

This Land is My Land

A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

Essay #64—Parshat Bamidbar 5762

We're getting close to Shavuot, the reason for the Exodus from Egypt. The *parshah* of Bamidbar is always read before Shavuot. As the *parshah* begins, Moshe is commanded to count each tribe, with the tribe's president assisting him. Those included in the census are "those who can go out and wage war." Reb Noson writes that the reason for the emphasis to wage war is that all Jews must be ready to wage war, to fight the battle for God in this material world. The reason for a total count was that the way to be able to wage war is through unity. This is why this *parshah* is read before Shavuot, because the unity between Jews is what enables us to receive the Torah, empowering us to be able to fight God's battle (see *Likutey Halakhot Arev*, 5:31-32).

Reb Noson continues with this idea. We find the Jews encamped with the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) throughout their sojourn in the desert. Whenever the Jews traveled, they took apart the *Mishkan*. They reassembled it wherever they encamped. Prior to its assembly, and after it was dismantled, the place was a scorching desert, filled with snakes and scorpions. But, when it was assembled, no matter where, it had all the sanctity of the Tabernacle. This shows us that no matter where we travel, we can take our holiness with us and reestablish it wherever we go (*ibid.*, *Beit Knesset* 4:2).

The idea behind this is that the Sanctity of the Tabernacle is established and permanent. It can never be done away with. Even today, for example, though the Holy Temple is not with us, it maintains its sanctity and all the laws of those impure apply even now, making a pilgrimage to the Temple Mount forbidden. The same applies to the sanctity of the Holy Land. Though the sanctity does not seem to be there, it IS there, waiting to be brought to light. Just as it was the Jews who, in the desert, were able to erect a Sanctuary, so too, we today have the power to erect and reveal the sanctity of the Land. We must want to reveal the sanctity, otherwise it won't happen. Instead, we'll see more and more of the insanity that we witness daily. We know we can't change things overnight. We know there's a process—a purification process—that must take place. Still, we can contribute towards the goal, if only by remaining honest to our ideals. Rebbe Nachman told the following parable of *The Tainted Grain* to illustrate this.

The king's star gazer saw that the grain harvested that year was tainted. Anyone who would eat from it would become insane. "What can we do?" said the king. "It is not possible to destroy the crop for we do not have enough grain stored to feed the entire population." "Perhaps," said the star gazer, "we should set aside enough grain for ourselves. At least that way we could maintain our sanity."

The king replied, "If we do that, *we'll* be considered crazy. If everyone behaves one way and we behave differently, we'll be considered the not normal ones. Rather," he said, "I suggest that we too eat from the crop, like everyone else. However, to remind ourselves that we are not normal, we will make a mark on our foreheads. Even if we are insane, whenever we look at each other, we will remember that we are insane!"

So it is. The world has become insane. On one hand it accepts terrorism and death as legitimate political means—as long as its on someone else's turf—while on the other hand it denies the Jews the right of self-defense, their battle on behalf of God. Many of us have fallen into such despair, that we accept this insanity as well. We accept it because the whole world's gone nuts and it seems that this is the way it has to be. Not so.

We may be tainted, we may have fallen victim, but who's to say we can't overcome it. Even if the craziness out there seems overwhelming, let us at least make a mark to remind us of where we are and what we've faced. Doing so, will allow us the build the Sanctuary, and motivate us to finally reveal the hidden sanctity of the Land. Then, when that sanctity is revealed, the world will leave us be, for they, too, will recognize that God is King over the entire world, the Land is His and He gave it to us. Period!

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