

**FROM THE BOOK  
WAR AND PEACE  
BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF RAV AVRAHAM  
YTZCHAK HA KOHEN KOOK**

**OUR HISTORY AS BROUGHT IN THE TANACH IS  
REPLETE WITH MILITARY MATTERS: MOST OF OUR  
GREAT MEN WERE FIGHTERS TOO**

A brief recollection of our history will help make the connection between war, Israel, and Torah more clear. Not only in our century have wars been waged in defending our right to our Land, also our initial entry into Eretz Israel in the days of Moshe and Joshua was filled with years of conquest and battle. Unlike a prevalent perspective of Judaism which negates any link between Torah and military matters, we understand that the establishment of the nation of Israel is dependent on both. In the Book of Devarim, we are reminded again and again that the commandments are to be fulfilled "in the Land" which we have inherited from our forefathers.

IN OUR MODEM ERA, WAR IS LOOKED UPON AS A DEBASING ENDEAVOR. AN ENLIGHTENED PERSONALITY IS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH WAR. MANY JEWS, RABBIS AND YESHIVA STUDENTS AMONG THEM, SEE MILITARISM AS SOMETHING IRRELEVANT TO THEIR LIVES. BUT WHEN WE LOOK UPON THE HOLY HEROES OF OUR PAST, WE SEE THAT THIS IS NOT SO.

Avraham Avinu, who symbolizes kindness and oneness with Hashem, is the same Avraham who leads a small group of students to war against the four most powerful kings of his time. The same Yaakov who learned for 14 years without sleep in the Academy of Shem lifts a boulder which takes many strong shepherds to raise, and overcomes an angel in a hand-to-hand battle. Moshe Rabbenu, the humblest of men, and the most erudite in Torah, leads Israel to war against the Amorites and personally slays Og, King of Bashan, a mighty giant. Joshua, who never left off studying Torah in the tent of Moshe's yeshiva, leads the armies of Israel against Amalek, and against the seven nations in the conquest of Canaan. Samson, a Nazir from birth, and a prophet, decimates the Philistine enemy with the jawbone of an ass, The prophet Samuel, the spiritual giant who held the nation together in the troublesome days of Israel's first Kingdom, equal in stature

to both Moshe and Aharon together, is also no stranger to valor. When King Saul fails to annihilate the nation of Amalek completely, Samuel takes a sword and rends Agag, the Amalek leader, asunder. And King David, the sweet singer of Israel, author of Psalms to Hashem, slices off the foreskins of two-hundred Philistines to win the King's daughter.

## **OUR VIEW OF WAR BECAME DISTORTED BECAUSE OF THE GALUT**

How can it be that these heroes of holiness are outstanding warriors, whose actions seem often barbaric? In drawing our attention to this seeming contradiction, Rabbi Kook is not only forcing us to reflect on our forefathers, he is forcing us to reflect on ourselves. Abraham and Moshe and David attained a paragon of Kedusha which every Jew longs to emulate. Our Sages tell us that all of the enemies that King David killed were considered holy Korbanot by Hashem, like sacrifices brought to the altar. If so, the contradiction we face when we remember their achievements in war is a misunderstanding on our part alone. And indeed, during nearly two-thousand years of Galut, our understanding of ourselves and our conception of Kedusha became severely distorted. Instead of being strong and proud lions of Judah, we became victims. Without our own land, we became scattered and oppressed. Without our own nationhood, we were stripped of our backbone and valor. Like in the past, the Torah student studied all day in the Beit Midrash, but in the Exile, when Jewish lives were threatened, he no longer had the recourse of arming himself for battle. Jews could be rabbis, doctors, lawyers, bankers, merchants, or artists, but soldiering and rifles were the domain of the goyim. Without our own land to fight for, and our own borders to defend, the Torah lost its earthly, national foundation. Judaism was reduced to being a spiritual message, restricted to study, individual mitzvot, and prayer.

## **THOSE OF OUR ANCESTORS WHO FOUGHT WARS DID IT FOR KIDDUSH HASHEM**

Rabbi Kook explains that the striking difference between the concept of Kedusha which evolved in the Exile, and the heroic portraits we find in the Bible, lies in our misunderstanding of war, and of the holy valor for G-d which battle instills in our hearts. The heroes of the past achieved their great stature, in a large measure through war, in defending the life of the

nation, and defending the honor of G-d. Not out of aggression, nor imperialism did they fight, but to uproot evil and champion the Name of Hashem. It is this motivation which makes them so unique and worthy of emulation. When seen in this light, the wars which they fought were not callous, uncouth endeavors, but a religious duty of supreme holy valor.

When it came time to fight the battles of G-d, to establish G-d's truth in the world, our forefathers were ready. They were completely whole with the mitzvah. Without hesitation, they rose to battle, often closing their yeshivot and taking their students with them. They went forth to perform their holy mission and to slaughter as many of the enemy as they could.

### **LIKE MOSHE, EVERYBODY MUST WAGE WAR AGAINST HASHEM'S ENEMIES**

An example of wholeness in G-d's service can be learned from Israel's most outstanding rabbi, Moshe Rabbenu. G-d commanded him to take revenge against the nation of Midian before he died. Our Sages teach that Moshe could have lived longer by postponing this final mission, but instead, he rushed forward to fulfill Hashem's will. Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook would often remind his students that there is no Halachic exemption from the obligatory war of conquering the Land of Israel. When the fight is raging, every Jew must play his part in the battle. In this regard, the mitzvah of war is no different from Tefillin or prayer. It must be performed with utter wholeness, with concentrated intention, and unwavering faith

The Rambam writes as follows: (Rambam, Laws of Kings and Their Wars, 7:15) "A man should not think at the time of war of his wife, nor of his children, nor of his possessions, but he must free his heart of everything and set himself to the battle. And more - he should think that the entire existence of Israel depends on him. And if he is afraid and turns back, it is as if he spilled the blood of his comrades. And regarding this, it is written: 'Not to melt his brother's heart like his heart'... For everyone who fights with all of his heart, and with the intention to sanctify the Name of Hashem, is promised that he will not be harmed... and he will merit the life of the World To Come." (Rambam, Laws of Kings and Their Wars, 7:15)

The Sefer HaChinuch ( Precept 529. 40) explains the commandment not to be afraid in war in the following language: "Not to be afraid or terrified in

war - this prohibits us from being terrified or frightened by our enemies in wartime, or to flee from them. Rather, we are obligated to overcome them, to strengthen ourselves and face them, and on this it is said, 'Do not be terrified because of them.' The foundations of the precept are that every man in Israel put his trust in Hashem, and not to be frightened for himself in a situation where he can bring honor to Hashem, Blessed Be He, and His nation."

## **THE SPIES INSTILLED FEAR UPON THE WHOLE NATION**

Tragically, we have not always succeeded in keeping this mitzvah. The greatest failure occurred with the Spies who were sent into Eretz Israel to scout out a strategy for conquering the Land. Their fear upon encountering the giants in Hevron, and the fear which their evil report instilled in the nation, was a catastrophe which caused the death of their whole generation.

Their crisis of faith still haunts us today: "And they spread an evil report of the Land which they had spied out for the Children of Israel, saying, The Land through which we have gone to spy it out is a land that eats up its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature... and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. And all of the congregation lifted up their voice and cried; and the people wept that night." (Numbers, 13:32 - 14:1)

BECAUSE THE JEWISH PEOPLE WEPT FOR NO REASON THAT NIGHT, G-D GAVE THEM A REASON TO WEEP ON THAT VERY SAME NIGHT THROUGHOUT ALL OF THE EXILE. THAT NIGHT, OUR RABBIS TELL US, WAS THE NINTH OF AV, THE DAY ON WHICH BOTH THE FIRST AND SECOND TEMPLES WERE DESTROYED.

Only Joshua and Caleb displayed the great faith in G-d which the mission demanded, saying: "The Land which we pass through to spy it out is an exceedingly good land. If Hashem delight in us, then He will bring us into this Land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only rebel not against Hashem, nor fear the people of the Land, for they are bread for us, their defense is departed from them, and Hashem is with us - fear them not."

Because of their faithfulness to G-d and their valor, Joshua and Caleb were privileged to enter the Land, whereas all of the other men of their generation died during the forty-year punishment in the wilderness.

## **HE WHO LONGS FOR ERTEZ ISRAEL IS CONSIDERED AS IF HE LIVED THERE**

We mentioned how the ordinary soldier, Adino HaEtni, in striving to be like King David, came to resemble him. The longing for something brings it closer. Similarly, Rabbi Kook teaches in a subsequent essay that someone who yearns for Eretz Israel, even though he or she is outside of the Land, can share in the Land's special gifts. The yearning forms a bridge, and the person becomes like an Israeli born in the Land. So too in our longing for the great souls of our past. Our identification with them, and our desire to emulate them, awakens our own inner potential. Their holy valor becomes an active part of our lives.

The yearning for the national valor we lack in Galut and the longing for the physical and moral bravery which filled the souls of our heroes, completes us as Jews, strengthening us and refining our spiritual powers. Rabbi Kook is certain that we will rebuild our nation, return to our homeland, and vanquish our enemies in a just and moral war. Through our yearning for our champions of old, our spiritual powers are awakened, and our holy valor is reborn

## **SUMMARY**

1. When we glance back at our foundations, we discover that our forefathers were heroes of Torah and champions of war.
2. Our downtrodden state and helplessness in Galut distorted our conception of holiness, and stripped us of our earthy, physical valor.
3. A Judaism which makes no claim to a territorial homeland, like the Judaism of Galut, does not need a military aspect. However, a nation which is commanded to conquer, settle, and rule over a specific land in order to live its true Torah life is faced with the likelihood of war.
4. Today, as in the days of Joshua, Samsom, King David, and the Maccabees, enemies surround us and make war a part of the mitzvah of living in Israel.
5. Israel's wars are the wars of G-d, and Israel's army is the army of G-d on earth.

6 Two strengths are called for in wartime. Strength for the physical battle, and strength to battle the ugly emotions and passions incited by war.

7. The great souls of Israel were complete in their spiritual building - mighty in Torah, mighty in holiness, and mighty in physical courage in their service of Hashem.

8. The yearning for the heroes of our past, and the desire to emulate them, makes their holy valor a part of our lives. Our identification with them, and our desire to emulate them, awakens our own former potential...

## **THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF CAUSED THE JEWS TO CONQUER THE LAND THROUGH WAR**

"If not for the sin of the golden calf, the nations which dwelt in the Land of Israel would have made peace with Israel and surrendered to them, for the Name of G-d which would have been called on Israel would have awakened within them the awe of (Divine) exaltation, and no form of war would have been waged. Israel's influence on them would have taken peaceful paths as in the Messianic era. Only, due to sin, the process was postponed for thousands of years."

War is not the Jewish ideal. From the heights of Sinai, the nation of Israel should have marched directly to Redemption in Israel, bringing the Kingship of G-d and universal peace to the world. Crowned by the light of the Torah, they should have journeyed immediately on to Yerushalaim without meeting the slightest resistance on the way. But the sin of the golden calf shattered the harmony between mankind and G-d which had been established at Sinai. Instead of peace came war.

Thus the utopia which mankind had lost with its expulsion from Eden was to be further postponed by thousands of years. With Adam's sin in the Garden, the paradisiacal symbiosis between mankind and the world came to a tragic end. Both man and the world were exiled from G-d. The task of reuniting them fell to the nation of Israel. We were to take Adam's place, on a national level, to lead the world back to G-d. The miracles of the Exodus from Egypt, and the giving of the Torah, brought the fear and knowledge of G-d back to the world. Israel's honor as G-d's chosen nation was magnified in the eyes of the nations. But, when a portion of the people (The Erev Rav) worshipped in front of the idol they made, the nation fell from grace. Instead of entering the Land of Israel in peace, crowned with the glory of G-

d, the Israeli nation was now compelled to fight. The goal of universal peace, when nations will not learn the art of war anymore, and when the lion will lie down with the lamb remained a dream for the Messianic future.

## **THE NATION FLOURISHES IN ERETZ ISRAEL**

What distinguishes us from other nations? In Galut, where we are downtrodden and disgraced, forced to adopt foreign manners and ways, our inner qualities are hidden. But now, as the winter of the Exile passes the lifeless branches of the nation return to life, and a national consciousness begins to flower and bear fruit.

In the darkness of the terrifying war, in the midst of pogroms, beatings, exile, and starvation, at a time when Yeshiva students barely have food, Rabbi Kook sees the Redemption of Am Israel. Behind the Zionist movement, behind Herzl, the Basel Congress, ideologies, speeches, personalities, and deeds, Rabbi Kook understands that the inner soul of Israel, its driving force of redemption, is pushing through. He sees Hashem's Will for His people taking expression. He sees prophecy coming to light. G-d has decided. The time has come for the people of Israel to return home. The time has come for Israel to rediscover herself as a nation. The passivity of past generations is giving way to a spirit of endeavor, building, and sacrifice. Great new souls are appearing on the stage of Jewish history. The life of the ghetto no longer satisfies. A generation arises demanding national rebirth.

It is important to place this vision of Redemption in its historical context. It is the time of the "Jewish problem." What is to be done with the miserable, downtrodden Jews? Many voices recommend assimilation as the ideal solution. If the Jews become goyim, the problem will go away. Others, at the First Zionist Congress at the turn of the century, decide to unite and form a Jewish political entity. This early desire for an independent Jewish State may still be far from the Torah ideal, but it is also a far cry from the assimilationists' dream. The Zionists want to build an independent Jewish nation, not to disappear.

## **EVEN THE SECULAR JEWS DESIRE TO RETURN TO THEIR LAND, HASHEM IS GUIDING THE WHOLE PROCESS**

Many of Rabbi Kook's contemporaries, and many critics of Israel today, failed to see what Rabbi Kook saw when they looked at the Zionist movement. They saw only its secular aspect. They looked only at its outer appearance and not deep into its core. They saw only the present, and not the stages which would come to expression in the future. Many Torah leaders demanded that the Redemption of Israel be completely holy from its conception. They wanted it to, appear miraculously - overnight. Their eyes only focused on' what Zionism lacked Rabbi Kook saw what it contained.

A vast human undertaking was beginning to unfold. For the first time in history, a scattered, exiled nation was on its way home. The transformation of a stateless people to a united nation is a project of overwhelming proportions. It demands a fierce inner strength, a new philosophy, new leaders, new talents, and the construction of the national format to contain the idea. The initial step came with the realization that the Jewish people could not live in the midst of gentile nations. Whether the place of our wandering was hostile or seemingly friendly, the result was the same - Jews and true Jewish identity were uprooted and lost. Now, after millennia, a nascent expression of Jewish nationality and independence commences to grow.

A Divine guidance is accompanying us back to Yerushalaim. Our national subconscious, Knesset Israel, is demanding full expression. The Zionist pioneers may have their own reasons for returning to Zion, but on the deepest of levels they are aligned with G-d's Will. The rebuilding of the nation is paving the way for Geula. The vehicle of Redemption, the national life of the Jewish people in Israel, is starting to take form. The participants in this drama may not be aware of the spiritual roots of this process! they may even deny it exists! but when the time for Redemption arrives, all of the nation and all of the world are enlisted in its service, whether they are conscious of their contribution or not.

The deterministic force behind all of history - the development and revelation of Knesset Israel - is speeding up and taking physical



expression in the Zionist movement. But Rabbi Kook is teaching us something more. This very force which is pushing Israel forward is forcing the development of all of the world.

### **THE JEWS YEARN FOR THEIR OWN KINGDOM IN ERETZ ISRAEL, THEY DON'T WANT THE GALUT ANYMORE**

"According to the magnitude of the yearning and attachment of a person to Eretz Israel, behold, his conceptualizations become clear from the foundation of the air of Eretz Israel which hovers over all who yearn to see her." (OROT, Eretz' Israel, Ch. 4) This keener wisdom comes not only to the settlers of Israel, but, in the words of the Gemara, to "All who yearn to see her." (Ketubot 75A). In their yearning for Israel, the Zionists are leading us to know who we are. First, we are discovering ourselves as a nation, and not merely as individual Jews. Instead of being Frenchmen, and Germans, and Russians of the Mosaic persuasion, we want our own national identity and homeland. Instead of seeing ourselves as being ever-beholden to the goyim, we demand our own statehood. We begin to see ourselves, not as the eternal victim of Galut, but as a proud, independent people. The "bilbul" of Babel - the confusion which arose from our life amongst the nations, influenced by their cultures, their languages, and impure ways, is giving way to a clearer wisdom. And the first sign of our new intelligence is understanding that we do not belong amongst the gentiles. (Torat Eretz Israel, Chapter 5, Pg. 116. Or HaChaim, Leviticus, 25:25)

A more encompassing perspective of Torah is also emerging, the Torah of Eretz Israel. Our Sages have emphasized the unsurpassed level of Torah studied in Eretz Israel, saying, "If you desire to see the Presence of the Shechina in this world, study Torah in Eretz Israel." (Midrash Tehillim 105)

### **THE GENTILE MURDERERS WILL SURELY PAY FOR THE JEWISH BLOOD THEY HAVE SPILLED**

The sin of the murderers is imbedded with stain, (Jeremiah, 2:22) the evil kings of the land, and all those who bring terror to the earth. 'The land will not be atoned for the blood which has been spilled upon it except through the blood of those who spilled it;' (Numbers, 35:33) and the atonement is sure to come - the total annulment of all of today's cultural machinations, with all of their lies and deceit, with all of their evil pollutions, and their

venomous poisons. The entire culture which praises itself with melodious lies must be erased from the world, and in its stead will be established the kingdom of the high holy ones (Daniel, 7:18. Zohar, Vayishlach, 170A)

The light of Israel will appear, to establish a world whose nations are possessed of a new spirit, nations who will no longer speak emptiness, and will no longer act contemptuously against G-d and against His Mashiach, against the light of the life of the world, and against the perfection and the belief embodied in the eternal covenant.

### **THE LIGHT AND THE KEDDUSHA OF ISRAEL WILL ANNUL THE DARKNESS IN THE WORLD**

Rabbi Kook tells us that our separation from the pollutions of Galut, and our return to our true national Israeli identity, is not a racist, anti-social gesture, but the very opposite. Our return to our true Divine calling brings joy and renewal and blessing to all of the world. The repentance of Israel leads to the repentance of all humankind. In the healing light of the Kingdom of Israel, all other nations, governments, political systems, religions, cultures, and cults cast off their garments of falsehood and aspire to truth. In the mirror of Israel's Torah, the nations of the world discover a new morality, an enlightened purpose for their talents, and a unified, peaceful goal. Heretical cultures and beliefs are exposed, corrected, and brought into harmony with the absolute ideals and guidelines of Torah.

WHEN THE DAY COMES FOR ISRAEL TO RADIATE ITS FULL POWER, THERE WILL BE NO ROOM FOR USURPERS WHO TRY TO PUSH THE JEWISH PEOPLE ASIDE. IN THE BLINDING LIGHT OF ISRAEL'S KEDUSHA, ALL IMITATORS WILL BE OF NO ACCOUNT WHATSOEVER. ALL OF THE MASQUERADERS WHO CLAIMED TO POSSESS A MONOPOLY ON TRUTH, WHETHER CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM, BUDDHISM, COMMUNISM, CAPITALISM, AND ALL OF THE REST, WILL BE EXPOSED AS EMPTY FLASKS. WHEN JUDAISM REACHES ITS HISTORICAL MATURITY WITH THE RETURN OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL, ITS HOLY CULTURE WILL DOMINATE THE ENTIRE WORLD PSYCHE, AS IT IS WRITTEN: "FOR THEN I WILL CONVERT THE PEOPLES TO A PURE LANGUAGE, THAT THEY MAY ALL CALL UPON THE NAME OF HASHEM, TO SERVE HIM WITH ONE CONSENT".

The reason why there can be no room for competing ideologies is because the Jews hold the true monopoly on the word of Hashem in the world. This is the Divine selection of Israel. The nation of Israel, and only the nation of Israel, was chosen by G-d to bear His truth and declare His Oneness. Just as there is only one G-d, there is only one way to serve Him, through the law which He gave to the Jewish people at Sinai. (Kuzari, 1:99-101) Everything else is fantasy, falsehood, and illusion. In the exalted light of the renewed Kingdom of Israel, the treachery of all other doctrines will be universally exposed. The Rambam writes: "When the Messianic King will truly arise and be successful and uplifted and exalted, they (the nations) will all immediately repent and realize that their ancestral heritage is falsehood, and that their prophets and ancestors caused them to err (Rambam, Laws of Kings and Their Wars, 11:4, uncensored edition)

The Tzaddikim of Israel, the Torah scholars like Rabbi Kook whose souls are in tune with the inner forces at work in the world. They understand that the wars of the world have a far deeper cause than a superficial glance reveals. They understand that all of the horrible bloodshed is but a frail, partial expression of an even greater cosmic suffering - the inexpressible cry of Israel and Torah ripped asunder from their source. Their bereavement is the mourning of the nation. Every Jew is to rise from his bed with them in the darkness of Exile, in the blackness of night, in a chorus of national mourning. This is to be a foundation of Jewish life in the Exile, emphasized in the very first section of law set down in the Shulchan Aruch - a Jew is to rise at midnight, at the hour when G-d roars out and weeps in the heavens over the destruction of the Temple, over the exile of His Shechina from the world, and over the exile of His children from Israel.

THE WEEPING OVER THE TEMPLE'S DESTRUCTION IS NOT ONLY FOR THE PHYSICAL WALLS WHICH FELL, BUT FOR THE LOSS OF THE NATIONAL LIGHT OF ISRAEL WHICH SHONE THERE IN ALL OF ITS SPLENDOR. THE SACRIFICES, THE SERVICE OF THE KOHANIM, THE SANHEDRIN, PROPHECY, AND KINGSHIP ARE ALL MANIFESTATIONS, INTERTWINED ONE WITH THE OTHER, OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE'S UNIQUE CONNECTION WITH HASHEM AND WITH THE ENTIRE WORLD IS PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS, CUT OFF FROM THE CHANNEL TO G-D.

Rabbi Kook writes in a letter (Letters of Rabbi Kook, Vol. 2, Letter 407): "Even though it is incumbent upon us to wage a strong battle against the dry nationalists, proponents of 'Jews denuded of Judaism' who were especially prevalent via the gymnasium academy here, nevertheless, on the other hand, it is incumbent upon us to be extremely careful not to break the thread of unity and brotherhood between the workers and the settlers in Eretz Israel, because we have been repeatedly warned what damage a civil war can do, especially at the beginning stages of our settling the Land while' we are still so few and weak in strength, and surrounded by enemies round about in every direction."

## **The Great Call**

The Rav issued this manifesto in 5667 (1907), when he served as the Rabbi of Jaffa and the settlements. Its message, however, is timeless.

To Eretz Israel, my friends, to Eretz Israel!

Let us proclaim this with one voice, with a great and incessant voice.

Come to Eretz Israel, dear brothers; come to Eretz Israel. Save your souls; save the souls of your [future] generations, the souls of our entire nation. Save [our people] from desolation and destruction, from decay and debasement, from, defilement and evil, from all the troubles and distress that they are likely to encounter in the lands of the nations, without exception or distinction.

"Come to Eretz Israel!" we shall exclaim, in an awesome and mighty voice, a thunderous and resounding cry that generates a storm and shakes heaven and earth, a voice that rends all chambers of the heart. Run for your lives and come to Eretz Israel. G-d's voice summons us; His hand is stretched out to us; His spirit in our hearts gathers us in, encourages us, and compels us all to cry out in a mighty and awesome voice: "Jewish brethren, beloved and precious kinsmen, come to Eretz Israel; gather together one by one. (Yeshayah 27:12) Do not tarry on account of arrangements and official matters; do not wait for impressive and illustrious certificates. Do what you can; flee and gather in Eretz Israel. Pave the way (Yeshayah 62:10) for our beloved and oppressed nation. Show it in deed that its path is already prepared and paved, that it has

nothing to ponder or investigate. Our nation does not have many paths [from which to chose]; it has only one path upon which it must go: only to Eretz Israel.”

The buds have appeared in the Land. (Shir HaShirim 2) Come, dear brothers, and see how the “rose of Yaakov” is beginning to blossom in the Holy Land. Come and see how Israel’s spirit blooms and reawakens — to life, to honor, and to strength. Beloved but wretched brethren, living in lands of darkness, are you aware of the great treasures of holiness and serenity, pleasure and tranquility, spiritual elevation, greatness of soul, sanctity of life, intellectual might, and emotional refinement that exist within the heart of every Jew that resides in Eretz Israel? Alas, dear brethren, can you fathom even a small fraction of the love [that exists] for the Desirable Land, the sacred love and eternal desire [for] the good Land and its pleasant tranquility?

Come to Eretz Israel and see the glory of the Desirable Land, the beauty of the Carmel and the Sharon, (Yeshayah 35:2) the splendor of its beautiful blue skies, the glory of its crisp, pure, and temperate air, which prevails even in the winter months. Come and delight in the Desirable Land; rejoice in the beautiful and delightful Land of the Living, whose air is a breath of life for our souls. How beautiful and pleasant she is!

Come to Eretz Israel; come and see, and your heart will rejoice and your bones will flourish like grass (Yeshayah 66:14). Come and see how our beloved and precious nation rejuvenates like an eagle, how it begins to stretch its aching bones, shattered during its bitter period of wandering and exile. Come and see how it accustoms itself to standing erect like a date palm...Come and feel how it invigorates its spirit by recalling its strength and glory, its eminence and splendor, every step of the way. Come and delight in memories that are better than good wine, memories that enrich the soul and broaden the mind, memories of kings and officers, warriors and prophets, memories of majesty and strength, greatness and glory. Come to Eretz Israel; here you will see the essence of it all; here you will know that you are living a worthy life, in the Land of the Living.

The time has come for Jewish revival in Eretz Israel. The necessity to return to the Land of our Forefathers will encompass all of the nation’s

circumstances, both material and spiritual, especially the latter...

Ever since we were exiled from our Land, the Torah followed the Jews into exile. It wandered from Babylon to France, to Spain, to Germany, to Poland, to Russia, and more. How happy we would be if we could say that it is returning to its original place, to Eretz Israel, together with the Jewish people, whose numbers continue to grow in the Holy Land. Now, who is so blind not to see the hand of G-d guiding us? And who does not feel obligated to work with G-d, [as our Sages say], “In the future, a Heavenly voice will thunder at the top of the mountains and say, ‘Whoever acted with G-d, let him come and receive his reward’ (VaYikra Rabbah 27:2)? Who can exempt himself from bringing additional blessing and swifter salvation [to the Jewish people], by arousing many hearts to return to the Holy Land — G-d’s heritage — to take possession of it and to settle it [by establishing] businesses and buildings, by purchasing land, [planting] orchards and fields, and [doing] anything else that is necessary for proper, orderly communal life?

WE HAVE A GREAT OBLIGATION TO AROUSE THE ANCIENT LOVE OF ZION THAT ETERNAL LOVE WHICH BURNS, AS IN DAYS PAST, WITH A SACRED FIRE, IN THE HEARTS OF OUR PEOPLE, WHEREVER THEY MAY BE. WE MUST FIGHT VIGOROUSLY AGAINST THE HATRED FOR OUR HOLY LAND THAT HAS BEGUN TO PENETRATE [THE HEARTS] OF INDIVIDUALS AMONG US. WE MUST DESTROY, WITH SPIRITUAL MIGHT AND THE DESIRABLE LAND’S ETERNAL SANCTITY, THE FILTH OF THE SPIES (MERAGLIM) THAT HAS BEGUN TO REAWAKEN SPECIFICALLY AT THIS TIME OF [DIVINE] FAVOR [FOR THE LAND]. “MERAGLISM” IS STRUGGLING [TO SURVIVE] WITH ITS REMAINING STRENGTH, BUT WE CAN SAY CONFIDENTLY, IN THE GLORIOUS NAME OF HASHEM, G-D OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO CHOSE THE DESIRABLE LAND, THAT THIS [STRUGGLE] IS SIMILAR TO A FLAME’S LAST EFFORT TO SOAR UPWARD BEFORE BEING UTTERLY EXTINGUISHED. THE STRENGTH OF OUR LOVE FOR THE HOLY LAND, THE LOVE OF ZION AND YERUSHALAIM, WILL RUN ITS COURSE AND ILLUMINATE ALL THE DWELLINGS OF YAAKOV, LIKE THE SUN IN ALL ITS MIGHT. WITH [GENTLE] HUMAN CORDS AND BONDS OF LOVE, (BASED ON HOSHEA 11:4) [THIS LOVE OF ZION] WILL DRAW ALL OF THE CHILDREN BACK TO THE DESIRABLE LAND, TO THE SOURCE OF THEIR LIVES.

## SELECTIONS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RAV AY KOOK ZTKL

G-d's word will endure forever ( Yeshayah 40:8). The holiness and fondness of the Desirable Land has not and will not change. All the bitter events — both material and spiritual — that have occurred in the Holy Land have not subdued it, even though — from a superficial perspective these events could have diminished our love and honor for the Land, distancing it from our hearts and causing us to loathe it, G-d forbid. All of the Land's desolation and destruction have succeeded only in increasing our love for it — a compassionate love for an unfortunate mother, in addition to the reverent love for a matron of royalty. And just as no physical destruction can diminish, our love for the Desirable Land, nor extinguish the holy and profound fire of love that burns within the soul of the entire nation, so too, no spiritual desolation — even if it is genuine, all the more so if it is imaginary — can weaken our faithful love for the splendid Land of the Living...

The critics on all sides, friends and foes alike, complain in vain about the concrete measures being taken to settle Jews in the Holy Land, saying that this is no longer a crucial [undertaking]. These bleary-eyed people do not see or feel the light; they do not recognize the glorious treasure of life that we possess, even now, in our desirable Land. They do not appreciate the powerful and luminous potential for growth that is hidden in its midst. They do not recognize the great influence that the small community dwelling in its Land, the Holy Land, [has on the entire nation]. They do not recognize [all of this] because they are unaccustomed to contemplating the essence [of a matter] or the outcome [of events]. They are only impressed by colorful pictures that catch the eye, by “legions of soldiers and loud cries.” (Sotah 42a).

But they cannot appreciate the beauty of life [resulting from] serene holiness, the inner peace, and the light shining with tranquility and a hidden confidence that rests in all its holiness upon the entire Assembly of Israel dwelling in the Holy Land.

OH BLIND ONES! WHO WILL GIVE YOU EYES TO SEE DEEP WITHIN [YOUR] HEARTS? WOE TO THOSE WHO DWELL IN LANDS OF DARKNESS! CAN YOU POSSIBLY IMAGINE OR GRASP THE GLORIOUS SANCTITY, THE ETERNAL JOY, THE ABUNDANCE OF DELIGHTFUL STREAMS THAT FLOW IN THE HEART OF A JEW WHO DWELLS IN THE

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**HOLY LAND? HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED THE TASTE OF THIS GARDEN OF EDEN? WOE, OPPRESSED AND WRETCHED BRETHREN! MY HEART, MY HEART GOES OUT TO YOU. MY INNARDS, MY INNARDS [GRIEVE] FOR YOU. HEED [MY WORDS]; LISTEN AND REJUVENATE YOUR SOULS. INSTEAD OF DEBILITATING GRIEF, APPARENT OR HIDDEN, AT THE SIGHT OF DESTRUCTION AND DESOLATION, FOREIGN UPHEAVALS, AND THE DEVASTATION OF ALL THAT IS GRAND AND HOLY; IN PLACE OF THIS MANTLE OF SORROW, A GLORIOUS LIGHT SHINES, A LIGHT THAT RESTORES AND COMFORTS THE SOUL, A LIGHT THAT GIVES STRENGTH AND PROVIDES HOPE. LIKE A MAN WHOSE MOTHER CONSOLES HIM, SO WILL I [G-D] CONSOLE YOU; AND YOU WILL BE CONSOLED IN YERUSHALAIM (YESHAYAH 66:13).**