

IF ONE DOES NOT OWN LAND, HE NEED NOT GO 'UP' FOR THE FESTIVAL

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Ki Sisa

If One Does Not Own Land, He Need Not Go 'Up' for the Festival

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 402, 89, Returning From a Medical Emergency on Shabbos. Good Shabbos!

If One Does Not Own Land, He Need Not Go 'Up' for the Festival

At the end of the parsha, the pasuk [verse] says, "Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the L-rd, Hashem, the G-d of Israel" [Shemos 34:23]. This is the command of "aliyah l'regel" [Going up (to Jerusalem) for the Festival]. On Pesach, Shavuot, and Succos the Jews were commanded to go up to the Beis HaMikdash to see and be seen by the Divine Presence of G-d.

The pasuk continues "...and no man shall covet your land when you go up to appear before Hashem your G-d, three times a year." We are guaranteed that we have nothing to fear while everyone is in Jerusalem. We might have been nervous about leaving no males at home, because it would be an open invitation to thieves and enemies. The pasuk tells us to have no fear -- no one will covet our land while we go up to Jerusalem to see the Shechinah [Divine Presence of G-d].

The Talmud derives a halacha from this -- whoever does not own land is not obligated to go up to Jerusalem on the Festival [Pesachim 8b]. The entire halacha of going up three times a year is for one who owns land.

The Kotzker Rebbe (1787-1859) asked, "Why is it that someone who doesn't own land is excused from going up to Jerusalem?" The Kotzker Rebbe answered, "Because he doesn't need to."

Only the person who owns land, who has a connection to this world, who is into materialism, needs to go up to Jerusalem to see the Shechinah. The person who is unencumbered by materialism does not need to go anywhere to see the Shechinah, because he sees the Shechinah everywhere.

One who has the property, the mortgage, the two garages and the Jacuzzi, etc., etc., must go to Jerusalem to see the Shechinah. But one who is free of the materialism of this world sees the Shechinah _everywhere_, so he is excused from the mitzvah of 'Reiyah,' going to see.

The Chofetz Chaim & Rav Shimon Schwab: A Tale of Two Grandfathers

This is a true story involving the Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933) and Rav Shimon Schwab (1908-1995).

Rav Schwab once visited the Chofetz Chaim, and the Chofetz Chaim asked him if he were a Kohen, Levi or Yisroel. Rav Schwab answered that he was a Yisroel. As it is well known, the Chofetz Chaim was a Kohen [Priest, descended from Aharon the High Priest].

The Chofetz Chaim said to Rav Schwab, "Do you know the difference between me and you? Soon the Beis HaMikdash [House of Sanctity - Temple] will be rebuilt. Everyone will go crowd into the Courtyard of the Beis HaMikdash for the first time. There will be a guard at the door who will ask the people whether they are Kohanim, Leviim [Jews descended from the tribe of Levi], or Yisraelim [Jews from tribes other than Levi]. The Kohanim will get to go inside and do the Service of the Beis HaMikdash. I will be one of those people. You, Rav Schwab, with all the other Yisraelim will be left outside. All the Yisraelim will be terribly jealous of me. They are going to want to do the Service, but the Halacha will be NO! -- Kohanim inside; Yisraelim outside."

The Chofetz Chaim continued, "Do you know why it will be like that? Because of something that happened thousands of years ago. Thousands of years ago, there was an incident called 'the sin of the Golden Calf.' The Jewish people sinned with the calf. Only 3,000 people participated in that heinous act of idolatry. But when Moshe Rabbeinu called out and asked everyone else to come and put out the fire... When he issued those famous words 'Whoever is for G-d, gather around me' [Shemos 32:26], do you know what happened? Only the tribe of Levi showed up. My grandfather came and responded to that call and your grandfather sat there and did nothing. Therefore, the Kohanim, who come from the tribe of Levi, will go into the Beis HaMikdash. But you, Yisraelim are going to be on the outside because you sat there and did not respond."

The Chofetz Chaim then looked at Rav Schwab and said to him, "What do you think? Am I trying to make you feel bad? Am I trying to rub your face in it? Chas V'Sholom [Heaven forbid!] I want to teach you a lesson. Many times in life, you will hear a little voice go off in your head that will say 'Whoever is for G-d, gather around me.' An event will occur or an issue will be raised. Everybody is going to be told 'Stand up and be counted.' In whose camp are you? I want you to know that questions like that and challenges like that have implications not only for you but for generations and generations after you. Because your grandfather did not answer 'Yes' in the affirmative to 'Who is for G-d, gather to me', you are excluded from the Beis HaMikdash Service. It was an act that has implications

thousands of years later. Because my grandfather said yes, I am a Kohen now and I am going to do the Service."

"Never forget", the Chofetz Chaim told Rav Schwab, "everybody has his moments of 'Who is for G-d, gather around me.' When you hear that voice, stand up and be counted!"

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Ki Sisa are provided below:

- Tape # 046 - Dealing With Illness on Shabbos
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- Tape # 230 - The Mitzvah of Shekalim and Davening Mussaf
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