

FROM THE BOOK TORAT ERETZ ISRAEL

RAV TZVI YEHUDA HAKOHEN KOOK ZTKL

A PERSON RECEIVES A NEW HIGHER SOUL UPON HIS ENTRANCE IN ERETZ ISRAEL

Rav Tzvi Yehuda continued his talk with an interesting insight mentioned in the book Chesed L'Avraham, by Rav Avraham Azulai, who died in Hevron approximately 350 years ago, in the year 5404. He writes that the first night a person comes to Eretz Israel, his soul rises to a spiritual world during sleep, then returns in the morning from its nocturnal wandering. Normally, the same soul returns after sleep, but after coming to Israel, a remarkable change takes place. After a person breathes and absorbs the air of Eretz Israel, he is transformed. When he awakens his first morning in Israel, he has a new soul.

"If a man is outside the Land of Israel, he has a soul of lesser celestial forces. If he merits to enter the Land of Israel, a soul from a newly created source comes to him, and clothes itself with his old soul. The first night he sleeps in Eretz Israel, both souls depart from him and rise to worlds above, and in the morning, only the new soul returns." Chesed L'Avraham, The Third Spring, Spring of the Land, River 12

THE GAON OF VILNA ECHOES THIS IDEA BY SAYING THAT A PERSON ISN'T COMPLETE UNTIL HE COMES TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL. ON THE VERSE AND YAAKOV CAME SHALEM, TO THE CITY OF SHECHEM, THE GAON OF VILNA EXPLAINS SHALEM IN ITS MEANING OF WHOLENESS, AND SAYS THAT YAAKOV WASN'T COMPLETE UNTIL HE CAME TO ERETZ ISRAEL. (KOL HATOR, CH.3:7)

What happened to Yaakov is a sign for his children, and for the national transformation, and completion, which the Jewish people are experiencing today; as the prophecy says, "For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own Land...A new heart I will also give you, and a new spirit I will put within you...And you shall dwell in the Land which I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people, and I will be your G-d." (Ezekiel 36) Rav Tzvi Yehuda pointed to the order of the verse. Only after we return to the Land, and are influenced by its special transforming powers, are our true, healthy spirits renewed. (Yalkut Shimoni, Habakkuk. 3)

ERETZ ISRAEL IS KADOSH, IT IS THE LAND CHOSEN BY HASHEM FOR HIS NATION, AND CREATED WITH UNIQUE HOLY PROPERTIES

The Rosh Yeshiva would return to this theme again and again. Even to his regular students, the majority of whom had grown up in Israel, he would explain with endless patience, until he was sure we understood, that Eretz Israel is not like every other land; just another geographic area with mountains and rivers, valleys, and lakes. Eretz Israel is something else entirely. Yes, it has mountains and rivers, but these mountains and rivers are a part of us, inseparable from our being and from our national task of uplifting mankind to a knowledge of Hashem. Eretz Israel is Kadosh. It is the Land chosen by Hashem for His nation, and created with unique holy properties. Our connection to Eretz Israel is not based solely on the fact that it is our homeland. There is a reason it is our homeland. The Almighty created it especially suited to us. We could only be a nation here. Only here, in Eretz Israel, could we genuinely fulfill our Torah; not just in the sense of observing all of the mitzvot applicable only in Israel (over one third of the 613 commandments,) but in the deeper, more fundamental sense of being an Am Kadosh

And see, Introduction to the Siddur, Beit Yaakov, by Rabbi Yaakov Emden: "When it seems to us in our present peaceful existence outside the Land of Israel, that we have found another Eretz Israel and Yerushalaim, this is to me, the greatest, deepest, most obvious, and direct cause of all of the awesome, frightening, monstrous, unimaginable destructions that we have experienced in the Diaspora. "

In Israel, they are one nation, and not outside of it." Zohar, Emor, 93

In the exile, the national framework of the Jewish people is destroyed. We are reduced to communities scattered all over the world; whereas, in Israel, the Presence of G-d, the Shechina, dwells in our midst. And I will dwell among the children of Israel. The special connection between the Land of Israel, Hashem, and the Jewish people is not only a spiritual bond - it is manifested in a physical fashion as well. Only in Israel can the Jewish people have a sovereign government, a Jewish army, or a national calendar based on the Jewish year. These are all manifestations of the Shechina in physical form.

To illustrate a Jew's eternal connection to Israel, Rav Tzvi Yehuda often used an insight of Rabbi Meir Yechiel of Ostrovta, one of the great Talmudic geniuses of the past generation. He was a prodigy, a giant in Torah, and a Tzaddik famous throughout the Jewish world. All of his life was spent in fasting, Rav Tzvi Yehuda told us. He felt a need to live this way - above the ways of ordinary men. Only occasionally would he taste something, or nap a bit, then immediately return to his learning.

"WHEN JEWS MEET, THEY CUSTOMARILY EXCHANGE, 'SHALOMS', AND ASK, 'WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?' THE USUAL RESPONSE IS: I COME FROM BELGIUM, BRAZIL, OR COLORADO. THE ADMOR OF OSTROVTZA SAYS, 'EVERY JEW IS OBLIGED TO ANSWER - I COME FROM ERETZ ISRAEL.' THIS IS A VERY DEEP INSIGHT, TELLING US THAT EVERY JEW, IN HIS INNERMOST ESSENCE, BELONGS TO ERETZ ISRAEL."

RABBI MEIR YECHIEL OF OSTROVTZA

WE HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THINK THAT OUR PLACE IN GALUT IS NORMAL: THIS SITUATION, RAV KOOK EMPHASIZED, WAS A DISGRACE AND TRAGIC MISTAKE

"Because of our long exile amidst the impurity of the gentile nations, we have become accustomed to think that our place in Galut is normal, and we forget that Eretz Israel is our natural, healthy, Divinely-intended place," Rav Tzvi Yehuda said.

This situation, Rav Kook emphasized, was a disgrace and tragic mistake. The matter is illustrated clearly in the Kuzari of Rav Yehuda HaLevi. In Chapter Two of this classic treatise on the nation of Israel and Torah, the Rabbi extols the virtues of Eretz Israel. After he finishes his lengthy praise of the Land, the King of the Kuzars chastises him for not acting in line with his words, for the Rabbi does not live in Israel. The Rabbi confesses:

"You have uncovered my great disgrace, O King of the Kuzars! It is this sin which prevented the Divine promise from being fulfilled in the time of the Second Temple - Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion. (Zecharia, 2:14) For Divine Providence was ready to restore everything as it had been at first, if all of them had answered the call and returned to Eretz Israel in gladness. But only a small portion responded, whilst the majority, and the Gedolim among them, remained in Babylon, preferring exile and slavery

under the gentiles, rather than giving up their houses and their affairs...If we had been willing to approach the G-d of our fathers with a pure heart, He would have granted us the same salvation which He granted to our forefathers in Egypt. Now, since this isn't so, our prayers to Worship at His holy mountain; Worship at His footstool; and He who restores His glory to Zion, and other prayers like these, are like the speech of the parrot and the chattering of the starling. We say these words, and others, without true belief in our hearts, as you rightly observe, O Prince of the Kuzars. (Kuzari, 2:24)

THE COMMANDMENT TO SETTLE THE LAND OF ISRAEL IS A POSITIVE MITZVAH OF THE 613 COMMANDMENTS IN THE TORAH

"In Judaism, it is accepted that, among the Rishonim, second in importance to the Rambam (Maimonides) is his near contemporary, the Ramban (Nachmanides) one of the most outstanding sages and Kabbalists, two things which go hand in hand. The Ramban concluded that the commandment to settle the Land of Israel is a positive mitzvah of the 613 commandments in the Torah (Bamidbar 33:53). He based his decision on the language of the verse, And you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the Land and dwell in it, which is stated in the language of a command. We are enjoined with two tasks: first, to possess the Land through conquest; and, secondly, to dwell in the Land." (Le Netivot Israel II, 158)

"The Ramban clearly establishes that this Land, which Hashem promised our forefathers, must be kept under our control, and not under the control of any other nation. This is clearly meant in a national sense, for everyone understands that ruling a land means the establishment of a state in that land. The establishment of Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel is a fundamental precept of the Torah. To ensure that the Land does not remain desolate, we must actively promote the development and settlement of the Land, in every sphere possible."

"Our Sages have clearly explained the value of Eretz Israel to the Torah and the mitzvot, stating that the precept of living in Israel is equal in scale to all of the commandments in the Torah. This is an awesome pronouncement. Obviously, this emphasis does not come to render all other precepts superfluous. Every precept is an integral part of the overall 613

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commandments. However, the mitzvah of living in Israel is not just an ordinary commandment. It is an all-encompassing precept - the fundamental prerequisite for Am Israel to be able to function as a nation. For the genuine keeping of the Torah is only in Eretz Israel. In every other place, the commandments are imposed as a way of reminder, so that when we return to Israel, we will know how to keep them. ,, (Sifre, Ekev, 11:18. And, Rashi, Deut. 11:18. Also, Ramban, there)

Rav Tzvi Yehuda based this on a Sifre, which Rashi quotes in his commentary on the Torah: Even though I am exiling you from Israel to outside the Land, distinguish yourself with the commandments, so that when you return, they will not seem new in your eyes. Rashi comments: "This is like a king who became angry at his wife, and sent her back to her father's house. He said to her, 'Wear your jewelry so it won't seem new to you when you return to the palace.' Thus HaKadosh Baruch Hu says to Israel: 'My sons, distinguish yourselves with precepts so that when you return, they won't be new to you.' This is what Jeremiah said, Set up way marks for yourself, make yourself signposts. (Jeremiah, 31:20) These are the mitzvot which Israel is commanded. (Sifre, Ekev, 11:18. And, Rashi, Deut. 11:18. Also, Ramban, there)

THE TRUE, INTENDED, PLACE FOR THE MITZVOT IS IN ERETZ ISRAEL. THEIR PURPOSE IN GALUT IS TO KEEP US ATTACHED TO THE TORAH, SO THAT WHEN WE RETURN TO ISRAEL, THE PERFORMANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS WON'T SEEM UNFAMILIAR AND NEW. THIS TEACHING OF THE SAGES EMPHASIZES THAT ERETZ ISRAEL IS NOT MERELY OUR GEOGRAPHICAL HOMELAND, BUT A FOUNDATION OF TRUE TORAH OBSERVANCE.

EVERY JEW, EVERY STONE, EVERY CITY, EVERY MITZVAH WHICH WE WERE LACKING IN ERETZ ISRAEL, DETRACTED FROM OUR OPTIMAL WHOLENESS, RAV KOOK SAID. ERETZ ISRAEL IS THE PLACE DESIGNED FOR US, BOTH IN THE COMMUNAL SENSE OF THE ISRAELI NATION, AND IN THE INDIVIDUAL LIFE OF EVERY SINGLE JEW. HERE WE ARE AT HOME. HERE WE ARE FAMILY. THE AIR OF ERETZ ISRAEL IS HEALTHY FOR US. AS RAV YEHUDA HALEVI WROTE IN HIS POEMS, THE AIR OF YOUR LAND IS THE BREATH OF OUR SOUL.

"The air of Israel makes one wise," (Baba Batra 158B) Rav Tzvi Yehuda said, quoting the well-known Gemara. "It causes intelligence and wisdom. And the beginning of intelligence is to understand that existence among the gentile nations is totally unpleasant."

THE JEW BORN IN GALUT DOESN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH HE IS MISSING BY NOT LIVING IN ERETZ ISRAEL

A Jew who was born outside the Land of Israel, who spent his whole life in the Diaspora, doesn't know any other reality. He readily becomes a creature of the foreign culture which surrounds him. He becomes estranged from his natural connection to Israel. His sense of a need for his own Jewish government, or Jewish army, or Jewish calendar, or Land, is obscured. The governments of America, England, or South Africa take care of his needs. In the absence of Jewish nationhood, gentile cultures and pastimes occupy a significant role in his daily existence. Thus, the redemption of Israel can become a secondary issue in his life. His life ceases to feel like an exile, and, because of his alienation from the deeper aspects of Torah, his existence in a gentile land does not feel unpleasant to him, or to his soul.

Rav Tzvi Yehuda wanted us to know that, on the contrary, living outside of Israel was unpleasant indeed; not only in being a guest in someone else's country, but even in the very air that we breathe. It is a well-known fact that the food we eat influences our internal being. We are careful to eat kosher food, because a Jew understands that to live a life of Kedusha, he must observe the dietary laws which Hashem has decreed for His people. The food which we eat has an effect on our souls. How much more so our surroundings, the air we breathe, and the land we walk on. In Israel, we are surrounded by Kedusha, by holy air and holy soil. And every moment we are here, we are performing a mitzvah, as our Sages say: Everyone who walks four cubits in the Land of Israel merits a portion in the World To Come. (Ketubot 111A) In contrast, outside of Israel, the air is impure, the land is impure, even Halachically, the Diaspora is categorized as possessing a state of defilement similar to that of a grave. (Shabbat 14B)

"We mustn't forget that the gentile nations do us a favor by allowing us to stay in their lands - until they expel us. One must realize that we are on foreign soil there. It is not our society, nor government. Nothing is ours.

Only in Israel, are we at home, with family, living according to our customs, and our uniquely Jewish year; living in the place designed for our Kedusha, for our psychological health, and even for our physical well-being. We must return to health, and turn away from unhealthy, polluted places, from environments which are sometimes so polluted and disorienting that one forgets who he really is, and thinks that it is normal to live among the gentiles. This is a tragic mistake."

ERETZ ISRAEL IS THE LAND OF OUR LIFE, NO MATTER WHERE A JEW IS, HE BELONGS ONLY TO ERETZ ISRAEL. THIS IS HIS PERMANENT HOME. OUTSIDE THE LAND, WE HAVE THE STATUS OF GUESTS.

"A generation ago, the Rabbi of Yerushalaim was Rabbi Shmuel Salant, a great scholar, famous throughout the world. During his childhood, he lived in Lithuania, in the city of Salant. In his youth, he contracted tuberculosis. The greatest doctors feared for his life and nearly surrendered all hope. They recommended he travel to a certain healthy locale, between Egypt and Ethiopia. Perhaps there he could live many more years. Rabbi Salant said to them, 'This location is close to the Land of Israel. It is preferable to travel there.' Thus he journeyed to Yerushalaim, where he lived to the age of ninety-three, serving as rabbi of the city for sixty years."

"Eretz Israel is the Land of our life, in every way, whether national, historical, social, or personal. Even in the aspect of our physical well-being and health. The atmosphere of Eretz Israel is our atmosphere. These mountains, these hills, these valleys, Yerushalaim, Hevron, and Shechem, in both their spiritual and physical meanings, they are bonded to us," Rav Tzvi Yehuda said.

"AND IF, DUE TO THE ROUTINENESS OF OUR LIVES, WE FORGET THIS CONNECTION, THIS IS A CATASTROPHE. IT IS A TRAGEDY WHEN WE FALL IN LOVE WITH THE GALUT. IT IS WRITTEN IN THE TORAH PORTION, MISHPATIM, THAT AFTER SIX YEARS, A HEBREW SLAVE MUST GO FREE. IF HE REFUSES, SAYING, I LOVED MY MASTER - I WON'T GO OUT TO FREEDOM, THIS IS AN AWFUL THING. LIKEWISE, WHEN WE FALL IN LOVE WITH THE GALUT, SAYING, 'I LOVED MY MASTER, THE FOREIGN NATION,' THIS IS A TRAGIC MISTAKE."

"We need to foster the understanding, and the feeling, that we must live in Israel, that this is our normal place, in terms of religion, and in terms of our nationhood. If we are not here, we are unhealthy. And from time to time, the gentiles remind us that we are living in their domain, in an alien land."

"THIS MUST BE CLEAR BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE - NO MATTER WHERE A JEW IS, HE BELONGS ONLY TO ERETZ ISRAEL. THIS IS HIS PERMANENT HOME. OUTSIDE THE LAND, WE HAVE THE STATUS OF GUESTS. FOR TWO OR THREE YEARS, IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE THERE, IN ORDER TO FULFILL A MITZVAH, BUT THE AIM OF OUR LIFE IS TO BE HERE."

NEVER LEAVE ERETZ ISRAEL FOR ANY REASON

Therefore, Rav Kook said, one must root oneself in Eretz Israel, not abandon her, nor make her a foreign thing. Someone who wants to be close to the king doesn't travel to one of his territories on the other side of the globe - he goes to the palace. In the words of the Kuzari, prophecy only occurs in her or for her. In the Land of Israel, or on her behalf. Prophecy, the highest and clearest expression of our closeness to Hashem, occurs either in Israel or in a situation of yearning for Eretz Israel. As the Gemara says, "One who eagerly awaits to see her (Ketubot 75A. But of Zion it shall be said. 'This and that man was born in her.' Both the one who is born there, and the one who yearns to see her) Through his yearning to belong to Eretz Israel, he becomes a part of her, and shares in her special gifts

Thus, the Rosh Yeshiva said, leaving Eretz Israel should not even enter one's thoughts. However, Shlichim (emissaries) who go out to the Diaspora for a limited time, perform a great and important task. Brief departures on behalf of Eretz Israel are permitted, in order to educate Jews in the Diaspora, and to establish a connection between the Jewish people and their Land.

Rav Tzvi Yehuda said that the laws on this subject were made very clear in the Gemara. Generally, leaving the Land of Israel is forbidden, but exceptional cases of temporary departure are permitted. One such reason is to learn Torah, if it is impossible to learn Torah in Israel, in a case where Eretz Israel lies in ruins, and is desolate of Torah. Then a person has no choice, and one must seek Torah outside the Land. Thank G-d, Rav Tzvi Yehuda said, this is not the situation today. Also, it is permissible to

temporarily leave Israel in search of a spouse, if it is impossible to find a suitable and proper daughter of Israel in Eretz Israel...

SONS AND DAUGHTERS CAN MAKE ALIYAH EVEN IF PARENTS OPPOSE THEM

When confronted by these Halachic rulings for the first time, students from the exile are often dismayed. The obligation of living in Israel can mean uprooting oneself from one's birthplace, and separating oneself from the culture and language one knows; and even from family and friends. A student asked Rav Kook what the Halacha said in a case where parents are opposed to a child's moving to Israel.

"THE RULING IN YOREH DEAH (240:15) STATES THAT IF A FATHER TELLS A CHILD TO TRANSGRESS A POSITIVE COMMANDMENT, EVEN A RABBINICAL ORDINANCE, THE CHILD SHOULD NOT LISTEN TO HIM. THE PRECEPT TO LIVE IN ISRAEL IS A TORAH COMMANDMENT, WHICH APPLIES IN EVERY GENERATION, TO EVERY JEW, EVEN IN THE TIME OF GALUT. THEREFORE, A BEIT DIN CAN COMPEL SOMEONE TO LEAVE THE EXILE AND MOVE TO ISRAEL, EVEN FROM A LUXURIOUS HOME IN THE DIASPORA, TO A MISERABLE HOME IN ERETZ ISRAEL; EVEN FROM A CITY IN GALUT WHERE THE MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS ARE JEWS, TO A CITY IN ISRAEL WHERE THE MAJORITY ARE IDOL WORSHIPPERS.

The Beit Din has this power of compelling someone to move to Israel, not because of the many precepts which one can only perform in the Land, but, rather, because of the Kedusha of the Land itself, an eternal Kedusha which has not changed, nor will ever change, for all eternity. (Chatam Sofer, Yoreh Deah, 234) Furthermore, the obligation of moving to Israel is all the more stringent when it stems from a desire to learn Torah in Israel, for, There is no Torah like the Torah of Eretz Israel. And the study of Torah is greater than the mitzvah of honoring one's father and mother. Concerning women, because of the intrinsic Kedusha of Eretz Israel, which is the foundation of the obligation to live here, they are also duty-bound in this mitzvah.

THE TIME HAS COME TO RETURN HOME

"There was a Divine need for the anger which scattered us amidst the impure, and a Divine reason for the awesome wrath and curse which lay on

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the Land. Only a short time ago, Israel was infested with malaria and diseases. Medical experts said it was impossible to live here. Yet Petach Tikva and Hadera rose out of the swamps. Now, with Hashem's blessing, This Land which was desolate has become like a Garden of Eden.(Ezekiel, 36:35) This has happened physically - in Israel's technological development and agricultural rebirth, and spiritually - in the flourishing of Yeshivot and Torah. Hashem was well pleased for His righteousness sake to magnify and glorify Torah. (Isaiah, 42:21)

THE TIME HAS COME TO RETURN HOME," RAV TZVI YEHUDA TOLD THE VISITING STUDENTS. "WHETHER WE WANT TO OR NOT; WHETHER WE RECOGNIZE THIS TRUTH, OR WHETHER WE WANT TO RUN AWAY FROM IT. AND I WILL BRING THEM BACK TO THEIR LAND.(EZEKIEL, 36:22) HASHEM HAS DECIDED THAT THE TIME HAS ARRIVED. EVEN IF THIS REQUIRES THE MOST UNPLEASANT MEANS, WITH HASHEM'S ANGER Poured OUT, THE TIME HAS COME TO RETURN TO OUR COUNTRY, AND TO OUR OWN SPECIAL AIR.

However, when we return, we must realize that our restoration in Israel is not happenstance. This is not a coincidental shaping of history. Rather, we must see Hashem's guiding hand, and His Divine ordering of events, for what they are - the fulfillment of, When Hashem brings back the captivity of Zion.(Tehillim, 126: 1) One must realize that this is all a manifestation of, "My spirit which is upon you, and the words which I have put in your mouth"(Isaiah, 59:21). It is Hashem's glorious spirit which is surrounding all of the House of Israel today and bringing us back to our Land, and to our Torah. Each one of you, in your coming to Israel, is a part of this. Hashem is returning His Presence to Zion. (From the Shemona Esrei). How fortunate we are to be a part of this national rebirth, to be a part of the restoration of our life to its original essence – the national community of Israel, A Kingdom of Kohanim, and an Am Kadosh. The more we are conscious of the Divine in the events of our time, the more we will merit to meet the Almighty, who returns His Divine Presence to Zion."

Rav Tzvi Yehuda addressed the students who had come from abroad:"You too have merited a new Israeli soul, by inhaling the air of our Land, the Land of Clal Israel. We hope that we will see you here soon, to build Eretz Israel, and to be built by her. There are people who are blessed with an

immediate Aliyah to Israel, and others who encounter spiritual and physical difficulties on the way. Sometimes coming to Israel to visit is a preparation for a permanent Aliyah, something which is essential to you, and to all of Am Israel."

SUMMARY ERETZ ISRAEL

1. When a Jew comes to Eretz Israel, upon awakening in the morning, he has a new soul.
2. The Gaon of Vilna taught that a person isn't complete until he comes to the Land of Israel.
- 3- Eretz Israel is not like every other land. Hashem endowed it with holy properties especially suited to His people
- 4-The Jewish people can only be a nation in Israel. The genuine fulfillment of Torah is achieved only in Eretz Israel. Only in Israel can the Jewish people be an Am Kadosh.
- 5- In the Exile, our identity shifted away from our national character, forming a Judaism which focused on the individual, and not on the Clal.
- 6- The Torah is not only a code of ritual practices and laws, but rather a national constitution, embodied in a Divinely-chosen community, and fulfilled in a Divinely-chosen Land.
- 7- Just as other nations belong to a particular land, Hashem's chosen nation belongs to a particular chosen Land.
- 8- Jewish sovereignty over Eretz Israel is a manifestation of the Shechina in the world. The Divine Presence appears, not only in the Kingdom of Israel in its ideal Torah state, but in the modern State of Israel today.
- 9- Because of our long exile amidst the impurity of the gentile nations, we have become accustomed to thinking that life in Galut is normal, and we forget that Eretz Israel is our true, Divinely intended place.
10. The precept of conquering and settling Eretz Israel is a Torah commandment, and not just the means for observing a Torah lifestyle in Israel.
11. The establishment of Jewish sovereignty over Eretz Israel is a fundamental axiom of the Torah. The Ramban clearly establishes that the Land which Hashem promised our forefathers must be kept under our control, and not under the control of any other nation.
12. Medinat Israel is Kadosh in its fulfillment of this national mitzvah. It is the vehicle which Hashem is using to enable us to actualize this

commandment, which is equal in value to all of the precepts in the Torah.

13. Eretz Israel is the true place for the Torah's observance. In the Diaspora, the commandments are imposed as reminders, so that when we return to Israel, we will know how to keep them.

14. It is permissible to temporarily leave Eretz Israel to perform certain mitzvot, but a Jew must first understand that his true home is in Israel.

15. The air of Eretz Israel gives wisdom. In contrast, the air outside of the land is impure; the land is impure; and, Halachically, the Galut possesses a state of defilement similar to that of a grave.

16. If a person's parents oppose his making Aliyah to Israel, the person is not obligated to obey, for a parent is not permitted to interfere in a child's observance of a Torah command, nor of a rabbinic precept

17. Because of its intrinsic Kedusha, women are also obligated in the mitzvah of living in Eretz Israel.

18. The Torah of Eretz Israel is the highest level of Torah. In fact, the Torah of Eretz Israel and the Torah of Chutz L'Aretz are not the same Torah, nor the same mitzvot. Attachment to Torah, and to Hashem, finds its fullest expression in the study of Torah in Eretz Israel

19. The Gemara states that Talmidei Chachamim outside the Land of Israel are out of place.

20. In explaining the reasons for Aliyah, one should stress the positive benefits in living in the place where the Jewish people belong. When this approach fails, the negative aspects of assimilation, and the dangers of living amongst the gentiles, should be made clear.

21. The time has come for the Jewish people to return home to Israel. Whether we choose to realize it or not, Hashem is bringing His people back to His Land. The ingathering of the exiles which we have witnessed in our time is not just a coincidence of history, but the fulfillment of, When Hashem brings back the captivity of Zion...

**THE JERUSALEM TALMUD COMPARES THE
REDEMPTION TO A SUNRISE, WHICH DAWNS
GRADUALLY, SLOWLY SPREADING
ITS LIGHT OUT OVER THE SKY**

"The Geula," he said, "stands in contrast to the Galut, our exile from the Land of Israel. Geula is the opposite of Galut. What is Galut? An aberration. For instance, in our normal state, we need to be here, the entire nation of Israel, in the Land of Israel. And all of Eretz Israel needs to be in our hands.

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Thank G-d, Hashem's light is now shining upon us, and increasing, little by little, in gradual stages. How different things were before the establishment of the State of Israel, when we were outside the Land, and the gentiles were in it, and the possibility for a Jew to enter Eretz Israel rested in foreign hands. This was a time of Galut. We've progressed a bit since then and are returning to a normal condition: Eretz Israel is now in our hands! Yerushalaim is now in our hands! And we are now independent! This process unfolds in stages. Just as Hashem can bring the redemption through miracles, He can do it without miracles, in a simpler way, through a natural process, via the conquest and settlement of Eretz Israel."

This was a teaching that Rabbenu emphasized. The Yerushalaim Talmud compares the redemption to a sunrise, which dawns gradually, slowly spreading its light out over the sky. We progress slowly, very slowly. Often in stages, which at first glance, seem opposed to our Holy Torah. Phenomenon like the non-religious pioneers, and Israel's present form of Statehood, must be viewed in their true light, Rav Tzvi Yehuda taught, as important, and Divinely ordained steps on the way to our true and ultimate Geula.

"The Master of the Universe created the world and gave it to mankind. The heavens belong to Hashem, and the earth He gave to man. He divided mankind into groups and apportioned each group its country, arranging mankind in a historical, developmental order. Thus, peoples with interests in common formed into communities and nations in the lands suited to their natural needs and growth. This distribution revolved around one particular nation, a special Divine creation, distinguished from the rest. He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel"

We were being guided toward a new self-image. The Rosh Yeshiva wanted us to understand that Israel is truly unique, a special Divine creation, independent of the natural evolution of mankind, in effect a different species of man individuals, and yet a Divine collective. The sins which had led to the destruction of the Temple and to our national life in Israel, had interfered with our task of leading the world toward a knowledge of Hashem. Gentile nations temporarily rose in our stead, bringing a material rule to the world. In the exile, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome imposed

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their cultures over mankind, while Israel's great spiritual message was dimmed. We were a kingdom stripped of our glory, our pride, and our Land.

THE IDEA THAT ISRAEL WAS THE CENTER OF THE NATIONS WAS A PREPOSTEROUS THOUGHT, AS THE KING IN THE KUZARI EXPRESSES. SEEMINGLY, WE WERE THE LOWEST OF PEOPLES, AT THE MERCY OF THE GENTILES WHEREVER WE LIVED. HOWEVER, OUR GLORY WAS SURE TO RETURN. IF NOT FOR OUR SAKE, THEN FOR THE GLORY OF OUR CREATOR: "THUS SAYS HASHEM G-D: I DO NOT DO THIS FOR YOUR SAKES, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL, BUT FOR MY HOLY NAME'S SAKE, WHICH YOU HAVE PROFANED AMONG THE NATIONS TO WHICH YOU CAME. AND I WILL SANCTIFY MY GREAT NAME, WHICH WAS PROFANED AMONG THE NATIONS ...FOR I WILL TAKE YOU FROM AMONG THE NATIONS, AND GATHER YOU OUT OF ALL COUNTRIES, AND WILL BRING YOU INTO YOUR OWN LAND." EZEKIEL 36:22-24

This encompassing vision is the vision of Torah which includes everything in the world. Truth can only be found by perceiving a matter in all of its fullness. If seen in a fragmented light, with glasses shattered by pogroms, and with a vision which has been dimmed by ghetto walls, then Israel indeed seems insignificant when compared to the world's great nations. This same fragmented vision caused the Spies to feel like grasshoppers when confronted with the giants of Hebron. It is a vision which doesn't see Hashem's special connection to His nation. Today, Israel has returned to its Land, re-established Jewish sovereignty, and achieved unparalleled success. For the first time in nearly two-thousand years, we have a powerful army able to defend our Land from our enemies. But photographs from only fifty years ago tell a different story - the tragedy of a people in ruins, disgrace, and defeat. To search for the truth of Am Israel in one isolated era, or generation, distorts the unity of the whole. The Torah of Hashem is perfect, encompassing all generations and time. After a two-thousand-year exile, the Jewish people have returned to where we truly belong, in Israel, to the center of the international map. This phenomenal saga of a people returning to live in their ancient land is not merely Zionism, or politics, or the solution to the "Jewish problem." The return of the Jewish people to Israel is the deepest essence of Torah.

THE END OF GALUT IS TAKING PLACE IN OUR DAYS

"We find with our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, a very clear definition of the end of Galut. In the Gemara, after a full page of reckonings and mystical calculations, a very obvious indication appears. It is a verse from the book of Ezekiel: But you O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they will soon be coming. Rashi comments that there can be no surer sign of the End of the exile than this. There are two parts to this verse. First, the Land, which for so many years lay desolate, is Divinely commanded to give forth its fruits not to the gentile nations, but to the nation of Israel. This abundant harvest is connected to the ingathering of the exiles, the second phase of the verse, For they will soon be coming.(Ezekiel, 36:8)

These two phenomena are clearly happening in our time. History bears witness to the desolation which, for nearly two thousand years, characterized the Land of Israel. In a famous letter to his son, soon after his Aliyah to Israel, the Ramban mourns over the destruction of the Land, and the even greater devastation of Yerushalaim. Also the American writer, Mark Twain, notes in "Innocents Abroad," the diary he kept on a visit to Israel, that the roads were more rocky than the hillsides, and he describes the unusual poverty of the land. Eretz Israel was conquered again and again, but only when her children returned, did she bring forth her fruit.

SUMMARY GALUT AND GEULA

1. The thrust of the Torah, the writings of our prophets, and our prayers, all point toward Geula - the redemption of Am Israel, and the redemption of the world in its wake - when the nations of the world will be brought to the true recognition of Hashem.
2. The Geula is occurring in our time through the return of the Jewish people to Israel; through the establishment of Jewish sovereignty in Eretz Israel; and through the return of more and more people to Torah
3. More than anyone in our time, Rav Kook taught that the Geula was actually happening in the down-to-earth realities of reestablishing the Jewish nation in Israel.
4. Just as Hashem can bring the redemption about through miracles, He can do so without miracles, through the natural process of conquering and settling the Land of Israel.

5. The Geula is a historical process which unfolds in gradual stages. Zionism and the modern State of Israel are Divinely ordained steps in this developing process.
6. To reveal the Kingdom of Hashem in the world, all of the Jewish people have to be back in Israel.
7. When the world is viewed in its true light - as Hashem's creation, then the real "superpower" in the world is Israel.
8. Zionism is not merely a political question, or a solution to the "Jewish problem," Zionism is a foundation of all of the Torah.
9. The highest sanctification of Hashem is not limited to religious Jews, but comes about through ALL of the House of Israel, through the return of the Jewish people to Israel. In contrast to this, the condition of Galut is a Chillul Hashem.
10. Our Sages tell us that when the Land of Israel yields its fruit to a great ingathering of exiles - the end of Galut has arrived. This is happening today, plainly in front of our eyes.
11. There is no coincidence. Hashem is bringing the Jewish people home to Israel. We need only to look with open eyes to see the Divine Presence returning to Zion...

THE MATTER OF THE SPIES

“It is well known that the Ramban established a fundamental Halachic ruling that living in the Land of Israel, and conquering the Land, are commandments of the Torah which apply in every age. Among the supporting verses he cites is the verse, “Rise and possess”. The Ramban emphasizes that this is the language of a command. In contrast to this, the rejection of the precept, Go up and possess, is a rebellion against Hashem. “And when Hashem sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, Go up and possess the Land which I gave you, and you rebelled against Hashem your G-d, and you did not believe in Me, and did not listen to My voice”. (Devarim 9:23). They didn’t listen to Hashem in conquering and possessing the Land. Possessing the Land is a mitzvah, and the opposite is a rebellion against Hashem.”

“And the proof that this is a commandment is this: They were told to go up in the matter of the Spies, “Go up and conquer as Hashem has said to you. Don’t fear, and don’t be discouraged”. And it further says: “And when

Hashem sent you from Kadesh Barnea saying, Go up and possess the Land which I have given you". And when they didn't go up, the Torah says: "And you rebelled against the word of G-d, and you didn't listen to this command." Ramban. Ibid

RAV TZVI YEHUDA WANTED THE LESSON OF THE SPIES TO BE CLEAR. THE TORAH IS ETERNAL. THE TORAH DOESN'T CHANGE. WHAT WAS TRUE IN THE TIME OF MOSHE RABBENU IS TRUE FOR US TODAY. THE SPIES REBELLED AGAINST HASHEM BY REFUSING TO OBEY HIS COMMAND TO GO UP AND CONQUER ISRAEL. THE LACK OF EMUNAH, WHICH THEIR MUTINY EXPRESSED, WAS A SIN FAR GREATER THAN THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF, WHERE ONLY THREE THOUSAND PEOPLE WERE PUNISHED. BECAUSE OF THE SIN OF THE SPIES, THE ENTIRE GENERATION OF MEN PERISHED IN THE WIDENESS. THIS GREAT WRONGDOING WAS NOT LIMITED TO THE MASSES, BUT INCLUDED THE GEDOLIM OF ISRAEL, AS RAV CHAIM LUZZATO EXPLAINS IN MESILLAT YESHARIM: "THEY FEARED A LESSENING OF THEIR HONOR, LEST, UPON ENTERING THE 'LAND, THEY WOULD NO LONGER BE PRINCES OF ISRAEL, AND OTHERS WOULD BE APPOINTED IN THEIR PLACE.

TRAGICALLY, MANY OF OUR PEOPLE MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE TODAY. THEY DON'T REALIZE THAT LIVING IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL ISN'T A MATTER OF PERSONAL CHOICE. IT IS THE UNDERLYING BASIS OF TORAH.

In the same way that the mitzvot of Kashrut, Sukkot, and Tefillin, are comprised of many details, so too the mitzvah of living in Israel has many different facets. At its foundation rests one of the Torah's most difficult precepts - a military command.

Certainly, the subject of war is not a pleasant topic. The prospect of having to wage war, even in defense of land and life, is a difficult matter to face. However, war is a facet of life, of Torah, and of our redemption, which has to be confronted and understood. The nearly two-thousand year Exile, without a land of our own, or a Jewish army, altered our orientation to matters of war. Without the means to defend ourselves, we adopted a self-image as victims. War was seen as something which belonged to the gentiles. We were to busy ourselves with Torah. War and religion were

looked at as opposites. The idea that a rabbi, a Talmid Chacham, a man devoted to Kedusha, and to the service of Hashem, could be connected in any way to weapons, and killing, and the horrors of war, was simply out of the question.

MOSHE RABBENU WAS THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ISRAELI ARMY

However, a look at the Torah, at our history, and our Sages, clearly shows the distortion of this thinking, and how very far we strayed from our forefathers. In addition to being our nation's holiest Tzaddik and Talmid Chacham, Moshe Rabbenu was the Commander-in-Chief of the Israeli army. Out of his exalted Kedusha, he had to leave his wife and move his tent outside the camp of the people, yet he led the nation in war. Rashi tells us that in the war with Amalek, Moshe's arms grew tired, and needed support in punishment for not having led the battle himself. This connection between Gedolei Israel and the army appears again and again in our history. Joshua, Samson, and King David, were all leaders of the nation, guardians of the Torah, and the commanders of Israel's armies. Rabbi Akiva supported the battles of Bar Kochva, and even carried his weapons. And the Rambam tells us that the Mashiach will restore all of Israel to Torah, and fight Israel's wars. Though wars are only waged out of necessity, if the occasion demands, the Torah commands us to war. Tzahal, the Israel Defense Forces, is a precept of Torah! Rav Tzvi Yehuda taught us to see this relationship between Torah and war in its true light. It was Hashem, he said, in His aspect of the Master of Wars, who brings the Geula, as the Gemara states: War is also the beginning of redemption.

"Come and possess. How is this precept performed?" Rav Tzvi Yehuda asked. "If need be, through the waging of war to conquer the land - whether this be enjoyable to us, or whether it goes against our nature and spirit. Baruch Hashem, we don't choose between mitzvot, like certain 'Orthodox' Jews do. If it were possible to conquer the Land without spilling blood, certainly this would be better. This is obvious. However, until the End of Days, when, Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, sometimes we have no choice but to act with our soldiers and army.

"Entering the land is no simple matter. Other people and nations live here, and there is a likelihood of conflict with them. The Children of Israel knew

they were leaving Egypt for Yerushalaim, so, The Children of Israel went up supplied. What is the meaning of supplied? Rashi explains: readied with arms. We are to prepare for military conflict. There are levels of this conflict, and the severest is a Milchemet mitzvah, a situation where the Torah commands us to wage war. What is the criterion of a compulsory war? Its principle meaning is liberating the Land. so in its fundamental sense, the concept of a Torah commanded war is bound up with entering the Land, as explained by the Ramban that this Land must be in our hands, under our active sovereignty and government, and not under the rule of any other nation

THE CHAFETZ CHAIM: "IN A SHORT TIME THE MASHIACH WILL COME, AND WE WILL HAVE A STATE, AND A STATE NEEDS AN ARMY"

"It is obvious that establishing ourselves throughout the Land of Israel is intertwined with military conflict and war. I heard several reports on the reaction of the Chafetz Chaim to Jews serving in the armed forces of the gentiles. He indicated that it would be good training and preparation for serving in our army. There were young men who sought to evade serving in foreign armies. The viewpoint of the Chafetz Chaim, which encompassed all of the multi-sided facets of Clal Israel, is a healthy lesson, indeed. He said to them. 'In a short time the Mashiach will come, and we will have a State, and a State needs an army. Will you wait until then to learn how to be soldiers? Now you have the opportunity to learn how to fight. This is very important to us. The Master of the World is arranging this practice to prepare you for service in our army."

"Not everyone understood this. In the last generations, Hashem has shown himself as the Master of war. He had us serve in the gentile armies, and out of this, several Jews became experts in strategy and warfare in our army. All of this is the working of the Master of the World, Who proclaims the generations from the beginning."

"Who was it who originated Israel's military posture? Moshe Rabbenu. The structure of Israel's army is from the Torah. As a part of his learning and teaching, Moshe was to conduct the wars of Torah. As he comes to prepare for war, Moshe orders a roll call of, "All who go forth to service in Israel", a statistical count with the wholeness of its physical body. It encompasses

the exalted spirit of Israel, and the Shechina, together with the practical requirements of an army in its most basic sense, as the nation of Israel faces the reality of entering the Land."

"In our returning... to the Land of our forefathers, this Eretz HaKodesh of our life, we didn't take from the Arabs who dwelled here in the Land's desolation, any governmental rule, for they didn't have any here. Rather, we returned to the Land with the collapse of the foreign government who temporarily ruled over it." "Also, something which is not known to everyone, we didn't expel them from their residences here in our Land and inheritance from our forefathers...rather they themselves, whether from cowardice or exaggerated fear, or from the invention of political schemes, and the multiplication of lies, and the creation of 'refugee camps' in the eyes of the world, near and far - they fled from and abandoned several of the areas where they lived." HaRav Tzvi Yehuda Kook, in the public proclamation, "You Shall Know!"

"The leaders of the gentile nations also know that Eretz Israel belongs to the nation of Israel. Even in the Koran and other books of Islam, it is mentioned that this Land belongs to the Jews, and that in the end of days the offspring of Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov will return to their inheritance. ,

THE PRECEPT OF LIVING IN ISRAEL

1. The highest sanctification of Hashem occurs through the nation of Israel in Eretz Israel.
2. Judaism is much more than an individual's private mitzvot. It is the constitution of the Jewish nation in its Land.
3. The Kedusha of the nation, and the Kedusha of the Land are two facets of a single essence.
4. Avraham Avinu is the foundation for the appearance of Am Israel in the world.
5. In the order of the Psukei D'Zimrah prayer, the chosenness of the Land of Israel precedes the chosenness of the nation.
6. The Kedusha of Eretz Israel is intertwined with the Kedusha of the nation.
7. Moshe Rabbenu's explanation of the Torah starts with the command to rise up and conquer the Land of Israel.

8. The Kuzari states that the Torah was given in Sinai precisely because it is in Eretz Israel, and not in Chutz L'Aretz.
9. The Ramban established the fundamental Halachic ruling that living in the Land of Israel, and conquering the Land, are commandments of the Torah which apply in every age.
10. The Ramban explains that settling in Israel is a mitzvah, and that its rejection is a rebellion against Hashem.
11. The establishment of Jewish sovereignty over Eretz Israel, as seen in the State of Israel, is a commandment of the Torah.
12. War is also the beginning of redemption.
13. Tzahal, the Israel Defense Forces, is a precept of Torah.
14. The Chofetz Chaim encouraged Jews to serve in the armed forces of the gentiles to prepare themselves for service in Israel's army.
15. Like the need to keep Kosher, or to put on Tefillin, the precept of compulsory war is a commandment like any other.
16. Today, in settling the Land of Israel, we are fighting a Milchemet mitzvah, according to the definitions established by the Rambam and the Ramban.
17. Previous generations did not have the technical capability to fulfill this commandment, but today, the means have returned to our hands.
18. There is no contradiction whatsoever between Yeshiva learning and the obligation to serve in the Israeli army. Yeshivot are obligated to explain the importance of the army to their students, and at the same time, to explain to the nation the importance of developing an abundance of Talmidei Chachamim.
19. We have absolutely no right to relinquish any control over any piece of Eretz Israel.
20. The Milchemet mitzvah of conquering Israel and keeping it in our hands comes even at the risk of one's life.
21. We must guard against language which leads to discouragement and weakness, and not be afraid in settling the Land of Israel, even in the face of opposition from all of the nations of the world.
22. When there is a willingness to sacrifice one's life for the State of Israel, miracles occur.
23. All setbacks we face in settling the Land of Israel are temporary. Because of its staggering scale, the return of the Jewish people to Israel is beset with problems, but these have no lasting significance in light of Hashem's guarantee to return our nation to Zion.

THERE ARE INSTANCES WHERE COMMANDMENTS DO NOT APPEAR ON THE LIST OF THE RAMBAM, BECAUSE THEY ARE COMMANDMENTS WHICH ENCOMPASS ALL OF THE TORAH (LIKE LIVING IN ERETZ ISRAEL)

The Rambam, in his classic work of Halacha, the Mishne Torah, makes the obligation of living in Land of Israel quite clear. In the Laws of Kings and Their Wars, Chapter Five, he details the prohibition against leaving the Land of Israel to dwell outside of the Land, describes the great love the Sages have for the Land, and quotes the Gemara in Ketubot, which states: In all times, a Jew should live in the Land of Israel, even in a city where most of the residents are idol worshippers, and not live outside of the Land, even in a city where most of the residents are Jews.

The question why the Rambam does not list living in Israel as one of the 613 precepts is more of a philosophical inquiry than a Halachic one, for, as Rav Tzvi Yehuda stressed, the appearance, or non-appearance, of a precept on the list has, by itself, no Halachic significance for the commandments, and the obligation to do them, comes from the Torah, and not from the varying lists. The lists don't determine which precepts we do - the Torah does. There are instances where commandments do not appear on the list, because they are commandments which encompass all of the Torah, as the Rambam himself explains in his introduction to Sefer HaMitzvot; or because they derive from Rabbinic decree; or because they were not practiced at the time of the list. When answering this question, Rav Tzvi Yehuda would clarify the Rambam's methodology to the enumeration of precepts on his list, as set forth by the Rambam in his introduction.

"The reason the Rambam does not list living in Israel in the Taryag mitzvot is not because he thinks it is less than a mitzvah - he thinks the opposite! It is more than a mitzvah.

"The Rambam established fourteen rules by which certain commandments are not included in the list, like precepts of Rabbinic ordinance, which are categorized differently than commandments from the Torah. Also, an encompassing commandment, which is above the normal value of the precepts, is not included in the list.

"AND ALSO THE RAMBAM, WHO DIDN'T INCLUDE IT IN THE LIST OF 613 MITZVOT, BEHOLD, THIS ISN'T BECAUSE IT HAS LESS VALUE THAN THE OTHER MITZVOT; RATHER IT IS ABOVE THE USUAL VALUE. AND ALSO BECAUSE, ACCORDING TO THE UNDERLYING FOUNDATIONS OF SEFER HAMITZVOT, PRECEPTS WHICH ENCOMPASS ALL OF THE TORAH AREN'T INCLUDED IN THE LIST." (L'NETIVOT ISRAEL, PART I, P. 117, HARAV TZVI YEHUDA HACHOEN KOOK. YERUSHALAIM, 5727.)

In the introduction to the Sefer HaMitzvot of the Rambam, Rule Four states, "Commandments which affect all of the mitzvot of the Torah are not included (in the list.)" As an example, he mentions the Torah command, You shall be holy which he explains as meaning to keep all of the Torah, and therefore, he does not list it as a separate command. So too with the mitzvah of living in Eretz Israel. It is an all-encompassing mitzvah, not simply because over a third of the precepts can only be performed in the Land of Israel, and therefore, obviously, one must live in Israel to truly keep all of the Torah. Living in Israel is more than this. It is a mitzvah which all of the Torah depends on, above and beyond the precepts specific to the Land. Not only did the Rambam think living in Israel is a Torah commandment, he believed it to be a major foundation of our faith, and a pillar of all of the Torah.

The Rambam emphasizes the centrality of Eretz Israel to Torah in Sefer HaMitzvot, concerning the positive precept of the Sanctification of the New Month. In a lengthy discussion, he makes it clear that it is the Jews of the Land of Israel who constitute the Jewish nation. Even if the majority of Jews are exiled from the Land, it is not the Torah centers outside of the Land which make up the heart of the nation, but the Jewish peasants who live in Eretz Israel. This is illustrated by the calculation of the Jewish calendar, which can only be established by the Jews in Israel, irrelevant of their status in Torah.

Rav Tzvi Yehuda guided us through a step-by-step understanding of this very deep concept, which, "Not every rabbi knew. He explained that the calculation of the new moon, and hence of the months, and the years, and the dates on which the holidays fall, can be done only in the Land of Israel. This was performed by witnesses, who upon observance of the new moon, would travel to Yerushalaim to testify before the Beit Din. When the Sages

saw that foreign persecution and rule over Israel threatened to disrupt the line of rabbinic ordination (Smichah) handed down from Moshe to the succeeding leaders of each generation (the Beit Din,) they sanctified, for all time, the calendar which we use today.

The Rambam makes clear in the Sefer HaMitzvot, concerning Positive Command 153, which deals with the establishment of the months, that this calculation can only be done in Israel: "Know! This accounting of months which we calculate today, and know from this the beginning of the months and the holidays, is not allowed to be made, except in the Land of Israel, exclusively...and here lies a very great foundation from the axioms of our belief, which was not known or understood except among the deep learners of Torah. We only make this accounting today to know the day that the Jews living in Israel established, for from their accounting we calculate and establish the months today, and not by our observation of the new moon. We base our calculation on their fixing and not upon ours. And our accounting is nothing more than the substantiation of their words"

THE RAMBAM ADDS, "IF WE COULD SUPPOSE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL DISAPPEARED FROM THE LAND OF ISRAEL; G-D FORBID THE ALMIGHTY EVER DO THIS, SINCE HE HAS ALREADY PROMISED NOT TO TOTALLY ERASE OR UPROOT ALL SIGNS OF THE NATION - THEN OUR RECKONING OF THE MONTHS WOULD NOT HELP US AT ALL, IN ANY WAY WHATSOEVER, BECAUSE WE ARE NOT EMPOWERED TO MAKE THE RECKONINGS OUTSIDE THE LAND OF ISRAEL.. AS WE EXPLAINED, FROM ZION SHALL GO FORTH TORAH."

The Chatam Sofer explains the deep import of what the Rambam is saying. "If, G-d forbid, a single Jew wasn't living in Israel, even if there were Jews living outside the Land, this would be the destruction of the entire nation, G-d forbid. The Rambam asserted that the times of the years, and the months, and the holy days which the Rishonim calculated were valid only if there were at least vine growers and farmers in Israel who would determine when the time had arrived.. And if this wasn't so then the reckoning and sanctification of the early Sages would have no affect, and the entire Torah would be null, G-d forbid, and there wouldn't be any nation of Israel, G-d forbid, and our existence as a nation would be utterly destroyed, G-d forbid. But our Creator promised that this would not be".

Not only did the Rambam think that living in Israel was a mitzvah; he felt it was a mitzvah on which the whole Torah was based! Rav Tzvi Yehuda explained this point further by citing a Gemara:

"This is made clear at the end of tractate, Berachot, regarding Rabbi Haninah, the son of Rabbi Joshua's brother, a Talmid Chacham who descended from Eretz Israel to the Galut. At the time, the nation was in a sorrowful state, and many Gedolei Israel remained outside of Israel. Rabbi Haninah was a leader of the generation, and a giant in Torah. He began to intercalate years, and determine the beginnings of the new months outside of the Land of Israel. This is something completely forbidden. Therefore two Talmidei Chachamin were sent from Israel to fight against this. Upon their arrival in Babylon, they took part in official, ceremonies and didn't reveal the purpose of their visit. They were received with great honor. Gradually, they started to vent their opposition. Finally, they entered a crowded assembly and said to the Jews of Babylon, 'Behold, you are a great congregation. You can be independent. You don't need Eretz Israel. You don't need Mt. Moriah.' Their sarcasm was purposefully stinging in order to shock the Babylonian Jews. 'And you've also got Rabbi Ahia here. Let Ahia build an altar, and let Haninah play on the harp. But know that if you detach yourselves from the centrality of Eretz Israel, you have no portion in the G-d of Israel! (Berachot, 63A and 63B)

"SEPARATING ONESELF FROM THE CENTRALITY OF ERETZ ISRAEL IN JEWISH LIFE AND IN TORAH IS HERESY," RAV TZVI YEHUDA STRESSED. "THE GEMARA CONCLUDES, "IMMEDIATELY, THE PEOPLE CRIED OUT IN TEARS AND SAID, G-D FORBID, WE DO HAVE A PORTION IN THE G-D OF ISRAEL!.. FOR FROM ZION SHALL GO FORTH TORAH, AND THE WORD OF HASHEM FROM YERUSHALAIM"

Thus, the Rambam emphasizes living in Eretz Israel is one of the fundamentals of our belief. Any understanding of Torah which does not place Eretz Israel in the center of Jewish life is a false and heretical doctrine. An in-depth study of the Rambam reveals that he does not view living in Eretz Israel as something peripheral to the nation. On the contrary, he sees the settlement of Jews in Israel as a necessary foundation of Torah, and as a foundation of Am Israel.

THE CHAFETZ CHAIM STATED IN HIS PRACTICAL WAY, THAT THE VALUE OF A COMMANDMENT WHICH A JEW PERFORMS IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL, LIKE PUTTING ON TEFILLIN, IS TWENTY TIMES GREATER THAN THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SAME PRECEPT OUTSIDE OF THE LAND

"In contrast to the Galut," Rav Tzvi Yehuda said, "Eretz Israel is our natural, normal, healthy place. The principal manifestation of Hashem's Presence is in Eretz Israel. The principal place of prophecy is Eretz Israel. The principal place of Torah is Eretz Israel. The Chafetz Chaim stated in his practical way, that the value of a commandment which a Jew performs in the Land of Israel, like putting on Tefillin, is twenty times greater than the performance of the same precept outside of the Land. In Israel, the performance of a commandment is natural to our lives. Even song is possible only in Eretz Israel, as it says, How can we sing Hashem's song on foreign soil? (Tehillim, 137:4.)

Rav Tzvi Yehuda pointed to an expression of Israel's yearning for vital fulfillment in the writings of the Gaon, Rabbi Yehoshua of Kutna. He was one of the leading Torah scholars of his generation, and the compiler of numerous responses to questions of law, the Yeshuot Malko. Regarding the return to Zion which was gaining momentum in his time, he wrote, "There is no doubting that this is a great mitzvah, for the ingathering of the exiles is the beginning of the Geula. And especially since we have now seen a tremendous yearning, both amongst non-believers, amongst ordinary men, and amongst the righteous, we are close to absolute certainty that the spirit of redemption has budded. (Responsa, Yeshuot Malko, Section 66)

THE LAND EXPELS THEM (THOSE WHO ARE NOT WORTHY TO DWELL THERE)

"IN CONTRAST TO THE YEARNING FOR THE LAND OF ISRAEL, A NEGATIVE PHENOMENON OF SPEAKING EVIL ABOUT THE LAND ALSO EXISTS. HARAV SHMUEL MOHLIVER, WHO WORKED FIERCELY FOR THE BUILDING OF ISRAEL AND FOR ALIYAH, WAS A TZADDIK AND A GAON IN TORAH. RAV YITZHAK NISSENBAUM WAS HIS SECRETARY, AND HE RELATED A STORY IN THE NAME OF HARAV MOHLIVER. A CERTAIN G-D-FEARING JEW ABANDONED THE LAND OF ISRAEL AND WAS

ACCUSTOMED TO SAY BAD THINGS ABOUT IT. HARAV SHMUEL MOHLIVER SAID, 'THIS DOES NOT MAKE SENSE. ALL OF THE TORAH IS FILLED WITH PRAISE FOR ERETZ ISRAEL. HOW COULD A G-D-FEARING JEW SAY THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE TORAH?'

To explain, he told a parable: A Shidduch was once arranged between two young people. Before the meeting, the girl realized that she already knew the boy, and it was clear to her that he wasn't the right partner for her. However, she didn't want to embarrass the boy by not going to meet him. So she showed up disheveled and dirty in hopes that the 'boy wouldn't like her. This is similar to our case of the Jew who was expelled by the Land. This is a sign that something was at fault with him. However, Hashem loves every Jew and does not want to humiliate someone by expelling him outright from Eretz Israel, so He makes the Land appear in an opposite light from what the person hopes for, (and the person seemingly decides to leave the Land on his own.) (HaRav Yitzhak Nissenbaum, "Rishonim L'Zion," The Hebrew, New York, Edition, 46, 20 Tevet, 5681)

PEOPLE OF THIS SORT ARE EXPELLED FROM THE LAND IN A GENTLE FASHION, RAV TZVI YEHUDA SAID. THEY BELIEVE THEY ARE REJECTING THE LAND, AND DON'T REALIZE THAT, IN TRUTH, THE LAND IS REJECTING THEM

"SIMILARLY, THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARGUE AGAINST ALIYAH TO ISRAEL BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE IT IS FRAUGHT WITH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL DANGERS."

"Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Shragai, who was responsible for matters of Aliyah in Israel, recounted that when he saw young people from North Africa and Yemen corrupted when they came to Israel, he asked the Gaon, HaRav Zvi Pesach Frank, ztkl, Rabbi of Yerushalaim, if it was worthwhile and permitted to continue to bring these Jews to Israel, or, on the contrary, to prevent them from coming. "G-d forbid", HaRav Frank responded. It is an obligation to bring them. If they become corrupted, you are not the one responsible for that. First of all, Jews must come to Israel. Afterward, the proper frameworks must be provided for them. Here we have a clear Halachic decision.

At the end of tractate Ketubot,(Ketubot 112B) several matters are cited regarding the love our Sages felt for Eretz Israel. Rabbi Abba kissed the stones of Acco. And, Rabbi Chia bar Gamda adorned himself with her dust. He didn't simply bend down to kiss the ground, he rolled in the dust, in order to actualize the verse: For Your servants desired her stones and cherished her very dust." Tehillim, 102:15

IF THE OBLIGATION TO LIVE IN ERETZ ISRAEL IS SO CLEAR, HOW CAN ONE EXPLAIN THE PHENOMENON THAT THE MODERN PIONEERS OF ALIYAH AND SETTLEMENT WERE NOT RELIGIOUS JEWS?

Rav Tzvi Yehuda said that this assumption simply was not true. "First of all, in the name of historical accuracy, the movement of Geula in our time did not begin with Herzl, but with (the religious group) Chebat Zion, the Lovers of Zion. At the head of this movement were Talmidei Chachamim of immense, holy stature, HaRav Tzvi Hirsh Kalisher, and HaRav Eliahu Guttmacher. Both of these men were graced with Divine spirit, and all of their words and deeds were directed toward Israel's Geula. Afterwards, when the movement spread, new spokesmen arose, and new directions developed, with a multiplicity of organizers and supporters. The Almighty brought these events about from many directions and sources. From Four directions the Spirit comes. The spirit of Hashem comes from every direction; through the physical world; through the phenomenon of anti-semitism; through the national awakenings of foreign nations (and their wars;) and also through the secular side of Am Israel. "

A GENERAL LACK OF AWARENESS CONCERNING THE RELIGIOUS BEGINNINGS OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT HAS LED TO A DISTORTED UNDERSTANDING OF ZIONISM, AND TO MANY MISTAKEN BELIEFS. PERHAPS THE MOST DAMAGING IS THE BELIEF THAT THE LEADING TORAH SCHOLARS OF THE GENERATION OPPOSED THE RETURN OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE TO ZION. A PROPER INVESTIGATION OF THIS SUBJECT DESERVES A CHAPTER OF ITS OWN.

Even if the majority of Jews are exiled from the Land of Israel, it is not the Torah centers outside of the Land which make up the heart of the nation, but the Jews who live in Israel. Anyone who separates himself from the centrality of Eretz Israel does not have a portion in the G-d of Israel. The

principal place of the Shechina, of prophecy, of Torah, and of song are in Eretz Israel. Israel's special Segula is only manifest here.

The greatest blessing comes to the world when the nation of Israel, in all of its fullness, returns to Eretz Israel. The light of the Babylonian Talmud originates from the Mishna, which is a creation of Eretz Israel.

As the ingathering of the exiles continues and grows toward completion, prophecy will return to the nation. It is precisely this physical ingathering and building of the nation in Israel which brings us to our spiritual health. The source of secular Zionism is a deep Kedusha, rooted in our national will to be in Eretz Israel. Rabbi Yehoshua of Kutna wrote that when the yearning to return to Zion starts with the "non-believers" - this is an almost positive sign that the redemption has budded.

A JEW WHO COMES TO LIVE IN ISRAEL IS FULFILLING A TORAH COMMANDMENT – WHETHER HE REALIZES IT OR NOT

Every additional Jew who comes to Israel, and every additional tree which is planted in the soil of Eretz Israel, is another spiritual stage of the Geula - in the very same way that every additional Yeshiva which is built in Israel is another stage in returning the Divine Presence to Zion.

People who abandon the Land of Israel think they are leaving of their own free choice, but really, the Land is expelling them in a gentle fashion

The Maharit states that the Tosefot in the name of Rav Chaim Cohen (which states that the precept of settling in Israel is not kept today) is the opinion of a mistaken student.

THE ARGUMENT AGAINST LIVING IN ISRAEL BECAUSE OF THE NON-OBSERVANT JEWS WHO LIVE HERE HAS ABSOLUTELY NO BASIS IN HALACHA. THE GEMARA CLEARLY STATES: A JEW SHOULD ALWAYS LIVE IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL, EVEN IN A CITY WHERE THE MAJORITY OF ITS RESIDENTS ARE IDOL WORSHIPPERS, AND NOT LIVE OUTSIDE THE LAND, EVEN IN A CITY WHERE THE MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS ARE JEWS.

The Land of Israel is Kadosh, in and of itself, not only because of the precepts that are performed here.

The Zionist movement did not begin with Herzl, but with the religious group, the Lovers of Zion, which was led by two Talmidei Chachamim, HaRav Tzvi Hirsh Kalisher, and HaRav Eliahu Guttmacher

GEDOLIM WHO SUPPORTED ALIYAH

THE OHR SOMAYACH

Rabbi Meir Simcha was known for his constant support of the Zionist movement from the time of his learning in Bialistok. The Chief Rabbi of Bialistok at the time was the Torah Gadol, Rabbi Shmuel Mohliver, the founder of the Zionist movement, Chibat Zion. The Ohr Somayach was aware of the controversy surrounding the Zionist movement, and he spoke out sharply in its behalf. After moving to Dvinsk, he was asked by an antagonist how he could support Zionism and thus increase the amount of sinners in the Land of Israel. He responded that the Zionists deserve support because they were actualizing: greatening the Name of Hashem. And he expressed his conviction that they would end up by sanctifying Hashem's Name, as well. When the Mizrachi movement was formed, he was especially happy and said, "Now the Haredim will no longer claim that only the sinners are Zionists."

"In this century, the rays of light shine forth with a great awakening through the channels of the great men of action such as Montefiore and those like him; and from the rabbis, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh (Kalisher) from Talyron, and Rabbi Eliahu (Guttmacher) from Gridetz, to build and to develop Yerushalaim, and to remove its desolation, almost to the extent which the enthusiasts' (the nonreligious Zionists) have widened the cause. Many rabbis stood in opposition, and even many rabbis who praised the matter (Zionism) in their hearts, put their hands on their mouths, in fear of the enthusiasts' zeal, and in fear of the Three Oaths which Hashem made the daughter of Yerushalaim swear. Now, however, Divine providence has brought together the League of intelligent Nations in San Remo, and a dictate was established that the Land of Israel shall be for the Jewish people. Since the fear of the Oaths has been removed with the permission of the nations, the mitzvah of settling the Land of Israel arises, a mitzvah equal to all of the other precepts in the Torah, and this mitzvah returns to its place. It is a mitzvah on everyone to help with all of their power to observe this mitzvah, and if Hashem, may His Name be blessed, will allow

this to come about, and if the matter will increase and expand, then surely it is a matter which stands at the zenith of the universe. (HaKetufah HaGedolah, Pg.174, HaRav Menachem Mendel Kasher) The "Three Oaths" which Hashem made Israel to swear when it went into exile are: Not to rebel against the nations of the world; Not to hasten the End; and Not to go up to Israel like a wall (Ketubot 111A.) See Chapter 11, Section 7, in this book for a more detailed discussion.

THE AVNEI NEZER

Rabbi Avraham Bornstein also proclaimed his support for the settling of Eretz Israel and Aliyah. Within his seven volume Responsa, the Rabbi specifically addresses the questions of Aliyah today, (Responsa, Avnei Nezer, Yoreh Deah, Part 2, Section 454) and why the Gedolim don't make Aliyah. Within his answer, he quotes the Kuzari of Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi. In the lengthy discussion between the Rabbi and the king, the Rabbi answers all of the king's questions on Judaism except one. When the king asks the Rabbi why the Jews don't make Aliyah, the Rabbi is left without an answer. He says:

"You have indeed shamed me, King Kuzar, and it is this sin that withheld us from realizing the culmination of the Divine promise during the Second Temple...for only a minority returned, and the majority, along with the Gedolim, remained in Babylon, preferring exile and dependence, rather than leaving their homes and affairs.

The Avnei Nezer adds that: "Nevertheless, Heaven forbid us to make the Gedolim of Israel mistaken or conscious sinners, Heaven forbid." He prefers to explain that the Gedolim of his generation did not make Aliyah because they were simply unable to secure visas. He ends his response with the following plea:

"And so you leaders and aristocracy of Israel who have the capability to acquire a visa and actualize this honorable idea - upon you is this great mitzvah, and there is no end to the reward of those who help in this matter, whether by attempting to obtain visas, or in the essential matter of purchasing land in Israel.

THE NETZIV

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, known as the Netziv of Volozhin, is the author of the Torah commentary, HaAmek Davar. He was the last Rosh Yeshiva of the influential Volozhin Yeshiva and was known for his

unequivocal support of Zionism. For many years, HaRav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook learned under his personal tutelage. In a letter, the Netziv writes:

"Similarly, it is the will of G-d that the Land of Israel be settled, slowly, slowly, by the outcasts of Israel. Hashem altered the heart of the Czar, may his glory be exalted, and of his ministers, to allow us to form a committee and company to gather money to support our brethren who are working the Land, and craftsmen in the Land of Israel and Syria. And the fact that this committee acts in the knowledge and accordance of the government and its laws, is a sign that it is G-d's will to make a settlement in His Holy Land. It is upon us to rise and roar, in the spirit of the Land, and to act in accordance with the will of G-d in every possible way, whether with the physical work in the Land, in business, in craftsmanship, or in spiritual endeavors, especially in printing books which will help this great matter - and we shouldn't entertain thoughts that this great matter be otherwise, as some people may imagine. And it is especially an obligation on the Gedolim to participate in the will of G-d by giving counsel to the people which G-d has blessed to donate to this matter, and to the holy committee which was appointed in charge of settling the Land, and through this, they too will merit to see Israel settle in the Land where the Almighty resides (Shivat Zion, Pg. 17)

THE CHOFETZ CHAIM

The most authoritative biography of the Chofetz Chaim was written by his son, Reb Aryeh Leb HaCohen, who was the head of the Beit Din in Radin, and the Radin Rosh Yeshiva after his father's death. The biography stresses his father's positive attitude towards Eretz Israel and Aliyah:

"I remember that in the years 5650-5651, when our Jewish brothers were expelled from Moscow, a great movement to make Aliyah to our Holy Land arose. The hundreds and thousands of refugees sought shelter in the land of our fathers. There they bought land, planted trees, and established settlements...At this time I received a letter from my father of blessed memory in which he pointed out to me the great surge amongst all facets of our nation to make Aliyah to Israel. He assumes that these are now the days of 'the footsteps of the Mashiach', that Hashem has redeemed His nation, and that it is very probably the beginning of the ingathering of the exiles which precedes the coming of the Mashiach. If we had the capability, it would be proper to buy land and to make Aliyah to Israel (Letters of the

Chofetz Chaim to his son, Reb Aryeh Leb HaCohen, Pgs.43-44)

In spite of the fact that the Chofetz Chaim was vehemently opposed to the anti-Orthodox spirit of the secular Zionists, he encouraged the Aliyah of G-d-fearing Jews

"IT ISN'T CORRECT THAT THE MAJORITY OF GEDOLEI TORAH OPPOSED ZIONISM,"

HaRav Tzvi Yehuda illuminated the true course of Zionism and the controversy it encountered by presenting a short history of the movement, and the responses it evoked throughout the Torah world.

"It isn't correct that the majority of Gedolei Torah opposed Zionism," he said. "Around the year 5660 (approximately fifty years before the establishment of the State of Israel) a pamphlet defaming Zionism was published in Kovna. It was called, 'Light to the Just' At the end of the pamphlet, a few letters from Gedolei Israel were included: from Rabbi Chaim of Brisk, Rabbi David Friedman of Karlin, and others. Afterward were some letters from some Admors, such as Rabbi Shalom Ber of Lubavitch, who was then in his youth. At a time when all of Eastern Europe, and especially Lita, were filled with a bounty of Gaonim and Talmidei Chachamin, they only managed to obtain the signatures of eight Torah scholars who had the stature of Rabbi Chaim of Brisk. To strengthen their contention, the compilers of the pamphlet had to go out of their way to obtain a letter from Rabbi Natan Adler from London. The editors of the pamphlet claimed that the community of Israel was going up in smoke because of Zionism. If so, why didn't they gather the signatures of the hundreds and thousands of great Torah personalities and Tzaddikim who lived at the time? What happened that the great sea of Gedolim and rabbis didn't respond? If Clal Israel was burning in flames, how are we to comprehend their failure to sign?"

For a further discussion of Gedolim who emphasized the great mitzvah of settling in Eretz Israel, see the book, Shivat Zion, Part 2. Prominent among them are: the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, the Gaon of Vilna, the Chatam Sofer, Rabbi Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, Rabbi Akiva Eiger, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Kalisher, Rabbi Eliyahu Guttmacher of Grieditz, the Malbim, Rabbi Israel Yehoshua of Kotna, Rabbi Elchanan Spektor of Kovno, Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin, the Netziv, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman (although a fierce opponent of secular Zionism, he stressed

the greatness of the Torah command to live in Israel, and he recognized the end of the Exile in his time,) the Rebbe of Piloy, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the Chazon Ish, the Rebbe of Obstroytza, and the Ohr Somayach.

"Rabbi Shlomo HaCohen of Vilna (the head of the Vilna Beit Din, and author of the Responsa Binyan Shlomo) said that he was amazed how Rabbi Chaim of Brisk and other rabbis were not more careful in their harsh declarations against masses of Jews. When Herzl came to Vilna, Rabbi Shlomo HaCohen went out to greet him with a Torah scroll and showed him the honor due to a king. HaRav Abromsky told me: 'It's well known that Rabbi Shlomo's house was filled with Zionism. "

"The Admor of Gur, the Sefat Emet, also shares with us a closeness of thought, and a closeness in our relationship to Eretz Israel. Upon his urging, many Haredim made Aliyah to Israel and even founded settlements. He always emphasized that there was a mitzvah to live in the Land of Israel. The Hasidim of Gur were at the head of all the Hasidim when it came to the settlement of Israel. Also in the dynasty of Rejin, many pleasant and important things were said about Eretz Israel, but it never reached actualization in deeds - theirs was a type of platonic love - in contrast to the Rebbe of Gur, who was a doer and who fostered the settlement of the Land. If there had been many like him, the situation today in Israel would look entirely different.

SOME GEDOLIM CAN AND DO MAKE MISTAKES

The question was often asked, how could Gedolei Israel make a mistake in such a serious matter as the return of the Jewish nation to Israel?

THERE IS A PREVALENT MYTH IN THE TORAH WORLD TODAY THAT HOLDS TORAH SCHOLARS INFALLIBLE AND CLAIMS THAT THEIR DECISIONS ARE INSPIRED BY RUACH HAKODESH, WHICH BY DEFINITION MUST ALWAYS BE RIGHT. THIS MISCONCEPTION IS BASED MORE ON FANTASY THAN A KNOWLEDGE OF TORAH AND A FAMILIARIZATION WITH JEWISH TRADITION.

The fourth chapter of Leviticus deals with special kinds of sin offerings. Situated between the offerings of a Kohen Gadol who sins, and a King who

sins, are the laws of a sin offering for the whole congregation: "And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the matter be hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have transgressed any of the commandments of Hashem concerning forbidden acts, and are guilty" (Leviticus, 4:13). The tractate Horiot, explains this as a case where, the majority of the Great Sanhedrin makes a mistake, and because of their error in deciding the law, a majority of the congregation transgresses. Here, the Torah itself recognizes the possibility of the majority of the Gedolim making a mistake.

THE SIN OF THE SPIES IS PRESENT AMONG SOME GEDOLIM

More than once, Rav Tzvi Yehuda reminded us of the tragic sin of the Spies, who had rebelled against Hashem in the wilderness, by refusing to go up to Israel. They were the outstanding Talmidei Chachamim of the era, the chiefs of the Sanhedrin, the heads of the tribes, whose sin was so severe, the entire generation was punished with death in the wilderness. (Mesillat Yesharim, Chapter 11, In the discussion on Honor) Our Sages inform us that this sin was the foundation of the destruction of both the First and Second Temples. (Tanchuma, Numbers, Shelach, 11-12) The taint of this sin still exists in the nation, and even Talmidei Chachamim can be affected by it.

SEE BASED ON THE VILNA GAON'S TEACHINGS, KOL HA TOR, CHAPTER 5: "THIS SIN OF THE SPIES...HOVERS OVER THE NATION OF ISRAEL IN EVERY GENERATION." AND, "HOW STRONG IS THE POWER OF THE SITRA ACHRA THAT IT SUCCEEDS IN HIDING FROM THE EYES OF OUR HOLY FATHERS THE DANGERS OF THE KLEIPOT; FROM THE EYES OF AVRAHAM AVINU, THE KLEIPAH OF GALUT...AND IN THE TIME OF THE MASHIACH, THE SITRA ACHRA ATTACKS THE GUARDIANS OF TORAH WITH BLINDNESS." AND, "MANY OF THE SINNERS IN THIS GREAT SIN OF, "THEY DESPISED THE CHERISHED LAND", AND ALSO MANY OF THE GUARDIANS OF TORAH, WILL NOT KNOW OR UNDERSTAND THAT THEY ARE CAUGHT IN THE SIN OF THE SPIES, THAT THEY HAVE BEEN SUCKED INTO THE SIN OF THE SPIES IN MANY FALSE IDEAS AND EMPTY CLAIMS, AND THEY COVER THEIR IDEAS WITH THE ALREADY PROVEN FALLACY THAT THE MITZVAH OF THE SETTLEMENT OF ISRAEL NO LONGER APPLIES IN OUR DAY, AN OPINION WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN DISPROVED BY THE GIANTS OF THE WORLD, THE RISHONIM AND ACHRONIM." LOC.CIT.

See also, the letter of Rav Eliahu Guttmacher in the beginning of the book, Em HaBanim Semaicha, Pg. 13; also quoted in Responsa, Nefesh Chaya, Rabbi Chaim Eliezar Vax, at the end of Responsa I: "We can see how important this matter is, that the Klipah attacks even the biggest Tzaddikim to negate this great thing (the settlement of Israel). For the whole power of the Kleipah depends on the Galut. With the cessation of Galut, the Klipah comes to an end."

Instances of Gedolim who erred can be found in the Torah, the Prophets, The Mishna, the Gemara, and in the writings of the Rishonim and Achronim. From the fall of the first man Adam, the potential for error has been a theme of man's existence. Even in the world of Torah, the freedom to err is not only a possibility, but a foundation of growth and free will, as our Sages teach: A man doesn't stand on words of Torah unless he fails in them (Gittin 43^a)

"Certainly, the redemption hasn't yet reached completion. Many Torah personalities withdrew from the Zionist cause, and even fought against it, because they wanted the redemption to be instantly complete. They attached themselves to the idea that the redemption had to be complete from its inception, as opposed to its being a gradual process which had to be brought to its final fulfillment. Thus, they couldn't accept a redemption which spread out in many directions, including secular paths replete with Apikorsim and free thinkers who had thrown off the yoke of the Torah. Nor could they come to terms with the redemption's natural unfolding, in down-to-earth events (See the interview with HaRav Tzvi Yehuda, Maariv, Erev Pesach, 5743. See also, HaTekufah HaGedolah, Pg. 390, Rav Menachem Mendel Kasher)

When the Rebbe of Belz came on Aliyah to Israel, he met with Rabbi Natan and said to him, "We realize now that we erred in our estrangement from Eretz Israel.' Other Gedolim also repented over this. If this repentance had occurred thirty years before (in the years preceding the Holocaust), the situation in Israel would have been very different. ,,

"My father, ZTK'L noted that the beginning of the Zionist awakening was replete with uncertainty, but that today, there aren't any doubts, and we see eye to eye the acts of Hashem revealed in the rebuilding of the Land. It becomes increasingly clear that those who supported the return to Zion were right."

Return To Zion Part Two - Summary

- 1. A lack of knowledge and misinformation has led some people to believe that the Gedolim opposed Zionism and the settlement of Eretz Israel. This is not true. While some Torah giants were antagonistic to the Zionist cause, many of equally great stature supported Zionism. The majority remained either undecided, or unwilling to disclose their opinions.**
- 2. The Ohr Somayach noted that nations of the world had nullified the "Three Oaths" in allowing the Jewish people to return to Israel, and that the mitzvah of making Aliyah to Israel had returned in full force.**
- 3. Although the Chofetz Chaim was vehemently opposed to the anti-Orthodox spirit of the secular Zionists, he was committed to the Aliyah of religious Jews.**
- 4. One of the reasons that Israel has a secular State today is the failure of the religious community to make Aliyah.**
- 5. Even Gedolim make occasional mistakes. The Torah takes this possibility into account by providing a special sin offering in a case where the majority of the Great Sanhedrin makes an error in deciding a law, which causes the congregation to sin**
- 6. The effect of the sin of the Spies still exists in the nation, and even Talmidei Chachamin can be influenced by it.**
- 7. Many Torah leaders believed that the redemption would miraculously occur all at once. They didn't accept that the redemption is a process which develops gradually, in a natural way, over a course of time, and thus they rejected the way Hashem was bringing back the exiles to Zion**
- 8. When the Rebbe of Belz came on Aliyah to Israel he admitted that his community had erred in their failure to come to Israel sooner.**
- 9. HaRav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook said that if there were doubts at the beginnings of the Zionist movement, now there are no doubts. It is increasingly clear that those who supported the return to Zion were right.**
- 10. The vitalness of Eretz Israel to Jewish life and Torah can readily be overlooked, even by a Talmid Chacham, if he is estranged from the deeper aspects of Torah. For this reason, it is important to study the Kuzari, the writings of the Maharal, and the book, Orot**

OTHER GEDOLIM WHO SUPPORTED ALIYAH EVEN BEFORE THE ZIONST MOVEMENT

Rabbi Yaakov Emden writes in the introduction to his scholarly Siddur, Beit Yaakov, "When it seems to us, in our present peaceful existence outside of the Land of Israel, that we have found another Eretz Israel and Yerushalaim, this, to me, is the greatest, deepest, most obvious, and direct cause of all of the awesome, frightening, monstrous, unimaginable destructions that we have experienced in the Diaspora (Siddur, Beit Yaakov, Introduction, P.13)

RABBI YEHUDA CHAI ALKALAI WRITES IN KOL KORAI, "BECAUSE ISRAEL DIDN'T RISE UP TO RETURN TO OUR LAND, AND TO THE INHERITANCE OF OUR FOREFATHERS, THE DECREES BEGAN, THE EXPULSIONS AND SLAUGHTERS, FOR THE MATTER IS DEPENDENT ON THE REPENTANCE OF RETURNING TO ERETZ ISRAEL (KOL KORAI, RABBI YEHUDA CHAI ALKALI. THE WRITINGS OF RAV ALKALAI.)

The Meshech Chochmah, written by the Ohr Somayach, Rav Meir Simcha HaCohen from Dvinsk, states that, "If a Jew thinks that Berlin is Yerushalaim... then a raging storm wind will uproot him by his trunk... a tempest will arise and spread its roaring waves, and swallow, and destroy, and flood forth without pity. (Meshech Chochmah, P.191-2)

These matters were stated by our Rabbis years before the Holocaust. The Natziv, Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, writes the following in his Hagadah, on the verse, And G-d brought us out with a strong hand, - "The Jews who didn't want to leave Egypt died in the three days of darkness. (Four-fifths of the Jews in Egypt died in the plague of darkness. Rashi, Exodus, 13:18) And we must remember all of this in our time also, when many Jews deny our future redemption, may it come soon, but Hashem will reign over us with a strong hand."

NOTEWORTHY ALSO, ARE THE WORDS OF THE GAON OF VILNA, WHICH ARE RECORDED IN KOL HA TOR. HE SAYS THAT IF WE DEVOTE OURSELVES TO BRING THE GEULA THROUGH HUMAN ENDEAVOR, EXEMPLIFIED BY THE RETURN OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE TO ZION, THEN WE NEED NOT FEAR THE WARNINGS OF OUR SAGES CONCERNING A RULER WHOSE DECREES WILL BE HARsher THAN HAMAN'S.

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAV TZVI YEHUDA KOOK ZTKL

(SANHEDRIN 97B) BUT, HE WARNED, IF THE JEWISH PEOPLE DO NOT RETURN TO ISRAEL ON THEIR OWN ACCORD, THEN HASHEM WILL BRING ABOUT OUR RETURN THROUGH THE SEVERE DECREES OF THE GENTILES WHO RULE OVER US IN THE LANDS OF OUR DISPERSION

"Our teacher, the Gaon of Vilna, Kadosh Israel, with words carved in flames, advised his students to go on Aliyah to Israel, and to further the ingathering of the exiles. Furthermore, he encouraged his students to hasten the Revealed End, and the fulfillment of the redemption, through the settlement of Eretz Israel. Almost every day, he spoke to us with trembling and emotion, saying that, in Zion and Yerushalaim there would be a refuge, and that we shouldn't delay the opportunity to go. Who can articulate, or who can describe, the magnitude of our teacher's worry when he spoke these words to us, with his Ruach HaKodesh, and with tears in his eyes (Kol HaTor, End of Chapter Five)

AND FINALLY, SEVERAL YEARS BEFORE THE HOLOCAUST, HARAV AVRAHAM YITZHAK HACHOHEN KOOK FORESAW THE HORROR WHICH WAS COMING. IN A SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE CHURVAH SYNAGOGUE IN YERUSHALAIM, ON ROSH HASHANA, IN THE YEAR 5694, SEVERAL YEARS BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR, HE SAID: "IF THERE WILL CEASE THE HOLY FERVOR, AND THE DESIRE FOR EXALTED REDEMPTION WHICH STEMS FROM IT; AND IF THE NATURAL, HUMAN FEELING FOR NATIONALITY, AND THE YEARNING FOR THE HONORABLE LIFE OF THE NATION, WILL DISAPPEAR - THE ENEMIES OF ISRAEL WILL COME AND BLOW A SHOFAR IN OUR EARS WHICH CALLS FOR OUR REDEMPTION. THEY FORCE US TO HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SHOFAR. THEY SOUND AN ALARM, AND SET OFF A CANNON IN OUR EARS, AND DON'T GRANT US REST IN THE GALUT. THIS SHOFAR OF AN IMPURE BEAST WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE SHOFAR OF MASHIACH. AMALEK, HITLER, AND OTHERS LIKE THEM, AWAKEN THE REDEMPTION. AND HE... WHO DIDN'T WANT TO HEAR, BECAUSE HIS EARS HAD BECOME BLOCKED, HE WILL HEAR... OUT OF ABSOLUTE COERCION, HE WILL LISTEN (THE ESSAYS OF RAV AVRAHAM YITZHAK HACHOHEN KOOK, P.269)

**THE DIASPORA CANNOT CONTINUE FOREVER, THE
DIASPORA IS THE WORST DESECRATION OF HASHEM THAT
THERE IS**

"There are situations where it is difficult to separate from the Galut," Rav Tzvi Yehuda explained. "However, the time has arrived for our nation's revival, and for the redemption of our Land. The Revealed End has come, the time when, You, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they will soon be coming. (Ezekiel, 36:8. Sanhedrin, 98^a) The time approached for Israel's return to Zion, and this caused the rebirth of the Land. But as the time arrives for our departure from the darkness of Galut, situations arise which resemble the Hebrew slave who rejects freedom and says, I loved my master (Exodus, 21:5).

JEWS FELL IN LOVE WITH THE GALUT AND REFUSED TO COME BACK TO ISRAEL. BUT THE DIASPORA CANNOT CONTINUE FOREVER. THE DIASPORA IS THE WORST DESECRATION OF HASHEM THAT THERE IS, AS WE FIND IN EZEKIEL: "AND WHEN THEY CAME TO THE NATIONS INTO WHICH THEY CAME, THEY PROFANED MY HOLY NAME, IN THAT MEN SAID OF THEM, THESE ARE THE PEOPLE OF HASHEM, AND THEY ARE GONE OUT OF HIS LAND". (EZEKIEL, 36:20)

Which Jewish community in the Diaspora doesn't face the potential danger which the Rambam describes in his letter, that with the passage of time, both Torah, the religion, and Jewish life will be threatened? One has to search far and wide for a thriving Jewish community outside the Land of Israel whose roots go back more than one hundred and fifty years. Where are the once great religious centers of Russia, of Europe, of North Africa, or Spain? Sometimes, it was the Jews who were annihilated. In other places, like Russia, the religion was destroyed. In many places, both the Jews and Judaism were wiped out.

**TODAY, THROUGHOUT AMERICA, MANY OF THE ONCE
PROMINENT JEWISH COMMUNITIES ARE SLUMS**

Buildings which once housed synagogues have been converted to churches. Assimilation in America is more than sixty percent. In Europe and South America, it is even higher. In spite of a few, isolated Torah communities, the Torah in all of these countries is waning. In contrast to

this, the study and observance of Torah in Israel is on the increase, and assimilation hardly exists.

THE FACT THAT THERE IS A SECULAR ZIONIST MOVEMENT, OR A SECULAR JEWISH GOVERNMENT IN ISRAEL, IN NO WAY CONTRADICTS THE ASSERTION THAT OUR REDEMPTION IS HAPPENING NOW, FOR THE BEGINNING STAGES OF REDEMPTION ARE NOT DEPENDENT ON TORAH OBSERVANCE, BUT ON HASHEM'S DESIRE' TO END THE DESECRATION OF HIS NAME WHICH THE DIASPORA CAUSES.

WHEN THE FLAG OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL WAS RAISED, ALL OF THE VATICAN'S DOCTRINES OF THE OUTCAST, MISERABLE JEW COLLAPSED

"All of the kingdoms of darkness which are destined to disappear in the future are already afraid of this inevitability, and now stand quaking in their last throes of life. The Gemara, Sanhedrin, tells that a certain Christian asked Rabbi Abahu, When will the Mashiach come? The Rabbi answered him, "When the shame of these people will be uncovered". (Sanhedrin 99^a) The people he refers to are the followers of the Nazarethite. When the flag of the State of Israel was raised, all of the Vatican's doctrines of the outcast, miserable Jew collapsed. We returned to our Land, and it became clear that the Eternal One of Israel will not lie. " (Samuel, Part One, 15:29)

"Our Sages tell us, There is no difference between our times and the Messianic Era, except concerning the subjugation to the gentile kingdoms.(Berachot 34B) We have eradicated foreign rule over the Land in our hands, and in this regard, we are a part of the Messianic Era. Obviously, we have not yet reached the perfection of complete Geula. The full meaning of Geula will appear when the majority of our millions of Jews dwell in the Land."

"In its overall meaning to Clal Israel, the ingathering of the exiles, the building of Eretz Israel, and the establishment of the State of Israel, have substantially erased the blemish of Galut. The Geula is confronting the Galut and overcoming it. We have already reached a degree of redemption, though it is not complete. The imperfection of Galut cannot be nullified by fighting directly against it. Galut resembles a shadow which can only be erased with light. The more we establish the light of Geula here, with a

mighty Kedusha, with spiritual permission. But in a general sense, these periods in which we are living are the developing stages of the time of Geula."

THE GEMARA SPEAKS OF TZADDIKIM WHO DON'T BELIEVE

(Who scorned the day of small things)? Who caused the table of the Tzaddikim to be disgraced in the Time to Come? The small-minded among them who didn't have faith in the Almighty". Sotah 48B. "Small-minded - small in Emunah." Rashi, there)

There were people at the time of the Second Temple, who remembered the grandeur of the First Temple and complained about the situation in their time. Today also, among certain groups, there is an absence of Emunah in Hashem's Providence over the events of our times. There are those who say that what is happening now is the work of the Satan. Personally, I am unacquainted with the Satan. I don't have any business with him at all. Our Sages say that, "One is to shoot arrows at the Satan." (Kiddushin 81^a) We believe that everything which is happening now is from Hashem. The Gemara tells us that if there exists an agricultural situation like we find in Eretz Israel today - this is the revealed End. We are not Karaites who don't believe in the Oral Law, nor do we deny this Gemara,"

Just as there are Torah scholars who take issue today with the way Hashem is returning His children to Zion, so too in Ezra's time, Torah scholars criticized the works of Hashem. The Almighty does what He pleases, when He pleases, in the manner He pleases, and He does not need our approval. Rav Tzvi Yehuda emphasized this by pointing to Koresh, the gentile king responsible for returning the exiled Jews to Zion.

HASHEM USES ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE AS HIS ENVOYS TO BRING REDEMPTION

The prophecy of Isaiah contains an interesting verse: Thus says Hashem to His anointed, to Koresh (Isaiah, 45:l) Koresh is called Mashiach? (Anointed?) See, Megilla 12A. However, the intention, Rav Kook explained, is that Koresh was a spark of Mashiach. All of Koresh's valor and success came from Hashem's help, as it says, "to Koresh, whose right hand I have

held, that I may subdue nations before him, and loose the loins of kings". Here, the Almighty reveals that everything comes from Him, For Yaakov, My servant's sake, and for Israel, My chosen. Hashem is the source of everything. I am Hashem, and there is none else; there is no G-d beside Me. I girded you, though you have not known Me, that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west that there is none beside Me. I am Hashem, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. Everything in the world, Rav Tzvi Yehuda stressed, in heaven, and in all of the earth, is from Hashem, as it says, I, Hashem, do all of these things

IN THE ERA OF THE SECOND TEMPLE, THE ALMIGHTY USED A GENTILE KING TO RETURN HIS EXILED CHILDREN TO ZION. "I HAVE RAISED HIM UP IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND I WILL MAKE STRAIGHT HIS WAYS. HE SHALL BUILD MY CITY, AND HE SHALL LET GO MY CAPTIVES" (ISAIAH, 45:13). THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T AGREE WITH THIS WAY OF RESTORING THINGS. THEY THOUGHT THE GEULA SHOULD COME IN A HOLIER WAY, AND THAT THE TEMPLE BE BUILT IN A MORE SUITABLE MANNER. HOWEVER, HASHEM HAS MANY SHLICHIM, AND HE DOES WHAT HE WANTS. KING HEROD, A GENTILE, USURPED THE THRONE OF ISRAEL BY FORCE, MURDERED ALL OF THE RABBIS, SAVE RABBI BABA BEN BUTA, WHOM HE ONLY BLINDED, (BABA BATRA 3B-4^a) AND YET HASHEM ALLOWED HIM TO RECONSTRUCT THE SECOND TEMPLE AND TO REBUILD THE CITY OF YERUSHALAIM.

"Today also, Hashem is causing tremendous upheavals in the world, and toppling rulers from their thrones, as in the time of Koresh. Hashem overthrew the Turks, who ruled in the Land, and replaced them with others who recognized our right to this Land. Is all of this happenstance? Nature's wanton anarchy? No. This is Hashem's hidden hand. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, "Hear, O deaf; and look, O blind, that you may see. Who is blind but My servant, or deaf as the messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as Hashem's servant?" Talmidei Chachamim, who are called servants of Hashem, they are the ones who are blind. It agonizes. Even Torah scholars, who are called Hashem's messengers and angels of Hashem - it is they who are deaf. Seeing many things, but you observe not; opening the ears, but he hears not " There are so many things to see and to hear. Be quiet, pensive, and listen. Then you will see the Almighty, who disguises Himself in the events which unfold in the world."

"Hashem is the Creator of the World, and the Creator of nations and kingdoms, and there is nothing besides Him. He brings about all of the great upheavals, as it says in Daniel: He brings down kingships, and raises them up. There is no mysticism in seeing Hashem's guiding hand in the events of our time. This is all clear, visual proof of the Divine. Our Holy Land, which was in a paralyzing slumber, is showing her powers. She began to awaken during all of the wars which erupted these last fifty years, and which ended the Turkish rule in the Land. Thank G-d, the Land is in our hands now. Even the Temple Mount is under our control."

"I HEARD FROM RABBI ARYEH LEIB, THE SON OF THE CHOFETZ CHAIM, THAT WHEN HIS FATHER HEARD ABOUT THE SETTLEMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN FOUNDED IN ERETZ ISRAEL; IN REHOVOT, RISHON L'ZION, AND GEDERA, HE SAID IN YIDDISH, 'BEHOLD, THE THING (GEULA) HAS ALREADY BEGUN.' THE CHOFETZ CHAIM WAS A GAON AND HOLY MAN, AND, ALONG WITH THIS, HE WAS ALERT AND AWAKE TO EVERY MATTER. HE KNEW THE SPIRITUAL LEVEL OF A PORTION OF THE SETTLERS IN THE NEW VILLAGES. YET NONETHELESS, HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE NEW SETTLEMENT IN ERETZ ISRAEL BELONGED TO THE PROCESS OF REDEMPTION."

"Secularism doesn't lessen the essential Kedusha of the State, This is what it says in Chatam Sofer, Responsa, Vol. 6:190, Hashmatot, Rabbi Moshe Sopher: "And Eliyahu the prophet ran before Achav (to honor him)," Achav who transgressed the entire Torah and even so, it is incumbent to grant him (Ahav) exceptional respect, for this is a mitzvah which transcends rational comprehension (to honor even an unrighteous leader of Israel) and one who transgresses this is considered a sinner, like a person who doesn't wear Tefillin.") he said. "In the Gemara, our Sages explain that all of the material used in building the Temple became sanctified only after it was set into place. We build with the secular, and sanctify afterward. Why is this? Because the Torah was not given to the Ministering Angels. Rashi explains that when they were constructing the Temple, they would buy all of the building materials with non-holy currency; or they would take all of the building requirements on credit, and, after the construction was finished, they made everything Kadosh. (Meilah 14A and 14B) This was enacted because our Sages realized that during the construction, workers would sit in the shade of the building to rest from the sun, and thus

(improperly) benefit from something which had been dedicated exclusively to the use of the Sanctuary."

THIS IS THE WAY THE REDEMPTION OF ISRAEL DEVELOPS, IN STAGES, LITTLE BY LITTLE

"The Temple was built in this fashion, and this is the way the redemption of Israel develops, in stages, little by little. Just as the stones used in building the Temple were not sanctified, so too, the building of Eretz Israel is accomplished by every segment of the nation of Israel; by the righteous, and by the less righteous. We build with the non-holy, even though this causes complications and problems, and, little by little, all of the various problems will vanish, and the sanctification of Hashem will appear in more and more light."

"THE GAON OF VILNA, THE RABBI OF ALL ISRAEL IN THE PREVIOUS GENERATIONS, DESCRIBES THIS SITUATION IN A DRAMATIC, SCORCHING LIGHT. HE SAYS: 'SINCE THE TEMPLE WAS DESTROYED, OUR SPIRIT AND OUR CROWN DEPARTED, AND ONLY WE REMAINED, THE BODY WITHOUT THE SOUL. AND EXILE TO OUTSIDE THE LAND IS A GRAVE. WORMS SURROUND US THERE, AND WE DO NOT HAVE THE POWER TO SAVE OURSELVES. THEY, THE IDOL WORSHIPPERS, IT IS THEY WHO DEVOUR OUR FLESH. IN EVERY PLACE THERE WERE GREAT SOCIETIES AND YESHIVOT, UNTIL THE BODY DECAYED, AND THE BONES SCATTERED, AGAIN AND AGAIN. YET, ALWAYS, SOME BONES STILL EXISTED, THE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM OF THE ISRAELITE NATION, THE PILLARS OF THE BODY - UNTIL EVEN THESE BONES ROTTED, AND THERE ONLY REMAINED A RANCID WASTE WHICH DISINTEGRATED INTO DUST - OUR LIFE TURNED INTO DUST. (LIKUTEI HAGRA, AT THE END OF SIFRA D'TZNIUTA)

"In the Galut, we are in a graveyard," Rav Tzvi Yehuda said. "Our Kedusha is in the impurity of gentile lands. Worms and maggots devour us. For two thousand years, we have been in a place of maggots and worms. They surround and encompass us there. The persecutions and pogroms of the gentiles, the gentile cultures, and their spiritual worlds, are the maggots and worms which feast on our flesh and gnaw away at our spirit and Kedusha. This is the reality of Galut. There is absolutely no compatibility between impurity and Kedusha. There is no point of contact between them.

Only an incisive opposition, a drastic opposition, the one separated from the other by a cosmological order. Thus, over thousands of years, the maggots and worms ate away at us. According to the holy, sensitive, living words of the Gaon of Vilna, the flesh is easiest to consume. But when the worms reach the bones, the Talmidei Chachamim, our source of spiritual power, the staunchest and most solid block which connects us to the eternity of Israel when the gnawing continues, and the absurdity (of Galut) and its evil reaches, G-d Forbid, our bones - then there is an extreme threat to our survival - an awful and horrifying situation."

"The Gaon of Vilna concludes: 'And we are now rising to a resurrection of the dead. Waking up. Rising from the dust. And an exalted spirit will rest upon us, The end of the Galut is revealed. The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. The Geula is compelled to appear. (The dead which Ezekiel saw...this was a metaphor. Sanhedrin 92B. A metaphor - it hinted to them that the Galut was like a dead man who returns to life. Likewise, Israel will return from the Galut.'" Rashi, there) The dead return to life. And even the evil doers, who are called dead in their lifetime, (According to Berachot 18B) come to return in repentance (See, Responsa of the Maharashdam, Orach Chaim, 17.)...

THE DAY THE KOTEL WAS CONQUERED IN 1967

"It is impossible to forget that day, "(The 28th day of Iyar, 5727) he recalled. "Already, for several days, the situation in the city was tense. Many of the Yeshiva's students had enlisted in the war. On the second day of the week, the twenty-sixth of Iyar, a student approached me as I was walking to the morning prayer at the Yeshiva. He told me that the war had begun, and that the Arab Legion was boasting that it would conquer all of Yerushalaim. Rumors reached me about battles on the outskirts of the city.

A friend phoned me and related in the name of HaRav Shlomo Goren, the Israel Defense Force's Chief Rabbi, that Tzahal units were advancing and getting closer to the Old City of Yerushalaim. This was nerve-trembling news. Each hour, expectation quickened. One of the students who had enlisted, raced back to the Yeshiva during an hour break and announced that tomorrow, with the Almighty's help, our paratroopers would reach the Kotel! All of us were filled with hope and trembling. On the fourth day of the week, an officer knocked on the door of my house. He had come with a

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message from HaRav Goren. 'The Rav is invited by the Chief Rabbi of the army to come to the Kotel,' he announced. 'An armored car is waiting downstairs'

"HaRav David Cohen, the Nazir, ZTK'L, joined us on the way. He too had been invited by his son-in-law, HaRav Goren. The army car progressed slowly amidst the joyous crowds who were thronging the streets of the city - thousands of singing and dancing people. Many of them had tears of joy in their eyes over the liberation of Yerushalaim. "

"On the way, the officer told me that the moment the paratroopers had reached the perimeter of the Kotel, a soldier, who was a student at our Yeshiva, climbed to the top row of stones on the Wall and unfurled the Israeli flag over the heights of the Kotel. His commander promised him a reward for his deed, and asked him to state his request. 'The greatest honor for me' he answered, "is that you send an army rabbi to bring our teacher here, HaRav Tzvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook, the Rosh Yeshiva of Mercaz HaRav."

"THE OFFICER ALSO TOLD US THAT HARAV GOREN HAD BEEN AMONG THE FIRST TO REACH THE KOTEL, IN THE FACE OF FIRE FROM ARAB SNIPERS, WHO HAD CONTINUED TO SHOOT FROM THEIR PLACES OF HIDING. HE CLUTCHED A TORAH SCROLL IN ONE HAND, AND A SHOFAR IN THE OTHER. FIGHTERS, WHO HAD SURVIVED FURIOUS BATTLES, CRIED LIKE CHILDREN WHEN THEY HEARD THE SHOFAR BLAST OF THE CHIEF RABBI. THEY ADMIRER HIS COURAGE OF HEART, AND HIS SELF-SACRIFICE, TO REMAIN ALL OF THE TIME AT THE HEAD OF THE BATTLE WITH THE PARATROOPERS WHO HAD BURST THROUGH FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES TO THE KOTEL."

"Many of our boys were wounded in the charge. To my question, through which gate of the Old City had they reached the Kotel, the familiar voice of a soldier from our Yeshiva said, 'Baruch Hashem, all of the gates are open.' Another student, a rabbi in the army, rushed up to me at the Kotel and told me that he had received permission from army command to hold Mincha prayer at the Wall. It was the first national prayer at the Kotel after a nineteen-hundred-year separation! A prayer which was utter cleavage to Hashem. Every eye was filled with tears. Soldiers prostrated themselves on

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the ground in front of the Kotel. Others wedged their fingers between the stones of the Wall. Everyone chanted the Tehillim 126, "A Song of Ascent: When Hashem brought back the exiles of Zion, we were like those who dream."

"BEFORE WE LEFT THE LIBERATED CITY, I WAS INTERVIEWED BY RADIO AND TELEVISION REPORTERS FROM ISRAEL AND FROM OUTSIDE THE LAND. THEY WANTED TO KNOW MY OPINION ON WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED." "BEHOLD, I SAID. WE ANNOUNCE TO ALL OF ISRAEL, AND TO ALL OF THE WORLD, THAT BY A DIVINE COMMAND, WE HAVE RETURNED TO OUR HOME, TO OUR HOLY CITY. FROM THIS DAY FORTH, WE SHALL NEVER BUDGE FROM HERE! WE HAVE COME HOME!"