

Fascinating INSIGHTS

ד' אב תשפ"א
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A Dream Land

There are those that have moved to Eretz Yisrael passionately but then have gotten caught up in the nitty-gritty and the problems that face them there. It's easy to forget that original enthusiasm, whether it be because of a different culture, a new language, etc. However, they should think from time to time of the merit they have to be in the Holy Land. Even Moshe, with all his Tefilos,

wasn't granted entry into Eretz Yisrael. Many great people throughout history longed to come to the Holy Land but were unable to for various reasons. How lucky are those who have the merit to be in Eretz Yisrael?¹ And for those who don't live there, how fortunate are they that they can just hop on a plane and be there within hours.

R' Eliezer Papo, author of the Pele Yoatz (1785-1828), writes in his Sefer Oros Eilim that הכל אין כנגד חבת ארץ ישראל, everything is nothing compared to the love for Eretz Yisrael. So leaving your family and money shouldn't hold you back from going to Eretz Yisrael. And back then it wasn't just a flight away. Leaving for Eretz Yisrael meant you were on your own and that you probably wouldn't see your family again. Many sacrifices were involved in moving to Eretz Yisrael in the past.

Of course there were many great people that were in Eretz Yisrael. And therefore we must think how lucky we are that we are walking on the same streets that Avraham and many other great figures traversed!²

Is there any comparison of celebrating a Yom Tov such as Succos and Chanuka in Eretz Yisrael? Being among your people who are celebrating it as well.³

There are also the opportunities of numerous Mitzvos⁴ that one can fulfill only in Eretz Yisrael. These include Terumos, Maaasros and Shemita.

Here is another thought to ponder. In which other country can you just travel to the *kosel* to daven if you so desire?! In this land, you are just a ride away from the site of the Beis Hamikdash!

R' Yehuda Greenwald (1845-1920), who was the Rav of the city of Satmar, had a tremendous yearning to be in Eretz Yisrael. He commented that when he will merit to be in Eretz Yisrael, he will run to the *kosel* and daven there. He later related that when he arrived in Yerushalayim, his legs became immobilized, as he was so awed by the great kedusha that he couldn't move. He then explained *עמדות היו רגלינו בשעריך ירושלים* (“Our feet stood firm within your gates, O Yerushalayim”): my feet remained standing [as they couldn't move] when I entered the gates of Yerushalayim.

¹ For those who live in Eretz Yisrael it is advised to say the following formula which comes from the students of the Vilna Gaon: הריני דר בארץ הקודש לשם מצות ישוב ארץ ישראל כמו שכתוב וירשתם אתה וישבתם בה Holy Land for the sake of the mitzva of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael as it says, “You shall possess it and you shall settle in it” (Devarim 11:31. See also Bamidbar 33:53).

² Even the street names can arouse feelings of kedusha. In one neighborhood you walk through the streets named after prophets such as Malachi, Amos, Yonah and Tzefanya. In other neighborhoods, the streets are named after Rashi, R' Shach, the Gra and the like—greats from the long past to those of our time!

³ It is interesting to note that in Israel, banks will recognize and deposit a check that is dated with a Jewish month (Eg: טיון תשפ"א instead of May 14, 2021).

⁴ See Kesubos 111a that one can walk four Amos (approximately 6-8 feet) and be assured that he will be a resident of the World to Come.

⁵ Tehillim 122:2.

Another thing to keep in mind is that there are so many tzadikim buried in Eretz Yisrael such as the Avos, Imahos, R' Shimon Bar Yochai, R' Akiva, R' Yosef Karo, the Arizal among many others. This is an opportunity to daven at their graves.

Let us not forget that most events recorded in the Torah took place in Eretz Yisrael. It is the place where Torah comes alive! We learn about Akaidas Yitzchak, the Beis Hamikdash, Mitzvos like Shemita, Kever Rochel, Me'aras Ha'machpeila and so on but it only comes alive in this land.

We should also keep in mind that being in Eretz Yisrael is living through a miracle in history, as it never happened that a nation returned to its homeland after 2,000 years of exile! That is a clear miracle!

Two Paths, One Road

The Gemara⁶ says that R' Akiva davened and was answered⁷ whereas R' Eliezer davened and wasn't answered. A heavenly voice declared that R' Akiva wasn't greater rather he was מדותיו על מעביר, a forgiving person in contrast to R' Eliezer. How can we say that he wasn't greater if this trait of מדותיו על מעביר is so great to the extent that the Gemara⁸ says כל המעביר על מדותיו מעבירין לו על כל פשעיו ("one who relinquishes his measure of retribution on someone who wronged him, the Heavenly Tribunal relinquishes all his sins for him")?

R' Yisrael Salanter⁹ explains that we know that Shamai was stringent and unyielding while Hillel was lenient and flexible. This wasn't just a demeanor but rather it was another argument amongst them. That is, they had a disagreement about what is the appropriate way for a person. Just as Shamai and Hillel argued in many aspects of Torah, similarly they argued how one should conduct himself—to be rigid or flexible. Shamai was of the position that one should conduct himself in an unyielding manner for the sake of כבוד התורה. Hillel's view was that one must be soft and flexible. As a result, each of them conducted themselves according to their view. If Shamai felt that the Torah way was to conduct oneself like Hillel's way, then he would have been humble, soft and flexible like Hillel. Similarly, if Hillel felt the Torah way was as Shamai conducting himself, he would have followed Shamai's path. However, each had their opinion. In Heaven, Shamai receives reward for being unyielding just like Hillel receives reward for being flexible because each one was acting according to the will of Hashem according to his knowledge of Torah. Today we must follow Hillel's path because we have a fixed Halacha as Chazal said that one should be humble and gentle in his ways like Hillel and not be stern and unyielding like Shamai.¹⁰ So Hillel wasn't greater than Shamai.

⁶ Taanis 25b.

⁷ Years ago there were certain communities in Israel where children had lice. As a result, each child had to bring a note stating that they were checked and had no lice. There was a six-year-old boy who said to his mother that he doesn't need to be checked for lice because doesn't have any. His mother incredulously asked how he knew that? The boy answered that every day he davens in *Elokai Netzor* in Shemoneh Esrei עלי שלא תעלה קנאת אדם עלי which means, "Human jealousy may not rise up against me" (only Nusach Sefard says this). The little boy unaware of this meaning understood the phrase in the following way and this was his intent when he uttered these words: Not to have lice come upon him, as he interpreted קנאה as כינה, lice, unaware of the variant spelling.

⁸ Rosh Hashana 17.

⁹ Ohr Yisrael, chapter 28.

¹⁰ Shabbos 30b.

R' Akiva being מעביר על מדותיו while R' Eliezer was not means according to what the Torah wants. R' Eliezer was a student of Shamai whose path he followed which was to be firm and unbending. Therefore he conducted himself that way for כבוד התורה. This is why he was not מדותיו על מעביר. R' Akiva on the other hand was from the students of Hillel and as a result he was מעביר על מדותיו. Consequently, R' Akiva wasn't greater than R' Eliezer. They each just followed their view.

If that is the case, then why was R' Akiva's tefilla accepted while R' Eliezer's was not? This is an outcome of the concept מדה כנגד מדה, measure for measure (see the Gemara¹¹ that says that whoever is compassionate toward Hashem's creatures is shown compassion by Heaven and whoever is not compassionate is not shown this). When one davens to overlook the sins of the public and answer them in a time of pain as was the case in the story with R' Akiva and R' Eliezer, then Hashem responds in kind to that person. Since R' Akiva possessed the trait of מדותיו על מעביר, because he was a student of Hillel, Hashem responded accordingly. It's not that R' Eliezer was on a lesser level rather he just didn't have that trait.

Chodesh Av—A Time for Simcha

When a leader is in his palace and has all he wants, he is happy and feels in need of no one. However, when he feels a lack he may call in his servants to sing and cheer him up. In a similar vein, Hashem feels "low" since there is no Beis Hamikdash. This is especially so during the Three Weeks.¹² Therefore, we need to give "Chizuk" to Hashem as it says תנו עוז לאלהים, give strength to Hashem.¹³ This is done through doing Avodas Hashem with enthusiasm and happiness. With this, we can appreciate a deeper meaning in עבדו את ה' בשמחה¹⁴—the purpose of Avoda is to do it in a way that it gives Simcha to Hashem.

The Gemara¹⁵ tells us משנכנס אב ממעטין בשמחה, when the month of אב comes in we diminish our Simcha. This can also mean that when אב comes in we diminish in our pleasures—no meat, showering and the like. How should this be done? בשמחה.¹⁶ In fact, the Chazon Ish tells us a fascinating insight. A Navi is required to be בשמחה when he gets a prophesy. Consequently, Yirmiya had to be בשמחה¹⁷ when he wrote Eicha.¹⁸ The name given to Av is מנחם אב—we need to console Hashem, our father in heaven.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, *Fascinating Insights and Incredible Insights* in addition to being the host of *The Fascinating Insights Podcast*. His writings, some of which have been translated into German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹¹ Shabbos 151b.

¹² See the Koznitzer Magid in his Sefer Avodas Yisrael, Masei.

¹³ Tehillim 68:35.

¹⁴ Tehillim 100:2.

¹⁵ Taanis 26b. R' Schwab points out that the Gemara says in Adar we increase in Simcha whereas in Av we decrease in Simcha. We see that a Jew must always have Simcha.

¹⁶ We lessen the mourning by being B'Simcha.

¹⁷ A student of a certain Chassidische Rebbe (who lived about 120 years ago) noticed his Rebbe dancing happily on Tisha B'Av. Upon coming closer to his Rebbe, he noticed that while the Rebbe was dancing happily, tears of sadness poured from his eyes. When he asked his Rebbe about this, his Rebbe told him that it is a Mitzva to mourn the Beis Hamikdash on Tisha B'Av, and a Mitzva must be carried out with happiness!

¹⁸ When there is meaning in suffering one can be בשמחה and it is no contradiction.