

SELECTIONS FROM THE BOOK

LIGHTS ON OROT
RAV AVRAHAM YITZCHAK HAKOHEN KOOK ZTKL

**THE THOUGHT THAT ERETZ ISRAEL IS AN
ACCESSORY TO JUDAISM IS A TRAGIC DISTORTION
WHICH WAS CAUSED BY THE NEARLY 2000 YEAR
EXILE**

Our connection to Eretz Israel is not dependent on history. Eretz Israel was given to Avraham Avinu without previous historical connection. The bond between Avraham and the land was not based on any external reason. The Brit between Avraham and the land was Divine. Only in the Holy Land can the national life of the Chosen People be totally uplifted to G-d. The prophecy exclusive to the Land of Israel, the mitzvot unique to the land, and the Beit Hamikdash are all manifestations of this Divine connection. It is an attachment based on Ruach Hakodesh, beyond scientific inquiry and rational explanation. This first essay of OROT introduces us to this higher vision and to the need to perceive Am Israel and Eretz Israel in a deeper, more poignant light.

THE THOUGHT THAT ERETZ ISRAEL IS AN ACCESSORY TO JUDAISM, AND NOT A CENTRAL PILLAR IN ITSELF, IS A TRAGIC DISTORTION WHICH WAS CAUSED BY THE NEARLY 2000 YEAR EXILE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE FROM THE LAND OF ISRAEL. AFTER YEARS OF WANDERING IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES, SCATTERED AMONG THE GENTILES, AND SEPARATED FROM OUR HOMELAND, OUR ORIENTATION TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL BECAME DISTORTED AND CONFUSED. INSTEAD OF BEING A DAY-TO-DAY REALITY INTEGRAL TO OUR LIVES, ERETZ ISRAEL BECAME A FARAWAY DREAM. IN OUR DIASPORA EXISTENCE, THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF JUDAISM WERE THE MATTERS WHICH AFFECTED OUR DAILY LIVES - TORAH STUDY, PRAYER, THE SHABBAT, KASHRUT, AND THE MITZVOT WHICH WE WERE STILL ABLE TO PERFORM. ERETZ ISRAEL BECAME SOMETHING OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE - A PLACE TO WHICH WE WOULD ONE DAY RETURN, BUT NOT AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE.

This misconception results when we misunderstand the true culture of the Jewish people. The foundation of our culture is not just the holidays and the performance of precepts, but in our being the nation which brings the word and blessing of G-d to the world. (Genesis, 12:3; Isaiah, 49:6) As we will learn, our national attachment to G-d can be achieved exclusively through the Land of Israel.

To help us remember the centrality of Eretz Israel to Judaism and to the nation of Israel, let us reflect on a few teachings of our Sages regarding the special qualities of the land of Israel. The Zohar calls the Land of Israel, the heart of all lands (Zohar, 3:2218)

A special Divine Providence graces Eretz Israel to the exclusion of all other lands. It is "The land where the eyes of Hashem our G-d are always upon it, from the beginning of the year till the end" (Deut. 11:12)

Certainly, G-d reigns the world over. From our point of view, however, there is a great difference in our ability to receive the Divine content. Our sages teach us that G-d has placed angelic forces to rule over all other lands. Only in the land of Israel is G-d's Providence direct, without any intermediary angels, (Ramban on the Torah, Leviticus, 18:25. Also, Derech Hashem, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, Part 2, Ch.4:8) Only in Israel is the worship of G-d pure without any barriers or impurities.

This is how the Ramban explains the Gemara's startling declaration that "All who live in Eretz Israel resemble someone who has a G-d, and all who live outside the land of Israel resemble someone who has no G-d." (Ketubot 110B) In Chutz L' Aretz, the worship of G-d only reaches the level of the celestial angels, whereas in Eretz Israel, Divine service is direct to G-d Himself, with no interference whatsoever.

Our Sages teach that the commandments which we perform in the Diaspora are only reminders until we can return to Israel to observe them properly (Sifre, Ekev, 11:18. Rashi, Deut. 11:18. Also, Ramban, Leviticus, 18:25.)

"For Hashem chose Zion, He desired it for His habitation" (Tehillim 132:13) and in almost the same breath, we continue, "For Hashem chose Yaacov as

His own, Israel as His Segula." (Tehillim 135:4) Both the land and the nation of Israel are chosen. "For Hashem will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His heritage." (Tehillim 94:14) G-d's heritage is the Land of Israel, as we learn from the verse, "Then He established it for Yaacov as a statute, for Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, "To you I shall give the land of Canaan, the lot of your heritage." (Tehillim 105:10) The nation and the land are eternally intertwined in G-d's plan for creation. Even their names are the same. Israel refers to both the land and the nation.

THUS, ERETZ ISRAEL IS MUCH MORE THAN A MEANS. IT IS OF SUPREME VALUE IN ITSELF. THE KEDUSHA OF THE LAND DOES NOT EVOLVE FROM THE MITZVOT PERFORMED THERE. RATHER, THE UNIQUE MITZVOT OF THE LAND STEM FROM THE INHERENT HOLINESS OF THE LAND. THIS IS WHY THEY ARE CALLED "THE MITZVOT THAT DEPEND ON THE LAND." THE LAND IS KODESH BY ITSELF "SHABBAT HAARETZ," HARAV AVRAHAM YITZHAK HACHOEN KOOK, PGS. 62-63. KAFTOR V'PERACH, CH.10. ALSO, RESPONSA, CHATAM SOFER, YOREH DEAH, 234, "THE KEDUSHA OF ERETZ ISRAEL COMES FROM ITSELF, AND NOT BECAUSE OF THE PRECEPTS RELATED TO IT.")

We have already mentioned that the Land of Israel lay in barren destruction during the nearly 2000 years which the Jewish people were in exile. Conqueror after conqueror tried to cultivate its once fertile soil, but all of them failed. The land's unwillingness to nurture foreign rulers is an example of the special connection between Eretz Israel and Am Israel. Even in the land's waste and destruction, its faithfulness to the Jewish people remains steadfast, as the Ramban makes clear:

"AND THAT WHICH IS STATED HERE, 'AND YOUR ENEMIES WILL RULE AVER THE DESOLATE LAND,' IS A BLESSING WHICH GUARANTEES THAT THROUGH ALL OF THE AGES, OUR LAND WILL NOT RECEIVE OUR ENEMIES, AND THIS IS A GREAT PROOF AND PROMISE FOR US. FOR YOU CAN NOT FIND IN THE ENTIRE WORLD A LAND WHICH IS GOOD AND BOUNTIFUL, THAT WAS ONCE SETTLED, AND IS NOW AS DESOLATE AS IS ISRAEL. FOR SINCE WE LEFT HER, SHE NEVER RECEIVED ANY OTHER NATION." (RAMBAN ON THE TORAH, LEVITICUS, 26:32)

DIASPORA LEADERS FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING THEIR DIASPORA COMMUNITIES, AND NOT ON BRINGING THEIR COMMUNITIES TO ERETZ ISRAEL

Only with the return of her children in our time did the land of Israel return to life. In a miraculously short time, the desert land became a major world exporter of fruits and flowers. The meeting between the Land of Israel and the people of Israel gives life and strength to both. The Holocaust decimated Jewish life like no other nightmare of history, yet upon our return to Israel, we transformed almost magically into a dynamic world power. This supernatural connection is pointed to by the verse from Isaiah, "He grants breath to the people upon it and spirit to them who walk therein" (Isaiah, 42:5. Ketubot 111a) With our return to Yerushalaim, to the valleys of the Jordan River, and to the shores of the Kinneret, our dry bones come to life.

"The thought regarding Eretz Israel that it has merely a peripheral value to facilitate the subsistence of the unified nation; even when it comes to fortify the concept of Judaism of the Diaspora, in order to preserve its form, and to strengthen the belief and fear of Hashem, and to strengthen the performance of the commandments in a proper fashion - this orientation toward Eretz Israel is not worthy of lasting fruition, for its foundation is rickety in light of the towering, unshakable Kedusha of Eretz Israel."

We mentioned that Herzl and other secular Zionists saw Eretz Israel as merely a means to coagulate the countryless Jews and thus preserve the physical nation. They failed to understand the vital connection between the Jewish people and Eretz Israel because they did not realize that the nation of Israel was essentially different from the nations of the world. They did not understand our true identity and our true national ideal which reaches culmination with the building of the Beit HaMikdash in Yerushalaim and the export of Divine blessing from Zion to the rest of the world.

Rabbi Kook writes that this short-sightedness is not limited to secular Zionists, but can be found in religious circles as well. Sometimes it takes the form of an outright rejection of the land of Israel. Proponents of this view claim that Jews can live a full and even better Jewish life in the Galut than in Eretz Israel. Others, less extreme in their rejection of Israel, agree that Eretz Israel is the ideal Jewish homeland, but at some later date, with the advent of Mashiach.

As a general rule, Diaspora leaders focus on strengthening their Diaspora communities, and not on bringing their communities to Eretz Israel. This Diaspora outlook on Judaism downplays the centrality of Jewish nationhood in order to strengthen Jewish life in Galut. If Eretz Israel is made out to be no longer important, the building of Torah in exile is seen to be the highest and ultimate goal. For instance, many books have been written on Judaism which do not even mention Eretz Israel. Until very recently, even the writings of Rabbi Kook which have been translated into English have neglected his writings on the Land of Israel. By concentrating on "the four cubits of Halacha" in Galut, and minimizing the value of Israeli nationhood, Diaspora existence is given added importance.

IN THIS PHILOSOPHY, ERETZ ISRAEL IS SEEN ONLY AS A MEANS TO AN END. THE MISSION OF JUDAISM IS TO UNFOLD IN THE DIASPORA. THE TORAH IS NO LONGER TO GO FORTH FROM ZION, BUT RATHER FROM BERLIN AND NEW YORK. THE JEWS, IT IS MAINTAINED, CAN BE A MORE INFLUENTIAL LIGHT TO THE NATIONS WHEN THEY ARE SCATTERED AMONGST THE GENTILES. ERETZ ISRAEL IS REDUCED TO BEING A FARAWAY, METAPHYSICAL, FUTURE IDEAL. MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE PLACE OF TORAH WORSHIP IS THE FEELING IN THE HEART. THIS DISTORTION CAN TRANSFORM GALUT COMMUNITIES INTO BASTIONS OF JUDAISM IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS SOME JEWS IN BABYLON ERRONEOUSLY BELIEVED THEY HAD DISCOVERED A NEW YERUSHALAIM OUTSIDE OF ERETZ ISRAEL.

Moreover, the material and physical demands of a homeland are seen as dangers interfering with Torah, mitzvot, and the service of G-d. This view relegates the Gemara in Tractate Ketubot to Aggadic legend. The Gemara (Ketubot 110B) states: "Always a Jew should live in the Land of Israel, even in a city where the majority of inhabitants are idol worshippers, and not live in the Diaspora, even in a city where the majority of residents are Jews."

This is also the Halachic decision of the Rambam (Rambam, Laws of Kings and Their Wars, 5:12) and the Shulchan Aruch regarding a married man who wants to move to Eretz Israel even though his wife refuses (Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer, 75:3. Rambam, Laws of Marriage, 13:19) So important is the mitzvah of living in Israel that the man is permitted to divorce his wife, without any Ketubah payment whatsoever.

**THE SPIES IN THE WILDERNESS WERE THE TORAH LEADERS
OF THE TRIBES, YET THEY FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THE
NECESSITY OF LIVING IN ISRAEL**

The Torah was not given to be lived in the wilderness of Sinai, but in the hills and valleys of Eretz Israel. In desiring to keep the spiritual side of Torah alone, and not its holy, earthly component, the Spies brought about the death of their entire generation. (Numbers, 14:26-35). (See Mesillat Yesharim on the Spies, Ch.11) The lack of faith they displayed in rebellion against the commandment to settle in the promised land reverberates through the annals of Jewish history

It is interesting to note that land in Chutz L' Aretz is halachically not considered land. Rather it has the perishable status of movable property, not land. Land, regarded as permanent property, is only found in Eretz Israel. See, Tosafot, beginning, "Ein," Shitot HaGaonim, Tractate Bechorot 53A.

SEE THE SHLAH HAKODESH, AMUD HASHALOM, LAST PARAGRAPH OF SUKKAH: "WHEN I SAW THE JEWISH PEOPLE BUILDING HOUSES LIKE PRINCES, MAKING PERMANENT HOUSES IN THIS WORLD, AND IN THE LAND OF DEFILEMENT, IN SPITE OF WHAT OUR RABBIS OF BLESSED MEMORY HAVE SAID, 'THE HOUSES OF THE RIGHTEOUS ARE DESTINED TO COME TO ERETZ ISRAEL,' ...AND THIS BUILDING (IN GALUT) SEEMS LIKE ONE WHO DIVORCES HIS MIND FROM REDEMPTION. THEREFORE, MY CHILDREN, MAY HASHEM WATCH AND REDEEM YOU, IF HASHEM WILL GIVE YOU MUCH WEALTH, BUILD HOUSES ONLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR BASIC NEEDS AND NO MORE, AND BUILD NOT TOWERS AND WALLS IN GRANDEUR AND PRIDE - RATHER ONLY THAT YOU MAY HAVE AN ABODE FITTING WITH YOUR STATION AND ROOMS FOR SECLUSION AND TORAH AND REPENTANCE."

See Chatam Sofer on Yoreh Deah 138, "Regarding someone who builds a big house of stone unnecessarily in the Diaspora, in order to have more space, and will despair of the Redemption coming, in this manner his building is a danger and not a precept which will protect him."

A Diaspora can be in Paris, in Crown Heights, or in a very lovely suburb of Johannesburg. It can be a very comfortable exile, but it represents a

destruction of our national wholeness which we are commanded to mourn nonetheless.

The book, Mesillat Yesharim, explains that the mourning over the exile, and the yearning for Israel's Salvation are essential foundations in the righteous Jew's service of G-d:

"Every Sage in Israel who possesses the words of Torah according to their true understanding, and grieves over the honor of the Holy One Blessed Be He, and for the honor of Israel all of his days, and yearns and feels pain for the honor of Yerushalaim and for the Temple, and for the swift flowering of Salvation, and the ingathering of the exiles, he merits Divine Inspiration in his words... A Hasid of this kind, aside from the Divine service he performs in carrying out the precepts with this motivation, must certainly feel constant and actual pain over the exile, and over the destruction of Yerushalaim, because of their tendency to minimize the honor of the Blessed One. And he will long for the Redemption, so that the honor of the Blessed One may be raised." (Mesilat Yesharim, Ch.19)

In the Diaspora, with its emphasis on the individual, someone who only studies the revealed side of Torah can become alienated from the nation's inner yearnings and goals. A Talmid Chacham can be learned in Halacha, but distant from the deep philosophical reaches of Judaism.

THE SPIES IN THE WILDERNESS WERE THE TORAH LEADERS OF THE TRIBES, YET THEY FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THE NECESSITY OF LIVING IN ISRAEL. THE GAON OF VILNA TEACHES THAT THIS SAME SIN HAUNTS THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN EVERY GENERATION. WHEN ONE PUTS A PERSONAL FOCUS OVER THE LIFE OF THE CLAL, THE YEARNING FOR A NATIONAL HOMELAND CAN BECOME WEAKENED AND CONFUSED. THIS TRAGEDY ARISES WHEN THE TORAH IS NOT LEARNED IN ALL OF ITS FULLNESS.

Based on the Vilna Gaon, Kol HaTor, Ch.5 says: "Many of the sinners in this great sin of, 'They despised the cherished land,' and also many of the guardians of Torah, will not know or understand that they are caught in this sin of the Spies, that they have been sucked into the sin of the Spies in many false ideas and empty claims, and they cover their ideas with the

already proven fallacy that the mitzvah of the settlement of Israel no longer applies in our day, an opinion which has already been disproved by the giants of the world, the Rishonim and Achronim."

In contrast, someone who understands only the superficial level of Judaism will feel nothing lacking if he lives far away from the Land of Israel, in a foreign country, in a gentile land, under a gentile government. He is estranged from the deeper levels of Judaism and the more lofty aspirations of the Clal. He is satisfied with the individual obligations which he feels he can perform just as well in Chutz L' Aretz, and thus the exile finds favor in his eyes. He does not feel a need for his own Jewish land and government, nor for a Jewish army, nor for any of the other foundations of national Israeli life. His focus is on Shabbat, Kashrut, and Tefillin. To perform them, he does not need Eretz Israel. He may go to shul every morning, and learn a page of Gemara each day, but he does not miss living in Israel. The opposite is true - he enjoys the Galut. He enjoys his work, his community, the education he can give to his children, and the opportunity he has to experience the best of both worlds - his Judaism and the gentile world around him. If there is an inner, esoteric need to live in Israel, he does not feel it. To his way of thinking, the concept of nationhood has nothing to do with Judaism, or with being "Frum."

Even great Torah leaders can fall prey to this compromise with Galut. An example of this can be seen in Yaacov Avinu's descent to Mitzrayim. At first, he journeyed to Egypt to merely sojourn there, and not to settle down. "And he went down to Mitzrayim and sojourned there."(Deut. 26:5) The Sifre comments that Yaacov did not intend to settle down permanently, but rather to live there temporarily, until the years of famine in Canaan passed (Sifre, Ki Tavo, 26:5) With time, however, his family's orientation to the land of Egypt began to change, as it says, "And Israel settled in the land of Mitzrayim, in the land of Goshen, and they took possession of it, and they were fruitful and multiplied greatly." (Genesis, 47:27)

The commentary "Kli Yakar" writes: "This verse is a condemnation of the children of Israel, for Hashem decreed to Avraham that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, while they desired to be settlers and property holders in a land not their own. And they settled down so permanently that they did not want to leave Egypt until Hashem was

compelled to take them out with a mighty hand, and those who did not want to leave died in the three days of darkness."

SIMILARLY, TODAY, AFTER GENERATIONS OF DIASPORA EXISTENCE, MANY JEWS IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH THE PLACE IN WHICH THEY LIVE, WHETHER IT BE ENGLAND, FRANCE, OR BRAZIL. ISRAEL IS OFTEN CONSIDERED A FARAWAY DREAM, A NICE PLACE FOR A VISIT, BUT NOT A PLACE VITAL TO A JEW'S DAY-TO-DAY LIFE.

One of the questions a person is asked when he reaches his Heavenly rest is, "Did you yearn for Salvation?" (Shabbat 31A) If a Jew is not longing for the Redemption, for Salvation from the Galut, then something is wrong. If he is happy in the Diaspora, then his Judaism is out of focus, and he is out of touch with his soul's deepest yearnings. As the Kuzari poignantly declares, his prayers for Yerushalaim and Zion are like the chattering of a nightingale, melodious but empty of meaning. (Kuzari, 2:24) Because he does not feel his soul's most inner desires, he does not feel the need to be saved. From what? From whom? Three times a day, he recites the words in the prayer book, "We yearn for Your Salvation all day long," but when the davening is finished, he forgets. They mistake a Judaism centered on the individual for the much broader contribution and blessing of the Clal.

**THEY MISTAKE JEWISH NEWSPAPERS AND BAKERIES FOR
AUTHENTIC ISRAELI CULTURE WHICH UNFOLDS NOT IN A
GHETTO, BUT IN A HOLY LANDSCAPE OF MOUNTAINS,
VALLEYS, DESERTS, AND LAKES**

When we are living in the place we belong, Hebrew is spoken, and not English, French, or even Yiddish. At the center of Israeli culture stands Yerushalaim, the city of G-d. The government is Jewish, the calendar is Jewish, the soldiers are Jewish too. Even the national psychology is totally different. In Israel, a Jew can feel pride. He can feel strong. If an enemy threatens, he has a means of defense. In Israel, the stereotype Jew of Galut is transformed into a pioneer building the Promised Land.

The displacement of inspiration from the prophetic channel of Israel to unsanctified wavelengths has profound spiritual implications as well. When Am Israel is in Galut, G-d hides Himself, and His light ceases to appear in full force. The Shekhina which shines on Yerushalaim withdraws

from the world and goes into exile. Israel and Judaism are disgraced. (Kuzari, I:4. Also note that the full title of the Kuzari is "The Book of the Defense of the Disgraced Religion.") Other religions rise to steal Israel's glory. (Maharal, "Mitzvah Candle." Daniel, Ch.7, see Abarbanel) The false doctrines they spread imprison Israel's true light in darkness. The prophet Ezekiel describes the horrible Chillul Hashem which results.

WHEN THE JEWS ARE IN EXILE, JUDAISM AND TORAH ARE SCORNE

"And when they came to the nations, into which they came, they profaned My Holy Name, in that men said of them, These are the people of Hashem, and they have gone out of His land." (Ezekiel, 36:20) When the Jews are in exile, Judaism and Torah are scorned. The "Chosen People" become persecuted, downcast victims, despised by all of the nations. G-d's Name is desecrated. In the eyes of the gentiles, the once mighty G-d of Israel lacks the strength to safeguard His people in His land. (Ibid, Rashi)

The great light of G-d which shines forth from Zion when the Kingdom of Israel reigns in its land, living its full Torah life, is temporarily extinguished with the exile of the nation. The mitzvot which give Divine life to the nation in Israel, now have educational value alone - the outer form without the inner content. (Sifre, Deut. 11:18, and Rashi there) The great light of Torah grows dim, subordinate to the moral code of the gentiles. Instead of accepting the Torah as the one Divine truth, the world views Judaism as a primitive, obsolete code, restricted to the lowly Jews and their subversive anti-culture....

SLOWLY, THE JEWISH PEOPLE BEGIN TO FEEL THAT THE EXILE IS SOMETHING FOREIGN, AND OBSOLETE

"I am asking you not to be saddened in the least, nor to worry, for behold, there are people who travel for several years to earn their livelihood, leaving their wives behind, and they also wander about without any means, while I, thanks to Hashem, am journeying to the Holy Land, which everyone yearns to see, the joy of all Israel, and the joy of Hashem, may He be praised, and I am setting off in peace, though you know I am leaving my beloved children behind, and my dearly loved books" (Iggeret of the Vilna Gaon upon his departure for Eretz Israel)

WHEN SUCH AN OUTSTANDING TZADDIK AS THE GAON, THE "FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD," SENDS HIS STUDENTS TO SETTLE IN THE PROMISED LAND, THE WHOLE DIASPORA WORLD IS AFFECTED. RABBIS GUTTMACHER AND MOHALIVER FOLLOW, AND THEIR MOVEMENT OF RELIGIOUS ZIONISM, CHOVEVEI TZION, RAISES A BANNER WHICH THE SECULAR ZIONISTS ARE LATER TO ADOPT. AS HEALTHY FEELINGS OF NATIONALISM AWAKEN THROUGHOUT THE NATION, THE GALUT BECOMES DESPISED. A HOMELAND AWAITS US. THERE IS NO LONGER A NEED FOR THE EXILE.

Thus, the Gaon of Vilna sends his students to Eretz Israel to settle in the land. Spiritual reverberations spread out over continents. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Kalisher and Rabbi Eliahu Guttmacher form the first Zionist movement, the Chovevei Tzion.

Their yearning spreads to include even non-religious Jews who can no longer bear the humiliation of Galut. An assimilated Paris journalist, Herzl, is suddenly filled with a spirit of Jewish identity and national pride. Jews assemble together for a World Zionist Congress. Hearts never touched by Jewish education are filled with a growing fervor for Zion. Waves of Aliyah begin. Myriads of souls hear the call. After a nearly 2000 year exile, Jews the world over begin to discover a new hope for life. The yearning grows gradually, like the growth of a plant - "the planting of G-d develops and blooms." At first the seed is buried underground. Then, in time, it sprouts. Jewish settlements begin reappearing in Israel. By sea, by air, and by land, arriving refugees fall to their knees to kiss the cherished land. The light of Redemption spreads over the mountains. Slowly, darkness gives way to light. Though the new day takes a long time in unfolding, the sun in all of its splendor is destined to appear.

The process of Redemption from the Galut, and the return of the scattered exiles to Eretz Israel, parallels the atonement of the land. It comes about slowly, in a natural, historical manner, encompassing both the spiritual and the material world, in order to return mankind to the recognition that G-d is the prime mover of history, Master of both heaven and earth. A Redemption which evolves without obvious miracles, in a gradual, step-by-step way, through a panorama of wars, revolutions, economic depressions, holocausts, political movements, and the bravery and self-sacrifice of

Israeli soldiers, all of this comes to teach that the G-d of Israel rules not only over the spiritual world, but over the physical world as well.

Naturally, we do not feel ready to return home all at once. Souls awaken gradually to the yearning, but as our polluted spring returns to health, our exiled inspiration begins to return home with it. Gradually, Jews in Galut seek a greater Judaism. Like a magnet, an awakening Clal Israel begins to draw in her wandering souls. Jews begin to long for a national life beyond the walls of the ghetto. Some assimilate among the nations, but others, hearing a deeper yearning, long for a Jewish land of their own. The Zionism which first awakened in the holy, valorous hearts of great Rabbis, now begins to spread through the nation. The fact that the Jewish people are once again able to think of Israel, and settle in Israel, and understand the inherent need for a Jewish State, this is because the dynamic inspirational force is no longer emanating in an amorphous international fashion. The Jewish people have awakened. They come to experience a driving need to seek their own unique channel. This is the deep motivating force behind the Zionist movement. At its roots lies a deep spiritual yearning for our unique Israeli spring, for Clal Israel, for a connection to the G-d of Israel - for a complete return to our Source. Rabbis involved in the secrets of Torah are aware of the true roots of this yearning. Beneath the surface of Zionism is a profoundly spiritual base. This is the case, whether the secular Zionists know it or not. Though they turn towards Israel for outwardly external reasons, it is the deep spiritual yearnings which are coming to life in the collective soul of the nation that are motivating their actions as well.

Slowly, the Jewish people begin to feel that the exile is something foreign, and obsolete. We have gathered up all that we needed in our wanderings. Valiant Jewish souls, inspired by a national fervor, proclaim that we can survive as an independent nation on our own. A spirit of bravery and sacrifice for the nation appears. We demand our own land. A Jewish settlement arises in Israel. We become fighters. Slowly, we strip off the helpless passivity which paralyzes our life in Galut. Miraculously, after nearly 2000 years of destruction, the land begins to yield up her fruits. The time of Redemption has come. "And the light of Mashiach, who gathers the outcasts, begins to appear."

**"Rejoice with Yerushalaim, and be glad with her, all you who love her."
(Isaiah, 66:10)**

THERE IS A FAMOUS STORY CONCERNING THE GAON OF VILNA WHICH IS RELATED BY HIS STUDENT, RABBI CHAIM OF VOLOZHIN. (INTRODUCTION TO SAFRA D'ZNIUTA, BY HARAV CHAIM OF VOLOZHIN) MAGIDIM, OR HEAVENLY MESSENGERS, WOULD REGULARLY VISIT THE GAON, BUT HE REPEATEDLY REFUSED TO LISTEN TO THEM. HE WOULD NOT EVEN GLANCE AT THEIR HEAVENLY FORM. WHEN ONE OF THESE MESSENGERS CAME TO REVEAL TORAH SECRETS TO RABBI CHAIM'S BROTHER, RABBI SHLOMO ZALMAN, THE VILNA GAON COMMANDED THE TORAH SCHOLAR NOT TO RECEIVE IT, OR EVEN GLANCE AT ITS CELESTIAL RADIANCE. RABBI ZALMAN ASKED WHY NOT - AFTER ALL, THE BEIT YOSEF, RABBI YOSEF CARO, AUTHOR OF THE SHULCHAN ARUCH, HAD A MAGID WHO INFORMED HIM OF SECRETS FROM HEAVEN. THE GAON OF VILNA ANSWERED THAT, FIRST OF ALL, THE BEIT YOSEF HAD LIVED SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE, AND SECONDLY, HE WAS IN ERETZ ISRAEL. THE GAON TOLD HIM THAT OUTSIDE OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO RECEIVE HEAVENLY MESSENGERS WITHOUT THE POLLUTED INTERFERENCE AND KLIPTOT OF CHUTZ L' ARETZ. HEAVENLY INFORMATION CAN ONLY BE PROPERLY RECEIVED IN ITS PURITY IN ERETZ ISRAEL. THIS IS WHY WHEN A MAGID FIRST APPEARED TO RABBI YOSEF CARO IN CHUTZ L' ARETZ, HE TOLD HIM TO GO TO ERETZ ISRAEL

Similarly, when Hashem first appears to Avraham, He tells him to journey to the land that He will show him (Genesis, 12:l) - the land uniquely created to facilitate a special connection to G-d. (See Zohar, Lech Lecha, verse cited) Only in Eretz Israel can Avram be transformed into Avraham in order to fulfill his potential of leading mankind to a knowledge of G-d. Only in Eretz Israel can he produce the offspring (Yevamot 64A) who will become the foundation for a holy nation destined to bring the word of G-d to the world.

The air in Eretz Israel causes wisdom." (Bava Batra 158B) Not only is the Land of Israel holy - the air is holy too. The atmosphere of Israel is pure, without the polluted Klipot of the Galut. In Eretz Israel, the connection between the individual Jew and Hashem is direct. "The eyes of Hashem are

upon it from the beginning of the year till the end." The purity of this direct attachment brings wisdom. And the beginning of this wisdom is to understand that over everyone who yearns to see her." You do not have to be in Israel to be graced by its wisdom. Every Jew who yearns to live there has a share in its secret treasures.(Ketubot 75A, "But of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in it; a man who was born there, and a man who yearns to see it." See Rashi, there) By yearning to be united with her soil, a person attaches himself to the soul of Clal Israel, and is uplifted in its magnified light. In his attachment to the land, he is freed from all Klípot and lower celestial forces. His soul ceases to be a private Diaspora soul and is transformed into the transcending, Divine soul of the nation.

The meaning of yearning to see Eretz Israel is when a person truly longs to be there. If a Jew prays in the morning for the ingathering of the exiles, and does not think about Israel again until the next time he opens a prayer book, chances are that he is not really yearning. (Kuzari, 2:24) If, on the other hand, his desire to live in Israel is an active, constant passion that he would act on if he could, then he merits to share in the land's special blessings.

The activity of the Ruach HaKodesh that is received in the Land of Israel is constant - even if a person should happen to leave for Chutz L' Aretz, through a mistake, or because of some compelling reason. Behold, even prophecy which has begun to appear in Eretz Israel does not cease outside of the land. "The word of Hashem is/was to Ezekiel in the land of Kasdim - it is because it already was." (Ezekiel, 1:3. Moed Katan 25A)

The influx of Kedusha that began in the Land of Israel gathers in all of the elucidations of holiness which are found in Chutz L' Aretz, in all of their ranges, and draws them up with its gravitational pull.

THE MORE ONE IS INCAPABLE OF TOLERATING THE AIR OUTSIDE THE LAND OF ISRAEL; THE MORE ONE FEELS THE IMPURE SPIRIT OF THE DEFILED LAND...

The more one is incapable of tolerating the air outside the land of Israel; the more one feels the impure spirit of the defiled land - this is a sign of a more interior absorption of the Kedusha of the Land of Israel, of the sublime kindness which will never abandon the person who has merited to

take refuge in the clear umbrage of the land of life, even in his distant journeys, even in his exile, and in the land of his wanderings.

The strangeness that one feels outside of the Land of Israel causes a greater bond with the inner spiritual desire for Eretz Israel and its Kedusha. The yearning to see the land increases, and the vision of the concrete, holy image of the land which the eyes of G-d are always upon from the beginning of the year until the end (Deut. 11:12) becomes deeper and deeper. And the depth of the holy yearning of the love of Zion, of remembering the land to which all the good things of life are bound - when this valorously increases in the soul, even in one individual - behold, it acts like an overflowing spring to all of the Clal, to the myriads of souls which are bound up with him, and the voice of the shofar of the ingathering of the outcasts awakens; and great mercy increases; and the hope of life for Israel sparkles; and the planting of G-d develops and blooms; and the light of Salvation and Redemption spreads out and out like the dawn which stretches over the mountains. (Yerushalaim Talmud, Berachot, I:I)

Rabbi Kook's words are not meant in a mere metaphorical fashion. He is describing a physiological truth. A person who has forged a deep spiritual connection to Israel will feel something unnatural in Chutz L'Aretz. The sensation can be an actual physical feeling, as if there isn't any air. What he or she is missing is the Kedusha of the Holy Land, which simply does not exist in the Diaspora.

Similarly, many religious Olim who return to Chutz L'Aretz to visit after a lengthy absorption in Eretz Israel, experience a feeling of foreignness when their airplane lands and they enter the terminal building. Immediately, they feel out of place, disconnected, as if they had landed on a totally different planet. The people around them seem strikingly non-Jewish; the language sounds foreign; the advertisements are unfamiliar; the policemen, the cars, the views from the highway seem detached from their lives. The scenery and architecture may be beautiful, but they are landscapes and buildings which belong to someone else. When the Oleh returns to his former neighborhood, he is liable to feel alien, as if he no longer belongs. The things people talk about seem suddenly unimportant. He no longer shares their priorities. Instead, he feels an urge to call someone in Israel to find out what's going on.

THE FEELINGS OF ALIENATION, AND OF SPIRITUAL EMPTINESS WHICH ARE EXPERIENCED IN THE DIASPORA, ARE SIGNS OF THE PERSON'S INNER PURIFICATION. THIS IS A HEALTHY REACTION FOR A JEW. IT IS A SIGN OF "THE SUBLIME KINDNESS WHICH WILL NEVER ABANDON THE PERSON WHO HAS MERITED TO TAKE REFUGE IN THE CLEAR UMBRAGE OF THE LAND OF LIFE, EVEN IN HIS DISTANT JOURNEYS" THIS SUBLIME KINDNESS IS A BLESSING FROM G-D, A DIVINE SHIELD WHICH PROTECTS THE JEW FROM THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF GALUT BY REMINDING HIM THAT HE DOES NOT BELONG THERE.

Someone who lives in the Diaspora and has never experienced an environment of Kedusha and spiritual health, may never recognize the impurity of his surroundings. He has no barometer of comparison. As we learned in the second essay of OROT, he will not miss Eretz Israel, and his Galut environment will seem pleasant in his eyes. Even when he visits Eretz Israel, he may not experience the Kedusha of the air and the land's profound spiritual treasures, for the land only discloses her secrets to the person who truly wants to partake of them with all of his heart and might.

The awakening from Galut to a new life in Israel resembles the journey of repentance which a person experiences when he turns to a new life of Torah. At first, he feels estranged from his old way of life. He senses its impurity and longs to break away from his previous lifestyle and surroundings. He no longer identifies with the life he once lived. Many of the things he once enjoyed, now seem to possess no lasting importance. He seeks out a new community, new values, new goals and ideals.

IN TRUTH, A PERSON WHO RETURNS TO A LIFE OF TORAH WITHOUT FORGING A DEEP BOND TO ERETZ ISRAEL HAS ONLY RETURNED PART OF THE WAY. IT MAY BE THAT HE WAS NOT EXPOSED TO THE DEEPER TEACHINGS OF TORAH; IT MAY BE THAT THE CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS OF MOVING TO ISRAEL WERE SIMPLY TOO GREAT; WHATEVER THE REASON, EVEN THOUGH HE HAS FOUND A NEW LIFE OF TORAH, HE HAS NOT YET FOUND INNER WHOLENESS. FOR THE MEANING OF TSHUVA IS TO RETURN TO THE PLACE ONE BELONGS, NOT ONLY IN DEEDS, BUT TO THE PLACE WHERE THE DEEDS ARE MEANT TO BE PERFORMED. THIS IS TRUE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND FOR THE NATION AS A WHOLE.

If a Jew is not actively yearning for Israel, then something is wrong with his spiritual life. If he identifies with being a Jew, and takes pride in his Jewishness - his contentment in Galut indicates that he is still detached from the Jewish ideal. For the truest expressions of Judaism and Jewishness are a devotion to G-d, to Torah, to Am Israel, and to Eretz Israel. None of these can be complete without the others (Siddur Beit Yaacov, Introduction)

The yearning for Israel leads to a desire to be there, to live there, to walk through its Biblical valleys and hills, to gaze upon Yerushalaim and touch the stones of the Kotel, to build a life in the land which G-d cares for with a special, direct, loving care. The Kuzari writes that "Yerushalaim can only be rebuilt when Israel yearns for it to such an extent that they embrace her stones and dust,"(Kuzari 5:27) as the verse of Tehillim states: "You shall arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favor her, the set time has come. For your servants take pleasure in her stones and embrace the dust thereof " (Tehillim 102: 14)

Here, Rabbi Kook reveals a very deep secret of the Redemption. The awakened yearning for Zion does not only influence the life of the individual who longs for the cherished land, it also influences his surroundings and the Jewish people as a whole. One person's yearning awakens the yearning of other Jews for Zion. Because each Jewish soul is connected to every other soul of Clal Israel, the yearning of one soul for Redemption has a positive influence on them all. Like a stone cast into a pond, the yearning of one Jew for Israel causes waves of yearning to spread out in circles which grow bigger and bigger until they reach the shore.

Following this scenario, when a leader of a Zionist youth group in New York decides to move to Israel, the spiritual waves caused by his yearning find their way to Australia. Suddenly, a Jew sitting on a beach in Sydney discovers himself dreaming about Israel. The next day, he buys a book on modern Zionism. Little by little, he finds his thoughts more and more focused on Israel. His interest transforms into an active yearning to see the land itself, and his longing sets off spiritual waves which find their way to Russia where a family is suddenly granted a visa to Israel after a long, seven-year wait.

"It happened that Rabbi Hiyah Rabbah, and Rabbi Shimon Ben Chalafta were walking in the Arbel Valley at the break of morning, before the light of day. They witnessed the rising of the dawn as it spread out its light. Rabbi Hiyah Rabbah said to Rabbi Shimon Ben Chalafta, 'Rabbi, thus is the Redemption of Israel - at the beginning it comes slowly, slowly, and then afterwards it increases and grows.'" (Yerushalaim Talmud, Berachot I:I)

HERE, RABBI KOOK REVEALS A VERY DEEP SECRET OF THE REDEMPTION. THE AWAKENED YEARNING FOR ZION DOES NOT ONLY INFLUENCE THE LIFE OF THE INDIVIDUAL WHO LONGS FOR THE CHERISHED LAND, IT ALSO INFLUENCES HIS SURROUNDINGS AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE. ONE PERSON'S YEARNING AWAKENS THE YEARNING OF OTHER JEWS FOR ZION. BECAUSE EACH JEWISH SOUL IS CONNECTED TO EVERY OTHER SOUL OF CLAL ISRAEL, THE YEARNING OF ONE SOUL FOR REDEMPTION HAS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THEM ALL. LIKE A STONE CAST INTO A POND, THE YEARNING OF ONE JEW FOR ISRAEL CAUSES WAVES OF YEARNING TO SPREAD OUT IN CIRCLES WHICH GROW BIGGER AND BIGGER UNTIL THEY REACH THE SHORE....

THERE WILL BE A PERIOD OF SETBACK IN THE POSSESSION OF THE LAND

See OROT, Orot HaTechiya, 44: "We recognize that a spiritual rebellion will come to pass in Eretz Israel amongst the people of Israel in the beginnings of the nation's revival. The material comfort which will be attained by a percentage of the nation, convincing them that they already have completely reached their goal, will constrict the soul, and days will come which will seem devoid of all spirit and meaning. The aspirations for lofty and holy ideals will cease, and the spirit of the nation will plunge and sink until a storm of revolution will appear, and people will come to see clearly that the power of Israel lies in its eternal holiness, in the light of G-d and His Torah, in the yearning for spiritual light which is the ultimate valor which triumphs over all of the worlds and all of their powers.

When the material drive surfaces, it will erupt with the fury of storm winds, and these are the pangs of Mashiach which come to refine and purify the entire world through the pains which they cause."

Our Sages liken the Redemption and the light of Mashiach to a gazelle. (Shir HaShirim Rabbah, 2:14) As the gazelle bounds over a mountain, leaping from rock to rock, one moment he leaps into view, and in the next moment he is gone - only to appear once again, ascending to a higher plateau. Similarly, a mountain stream rushes along the hills and slopes, only to disappear into a hidden, underground well. In its place are boulders, thistles, and rocky terrain until the stream reappears with ever-building force. If a hiker were to stand in only one spot and stare down at the vanishing water, he would think that the stream has disappeared. Only if he takes a higher perspective, a more encompassing view, does he see that the stream reappears in a different location along the mountain path. What seemed to be the end was really a prelude to another beginning. So too, out of the tragedy of the Holocaust came the establishment of the Jewish State. Out of a united Arab attack came miraculous victory in war.

After the Six Day War, a period of spirited settlement was followed by a heartbreaking Sinai withdrawal. Secular Zionism began losing fuel.

TODAY, STRENGTH AGAINST OUR ENEMIES HAS TURNED INTO SURRENDER AND WEAKNESS. TRUE TO RABBI KOOK'S WARNINGS, THE BUILDERS OF THE LAND HAVE BEGUN TO BETRAY THE NATION' S HISTORICAL COVENANT. GENERALS WHO CONQUERED OUR BIBLICAL CITIES, SIGN TREATIES TO GIVE THEM AWAY. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REDEMPTION? THE GAZELLE SEEMS TO HAVE FLED. THE MOUNTAIN STREAM SEEMS TO HAVE RUN DRY. BUT THE SECRET OF OUR HISTORY, OF OUR EVER-BURNING FLAME, INSURES US THAT AN EVEN BRIGHTER LIGHT WILL SHINE IN THE FUTURE.