



Seeing Spiritual

We have in our *parashah* the sweeping promise that has resonated throughout our generations ever since with eternal messages for each of us. “*Raise your eyes and from the place where you are now [standing] look to the north to the south to the east and to the west. For all the land that you see, I will give to you and your offspring forever... Rise, walk the land, through its length and breadth, for I will give it [all] to you.*” (*Bereisheet 13:14-17*) Hashem directs Avraham Avinu to do two things, to see the land and to traverse its expanse. Why are both charges necessary and how do they apply to us today?

The *Kli Yakar* offers a stunning interpretation of these verses. He notes that there are two aspects of the land, the spiritual and the physical. As the place of the earthly Temple mirrors the heavenly Temple, the *Kli Yakar* explains that it is the repository of spirituality, connecting us with Hashem forever. Further, when one looks at this holy place, he is immediately infused with a spirit of holiness and purity. Not only does he perceive the Divine, but he is seen by Hashem, enveloped in a halo of grace and transcendence. This experience is not limited to the time that our holy Temple

stood, rather, it exists in every generation until the end of time. The spiritual legacy given to Avraham and his descendants is unconditional, acquired by way of his **seeing** the land. How fortunate we are that we can take advantage of this spiritual well-spring and gain *chizuk* in difficult times, feel strengthened and bolstered by the closeness to Hashem.

The promise of the physical land, continues the *Kli Yakar*, was actualized by way of Avraham Avinu journeying through the land. Whereas the spiritual inheritance was given, “*lecha...u’lezar-acha ad olam,*” to Avraham and his offspring forever, their possession of the physical land depended upon adhering to Torah and mitzvot.

In his *sefer Menachem Tzion*, Rav Zaks emphasizes the importance of **looking** at Eretz Yisrael with positivity and optimism. One must focus on the beauty of the land, on its good aspects and qualities. The *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Eichah* recounts how Yaakov Avinu asked Hashem “where are my children?” to which Hashem responded, “an *ayin ra’ah* took control of them and they were exiled from the land.” Their inability to focus on all the good in our land led to the exile and most tragically, extends the exile until today.

Rav Zaks tells a story about one of the Gerrer Rebbes who visited Israel shortly before WWII. In one of his letters, he makes reference to the “holy city of Tel Aviv.” At the time, Tel Aviv had no yeshivot or any

other definitive marks of holiness. The Rebbe, however, explained that it was a city filled with Jews, no churches or mosques, and Sunday was a regular weekday. Focusing on the positive elements, he found the holiness within.

At this time, when so many lives are at the forefront as they proudly protect our land, it is imperative that we show Hashem how much we cherish it, how we choose to focus on the positive and draw from its spiritual resources. Thus, may all Jews throughout the world merit to make Eretz Yisrael their permanent home, sooner than we can ever imagine. ■



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