

# TRUE ALIYAH

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

**The last time Eretz** Yisroel was a serious topic of discussion in the Torah was back by the spies. It has returned to the spotlight again in this week's parsha because the nation is finally about to take the land. The issue of dividing the land has become super relevant and is finally addressed here, in Parashas Pinchas.

This of course provides the opening for the remarkable account of the five daughters of Tzelofchad. As Rashi points out, it was their love of Eretz Yisroel that compelled them to approach Moshe Rabbeinu about a portion in the land. It was their love of Eretz Yisroel that eternalized them in the words of every Sefer Torah.

At present time I am working on a book called "The God Experience, Part 2." Included in this part of the project is one of the ultimate God Experiences there is: Eretz Yisroel. The following is an excerpt from the chapter.

The Torah says:

I am God your God Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be God to you. (Vayikra 25:38)

You can't get much more explicit than this. God Himself, not the rabbis, has said that a Jew NEEDS Eretz Yisroel to properly connect to God. The rabbis, for their part, amplified the message:

A person should rather live in Eretz Yisroel, even in a city whose majority of inhabitants are gentile, than outside the Land, even if the majority of the city's inhabitants are Jewish. All those who dwell in Eretz Yisroel are like those with a God, and all those who dwell outside the Land are like those without a God, as it says, "I am God your God Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be God to you" (Vayikra 25:38). (Kesuvos 110b)

Eretz Yisroel simply IS a God Experience. For those who love the land, this is welcome news. For those who don't, it is something to minimize and rationalize.

"It doesn't actually mean that."

"It doesn't apply today."

"It doesn't apply to me."

"I asked my rabbi, and he said I don't have to."

"Torah can be learned ANYWHERE in the world. I don't have to be in Israel to fulfill my halachic obligations. In fact, I can do them better here in the Diaspora."

"If you sin outside of Israel it is not as serious as if you sin inside Israel."

"The Shechinah is in exile, so why shouldn't we be?"

These are just some of the reasons given for why some do not make aliyah, or even think about it. There are many more.

Never mind the fact that we are still in exile because the Jews of Moshe Rabbeinu's generation rejected Eretz Yisroel. Never mind how, after thousands of years of living ONLY in the Diaspora we have our land back and can come and go as we please. Never mind how Israel survives and even thrives supernaturally, a clear indication of God's blessing. There's a different point to be made here.

Whether or not there is an actual obligation for a Jew to live in Eretz Yisroel today is debatable. Whether or not God's Presence is felt most in Eretz Yisroel is not. True, there have been spiritual shifts since the First Temple was destroyed. This however never included a spiritual equalization of ALL lands.

It has to do with the sefiros. EVERYTHING has to do with the sefiros, the discussion of which is the essence of Kabbalah.

Physical heights are measured in feet or meters. Spiritual heights are measure in degrees of kedushah, or holiness. The higher something is spiritually, the holier it will be in Creation.

Height in the spiritual world though is not measured in feet or meters, but in sefiros. There are 10 of them, from top to bottom: Keser, Chochmah, Binah, Chesed, Gevurah, Tifferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malchus.

In short, the sefiros are completely spiritual, even though they eventually result in something physical. They are a system designed to receive and filter the infinite light of God, so that it can not only result in something finite, the world can even appear to be Godless. This is necessary for free will, which is necessary for earning one's place in the eternal world of Olam HaBa—the World-to-Come.

Ohr Ain Sof, literally the "Light Without End," enters the "system" on the level of Keser. It is then "filtered" and reduced each level it descends. As the light moves "away" from its Source it becomes less spiritual, less Godly, and by necessity, less holy.

Therefore, though two objects can appear to exist on the same physical plane, they can simultaneously exist on two entirely different spiritual planes. Thus, when it teaches:

Eretz Yisroel is higher than all lands. (Kiddushin 69a)

it does not mean physically. It did not require advanced technology to see that physically this was

not true, even in the time of the Talmud. The Talmud means spiritually. The spiritual level and holiness of something or somewhere, depends upon the level of sefirah in which its conceptual reality is rooted.

The system is VERY complex, as Kabbalah details. The system has sub-systems which have sub-systems, which have more sub-systems. The point however is basic: the higher up the spiritual ladder one climbs, the more one accesses Divine light, increases their level of holiness, and enhances their God Experience.

Therefore, what counts is not the physical elevation of Eretz Yisroel. Mt. Everest is far higher than any mountain in the Jewish homeland. What matters most is the spiritual level of Eretz Yisroel, where it is rooted in the sefiros. That will determine what kind of conduit it can be for the light of God, and the level of spiritual impact it can have on those living on its land.

There was a sefer published in 1655 on this particular topic, called "Tuv HaAretz," literally "Goodness of the Land." What follows in the rest of the sefer are some of the most remarkable concepts known to mankind. They conclusively show, based upon its spiritual location in the sefiros, how incredible Eretz Yisroel is as a land, and incomparable as a place to experience the reality of God.

A person may have a legitimate reason for not making aliyah, but it doesn't compensate for the lack of God Experience from living in the Diaspora.