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Why Eretz Yisrael?

Question: Why is Eretz Yisrael the only thing that interests you people (i.e. Religious-Zionists)? You're fixated on it! Certainly it's important, but there are other important things too: Learning Torah and performing Mitzvot, education and our country's social problems.

Answer: Indeed, the idea that we are "only interested in Eretz Yisrael" has long provided a ready excuse for complaining. There are two answers to it:

First, why be inaccurate? Why mislead and confuse people? It simply isn't true. We certainly are involved in Eretz Yisrael, but we are also involved in Torah learning and Mitzvah observance and education and social issues. "Everything G-d said, we will do and obey" (Shemot 24:27). And precisely because the battlefield is so widespread, we have to work on ourselves in every one of these spheres, and G-d will come to our aid.

Second of all, are we properly devoted to Eretz Yisrael? It should only be so! Surely you can't suspect Moshe of not being devoted to Torah and mitzvot, education and society, yet he still begged to enter Eretz Yisrael: "I beseeched G-d at that time saying, 'Let me pass through and see the good land...'" (Devarim 3:23-25). G-d finally said to him, "You've said enough!" (verse 26). Don't ask anymore. "Let people not say, 'How unfair the Master! How stubborn and incalitrant the disciple!'" (Rashi). That shows how vociferously Moshe begged. "Here is one of three places where

Moshe told G-d, 'I won't relent until You tell me if You're going to fulfill my request or not' (Rashi, verse 23). Yet surely Moshe had a reason for doing so. Eretz Yisrael has profound importance, the very most profound importance of all. It was only for a matter of such extreme significance that Moshe begged G-d in this manner. And Eretz Yisrael involves not just one profound matter, but 252 profound matters. Ha-Rav Natan Shapiro, the Chief Rabbi of Cracow, born in 1591, was one of the greatest Mekubalim of Poland in his day. His entire book "Megaleh Amukot" is devoted to those same 252 arguments used by Moshe to explain why he craved to enter the Land. Rav Shapiro did not invent them all. Rather, they are taken from the works of Rabbi Menachem Racanati, the "Rokeach," the Arizal, Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Pano, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero and Rambam's Guide to the Perplexed. (see the work, "Kol HaNevu'a" by Rabbi David HaKohen, "the Nazir", page 269). For example, Principle 4 is: "If someone possesses the merit from Eretz Yisrael, he can rid the world of its craving for idolatry." Also, Eretz Yisrael is a key to "attaining the secret of wisdom... because the air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise." Certainly Moshe was full of divine wisdom, yet he still craved to enter Eretz Yisrael to add to what he already had.

Principle 170 is: Eretz Yisrael is the key to fulfilling "The humble shall inherit the Land" (Tehillim 37:11), for the culmination of all character traits is humility. Certainly Moshe was the most humble man on earth. Even so, he longed to enter the Land to become more so.

Principle 187: "Eretz Yisrael is the key to bringing all the nations under the wings of the Divine Presence. That's why Moshe beseeched Hashem. He was acting for the sake of Heaven, with the intent of helping all mankind to serve G-d."

Indeed, Eretz Yisrael is a very profound matter. And may we merit to become more closely attached to Eretz Yisrael and to delve more deeply in the topic of Eretz Yisrael.



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