

IN THE MERIT OF BRIS

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

God appeared to him . . . (Bereishis 18:1)

THE TALMUD SAYS that God appeared to Avraham on the third day after Bris Milah, when he was weakest. It was a sick call, in the merit of the Milah that was performed. Once Avraham performed Bris, it was a whole different relationship between him and God, and this week's parsha shows to what extent.

One of the other major benefits from Bris Milah was Eretz Yisroel. The Zohar says that the Jewish people's connection to the Land is because of Bris Milah, which shows how important the Land is. Bris is considered one of the most primordial concepts, so if Eretz Yisroel is tied to it, it must be extremely central to the purpose of Creation as well.

With respect to this, the Talmud also says that three wonderful "gifts" are acquired through suffering: Torah, Eretz Yisroel, and Olam HaBa—the World-to-Come (Brochos 5a). The only question is, if they have to be acquired, WHY are they called gifts? And, if the currency of acquisition is suffering, HOW can they be called gifts?

The answer of course is that, once acquired, these three, Torah, Eretz Yisroel, and the World-to-Come are so wonderful that a person will be happy to have spent the pain to get them. The eventual pleasure of "having" them will make the suffering seem like a small price to have paid.

The World-to-Come is certainly like that. Mesiros Nefesh, or self-sacrifice, is the currency of the World-to-Come. You literally buy your portion, or increase it, through acts of self-sacrifice. A person DEFINITELY buys his gift of eternal life with suffering.

Torah as well. Without self-sacrifice, a person does not acquire Torah. He can read it, and he can learn it, but he won't acquire it to the degree that he becomes ONE with his learning, and feels extra life because of it. This is a whole different level of Torah, one that someone from the outside can't possibly appreciate. And that's before discussing what self-sacrifice for Torah on this side of history will do for a person's level of Torah on the other side of history.

But what about Eretz Yisroel? The Spies did not reject Torah. They certainly did not reject reward in the World-to-Come, though they ended up losing it because of their sin. They did however reject ERETZ YISROEL, seeing it as anything BUT a gift. They were clearly not prepared to pay for it with self-sacrifice, as they told Moshe Rabbeinu, the Jewish people, and effectively, God Himself when

they chose to stay in the desert. And quite frankly, there are millions of Jews around the world today who feel the same way.

The short answer to this question is in Parashas Behar, where God says that He took us out of Egypt, to bring us to Canaan, to be our God. From this the Talmud, remarkably, learns that He can't actually be our God while we live in the Diaspora (Kesuvos 110b). Dovid HaMelech went so far as to call himself an idol worshipper because he was forced from the land, though he never came close to doing any such thing.

There are midrashim galore that elaborate on this topic. (Personally, I have written a couple of books to explain the importance of Eretz Yisroel and the mitzvah of living there. You can order any of them through Amazon, or from my own site, if you want more information on the topic.)

Just one thing I'd like to point out for now. It is interesting that the Talmud put Eretz Yisroel between Torah and the World-to-Come, and not first. Assuming that the list is in order of importance, one would expect Eretz Yisroel to be the least important of the three. From the Talmud, it seems that it is a bridge between Torah and the World-to-Come, which given the verse from Parashas Behar, would make sense.

This was something that Moshe Rabbeinu understood perfectly well, as one would expect. This is why he worked so hard to overturn the decree against his entry into the Land. And, as the Talmud points out elsewhere, it wasn't just to perform the mitzvos dependent on the Land. He would have received reward for having done them because he wanted to, but was prevented from doing so (Brochos 6a).

There are many answers to this, and on many different levels. One of them though has to do with the fact that the souls of the Jewish people were "hewn" from Eretz Yisroel. When a person acquires a portion of the Land, they acquire a portion of himself or herself. It's like buying the house you grew up in, except in this case it is the "house" you are meant to live in as well. It is the ULTIMATE home of a person, where they can most be themselves both spiritually and physically.

To this end, I have suggested to people over the years, especially if they cannot move here, to at least buy a piece of land or invest in something, ANYTHING. There is no way to overstate the importance of having a portion in the Land, ANY portion. It's why, according to the GR"A, Eretz Yisroel has needed help from the Diaspora, to allow Diaspora Jews a means to be invested in the Land and redemption when they can't be there in person.

To my absolute joy, I was contacted this week by an organization that actually makes a point of helping people to do exactly this. It's called, appropriately, "Kinyan Eretz Yisroel," or "Acquisition of the Land of Israel." It is a modern day means for Jews around the world to have A portion in the gift meant for them, since Creation. It is an opportunity to become spiritually attached to the Land that is already spiritually attached to them.

This is the link that was given to me for people to find out more about this unique opportunity, and to participate in this incredible program. And, being so close to the end of history, MUCH closer than most people know, it is a merit of tremendous importance that can, in the end, make a difference regarding how one fares as history transitions to the Messianic Era.

Check it out here: <https://www.kinyaneretzisrael.com/?uname=ca&camp=rpw>. It's not such a major sacrifice for Eretz Yisroel, but it is a major acquisition for life in this world and the next one.