

OUR FUTURE LIES IN CHEVRON

by Rabbi Berel Wein

Rashi comments that the Lord assured Avraham that leaving his home and family in Aram and heading to a then unknown destination would somehow be to his benefit and ultimate good. Even though this may appear strange to the casual observer - leaving the known and secure and heading out to wander to an unknown destination - the ways of the Lord are inscrutable and often counter-intuitive to human logic.

The purpose of Avraham's wandering journey is to reach the Land of Israel and to claim it for his descendants. For only in the Land of Israel will Avraham find personal fulfillment and realize his true spiritual, moral and holy potential. But while in Aram and Charan, Avraham and Sarah did good work, spreading the idea of monotheism and teaching the basic system of morality that is the core of the Torah's value system. Many people were influenced by them and became followers of monotheism and began to worship only the one true God.

So, why not leave Avraham and Sarah in Aram to continue their good work? Why send them off to the Land of Israel, then inhabited by the fierce and pagan Canaanite nation, to a very uncertain and perilous situation? And in the Land of Israel, the wicked, powerful and influential cities of Sodom are present. Seemingly Avraham and Sarah can accomplish much more by remaining in Aram than by travelling to the Land of Israel. And because of this type of human thinking, Avraham has to rely on the Lord's counter-intuitive logic, so to speak, and unhesitatingly embark on this dangerous journey that will eventually change all of human history.

What is clear from all of this is that the fulfillment of Jewish destiny and influence, of the holy self-actualization of the Jewish people can only be achieved in the Land of Israel. The obstacles that the Land of Israel itself raises to this self-actualization are many and profound. Nevertheless, the actions of our forbearers remain as the guideposts for all future Jewish generations.

If we look around at the Jewish world today the only significant demographic growth of Jews the world over is in the Land of Israel. The millennia-long exile and the Diaspora generally is shutting down, whether from external pressures or inner weakness. Only in the Land of Israel will the Jewish people find their soul and destiny.

And, just as in the time of Avraham and Sarah, the Land of Israel is plagued with dangers, problems and fraught with apparent peril. There is still a touch of Sodom present there and the heirs of the Canaanites are in the land. Yet just as the Lord told Avraham many thousands of years ago, only

there will you become great and blessed - blessed for yourself and for all of humankind.

The opportunity to live a truly Jewish life and to help build a kingdom of priests and a holy nation is pretty much reserved to those who today live in the Land of Israel. The future of the Jewish people lies today in Chevron and not in Charan.

Shabat shalom,

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Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com