Parshas Vayechi - Eretz Yisrael

I will make you fertile and numerous, making of you a community of peoples; and I will assign this land to your offspring to come for an everlasting possession.	וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הִנְנִי מַפְרְךָ֙ וְהִרְבִּיתִ֔ךָ וּנְתַתִּ֖יךָ לִקְהַ֣ל עַמִּ֑ים וְנָֽתַתִּי֙ אֶת־הָאָ֣רֶץ הַזֹּ֔את לְזַרְעֲךָ֖ אַחֲרֶ֥יךָ אֲחֻזַּ֥ת עוֹלָ֖ם: (בראשית מח, ד)

Instructions For Teaching This Lesson:
Present to your class the significance of ארץ ישראל.

Step 1:
Explain to the students how ארץ ישראל is the chosen land, the most beautiful land, but only for בני ישראל.

Step 2:
Review the different נבואות and הבטחות about ארץ ישראל from תנ"ך. Remind the students how studying Hashem's הבטחות helps us strengthen our בטחון.

Step 3:
Discuss with students the actualization of these נבואות. Emphasize the number of years that the land remained dormant, how it wouldn't respond to any other nations.

Step 4:
Show the video and/or teach the song from Journeys 3 - Yerushalayim

Parshas Vayechi - Eretz Yisrael

רש"י: בראשית א:א

בראשית. אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק לֹא הָיָה צָרִיךְ לְהַתְחִיל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה אֶלָּא מֵהַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם, שֶׁהִיא מִצְוָה רִאשׁוֹנָה שֶׁנִּצְטַוּוּ בָּהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמַה טַּעַם פָּתַח בִּבְרֵאשִׁית? מִשּׁוּם כֹּחַ מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לָתֵת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם (תהילים קי"א), שֶׁאִם יֹאמְרוּ אֻמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לִסְטִים אַתֶּם, שֶׁכְּבַשְׁתֶּם אַרְצוֹת שִׁבְעָה גּוֹיִם, הֵם אוֹמְרִים לָהֶם כָּל הָאָרֶץ שֶׁל הַקָּבָ"ה הִיא, הוּא בְרָאָהּ וּנְתָנָהּ לַאֲשֶׁר יָשַׁר בְּעֵינָיו, בִּרְצוֹנוֹ נְתָנָהּ לָהֶם, וּבִרְצוֹנוֹ נְטָלָהּ מֵהֶם וּנְתָנָהּ לָנוּ:

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, כֹּחַ מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לָתֵת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם
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!

שמות ג:ח

וְלְהַעֲלֹתוֹ מִן־הָאָרֶץ הַהִוא אֶל־אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה וּרְחָבָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבָשׁ
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 CE. 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)

Parshas Vayechi - Eretz Yisrael

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.

<u>ויקרא כו:לב</u>
וְהַשְׁמֹתִי אֲנִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְשָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיהָ אֹיְבֵיכֶם הַיֹּשְׁבִים בָּהּ׃
<u>רש"י:</u>
והשמתי אני את הארץ. זוֹ מִדָּה טוֹבָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁלֹּא יִמְצְאוּ הָאוֹיְבִים נַחַת רוּחַ בְּאַרְצָם, שֶׁתְּהֵא שׁוֹמֵמָה מִיּוֹשְׁבֶיהָ (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 רמב"ן 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.

<u>מהרש"א סנהדרין צח.</u>
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.

Parshas Vayechi - Eretz Yisrael

מכות כד:
שׁוּב פַּעַם אַחַת הָיוּ עוֹלִין לִירוּשָׁלַיִם, כֵּיוָן שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ לְהַר הַצוֹפִים קָרְעוּ בִּגְדֵיהֶם, כֵּיוָן שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ לְהַר הַבַּיִת רָאוּ שׁוּעָל שֶׁיָּצָא מִבֵּית קָדְשֵׁי הַקָּדָשִׁים, הִתְחִילוּ הֵן בּוֹכִין וְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא מְצַחֵק. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: מִפְּנֵי מָה אַתָּה מְצַחֵק? אָמַר לָהֶם: מִפְּנֵי מָה אַתֶּם בּוֹכִים? אָמְרוּ לוֹ: מָקוֹם שֶׁכָּתוּב בּוֹ "וְהַזָּר הַקָּרֵב יוּמָת", וְעַכְשָׁיו שׁוּעָלִים הִלְּכוּ בּוֹ, וְלֹא נִבְכֶּה?!

It happened that Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria, Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Akiva went up to ירושלים. When they reached הר הצופים, they tore their clothes. When they reached the הר הבית, they saw a fox emerging from the place of the קדש קדשים. The others started weeping; Rabbi Akiva laughed.
They said to him: "Why are you laughing?"
He said to them: "Why are you weeping?"
They said to him: "A place [so holy] that it is said of it, 'the stranger that approaches it shall die,' and now foxes traverse it, and we shouldn't weep?"

אָמַר לָהֶן: לְכָךְ אֲנִי מְצַחֵק, דִּכְתִיב: "וְאָעִידָה לִּי עֵדִים נֶאֱמָנִים אֵת אוּרִיָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְאֵת זְכַרְיָה בֶּן יְבֶרֶכְיָהוּ" – וְכִי מָה עִנְיַן אוּרִיָּה אֵצֶל זְכַרְיָה? אוּרִיָּה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ רִאשׁוֹן, וּזְכַרְיָה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ שֵׁנִי! אֶלָּא: תְּלָה הַכָּתוּב נְבוּאָתוֹ שֶׁל זְכַרְיָה בִּנְבוּאָתוֹ שֶׁל אוּרִיָּה.

He said to them: "That is why I laugh. For it is written, 'I shall have bear witness for Me faithful witnesses— אורי’ הכהן and ‘זכרי.' Now what is the connection between Uriah and Zechariah? Uriah was [in the time of] the first בית המקדש, and Zechariah was [in the time of] the second בית המקדש! But the Torah makes Zachariah's prophecy dependent upon Uriah's prophecy. With Uriah, it is written: 'Therefore, because of you, ציון shall be plowed as a field; ירושלים shall become heaps, and the הר הבית like the high places of a forest.' With Zachariah it is written, 'Old men and women shall yet sit in the streets of ירושלים.'

בְּאוּרִיָּה כְּתִיב "לָכֵן בִּגְלַלְכֶם צִיּוֹן שָׂדֶה תֵּחָרֵשׁ", בִּזְכַרְיָה כְּתִיב "עוֹד יֵשְׁבוּ זְקֵנִים וּזְקֵנוֹת בִּרְחֹבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם". עַד שֶׁלֹּא נִתְקַיְּמָה נְבוּאָתוֹ שֶׁל אוּרִיָּה הָיִיתִי מִתְיָירֵא שֶׁלֹּא תִּתְקַיֵּים נְבוּאָתוֹ שֶׁל זְכַרְיָה, עַכְשָׁיו שֶׁנִּתְקַיְּמָה נְבוּאָתוֹ שֶׁל אוּרִיָּה – בְּיָדוּעַ שֶׁנְּבוּאָתוֹ שֶׁל זְכַרְיָה מִתְקַיֶּמֶת. בַּלָּשׁוֹן הַזֶּה אָמְרוּ לוֹ: עֲקִיבָא נִיחַמְתָּנוּ, עֲקִיבָא נִיחַמְתָּנוּ.

"As long as Uriah's prophecy had not been fulfilled, I feared that Zechariah's prophecy may not be fulfilled either. But now that Uriah's prophecy has been fulfilled, it is certain that Zechariah's prophecy will be fulfilled."
With these words they replied to him: "Akiva, you have consoled us! Akiva, you have consoled us!"

Parshas Vayechi - Eretz Yisrael

ישעי' מא, יח-כ

אֶפְתַּח עַל־שְׁפָיִים נְהָרוֹת וּבְתוֹךְ בְּקָעוֹת מַעְיָנוֹת אָשִׂים מִדְבָּר לַאֲגַם־מַיִם וְאֶרֶץ צִיָּה לְמוֹצָאֵי מָיִם:
I will open up streams on the bare hills, and fountains amid the valleys; I will turn the desert into ponds, the arid land into springs of water.

אֶתֵּן בַּמִּדְבָּר אֶרֶז שִׁטָּה וַהֲדַס וְעֵץ שֶׁמֶן אָשִׂים בָּעֲרָבָה בְּרוֹשׁ תִּדְהָר וּתְאַשּׁוּר יַחְדָּו:
I will plant trees in the wilderness, I will set other trees in the desert

לְמַעַן יִרְאוּ וְיֵדְעוּ וְיָשִׂימוּ וְיַשְׂכִּילוּ יַחְדָּו כִּי יַד־ה' עָשְׂתָה זֹּאת וּקְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרָאָהּ: {פ}
That all may see and know, consider and comprehend that Hashem's hand has done this, that the Hashem created it.

יחזקאל לו, לה

וְאָמְרוּ הָאָרֶץ הַנְּשַׁמָּה הָיְתָה כְּגַן־עֵדֶן וְהֶעָרִים הֶחֳרֵבוֹת וְהַנְּשַׁמּוֹת וְהַנֶּהֱרָסוֹת בְּצוּרוֹת יָשָׁבוּ:
And it shall be said, "That land, once desolate, has become like the garden of Eden; and the cities, once ruined, desolate, and ravaged, are now populated and fortified."

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!

Parshas Vayechi - Eretz Yisrael

YERUSHALAYIM

Composed By Abie Rotenberg, Lyrics By Chaya Sara Fogel

Come let us sing the song of a city
Known for its beauty, splendor, and grace,
Come let us find the words to describe her
She is not like, not like any other place.

CHORUS:
ירושלים, the place to live
הרים סביב ,ירשלים
עיר של שלום ,ירושלים
ירושלים, we're going home.
ירושלים, the sky so blue
ירושלים, we turn to you,
עיר של שלום ,ירושלים
ירושלים, we're going home.

Walk down a street named for the tzaddik
Who lived by this very road,
Step into a shul, you almost can hear
The words of the sages speaking the wisdom of old.
Where else in this world can you find a wall
Whenever you touch it, it touches you,
Reach for its stones, they're moist with the tears
Of our hopes and our dreams, that we know will soon come true.

CHORUS

Dreams of past splendor
And whispers of glory,
Your walls tell your story
Your soul, waiting so long.
For the time when
Our tears will be stilled,
Our prayers fulfilled
Our city rebuilt!
Join in the crowd rushing to shul
As the siren invites the queen,
Shabbos has come bringing peace to each home
The city's at rest, the feeling is so serene.
Travel the land, the mountains and valleys
There is a story behind each stone,
But when you return, your heart will rejoice
As ברוכים הבאים appears and you know you're home.

CHORUS

Parshas Vayechi - Eretz Yisrael

Parshas Vayechi - Eretz Yisrael

What does רשי say is the reason that the תורה begins with בריאת העולם?

_____

_____

How is ארץ ישראל's desolation actually a good thing for us?

_____

_____

What did Hashem promise to us about ארץ ישראל?

_____

_____

What did ארץ ישראל look like until בני ישראל returned?

_____

_____

What did ארץ ישראל look like after בני ישראל returned?

_____

_____

Parshas Vayechi - Eretz Yisrael

What does רשי say is the reason that the תורה begins with בריאת העולם?

When Hashem wants to give ארץ ישראל and the גוים argue against it, there will be proof that Hashem created the world and has the right to give it to whoever He wants.

How is ארץ ישראל's desolation actually a good thing for us?

Our enemies won't live there

What did Hashem promise to us about ארץ ישראל?

The deserts will produce trees and the land will become prosperous

What did ארץ ישראל look like until בני ישראל returned?

Desolate - few trees and growth, deserts

What did ארץ ישראל look like after בני ישראל returned?

The land produced and there are trees and fruit growing