

# This Land is My Land

## A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

### Essay #42—Parshat Miketz/Chanukah 5762

Ho! Ho! Ho! And a merry Chanukah to you all. It's wonderful sharing the good news from Israel these days, a blowup in Haifa Sunday morning (Chanukah eve), bombs detonated, mortars falling, etc. All the ingredients necessary for a campaign for "peace on earth and goodwill to all men." It's like living in a dream (read: nightmare) world, where everything appears surrealistic. In fact, it's what happens in this week's parshah.

"Pharaoh dreamed; there were seven fat cows emerging from the river...seven lean cows followed them and swallowed the fat cows...there was no trace of the fat cows...seven fat good ears of grain growing in a single stalk...seven thin and scorched ears swallowed up the fat ears of grain...there was no trace of the fat grain..." (*Genesis 41:1–7*).

Such is the way of Pharaoh, who represents a person's disturbing imagination and fantasies (*Likutey Moharan I, 54:6*). Each person tastes good at various points and periods in life. Yet, the bad times and bitter tastes overwhelm him. He allows his fantasies to run free and they begin to pursue him. The fear of evil joins the chase, and thoughts of evil swallow up and remove any trace of good that the person had ever had. It is as if the person never had a good moment in life. So he becomes depressed. Even if he should wake up from his dreams and see another sign of hope, like "seven good ears of grain," there immediately follows "seven thin ears of grain..." and he becomes swallowed up in his worries, as if there will never be any good again.

Reb Noson writes that only Yosef was able to correctly interpret Pharaoh's dream. This is because good and evil coexist and yet it appears that evil always conquers good. However, the tzaddik is able to overcome evil; he can always show that there is good even within evil, even if the good has been swallowed up by the evil and seemingly disappeared. For when evil confronts the tzaddik, the tzaddik can conquer it. This is why Yosef advised to put away food for the forthcoming years of famine. He was teaching people to take advantage of the good days, the good times and one's good deeds, by stockpiling them as best as possible. Then, even in the bad days, in times of evil, he has a supply of good in reserve (*Likutey Halakhot, Chanukah 3:7*).

Reb Noson adds that this lesson also applies to Chanukah. The Greeks tried to swallow up the Jews and any good we had. The Greeks decreed, "engrave [even] upon your oxen that you have no portion with the God of Israel!" But the Jews, we, rallied, keeping the faith, and never forgetting our roots. Nor did the Jews forget the good that they had experienced and hoped yet to experience. They were successful, to the point that a handful of Maccabees (*Makkaby*) were able to take on the massive Greek armies and defeat them handily.

Today we face the same circumstances. There are those who mock us, claiming that we are a faithless people, with no connection to the God of Israel or to a Biblical Land. Even if they have forgotten, let us remember that **MaKkaBY** forms the acrostic of "*Mi Kamokhah B'eilim YHVH*—Who is like You,

among the mighty, O' God!" (*Exodus* 15:11). There definitely exist Jews who keep the faith, who retain their connection to God. Even though we may be few, we can certainly confront the odds against us and win the battles we face. After all, we've been doing it for some 2,000 years in exile as it is. This is as Reb Noson observes:

"And Yaakov saw *shever* (provisions) in Egypt" (*Genesis* 42:1). The word is written **SH**ever (relating to "break") but can be read *Sever* (hope). The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 91:1) teaches:

Yaakov saw:

- *shever*, a famine and he saw *sever*, the plenitude of their harvest;
- *shever*, Yosef descended to Egypt and he saw *sever*, Yosef was the ruler.
- *shever*, the Jews would be enslaved there and he saw *sever*, the Jews would be redeemed.

What Yaakov saw was that despite the Jews having to enter Egypt, the exile, there is always hope. Yaakov, the paradigm of a Jew, understood that a person must always await salvation, patiently. However, there are times when a person feels closed in, embattled from without and troubled from within. The person must learn to look inward, at the level he is on at that moment. He will see that despite his *shever* (brokenness), he has *sever* (hope) to be redeemed. He must draw strength from that knowledge that all will be rectified (*Likutey Halakhot, Shiluach HaKen* 5:22).

So, as we look forward to Chanukah, we can look forward to overcoming evil—the evil Greeks, the evil of Esav, the evil of Yishmael. We can recall that God has always been there for us, He has always managed a salvation, despite the lean cows and ears of grain that have overtaken us from time to time. Because Yosef exists; the tzaddikim who guide us even, or especially, in the most difficult times. They teach us to light our menorahs and intellects with the holy oil of the Temple, with the hope of good times to come. So instead of the lean and scorched ears of grain, we should look forward to scrumptious latkes. Instead of focusing upon the scorching and bombings carried out by Yishmael, the Greeks and Esav, we should look Above and Beyond and pray for those imminent good times that are just waiting to come. After all, of all the festivals we celebrate during the Jewish calendar year, Chanukah is the only miracle that occurred in the Holy Land, in our Land. It is our miracle; we have a right not only to celebrate it yearly, but to experience its deliverance from our evil oppressors, too. Amen.

Don't you agree?

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