

This Land is My Land

A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

Essay #9—Parshat Devarim 5761

“Come and occupy the Land” (*Deuteronomy* 1:8). Rashi comments, “There is no one to argue against your claim; you don’t even have to battle for it. Had you not sent the spies, you would not even need weapons [to conquer the Land].”

An interesting aspect of this week’s parshah is the amount of text dedicated to ascending, conquering and occupying the Holy Land. Reb Noson cites this as very timely, for Devarim is always read on the Shabbat preceding Tisha b’Av (the 9th of Av). What is the connection? The Torah is reminding us that despite our exile, the Holy Land is ours and we will return to it. God promised us the Land and we received it. And God promised to redeem us. If He hasn’t done so until you read these lines, He can still and will do it, hopefully, very soon. After all, He promised!

While we’re awaiting the Redemption, let’s examine the above-quoted verse with Rashi’s comment. If we focus only on the events of 5761, these last ten months, it seems we’ve got a problem.

“Come and occupy the Land.... ”

“There is no one to argue against your claim; you don’t even have to battle for it!”

Who are you kidding?

“There’s no one to argue our claim?”

“We won’t even need weapons?”

Well, maybe weapons may be correct. The Israeli government doesn’t always let its soldiers use their weapons, sometimes even if they need to defend themselves.

But something tells me this was not what Rashi meant, not for 5761, not for the preceding 50 years, and, for that matter, not for any period of the exile.

Now, there are weapons and there are “weapons.” There is the sword, the bow and arrow, and, of course, the modern, evermore efficient killing machines. (Rebbe Nachman once remarked about the researchers and scientists of his day, “What great ‘sages’ they must be to figure out how to make a wonderful weapon that can kill thousands of people at once!” [*Tzaddik* #546]).

There are other types of weapons, for example the media (see [Essay #5](#)). One media giant is CNN (Cynical News Network) which repeatedly reports lopsided news. Another media giant is CNN (Consistently Nefarious News) which has a knack of distorting the news it reports.

Finally, there are the “weapons” that we should consider. There is Torah. There is truth. There is faith. And, there is prayer. What better gift could we ask for than God Himself appearing to us (at Sinai) and imparting to us ‘His delight’ (*Proverbs* 8:30; the entire chapter speaks of how prominent the Torah is to God). The Torah herself is truth, as is written, “My mouth shall speak truth” (*ibid.* v.7). Torah and Truth are intricately bound together.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that we receive all our bounty by way of the Land of Israel. The influx of the Land of Israel is drawn from Truth. (Kabbalistically, Truth corresponds to Zer Anpin while the Land of Israel reflects Malkhut, the level which is below Zer Anpin, from which it receives bounty). “When we eat the bounty that comes via the Land of Israel and afterwards, with that strength, we praise God (i.e., pray), then heaven and earth are made anew” (*Likutey Moharan* I, 47:4-5). That is, there is a brand new creation, a new beginning, one which is void of past hatreds and prejudices, of preconceptions and the fixed natural order as we know it.

When the Jews were first informed that they were to enter and live in the Holy Land, they were living such an existence. They had manna, food from Heaven, which contained nearly every single taste in existence. (Imagine being a “veggie,” “carnivore,” “macrobiotic,” a “weight watcher” and eating a kosher [i.e., salted], saturated, fat-filled burger with french fries all at the same time!). They had a stone which accompanied them throughout their sojourn in the desert; whenever they encamped it provided water for all their needs. They had Clouds of Glory instead of “road construction crews” to elevate valleys and level mountains. Their clothes were tailored by God to adjust to their natural growth (upwards or sideways!) which the Clouds would dry-clean daily. They witnessed the Ten Plagues, the Splitting of the Red Sea and the Revelation at Sinai. What was their problem with entering the Land that they had to first “check it out?”

The answer is, as long as the Jews could maintain their miraculous lifestyle, they were not worried. Their concern began when they would enter the Land, because they knew that these miracles would not accompany them across the Jordan River. But they were wrong in a big way. Perhaps the manna, the stone and the Clouds would no longer accompany them. Yet, there is a Truth which gives bounty to the Land. If God provided in the desert, representative of the absence of truth, then He could certainly provide in the Land of Truth. The Jews had the “weapons” to provide the finest security available. They had Torah, they had truth, they had faith, and they had prayer. But the people felt the need for a “natural order,” which they considered their security. Had they not sent the spies, they would not have needed weapons, for their ‘weapons,’ transcended the other types of weapons. Nobody would have challenged them or their right to the Land, because there would have been no preconceptions, no prejudices. The world would have been a new world, a world in which the Land clearly belonged to the Jews from “Day One” (Genesis 1:5).

This is also a lesson for Tisha b’Av. We've been in exile for such a long time “we’ve grown accustomed to its face.” We somehow seek security in the small comforts we are used to, while failing to see the larger Comfort, God, Who is as anxious for us to use His weapons, as we are anxious about maybe having to use ours. When we begin to use His weapons of Torah, truth, faith and prayer, we can leave behind our exile and freely occupy the Land of Israel, without the use of any weapons. We can proudly proclaim that this Land is our Land, from the Dan to the Negev, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean. This Land was truly tailor-made for us.

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