

## It shall be when Hashem, your G-d, brings you to the Land to which you come to possess it, then you shall deliver the blessing on Har Gerizim and the curse on Har Eival. (11:29)

As the nation prepared to enter the Land, Hashem instructed them to initiate a new covenant upon entering *Eretz Yisrael*. One does not enter Eretz Yisrael unless he first prepares himself with the appropriate sense of submission born of awe. *Kabbolas haTorah*, receiving the Torah forty years earlier, carried them along their journey through the wilderness. A new generation was preparing to enter the Land. In the Plains of Moav this new generation also received an induction into *kabbolas ol Malchus Shomayim*, accepting upon themselves the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom. The covenant into which the nation was now entering was made in *Eretz Yisrael*, a land which demands humility on the part of the newcomer. As *Eretz Yisrael* is a holy land which Hashem has bequeathed to *Am Yisrael*, the people were to view the Land through eyes of deference and lowliness, because this Land is unlike any other, which is defined by its geographical locus. *Eretz Yisrael* is the parcel of land that Hashem designated to Avraham *Avinu*, the Patriarch, as the homeland for his descendants. It is the land in which the fulfillment of the Torah's *mitzvos* achieves its apex.

Interestingly, throughout *Sefer Devarim*, whenever living in *Eretz Yisrael* is underscored and reiterated, the word *yerushah*, inheritance (in various forms and conjugations), is used to refer to our relationship with the Land. This term presents an inconsistency with regards to *Shevet Levi*. The Torah writes: "You shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d – and the *Levi* who is in your cities, for he has no share and inheritance with you" (Ibid. 12:12). *Shevet Levi* did not inherit a portion in *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem is their portion. This in and of itself is a difficult concept to understand. One would think that he who devotes his life to spiritual service, to serving in the *Bais HaMikdash* as representatives of the nation, would, in fact, receive a portion in the Land. In his commentary to *Devarim* 10:9, *Rashi* explains that *Shevet Levi* was distinguished from the other tribes to serve in the *Bais HaMikdash*, thus not leaving them sufficient time to plow and seed, to fulfill the agricultural responsibilities that are part and parcel of land ownership. *Shevet Levi* received their portion from the people (without the necessary work involved in obtaining it). They received the finished product, so that they would be free to devote themselves fully to serving Hashem in the *Bais HaMikdash*. In conclusion, by right, *Shevet Levi* should have received a portion in the Land. They did not, due to their obligation to serve in the spiritual sphere, a service which does not allow for their involvement in the agricultural upkeep of the Land.

*Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl*, cites *Rashi's* comment to the initial *pasuk* of the Torah, "In the beginning of G-d's creating the heaven and the earth." The Torah should have commenced its narrative with the first *mitzvah* that *Klal Yisrael* was enjoined prior to leaving Egypt. Why did it start with *Bereishis*? *Koach Maasav Higeed l'Amo, lasseis lahem nachalas goyim*; "The strength of His works He declared to His nation, to give them the heritage of the peoples" (*Tehillim* 11:6). When the nations of the world confront us with the accusation that we are thieves who conquered/stole

the land of *Eretz Yisrael*, which was inhabited by the seven pagan nations, we will contest that Hashem created the world, so that He had the right to give the land to whomever He pleased. What validity does such an accusation have? Nations are constantly at war, with one conquering the other, and to the victor go the spoils. Why would we need to respond to world opinion when, in fact, it is a commonplace occurrence that one nation conquers another? What was one nation's land yesterday is another nation's land today. Why pay even lip service to such a ludicrous accusation?

*Rav Heyman* explains that it is not the anti-Semitic diatribe of the nations of the world that is relevant, but rather, the accusations the angels that represent the gentile nations level in the Heavenly sphere. They would question our right to *Eretz Yisrael* based on our spiritual designation as a *Mamleches kohanim v'goi kadosh*, Kingdom of Priests and a holy nation. As such, we are all *Kohanim/Leviim* (or should be) and, by right, our designated "vocation" does not permit us to devote our time to the land. Proof positive was apparent during the nation's forty-year trek in the wilderness, during which Hashem fully sustained millions of men, women and children. The Jewish People might require a place to live, but why would they warrant a particular land assigned specifically to them?

This, explains *Rav Heyman*, is exactly what the *sarei ha'umos*, angels of the nations, would have claimed had the Torah not opened with *Bereishis bara Elokim*. Hashem created the world. It is His, and He gave it to whom He designated. After twenty generations of "pain" resulting from the negative, immoral behavior which Adam's and Noach's descendants perpetuated, Hashem selected Avraham *Avinu* to be His standard bearer in the world. He would initiate, teach and guide his descendants on the proper course of life – a life committed to Hashem and His precepts. As a result, Hashem promised him *Eretz Yisrael*, for only there could his descendants fulfill the Torah in its entirety. Veritably, the nation was in the wilderness for forty years, during which Hashem completely sustained them – no work; no plowing, harvesting or any form of agricultural endeavoring. This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience whose goal was to inculcate the nation with faith and trust in Hashem in preparation for their entrance into the Land and a life of material and physical laboring, under the aegis of, and commitment to, the Torah. Their wilderness experience was their *hachsharah*, training, for life in *Eretz Yisrael* which would, for all intents and purposes, appear to be *teva*, natural, but, in fact, could not be farther from the truth.

In conclusion, posits *Rav Heyman*, the purpose of inhabiting the Holy Land is to sanctify it with our *mitzvah* performance and for it to consecrate us through its holy essence. If we view *Eretz Yisrael* as our birthright and homeland, however, and that becomes the sole reason for our occupying it, we become no different than the nations of the world, who contend: "Why did you not select an uninhabited land to serve your nationalistic purposes?"