

# This Land is My Land

## A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

### Essay #49 — Parshat Yitro 5762

Parshat Yitro. What a week! The week of the Revelation of God at Sinai, the week that the Torah was given to us, the Chosen People, at Sinai. And it began as "one of those weeks" in Jerusalem too, when another Arab murderer blew himself up this morning (Sunday) in the center of Jerusalem, murdering some, maiming others and scarring many others for life. What gives? Is this what we were chosen for? To be cannon fodder for a murderous tribe of Arabs? (or Germans, or whoever decides they need a scapegoat or victim?)

Our Sages teach that we find in Scripture five names for Sinai. It is known as Sinai because from Mount **SIN**ai, **SIN**ah (hatred) descended upon the Jews (*Shabbat* 89b). The commentaries point out that because God gave to us the Torah; because we merited receiving God's Torah and mitzvot (and we perform them); the hatred of the nations has been aroused moving them to pour their wrath out upon us.

The prophet, Jeremiah, laments this blatant, seemingly senseless hatred: They [the nations] heard that I am sighing, and there is none [among them] who would comfort me; all my enemies heard of my troubles and they are glad that You have done it" (*Lamentations* 1:21). Rashi explains, **For You have done it**: "You caused that they should hate me, for You separated me from the nations. We are enjoined from eating and drinking with them and partaking of their foods. We cannot intermarry. Were we allowed to intermarry with the nations, perhaps they would have compassion upon us and their offspring." And there's more to it.

God created the world for **ALL** mankind to serve Him, but only **WE** received the Torah. The Torah contains God's directives, what He knows to be the best and most perfect way for us to be able to search, seek and find Him. No one else can boast such a treasure, which comprises the actual means to be able to pass through this temporary world in order to attain the eternal reward of the World to Come. Our Sages teach that everyone, including gentiles, can merit Future Reward. Nonetheless, they weren't given the best means to attain it, whereas we were. They didn't receive the Torah. It is natural for one who has to find his own way through the maze of This World to resent those who have the means to pass through safely.

There is another, more subtle message transmitted by our receipt of the Torah. By having seen God "face to face" (as it were) at Sinai, by God having given us His Torah, the message both Jew and gentile received is, "The Jews have the truth, for the Torah, what I, Myself am telling them, is truth." Isn't this cause enough to have others hate us and seek our untimely demise? What would you do if you're told you don't have the truth and unless you join me and take up my side you'll never ever get it? So, one reason the mountain is called Sinai, is because from **SIN**ai, **SIN**ah (hatred) descended upon the Jews.

Is this the message we really want to hear? Is this message we want to receive? What kind of "bright future" does this bode for us? Aren't we supposed to be a "light unto the nations?" If our lives are truly so bleak, which nation would want our light? To understand this, we should focus upon one of the Ten

Commandments, the mitzvah of Shabbat. It is a beautiful day, a day of rest. A day for family and friends, a day of introspection. Shabbat is a treasure in a league all of its own (cf. *Shabbat* 10a). To better appreciate it, let us look at excerpts from a discourse of Rebbe Nachman's *Likutey Moharan* (I, Lesson #57).

When a person merits having faith, specifically faith in the Sages, he strives for true intellect and also invokes the merits of the Patriarchs. Then the person can delight in the joys of Shabbat, in the aspect of "Then you can delight...I will let you ride the heights of the earth, and I will give you to enjoy the inheritance of your father Yaakov" (*Isaiah* 58:14)... The delight of Shabbat is the aspect of eating in holiness. From weekday eating the Other Side [i.e., evil] too derives benefit, whereas the Other Side has no share whatsoever of Shabbat eating. This is why we have been commanded concerning Shabbat eating (*Exodus* 16:25), "Eat it today, for today is God's Shabbat." This is because the food of Shabbat becomes holiness and absolute Godliness, without any waste whatsoever...One can accomplish with Shabbat eating what one accomplishes by fasting - i.e., defeating one's enemies in the merit of Shabbat delight, just as one does by fasting. On account of this it is called ShaBbaT, because it is propitious "lehaShBiT (for putting an end to) enemy and avenger" (*Psalms* 8:3).

Rebbe Nachman teaches that when a person fasts, his enemies fall before him. Rebbe Nachman explains that anger, which stems from the liver (cf. *Berakhot* 61b), causes the "great accuser" to become aroused. The great accuser is Esav, **EDoM**, whose place is in the liver. He is called "**ADM**oni (the Red One)," for he is the aspect of the liver, which is full of **DaM** (blood). From this "great accuser," accusations are aroused by an assortment of enemies and avengers. These enemies and avengers oppress a person who is subject to anger. They assume control and rule over him. They have no fear of an angry person because anger strips one of his humanity and he appears to them as an animal. For in the main, the fear and respect that a human being deserves is due only to the image of God which rests upon his face. By virtue of this image, a human being is a human being. However, if the image is lost, as, for example, as a result of losing one's temper, one loses his status of human being and assumes the status of animal. He loses respect and his adversaries oppress him. The Rebbe continues:

Yet, by means of fasting the person rectifies his face, i.e., his human image. People respect and fear him, and his enemies fall *lephanav* (before him) - specifically *lephanav*, since their fall is because of the *panim* (face). All this happens by means of fasting, because by fasting the liver is made subservient to the mind. On a day that a person eats, the liver is nourished first, and afterwards it sends nourishment to the mind. Thus, on a day the person eats, prominence belongs to the liver. But when one fasts, the mind is nourished first, and only afterwards the liver. Therefore, on a fast day, the liver is subservient to the mind. Prominence belongs to the human mind, to the human being within; the animal, the aspect of the anger and the liver is subdued...Thus, by means of fasting, the person subdues the liver...and when the liver, the "chief accuser," is subdued, then all the enemies that are connected with the liver are subdued. Hence, the letters **tZOM** (fasting) are an acronym for "*Vekhatoti Mepanav tZarav* (I will thrash his adversaries from before him)" (*Psalms* 89:24).

Rebbe Nachman then explains that whatever fasting can accomplish, delighting on Shabbat accomplishes even more!

But when a person merits to the aspect of the delight of Shabbat then he has no need to fast, because he accomplishes with his eating what he accomplishes by fasting - i.e., "*lehaShBiT* enemy and avenger." For **ShaBbaT** eating is holy, and "no stranger may eat of the holy" (*Leviticus 22:10*). Then the liver is subdued and its power eliminated, in the aspect of "all wrathful dominions flee and depart," (see *Zohar II*, 135b). Then, all is love, in the aspect of "O love of delight" (*Song of Songs 7:7*). All this is from the above mentioned delight of Shabbat.

The Rebbe continues that to subdue and eliminate one's enemies, Shabbat eating will suffice. However, if one wants to actually invoke peace, a true, lasting peace, one must increase his contributions to charity, as our Sages teach, "The more charity, the more peace" (*Avot 2:7*). In addition, there is a difference between the peace produced by weekday fasting, and that produced by Shabbat delight. The peace of fasting lacks the aspect of speech, as in "they could not speak a word of peace [to Yosef]" (*Genesis 37:4*). But by means of the delight of Shabbat eating, speech is executed in peace, in the aspect of "For the sake of my kin and my companions, I will now speak peace" (*Psalms 122:8*). This is the aspect of "or speaking of [weekday] matters" (*Isaiah 58:13*), which is said with regard to Shabbat, because the power of speech is made whole through the great light that shines at the time of Shabbat eating.

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Esav is Edom, the liver, one who always accuses us and raises the roof should we do anything to protect ourselves against murderous thugs. The liver itself corresponds to Esav while its lobes represent Yishmael (*Tikuney Zohar #21*, p.52a; see *Anatomy of the Soul* Chapter 11, where this is explained in greater detail). In fact, the Zohar teaches that the liver is served by 70 blood vessels which correspond to the 70 nations. Thus, any anger on our part will trigger the liver and all its components - Esav, Yishmael and the other 70 nations. So we must look to relieve ourselves of anger, of stress, of the pressures from within and without that lead us to anger. For this, we need Shabbat, a day of rest, a day of focus, a day when we learn self-control: this is forbidden so we abstain, this is permitted so we may partake, etc.

In addition, as the Rebbe taught, "it is called **ShaBbaT**, because it is propitious "*lehaShBiT* (for putting an end to) enemy and avenger." The reason is that when we observe Shabbat, when we delight in Shabbat, send the message that we are God's Chosen People. We celebrate the Seventh Day, His Chosen Day (not Sunday or Friday which were chosen by mortals), and merit overcoming the stress and pressures forced upon us by our enemies. We also display true faith and trust in God, exhibiting what it means to connect and bond with God. Thus Shabbat, at one and the same time, has the power *lehaShBiT* - to put an end to the enemy, while kindling "light to the other nations" in an exemplary manner.

Nu? So what has Shabbat eating have to do with *This Land is My Land*? Good question. *Zimrat HaAretz* explains (I; 57) that "the inheritance of your father Yaakov" refers to the Holy Land. Thus Shabbat and the Holy Land are synonymous. (Kabbalistically, both are said to parallel Malkhut.) Furthermore, since they are synonymous, eating the food of the Holy Land is comparable to eating on Shabbat, and is considered "eating in holiness." This is as stated, "You will eat to satisfaction and dwell securely in your Land. I will grant peace in the Land so that you can sleep without fear. *v'hiShBaTi chayah ra'ah* - I will rid the Land of wild animals and the sword shall not pass through your Land" (*Leviticus 26:5-6*). (The work, *Zimrat HaAretz*, is a commentary on Likutey Moharan by Rav Nachman of Tcherin. It explains how nearly every lesson of Rebbe Nachman speaks of the Holy Land.)

As King David said, "God gave them the Land of nations and they inherited the toil of other peoples. [This was done for the Jews] on condition that they observe His laws and keep His Torah" (*Psalms*

105:44-45). Thus, the condition we have to fulfill in order to attain and maintain the Land is to observe the Torah, which we receive this week. May Hashem grant us proper acceptance and observance of the Torah, especially the observance of Shabbat, so that our enemies will be unable to inflict any further suffering and we may light up the whole world with the light, delight and song of Shabbat, Amen.

P.S. The Breslov Research Institute is nearing completion of a book about Shabbat, explaining the deeper concepts underlying the preparations for Shabbat, the Shabbat prayers and meals, as well as a section about *motzei Shabbat* (the conclusion of Shabbat). In addition, the book will contain many perspectives about the inner meaning of Shabbat itself and how one can heighten his and her spiritual awareness of the beauty and delight of the Shabbat. We are hoping that publication will take place around Pesach time. For those interested in reserving an advance copy, please e-mail us at the Institute and we'll be happy to send you your copy when it is printed. (The price is presently undetermined. Our Sages teach that all one's income for the year is decreed on Rosh Hashanah, except for his Shabbat expenses. One who is lavish with his spending for Shabbat, will be given more income (*Beitzah* 15a). So whatever the book costs, you'll be making money on it!)

Best wishes,  
Chaim

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