

The Chosen Land for the Chosen Nation

In this week's פרשה, Hashem promised יעקב that He would give him ארץ ישראל as an inheritance forever.

ויחי מח:ד

ויאמר אלי הנני מפרך והרביתך ונתתיך לקהל עמים ונתתי את הארץ הזאת לזרעך אחריך אחזת עולם:

What is so special about ארץ ישראל?

Get responses from the students:

- It's קדוש
- We can do more מצוות
- The בית המקדש was there and will be rebuilt there
- The שכינה rests there

Now, we are going to look at some of the miraculous aspects of the land of ארץ ישראל itself.

רשי: בראשית א:א

בראשית. אמר רבי יצחק לא היה צריך להתחיל את התורה אלא מהחדש הזה לכם, שהיא מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו בה ישראל, ומה טעם פתח בבראשית? משום כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים (תהילים קי"א), שאם יאמרו אמות העולם לישראל לסטים אתם, שכבשתם ארצות שבעה גוים, הם אומרים להם כל הארץ של הקב"ה היא, הוא בראה ונתנה לאשר ישר בעיניו, ברצונו נתנה להם, וברצונו נטלה מהם ונתנה לנו:

Rashi in בראשית says that the תורה which is the law book for בני ישראל should have begun with the מצוה of ראש חדש, the first מצוה given to בני ישראל in the תורה. Why did it begin with the story of the creation instead?

Because, like it says in Tehillim, כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים,

Because He created the world, He has the right to give out the land as He chooses.

If the גוים come and complain and say to בני ישראל, "You are robbers who stole ארץ ישראל from the seven nations.", they can answer that Hashem created the world and it is His to give to whomever He chooses.

Hashem gave the chosen land to His chosen nation

רבה פרשת מסעי

אמר הקב"ה: הארץ שלי, שנאמר - לה' הארץ, וישראל לי הם, שנאמר - כי לי בני ישראל עבדים. מוטב שאנחיל ארצי לעבדי - שלי לשלי

Hashem said - The land is Mine and בני ישראל are Mine. How good is it that I give My land to My people!

The Land that Waited for our Return

שמות ג:ח

וְלִהְעֵלְתָּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ הַהִוא אֶל־אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ זָבֵת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ

The תורה describes ארץ ישראל as a land that is beautiful, large, and prosperous for crops.

This was definitely the case, when בני ישראל inhabited the land. This was true through the time of Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived in the years 37 -100 AD. He wrote:

- For the whole area is excellent for crops or pasturage and rich in trees of every kind, so that by its fertility it invites even those least inclined to work on the land.

(Josephus, The Jewish Wars; Book III 3:2 Penguin edition, p. 192)

However, Hashem warns that if בני ישראל don't listen to Him and His תורה, they will be kicked out of the land, and the land will be desolated.

ויקרא כו:לב

וְהַשְׁמַתִּי אֶנִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְשָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיהָ אֵיבֵיכֶם הַיֹּשְׁבִים בָּהּ:

רש"י:

והשמתי אני את הארץ. זו מדה טובה לישראל, שלא ימצאו האויבים נחת רוח בארצם, שתהא שוממה מיושביה (ספרא):

Rashi explains that the desolation of the land is actually a ברכה. The land will not prosper for our enemies and therefore, they will not live there.

During the two thousand years of גלות from our Land, numerous empires have conquered the Land and countless wars were fought for its possession. And yet, astonishingly, no conqueror ever succeeded in permanently settling the Land or causing the deserts to blossom.

The רמבן visited ירושלים in 1267. He couldn't even find a מנין of men to daven with. He wrote to his son:

- "Many are Israel's forsaken places, and great is the desecration. The more sacred the place, the greater the devastation it has suffered. Jerusalem is the most desolate place of all."

Mark Twain visited ארץ ישראל in 1867 and described the land:

- "A desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action. The further we went... the more rocky and bare, repulsive and dreary the landscape became."

Many others described ארץ ישראל and ירושלים as uninhabitable, as well.

The Land that Waited for our Return

מהרש"א סנהדרין צח.

אין לך קץ מגולה מזה וכו'... לפי שכל זמן שאין ישראל על אדמתם אין הארץ נותנת פירותיה כדרכה אבל כשתחזור ליתן פירותיה זהו קץ מגולה שקרב לבא זמן גאולה שיחזרו ישראל על אדמתן

The מהרש"א in סנהדרין says that the land will not prosper if בני ישראל are not there. But when it begins to produce fruit again, it will be a sign that the גאולה is near and all of בני ישראל will soon return home to ארץ ישראל

When the many Jews moved to ארץ ישראל after the Holocaust, the land was still desolate - a mixture of uninhabitable swamp and desert. Ten years later, a story was written in the April 1960 issue of Scientific American:

....an international convention brought 485 farmers from 37 countries to see what had been accomplished. They found a nation of two million people, whose numbers had doubled in the decade, principally by immigration. Yet Israel was already an exporter of agricultural produce and had nearly achieved the goal of agricultural self-sufficiency, with an export/import balance in foodstuffs. It had more than doubled its cultivated land, to a million acres. It had drained 44,000 acres of marshland and extended irrigation to 325,000 acres; it had increased many-fold the supply of underground water from wells and was far along on the work of diverting and utilizing the scant surface waters. On vast stretches of uncultivable land it had established new range-cover to support a growing livestock industry and planted 37 million trees in new forests and shelter belts.

Now that Jews have returned to the Land, it is prosperous, the valleys are green, and the desert is blooming! This is a sign that the גאולה is on its way!

The Land had waited for our return!



Teach to Reach is under the guidance of:

Harav Reuven Feinstein, shlit"א
Harav Sholom Kaminetsky, shlit"א

Harav Aaron Lopiansky, shlit"א
Harav Shaya Cohen, shlit"א

Support and resources
for new and veteran
Mechanchim

- weteachtoreach.com
- info@weteachtoreach.com
- 516.295.5700