



SACRED SPACE

The land of Eretz Yisrael is saturated with holiness (See Keilim 1:6 and Taanis 10a). The gemara (Kidushin 69a) informs us that Eretz Yisrael is higher than all lands. This is not merely a topographic point, but means that spiritually, Eretz Yisrael is the highest (See Maharal in Chidushai Agados on Kidushin 69a). This is also indicated in the use of language the gemara uses. When it says someone went from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael the term salik, ascend, is used, whereas from Eretz Yisrael to Bavel it says nachis, descend. On a literal level, this is because Eretz Yisrael is higher geographically. However, it also means in a spiritual sense and as the gemara says see the difference between the takifei Eretz Yisrael and the great ones of Bavel.

There were Amoraim who expressed authentic love for Eretz Yisrael. R' Abba kissed the stones of Akko, the first stones of Eretz Yisrael that he encountered. Due to his love for the holy land, R' Chanina attended to the obstacles and unevenness of the roads to make sure that it wouldn't receive a bad reputation. In middle of learning R' Ami and R' Asi would move from the sunlight to the shade in the summer, and from the shade to sunlight in the winter. This was to eliminate any cause for complaint about living in Eretz Yisrael. R' Chiya Bar Gamda rolled in the dust of Eretz Yisrael (Kesubos 112 and Rashi there).

Throughout history many made their way to the holy land. R' Ovadia Bartenura (1440-1516) after serving as rabbi in various Italian communities set out for Eretz Yisrael in 1486. The

journey took him two years.

Another example is R' Yeshaya Horowitz, the Shela Hakadosh (1560-1630). In 1621, he left Prague for Eretz Yisrael. He revealed this to no more than two of his most intimate friends. He didn't even tell his own children! This was in order that he shouldn't be dissuaded. He thus left his friends and family in addition to resigning his post as rabbi of Prague (As a consolation to his children and disciples he set out to write the sefer we know as the shnei luchos habris, whose initials spell shelah, as this is why he was called so). As he wrote it, it grew in size and scope. He therefore was unable to finish it while in Prague). After a number of years in the Holy Land, he finally completed this work. He then sent it to his children in Europe. On his way to the Holy Land, when he was in Damascus, he was offered by the scholars of the city to become their spiritual leader. A delegation from Tzefas also came and offered him a position in the rabbinate in Tzefas. He declined these offers as he had his heart set on living in Yerushalayim. He accepted the offer to be rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva of the Ashkenazim in Yerushalaim, a position that came without a salary.

During shacharis on Shabbos morning on the 11th of Elul, in 1625, 15 rabbis and leaders were arrested without warning or cause including the Shelah as the rule of Ibn Farukh and his notorious brother-in-law Othman Aga extracted lots of money by pillage and torture. The Shelah was held captive for 15 days which was spent in constant

terror. The community was forced to pay a huge ransom to free its leaders. Fearing for his life, the Shelah fled Yerushalayim where he eventually settled in the city of Tevarya, where he is buried near the Rambam.

Eretz Yisrael will be in its full grandeur in the future, unlike the way it is today. This is the kind of land we hope for. For this reason, the only bracha in Shemoneh Esrei that begins with a vav is v'lireshalayim (besides v'lamalshnim which is a later addition). This is because a vav, which means "and," indicates that it is connected to the previous bracha which is al hatzadikim. That is the type of Yerushalayim we desire, a city of tzadikim and chassidim, as the bracha of al hatzadikim expresses, and not of theatres, non-kosher stores and the like.

R' Ephraim Wachsman was once on a plane traveling to Eretz Yisrael when a woman in her 80s approached him saying she is traveling with a group of Evangelical Christians from the Southern United States.

She asked if it's true that there are neighborhoods in Jerusalem where if a woman enters immodestly dressed, they get upset with her. Not knowing what to reply, R' Wachsman said such behavior is not sanctioned by the rabbis. Also, sometimes young people get hotheaded but they don't mean harm. Then the woman said,

"Jerusalem is the holiest city in the world. It is disgraceful how some people walk around there. If you Orthodox Jews won't stand up for the sanctity of Jerusalem, then who will?!"

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

*To join the thousands of recipients and receive these insights free on a weekly email, obtain previous articles, feedback, comments, suggestions (on how to spread the insights of this publication further, make it more appealing or anything else), to support or dedicate this publication which has been in six continents and more than forty countries, or if you know anyone who is interested in receiving these insights weekly, please contact the author,
Rabbi Yehoshua Alt, at
yalt3285@gmail.com.
Thank you.*

*Listen to the NEW, short Fascinating Insights podcast at
<https://jewishpodcasts.fm/fascinating-insights>,
where it can also be downloaded!*

Coming Soon Bez"H

The book Extraordinary Insights

For Dedication Opportunities (which can be given from Maiser money)—L'ilui Nishmas, in memory of a loved one, L'Refuah Shleima, Hatzlacha, or for any reason, in addition to sharing in the merit of the Torah learned by each reader—please send an email to yalt3285@gmail.com. Donations can also be given via credit card by clicking "Donate" at <https://thechesedfund.com/fascinatinginsights/extraordinaryinsights>. Any amount is welcome.