

This Land is My Land

A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

Essay #47—Parshat Bo 5762

Parshat Bo, the week of the Exodus. What a great feeling to be able to participate in such a historical happening! And we can. The Torah tells us, "God will bring you to the land of the Kanaanite as He swore to your forefathers and He will give it to you" (*Exodus* 13:11). Thus the Land is ours, given to us by God. Rashi points out that the phrase "He will give it to you," is an advisory that we ought to view the Holy Land as a daily gift from God. "View [the Land] as if God has given it to you today, not as an inheritance from ancestors."

The beauty of a fresh gift is always appreciated. It never has time to spoil nor does the thoughtfulness of the gift ever wane. Its value is savored continually. This is the Torah's intention, for us to revel in God's gift to us; to see, feel and experience the Holy Land as a very precious present, especially in present times. This idea of feeling the Holy Land as a gift is a very integral part of the survival of the Jewish Nation. We can call this feeling "Project Renewal."

As has been discussed in earlier essays, the Torah begins with the story of the Creation. Rashi comments that the Torah should have begun with the first mitzvah the Jews were commanded to perform as a nation, the mitzvah of declaring Rosh Chodesh, the New Moon (see *Exodus* 12:1-2), because the purpose of the Torah is to reveal God's will and His mitzvot in order that we serve Him. Yet God begins the Torah with the Act of Creation to tell us that the entire world is His — He will give whatever land He wants to whomever He wishes. Since He gave the Holy Land to us, the Jewish Nation, it is ours and nobody else has any claim whatsoever to any sovereignty over the Land (Rashi, *Genesis* 1:1). What, though, is so special about the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh that Rashi teaches us that it should have been placed at the beginning of the Torah? There are many other mitzvot that are more frequently and widely observed, others that seem more basic to our faith. Why not suggest that one of them be the opening of the Torah?

In *Likutey Halakhot* (*Rosh Chodesh* 3:2-3) Reb Noson writes that declaring the New Moon was delegated only to the wisest of all Jews, the members of the Sanhedrin, the High Court in Jerusalem. Only such Sages could be relied upon to know the exact moment of the renewal of the moon. The reason for this is that the New Moon appears only after the previous moon has "disappeared" completely, when it seems that there is no more light, that darkness reigns supreme. Everything seems concealed and hidden from man. Specifically, at that moment, the New Moon will appear. When comparing this phenomenon to a person's life, this alludes to the person being in a state of concealment from God, where all seems darkness and despair, he no longer has any connection to God. Only the true tzaddikim, who are wise to God's ever-present Presence, who are knowledgeable about His continuous granting of compassion and mercy upon His creation, can know that even in the darkest moments God is always there.

This is why this mitzvah was the first to be given to all of Israel. It was given to the Jews in their darkest moments, while they were still being held in bondage in Egypt. Yet, at that moment, God gave them the

message that they **WILL** be redeemed. The message is the same—the disappearance of light, of knowledge of God; the oppression of darkness and of bondage, are all alluded to in the message of Rosh Chodesh: "Never despair!" There is always a new moon, there is always a chance at renewal, to begin again, from wherever the person may have fallen. Everything starts with the New Moon, with the person's urge, desire and ability to begin anew. Elsewhere, Reb Noson adds that this is why it is known as Rosh ChoDeSh, for it shares the same root as the word *ChaDaSh*, "new" (*Likutey Halakhot, Tefillin*, 5:19).

In yet another discourse, Reb Noson writes about a person seeing everything from a fresh viewpoint each day. A master architect will not use the same design twice. Can anyone imagine God, the Master Architect of the entire world, doing the same thing every day — bringing out the sun in the east in the morning and having it set in the west at night, as if there is nothing new in creation that day? But this is not so! Rebbe Nachman teaches that God **NEVER** does the exact same thing twice (see *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #54). Thus, each day has built into it a special renewal, a special freshness, a unique presence of God and Godliness that we, on any level, can relate to directly and benefit from (*Likutey Halakhot, Birkhot HaShachar* 5:28).

This is Rashi's message about our viewing, daily, the Holy Land as if it is a gift to us from God. The Holy Land represents the power and force behind the Creation, because it has the potential to reveal that everything is in God's Hands and He can do as He wishes. It is up to us to turn to Him in order to recognize His Kingship and to be able to relate to Him and benefit from Him. We can do this, if we view each day as a new Creation—something unique, something filled with new energy.

The importance of recognizing God's gift daily, in today's circumstances, cannot be underestimated. Each day we face assault after assault, from gun-and-mortar terrorists, media terrorists, and perhaps worst of all, from within our own ranks. What should we do? Is there a solution? Will we ever get out of this mess? If we begin to count our blessings, that the Holy Land is ours and it is a gift to us, each and every one of us, from God Himself(!), then we will have the courage and conviction to face the day, to face the daily grind and the daily discouragement and overcome them. For, think about it, God Himself gave me a very special present. He gave me "today!"

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