

*NCSY Torah*  
— *on One Foot Series*

# ERETZ YISRAEL

ארץ זבת חלב ודבש



# ISRAEL

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## MERITS OF LIVING IN ERETZ YISRAEL

A person who lives in Eretz Yisrael merits a share in the World to Come. (Pesachim 113a)

One who lives in Eretz Yisrael is considered without sin, as it says (Isaiah 33:24),

"The people who live there will be forgiven their sins." (Kesubos 111a)



It's better to live in a desert in Eretz Yisrael than in a palace someplace else. (Bereishis Rabbah 39:8)

Someone who lives in Eretz Yisrael is like one who has a G-d. (Kesubos 110b) Why is he "like" one who has a G-d? Even if he doesn't know the first thing about G-d, he can still feel Him in Israel.

## TORAH AND ISRAEL

There's no Torah like the Torah of Eretz Yisrael. (Bereishis Rabbah 16:4)

Abaye (who lived in Babylonia) said that a Torah scholar in Eretz Yisrael is equal to two outside of Israel. (Kesubos 75a)

The air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise. (Baba Basra 158b)

Even idle chatter in Eretz Yisrael is like learning Torah. (Vayikra Rabbah 34:7)

Learning Torah is an integral part of keeping Israel safe. According to the Talmud (Sanhedrin 49a), "If not for David learning Torah, Yoav would not have been victorious in battle. If not for Yoav fighting battles, David would not have been able to learn Torah."

The Jews have two inheritances. One is Eretz Yisrael (Exodus 6:8) and the other is Torah (Deut. 33:4).

## JERUSALEM



According to the Mishna in Keilim (1:6-7) Eretz Yisrael is the holiest of all lands and Jerusalem is the holiest city. The Talmud tells us (Baba Basra 75b) that three things are called by the Name of G-d: tzaddikim (the righteous), Moshiach (the messiah) and Jerusalem.

So beautiful was Jerusalem during the time of the Temple that the Rabbis tell us that a person who didn't see Jerusalem before its destruction never saw a beautiful city (Sukkah 51b). It was so beautiful that the Talmud in Kiddushin (49b) says that there are 10 portions of beauty in the world, of which Jerusalem received nine and the rest of the world shares one.

The Mishna in Avos (5:7) describes ten miracles that occurred during the time of the Beis HaMikdash. Among these was that no snake or scorpion ever harmed anyone in Jerusalem and nobody ever went without a place to stay overnight while there.

Jerusalem is so important that it says in Psalms (137:5-6), "If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill...may my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth; if I do not place Jerusalem above my greatest joy."

In the future, Jerusalem will be the capital of the world (Shemos Rabbah 23:10). The prophet Jeremiah tells us that "At that time, people will call Jerusalem the throne of Hashem and all the nations will gather into it" (Jeremiah 3:17).

## לשנה הבאה בירושלים

## NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

# J E W S , G - D A N D I S R A E L

There is a special relationship between the Jewish people, G-d and Eretz Yisrael. The Torah says that Eretz Yisrael is "a land that Hashem seeks out; the eyes of Hashem are always upon it" (Deut. 11:12). The Midrash tells us (Bemidbar Rabbah 23:7) that Eretz Yisrael is more loved by Hashem than anything else. The Talmud says (Moed Katan 25a) that G-d's presence doesn't rest outside of Eretz Yisrael.



The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 13:2) explains that Hashem evaluated every land and found no land more appropriate for the Jewish people than Eretz Yisrael. But the relationship is not just between the Jews and Eretz Yisrael - G-d is a necessary component of the equation! Consider the following:

"Hashem will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed...(then) He will turn your hearts and the hearts of your children to love Hashem, your G-d with all your hearts and all your souls..." (Deut. 30:5-6).

"I will ... gather you from all lands and bring you to your own land... I will give you a new heart and I will put a new spirit within you... you will live in the land that I gave to your fathers. You will be My people and I will be your G-d..."

(Ezekiel 36:24-36)

As long as you do the will of Hashem, the nations will make silver and gold flow into Eretz Yisrael. It will be blessed with produce and all nations will be sustained through it. (Rashi on Deut. 33:25)

Finally, the Torah says (Leviticus 26:42), "I will remember my pact with Jacob and with Isaac and with Abraham and I will remember the land." Rashi explains that if the merit of Jacob is not sufficient for the Jewish people, G-d will remember the merit of Isaac. If that is not enough, He will remember Abraham. By this logic, the merit of Eretz Yisrael on behalf of the Jewish people can exceed even that of the Forefathers!

## This Land is Our Land...

Rashi's very first comment on the Torah asks why the Torah doesn't just start with the first law. Why does G-d give a whole history, starting with the creation of the world? Rashi answers that this is to prevent the nations of the world from claiming that the Jews stole Eretz Yisrael. Hashem created the world and He can give it to whomever He likes. And He did give Eretz Yisrael to the Jews, a fact repeated many times throughout the Torah. The following is a small sampling.

To Abraham: "I am Hashem who brought you out of Ur Kasdim to give you this land to inherit."  
(Genesis 15:7)

To Isaac: "To you and your descendants I give this land."  
(Genesis 26:3)

To Jacob: "The ground upon which you are lying I give to you and your descendants." (Genesis 28:13)

To Moses: "I made a pact with (the Forefathers) to give them the land of Canaan." (Exodus 6:4)

To Joshua: "Every place you will walk I have given to you, as I told Moses." (Joshua 1:3)

The Talmud tells us (Avodah Zarah 53b) that Eretz Yisrael belongs to the Jews as an inheritance from our Forefathers. In addition, three places indisputably belong to the Jews because they were purchased: the cave of Machpelah, the Temple Mount and Joseph's grave (Bereishis Rabbah 79:7).



# MITZVOS AND ISRAEL

It is a mitzva (religious duty) to live in Israel. The Torah tells us, "Inherit the land and live in it, since it is to you that I am giving the land to occupy" (Numbers 33:53). The Ramban (Nachmanides) explains that "inherit the land" is a commandment to the Jewish community as a whole to control the government of Israel. "Live in it" is a mitzva for each individual to live in Eretz Yisrael, even if the land is under outside control. The Ramban calls this mitzva "incumbent upon every individual in every generation."

How important is the mitzva of settling Eretz Yisrael? Omri was a wicked king, worse than any of his predecessors (1 Kings 16). The Talmud (Sanhedrin 102b) asks what he did to deserve being king. It answers that he added a city to Eretz Yisrael, even though he did so for his own honor and not to honor Hashem (1 Kings 26). If a wicked person who builds up Israel for his own sake is rewarded, certainly an average person who intends to do the will of Hashem will be rewarded!

In addition to the mitzva of living in Israel, there are many mitzvos that can be observed only

there. These are in large part agricultural in nature, such as terumos and ma'aseros (the various tithes), shmittah and yoveil (the Sabbatical and Jubilee years). The Talmud asks (Sotah 14a), "Why did Moses want so desperately to enter Eretz Yisrael? Did he want to eat its fruits or satisfy himself from its goodness? No, he wanted to fulfill the many mitzvos unique to Eretz Yisrael."



The mitzva of birkat hamazon ("bentching" or grace after meals) is also related to Eretz Yisrael. The Torah tells us (Deut. 8:7-10), "Hashem is bringing you into a good land, a land with streams of water, of fountains and springs... a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates; a land

of oil olive and honey; a land where you will eat bread without shortage. You will lack nothing in the land... When you have eaten and are satisfied, you will bless Hashem for the good land which he has given you."

In short, Eretz Yisrael was given to the Jewish people to help them keep mitzvos. As it says in Psalms (105:44-45), "Hashem gave them the lands of nations... so they would keep His laws and observe His Torah."

You may be aware that Eretz Yisrael is called "a land flowing with milk and honey" (see Exodus 3:8, Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 14:8 and Deuteronomy 6:3, among many, many others). But did you know that there are seven species of produce for which the Torah specifically praises Eretz Yisrael? These are wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates (see Deut. 8:8). They are called "the seven species" and the special blessing of al hamichya (for the grains) or al hapeiros (for the fruits) is said after eating them.



The prophet Yechezkel says (Ezekiel 36:8), "Mountains of Israel, put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel because they are coming soon." The Talmud teaches us (Sanhedrin 98a) that one of the surest signs of the Jewish people's ultimate redemption is an abundance of produce coming from Eretz Yisrael.

LUCKY  
SEVEN

