitzvah* performance to a higher standard. Thus it says:

There is no Torah like the Torah of *Eretz Yisroel*, and no wisdom like the wisdom of *Eretz Yisroel*. (*Bereishis Rabbah* 16:4)

[Even] the air of *Eretz Yisroel* makes a person wise. (*Bava Basra* 158b)

This is not talking about *physical* air you breathe through your *physical* nose. This is talking about a spiritual breathing your soul does by living in the only land whose borders parallel the only opening to Heaven. This results in a spiritual advantage that the *Gemora* sums up with:

Three inherit the World-to-Come: One who lives in *Eretz Yisroel*, etc. (*Pesachim* 113a)

Living in *Eretz Yisroel* is the equivalent of performing all the *mitzvos* of the Torah. (*Sifri, Re'eb; Tosefta, Avodah Zarah* 5:2)

Here's the best part. All of this works regardless of who is in political control of the country. It's the reality of *Eretz Yisroel* during times of redemption and exile, if a person is here to take advantage of it (*Tuv HaAretz*). The *midrash* has only praise of Jews who make *aliyah* before *Mosbiach* comes, because it shows that they put spiritual priorities over material ones.

People have many “reasons” for why they won't even entertain the possibility of moving from the Diaspora to *Eretz Yisroel*. The spies did too in Moshe *Rabbeinu's* time, and look how that worked out for them. You can fool people a lot of the time, and yourself, some of the time. But you can't fool God *any* of the time, so . . .

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