

This Land is My Land

A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

Essay #2—Parshat Shelach 5761

When God first created the world, He gave possession of the Holy Land to the nation of Kanaan. Afterwards He give the Land to the Jews. If the Land was indeed meant for the Jews, why wasn't it given to them first? For what purpose was it first entrusted to Kanaan and then to the Jews? Or, in contemporary terms, why did God allow the nomadic Palestinians, who came here just a century ago, to settle and thereby stake a claim? Why isn't *our* millennia-long historical connection enough to convince everyone about the truth of the matter?

When God created the world, He did not immediately give the Torah. Twenty-six generations passed before that event. Since Torah is the vitality of the world, with what was the world sustained until it was given? The answer is, it was sustained from God's Treasury of Unearned Gifts. This treasury was made to sustain a person even if he is far from God and has no merit to receive blessing. Had the Torah been given immediately, Torah law would have immediately demanded punishment for each transgression. The early generations were idolaters and committed other terrible sins as well. They would have been totally destroyed (as nearly happened during the Flood). Therefore, God delayed giving the Torah and designed the world with the ability to exist through His Treasury of Unearned Gifts. The Torah and the Holy Land are synonymous, for the main fulfillment of Torah can only take place in the Holy Land.

Kanaan's prior possession of the Holy Land is for the same reason as the delayed giving of the Torah. Had God given the Jews the Holy Land right from the beginning of creation, Torah Law would have demanded punishment for disobeying and they would have had to been immediately expelled. That would have given the Other Side, the forces of evil, possession of the Land. However, since the Land was inhabited initially by idolaters, its sanctity was hidden and sustained through God's treasury. The sanctity of the Land was revealed when the Jews took possession of the Land, in the days of Joshua.

We, today, are also able to take possession of the Land. What is preventing us? The sanctity that was concealed when the Land was in the hands of Kanaan, was first revealed by our patriarch Abraham. However, it took until Joshua's days for the sanctity to be fully revealed, a matter of some 400 years! The Land's beauty and sanctity still exist, waiting for *us* to reveal them in their fullness. Our ancestors displayed patience enough for us, too. There is no need for us to wait 400 years to do so. What is preventing us?

Our faith, or our lack of it, that the Land is truly ours. It is our Land, because it is God's Promised Land, which He promised to us. If we believe in the promise, we will be fortunate to see Him fulfill it (see *Likutey Halakhot, Milah 3:2*).

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The following question was raised after [last week's essay](#). We will try to answer it at length in the future, God willing. For the moment we provide the following.

The Question:

Precisely which land did God promise us, on what terms, and with what boundaries? We can't simply say that God gave us all the land we can take "by any means necessary"—for then our dispossession by the same means is presumably just as legitimate...But the idea that God has placed his stamp of approval, in advance, on whatever borders a series of secular Israeli governments are able to maintain, by military means, with massive U.S. aid, is implausible, to say the least.

The concise answer:

God promised us the Holy Land, the boundaries of which are given in the Bible (*Numbers* 34:1-15). The Bible also mentions there the land on the east bank of the Jordan River, which was conquered by the tribes of Reuven, Gad and Menasheh. In *Genesis* (15:18-21) God promises the Land to Abraham. This Land includes not only the territory of the seven Kanaanite nations, but the land of three nations beyond the Kanaanite border, as well. Today, the land of these three nations comprises the area of Trans-Jordan, southern Syria and parts of Iraq, as is written, "From the brook of Egypt (Wadi el Arish) to the Euphrates River." As Rashi comments, this area will be given to us in the Future. The subject of these borders and their significance is discussed at length in *Mashiach: Who? What? Why? How? Where? And When?*, Chapter 25 (Breslov Research Institute, 1994).

At present none of this is applicable. Rebbe Nachman once said, "Mashiach will conquer the entire world without firing a shot!" Thus, terms like "land," "boundaries," "secular governments," "US arms," "military means," are not relevant to the promise. They have no bearing upon Rashi's commentary, "If the nations say you have taken our Land..." (*Genesis* 1:1). It was, is, and always will be our Land, since it was promised to Abraham. Yet even Abraham did not possess it, for as we see, he had to purchase a burial place for Sarah (*Genesis* 23)! God gave the Land to the Jews physically only after the Exodus. They were taken from the Land when they were exiled and returned to it during the Second Commonwealth, the era of the Second Temple. And they were exiled from it again after the destruction of that Temple.

We still await our return. We are presently, thank God, in the Land. But we are still in exile. Mashiach has not yet come. Therefore, the nations will continue to attack us—verbally as well as physically—claiming that the Land is theirs, not ours. From their point of view, the statement "by any means necessary" has complete legitimacy. If we are the stronger, we sit in the land; if they conquer, then they're the boss. However, neither Rashi nor Reb Noson address this issue. They are talking about a Holy Land, the Holy Land that God gave to us, as a Jewish Nation. From when it was promised to Abraham, it has never been out of our possession, even though it has too long been out of reach.

As of this writing the Land still hasn't been put back in our reach either. It WILL BE, definitely, when we strengthen our faith and recognize that the world belongs to God. The Land is His and He will give it to whomever He wants. That will take place when Mashiach conquers the world by means of the "gentle weapon" of prayer, not military might. One need only take account of the terrible tragedies that have befallen us in this year (5761/'00-'01) alone, to understand that the military option has not lived up to its promise. Why? Because, unfortunately, there are many who fail to believe that the Land is really theirs.

Why fight for something you don't believe in? This itself proves Reb Noson's point, that it is the lack of our faith that allows the nations to keep pressing for the Land. The proof is in the Torah reading of this week (Parshat Shelach). God promised the Land to the Jews, but the spies went and slandered it. "It's not for us," they said. Truth be told, not only did they blew their mission and status, with their own words and deeds they lost the Land to themselves!

Let's not make that mistake. It is up to us to strengthen our faith and our prayers, so that the truth soon be revealed, that it is our Land, and that we be privileged to see with our own eyes the redemption of Zion and Jerusalem. This is alluded to in this week's Torah reading (*Numbers* 15:17-21), "When you come to the Land, take off the *challah* offering...." Reb Noson writes that the word ChalLah is similar to vayeChaL, "He prayed." If you want to get to the Land, then pray for it. If you want the Land [itself] then pray for it (see *Likutey Halakhot, Pidyon Bekhor* 5:27).

(These topics and ideas, and many dozens more, will all be part of future essays which we hope, with God's help, to never to have to write, since we hope more for Mashiach's immanent and immediate arrival. However, with patience, if God forbid Mashiach doesn't come soon [because he wants to read these essays too], we will try to cover the subject, *This Land is My Land* at great length. We will try to understand and realize the greatness and sanctity of the Holy Land, what it means to us physically, emotionally, financially and spiritually. However, we're a bit overwhelmed here at Breslov Research with other work. Nonetheless, we'll try to squeeze out some time each week to develop the ideas, as they come. Please, please forgive us and be patient. If there are questions, please write. We'll try to answer them, in this forum or another.)

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