

Profiles in Persecution – Rav Yisachar Shlomo Teichtal

The Eim HaBanim Semeicha



Kesubos 111a .1

לכדרי יוסי ברבי חנינא דאמר ג' שבועות הללו למה אחת שלא יעלו ישראל בחומה ואחת שהשביע הקדוש ברוך הוא את ישראל שלא ימרדו באומות העולם ואחת שהשביע הקדוש ברוך הוא את העובדי כוכבים שלא ישתעבדו בהן בישראל יותר מדאי

Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Hanina, who said: Why are these three oaths (Song of Songs 2:7, 3:5, 8:4) needed? One, so that the Jews should not ascend to Eretz Yisrael as a wall, but little by little. And another one, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, adjured the Jews that they should not rebel against the rule of the nations of the world. And the last one is that the Holy One, Blessed be He, adjured the nations of the world that they should not subjugate the Jews excessively.

2. Eim HaBanim Semiecha p. 33

I discovered a letter written by the author of the *Tanya*¹ to the Rebbe of Berditchev, informing him of his release from prison in Petersburg.²

I shall recount and declare that which is too great to tell. For HaShem has done wondrously in the land. Who am I, lowly of men, that HaShem has helped me glorify and sanctify His name... This was all HaShem's doing. He has arranged this by virtue of the merit of the Holy Land and its inhabitants. This is what stood by our side and will always assist in relieving us from the oppressor and delivering us from distress.³

I The Merit of Eretz Yisrael Protects Us

From his holy words I learned an entirely new concept, of which I was unaware until now and which I had not come across in any book. That is, when a Jew is in trouble, he can be saved through the merit of *Eretz Yisrael* and its inhabitants...

3. P.41 – Different Times call for Different Emphasis

I The Factors That Prompted the Writing of This Volume

Now that we have encountered unwanted days,³ my mind is preoccupied with the troubles of the generation. I am, therefore, unable to delve into ordinary halachic matters, as has been my practice since my youth, since such study requires clarity.⁴ Moreover,

1. Today's afflictions preclude ordinary Torah

the storms of exile which have assaulted us, have banished the yeshiva from my house of study. On the bitter day when the pogroms spread among the people and trampled all that was holy, yeshiva students were evicted from their study halls. I remained alone, isolated with my thoughts on the present-day destruction of the people and communities of Israel. Why has the Lord done this? What is the meaning of this terrible anger?⁶

Thus, I decided to examine the history of our people during its 2,000 years in the tumultuous pit of destruction and exile in the lands of the nations. I have never dealt with these types of questions. Since my youth I have always been implanted in the house of God, hidden and concealed in the four cubits of *halachah*. HaShem (may He be blessed) has graciously allowed me to learn, teach, and author works which have been well received and praised by the great scholars of the generation.⁷ I never took the time to concern myself with matters affecting the welfare of our holy nation, for this is a *mitzvah* that can be fulfilled by others. [I, therefore, felt] that one could apply the verse *All your desires cannot compare to it* [the Torah] (*Mishley* 3:15), and that one should not neglect Torah-study on its account.⁸ Now, however, amidst this great upheaval, it is impossible to concentrate on the discussions of Abaye and Rava, and complicated *halachot*. My students have been driven away from me, and I have no one with whom to discuss halachic matters.

Vayikra 26:42

וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב וְאֶף־אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲבְרָהָם
אֲזָכָר וְהָאֶרֶץ אֲזָכָר:

Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob; I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham; and I will remember the land.

4. p. 45 – Reason for Problems

II The Purpose of Our Afflictions is to Arouse Us to Return to Eretz Yisrael

Furthermore, the sole purpose of all the afflictions that smite us in our exile is to arouse us to return to our Holy Land. This can be inferred from the story of King David and the plague. During the plague, God sent him Gad the prophet. *And Gad came to David...and said to him, "Go up and establish an altar to the Lord"* (II *Shmuel* 24:18). The *Midrash* explains:

5. P. 49-50 – Need an Open Mind

accordance with the object's view as manifestly apparent.

Therefore, those who have a predisposition on this matter will not see the truth and will not concede to our words. All the evidence in the world will not affect them, for they are smitten with blindness, and their inner biases cause them to deny even things which are as clear as day. Who amongst us is greater than the spies? The Torah testifies that they were proper individuals.²⁶ Nonetheless, since they were influenced by their desire for authority,²⁷ they rejected the desirable Land and led others astray, causing this bitter exile (as *Chazal* explain).³¹ Yehoshua and Calev began to argue with them and attempted to prove the authenticity of Moshe and his Torah. They proclaimed, *Let us ascend at once* (*BeMidbar* 13:30). They even brought lengthy arguments and proofs to show that Israel would succeed [in entering the Land], as Rashi states. Nevertheless, they were unable to convince them [the spies], for the spies were prejudiced by hidden motives.

The same holds true in our times, even among rabbis, *rebbe's*, and *chassidim*. This one has a good rabbinical position; this one is an established *Admor*;³² and this one has a profitable business or factory, or a prestigious job which provides great satisfaction. They are afraid

that their status will decline if they go to *Eretz Yisrael*.³³ People of this sort are influenced by their deep-rooted, selfish motives to such an extent that they themselves do not realize that their prejudice speaks on their behalf.

In my responsa, *Mishneh Sachir*,³⁴ I cite our holy and godly mentor, R. Yeshayah Muskat of Praga, in a eulogy for the brilliant R. Meir Shapira, *av beit din* of Lublin. He says that most of the time a person fools himself and thinks that he acts for the sake of Heaven. In reality, though, he is controlled by his deep-rooted motives, and even he does not realize it... He proves this from the story of Avraham and Eliezer. *Divrei Chayim* (on Chanukah) states that a person sees only what he wants to see. Therefore, one who is prejudiced on a certain matter can no longer judge truthfully. This is why the Torah prohibits a judge from taking a bribe.³⁵

6. P. 469 – I've changed

I have heard that many people try to defame me because of a letter I wrote in *Tikkun Olam*,⁷⁶⁵ published by the holy Rebbe of Munkatch z"l. For in that letter I spoke out against *aliyah*, while now I advocate it. However, the preceding idea resolves this contradiction quite well. When I wrote that letter, it was a time of peace and tranquillity. We had not yet reached this state of mortal danger, and no lives were at stake. Now, however, times have changed. Therefore, the ruling has also changed, as the above-cited *Shelah* demonstrates.

Besides this, I already explained in the introduction⁷⁶⁶ that I had never delved deeply into this issue. Now, however, after examining this *halachah* in depth, I realize that I was mistaken. Therefore, I am emulating many of our Talmudic Sages who admitted their mistakes and said, "What I originally told you was mistaken."⁷⁶⁷ We also find that the *poskim* sometimes retract rulings that they made previously.

May HaShem bring us to His holy mountain speedily in our days.

8. P. 88 – Pleading with Non-religious

are due and valid.

Therefore, you [the pioneers] and all of us must realize that the rebuilding, the governing, and all aspects of life must be founded on the spirit of our holy Torah. Only then, we will succeed;⁴⁸ only then, we will have a strong claim to our inheritance. If, however, we stray from the path of the Torah (God forbid), our entire claim to *Eretz Yisrael* dissipates, leaving us with no rights to it whatsoever. When the Supporter withdraws, he who is being supported stumbles. We have seen with our own eyes all of the difficulties and complications that you and all of Israel have encountered in recent years, ever since you began rebuilding the Land. How many innocent souls have perished in our Holy Land at the hands of Arab zealots? All this occurred because our claim to our inheritance is imperfect, for it is not completely in accordance with the spirit of our holy Torah.

I do not suspect that you act in this manner deliberately. The only

10. P. 312 – Aliya will get more influence

I found the following in *Osef Michtavim*,³¹² a collection of letters from the Rebbe of Gur *shlita*:

This indeed is my opinion. The *mitzvah* of *Yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, which our holy Torah commands us, does not depend on a specific time, only on capabilities and opportunities.* Therefore, we must take advantage of today's opportunities and exert all of our strengths [for this *mitzvah*]. **The more Orthodox Jews that ascend to *Eretz Yisrael*, the greater their influence will be, and this will help preserve the holiness of the Land... In this way, Orthodox Judaism's influence will grow, and the settlement of the Holy Land will be founded on the spirit of our holy, written and oral Torah.**

* Undoubtedly, he wrote this in order to reject the Megillat Esther's opinion (cited above)³¹³ that this *mitzvah* is only in effect during the Messianic era, not during the period of exile. Our brilliant mentor, R. Yosef Sha'ul, also challenges the Megillat Esther's words and cites several proofs for the Ramban's opinion. He concludes, "Therefore, [the *halachah*] clearly follows the Ramban; and may HaShem grant us the merit to fulfill this *mitzvah*."³¹⁴ *Sefer Chareidim* states, "There

7. P. 82 – Dealing with the non-religious

III WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND REPROOF TO THE PIONEER BUILDERS OF ERETZ YISRAEL

After all I have said above, I will now address the builders of our Holy Land (may HaShem give them life, and may He help them succeed). It is as clear as day that the Holy One Blessed be He desires your deeds and your labor. You have built cities, and you have made flourishing gardens from fallow fields. This is the result of great toil and effort, and in many cases it involved genuine self-sacrifice. You have transformed swamps containing all sorts of disease into flourishing, prime soil. I have cited in this volume many sources which prove that the Holy One Blessed be He is pleased with your actions. I would like to cite here one additional proof which is impeccable and irrefutable.

The Talmud states, "R. Yochanan says, 'Why did Omri deserve kingship? Because he added on a city to the Land of Israel'" (*Sanhedrin* 102b). [The *Midrash* adds]:

Tana DeVei Eliyahu: Once, I, [Eliyahu HaNavi], was sitting in a study hall. I asked, "My masters, why is it that all other kings were not succeeded by their sons, while Omri had three of his descendants inherit his throne?" They replied, "We do not know." I said to them, "My masters, it is because he added a great city to the Land of Israel. Omri thought, just as Jerusalem is [the capital] for the kings of Judah, so will Shomron be [the capital] for the kings of Israel." (*Yalkut Shimoni* 2:207)

9. p. 97 – Reason for Suffering

This also helps explain the afflictions that will befall us before *Mashiach* arrives. It is well known that this last redemption will be eternal; there will be no exile or subjugation following it. Furthermore, the Holy One Blessed be He does not want even a single Jewish soul to be lost among the nations, as it is written, *And you will be gathered up one by one* (*Yeshayah* 27:12), *So that none of us be banished* (*II Shmuel* 14:14). Now, if the redemption would occur while we live prosperously and tranquilly among the nations, there would be many, many of our Jewish brethren who would not want to leave. What are they lacking here in exile? They are wealthy and prominent officers among the nations, like the Rothschilds and the Jewish Barons, who attained distinction and honor, rising to positions of authority and prestige. Why should they care about *Mashiach* and *Eretz Yisrael*? They have a *mashiach* and a Jerusalem right here. They do not need a better *Mashiach* than the one they have.

This indeed is what the wealthy Jews of Ezra's time did when they dwelt peacefully in Babylonia. Rashi writes that the proper people who dwelt peacefully and comfortably in exile did not ascend to *Eretz Yisrael* with Ezra. Only the poor and downtrodden went with him.¹⁵

11. P. 525 The Name Eim HaBanim Semeicha

INTRODUCTION.

I thank HaShem with all my heart that he granted me the privilege to complete this work successfully. So may He grant me the privilege to publish all of my works, to glorify His blessed name. May our eyes behold Jerusalem rebuilt like the high heavens.²⁰ May His eternal kingdom be exalted. Amen. Amen.

At this time, at the completion of the printing, I will make it known that the incident mentioned at the end of the second introduction happened to me! Blessed is HaShem Who performed this wonderful kindness for me. May He never abandon or forsake me. And, may I behold Israel's solace and salvation, speedily in our days. Amen.