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נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Devarim

Our Existence in Eretz Yisrael Depends on Our Observance of Torah and Mitzvot

Devarim (1:1): "These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Israel, on the other side of the Jordan. (2:2) You all approached me and said, "Let us send men ahead of us and let them spy out the Land and bring word back to us the road on which we should ascend and the cities to which we should come. (2:4, 5) You shall command the people saying, "You are passing through the boundary of your brothers, the children of Esav, who dwell in Seir; they will fear you, but you should be very careful. You shall not provoke them, for I shall not give you of their land even the right to set foot, for as an inheritance to the children of Esav I have given Mount Seir. (2:9) "Hashem said to me: You shall not distress Moav and you shall not provoke war with them, for I shall not give you an inheritance from their land, for to the children of Lot I have given it as an inheritance. (2:18,19) This day you shall cross the border of Moav ... and you shall approach opposite the children of Ammon; you shall not distress them and you shall not provoke them ... for the children of Lot I have given it as an inheritance.

Questions:

1. What is the connection between the end of *Sefer Bamidbar* and the beginning of *Sefer Devarim*?
2. The *Shlah Hakadosh* writes that all the topics of the *parasha* are connected and interwoven. What is the connection between all the subjects in this week's *parasha* – Moshe *Rabbeinu's* rebuke, the lengthy reminder of the sin of the spies, the Jewish people's future arrival into *Eretz Yisrael*, the warning to avoid the borders of Eisav, Moav and Ammon, and, finally, a recap of their successful war with Sichon and Og?
3. What is the connection between the *haftara* and the *parasha*?

Our current situation:

We are witness to a war being fought in Eretz Yisrael against all things holy - *shemirat Shabbos*, proper *geyrut* (conversion), the sanctity of the *Kotel*, etc ... Many politicians promote this agenda in the name of freedom and democracy, when all they really care about is finding favor in the eyes of the public and getting more votes. I was greatly pained, that the new labor leader, Avi Gabbay, whose promotion to the head of his party defied all logic, immediately joined those who promote public desecration of *Shabbat*. He is a Moroccan whose grandparents were righteous people. When they came to *Eretz Yisrael* they held on to the glorious heritage of Moroccan Jewry even though this was very difficult. They never imagined that their offspring would vote to allow public transportation to run on *Shabbat*! How could this happen? It must be that Avi Gabbay's power has gone to his head, and he has forgotten that Hashem is the one who, against all logic, elevated him to his current position. He should thank Hashem and pray that Hashem helps him succeed. Even Presidents Obama and Trump, despite being non-Jews, thanked Hashem at the *Kotel* for being elected and prayed to Him to have successful terms. I pray to Hashem that He opens the heart of Avi Gabbay and help him realize his mistake, so that he can return to his true roots; for only by keeping the Torah can he hope to succeed in his new role, as we will explain.

The words of the Zohar and Ramban on the greatness of Eretz Yisrael and why it was given to the Jewish people:

The *Zohar* (page 108b) says that *Eretz Yisrael* has no minister and no angel appointed to watch over it - Hashem Himself oversees it. Therefore, the Jewish nation which also has no angel or minister appointed to watch over it, is an appropriate match for the land which has no angel or minister appointed over it. The Ramban as well writes in his comments on the Rambam's *Sefer Hamitzvot* about the extraordinary connection between Hashem, *Eretz Yisrael*, and the Jewish people. He says that the mitzva of residing in *Eretz Yisrael* is praised exceedingly by our



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Sages. They even say that anyone who lives outside of *Eretz Yisrael* is as if he has served foreign gods. And besides their words of the greatness of living in *Eretz Yisrael*, it is also a positive commandment, as the Torah says, "You should conquer the land and dwell there." Therefore, he says, it is a positive commandment for everybody throughout the generations, even in the time of the exile, to live in *Eretz Yisrael*. In his *drasha* for *Rosh Hashana*, the Ramban adds that those who merit dwelling in front of Hashem in His land, are considered as if they see the face of the King. If they are careful in guarding His honor while dwelling in the land, it is good for them and they are praiseworthy. However, if they rebel against Him, there is no greater form of rebellion than to fight the King in His own palace and anger Him in front of His face. What does Hashem then do to them? He throws them out of the palace and exiles them throughout the world. This is as it states in *Hoshea* (9), "And I said that they will not dwell in the land of Hashem." The Ramban asks what the Navi means when he says "the land of Hashem?" Isn't the whole world the land of Hashem - He created it and it's all His! The idea, however, is as follows: Hashem created the heavens and the earth and gave the power to the heavens to rule over the earth. Hashem gave each nation and each land a certain *mazal* (constellation) to oversee it, as it's known from the books on astrology. This is what the Torah means, "and Hashem apportioned to them...", i.e., that He apportioned to each nation a certain constellation in the heavens. On top of this constellation, Hashem also placed an angel to guard each nation and each land [Hashem controls the constellations and angels but they serve as intermediaries]. But *Eretz Yisrael* is different - it is only Hashem's. He gave it no angel to guide and rule it. He bequeathed *Eretz Yisrael* to his special nation, the offspring of his beloved *Avot* - Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. This is what the Torah means, "And they will be for me a nation and I will be for them a G-d," that only Hashem rules them with absolutely no intermediary. The holy nation lives in the holy land that is distinguished by the many mitzvot done there for the sake of Hashem. Therefore, Hashem tells them that they should guard all His commandments and laws so that the land does not vomit them out.

Why Hashem gave Eretz Yisrael to the Jewish People

This is why Hashem gave *Eretz Yisrael* to the Jewish people. Since they were the only nation that accepted the Torah, they are the only nation that can do the mitzvot and have a connection to the *kedusha* (holiness) of the land. As no other nation is fit for *Eretz Yisrael*, Hashem also commanded us to conquer all of *Eretz Yisrael* and not leave a foothold for any other nation. Hashem warned us that negligence in this matter would cause the Jewish people great suffering, which we can personally attest to in our own times. The Torah states (*Bamidbar* 33:52-55), "You shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you ... You shall possess the land and you shall settle in it, for to you have I given the land, to possess it ... But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land before you, those of them whom you leave shall be pins in your eyes and a surrounding barrier in your sides. They will harass you upon the Land in which you dwell."

Our Continued Existence in Eretz Yisrael Depends on Torah and mitzvot

Hashem gave *Eretz Yisrael* to the Jewish people so that they could do the mitzvot; he did not give it to them so that they would be politically independent and have their own country. Therefore, if we do not keep the Torah and mitzvot, we have no right to continue living in *Eretz Yisrael*, and then our claim to *Eretz Yisrael* is no better than that of any other nation. The Torah makes this quite clear. First, in *Parashat Acharei Mot* (*Vayikra* 18:25-28) when it describes how the Canaanites were thrown out of *Eretz Yisrael* as a result of their immoral behavior, it states, "The land became contaminated ... and the land disgorged its inhabitants. But you shall safeguard My decrees and My judgments, and not commit any of these abominations ... For the inhabitants of the land who are before you committed all of these abominations, and the land became contaminated. Let not the land disgorge you for having contaminated it, as it disgorged the nation that was before you." The Torah repeats the message again in *Parashat Behar* (25:18,19), "You shall perform My decrees, and observe My ordinances and perform them; then you shall dwell securely on the land. The land will give its fruit and you will eat your fill; you will dwell securely upon it." This point is so crucial that the Torah speaks about it yet again in *Parashat*



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Bechukotai (26:3-6), "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them; then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit ... and you will dwell securely in your land." Now we can understand the connection between the points of the *parasha*. They are all coming to stress this very point: Moshe Rabbeinu rebuked the Jewish people before they entered *Eretz Yisrael*. He elaborated on the sin of the spies, as this sin prevented the Jewish people from meriting to enter *Eretz Yisrael* right away. He added in his rebuke that they would only be able to live in *Eretz Yisrael* if they kept the Torah and mitzvot. Moshe also mentioned the lands that were given to the non-Jews, to stress that even the inheritance of these non-Jews was based on certain mitzvot that these non-Jews did. They were forbidden to enter Seir, the land of Eisav, because of Eisav's exemplary behavior in honoring his father (as stated in *Targum Yonatan*). Moav and Ammon were granted their lands due to Lot's kindness to Avraham (as *Targum Yonatan* says there). Moshe contrasted this to the lands of Sichon and Og, who had no such merits and therefore had their lands taken away from them. With this, we have explained the connection between all the topics of the *parasha* - they are all coming to reinforce the idea that our existence in *Eretz Yisrael* is based on the strength of our Torah and mitzvot.

The Haftara's Connection

Now we can understand the connection between the *parasha* and the *haftara*. In the *haftara* we read about Yeshayahu's vision 1-9, 19-20), "The vision of Yeshayahu son of Amotz, which he saw concerning Yehudah and Yerushalayim ... The heavens should listen and the earth should give ear, for Hashem has spoken, 'Children have I raised and exalted, but they have rebelled against Me. An ox knows his owner, and a donkey his master's trough but Yisrael does not know, My people do not comprehend ... A sinful nation, a people weighed down by sin, evil offspring, destructive children! They have forsaken Hashem ... From the sole of the foot to the head, nothing in him is whole ... Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; as for your land - strangers consume it in your presence ... If you are willing and obey, you will eat the goodness of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword ...' The intent of the Navi is the intent of Moshe Rabbeinu in this week's *parasha*: We must realize that everything is dependent on our keeping the Torah and fulfilling the mitzvot. If we keep the Torah, we will eat the bounty of the land; and if we don't, Heaven forbid, the opposite will occur.

A True Story

Harav Shmuel Eliyahu, the Rav of Tzfat, told me that the Moslem leader of the north wanted to meet him. Rav Shmuel asked him that if the Moslems believe in the Torah, why do they fight the Jews over *Eretz Yisrael*? The Torah states very clearly that *Eretz Yisrael* was given to the Jews. How then, can the G-d fearing Moslems defy the clear will of G-d? He replied that the Rav was correct – if the Jews would keep what it says in the Torah, then *Eretz Yisrael* would belong to the Jews and no Moslem would oppose them. However, since the Jews in *Eretz Yisrael* do not keep the Torah, they do not deserve *Eretz Yisrael*, and therefore the Moslems are justified in trying to take *Eretz Yisrael* for themselves. Unbelievable! To our great sorrow, the Moslems understand something that many of our Jewish brothers do not.

Words of Mussar

We learn from our Torah that *Eretz Yisrael* is not just a simple piece of territory, but the holiest place in the world. Its holiness comes from Hashem and His Torah and therefore *Eretz Yisrael* can only belong to the Jewish people, as they are the only nation who observes the Torah. Although to our great sorrow, the *Beit Hamikdash* has been destroyed, nevertheless, Hashem's Presence has not left the land. To rebuild the *Beit Hamikdash* and bring out the full holiness of the land, we must keep the Torah to the best of our abilities. This is also the way, and the only way, that we can be assured of peace and security. This is



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particularly important to keep in mind during these days, when the Jewish Nation mourns the destruction of Yerushalayim and the *Beit Hamikdash*. May it be Hashem's Will that we merit seeing the coming of the redeemer and the building of the *Beit Hamikdash* speedily in our days. Amen

Shabbat Shalom

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Rav Mordechai Malka