

whY I Matter

בשבילי נברא העולם (סנהדרין לז)

Edited by Yedidye Hirtenfeld

ב' - ח' חשוון ה'תשע"ח

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לך לך

זמנים

Weekdays

Shachris	
Sunday	6:50 8 & 8:30
Weekdays	5:50, 6:50, 7:30 & 8:30
Weekday Rosh Chodesh	5:40, 6:40, 7:30 & 8:30
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Maariv	after mincha

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Candle Lighting	540
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In this week's parashah, we read that Hashem promised Eretz Yisrael to Avraham's descendants. In Divrei Hayamim I (16:16-19—recited every day in the Hodu prayer), we read similarly, "That He covenanted with Avraham, and His oath to Yitzchak . . . saying, 'To you [singular] I shall give the Land of Canaan, the lot of your [plural] heritage.' When you were but few in number, hardly dwelling there."

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen

Kook z"l (1865- 1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael)

comments on these verses: Eretz Yisrael is suitable for the Congregation of Yisrael as a whole, in all generations, forever and ever, yet it also is suitable for every individual Jew according to his nature, his needs, and his essence. This fit is precise, for it was measured out by Hashem, who gave His beloved Land to His holy people.

This is why the verse begins in the singular—"To you [singular] I shall give the Land of Canaan"—and ends in the plural—"The lot of your [plural] heritage." Regarding the verse, "When you were but few in number, hardly dwelling there," R' Kook writes: The tie between Yisrael and its Holy Land is not like the natural tie that connects other nations to their lands. Generally, a connection between a nation and its land develops over time based on events that happen there and continued expansion and building as a result of population growth. This is not true in the case of the Divinely-ordained connection between the Congregation of Yisrael and the holiness of the Beloved Land. Even when we were few in number [i.e., Avraham and Sarah alone], there already was a special connection between our nation and its land. (Olat Re'iyah p.203 see also about Eret Yisroel elsewhere in this sheet)

What do you make of it

"ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן" - אמר ר' אלעזר בשם ר' יוסי בן זמרא: אם מתכנסים כל באי העולם לברוא אפילו יתוש אחד, אינם יכולים - ואתה אומר "ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן"? אלא, אלו הגרים שגיירו אברהם ושרה. ולמה נאמר "עשו" ולא נאמר "גיירו"? ללמדך שכל מי שהוא מקרב את הנכרי ומגיירו כאילו בראו.

[בראשית רבה ל"ט, כ"א, וג"כ פ"ד, ב']

"אשר עשו בחרן" - אמר ריש לקיש: כל המלמד את בן חברו תורה, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו עשאו, שנאמר "ואת הפש אשר עשו בחרן"

[סנהדרין צ"ט, ב']

A midrash records how a young Avraham concluded on his own that Hashem exists. Just as a palace cannot exist without a builder, he reasoned, so a world such as ours cannot exist unless it has a Creator. When the students of the Mir Yeshiva took refuge in Shanghai, China during World War II, they found a vast, empty synagogue available for the yeshiva's use. There was no rational reason for a synagogue of that size to exist in a city that had never had more than a tiny Jewish presence. Subsequently, R' Yechezkel Levenstein z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the yeshiva) observed in a 1941 address: "Although we have never seen the builder or the caretaker of this shul, we understand without a doubt that there was a builder and there is a

לכבוד האי גברא ובי"ב הרוצים בעילום שמם על הסיוע שמושיטים לי בעין יפה להמשיך את הגליון עוד הפעם בשנה זו שיהיה לזכותם ולזכות כל משפחתם הקב"ה יברך אותם בכל מילי דמיטב מיט יידישע נחת בעושר ואושר ואריכת ימים בבריאות בזה ובבא עבנצב"ב

caretaker." He continued: But how does a person like Avraham, who lives in a world devoid of knowledge of G-d, come to recognize G-d? The answer is that if a person is troubled enough by a problem, he finds a solution. Even if the solution is beyond one's normal abilities, one finds a way to attain it when he feels that he has no other choice. The gemara teaches that although prophecy has been taken away from the prophets, it has been given to the wise. Indeed, said R' Levenstein, it is nothing less than prophetic when a person struggles over a problem and then sees light. Avraham, too, could not rest because he was so troubled by not knowing who had "built the palace," and thus he found an answer. (Mi'mizrach Ha'shemesh) "Praiseworthy are those whose way is perfect, who walk with the Torah of Hashem." (Tehilim 119:1) R' Shmuel d'Ouzida z"l (Tzefat, Eretz Yisrael; late 1500s) writes: There are many things which happen to be prohibited by Torah which people don't do, out of disgust or because of social mores—for example, drinking blood and eating rodents. This verse is teaching: "Praiseworthy are those whose way is perfect, [but who choose that path in order to] walk with the Torah of Hashem, [not for their own reasons]." (Peirush Mi'ktav Yad)

ויאמר ה' אל-אברהם לך-לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל-הארץ אשר אראך

Our parshah opens with the possuk, "Go forth from your land.... to the land asher ar-eh-ko (usually translated- that I will show you). (12:1) Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani (1706-1779 in Modena and Mantua Italy) asks two questions. Firstly, asher ar-eh-ko means "that I will show you", like it usually does, then it is more fitting to write "asher er-eh lecha". Secondly, in truth we never find that Hashem showed Avraham he should go to Eretz Yisroel! It is only written (possuk 5), "And Avram took Sarah his wife....and they left to go to the Land of Kanaan". The possuk doesn't

mention that Hashem told him to go there and it implies that Avraham understood this by himself. How did Avraham realize that this was the land that Hashem intended for him to to? Zera Shimshon explains in light of the Medrash (Yalkut Shimoni Vayairo remmez 102) that explains the origin of the name "Yerushaliyim". The medrash explains that Avraham called it "Har Yayroeh" and Shaim (the son of Noach) called it "Shalaim". Hashem combined both of these names, contracted them, and called it Yerushalayim. The commentator on the Yalkut asks why did Shaim and Avraham call it two different names? What is the depth in each of these names? He explains that Sheim called it Shalaim, which means complete, because he was able to perceive the completeness of Hashem's physical world, health, strength, and prosperity that manifested itself in Yerushaliyim. However he wasn't on such a high level of spirituality to bring out the spirituality that also exists in Yerushaliyim. Avraham on the other hand, who was on a much greater level of spirituality, also brought out the tremendous spiritual beauty of Eretz Yisroel in general, and specifically Yerushaliyim. Therefore he called it Har Yeiroeh, which has the same root as yiras Hashem. Hashem called it both of these names because in truth both exist there; great spirituality, for those who can be aware of it, and also great plenty for those who are not at that level. From here, continues **Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani** we see that Eretz Yisroel is different from other lands. The quality, beauty and splendor of all lands are independent of the character and conduct of its inhabitants. However the spiritual and physical beauty of Eretz Yisroel is connected and proportionate with its inhabitants conduct. When there are tzaddikim there, for instance Shaim, then its physical beauty is seen. And when there are even greater tzaddikim there, like Avraham Avinu, then even its spiritual glory can be felt. According to this, concludes Zera Shimshon, when Hashem told Avraham to go to the land asher ar-eh-ko, which means to the land in which I (Hashem) will show your greatness to others, Avraham understood that Hashem was referring to Eretz Kannan. It is only in

Eretz Yisroel that a persons greatness is reflected in the beauty of the land. (Zera Shimshon)

Hashem said to Avram, **"Go out from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you".**(12:1) Rashi explains, "Go out -for your benefit and for your good, and there I will make you into a great nation, but here you will not merit to have children." Rashi teaches us here that Avram's being in his birthplace and in his father's house prevented him from having children. The Rashi on the next possuk, however, seems to contradict this. In that possuk (possuk 2) Hashem promises Avram that H. will make him into a big nation. Rashi explains the reason for this promise is because "being on the road" usually diminishes the chances of having children. Therefore Hashem promised Avram that in his case this will not happen but rather he will become a great nation. From this Rashi it seems that it is the fact that Avram was traveling is the reason that Avram will not have children and not just being in his birthplace! How do we reconcile these two statements? **Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani** (1706-1779 in Modena and Mantua Italy) explains in light of a dispute in the Gemorro (Rosh HaShana 16b). "Rebbi Yitzchak further said: Four things annul a person's (bad) verdict; tzedakah, prayer, change of name and change of conduct. ... Some add, relocating [also helps], as it is written, Now Hashem said to Avram, Go out of your country, and it proceeds, and I will make you a great nation. And the other [— Rebbi Yitzchak, why does he not reckon this]? — In that case (the case of Avram's moving to Eretz Kenaan) it was the merit of Eretz Yisrael which helped him. In other words, according to Reb Yitzhak only moving to Eretz Yisroel changes the decree of a person and according to the other opinion moving anywhere helps. In light of these two opinions Zera Shimshon reconciles the seeming contraction in Rashi. It was clear that in order for Avram to become a great nation he had to leave his birthplace. According to the opinion who argues with Rebbi Yitzhak, it would be enough for Avram to move to a place

that is close to his birthplace. It would be farther enough away to be considered that he relocated, so he could annul the decree that he can't have children, and there would be no problem that traveling diminishes the chance of having children. (This is what the first Rashi is referring to.) However, Rebbi Yitzchak argues and he holds that simply relocating is not enough to annul a bad decree. Therefore Avram couldn't rely that the decree to be childless would be nullified if he only moved closed to home. He had to move to Eretz Yisroel so that the merit of living there would help him have children. However there is a problem to travel so far because "being on the road" diminishes the chance of having children. Therefore Hashem promised him that in his case this would not be but he will become a great nation.(Zera Shimshon)

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Wife insurance

"ולאברם היטיב בעבורה" - אמר ר' חלבו:
לעולם יהא אדם זהיר בכבוד אשתו, שאין
הברכה מצויה בתוך ביתו של אדם אלא בשביל
אשתו, שנאמר "ולאברם היטיב בעבורה".
[בבא מציעא נ"ט, א']

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"Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house . . ."(12:1) **R' Moshe Chafetz z"l** (early 18th cent.) writes that a person usually loves his home for one of three reasons: He is used to it, he was born there, or his ancestors have lived there for many generations. Human nature is that it is difficult for a person to leave a place that has all three of these "traits" in order to go to a place that he has never even seen. This was Avraham's first test, that he had to leave his land, his birthplace and his father's home and go to a land that he did not know. Generally, people love their homes even when they are bad places, as Iyov said (Iyov 17:13-14), "Inasmuch as I crave the nethermost depths as my home, I spread my mattress in the dark. I called to the pit, 'You are my father!', to the worms, 'My mother, my sister!'" Avraham's test was to love Hashem instead of his hometown. (Melech Machshevet) [**Rabbi Shlomo Katz** of Hamaayan notes: **R' Yitzchak Shifrin** (of Baltimore) lived part of his childhood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, a town famous for its devastating floods. He used the

people of Johnstown to illustrate man's irrational love for his hometown; after each flood, these people come home and rebuild, knowing full well that the next year's floods may drive them out again.

ואברכה מברכיך ומקללך אאר ונברכו בך בך
משפחת האדמה

You shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you (12:2-3) R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) comments: The Torah says that man was created male and female and was commanded to procreate. This refers not only to physical activity, but to intellectual and spiritual growth as well. In the language of kabbalah, "male" refers to a giver and "female" refers to a recipient. A person who aspires to spiritual growth must be both male and female, able to impart to others whatever spiritual gifts he or she has to offer, and able to receive from others what they can contribute towards his or her (i.e., the recipient's) growth. This was the blessing to Avraham recorded in our verses: You shall be a blessing to others, because you will give to them. And, those who bless you, shall be blessed, indicating that Avraham will also receive from others. (Yemei Zikaron)

ויקה אברם את-שרי אשתו ואת-לוט בן אחיו
ואת כל רכושם אשר רכשו ואת הנפש אשר
עשו בחרן ויצאו ללכת ארצה כנען ויבאו ארצה
כנען

"Avram took his wife Sarai and Lot, his brother's son, and all their wealth that they had amassed, and the souls they made in Charan . . ." (12:5) The Aramaic translator and commentator, Onkelos z"l, translates "the souls they made in Charan" as "the souls they subjugated to the Torah in Charan." Rashi z"l explains: They brought them under the wings of the Shechinah. Avraham converted the men and Sarah converted the women, and the Torah treats it as if they "made" them. **R' Abba Mari of Lunel z"l** (Provence; late 13th-early 14th centuries) describes the process that led Avraham to attract these converts: Avraham Avinu was the father of all philosophers who expounded the truth. He found a world that was desolate, filled with false beliefs. Man in those days could not contemplate anything beyond the physical universe, and they worshiped the

stars and constellations. They said: The sun is the great power that controls the upper world, and the earth is beneath it. . . This led to a belief that the world had always existed. Then Avraham came along; he enlightened the face of the eastern lands [a play on a verse in this week's haftarah – Yeshayah 41:2] and made it his mission to uproot these beliefs. He began to debate with them, using logical arguments to show them the errors of their beliefs and to prove to them with clear proofs the existence of Hashem and His Oneness/Uniqueness; that He is separate from the physical universe and is not a force of that universe; and that He alone made the universe according to His Will. All of the wise men of his day disagreed with him, as is recorded in their books, which are quoted by Rambam z"l in Moreh Nevuchim. . . They argued that the sun is clearly very powerful, and he responded: "True, but it is only a tool, like an ax in the hands of a lumberjack." Eventually, he persuaded a small number of them to accept the true faith, as our verse testifies and Onkelos explains. Wherever Avraham would travel, he would publicize these true beliefs, i.e., the belief in Creation, as it is written (Bereishit 21:33), "There he proclaimed the Name of Hashem, Kel of the Universe." He proclaimed two important principles, principles that exceed all others in importance. The first: To know that Hashem necessarily exists, and that He is One/Unique. . . The second: To know that He created the world of His own Will. . . We do not find any hint that anyone before Avraham prayed to Hashem. Avraham did this to disabuse people of the belief that the world always existed, for prayer is of no use if the world was not created. . . Prayer is only useful if one believes in a Creator who has the power to respond to prayer and alter the course of nature. . . This is what our Sages mean when they say that Avraham was the first to call Hashem "Master." (Minchat Kenaot)

ויהי בימי אמרפל מלך שנער אריזן מלך אלסר
כדלעמר מלך עילם ותדעל מלך גוים. עשו
מלחמה את ברע מלך סדום ואת ברשע מלך
עמרה שנאב מלך אדמה ושמאבר מלך צביים
ומלך בלע היא צער

"It was in the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar; Aryoch, king of Ellasar; Kedarla'omer, king of

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in loving memory of
Sam & Helen Fuchs
(Shmuel Moshe & Chanh ל"ט)

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Elam; and Tid'al, king of Goyim. They made war on Bera, king of S'dom; Birsha, king of Amorah; Shinav, king of Admah; Shem'ever, king of Tzevoyim; and the king of Bela, which is Tzo'ar." (14:1-2) What is the larger significance of this event? **R' Shlomo Goren z"l** (1917-1994; Chief Rabbi of Israel) explains: It is apparent from the Torah that this war was Kedarla'omer's fight, and the other three kings were merely his allies. We read, for example (14:17), "The king of S'dom went out to meet [Avraham] after his return from defeating Kedarla'omer and the kings who were with him." Our Sages say that "Amraphel" was Nimrod, the most powerful king in the world, yet Kedarla'omer is singled out by the verse as the primary figure. That

could only be because he instigated the war. Why did he do that? We read (Devarim 32:8), "When the Supreme One gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of man, He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of Bnei Yisrael." This teaches that, when Hashem separated the nations after the Flood and the building of the Tower of Babel, He divided the world among the 70 nations and assigned territories to each. Eretz Yisrael was assigned to the descendants of Shem, son of Noach (see Rashi to Bereishit 12:6). Thus, we find that Malki Tzedek, king of Shalem—i.e., Yerushalayim—was none other than Shem. (see Rashi to 14:18). However, the Canaanites, descendants of Cham, son of Noach, conquered Eretz Yisrael from the sons of Shem (see Rashi to 12:6), all the way to the cities mentioned in our verse: S'dom, Amorah, Admah and Tzevovim (see 10:19). Kedarla'omer was a descendant of Shem; he was king of Elam, named for a son of Shem (see 10:22). Therefore, specifically Kedarla'omer went to war to regain the land from the descendants of Cham. Why then does the Torah portray Kedarla'omer as an aggressor? Because Kedarla'omer had no business fighting that battle. Hashem had already promised Avraham (13:15), "For all the land that you see, I will give it to you, and to your descendants forever." Once Avraham arrived in Eretz Yisrael, the Land no longer belonged to all the descendants of Shem, but only to the descendants of one—Avraham. (Torat Ha'mikra)

Hashem asked Avraham to move to Eretz Yisroel. Is Eretz Yisroel holy because of the Mitzvot that apply there, or does it have inherent Kedushah / holiness? This question was debated in the early 20th century in the context of the Hetter Mechirah / selling Eretz Yisrael to a non-Jew for the Shemittah year to avoid the restrictions associated with that year. In opposing the sale, which supporters said was necessary to preserve the viability of the then-nascent Yishuv / settlement, **R' Yaakov David Willowsky** z"l (1845-1913; rabbi in Poland, Chicago and Tzefat; known as "Ridvaz") argued that it makes no sense to sell

Eretz Yisrael for that purpose, because the Kedushah / holiness of the Land would be nullified by the sale, in which case there would be no reason to preserve the Yishuv. Once the Land is sold to a non-Jew, Ridvaz argued, the agricultural Mitzvot no longer apply, and it is no longer the "Holy Land." **R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook** z"l (1865-1935; rabbi of Yafo; later the first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) disagreed, and he wrote to the Ridvaz: While it is true that Eretz Yisrael has added Kedushah because of the agricultural Mitzvot that apply there and nowhere else, Eretz Yisrael also has inherent Kedushah that is independent of the Mitzvot. Indeed, our Sages say that the Mitzvah of settling Eretz Yisrael is equivalent to all other commandments combined. This would be illogical if the Mitzvah of settling Eretz Yisrael existed only to facilitate the performance of other Mitzvot. (Both the views of Ridvaz and R' Kook are found in the latter's Shabbat Ha'aretz p.61 and Mishpat Kohen No. 63) **R' Avraham Bornstein** z"l (1838-1910; rabbi, rosh yeshiva and chassidic rebbe in Sochatchov, Poland) writes: Midrash Rabbah states that Yaakov was afraid of Esav because the latter had lived in Eretz Yisrael while Yaakov had lived abroad with Lavan. Surely Esav was not performing the agricultural Mitzvot. Yet, Yaakov feared the merit that Esav had amassed by living in Eretz Yisrael. This indicates that living in Eretz Yisrael has value in its own right. (She'eilot U'teshuvot Avnei Nezer: Y.D. 454:32) [Hamaayan]

R' Donash ben Tamim z"l late 9th century R' Donash was a philosopher, physician, astronomer and prolific author. He was born in Iraq and died in Kairouan, Tunisia. Only one of R' Donash's works, a commentary on Sefer Yetzirah, survives. In it, R' Donash relates that many early manuscripts of **R' Saadiah Gaon** (892-942), written while the latter still lived in Egypt (before 928), reached R' Donash's teacher, **R' Yitzchak HaYisraeli**. R' Yitzchak, in turn, instructed R' Donash which part of those works he agreed with and which he disputed. R' Donash also mentions some of his other books, including a treatise on

astrology written in honor of the caliph, and one on astronomy written at the request of **R' Chisdai ibn Shaprut**. **R' Avraham ibn Ezra** quotes R' Donash in some of his works sometimes by the name "R' Adonim ben Tamim Hamizrachi" often disagreeing with him. Nevertheless, ibn Ezra places R' Donash alongside R' Saadiah Gaon and **R' Yehuda ben Kuraish** among those whom he calls the "Elders of the Holy Tongue." (This R' Donash should not be confused with **R' Donash Halevi ben Labrat**, the disputant of Menachem ben Saruk who is quoted numerous times by Rashi. That R' Donash lived a century later.) (Sources: The Artscroll Rishonim, p.50; Commentary of Ibn Ezra to Kohelet 12:5)

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יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקי ואלקי אבותי
שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים
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דוד בן טובשין
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