

RABBI YSACHAR SHLOMO TEICHTEL ZTKL FROM THE BOOK EM HA BANNIM SEMECHA

ABOUT THE BOOK

Em Habanim Smeicha, by Harav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, was first published in Budapest in 5703 (1943). A new, annotated edition was issued by the author's son in Yerushalaim, published by Machon Pri HaAretz in 5743 (1983).

All those who discover this volume share the sense that they hold a priceless treasure in their hands. This is because Rabbi Teichtal, zt"l, was one of gedolei hador in the orthodox Hungarian community up until the time of the churban of Europe. While many of his colleagues were discouraging the return to Zion for a variety of reasons, this unique gadol was investigating the matter exhaustively, down to its very foundations in Torah. His conclusions are eye-opening.

The upheaval of Jewish life in this heretofore-comfortable golus, and the annihilation of unprecedented numbers of his brethren, forced him to seek explanations. Why was the Almighty doing this?

The results of his search are laid out on the 335 pages of this beautiful sefer.

We who are privileged to have access to the book must therefore be especially grateful for our opportunity to drink from this rare fountain. And we must be careful to understand what we are learning.

Based on an extensive, deep knowledge of all manner of Torah sources, the author reached a conclusion concerning the events of his time which was shocking even to himself.

PREVIOUSLY HE HAD SHARED THE PREVALENT VIEW THAT THE JEWS IN EXILE MUST PURSUE LIVES OF INDIVIDUAL PIETY. THIS WHILE PRAYING AND BELIEVING THAT MASHIACH BEN DAVID WOULD APPEAR IN A CLEARLY MIRACULOUS FASHION TO BRING US BACK TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL.

THE VIEW WAS CALLED INTO QUESTION FOR HARAV TEICHTAL BY TWO FACTORS. THE FIRST WAS THE CATAclysmic DEVASTATION TO WHICH HE WAS WITNESS. THE SECOND WAS THE SIMULTANEOUS SUCCESS OF A MOST UNLIKELY UNDERTAKING: THE RESETTLING OF ERETZ ISRAEL BY THE LARGELY SECULAR ZIONIST MOVEMENT.

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Here was a group who had thrown off the yoke of Torah, and lacked any insight into what the Land of Israel was meant to be. Serious believers in G-d, learned in Torah, knew that the Land lay desolate, and would stay so until the beginning of the ultimate geula. It was also known that we would have to deserve to be redeemed. Who would have imagined that it would be these sinners, of all people, who would be the instruments of our Redemption? And yet....

It was a difficult idea to swallow. Even Rav Kook, zt'l, who succeeded in ascending to the Land and who was involved with it in a real political sense, had his problems conveying this type of idea. This sefer is thus even more remarkable. The time and place in which it was written forced the author into a heroic position. Despite fierce opposition~ he refused to abandon the campaign to show the truth to his fellow Chassidim. Yet, his ideas remained "on paper;" not really interpreted one way or the other by his disciples — so many of whom were murdered in Nazi Europe — not acted upon by any appreciable number of people. It is therefore almost a sacred obligation for the Torah Jew today to learn and absorb this message, and apply it in practice.

The thesis of this valiant gadol can be summarized thus:

- * The mitzvah of settling the Land of Israel is one of the most precious Mitzvos commanded to us. (Numerous quotations from the written and oral Torah and from rishonim and achronim demonstrate the point.)
- * Our ultimate geula is contingent upon our beginning, at least in some measure, to atone for our criminal "rejection of the coveted Land."
- * This ultimate Redemption will not be sudden and miraculous. The sources emphasize that it will be gradual and through "natural" means.
- * The abandonment of Torah by large segments of the nation is a terrible thing. We must not cease our attempts to bring back those who have strayed.
- * The fact that these very sinners — the "impure" members of our nation — are the ones who have chosen to shoulder this precious mitzvah is so extraordinary that we must recognize it as the hand of G-d. He is bringing us to the final chapters of history in this unexpected way. (Rav Teichtal even offers an explanation for why this very element of the people was chosen.)
- * Now the main task ahead of the Jews is the overwhelmingly

important mitzva of ahavas Israel. We must reunite as a single people, bringing sinners back with love to service of the Creator. We must not delay. We must join those who have begun the sacred task of building the Land.

* Only there, in Eretz Israel, can we become one nation. Jews who are genuinely eager to serve the Creator - Hachareidim ledvar Hashem — must ascend in large numbers to settle the Land and build it. That way, people, Land, and Torah will come together, and the geula will unfold.

The sefer was written over sixty years ago. Much of it has been proven prophetic by the passage of time. Today, its message is even more urgent. The ultimate geula is, after all, that much closer and the paradox of men without Torah building our Land seems still to prevail. Dare we refuse to listen to a pure voice of Torah greatness, who offers us a formula for expediting the redemption process?...

THE JEWS WERE EXILED BECAUSE THEY DESPISED THE LAND

It says in Tehillim, It is time to favor Zion, for the appointed time has come, for Your servants cherished her stones... (102:14-15). The Sforno explains that the Jews were exiled because they despised the Land, and the redemption will come with the rectification of this sin.

"And I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember, and I will remember the Land (VaYikra 26:42). Seeing that the verse begins with the words I will remember, it is difficult to understand why it repeats them twice at the end. The Alshich (VaYikra 26:40) and the Akeidah (Akeidat Yitzchak 70) both explain that the Holy One Blessed be He was saying: 'And I will remember - I would have remembered the merit of the Patriarchs and I would not have exiled [their descendants]. Instead, I would have punished them in their own Land. But, I will remember the Land meaning, I will remember the wretched deeds that they committed in the Land, by violating the Sabbatical years and withholding the priestly gifts. For this, there is no forgiveness. Therefore, the Land needs to be appeased.'...

RAV ELIYAHU GUTTMACHER WRITES: WE INITIATE THE REDEMPTION AND THEN HASHEM COMPLETES IT
"Furthermore, human intellect dictates that we initiate the process of redeeming the Land, and then Hashem will complete it. One must

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understand the great importance of this matter, for the evil forces (kelipot) gain strength even among the most righteous individuals in order to nullify this good. This is so because the kelipah's entire strength depends on exile; when the exile dissolves, so will the kelipah, as the Talmud states in Sukkah (52a).

Your beloved friend,

Eliyahu, son of our master R. Shlomo zt"l, of Greiditz

THESE ARE SOME OF THE MANY TZADDIKIM WHO URGED JEWS TO SUPPORT THE SETTLEMENT OF ERETZ ISRAEL

THE TZADDIK RABBI HILLEL OF KOLOMAYE ZTK'L

In the same vein, in the year 5660 [1900], the holy gaon, our mentor, R. Hillel of Kalamaya, published a manifesto calling and urging our Jewish brethren to buy the Land of Israel from the Ishmaelites (Arabs). It was an opportune moment, for the sultan was at war and needed money. He was willing to sell Eretz Israel, Transjordan, and Syria for almost nothing. This holy man [R. Hillel] saw this as a divine visitation and called out vigorously in the streets to persuade the people of Israel to swiftly redeem our "king" from foreign control and from the hands of the impure. He urged them to rebuild the ruins of Eretz Israel, to glorify the seat of our Beit HaMikdash, to restore the crown to its former glory, and to make Eretz Israel the most beautiful of sites, the joy of all the earth. He was the original founder of the Petach Tikvah colony. All of this is recounted in the introduction to Tosafot ben Yechiel (a commentary on the holy work, Tana DeVei Eliyahu) by R. Hillel's son-in-Law, the holy gaon, our master, R. Akiva Yosef Schlessinger, author of Lev Haivri. Due to our numerous sins, however, his words fell upon deaf ears. They hovered in the air, unable to find a place in the hearts of our Jewish brethren in which to rest.

AN ACCUSATION ON THE PASSIVITY OF ORTHODOX JEWS OUTSIDE ERETZ ISRAEL TO JOIN AND DO SOMETHING TO SETTLE THE LAND

The Orthodox Jews made silence their virtue and clung to the principle, "It is preferable to sit and do nothing," as has always been their policy. The irreligious extremists were swayed by the new era which ushered freedom

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into the world. They said, "Here, I will dwell, for I have desired it." They expected to find tranquility here in the lands of exile, seeing that they had received equal rights like all other citizens. In the meantime, they let our sacred mother [Eretz Israel] wallow in the dirt and remain in ruins. They let her eyes become a fountain of tears, to cry and lament over us because we remain in exile and do not contemplate longing to return to her bosom and to reestablish her home.

After some years passed in this new era of freedom, known as "The Golden Era," hatred sprang forth against the Jews in exile. Each time it occurred in a different location, until its flames spread so greatly that it endangered the entire community. We went from bad to worse until we reached the terribly dreadful state in which we find ourselves today.

DURING THE PAST FEW DECADES, THE IRRELIGIOUS HAVE OPENED THEIR EYES AND RECOGNIZED THEIR MISTAKE IN THINKING THAT THEY WILL FIND THEIR HEART'S DESIRE HERE IN EXILE. THEY HAVE SEEN THAT HOSTILITY SURROUNDS THEM FROM ALL SIDES. IN RESPONSE TO THEIR LOVE, THE GENTILES HATE THEM AND PERSECUTE THEM WITHOUT REASON. HENCE, THEY OPENED THEIR EYES AND RECOGNIZED THAT THEIR HOPES OF FINDING PEACE AND QUIET HERE IN EXILE ARE FUTILE. THE DESIRE TO RETURN TO THE LAND OF OUR FOREFATHERS AWOKE WITHIN THEM, AND THEY BEGAN WORKING TOWARDS THIS GOAL.

Those who tremble at the word of Hashem, however, stood on the side and refrained from sharing in the work. They stood by their age-old claim, "It is preferable to sit and do nothing." In the meantime, these "initiators" began rebuilding our Holy Land (so may it continue and prosper), while the Orthodox Jews and the tzaddikim stood aloof. It is clear that he who prepares prior to the Shabbat will eat on the Shabbat, and since the Orthodox did not toil, they have absolutely no influence in the Land. Those who toil and build have the influence, and they are the masters of the Land. It is, therefore, no wonder that they are in control, for He who guards the fig tree will eat its fruit (Mishle 27:18).

NOW, WHAT WILL THE ORTHODOX SAY? I DO NOT KNOW IF THEY WILL EVER BE ABLE TO VINDICATE THEMSELVES BEFORE THE HEAVENLY COURT FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE MOVEMENT TO REBUILD THE

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LAND, AND FOR NOT HEEDING THE CALL OF THESE TZADDIKIM OF THE GENERATION. THESE TZADDIKIM WERE RENOWNED AS COMPLETELY SELFLESS, HOLY MEN OF G-D, AND ALL OF THEIR UTTERANCES WERE AS COMPLETE AND TRUE AS THE TORAH OF MOSHE FROM THE ALMIGHTY. AND SINCE THIS AWAKENING CAME FROM SUCH HOLY MOUTHS, THEY SHOULD HAVE LISTENED AND JOINED IN THIS SACRED TASK. HAD THE G-D-FEARING, RELIGIOUS JEWS BEEN INVOLVED IN THIS UNDERTAKING, OUR HOLY LAND WOULD HAVE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, MORE SANCTIFIED, APPEARANCE AND FORM THAN IT HAS NOW.

In truth, though, our Father in Heaven desires and is pleased with the current appearance and form (as I will explain later on based on unequivocal proofs from Chazal). All agree, however, that if the Orthodox would have cooperated with and participated in the building effort, it would have been exceedingly lofty and holy. Now that they kept themselves at a distance, they should not wonder or question the situation, for they are at fault.

Furthermore, if all of Klal Israel would have agreed to rebuild the Land it would have already been built-up and perfected enough to absorb a large portion of the Diaspora Jews. A great number of our fellow Jews who were recently killed (due to our numerous sins) would have been saved, for they would have already been in Eretz Israel. Who will accept responsibility for the innocent blood that has been spilled in our days? It seems to me that all of the leaders who prevented the people of Israel from joining the builders cannot cleanse their hands and say, our hands did not spill this blood.

THE SIN OF THE SPIES REVISITED THE BLEMISH AND GREAT SIN OF SOME AMONG THE ORTHODOX JEWS WHO CREATED ANIMOSITY AGAINST SETTLERS AND AGAINST THE LAND ITSELF

In this way, these zealots spread hatred and enmity throughout the Orthodox world against the group which devoted itself to building up our Land to its former glory. As a consequence of this, they also caused the desirable Land to be despised. They became entrapped in the sin of the spies, about whom it says: They murmured in their tents... They despised

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the desirable Land (Tehillim 106:25, 24). What was the result of the spies? They caused everlasting sorrow. Today's "spies," as well, have added sorrow onto sorrow, bringing us to our present situation in which we see horror after horror and weeping after weeping in the House of Israel. All of this has occurred because we despised the desirable Land, as I will prove later on from the words of Chazal.

Our master, Maharam Chagiz, discusses the great punishment that awaits those who slander the inhabitants of Eretz Israel:

Hashem decreed that just as all the men who have seen My glory (Bamidbar 14:22) - meaning, the generation of the spies will not see the Land, the same is true of future generations. Anyone who spreads an evil report about the Land will be stricken and will receive the punishment of the spies. This is the meaning of [the next verse] And all who provoke Me shall not see it (ibid. 14:23), which refers to the future. (Sefat Emet 32b)

The Kabbalist, Rav Avraham Azulai (the grandfather of our master, the Chida), writes in his holy work, Chesed LeAvraham:

Anyone who lives in Eretz Israel is considered a Tzaddik (righteous individual) even though it does not seem that way. For if he was not a Tzaddik, the Land would vomit him out, as it says, And the Land vomits out its inhabitants (VaYikra 18:25). Since the Land does not vomit him out he must be considered a Tzaddik, even though he is presumed to be wicked Chesed LeAvraham, Ma'ayan 3, Nahar 12

Thus, it is clear that we do not properly understand [the true nature of] the inhabitants of Eretz Israel with our physical eyesight. For man sees what his eyes behold, while Hashem sees into the heart. Therefore, we cannot judge or degrade specific individuals, and certainly not the entire community, even those who do not find favor in our eyes or do not act in a manner befitting our nation.

Nachalah LeYisrael, chap. 12.

CONFESSION OF PRIOR MISTAKES

I MUST CONFESS THE TRUTH AND DECLARE MY SIN. I, TOO, DESPISED THE REBUILDING OF THE LAND, BECAUSE I HEARD UNQUALIFIED STATEMENTS MADE BY MANY ORTHODOX JEWS, WHICH BECAME FIRMLY IMPLANTED IN MY HEART. I DID NOT CONCERN MYSELF WITH

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THIS MATTER AT ALL, BECAUSE I WAS PREOCCUPIED WITH LEARNING, TEACHING, AND WRITING VOLUMES ON THE TALMUD AND ITS COMMENTARIES, AS WELL AS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS REGARDING THE WORD OF HASHEM. I ONLY DELVED INTO THIS HALACHAH AFTER WE SUFFERED AFFLICTIONS IN THIS BITTER EXILE. HASHEM ENLIGHTENED ME, AND I SAW THAT I AND ALL THOSE WHO OPPOSED THIS MOVEMENT WERE MISTAKEN. I ADMIT AND SAY, "THAT WHICH I PREVIOUSLY TOLD YOU WAS MISTAKEN" JUST LIKE RAVA AND OTHER GREAT TALMUDIC SAGES DID. WHEN RABBIS ADMIT THEIR MISTAKES THEY ARE PRAISEWORTHY.

I discovered a letter written by the author of the Tanya to the Rebbe of Berditchev, informing him of his release from prison in Petersburg. The letter was written in 5559 [1799], and is printed in Beit Rebbe, chap. 18. Also see a similar letter in Igrot Ba'al HaTanya, David Tzvi Hillman (Yerushalaim, 5713 [1953]), no. 62

"I shall recount and declare that which is too great to tell. For Hashem has done wondrously in the land. Who am I, lowly of men, that Hashem has helped me glorify and sanctify His name... This was all Hashem's doing. He has arranged this by virtue of the merit of the Holy Land and its inhabitants. This is what stood by our side and will always assist in relieving us from the oppressor and delivering us from distress."

From his holy words I learned an entirely new concept, of which I was unaware until now and which I had not come across in any book. That is, when a Jew is in trouble, he can be saved through the merit of Eretz Israel and its inhabitants...

And Yaakov took a vow saying: "If G-d will be with me, and guard me on this way that I am going, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and I will return in peace to my father's home..." (Bereshit 28:20-21)

Based on this we can answer the question which troubled the commentators. On the words, And Hashem will be my G-d, they ask, "Is it possible that Yaakov Avinu qualified his acceptance of G-d with a condition?" Based on the above, though, it is quite clear.

It is well known that Chazal say, "He who dwells in Eretz Israel is like one

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who has a G-d, and he who dwells outside the Land is like one who does not have a G-d" (Ketuvot 110b). This, then, is the meaning of Yaakov's statement And I will return in peace to my father's home, and Hashem will be my G-d. That is, he will return to Eretz Israel and then Hashem will be his G-d. Hence, this itself was the vow that he would return to Eretz Israel.

I later found this interpretation stated explicitly in the Midrash. Our Sages write that Yaakov Avinu longed for Eretz Israel, as it says, And I will return in peace to my father's home (Tanchuma, Re'eh 8). I also found this in the Zohar: "And I will return in peace to my father's home, for there lies the Holy Land, there I will be perfected, and Hashem will be my G-d" (Zohar I:150b). This is exactly how I explained Yaakov Avinu's vow. Thus I have merited to concur with the godly Tana, R. Shimon bar Yochai. Rejoice O innards that you have been so privileged.

When I presented this idea to my beloved friend, the brilliant R. Israel Veltz shlita, judge and mentor of the Orthodox community here [in Budapest], he showed me a Tosefta which concurs with the Zohar:

It says, And I will return in peace to my father's home. What is the meaning of [the continuation of the verse] And Hashem will be my G-d? [Similarly], it says, To give you the Land of Canaan to be for you a G-d (VaYikra 25:38). [These verses demonstrate that] as long as you are in the Land of Canaan, I am your G-d. If you are not in the Land of Canaan, I am not your G-d. (Tosefta, Avodah Zarah 5:2)

Based on this, we can understand the Midrash on the verse Yaakov was very frightened (Bereshit 32:8): "Yaakov said, 'All of these years Eisav has dwelt in Eretz Israel, perhaps he is coming against me with the strength of living in Eretz Israel'" (Bereshit Rabba 76:2). Although this appears difficult, it is quite comprehensible based on the above. Since the essence of Yaakov Avinu's prayer was that the merit of Eretz Israel should protect him by virtue of his desire to return to it, he had good reason to be afraid. He was "dwelling" there merely in thought, while the wicked Eisav was actually dwelling there. Therefore, Yaakov was fearful that perhaps Eisav's merit would be greater than his own.

THE PURPOSE OF OUR AFFLICTIONS IS TO AROUSE US TO RETURN TO ERETZ ISRAEL

Furthermore, the sole purpose of all the afflictions that smite us in our exile is to arouse us to return to our Holy Land. This can be inferred from the

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story of King David and the plague. During the plague, G-d sent him Gad the prophet. And Gad came to David...and said to him, "Go up and establish an altar to Hashem" (II Shmuel24:18). The Midrash explains:

This can be likened to a father who beat his son, but the son did not know why he was being punished. After the beating, the father said, "For several days I have been commanding you to do something, and you have ignored me. Now go and do it!" So too, the thousands who fell at the time of David died only because they did not demand the building of the Beit HaMikdash. From this we can derive a kal vachomer. If they, in whose days the Beit HaMikdash was neither built nor destroyed, were punished for not having demanded its construction; then we, in whose days the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed...certainly [deserve punishment], for we do not mourn nor supplicate. (Midrash Tehillim 17)

RASHI ON HOSHEA (3:5) CITES THE FOLLOWING:

R. SHIMON BEN MENASSIYA SAID: "THE JEWISH PEOPLE WILL NOT BE SHOWN A GOOD SIGN UNTIL THEY ONCE AGAIN REQUEST THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, THE KINGDOM OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID, AND THE REBUILDING OF THE BEIT HAMIKDASH. IT IS THUS WRITTEN, AFTERWARDS, THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WILL RETURN AND SEEK OUT HASHEM THEIR G-D AND DAVID THEIR KING... (HOSHEA 3:5)."

BEHOLD, OUR DESIRE TO RETURN TO ERETZ ISRAEL ENCOMPASSES THESE THREE ELEMENTS. FIRSTLY, "HE WHO DWELLS IN ERETZ ISRAEL IS LIKE ONE WHO HAS A G-D" (KETUVOT 110B). ALSO, THE REBUILDING OF THE BEIT HAMIKDASH WILL OCCUR (WITH G-D'S HELP) WHEN WE ASSEMBLE IN ERETZ ISRAEL, AS EXPLAINED IN MEGILLAH (17B-18A). AFTERWARDS, MASHIACH, WHO REPRESENTS THE KINGDOM OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID WILL ARRIVE, AS I WILL DEMONSTRATE IN THIS VOLUME. FIRST AND FOREMOST, THOUGH, WE MUST STRIVE TO RETURN TO ERETZ ISRAEL AND THEN, WITH G-D'S HELP, WE WILL ATTAIN THESE THREE OBJECTIVES.

The Tosefta comments on the verse "And I will truly implant them in this Land with all My heart and with all My soul" (Yirmiyah 32:41): If they are not upon the Land, they are not truly implanted before Me, neither with all My heart nor with all My soul. (Tosefta, Avodah Zarah 5:4)

It is striking that the Holy One Blessed be He says that when the people of

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Israel are not in Eretz Israel they do not cling to His heart and soul! Therefore, we should not be astonished by what has happened to us in our times, or by the lack of Divine Providence that we are experiencing, for we live in the lands of the nations and do not cling to G-d's entire heart and soul. However, when we strive to return to Eretz Israel, we will immediately cling to His entire heart and soul.

The essential point is that Hashem is waiting for us to take the initiative, to desire and long for the return to Eretz Israel. He does not want us to wait for Him to bring us there. He, therefore, told us, And I will truly implant them in this Land. That is to say, when we, of our own volition, truly and with all our strength, desire and strive [to return to the Land], then G-d will bring our work to a successful end.

The Zohar writes in a similar vein. Although King Shlomo's Temple was erected miraculously, the Holy One Blessed be He waited for our initiative and only then completed the edifice (Zohar I: 74a). The same is true of settling Eretz Israel. We must strive with all our might, to the best of our abilities, and then Hashem will complete our handiwork. May the pleasantness of Hashem be upon us to establish and bring success to the work of our hands.

I must, however, make it quite clear that my words are intended for those Jews who wish to arrive at the absolute truth by way of halachic debate and dialogue. For, the issue of the final redemption is also a matter of halachah, as Chazal demonstrate: "The word of Hashem (Amos 8:11) - this is halachah. The word of Hashem (ibid. 12) - this is the final redemption" (Shabbat 138b, Tana DeVei Eliyahu (16:11). Thus, anything which concerns the final redemption is akin to ordinary halachic matters and requires a dialogue of scholars. This halachah should not differ from any other halachah in the Torah and must be discussed by scholars using proofs from our holy Torah to determine what course of action to take. Why should the halachah of rebuilding the Land - which concerns the honor of Hashem, the holy nation, and the Holy Land - be less important than any other halachah in the Torah? Therefore, one scholar builds [a proof] and the other refutes it until the matter becomes clear, as the Mabit explains in his responsa (Sec 116.)

THE SIN OF THE SPIES IN OUR DAYS

Therefore, those who have a predisposition on this matter will not see the truth and will not concede to our words. All the evidence in the world will not affect them, for they are smitten with blindness, and their inner biases cause them to deny even things which are as clear as day. Who amongst us is greater than the spies? The Torah testifies that they were proper individuals. Nonetheless, since they were influenced by their desire for authority, they rejected the desirable Land and led others astray, causing this bitter exile (as Chazal explain). Yehoshua and Calev began to argue with them and attempted to prove the authenticity of Moshe and his Torah. They proclaimed, Let us ascend at once (Bamidbar 13:30). They even brought lengthy arguments and proofs to show that Israel would succeed [in entering the Land], as Rashi states. Nevertheless, they were unable to convince them [the spies], for the spies were prejudiced by hidden motives.

THE SAME HOLDS TRUE IN OUR TIMES, EVEN AMONG RABBIS, REBBES, AND CHASSIDIM. THIS ONE HAS A GOOD RABBINICAL POSITION; THIS ONE IS AN ESTABLISHED ADMOR; AND THIS ONE HAS A PROFITABLE BUSINESS OR FACTORY, OR A PRESTIGIOUS JOB WHICH PROVIDES GREAT SATISFACTION. THEY ARE AFRAID THAT THEIR STATUS WILL DECLINE IF THEY GO TO ERETZ ISRAEL. PEOPLE OF THIS SORT ARE INFLUENCED BY THEIR DEEP ROOTED SELFISH MOTIVES TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THEY THEMSELVES DO NOT REALIZE THAT THEIR PREJUDICE SPEAKS ON THEIR BEHALF.

THE ZOHAR AND THE SHELAH EXPLAIN THAT THE SPIES WERE AFRAID THAT THEY WOULD LOSE THEIR POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP UPON ENTERING ERETZ ISRAEL. 3:158A, S.V. VAYISHLACH

Rashi on Kiddushin (69b) states that the Jews who dwelt comfortably in exile did not go up with Ezra to Eretz Israel. Only the poor and dejected souls ascended with him. Furthermore, Seder HaDorot cites our mentor, the S'ma, who saw the following in Ma'aseh Nissim (by R. Eliezer of Worms, author of the Roke'ach): Ezra sent letters to all of the Diaspora communities urging them to ascend with him to Eretz Israel. One such letter arrived in the city of Worms, in Germany. The Jews residing there answered, "You may dwell in the great Yerushalaim, we will dwell here in the small Yerushalaim." They said this because they were very important

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in the eyes of the ministers and the Gentiles. They were extremely wealthy, and they lived peacefully in exile.

Seder HaDorot further quotes the S'ma as saying that this is why such terrible decrees have befallen the Jews of Germany - Worms in particular - more than any other community. They settled there at the time of the destruction of the First Temple, but when Ezra asked them to return at the end of the seventy years, they refused. Indeed, we see from the history of our people that all of the troubles and evil decrees have emanated from Germany, just like today. It all stems from the sin of refusing to ascend with Ezra, which happened because they lived peacefully in exile.

THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE; WHEN JEWS LIVE COMFORTABLY IN EXILE, THEY DO NOT WANT TO HEAR ABOUT ALIYAH TO ERETZ ISRAEL

The prophet Chaggai cries out: And now, thus says Hashem of Hosts, "Consider your ways. You have sown much, but bring in little; you eat without being satiated...; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and whoever earns wages earns for a bag with a hole." Thus says Hashem of Hosts, "Consider your ways" (Chaggai 1:5-7). Rashi explains: Consider your ways, meaning, your business. You see that your labor achieves no blessing, as the verse says, You have sown much, but bring in little..., and whoever earns wages earns for a bag with a hole. Any profit you make perishes, just like one who places money in a pocket with a hole. You find that when the Children of Israel were exiled to Babylonia, Ezra said to them, "Ascend to Eretz Israel." They, however, did not want to go. Ezra said to them, You have sown much, but bring in little; you eat without being satiated...; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and whoever earns wages, earns for a bag with a hole. (Midrash Tanchuma, Tetzaveh 13) Tzefanyah states, "And I will punish the men who sit complacently, who say in their hearts, "Hashem will not do good, nor evil." And their wealth will become a plunder, and their houses a desolation; they will build houses, but will not dwell in them; they will plant vineyards, but will not drink their wine" (Tzefanyah 1:12-13). Indeed all of this has occurred in our days in nearly all of the countries of Europe, because the Jews disregard aliyah to Eretz Israel, as the Tanchuma demonstrates.

The brilliant Yaavetz (Sulam Bet el) also bemoans our lack of interest in

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returning to and dwelling in Eretz Israel. Since we subsist peacefully outside the Land, we imagine that we have already found a different Eretz Israel and Yerushalaim. This caused great misfortune to the Jews who dwelt comfortably in Spain (and other lands), and they were expelled. There is no remnant of the Jewish people left in that land. Hashem is righteous, for they completely forgot that they were in exile, and they assimilated among the nations. All of this has happened because we neglected to return to our homeland, the Land of the Deer.

Chazal state: “The Land of Israel is beloved since the Holy One Blessed be He chose it. You find that when G-d created the world He distributed the various lands to the heavenly ministers and chose the Land of Israel for Himself. How do we know this? Moshe said, When the Supreme One apportioned to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of man, He set the boundaries of the people according to the number of the Children of Israel (Devarim 32:8). He also chose the people of Israel as His portion, as it is written, For Hashem's portion is His people; Yaakov is the lot of His inheritance (ibid. 32:9). Said the Holy One Blessed be He: “Let Israel, who became My portion, inherit the Land which became My portion.” (Midrash Tanchuma, Re'eh 8)

Likewise, Yoav, while battling Amman and Aram, said, Be strong and let us be strong, for the sake of our people and for the sake of the cities of our G-d; and let Hashem do that which is good in His eyes (I Divre Hayamim 19:13). He used the expression the cities of our G-d, implying that the cities should appear G-d-like through the observance of Torah and mitzvot, and then Hashem would bestow goodness upon them. This is the reason they won the war.

The following verse explicitly affirms this principle. And David assembled all the leaders of Israel... Then King David stood up on his feet and said: “Hear me, my brothers and my people... And now, in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of Hashem, and in the hearing of our G-d, observe and seek out all the commandments of Hashem your G-d, so that you may possess the good Land and bequeath it to your children after you forever” (I Divrei HaYamim 28:1-9). Thus, David, who was chosen to be our eternal king, proclaimed to the entire Congregation of Israel from the very outset that it is impossible to inherit the good Land without observing the mitzvot.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND REPROOF TO THE PIONEER BUILDERS OF ERETZ ISRAEL

After all I have said above, I will now address the builders of our Holy Land (may Hashem give them life, and may He help them succeed). It is as clear as day that the Holy One Blessed be He desires your deeds and your labor. You have built cities, and you have made flourishing gardens from fallow fields. This is the result of great toil and effort, and in many cases it involved genuine self-sacrifice. You have transformed swamps containing all sorts of disease into flourishing, prime soil. I have cited in this volume many sources which prove that the Holy One Blessed be He is pleased with your actions. I would like to cite here one additional proof which is impeccable and irrefutable.

The Talmud states, "R. Yochanan says, 'Why did Omri deserve kingship? Because he added on a city to the Land of Israel'" (Sanhedrin 102b).

Tana DeVei Eliyahu writes: Once, I, [Eliyahu HaNavi], was sitting in a study hall. I asked, "My masters, why is it that all other kings were not succeeded by their sons, while Omri had three of his descendants inherit his throne?" They replied, "We do not know." I said to them, "My masters, it is because he added a great city to the Land of Israel. Omri thought, just as Yerushalaim is [the capital] for the kings of Judah, so will Shomron be [the capital] for the kings of Israel" (Yalkut Shimoni 2:207)

In the Kabbalistic work, Otzrot Yosef, by the great R. Yosef Engel z"l, I discovered an insight to this Midrash. The Kabbalists ask, "It seems puzzling why did the Holy One Blessed be He reward Omri with kingship for that particular deed? Why not a different reward?" They reply, "It is well known that Eretz Israel is in the supernal sphere of Kingship (Malchut). Thus, since Omri rectified an aspect of Kingship on earth by adding a city to Eretz Israel, he received the specific reward of kingship."

Otzrot Yosef, Ma'amar HaLevanah, Vav {beginning}.

Now Omri was considered one of the wicked kings, as the verse states, Omri did evil in the eyes of Hashem, and did worse than all those who had preceded him. He went in the entire path of Yerovam ben Nevat and in his sins that he caused Israel to commit, to anger Hashem, G-d of Israel, with their vanities (I Melachim 16:25-26). The city he established was not built for the sake of glorifying G-d's name, but for Omri's own honor, as

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stated above: "Just as Yerushalaim is [the capital] for the kings of Judah, so will Shomron be [the capital] for the kings of Israel." Nonetheless, even though it was built with great sins, it is clear that Omri fulfilled the positive commandment of settling Eretz Israel. After all, if he did not fulfill a mitzvah there would be no reward. Also, since he was rewarded specifically with kingship, we must conclude that he rectified the supernal sphere of Kingship. This is why he deserved such a great measure of kingship, that is, three generations of kings, as mentioned above.

Thus, Omri fulfilled the mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Israel with all its rectifications, even those pertaining to the upper worlds. Through the physical act of building, he elevated and established the mitzvah, even though that was not his intention at all and even though he acted sinfully. The proof being the fact that he received his reward "a measure for a measure."

HENCE, WE HAVE A CLEAR, IRREFUTABLE PROOF THAT BY BUILDING A CITY IN ERETZ ISRAEL, EVEN THE GREATEST SINNER - ONE WHO DENIES THE ENTIRE TORAH (HEAVEN FORBID), LIKE OMRI WHO WORSHIPPED IDOLS, WHICH IS TANTAMOUNT TO DENYING THE ENTIRE TORAH - ACHIEVES ALL OF THE POSSIBLE RECTIFICATIONS THAT THIS MITZVAH CAN EFFECT IN THE SUPERNAL WORLDS. THIS PRINCIPLE CAN BE APPLIED TO OUR TIMES AS WELL. EVEN THOUGH THE MEN WHO CURRENTLY BUILD THE LAND HAVE LEFT THE PATH OF THE TORAH (DUE TO OUR MANY SINS), THEY ARE CERTAINLY NO WORSE THAN OMRI. THE VERSE TESTIFIES THAT HE WAS MORE WICKED THAN ALL WHO PROCEEDED HIM AND THAT HE FOLLOWED THE WAYS OF YEROVAM BEN NEVAT, WHO CAUSED ISRAEL TO SIN. NONETHELESS, WHEN OMRI BUILT ERETZ ISRAEL, HE FULFILLED THE MITZVAH PROPERLY AND ACHIEVED UNIFICATION IN THE UPPER SPHERES. IN THE SAME MANNER, IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE SUPERNAL SPHERE OF KINGSHIP HAS BEEN RECTIFIED AND GLORIFIED BY THE TOIL OF TODAY'S BUILDERS, NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE. EVEN IF THEY ARE THE GREATEST SINNERS, THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE DESIRES THEIR ACTIONS, AND THEY ACHIEVE THE APPROPRIATE RECTIFICATIONS AND UNIFICATIONS. THAT IS, BY CONSTRUCTING BUILDINGS AND TRANSFORMING THE LAND INTO FERTILE SOIL, THEY HAVE FULFILLED THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE MITZVAH OF YISHUV ERETZ ISRAEL

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The Maharsha writes that the main element of the mitzvah of settling Eretz Israel is cultivating fields and vineyards. The Chatam Sofer agrees. He explains that the land of Sichon and Og was not considered a settled land (even though it was inhabited), because it was not cultivated by Gentiles or Jews...(Derashot Chatam Sofer, Sermon for Shabbat HaGadol 5558) Hence, the essential component of Yishuv Eretz Israel is cultivation.

The following verse clearly proves this. These are the sons of Se'ir the Chorite who settled the Land (Bereshit 36:20). Rashi, quoting our Sages (Shabbat 85a), comments, "They were experts in settling the land. This plot is suitable for olive trees, this plot for vineyards. They would taste the soil and know for which plant it was best suited." Thus, planting is the main aspect of settling the Land. In addition, both the Rashbash and the Chatam Sofer compare cultivating the Land to the mitzvah of tefillin, sukkah, or lulav [i.e. it, too, is a mitzvah].

MOREOVER, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE SIMPLE JEW WHO BUILDS THE LAND WITHOUT ANY SPIRITUAL INTENT (KAVANAH), MERELY FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT, ACCOMPLISHES A GREATER RECTIFICATION (TIKKUN) IN THE SUPERNAL WORLDS THAN THE GREATEST TZADDIK WITH HIS TEARFUL AND LAMENTING MIDNIGHT LOFTY PRAYERS (TIKKUN CHATZOT) RECITED FOR THE SAKE OF THE SHECHINAH AND THE END OF EXILE. THE LATTER CERTAINLY ACCOMPLISHES A GREAT RECTIFICATION, YET IT CANNOT COMPARE TO THE RECTIFICATION CAUSED BY THE SIMPLE JEW WHO PHYSICALLY BUILDS THE LAND, EVEN IF HE HAS NO GODLY INTENT (AS THE ABOVE-MENTIONED PASSAGE FROM SANHEDRIN INDICATES).

We need you, for even Shlomo selected experts for each aspect of the work. The same is true today. Everyone will admit that without expert craftsmen we will be unable to rebuild the Land. Therefore, anyone who understands will acknowledge that we need you and your labor. You, however, must also understand that you need the gedolei Torah, so that everything will be done in the spirit of the Torah. Then, your labor will bear fruit. Similarly, Chazal state: Were it not for David who sat and occupied himself with Torah, Yoav ben Tzeruyah would not have been victorious in war. And, were it not for Yoav who fought the battles, David would not have been able to sit and occupy himself with Torah. (Sanhedrin 49a)

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“You have said, it is useless to serve G-d, and what profit is there that we have kept His charge” (Malachi 3:14). You have wearied Hashem with your words...when you say, everyone who does evil is good in the eyes of Hashem, and He favors them; or where is the G-d of justice? (ibid. 2:17). Then, those who fear Hashem spoke to one another, and Hashem listened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear Hashem and those who give thought to His name. And they will be Mine says Hashem of Hosts, on that day which I appoint as My particular day; and I will have mercy upon them as a man has mercy upon his son who serves him. Then you will return and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves G-d and one who does not serve Him” (ibid. 3:16-18).

Rashi explains: Then...spoke to one another... I [Hashem] am responding to your words: Then, when the wicked perpetrate evil and the righteous walk submissively before Me, those who fear Hashem spoke to one another, [cautioning each other] not to cling to the evil ways of the wicked. And as for Me, I have not forgotten the conversation of those who fear Hashem. Even though I am not quick to reward, nonetheless, I listened and heard, and I commanded to write a book of remembrance for their sake. And their words will be preserved for that day which I appoint as My particular day, meaning, the day which I stored away and set aside to pay My reward. Then, I will show you the difference between the righteous and the wicked.

THUS, MALACHI, THE LAST PROPHET, FORETOLD WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO US AT THE END OF DAYS, DURING THE BIRTHPANGS OF MASHIACH. TROUBLES WILL BESIEGE US TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT SOME PEOPLE WILL SAY, "IT IS USELESS TO SERVE G-D, AND WHAT PROFIT IS THERE THAT WE SHOULD KEEP HIS TORAH; AND EVERYONE WHO DOES EVIL IS GOOD IN THE EYES OF HASHEM, AND HE FAVORS THEM; AND WHERE IS THE G-D OF JUSTICE?" THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT WE HEAR TODAY, DURING THESE BITTER TIMES THAT HAVE BEFALLEN US.

However, those who fear and cling to Hashem spoke to one another [cautioning each other] not to cling to their evil ways. They strengthened and encouraged each other, as Yeshayahu said, I will await Hashem who

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conceals His face from the House of Yaakov, and I will hope for Him (Yeshayah 8:17). That is to say, even though He conceals His face from the House of Yaakov, I will await and hope for Hashem. The Holy One Blessed be He hears and pays attention to these words spoken during times of trouble by those who fear Him. He writes them down in a book of remembrance, and afterwards, on the day of recompense and salvation, the Holy One will show the difference between those who clung to Him and those who strayed from Him.

Therefore, every Jew will certainly strengthen himself during these difficult times and guard himself from slipping, because the time will surely come when the prophecy will be fulfilled, and the difference between those who serve G-d and those who do not will become apparent. Each Jew will live up to the prayer "And despite all this we have not forgotten Your name." It is worthwhile for us to bear the heavy burden of exile on account of the great reward that the Holy One Blessed be He will bestow upon us on the day that He will appoint as His particular day. For on that day, He will reward each individual based on the deeds he performed with G-d

EVIL DECREES COME AS A PUNISHMENT FOR OUR REFUSAL TO GO UP TO ERETZ ISRAEL

It is written in Seder HaDorot, 5380, in an addendum, citing Ma'aseh Nissim 9: In his youth, R. Yusfa Shamash studied in the yeshiva of our brilliant master, R. Pinchas Segal, who served as av beit din of Fulda. In the year 5380 [1620], he quoted his mentor, the brilliant R. Falk, author of the S'ma, explaining the reason why evil decrees are more prevalent in Worms than any other community or state. Jews settled in Worms at the time of the destruction of the First Temple. After the seventy years of Babylonian exile were completed, the exiles returned to Yerushalaim and Eretz Israel. Those who settled in Worms, however, did not return. The people of Yerushalaim wrote them, urging them to come and settle in Eretz Israel, so that they could ascend to Yerushalaim on the three pilgrimage festivals. They paid no attention to this, replying, "You may dwell in the great Yerushalaim; we will dwell here in the small Yerushalaim." This occurred because they were extremely wealthy and very distinguished in the eyes of the ruler and the Gentiles. This is why evil decrees have been renewed upon them more than any other community or country. In any event, we see that they were afflicted with misfortune, evil decrees, and exile because they regarded themselves secure in their land.

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THE SAME IS TRUE THROUGHOUT THE DIASPORA. SINCE THE JEWS DO NOT CONSIDER RETURNING TO AND DWELLING IN ERETZ ISRAEL, THE GREAT ADVISOR, THROUGH HIS PROFOUND COUNSEL, CONSTANTLY AFFLICTS THEM WITH EXILE AND HARSH BONDAGE SO THAT THEY WILL WANT TO RETURN TO ERETZ ISRAEL. THE YAAVETZ ALSO AGREES WITH THIS. HE WRITES THAT HARSH DECREES SWIFTLY COME UPON ISRAEL WHEN THEY DISREGARD ERETZ ISRAEL

“And he sent out the dove” (Bereshit 8:8) In the Midrash Aggadah on the Torah: Noach 8:11 it is written: “The dove represents the Jewish people. Just as the dove did not find rest for the sole of her foot, so too, Israel will find no rest in exile, as it says, “There will be no rest for the sole of your foot” (Devarim 28:65). And, just as the dove returned to the ark, so too, Israel will eventually return to its Land from exile because of the yoke of the nations who are likened to water, as it says, Woe to the multitude of many nations who are as tumultuous as the tumult of the seas” (Yeshayah 17:12)

Thus, it is clear from the Midrash that the pains of exile will push the Jews to their Land. This idea is repeated in Midrash Eichah (1:29) on the verse “She dwelled among the nations, but found no rest” (Eichah 1:3): "R. Shimon ben Lakish says, 'Had she found rest, she would not have returned.'"

It is also found in Bereshit Rabba (33:8): “And the dove did not find rest” (Bereshit 8:9): Yehudah bar Nachman said in the name of R. Shimon, "Had she found rest, she would not have returned." Similarly, She [Israel] dwelled among the nations, but found no rest (Eichah 1:3): Had she found rest, she would not have returned. Similarly, And among those nations you will not be tranquil; there will be no rest for the sole of your foot (Devarim 28:65): Had they found rest, they would not have returned.

PEOPLE WHO MAY SEEM SINNERS CAN HAVE A GREAT LEVEL

R. Chayim Vital writes in Sefer HaChezyonot that he once asked his mentor, the Ari z"l, how he professed to have such a lofty soul when [in reality] even the most insignificant person of the earlier generations was incomparably more righteous and pious! The Ari z"l replied: Realize that greatness of the soul does not depend on man's perceivable deeds. Rather,

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Hashem probes the hearts and minds of men according to each time period and generation. A very small deed in this generation is equal to many mitzvot in the earlier generations. This is so because the kelipah and the evil forces have so vastly intensified in our generation that they are infinite and immeasurable. This was not the case in the earlier generations. Therefore, had I lived in those generations, my deeds and wisdom would have been wondrous, and they would have surpassed those of many of the earlier tzaddikim Tana'im and Amora'im”.

In his work, Netiv Mitzvotcha, the holy Kabbalist, R. Isaac of Komarno, comments on this: And now, my brother, take heed! If in the days of our master, the Ari, there was such an enormous intensification of the kelipot, what are we to say during these bitter times? Surely, we should embrace anyone who bears the name of Israel and invoke merit and love upon him. All of his sinful deeds are a result of the strengthening of the evil forces and are due to the hardships and suffering which have caused him to lose his understanding. I swear by the Eternal G-d that all of the wicked Jews in this country, particularly those in Germany, are like infants who were kidnapped by Gentiles. They act under duress and speak out of ignorance. In an instant, they would all be willing to spill their blood like water - with love, happiness, and joyful dancing - for the sanctification of G-d's great name.

(Netiv Mitzvotcha, Netiv Emunah 6:10)

This is true, for they are willing to sacrifice themselves for what they perceive as Judaism; and if they had a greater understanding, they would do more. In any event, observe, my brother, that this holy man of G-d states explicitly that we should embrace all those who bear the name of Israel. They suffer with the entire Jewish people, because they, too, are called Israel. He further states that it is a mitzvah to invoke merit upon them and accept them with abounding affection. He even swore by the Eternal G-d that all of today's sinners are like infants who were kidnapped by Gentiles, and that they act under duress. Pay close attention to and delve into his words, for he was renowned as a man who possessed Ruach HaKodesh.

Nevertheless, it is clear that no Jew, not even the worst one, will be banished at the time of redemption. All Jews will return to their accepted

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borders, and Hashem will accept them with love and affection. This already occurred in the days of Ezra, as it is written: The people of exile who had come out of captivity offered burnt offerings to the G-d of Israel, twelve bulls... (Ezra 8:35). R. Yehudah says that these sacrifices were brought to atone for the sin of idolatry that was committed in the days of Tzidkiyahu. (The Talmud explains that the idolaters of Tzidkiyahu's generation were still alive, and it was they who returned from the exile [see Horayot 6a and Temurah 15b])

The Talmud queries, "Did they not act willfully?" Rashi explains, "The people of Tzidkiyahu's generation acted willfully and are deserving of death... How can they achieve atonement through these sacrifices?" The Talmud answers, "It was a temporary ruling." Rashi explains, "They were atoned even though they acted willfully." Rabbeinu Gershom Me'or HaGolah, commenting on the Talmud's answer, writes, "It was beyond the letter of the law."

It appears to me that this is similar to the custom of kings to grant amnesty to criminals on a day of royal celebration. The Shelah writes that all the practices common among mortal kings originated in sanctity. The trait of granting amnesty, as well, was stolen by the mortal kings from the Holy One Blessed be He. For, on the day of rejoicing over the redemption at the time of Ezra, G-d granted amnesty to those who willfully worshipped idols. He allowed them to achieve atonement through a sacrifice, as if they acted unintentionally, so as not to exclude them from the joy of redemption.

Thus, the Holy One Blessed be He did not exclude even the absolute heretics (the ones who worshipped idols, which is the most grievous offense [see Shavuot 13a]) from the joy of redemption. Therefore, it is clear to me that now, too, when we merit redemption (speedily in our days) not a single Jewish soul will be cast aside, not even the greatest and most rebellious sinners. This is especially true in our days, because there is practically no one in the category of "one who knows his Master yet intentionally rebels against Him." Rather, they are like infants who were kidnapped by Gentiles. They do not know better, for they were not raised in the spirit of the Torah, and all of their sins are committed unwillingly (as the holy man of G-d from Komarno stated above). Therefore, it is certainly a mitzvah to bring them near. This is similar to what the Rambam writes about the children of those who separated themselves from the

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congregation, like the Karaites. They should not be treated as outcasts. On the contrary, it is a mitzvah to bring them near, for they have been raised contrary to the spirit of the Torah (Rambam, Hilchot Mamrim 3:3)

It is written in Tanna debe Eliyahu Rabba 22:

Father in Heaven, may Your name be blessed for all of eternity, and may You derive pleasure from Your servants Israel, wherever they may dwell. I bless You in this manner because You have said that You accept the repentance of the sinners of Israel. Even if a person commits many grave sins, when he repents You say, "I have compassion on him, and I will accept his repentance." Even if he arises and curses and blasphemes Your Exaltedness, when he returns and repents, You, O Holy One, forgive him for everything, as it says, Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame man will leap like a gazelle and the tongue of the mute will sing (Yeshayah 35:5-6). The blind, deaf, and lame refer to those who lack Torah knowledge and good deeds, as it says, For water will break out in the wilderness and streams in the desert (ibid.). (Tanna debe Eliyahu Rabba 22)

LET THIS BE A LESSON FOR THOSE WHO SCORN AND SLANDER THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. IT IS FORBIDDEN TO INVOKE CONDEMNATION UPON EVEN THE MOST CORRUPT JEWS, FOR THEY ARE THE SEED OF THE TRIED ONES, SONS OF AVRAHAM, YITZCHAK, AND YAAKOV, AND THEY ARE DEEPLY ROOTED IN HOLINESS, AS I CITED ABOVE FROM THE ZOHAR. REMEMBER AND KEEP THIS PRINCIPLE; DO NOT FORGET IT, LEST YOU FALL INTO THE TRAP OF SATAN, WHO INCITES YOU TO DENOUNCE THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.

And Hashem your G-d will bring you to the Land that your forefathers possessed and you shall possess it... And Hashem your G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, to love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live. (Devarim 30:5-6)

The author of Kapot Temarim (Yom Teruah on Rosh HaShanah 30a, S.V. gemara) interprets the verse, She is Zion, no one cares about her (Yirmiyah 30:17), as follows: The people of Israel were complaining about their troubles. Therefore, Hashem said: "Why do you complain? I am not

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incapable of bringing salvation, but what am I to do? Your sins caused this. No one cares about Zion. She cries out to Me that you do not remember her. How, then, can I remember and redeem you?"

The book of Melachim (II 14:26-27) states: "For Hashem saw that Israel's affliction was very bitter. And there was none surviving and none remaining and there was no helper for Israel. But Hashem did not speak to erase the name of Israel from under the heavens, so He saved them by the hand of Yerovam ben Yoash." The Midrash Yalkut Shimoni 2:232 comments: But Hashem did not speak... Why is Yerovam mentioned here? Was he not an idolater? The explanation is that [he deserved this] because he did not listen to gossip about Amos. At that time, the generation and its leader worshipped idols. Nevertheless, [G-d said], "The Land which I promised to give to the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, give it over into the hands of he who did not listen to gossip." They say: that which was not given over into the hands of Yehoshua bin Nun and David, king of Israel, was given over into Yerovam's hands, as it says, So He saved them by the hand of Yerovam ben Yoash.

THUS, WHEN THE ALMIGHTY WANTS TO SAVE ISRAEL FROM EXCEEDINGLY DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES, HE SAVES THEM EVEN BY WAY OF THE MOST WICKED PERSON, LIKE AN IDOLATER, IF HASHEM FINDS A GOOD TRAIT IN HIM LIKE LOVING HIS FELLOW JEW AND NOT GOSSIPING ABOUT HIM, THEN HASHEM WILL USE THIS PERSON TO BRING SALVATION.

It seems to me that the reason for this [order of events] is based on a comment of the Chatam Sofer himself. (Derashot Chatam Sofer, vol. 3, p. 299) He writes that the height of our evil lot is dispersion and exile. For even though the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed, had we remained in Eretz Israel matters would not have been so bad. Similarly, the Rambam (Hilchot Ta'anit 5:2) writes, "The murder of Gedalyah ben Achikam caused the flame of Israel to be extinguished and the Jews to be dispersed among the exiles, due to our numerous sins".

THE REDEMPTION WILL PROGRESS GRADUALLY, NOT ALL AT ONCE

Now, I already mentioned that our Sages in the Zohar, Midrash, and Yerushalmi assert that the redemption will progress gradually, not all at

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once. Therefore, the ingathering of the Jews to Eretz Israel must precede the true redemption. First, they must leave the state of absolute evil, which is dispersion and exile, and proceed to the middle level of evil, which is when the people of Israel are in their Land but the Temple is in ruins.

Is it possible that the Holy One Blessed be He will enlarge Eretz Israel? R. Yitzchak said: "A man does not know how wide or how long a scroll is until it is unrolled and revealed. The same is true of Eretz Israel. It consists mostly of mountains and valleys, as it says, But the Land into which you cross over to possess it is a Land of mountains and valleys..., a Land that Hashem your G-d seeks out; the eyes of Hashem your G-d are always upon it... (Devarim 11:11-12). When the Holy One Blessed be He straightens it out - as it is written, Every valley will be raised, and every mountain and hill will be lowered, and the crooked will be made straight, and the rough places, a plain (Yeshayah 40:4) - then its [true dimensions] will be known. (Devarim Rabba 4:11)

R. Natan comments on the verse: To those who love Me and keep My commandments (Shemot 20:6): "This refers to those who dwell in Eretz Israel and dedicate themselves to all of the mitzvot" (Yalkut Shimoni, Yitro 292)

Our mentor, the Magen Avraham, explains in Zayit Ra'anani: "This refers to those who dwell in Eretz Israel." For in Eretz Israel there were harsh decrees and the Jews could have fled to another land. Nonetheless, they sacrificed themselves to settle the Land. This is not true of those who dwell outside the Land. When there are harsh decrees, they are liable for their souls if they do not flee to another land.

WE CAN NOT WAIT ANYMORE TO GO UP TO ERETZ ISRAEL

The Ramban quotes the Sifrei on the verse You shall seek out His dwelling place (Devarim 12:5): You might think that you should wait until a prophet reveals it to you. Therefore, the verse says, You shall seek out His dwelling place and come there. Seek out and find it, and then a prophet will reveal it to you, just like we find by David.

This Midrash warns us not to wait until a prophet commands us to ascend [to Hashem's dwelling place]. Rather, we must go up and seek it out to the best of our abilities, and then Hashem will grace us with a prophet.

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Certainly now, during these troubled times, we are obligated to do our utmost and try with all our strength and courage [to return to our Land].

In addition, the Ahavat Yonatan states that harsh decrees will be enacted against the people of Israel in the end of days, and they will desire to go to Eretz Israel (Ahavat Yonatan, Haftarat Eikev, on Yeshayah 49:19)

The Kuzari writes as follows (Kuzari 2:23)

If so, you are remiss in your obligation to your Creator, for you do not make this place the object of your ambitions. You say, "Have mercy on Zion for it is the house of our lives," and you believe that the Shechinah will return there...and that it is befitting for precious souls to yearn to return there... Also, your forefathers chose to dwell there rather than remain citizens in their birthplaces, even when the Shechinah was indiscernible in the Land. On the contrary, the Land was full of lewdness; and, nonetheless, they desired to stay only there.

After much toil, Hashem enlightened me to find the answer to the question: why does the exile endure despite the fact that the era of in its time has already arrived. Behold, the prophet Hoshea says, "Afterwards, the Children of Israel will return and seek out Hashem their G-d and David their king, and they will tremble for Hashem and for His goodness in the end of days (Hoshea 3:5). Chazal comment: The Children of Israel were exiled because they despised three things: the kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of David, and the Beit HaMikdash. R. Shimon ben Menassiya said: "The people of Israel will not be shown a good sign until they return and seek out these three things." Accordingly, it says, Afterwards, the Children of Israel will return and seek out Hashem - this refers to the kingdom of Heaven; and David their king according to its simple meaning; and they will tremble for Hashem and His goodness - this refers to the Beit HaMikdash, as it says, This good mountain (Devarim 3:25). (Yalkut Shimoni 2:106)

Rashi comments on the counting of the Levi'im: "The Holy One Blessed be He said to Moshe, 'You do your part and I will do Mine.'" This is a fundamental principle in all matters; we must first do our share and then the Holy One Blessed be He will do His.

OUR TESHUVAH CONSISTS IN RETURNING TO ERETZ ISRAEL

IT IS FURTHER WRITTEN IN THE KUZARI: THIS SIN (THAT IS, THE FACT THAT FEW JEWS LONG TO ACTUALLY RETURN TO ERETZ ISRAEL) PREVENTED THE FULFILLMENT OF THAT WHICH WAS DESTINED FOR THE SECOND TEMPLE. FOR DIVINE PROVIDENCE WAS READY TO REAPPEAR AS AT FIRST IF ALL THE JEWS HAD WILLINGLY AGREED TO RETURN. BUT, ONLY A MINORITY RETURNED; THE MAJORITY REMAINED IN BABYLONIA... DIVINE PROVIDENCE ONLY APPEARS TO A PERSON IN PROPORTION TO HIS PREPAREDNESS FOR IT. IF HE PREPARES A LITTLE, HE WILL RECEIVE A LITTLE, IF A LOT, A LOT. IF WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO WILLINGLY AND WHOLEHEARTEDLY DRAW NEAR TO THE G-D OF OUR FOREFATHERS, HE WOULD SAVE US AS HE SAVED OUR ANCESTORS FROM EGYPT. [BUT SINCE THIS IS NOT THE CASE], OUR UTTERANCES OF "WHO RESTORES HIS PRESENCE TO ZION" AND BOW DOWN AT HIS HOLY MOUNTAIN ARE LIKE THE CHIRPING OF THE BIRDS, FOR WE SAY THESE THINGS WITHOUT PROPER INTENT (KUZARI 2:24)

Chazal assert that the second redemption should have been everlasting but sin prevented it (Sanhedrin 98b). The Maharsha explains that the sin was that the Jews did not all return to Eretz Israel. (Maharsha, Yoma 9b, s.v. ke'chomah) This corresponds fully with the words of the godly Kuzari.

The Ahavat Yonatan writes that our very return to Eretz Israel is considered repentance, and it is, in fact, the essence of repentance:

When numerous troubles will befall the Jews and, despite this, they will not forsake Hashem nor their inheritance – i.e., the Holy Land (may it speedily be rebuilt), their primary repentance will be achieved. For, repentance must be performed in the same place and concerning the same act. (See Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:1.) Now, their main transgression at the time of the Beit HaMikdash was their descent to Egypt, as the verse says, Woe to those who go down to Egypt (Yeshayah 31:1). This gave rise to grave sins. Therefore, their future repentance will be that they will not forsake their inheritance. (Ahavat Yonatan, Haftarat Balak)

Now, today, when even the lowest Jews have decided to return to our inheritance, and they dedicate their lives to it, refusing to covet any other

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land, the Holy One Blessed be He certainly considers this repentance. The fact that they do not fulfill the commandments of the Torah is because they were not raised and educated in this spirit. They are like infants who were kidnapped by Gentiles, as the Rambam writes. But, the act of aliyah is undoubtedly considered repentance, and through it they fulfill the positive commandment of teshuvah (repentance). This is the essence of repentance, as our mentor, R. Yonatan, explains.

Midrash Talpiot cites the Zohar Chadash:

Micha'el, the great guardian angel of Israel, said: "Master of the Universe, when will Israel be delivered from the Edomite exile? Did You not say that when they suffer myriad afflictions, they will be redeemed from exile?" The Holy One Blessed be He replied, "Let Sama'el, the guardian of Edom, come and debate you." Sama'el came and claimed, "You [G-d] said that the people of Israel will remain in exile until they repent, and now they are wicked"... The Holy One Blessed be He said to Michael, "You should have looked at the beginning of the verse - You will return unto Hashem Your G-d, and only afterwards, For G-d is merciful (Devarim 4:30-31)..." Michael retorted: "Master of the Universe, is it for naught that You are called a merciful G-d? You are merciful even if they are unworthy!" The Holy One Blessed be He said: "I have already sworn that I will not redeem them until they return to Me [to some small degree], even like the tip of a needle. Then, I will open for them a large opening."

Thus, even the slightest repentance, like the tip of a needle, is enough for the Holy One Blessed be He to bring the redemption. Hence, according to R. Yonatan's assertion that returning to Eretz Israel is the essence of repentance, we may conclude that all those who have strayed from the path of Torah and mitzvot are repenting like Hashem desires by returning to the Land. Their return is considered at least a repentance like the tip of a needle. Afterwards, the principle of "One mitzvah leads to another" (Avot 4:2) will surely be realized, and the Holy One Blessed be He will open their hearts wide and sway them to love and worship Him wholeheartedly.

In any event, since the pioneers perform a mitzvah by returning to the Land and since the Holy One Blessed be He is pleased with their actions, every single Jew is undoubtedly obligated to assist, support, and join them in this endeavor. He who keeps a mitzvah will know no evil, (Kohelet 8:5) and nothing bad will come out of this, G-d forbid. On the contrary, Hashem's

great name will be glorified and sanctified through it. This is true and clear

TODAY'S SINNERS ARE LIKE INFANTS WHO WERE KIDNAPPED BY GENTILES

Today's situation cannot be compared to that of the Temple era, when the Jews dwelt in their Land. At that time, the members of the Sanhedrin - who sat upon the thrones of judgment, Torah, and piety - showed and taught them the ways of the Torah. Yet, the Jews rejected the Sanhedrin and Hashem's Torah. They did not listen to the voices of the prophets, therefore they were exiled. The people of our generation, however, were born in exile, and they assimilated with the Gentiles. They did not see or hear [the ways of the Torah], nor experience Hashem's honor. Therefore, the fact that they do not follow the ways of the Torah is no proof that they detest it. They have simply been blackened by the conduct of the Gentiles.

I already cited our Kabbalistic master from Komarno who swore by the Eternal G-d that today's sinners are like infants who were kidnapped by Gentiles, for they act under duress and all of their sins are unintentional. The Rambam also writes that it is a mitzvah to bring those who were raised with foreign customs closer to the Torah, for they are like infants who were kidnapped by Gentiles. It is a mitzvah to love them, for they are descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Hence, the Holy One Blessed be He certainly does not despise today's pioneers.

The Midrash comments on the verse The House of Israel dwell on their Land, and they have defiled it (Yechezkel 36:17): "The Holy One Blessed be He said, 'If only My children were with Me in Eretz Israel, even though they defile the Land'" (Yalkut Shimoni 2:1038). This Midrash expresses the same idea I just mentioned. Since they have spent so much time among the Gentiles, they are unaware of the severity of the prohibitions that they transgress, and all of their actions are under duress. Thus, they cannot be compared to the sinners of the Temple era.

Moreover, they cherish the Land and refuse to desire any other land besides that of their forefathers. They sacrifice their lives for it, as is well known. Many have even died for the sake of the Land. We heard that during the Arab uprisings, many Jews who were killed in battle said with their last breaths, "There is nothing better than to die for the sake of our Land."

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THE CHATAM SOFER CITES THE TALMUD IN SANHEDRIN (47A) WHICH STATES THAT A JEW WHO IS KILLED BY GENTILES IS CALLED HOLY (KADOSH) EVEN IF HE WAS WICKED. (TESHUVOT CHATAM SOFER, YOREH DE'AH 333) THIS IS CERTAINLY TRUE OF TODAY'S PIONEERS WHO RISK THEIR LIVES FOR THE SAKE OF OUR LAND. IS THERE ANY DOUBT THAT THEY ARE DESTINED FOR THE WORLD TO COME [OLAM HABA]?! IS THIS NOT A CLEAR TESTIMONY THAT EVEN THOUGH THEY DO NOT "SEE" THEIR INNER JEWISH SOULS "SEE" AND YEARN TO RETURN TO THEIR ROOTS?

THE SIGNS OF REDEMPTION ARE APPEARING ALREADY

Our Sages declare, "He who dwells in Eretz Israel is like one who has a G-d (Ketuvot 110b). That is to say, even if he does not know and understand how to seek G-d, his inner soul feels the need to do so. The words, "is like one," allude to this. That is, he has a G-d even if his conduct does not show it. Therefore, since today's pioneers seek out Eretz Israel, they are included in the verse: "And they will seek out Hashem their G-d and David their king" (Hoshea 3:5). For, the return to Eretz Israel will lead to the establishment of the Davidic Dynasty and the building of the Beit ha Mikdash.

The Sifrei Zuta states

R. Shimon said: "Come and see how beloved is Eretz Israel. A person who goes off to war runs and runs, but when he reaches the battlefield, his legs buckle under. This did not happen to the Jewish people. When they approached Eretz Israel their legs lifted them up, and they said to one another, 'We are unworthy to enter Eretz Israel even if we die there immediately, for we are entering the place which Hashem promised our forefathers to give to us.'" (Sifrei Zuta, BeHa'alotcha 33, on Bamidbar 10:33)

The great man, our brilliant and righteous master, R. R. Akiva Yosef Schlessinger, author of Lev Halvri, and son-in-Law of the brilliant and righteous R. Hillel of Kalamoya Z"l, concurs with this in his wondrous work, Tosafot Ben Yechiel, a commentary on Tana De Vei Eliyahu. Tana De Vei Eliyahu states: "Blessed is the Omnipresent, blessed is He and blessed is His name, for He is entirely impartial. Since Israel wept without cause [in

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the episode of the spies], He decreed upon them eternal weeping” (Eliyahu Rabba 8:3-4).

R. Akiva Yosef comments: Indeed, there is no wisdom, counsel, or understanding against Hashem. (Based on Mishle 21:30.) All of their wise and logical arguments against Eretz Israel are null and void, like the counsel of the spies. We must simply do the will of our Creator in accordance with His commandments. For Hashem has chosen Zion (Tehillim 132:13), and the Land is exceedingly good (Bamidbar 14:7), both materially and spiritually. He who keeps the commandment will know no evil (Kohelet 8:5), since he enters there [Eretz Israel] "like Hashem my G-d commanded me (Based on Devarim 4:5.). "I will keep the word of the King of kings (Based on Kohelet 8:2.) The Holy One Blessed be He.

R. ABBA SAID, "THERE IS NO CLEARER SIGN OF THE END OF DAYS THAN THIS VERSE: BUT YOU, O MOUNTAINS OF ISRAEL, WILL GIVE FORTH YOUR BRANCHES AND YIELD YOUR FRUIT TO MY PEOPLE ISRAEL, FOR THEY ARE SOON TO COME (YECHEZKEL 36:8)." (SANHEDRIN 98A) RASHI EXPLAINS, "WHEN ERETZ ISRAEL GIVES FORTH ITS FRUIT IN ABUNDANCE THE END WILL BE NEAR, AND THERE IS NO CLEARER [SIGN OF THE END OF DAYS." THIS FULLY CONCURS WITH OUR HOLY MASTER WHO ASSERTS THAT THE LAND WILL BE REBUILT AND GIVE FORTH ITS FRUIT ABUNDANTLY BEFORE THE END OF DAYS, AND THAT THIS IS A SIGN OF THE IMMINENT REDEMPTION.

Why did the Men of the Great Assembly see fit to place the blessing for the ingathering of the exiles after the blessing of the years? Because it is written, But you, O mountains of Israel, will give forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are soon to come. (Megillah 17b) Rashi explains, "This verse indicates that the ingathering of the exiles will occur when the years are blessed." That is to say, the Men of the Great Assembly established the blessing of "Sound the great shofar for our freedom and raise a banner to gather our exiles" after the blessing of the years which reads, "Bless for us...all the varieties of its crops, for goodness." They did so because this is how it is going to be in the future when the redeemer arrives, speedily in our days.

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THE SACRED WORDS OF THE MAHARAL OF PRAGUE, IN GEVUROT HASHEM (GEVUROT HASHEM 18) , SHED LIGHT ON CURRENT EVENTS IN ERETZ ISRAEL:

YOU MUST UNDERSTAND...THAT THE HOLY KINGDOM OF ISRAEL, WHICH HAS AN INHERENT, DIVINE STATUS, SPROUTS FROM AN UNSANCTIFIED KINGDOM. FOR, THIS BEFITS A KINGDOM WHICH HAS A DIVINE AND INHERENT NATURE. THE VERSE, I BROUGHT FORTH FIRE FROM WITHIN YOU (YECHEZKEL 28:18), ALLUDES TO THIS. SANCTITY, WHICH IS COMPARED TO THE FINENESS OF FIRE, WILL ARISE FROM THE PROFANE AND CONSUME EVERYTHING. SIMILARLY, AN UNRIPE FRUIT STAYS IN ITS PEEL, BUT WHEN THE FRUIT GROWS AND RIPENS THE PEEL DECAYS. FOR, ANYTHING WHICH HAS AN INHERENT STATUS SPROUTS FROM SOMETHING EXTERNAL TO IT. THIS IS WHY MOSHE RABBEINU A"H GREW UP IN PHARAOH'S HOUSE - SO THAT HIS SACRED AND GODLY STATUS COULD COME FROM THE MUNDANE. HAD THIS NOT OCCURRED, HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN INHERENTLY 'SEPARATE' (NIVDAL). UNDERSTAND THIS FOR IT IS VERY DEEP, AND IT IS FAMILIAR TO THOSE WHO KNOW ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL [LIT., 'SEPARATE'] THINGS FROM MATERIAL THINGS. SIMILARLY, MASHIACH SITS IN ROME.

Even though today's workers in Eretz Israel are extremely materialistic, their actions will lead to great spiritual heights. We must not alienate them nor hinder them from their work, G-d forbid. On the contrary, we must bring them near in any possible way and assist them. For it is G-d's will that events proceed specifically in this fashion. The essence and foundation of this process originate in the pinnacle of holiness. Its purpose is to produce from these laborers something awesome and lofty: the essence of our grand future and the elevation of our holy nation's pride, about which all of our holy prophets prophesied.

All of the great rabbis mentioned above agree that great things must come from the mundane, after which they ascend higher and higher. In this way, they enter the world unexpectedly and sneak away from the accusers.

RABBI TEICHTEL VIEW ON THEODORE HERZL

Therefore, Hashem through His profound counsel, designated one man to propose this project of acquiring and building the Holy Land. This man did not know the difference between his right and his left in terms of Judaism.

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All of his assistants were equally ignorant. When the Attribute of Justice and the evil forces saw this movement - those who initiated it, those who advocated it, and those who carried out the work they were not afraid at all. They assumed that these builders were part of their camp: "What could they possibly do in the Land? They are on our side, not our enemies'." Therefore, they did not hinder this project. Meanwhile, the process began and the evil forces can no longer nullify it, as the divine visitation will grow greater and greater.

[I already explained that] the original light of Mashiach developed in ugly wrappings and from the evil forces themselves. The same thing happened today during the era of the "footsteps of Mashiach." The time came for Mashiach to arrive, but the Land needed to be prepared and rebuilt. Therefore, Hashem was compelled to steal away from the evil forces and destroy their strength using their own tactics, so He chose unworthy men. It was all part of the Omniscient's plan. This, too, is clear and true...

[Note of compiler: Herzl's grandfather Simon Loeb Herzl was a close student of Rabbi Yehuda Chai Alkalai, a Sephardic Rabbi and a contemporary of Rav Kalischer, both initiated the religious move to colonize and develop Eretz Israel in the 19th century. So the effort of Rabbi Alkalai gave its fruits through Simon Herzl's grandson Theodore]

Based on this we can answer the query raised by the Assembly of Israel (Kenesset Israel), as stated in the Midrash: My Beloved sent forth His hand through the hole (Shir HaShirim 5:4). (Matnot Kehunah explains: "He sent forth His hand through the hole to perform miracles through Cyrus.") R. Abba bar Kahana said, "What is the nature of a hole? Is it not a place where insects swarm?! [The explanation is as follows]. The Assembly of Israel enacted it in order to avoid opposition. "You have said, My innards stirred for Him, I have also said, My innards My innards, I tremble." That is to say, "It hurts Me, as well, to have a Gentile initiate the building. But, what can I do? I cannot do it through a Tzaddik because of the accuser." In any event, this Midrash is a clear proof for today's situation. The true G-d indeed knows how to arrange circumstances.

The Magen Avraham, in his work Zayit Ra'anan (Yalkut Shimoni Nasso) , explains: The Talmud states that the Holy One Blessed be He regrets this

oath (Chagigah 5b). He says, "As long as the anger - that is, the accuser - stands in My way, they cannot enter the [Land of] rest. When the anger subsides, however, they will enter the Land of rest" From this we learn that Hashem gave the accuser permission [To interfere] until the nullifier [The accuser himself] is abolished. Thus since the evil forces have permission to accuse, Hashem must conceal this matter from them, as I have written.

WE MUST NOT FOLLOW THE WAYS OF THE SPIES WHO DESPISED THE LAND

Tana DeVei Eliyahu comments on the verse to guard the way to the tree of life (Bereishit 3:24): To guard the way - this refers to the "way of the land" (derech eretz); to the tree of life, for the "way of the land" precedes the tree of life. The tree of life refers to Torah, as it says, It is a tree of life for those who grasp it (Mishle 3:18). (Eliyahu Rabba 1:2)

The above-mentioned brilliant Tzaddik, R. Akiva Yosef Schlessinger (Tosafot Ben Yechiel on Eliyahu Rabba 1:2, s.v. lishmor), explains: This requires clarification. Which "way of the land" is he referring to? The answer is based on the Yalkut's statement: "'For they were banished from the Land' - this refers to Eretz Israel." Tana DeVei Eliyahu is informing us not to...follow the ways of the spies who despised the Land. They said that Torah precedes Eretz Israel. Therefore, they did not want to enter the Land. They preferred to stay in the desert and learn Torah from Moshe Rabbeinu, for the Torah was only given to those who ate the Manna. Thus, Eliyahu tells us that "the way of the Land" - that is, the way that leads to the Land of Israel- comes before Torah. Accordingly, the Midrash states, "Dwelling in Eretz Israel outweighs the entire Torah" (Sifrei, Re'eh 28, on Devarim 12:29)

R. Schlessinger also writes (Tosafot Ben Yechiel on Eliyahu Rabba 1:1) that the reason the spies failed and were unwilling to enter Eretz Israel is because they were afraid of the transgressions committed there, which are more serious than those committed outside the Land. This was a sin on their part, for they were like the gentile nations who refused to accept the yoke of Torah for the same reason. Israel, on the other hand, said, We will do and we will listen (Shemot 24:7) for they had great trust in G-d; and Hashem assists those who come to be purified (Shabbat 104a)

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The Radak writes (Radak, Tehillim 146:3) Salvation is solely in the hands of Hashem, and He brings it about through mortals, as He did with Cyrus during the Babylonian exile. In the future, as well, Hashem will bring Israel's redemption through gentile kings, by inspiring them to set the Jews free

The Midrash states (Eicha Rabba I:41): "R. Abba bar Kahana said, 'If you see benches filled with Babylonians in Eretz Israel, anticipate the footsteps of Mashiach. Why? For, it says, He spread a net for my feet (Eichah I:13)

The Torah Temimah (Eicha I:141) writes: "If you see benches filled with Babylonians in Eretz Israel" means, if you see many Diaspora Jews ascending from Babylonia to Eretz Israel, it is a sign that the Holy One Blessed be He calculated the end of days.

Now, in recent years thousands and tens of thousands of our Jewish brethren have flowed into Eretz Israel from all corners of the Diaspora. This is certainly a sign of the beginning of redemption.

HASHEM SENDS PUNISHMENTS IN ORDER TO AFFLICT US AND FORCE US TO DO TESHUVAH

The following is a quote from the introduction to Ezrat Kohanim on Tractate Middot: Let us contemplate, deliberate, and investigate: Perhaps all of the hardships, evil afflictions, and misfortunes that befall us bang like a hammer on the doors of our hearts to arouse and awaken us from our indolent sleep. They replace the prophets' utterances in days of old, as Chazal state in the holy books: Today, afflictions and evil diseases fulfill the mission of rebuke that the prophets used to fulfill (when prophecy was prevalent in Israel). I think this is stated in the Zohar (Keddoshim).

I found this stated explicitly in the Midrash: The Holy One Blessed be He said to the prophets: "If you do not fulfill My mission, do you think that I have no [other] messengers?! Land has the advantage over everything (Kohelet 5:8). I will achieve My mission even through a snake, a scorpion, or a frog." This can be proven, because were it not for the hornet, how would the Holy One Blessed be He have punished the Amorites? Were it not for the frog, how would He have punished the Egyptians? Therefore, it says, Behold I will strike all your borders with frogs (Shemot 7:27). What

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does this mean? The Holy One Blessed be He said, "Behold, I will push the plagues upon you" (Shemot Rabba 10:1-2)

I will prove the absolute clarity and truth of this concept from the words of our sacred seers. Notice how our holy prophets aroused the hearts of our ancestors in a similar fashion at the beginning of the Second Temple era. Our ancestors stopped building the Temple because the enemies of Judah and Yerushalaim halted them by force and power.' So the prophets aroused them in the name of Hashem, saying, Is this a time for you, yourselves, to dwell in your roofed houses while this House lies in ruins?... Consider your ways... You have sown much, but bring in little; [you] eat without being satiated... Why is this? says Hashem of Hosts. Because of My House which lies in ruins, and you run, each man to his own house. Therefore, because of you, the heavens withheld their dew, and the Land withheld its produce. I called for a drought upon the Land (Chaggai 1:4-11, see Rashi).

Once they became inspired to build the Temple, the prophet said, Now, consider [what happened] from this day and beforehand, before a stone was laid upon a stone in Hashem's sanctuary. When they would come to a [grain] heap of twenty [measures], there were only ten... From this day on, I [G-d] will bless [you] (ibid. 2:15-19). That is to say, notice the difference between the past and the present, and realize that your pain and suffering will turn into blessings because you now build the Temple. In reality, they were not only blessed physically, but also spiritually. They advanced to great heights and transformed everything from bad to good, as is well known. When they first came to Eretz Israel they were on a lower level, for the "craftsmen and smiths" remained in Babylonia.

After a few years, however, this changed, and people sought Torah only from Zion. All this occurred because of the sanctity of the Mikdash (Temple). See Pirkei Heichalot' which describes their lofty status.

We also find that the inhabitants of Beit Shemesh were severely punished because they did not search for the Holy Ark when it was in the hands of the Philistines (Sotah 35a-b; Bamidbar Rabba 5:9). Yefeh To'ar HaKatzar explains that they were punished, [and no one else], because their city was the closest to the Philistines. The Midrash states, "The Holy One Blessed be He said, 'If one of them lost a chicken, he would search for it

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extensively. But, My Ark is in the fields of the Philistines for seven months and they pay no attention... I will attend to it" (Bereshit Rabba 54:4). Now, all of this was said of the Ark itself, without the Tablets (as will be explained below). Certainly, then, we must search for the entire Beit HaMikdash, with the Tablets and all of its holy vessels.

THOSE WHO WENT UP FROM BABEL TO ISRAEL WERE MOSTLY OF LOW LEVEL YET THEY ARE PRAISEWORTHY FOR MAKING ALIYAH

I will add to the words of the brilliant author of Ezrat Kohanim. The immigrants were not simply on a lower level, as he put it, but they were extremely low and wicked. The Radak writes: Most of the people who ascended from Babylonia performed improper deeds. They married gentile women, as [is evident] from Ezra and Malachi's admonition — "He has married the daughter of a foreign G-d" (Malachi 2:11); they desecrated the Shabbat; and [sinned] in other areas, as is written in the book of Ezra.'

Ezra states this explicitly: The officers approached me saying, "The people of Israel, the Kohanim, and the Levi'im have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, like their abominations to the Canaanites (Ezra 9:1). Metzudat David explains, "They were still performing the abominations of the Canaanites."

These are the ones who went up from Tel-Melach (Pillar of salt)... They could not tell their father's house and their seed, whether they were from Israel (Ezra 2:59). The Talmud comments, "Tel Melach refers to people who acted like [the people of] Sedom, which turned into a pillar of salt" (Kiddushin 70a). Rashi explains, "[The people of] Sedom were adulterous, as it says, wicked and sinful (BeReshit 13:13) - wicked with their bodies and sinful with their money." This demonstrates how wicked the people really were.

The Sforno writes that the Holy One Blessed be He complained to Chaggai, Zechariah, and Malachi about the Jews who remained in Babylonia and failed to ascend to Eretz Israel. He explained to them that since the righteous men stayed in Babylonia and only the wicked ones came, He was unable to let His Shechinah rest among them. Therefore, He requested that they try to convince the righteous men to ascend to Eretz Israel so that He can let His Shechinah rest there.'

R. Yosef Albo writes in Sefer Halkarim, "Only a small number ascended with Ezra. The great ones (gedolim), the wise men, and the nobility of Israel

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remained in Babylonia.” Rashi writes, “The majority remained in Babylonia.” That is to say, the majority both quantitatively and qualitatively.

THE AUTHOR (EZ RAT KOHANIM) WONDROUSLY EXPLAINS THAT EVERY JEW MUST STRIVE TO COME TO ERETZ ISRAEL, SO THAT HE CAN MERIT TO BUILD THE BEIT HAMIKDASH. HE WRITES THAT THE [STORY OF] CREATION ALLUDES TO THE FACT THAT THIS IS ISRAEL'S MAIN PRAYER AND HOPE. CHAZAL COMMENT ON THE VERSE “NO PLANT OF THE FIELD WAS YET ON THE EARTH” (BERESHIT 2:5): “ALL OF ISRAEL'S PRAYERS ARE FOR THE BEIT HAMIKDASH. O MASTER, WHEN WILL THE BEIT HAMIKDASH BE BUILT” (BERESHIT RABBA 13:2). CHAZAL FURTHER STATE THAT THE HOLY ONE HIMSELF HAS PRAYED FOR THE BUILDING OF THE BEIT HAMIKDASH SINCE THE DAYS OF AVRAHAM, AND EVEN BEFORE (BERESHIT RABBA 56:10).

Anyone who neglects this will be punished severely, as Ezrat Kohanim asserts. This is why we have suffered so many hardships of late. We have disregarded Eretz Israel, over which Hashem our G-d constantly watches, forever and ever. We have also disgraced and scorned its builders. If we do not change our way of thinking (G-d forbid), our troubles will increase. All of the troubles and evil afflictions that have befallen us are in place of the prophets' utterances. They speak to us, rebuke us, awaken us from our idle sleep, and cause us to aspire to return to our Holy Land...

We also find this in Midrash Tanchuma regarding Elimelech and his sons: They dwelt there [Moav] about ten years (Ruth 1:4). All of these years, the Holy One Blessed be He gave them warnings, perhaps they will repent and return to Eretz Israel. When they did not repent, He began to smite their cattle and camels. When they [still] did not realize that they must repent, they died immediately. (Tanchuma, BeHar 3)

Behold, G-d's warnings were not delivered by prophets (for we do not find that prophets went to them in Moav). Rather, the afflictions and mishaps that befell them took the place of the prophets to arouse them to repent. Now, in what way were they to repent? Only by returning to Eretz Israel. But, since they did not repent, and they did not even realize that they needed to repent, they were punished with loss of property and, eventually,

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death (may the Merciful One protect us). The Midrash also says that a number of times Yaakov Avinu did not understand why he was being punished, and it was because he did not hurry to return to the Land of his forefathers. Now, it is well known that all of Yaakov Avinu's experiences reflect what will happen to his descendants at the end of days. Therefore, Chazal were referring to us when they said these things, for we too do not understand why we are being punished so frequently. It is because we do not hurry to return to the Land of our forefathers.

THE ENTIRE NATION WOULD DISSOLVE IF THE JEWISH PEOPLE WOULD CEASE TO EXIST IN ERETZ ISRAEL

The Rambam writes in Sefer HaMitzvot, Positive Commandments 153 I will explain further. Let us suppose, for example, that there would be no Jews living in Eretz Israel - G-d forbid that He should do such a thing, for He has promised not to destroy the remnants of the nation completely. [Let us suppose] also that there would be no Jewish court (beit din) there, and that there would be no beit din in the Diaspora which was ordained in Eretz Israel. [Under these circumstances], our calculations would not help us at all. For we may not calculate the months or establish leap years in the Diaspora, unless we fulfill the conditions mentioned above. For, out of Zion the Torah will go forth (Yeshayah 2:3)

I QUOTED THIS IN ITS ENTIRETY BECAUSE IT HELPS US FULLY COMPREHEND THE RAMBAM'S OPINION. HE CONSIDERS THE SETTLEMENT OF OUR HOLY LAND AN ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION [OF OUR FAITH]. HIS STATEMENT TEACHES THAT THE EXISTENCE OF THE ENTIRE HOLY NATION IS BOUND TO THE SETTLEMENT OF THE LAND TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT THE ENTIRE NATION WOULD DISSOLVE IF THE JEWISH PEOPLE WOULD CEASE TO EXIST IN ERETZ ISRAEL, G-D FORBID.

The commentator on the Rambam's Hilchot Kiddush HaChodesh" quotes him as follows: "If, G-d forbid, the Jews would perish from Eretz Israel - may Hashem be blessed because He has promised us in the Torah not to destroy this nation completely." Thus, he, too, understands the Rambam to mean that the Jewish people would be destroyed, G-d forbid, if they would not dwell in Eretz Israel. This concept is utterly astounding!

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I will now strengthen this position with the words of our mentor, the Chatam Sofer (Teshuvot Chatam Sofer, Orach Chayim 203). He also cites the Rambam's comments in Hilchot Kiddush HaChodesh and explains: Even though Hillel and his colleagues sanctified all of the months and years until the coming of Mashiach, this will not help unless one Jew lives in Eretz Israel. Hillel and his colleagues - the last men to receive traditional ordination calculated and sanctified [the months and years] for this one Jew, and the sanctity emanates from there [Eretz Israel] to all of Israel. However, if the settlement in Eretz Israel would cease to exist in our days (G-d forbid), this sanctification (kiddush) would become null and void, and most of the mitzvot would dissolve, G-d forbid. Therefore, we must support [Jewish] settlement [in the Land] with all of our strength.

THE BRILLIANT AUTHOR OF S'DEI CHEMED (MA'ARECHET ERETZ ISRAEL, COLLECTION OF LAWS, P. 680) COMMENTS ON THIS: THE CHATAM SOFER DOES NOT ASSERT THAT WE MUST STRENGTHEN THE SETTLEMENT OF ERETZ ISRAEL IN ORDER TO HELP THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND [FULFILL] THE MITZVAH OF YISHUV ERETZ ISRAEL. RATHER, WE MUST DO SO FOR OURSELVES, SO THAT WE CAN FULFILL THE WORDS OF THE TORAH. FOR IF JEWS WOULD NOT LIVE THERE, THE TORAH WOULD VANISH, G-D FORBID, AS THE RAMBAM WRITES IN HILCHOT KIDDUSH HACHODESH...

Our master, the Chida, concurs in Yosef Ometz (Section 19): "I will further reveal that the Rambam writes in Hilchot Kiddush HaChodesh that...we rely on the calculations and fixings of the inhabitants of Eretz Israel... He also states in Sefer HaMitzvot that if, G-d forbid, there would be no Jews [in Eretz Israel] our calculations would be meaningless... Therefore, all Diaspora Jews are obligated to ensure that there are Jews in Eretz Israel, for if not, [the Diaspora Jews] would forget about the new months and holidays."

“I HATE ALL BABYLONIANS, BECAUSE THEY DID NOT ASCEND TO ERETZ ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF EZRA”

REISH LAKISH SAID TO RABBA BAR BAR CHANAH, "BY G-D, I HATE YOU. (RASHI EXPLAINS: 'I HATE...ALL BABYLONIANS, BECAUSE

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THEY DID NOT ASCEND TO ERETZ ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF EZRA. THEY PREVENTED THE SHECHINAH FROM RETURNING TO REST UPON THE SECOND TEMPLE.') IT IS THUS WRITTEN, IF SHE BE A WALL, WE WILL BUILD UPON HER A BATTLEMENT OF SILVER; AND IF SHE BE A DOOR, WE WILL ENCLOSE HER WITH A CEDAR BOARD (SHIR HASHIRIM 8:9): HAD YOU MADE YOURSELVES LIKE A WALL AND ASCENDED ALL TOGETHER TO ERETZ ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF EZRA, YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPARED TO SILVER WHICH DOES NOT DECAY (AND THE REDEMPTION WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETE). NOW THAT YOU WENT UP LIKE DOORS, YOU WERE COMPARED TO CEDAR WHICH DECAYS (MEANING, THE EDIFICE WAS DESTROYED)." (YOMA 9B)

The Ya'avetz explains [the homiletic passage in which Eliyahu] appears to R. Chiya as a fiery bear (Bava Metzia 85b): For he [the angelic minister of Persia, who appears as a bear] prosecutes against the Babylonian Jews who did not ascend when Cyrus, king of Persia, gave them permission to do so. Had they ascended during that divine visitation, [their efforts] would not have decayed and the redemption would have been complete... Therefore, there is room to prosecute, because the Babylonians caused the exile to be lengthened.

Thus, even at the time of R. Chiya (who lived after the destruction), the prosecutor prosecuted because many Jews did not ascend when Cyrus granted permission.

The Midrash comments on the verse If she be a wall (Shir HaShirim 8:9): Had Israel ascended from Babylonia as a wall, the Second Temple would not have been destroyed. R. Ze'ira went to the marketplace to buy some goods. The seller said to him, "You are not leaving here, you Babylonian whose ancestors destroyed the Belt HaMikdash!" R. Ze'ira wondered, "Are my ancestors any different than his?" He entered the study hall and heard the voice of R. Shilah, who was sitting and expounding, "If she be a wall: Had Israel ascended from the Diaspora as a wall, the Second Temple would not have been destroyed." [Upon hearing this], R. Ze'ira said to himself, "That ignorant Jew taught me well." (Shir HaShirm Rabba 8:9:3)

Responsa Chavot Ya'ir explains that when R Zeira called someone a "stupid Babylonian" because of his love for Eretz Israel, he had this very idea in mind.'

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THUS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THIS HATRED [AGAINST BABYLONIAN JEWS] FOR NOT RETURNING TO ERETZ ISRAEL WITH EZRA, CONTINUED FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION, THE OTHER JEWS COULD NOT FORGIVE THEM FOR THIS, SO MUCH SO THAT EVEN A SIMPLE, IGNORANT JEW DID NOT WANT TO SELL HIS GOODS TO A BABYLONIAN JEW, SAYING THAT HIS ANCESTORS DESTROYED OUR CITY AND DESOLATED OUR BELT HAMIKDASH.

Now, according to the brilliant and holy Minchat Elazar, who holds that the future redemption will come only through manifest miracles and not with the permission of the kings, what was the sin of Ezra's generation? Why should there be such a long-lasting, pent-up hatred for them? Surely, the Jews of Babylonia did not want to be redeemed by Cyrus. They wanted to be redeemed by the Holy One Blessed be He Himself, with manifest and glorious miracles. [So, what was their sin?] We are forced to say, "Why do you involve yourself with the Merciful One's hidden matters?!" (Berachot 10a). Perhaps, the Holy One Blessed be He wanted it to unfold specifically in that manner.

The same applies to our situation. If the kings grant us permission to return to our Land, this is the Creator's will. It will develop into what should have developed at the time of Cyrus, had all the Jews returned. All we have to do is see to it that everyone returns. Then, we will attain our heart's desire, the final redemption, with G-d's help. This is an irrefutable proof

This explains King David's statement to Hashem (when he was collecting donations for the building of the Beit HaMikdash), "And now, I have seen Your people, who are present here, offering donations to You with joy" (I Divrei HaYamim 29:17). Rashi comments: Who are present here: This refers to those who are mentioned above, David assembled all the princes of Israel... (ibid. 28:l). But, the wealthy Jews of each city are not present here. Therefore, O Master of the Universe, the donation is humble. For, if the rest of Israel were here, the donation would be greater.

THIS IS A DISGRACE TO OUR NATION'S WEALTHY INDIVIDUALS. THEY CONTINUALLY REFRAIN FROM DONATING EVEN TO THE LOFTIEST CAUSES, LIKE BUILDING THE BEIT HAMIKDASH. THIS IS TRUE UNTIL THIS VERY DAY. THUS, DAVID CRITICIZED THE WEALTHY JEWS FOR

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STAYING AT HOME AND FAILING TO DONATE. AS A RESULT OF THIS, NOT EVERY JEW HAD A SHARE IN THE BEIT HAMIKDASH AND IT DID NOT ENDURE; IT WAS NOT "LIKE SILVER WHICH DOES NOT DECAY" (YOMA 9B).

The Tosefta also describes how great Aliyah is when all of Klal Israel participate in it: "About forty thousand soldiers (of Reuven and Gad) passed before Hashem for the battle" (Yehoshua 4:13). It also says, "Hashem has delivered the entire Land into our hands" (ibid. 2:24). Do you really think that Israel conquers the Land before the Omnipresent? Rather, when all the Jews live in the Land, it is conquered; when they do not all live in the Land, it is not conquered. (Tosefta, Avodah Zarah 5:2)

The founders of the movement to return to and settle in our Holy Land, along with their comrades, are very weak in our holy religion (due to our numerous sins). They have broken virtually all ties with it. Nevertheless, we notice that they refuse to choose any plot of land, other than our forefathers' Land, to turn into a settlement. They sacrifice themselves for the Holy Land, as numerous incidents demonstrate. Many of these simpletons endangered their lives for it, and countless sacrifices have been offered on the altar of this sacred soil. May G-d remember this for their benefit.

RETURNING TO ERETZ ISRAEL IS THE SAME THING AS SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF HASHEM

R. Shimon ben Menassiya said, "Israel will not be shown a good sign until they return and seek out these three things. Accordingly, it says, Afterwards, the Children of Israel will return and seek out Hashem their G-d - this refers to the kingdom of Heaven and David their king - according to its simple meaning and they will tremble for Hashem and His goodness - this refers to the Beit HaMikdash, as it says, This good mountain and the Lebanon (Devarim 3:25)" (Yalkut Shimoni 2:106).

R. Alkalay comments on this (Minchat Yehudah, sec. 18, p. 237). Since he said that Israel will not see a good sign until they seek out those three things, we certainly have a great obligation to devote ourselves to them. "Afterwards, the Children of Israel will return and seek out Hashem - this refers to the kingdom of Heaven": The holy Zohar states, "The Holy One

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Blessed be He is called 'King' only in Eretz Israel" (Zohar 3:276a). Thus, the first act of repentance that Israel will do in the end of days will be to seek out the kingdom of Heaven. That is, they will return to Eretz Israel so that the Holy One Blessed be He can be called 'King.' This is the meaning of And seek out Hashem their G-d, for "He who dwells outside of the Land is like one who has no G-d" (Ketuvot 110b).

I heard from the holy lips of the great rabbi, the "fortress and tower," R. Yehudah Bibas, that this explains the verse "Return to Me and I will return to you" (Malachi 3:7). That is to say, Israel will return and find shelter with G-d in Eretz Israel, and then He will cause His Shechinah to rest among us...

The Zohar similarly states: "R. Chiya said, 'The nations will rule over Israel for only one day, a day of the Holy One Blessed be He, which is a thousand years. It is thus written, He has made me desolate, faint throughout the day (Eichah 1:13), one day and no longer.' R. Yosi said, 'If [the Jews] are subjugated longer than this, it is not because of the King's decree, but because they refuse to return towards Him " (Zohar 2:17a).

...Now, it is well known that the mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Israel is equal to the entire Torah (Sifrei, Re'eh 28). It is also well known that many Jews presently ascend to Eretz Israel with genuine effort and self-sacrifice. Furthermore, [we already explained that] by performing one of the preeminent mitzvot, the Jews are considered penitents and deserve redemption. Therefore, the Rambam's statement - "Israel will only be redeemed through repentance, and the Torah has already promised that Israel will repent...and immediately be redeemed" - has come to fruition. That is to say, the very fact that the Jews yearn to return to Eretz Israel, which is a preeminent mitzvah, is their repentance, and it makes them worthy of seeing the final redemption (with G-d's help). Their yearning stems from Hashem's promise to stir their hearts to repentance at the end of their exile. For, I stated above that the Holy One Blessed be He will place in their hearts the desire and yearning to return to Eretz Israel. This itself will be their repentance, as Hoshea the prophet says, Afterwards, the Children of Israel will seek out Hashem their G-d. "This refers to the kingdom of Heaven," [meaning, they will strive] to return to Eretz Israel so that the Holy One Blessed be He can be called "King."

THE REDEMPTION HAS TO BE AWAKENED FROM BELOW

Minchat Yehudah also explains that the verse, And they will seek out Hashem their G-d (Hoshea 3:5), does not merely imply entreaty through prayer, rather: This great matter requires us to entreat the kings of the earth... The Holy One Blessed be He will motivate them to set us free and allow us to return to our possession and our forefathers' inheritance... Israel will not be shown a good sign until they entreat and create an opening like the tip of a needle, and then the Holy One Blessed be He will create an opening like the entrance to a hallway. The Torah also promises, From there [exile] you will seek Hashem, your G-d, and you will find Him (Devarim 4:29).

The author of Yefeh To'ar concurs: "Mashiach is not going to come to gather the exiles; he is not needed for that. Hashem Who scattered Israel will gather them, as it says, "He will raise a banner for the nations and assemble the outcasts of Israel" (Yeshayah 11:12), and "They will bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to Hashem" (ibid. 66:20). Hashem will do these things in the way of the world." (Yefeh To'ar, Bereshit Rabba 98:14:9, s.v. im kein lamah)

This explains events that you witness today. Do not be so quick to conclude that we should sit back and do nothing about redemption, and that we should wait for Mashiach to come and carry us off on the wings of eagles to our Land and our inheritance. Many of our fellow Jews, even rabbis and gedolei Torah, imagine that the redemption will occur in this way. One great rabbi [even] preached in public that we must not act at all, not even to build and settle the Land. Rather, we must wait for Mashiach to swoop down and carry us to Eretz Israel on clouds. He came to this conclusion because he did not delve deeply into this halachah, which is one of the deepest and most obscure halachot. He who does not delve deeply into it has no grasp on it whatsoever.

I WILL NOW CITE A PROOF FOR THIS FROM A "TANA," THE RIGHTEOUS KABBALIST, THE SEFARDIC SCHOLAR (RABBI YEHUDA ALKALAI IN MINCHAT YEHUDA SEC 34 P 254) MENTIONED ABOVE:

DO NOT ENTERTAIN THE THOUGHT THAT THE END AND THE REDEMPTION... AND THE COMING OF MASHIACH ARE THE SAME THING,

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AND THAT THEY WILL ALL OCCUR SIMULTANEOUSLY, IN ONE DAY. ACTUALLY, THEY ARE SEPARATE THINGS. EACH ONE HAS ITS OWN TIME AND BOUNDARY, A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE. WE THUS SAY IN SELICHOT, "BRING THE APPOINTED TIME (KETZ) OF REDEMPTION NEAR." ITS BEGINNING IS MINUTE AND UNDETECTABLE, AS THE YERUSHALMI STATES: "R. CHIYA AND R. SHIMON, THE SON OF REBBE, WERE WALKING IN KARITZTA (NAME OF A PLACE). THEY SAW THE GLIMMERING OF THE MORNING STAR. R. CHIYA SAID TO R. SHIMON: 'SO IS THE REDEMPTION OF ISRAEL- AT FIRST LITTLE BY LITTLE, [BUT] AS IT PROGRESSES, IT GROWS GREATER AND GREATER.' WHY SO? WHEN I SIT IN DARKNESS, HASHEM IS A LIGHT UNTO ME (MICHAH 7:8)" BERACHOT I:I [4B])HE WHO SAYS THAT MASHIACH BEN DAVID WILL INITIATE THE REDEMPTION, AS THE LOWLY MASSES ANTICIPATE, IS LIKE SOMEONE WHO SAYS THAT THE SUN WILL RISE BEFORE DAWN. NONSENSE! THE GREAT EVIL THAT ARISES FROM THIS HARMFUL OUTLOOK IS TANGIBLE, AS EXPERIENCE PROVES. IT IS A MITZVAH TO PUBLICIZE THIS MATTER TO THE IGNORANT, AND BLESSED IS HE WHO SANCTIFIES G-D'S NAME AMONG THE MULTITUDES. IN MY OPINION, HE WHO HIDES THIS MATTER, DESECRATES G-D'S NAME IN PRIVATE.

For due to our numerous sins, several simpletons who pinned their hopes on the year 5600 [1840] have opened their mouths without measure and fabricated things that are not so about Hashem and His anointed one." Thus, this wondrous destiny, for which, our sacred ancestors yearned and about which all of the prophets promised, has become a laughing matter (in the eyes of the masses). Woe to the ears that have heard this.

The eyes [i.e., the leaders] of the congregation did this evil thing unintentionally" (G-d forbid [to say otherwise]). Even if the Almighty commands us directly not to speak about the promise of redemption for better or for worse, (nonetheless), it says, It is a time to act for Hashem; they have nullified Your Torah (Tehillim' 119:126). If the Holy One Blessed be He has compassion on the honor of the tzaddikim more than His own honor," certainly the tzaddikim must have compassion on their Master's honor more than their own. They must, therefore, pay no attention to the vain and impetuous ones who put their mouths before their ears. Compassion and forgiveness belong to Hashem our G-d," for I have spoken until now out of the greatness of my grievance and anger, "G-d will bless the man who is zealous for His name and who stops up the mouths

of the liars' when they speak nonsense. All of Israel is commanded to sanctify G-d's name."

We have a tradition, which is familiar to all, of Israel, that Mashiach ben Yosef will precede Mashiach ben David; and the redemption, meaning, the deliverance from the decrees and afflictions that storm upon (Israel) — will precede even him... (Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai in Minchat Yehuda Sec 34 p 254)

THE RAMBAM SAYS THAT JEWS HAVE TO LEARN WARFARE IN ORDER TO DEFEND THE LAND

Letter that our mentor, the Rambam, wrote to the scholars of Marseilles regarding astrology (Iggrot U'Teshuvot LeRambam, Iggrot Shonot, p. 21. 204)

This is what abolished our kingdom, destroyed our Beit HaMikdash, prolonged our exile, and brought us to our present predicament. Our fathers sinned and are no more. For they found many astrology books, followed them, and went astray. They imagined that these wisdoms were glorious and greatly beneficial, and they did not study warfare and land conquest. Instead, they imagined that these wisdoms would help them. Therefore, the prophets called them fools; and they certainly were fools, for they followed vanities which cannot avail nor rescue, for they are vain. (Iggrot U'Teshuvot LeRambam, Iggrot Shonot, p. 21. 204)

Thus, our master, the Rambam, blames our ancestors for the destruction of our Land and our Temple because they did not study warfare and land conquest. Instead, they wasted their time and relied on vanities and nothingness. Now, why did he not blame them for their failure to study Torah and serve G-d properly? The answer must be, because that alone is insufficient. The Ramban writes in many places that we must not rely on miracles. Rather, we must do whatever is humanly possible, and then G-d will send us heavenly assistance. (Ramban: VaYikra 21:17; Bamidbar 1:45, 13:2.)

WE HAVE THE MERIT OF THE PATRIARCHS WHEN WE CHERISH THE LAND AS THEY DID

Why does the Torah mention the merit of the Land alongside the merit of the Patriarchs? Reish Lakish says, "This can be compared to a king who has three sons, and a maidservant who raises them. Whenever the king inquires about his sons he [also] inquires about the woman who raises

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them. Similarly, whenever the Holy One Blessed be He mentions the Patriarchs, He mentions the Land with them, as it says, And I will remember. My covenant with Yaakov, [and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember] and I will remember the Land (VaYikra 26:42)." (VaYikra Rabba 36:5)

Furthermore, I already cited the Midrash on the verse I gave you a desirable Land (Yirmiyah 3:19): "A Land which the fathers of the world desired. Avraham craved it; Yitzchak craved it; and Yaakov craved it" (Tanchuma, Re'eh 8). (The Midrash cites verses to prove this.)

WE CAN NOW EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF OUR [ORIGINAL] VERSE AND MIDRASH. THE TORAH REVEALS TO US THAT HASHEM WILL REMEMBER THE MERIT OF THE PATRIARCHS ONLY IF WE EMULATE THEM BY DESIRING AND CHERISHING THE LAND. IF WE CHERISH, DESIRE, AND CRAVE THE LAND AS THEY DID, HASHEM WILL REMEMBER THEIR MERIT FOR OUR SAKE. THUS, THE VERSE SAYS, AND I WILL REMEMBER MY COVENANT WITH YAAKOV...BUT ONLY ON CONDITION THAT I WILL REMEMBER THE LAND, [MEANING, ONLY IF I SEE] THAT YOU CHERISH THE LAND. THIS ALSO EXPLAINS THE MIDRASH'S STATEMENT: "WHENEVER THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE MENTIONS THE PATRIARCHS, HE MENTIONS THE LAND WITH THEM." EXAMINE THIS CLOSELY, FOR IT IS CLEAR AND TRUE. THE MORE WE CHERISH OUR HOLY LAND, THE MORE WE WILL RECEIVE THE MERIT OF THE PATRIARCHS.

Based on this, you will also realize that the redemption depends solely on our love for the Holy Land. The more we cherish it, the closer the redemption comes. In Even Sheleimah, our mentor, the Gaon of Vilna z"l, writes that the future redemption depends on the merit of the Patriarchs, not repentance (Even Sheleimah 11:9) Accordingly, we say three times a day, "Who remembers the kindnesses of the Patriarchs and Who brings a redeemer to their children's children." Thus, redemption depends on the merit of the Patriarchs, which depends on how much we cherish the Land. Therefore, I am correct that everything depends on the love of the Land. May Hashem place in our hearts the desire to sacrifice ourselves for the sanctity of our Land and build it on its original site, for the honor of His blessed and exalted name. And, may we be worthy of the final redemption speedily in our days. Amen.

THE LAND IS BELOVED BY HASHEM: IF ONLY MY SONS WERE HERE...

The Holy One Blessed be He said: "Eretz Israel is more beloved to Me. than anything. Why? Because I spied it out..." This teaches that there is no love like the love for Eretz Israel. The Holy One Blessed be He said to Moshe: "The Land is beloved to Me, as it says, A Land that Hashem your G-d constantly seeks out (Devarim 11:12); and the people of Israel are beloved to Me, as it says, Rather, because of Hashem's love for you (ibid. 7:8). I will bring the people of Israel, who are beloved to Me, into Eretz Israel, which is beloved to Me, as it says, When you come into the Land of Canaan (Bamidbar 34:2)." (Bamidbar Rabba 23:7)

"If only My children were with Me, even though they anger Me." This is the meaning of the verse, Oh, that I were in the desert in a lodging place of wayfarers (Yirmiyah 9:1). The Holy One Blessed be He said, "If only My children were with Me as they were in the desert when they complained against Me." (Eichah Rabba 3:7)

The House of Israel dwell on their Land and they have defiled it (Yechezkel 36:17): The Holy One Blessed be He said, "If only My children were with Me in Eretz Israel, even though they defile it." (Eichah Rabba 3:7)

IT IS IMPORTANT TO BUILD AND SETTLE THE LAND NO MATTER WHO DOES THIS WORK

I already demonstrated in the foreword to this work that building the Land is very desirable and proper in G-d's eyes, no matter who does it. The most important thing is that the Land should be built up so that people can settle there. At this point, I would like to add another proof from the Midrash: R. Yosi bar Chanina said: "There are four categories with respect to names: There are those whose names are becoming and whose deeds are becoming. There are those whose names are ugly and whose deeds are ugly. There are those whose names are ugly and whose deeds are becoming. And, there are those whose names are becoming and whose deeds are ugly... 'Those whose names are ugly and whose deeds are becoming' refers to the people [who returned from the Babylonian] exile: The children of Bakbuk, the children of Chakufa, the children of Charchur (Ezra 2:51, Nechemyah 7:53). They were worthy to ascend and build the Beit HaMikdash." (Bereshit Rabba 71:3)

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In any event...this demonstrates that the people who returned at the time of the Second Temple were on a low level. Nevertheless, our Sages in the Midrash (above) testify that even though their names were ugly, their deeds were becoming to the Creator of the Universe. Now, anyone who sees these words of Chazal will be astounded. How can the deeds of such people be considered becoming? It is well known that those who returned with Ezra were extremely evil and sinful. The Radak (Malachi 1:1) writes: "Most of the people who ascended from Babylonia performed improper deeds. They married gentile women, as [is evident] from Ezra (Ezra 9) and Malachi's admonition, "He has married the daughter of a foreign G-d" (Malachi 2:11); they desecrated the Shabbat; and [sinned] in other areas, as is written in the book of Ezra".

After seeing all of these sources, how is it possible to say that the deeds of those who ascended with Ezra were becoming, and only their names were ugly? Chazal even use them as the example of "Those whose names are ugly and whose deeds are becoming"! How can it be said about such an evil and deceitful generation that their deeds were becoming? In what way were their deeds comely?! This is utterly perplexing and most astonishing!

THE ALIYA OF OTHERWISE SINNERS MAKE THEIR ACTS ACCEPTABLE IN FRONT OF HASHEM

We are forced to say that their comeliness and beauty was the act of aliyah itself and the fact that they built the Land and the Beit HaMikdash. Hashem was very pleased by this, even though they transgressed practically the entire Torah. Nonetheless, in this one area their deeds were desirable and becoming to G-d. For this reason alone they were worthy to be called "becoming" and to serve as the example of "Those whose names are ugly and whose deeds are becoming." Perhaps this is because the mitzvah of settling Eretz Israel is equal to the entire Torah. Their involvement in this mitzvah tipped the scales so greatly that it could be said of them that their deeds were becoming. In any event, this shows how much the Holy One Blessed be He loves when the Holy Land is built, no matter who does it, even the lowliest Jew... This is an irrefutable proof

You are beautiful, my love, as Tirtzah, comely as Yerushalaim (Shir Ha Shirim 6:4). Rashi explains that this refers to the builders of Yerushalaim and the Temple at the time of Ezra. Behold, the Holy One Blessed be He

Himself called these olim beautiful and comely! Thus, Chazal were correct that the deeds of those who returned from exile were becoming. The act of aliyah and building made them fitting to be called comely

The book of Ezra states that Ezra devoted himself to separating the Jews from their foreign wives [only] twenty years after the building. He cried out, plucked his hair, cursed, and did whatever he did until he succeeded in purifying and cleansing them from their terrible sins. At first, however, at the time of the aliyah, he did nothing about this. He simply gathered and assembled whoever came, no matter who they were, and did not ask about their deeds. He did not distance them, even though he knew quite well of their evil deeds. Instead, he received them with open arms. He knew that the building and settlement effort required plenty of manpower and that the more people that would join, the more complete it would be. And perhaps he knew, through Ruach HaKodesh, that their deeds were becoming and pleasing to Hashem; therefore, he did not inquire about them

THE SELF SACRIFICE OF THE FIRST SETTLERS OF THE LAND IS BELOVED BY HASHEM

Behold, who in our days is noble or arrogant enough to call today's olim "ugly" or "wicked" (G-d forbid)? Who can condemn their actions or denigrate and slander them? With true self-sacrifice they have succeeded in building a flourishing Land. Unwittingly, they have fulfilled the great, positive commandment of You shall possess it and dwell in it (Devarim 17:14, 26:1), with all of its revealed and hidden rectifications, as I proved in the foreword. I say unhesitatingly that their deeds are becoming to the Holy One Blessed be He and their reward is exceedingly great. I only wish that my lot could be with theirs in this matter. We only have to ask them to follow the ways of Hashem from now on, and do everything in the spirit of the Torah, according to the instructions of the gedolim of the generation. We will achieve this, with G-d's help, if we bring them close to us, lovingly and respectfully. The gentle words of the wise will be heard, but not loud noise and yelling. Then, they will subject themselves to the spirit of Torah and fear of G-d, and we will succeed in purifying them, just like Ezra did. He was able to bring the sinners closer to Torah and sanctity because they saw that he befriended them and did not alienate them. This is true and clear to anyone who wants to see the truth.

WE IMITATE HASHEM BY PLANTING TREES IN ERETZ ISRAEL

R. Yehudah ben R. Simon began: You shall follow Hashem your G-d (Devarim 13:5). Is it possible for flesh and blood to follow the Holy One Blessed be He...? Rather, at the beginning of creation the Holy One Blessed be He engaged in planting, as it is written, Hashem G-d planted a garden in Eden (Bereshit 2:8). Similarly, when you enter the Land engage in planting first, as it is written, When you shall come into the Land, and you shall plant (VaYikra 19:23). (VaYikra Rabba 25:3)

On a simple level, this Midrash teaches that the verse, You shall follow Hashem, means that we should imitate G-d's ways...and cultivate the Land first. However, we can add another fitting interpretation based on the above. I already cited from the Kabbalistic work, Tzror HaMor, that Eretz Israel is second only to Hashem Himself. Therefore, we can say that Chazal derive this lesson – that we should plant upon entering the Land - from the very words of the verse You shall follow Hashem your G-d, That is, you shall go to Eretz Israel, which follows Hashem, and build it up so that it can be sanctified with the holiness of. This will happen if you make the Land inhabitable for the Children of Israel by planting, building, and perfecting it immediately when you arrive there... With G-d's help, this explanation is as sweet as honey and illuminates like a radiant light.

WE DERIVE FROM ALL OF THIS THAT WHEN A JEW COMES TO THE HOLY LAND AND WORKS THE SACRED SOIL, BY PLANTING TREES, BUILDING HOUSES, OR DOING ANYTHING THAT IS VITAL FOR ITS SETTLEMENT, HE CAUSES THE LAND TO BECOME SANCTIFIED WITH THE HOLINESS OF G-D'S SACRED NAME. THIS IS TRUE EVEN IF HE HAS NO INTENTION WHATSOEVER TO DO THIS.

WHILE IN EXILE WE NEED ONLY STUDY TORAH, IN ERETZ ISRAEL WE NEED TO WORK TO SETTLE THE LAND AND STUDY TORAH

The Chatam Sofer writes: (Chiddushei Chatam Sofer, Sukkah 36a, s.v. domeh le'kushi): However when we are scattered among the nations of the

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world (due to our numerous sins) the more the world develops, the more divine service deteriorates. Then, R. Yishma'el agrees with R. Shimon bar Yochai (that one should only study Torah and not engage in social welfare). We [in exile] rely on R. Nehurai [who says], "I leave aside all the trades in the world and teach my son only Torah" (Kiddushin 82a). This is true outside the Land, as explained above.

This is what Rava teaches regarding a Kushite etrog. Even if it is not [merely] similar, but a real Kushite - meaning, R. Shimon bar Yochai and his true adherents - nonetheless, "One [the Beraita] refers to us [in Babylonia], and one [the Mishnah] refers to them [in Eretz Israel]." That is to say, for the inhabitants of Babylonia (Chutz LaAretz) it is fitting (to act like R. Shimon bar Yochai and only study Torah...). But, for the inhabitants of Eretz Israel it is pasul, because the people of Israel need to settle Eretz Israel. (Chiddushei Chatam Sofer, Sukkah 36a, s.v. domeh le'kushi)

THESE WORDS ARE UTTERLY ASTOUNDING. OUR MENTOR, THE CHATAM SOFER, VALUES THE WORK OF SETTLING THE LAND SO MUCH THAT HE FORBIDS THE INHABITANTS OF ERETZ ISRAEL TO ACT LIKE R. NEHURAI AND R. SHIMON BAR YOCHAI, [WHO ADVOCATE] STUDYING TORAH EXCLUSIVELY WHILE NEGLECTING THE LAND. INSTEAD, WE MUST ACT LIKE R. YISHMA'EL AND ENGAGE IN YISHUV ERETZ ISRAEL, BECAUSE IT IS A MITZVAH. HE EVEN COMPARES SOMEONE WHO NEGLECTS THIS MITZVAH TO SOMEONE WHO SAYS "I WILL NOT DON TEFILLIN...". THIS IS THE RULING OF ONE OF THE GREATEST POSKIM OF THE LATER GENERATIONS, OUR MENTOR, THE CHATAM SOFER, WHOSE DECISIONS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED LIKE THE TORAH OF MOSHE FROM THE ALMIGHTY.

Who, then, is so noble or arrogant to degrade what our mentor, the Chatam Sofer, values so highly? He even compares working the Land to the daily, positive commandment of donning tefillin. Without the mitzvah of tefillin a Jew is simply not a Jew, and he descends [to purgatory] and does not rise. Therefore, those who degrade the positive commandment of Yishuv Eretz Israel, using fabricated and shaky proofs, should be utterly ashamed. Their words are null and void in comparison to those of our mentor, the Chatam Sofer z"l, and we may disregard them completely.

THE REBBE OF GUR SAID: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TODAY'S OPPORTUNITIES TO ASCEND TO ERETZ ISRAEL

I FOUND THE FOLLOWING IN OSEF MICHTAVIM, A COLLECTION OF LETTERS FROM THE REBBE OF GUR SHLITA: THIS INDEED IS MY OPINION. THE MITZVAH OF YISHUV ERETZ ISRAEL, WHICH OUR HOLY TORAH COMMANDS US, DOES NOT DEPEND ON A SPECIFIC TIME, ONLY ON CAPABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES THEREFORE, WE MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TODAY'S OPPORTUNITIES AND EXERT ALL OF OUR STRENGTHS [FOR THIS MITZVAH]. THE MORE ORTHODOX JEWS THAT ASCEND TO ERETZ ISRAEL, THE GREATER THEIR INFLUENCE WILL BE, AND THIS WILL HELP PRESERVE THE HOLINESS OF THE LAND... IN THIS WAY, ORTHODOX JUDAISM'S INFLUENCE WILL GROW, AND THE SETTLEMENT OF THE HOLY LAND WILL BE FOUNDED ON THE SPIRIT OF OUR HOLY, WRITTEN AND ORAL TORAH.

(OSEF MICHTAVIM (YERUSHALAIM, 5727 [1967]), PP. 75, 77)

YISHUV ERETZ ISRAEL IS A POSITIVE MITZVAH OF THE TORAH

Sefer Chareidim (Mitzvot Asei HaTeluyot B'Eretz Israel, chap. I, sec 15) states, "There is a positive, biblical commandment to dwell in Eretz Israel, as it says, You shall possess it and dwell in it" (Devarim 17:14, 26:1). Chazal say that this mitzvah is equal to all the mitzvot of the Torah (Sifrei, Re'eh 28), and it is one of the 613 mitzvot according to the Ramban and the Rashbetz

The Maharam Schick agrees, (Yoreh De'ah 225) as does the Maharsham. (Vol. I, sec. 18) The latter cites the Maharam (Teshuvot Maharam (Krimona, 5317 [1557]), sec 199) who asserts that there is no difference between today and the Temple era; it is always a mitzvah.

In his holy work, Azor Eliyahu p. 194, the author of Sheivet Mussar writes that the mitzvah of dwelling in Eretz Israel is in effect even when the Land is in ruins.

The holy volume, Aspaklariya HaMe'irah, (VaYeitzei, p. 21b) also states, "This implies that it is forbidden to leave Eretz Israel even when it is in ruins. After all, there was no Temple at the time of Yaakov." (Furthermore, I

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already stated above that even the Rambam holds that dwelling in the Land is biblically ordained. The reason he does not count it as one of the 613 mitzvot is because it encompasses the entire Torah. I just discovered that our mentor, the Or HaChayim HaKadosh, writes, "Settling the Land is a mitzvah which encompasses the entire Torah." (Or HaChayim, Devarim 30:20)

ONLY IN ERETZ ISRAEL CAN WE FIND CONSOLATION THE GENTILES HAVE BEATEN US ENOUGH

REALIZE THIS, O FELLOW JEW! FROM NOW ON DO NOT SEEK REST ANYWHERE EXCEPT BY YOUR TRUE MOTHER, ERETZ ISRAEL. ONLY OUR TRUE MOTHER WILL CONSOLE US AFTER ALL OF THE SEVERE HARDSHIPS THAT HAVE BEFALLEN US, AND AFTER ALL OF THE PAIN THAT THE STEPMOTHER HAS INFLICTED UPON US. THE PROPHET SAYS, LIKE A MAN WHOSE MOTHER CONSOLES HIM, SO WILL I CONSOLE YOU, AND IN YERUSHALAIM YOU WILL BE CONSOLED (YESHAYAH 66:13). THAT IS, WE WILL ONLY FIND SAFETY AND CONSOLATION BY OUR TRUE MOTHER, ERETZ ISRAEL. THUS, THE PROPHET SAYS, AND IN YERUSHALAIM, WHICH REPRESENTS ALL OF ERETZ ISRAEL, YOU WILL BE CONSOLED. LET US NO LONGER PUT OUR FAITH IN OUR STEPMOTHER AND, THEREBY, REMAIN IN THE LANDS OF EXILE.

How much money did our ancestors invest in these lands? They built palaces, castles, and great halls, because each one of them thought, This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it (Tehillim 132:14). They completely disregarded their true mother, Eretz Israel. The Shelah (Sh'nei Luchot HaBrit 2:78b (the end of Tractate Sukkah).) and the Chatam Sofer (Yoreh De'ah 138) bemoan the fact that some Jews become completely absorbed in Chutz LaAretz. They build themselves houses and palaces and invest all of their silver and gold in "Chutz LaAretz" property, in order to enhance and expand the stepmother's boundaries. But, they neglect to establish the boundaries of the widow, our righteous mother who cries and laments over us. They do not even consider doing anything for her benefit. They only care and desire to make an honorable living and build a big house with a courtyard made of hewn stones. [They build it] to last for many years, so that they can bequeath it to their children and grandchildren who will be born on foreign soil, [for] they hope to see many offspring and live long lives in exile.

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In this way, we lost hundreds and thousands of years in exile and gave all of our strength and wealth to our stepmother. And now, we "merited" to receive her expression of gratitude for all of the effort that we expended on her behalf. She took a staff and hit us cruelly and mercilessly. She wounded our entire body; from the sole of the foot to the head, there is nothing whole. She also banished us completely and took our money from us. We were forced to leave her house naked and indigent. Thousands and tens of thousands of our Jewish brethren died unnatural deaths at her hands.

These are the deeds of our stepmother. Now, should we put our faith in her for the future and return to her once again? How can we be so sure that after a few decades she will not do this to us again? Indeed, we see that the Gentiles have treated us this way during every period of our history. But, we have yet to learn that we must no longer put our trust in the lands of exile. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, No! No! We will no longer return to our stepmother. Instead, we will arise and go up to our true mother and devote all of our strengths to her, from now and forever, to build up her walls and repair her ruins. Be strong and let us be strong for the sake of our people and for the sake of the cities of our G-d, and the good Lord will make a good sign for us, and our enemies will see and be ashamed.

WE HAVE TO LEAVE THE PAIN OF EXILE

The Midrash states: The day the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed it was decreed that the Torah scholars will learn amidst pain, poverty, and confusion, so that they will pray for the coming of Mashiach.

It seems to me that the explanation of this Midrash is based on something I heard from my brother-in-Law, the brilliant rabbi, son of saints, our master, R. Moshe Klein shlita, the spiritual leader of Grossvardine. The brilliant R. Meir Shapira z"l, av beit din of Lublin, traveled around Hungary to speak to the gedolim and leaders of the generation about settling and building the Land (for it is well known that they opposed this matter). Despite all of his arguments and proofs, he was unable to convince them to give their approval. [At the end of his trip] he spent a Shabbat with a certain rebbe, one of the leaders of the generation in this country. He noticed that this

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rebbe had a custom of eating two portions of fish during Se'udah Shlishit (the third festive Shabbat meal), one before lighting the [Havdalah] candles and one afterwards. The one before the lighting was called "fish of darkness" and the one after was called "fish of light." "Now I understand why you oppose aliyah and the building of the Land," said the Rabbi of Lublin to his host. "As long as you eat 'fish of light' you do not need Eretz Israel. But, due to our numerous sins, the majority of Klal Israel eat only 'fish of darkness,' and you are unaware of Israel's pain."

Therefore, after all that we have been through here in Europe, where we have all eaten "fish of darkness," everyone must certainly approve of aliyah and building the Land. The fact that there are still individuals, and especially rebbes, here in Hungary who oppose this, is only because they have not yet "tasted" what most of Klal Israel has "tasted." May Hashem protect them from this. This explains the Midrash cited above, "It was decreed that the Torah scholars will learn amidst pain, poverty, and confusion, so that they will pray for the coming of Mashiach."

IT IS PREFERABLE TO DWELL IN THE DESERTS OF ERETZ ISRAEL THAN IN THE PALACES OF CHUTZ LA ARETZ

Our brilliant and holy master, R. Tzvi Elimelech zt"l, writes in Iggra DeParkase: I heard in the name of a certain Tzaddik that one attains a greater level of "dwelling in Eretz Israel" when he leaves the Land for a period of time and then returns. He "tastes" the sanctity more the second time. In my opinion, we learn this from Avraham Avinu, because his main stature and eminence came the second time, [as it says] , And Avraham ascended from Egypt (Bereshit 13: 1).

I will add to the words of our mentor. Sefer Chareidim cites a Midrash which states that the Holy One Blessed be He originally told Avraham to go to Eretz Israel, see it, and return [to his birthplace]. After he returned, Hashem did not allow him to go back to Eretz Israel for five years. During this time, he longed to return to the Land, and he said: O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Behold, I would wander far off; I would dwell in the desert (Tehillim 55:7-8). [Chazal comment on this], "It is preferable to dwell in the deserts of Eretz Israel than the palaces of Chutz LaAretz" (Bereshit Rabba 39:8).

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The same is true today. We have experienced the true nature of our stepmother, the lands of exile, in the fullest measure. She has placed her cup of poison before us in all the countries of Europe, and we have drunk and drained its sediments. Therefore, every Jew will undoubtedly wake up from his slumber and intensify his aspiration and yearning for his true and proper mother, our Holy Land. He will refuse to stay in the Diaspora any longer, even in exchange for all of the treasures in the world. He will strive with all his might, with all his heart and soul, and with all his wealth to return to his mother's bosom as soon as possible. He will say what Avraham Avinu said when he longed to return to Eretz Israel, "It is preferable to dwell in the deserts of Eretz Israel than the palaces of Chutz LaAretz" (Bereshit Rabba 39:8)

Better is a dry piece of bread with tranquility in it than a house full of quarrelsome feasts (Mishle 17:1): Better is a dry piece of bread with tranquility in it: R. Yochanan said, "This refers to Eretz Israel, for even if a person eats (dry) bread and salt every day while dwelling in Eretz Israel, he is assured a portion in the World to Come...Than a house full of quarrelsome feasts: This refers to Chutz LaAretz, which is full of violence and robbery." (Yalkut Shimoni 2:956)

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, like a child who is weaned from his mother; my soul is like a weaned child". (Tehillim 131:2) The Yerushalmi comments (Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 2:4 [9a]): "Like a baby which has left its mother's womb, so has my soul been to me" That is to say, in Eretz Israel one feels like a baby which has left its mother's womb, because Eretz Israel is his mother.

THE LANDS OF EXILE ARE FULL OF BLOOD AND VIOLENCE, EVIL SPIRITS REST ON THESE LANDS

How many thousands, tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of evil spirits remain in these lands upon which our fellow Jews have "stumbled" in recent times? According to this Yalkut, all of these lands are filled with anger because of all the blood that was spilled in them. How can we remain here any longer? For this same reason, our forefathers who were expelled from Spain did not want to return, even after the decrees ended.

Therefore, one should not become blinded or enticed by a good business opportunity that he might find here, for he will not see any blessing from it.

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An evil spirit rests on it, and in the end it will be to his detriment, G-d forbid. I said this long ago about individuals who use bribes and "protectionism" to remain in places from which practically all of the Jews were expelled. They use the prevailing market conditions to amass huge sums of money. Others take advantage of war-time market conditions to become wealthy. However, they forget that the Creator of the Universe sent these afflictions to awaken us, His children, to leave the lands of exile and yearn to return to our forefathers' inheritance. They do not understand this. They have fattened their hearts and become engrossed in accumulating wealth through the great business opportunities that have developed during these turbulent times.

Nothing will come out of this but disappointment I cited a Midrash about the plague of locusts [to prove this]: What is the meaning of the verse Not a single locust remained (Shemot 10:19)? R. Yochanan said, "When the locusts came, the Egyptians rejoiced, saying, 'We will gather them and fill barrels with them.' The Holy One Blessed be He retorted, 'You wicked ones, you are happy with the plague that I have brought upon you?!' Immediately, Hashem turned a very strong west wind, and it carried the locusts (ibid.). What does it mean Not a single locust remained? Even the ones that were salted in their pots and barrels flew away." (Shemot Rabba 13:7)

The same is true of those who rejoice over the market conditions that have resulted from today's misfortunes. The Holy One Blessed be He says to them, "You are happy with the plague that I have brought upon you?! I swear by your lives that you will remain empty-handed, because the wind will carry everything away!" Similarly, we must not expect anything from the market conditions that will arise after the war. The only outcome of these misfortunes should be that we leave the Diaspora, go up to the cities of Zion, and dwell therein. Then, we will succeed and attain everlasting peace and tranquility. This is Hashem's will, as I proved above at length.

PLAGUES AND SUFFERINGS COME IN ORDER TO MAKE US GO UP TO ERETZ ISRAEL

Let no one imagine that after the war ends and the countries of Europe return to their normal routine, the Jews will be able to do good business with the Gentiles. [For one could argue], only a few Jews will remain, because the vast majority has been annihilated during the horrors of the

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war (due to our numerous sins). Therefore, the Gentiles will not be jealous, for jealousy is only caused by many Jews, not a few scattered ones. I do not suspect that any Jew would say or think such a thing. First of all, who gave him the right to inherit the multitude of Jews who were killed in sanctification of G-d's name (Al Kiddush Hashem)? Also, which pure-hearted man would want to build himself up and derive some selfish benefit from spilt Jewish blood? Furthermore, what does he think? - that all of this blood was spilled just so that he can build his house and elevate his pride?!

NO! NO! ALL OF THIS JEWISH BLOOD WAS SPILLED TO MAKE ISRAEL WANT TO GO TO ERETZ ISRAEL. I ALREADY PROVED THIS SEVERAL TIMES FROM THE MIDRASH WHICH STATES THAT HASHEM BROUGHT A PLAGUE ON THE PEOPLE OF DAVID'S GENERATION SO THAT THEY WOULD REQUEST THE BUILDING OF THE BEIT HAMIKDASH (MIDRASH TEHILLIM 17:4). IN FACT, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PLAGUE STOPPED, DAVID WENT TO ARAVNAH AND PURCHASED THE SITE WHERE THE BEIT HAMIKDASH WOULD BE BUILT.(SEE II SHMUEL 24:18.; I DIVREI HAYAMIM 21:18) IN THIS WAY, HE RECTIFIED THE SOULS OF THE FALLEN JEWS, BECAUSE THEY CAUSED THE SITE OF THE TEMPLE TO BE PURCHASED SOONER.

The same is true today. If we arise and go up to Zion, we will rectify the souls of the Children of Israel who died in sanctification of G-d's name, because they caused us to return to our forefathers' inheritance. And if we are worthy to see the ingathering of many Jews to Eretz Israel- at which time Hashem will direct our hearts to love and serve Him sincerely.... then we will merit to see the resurrection of all those who perished in exile. They will arise first, as the Ritva and Ikkarei HaDat, citing the Radvaz, explain. Thus, if we leave the Diaspora and return to Eretz Israel, not only will we rectify the souls of our fellow Jews who were killed in exile, but we will even hasten their resurrection. Then, their deaths and the Kiddush Hashem that they caused will not have been in vain.

THE ARI HAKADOSH EXPLAINS THAT THE TEN MARTYRS WERE KILLED IN ORDER TO WEAKEN THE EVIL FORCES (KELIPOT) WITH THE KIDDUSH HASHEM THAT THEIR DEATHS CAUSED. THE SAME IS TRUE TODAY. IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT WHEN THE KELIPOT INTENSIFY THEY PREVENT US

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FROM RETURNING TO OUR HOLY LAND. THUS, THE KIDDUSH HASHEM GENERATED BY THE DEATHS OF THOUSANDS AND TENS OF THOUSANDS OF JEWISH MARTYRS HAS WEAKENED THE KELIPOT AND ALLOWED THE GATES OF OUR HOLY LAND TO BE OPENED, AS THE PROPHET PROPHESED, THE GATES OF YOUR LAND HAVE BEEN OPENED WIDE (NACHUM 3:13).

However, this will only happen if we understand the purpose of our afflictions. I explained above, citing the brilliant author of Eirech Dal, that one can understand the Creator's will from the afflictions He sends. If the situation in Chutz LaAretz makes it difficult to live there, then we know that the Creator wants us to leave the Diaspora and return to our forefathers' Land. If we do this, we will achieve the Creator's desired goal and rectify our souls and the souls of our fellow Jews who perished in the horrors of exile. However, if we do not do this (G-d forbid), but let the Yeitzer HaRa entice us to remain here in the Diaspora, not only do we transgress the Creator's will, but we are also guilty for the Jewish blood that was spilled in vain. Therefore my brothers and friends, let us take these words to heart, and then the Almighty will be exalted through us in the heavens above and on the earth below. Amen so may it be His will.

LIVING IN EXILE IS DISGUSTING

During this lengthy exile, we have become so accustomed to nursing from the breasts of a foreign woman that we think it is impossible otherwise. Hashem complains about this and says to the Jewish nation: "How many years have you be en accustomed to this, yet it does not disgust you!" He begs us [to loath the exile]; He even forces us [to do so] by way of current events. For if we do not loath them [the Gentiles], they will loath us. In this way, He will rid us of our Diaspora mentality, in which we have become so accustomed to living together with the Gentiles. Then, He will teach us to live in conjunction and brotherhood with our fellow Jews, without jealousy, hatred, or rivalry; in our Land, the portion of our inheritance. Amen, so may Hashem declare.

THE GENTILES ALWAYS TURN AGAINST US IN THE END

Furthermore, my brother, contemplate and recognize the history of our people throughout the exile. Difficult times were always followed by easier

times and freedom. However, the days of freedom only lasted a few decades, and then the hardships began once again. This has been Israel's lot throughout the journey of exile. Therefore, do not put your faith and trust in the cordiality that the Gentiles will show you after the passage of these difficult days, for strength does not last forever.

**WE CAN MAKE ALIYAH IN TWO WAYS: BECAUSE WE
CHERISH THE LAND OR BECAUSE WE ARE KICKED
OUT BY THE GENTILES: LET'S DO
IT BECAUSE WE CHERISH THE LAND**

It is well known that (we fulfill) the entire Torah by choice and not by force... The Ramban explains that the verse, You shall dispossess [the inhabitants of] the Land and dwell in it (Bamidbar 33:53), implies an explicit positive commandment to dwell in the Holy Land. Now, when we are rejected from the entire face of the earth, we fulfill this positive commandment only under duress, and it is not clear that we choose it willfully, for Hashem's sake. However, when we could live in the choicest lands of the nations, but we choose to dwell only in Eretz Israel, then we fulfill this positive commandment by our own free will. (Derashot Chatam Sofer, Sermon given on the 7th of Av (a eulogy for R. Yeshayah Berlin z"l), vol. 2, p. 306a. [The parenthetical comments are R. Teichtal's.]

Hashem our G-d spoke to us in Chorev saying, "You have dwelt long enough at this mountain, turn and take your journey and come to the mountain of the Amorite... Behold, I have set the land before you, come and possess the Land which Hashem swore to your forefathers...to give to them and their seed after them" (Devarim 1:6-8)

After asking several questions on these verses, the Chatam Sofer explains: On the day the Torah was given, Israel gained the right to inherit the entire world and subjugate the nations. For on that day, the foundations of the earth collapsed, and if not for that momentous revelation, the world would have reverted to nothingness. Thus, the entire world exists for Israel's sake. This is true even if we do not fulfill Torah and mitzvot, for [Chazal] say "Had He brought us near to Mount Sinai, but not given us the Torah, it would have been sufficient for us" (Pesach Haggadah). Thus, this momentous revelation, in and of itself, is worthy of sustaining the world.

Accordingly, we have the right to choose a nice portion in which to dwell [from anywhere] in the world, and the nations must accept us based on the preceding logic. But, why should we sustain other nations with our

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[efforts], while we lack everything and are starving and thirsty? The entire world subsists for the sake of Hashem's nation, but we have no portion nor inheritance in this world, [besides Eretz Israel]. Furthermore, it is unimaginable that we could reach the level of perfection needed to rectify (tikkun) the supernal worlds, outside the Holy Land. Therefore, when we neglect to acquire true perfection, the tables are turned and we bring calamity to the entire world.

Now we will explain the verses mentioned above. The Holy One Blessed be He says to Israel, You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. That is to say, you deserve merit and honor just because you dwelt at this mountain, even without accepting and keeping the Torah. Therefore, from now on Turn and take your journey, [meaning journey] for yourselves. When will you provide for your own house? Come to the mountain of the Amorite [i.e., Eretz Israel], for there you will acquire true perfection. He further says, Behold I have set the land before you. This means, I have given you the entire world because you dwelt at this mountain. However, I advise you, Come and possess the Land which I swore to your forefathers. Why should you toil for others and let the nations of the world eat the fruits of your labor? Come and possess the land”

(Derashot Chatam Sofer 7 of Av Vol 2, p 306)

WE HAVE LIVED WITH BOTH FEET IN THE LANDS OF GALUT AND THAT HAS BEEN OUR WORST TRAGEDY

Had we not stood with both of our feet, our heads, and our hearts here in the Diaspora, forgetting completely about our Holy Land, our money would not have fallen into Eisav's hands. Woe to all of the Jewish money that fell into Eisav's hands here in the lands of Europe. How much of our Holy Land could we have redeemed and built with that money?! This happened because we stood with both of our feet here in the Diaspora. We put so much faith in our sojourn here in exile that we disregarded our Land and our inheritance. Yaakov Avinu stood in the Diaspora with only one foot, while his other foot, his eyes, and his heart were in the Holy Land. Therefore, foreigners had no control over his money. We, however, did not follow his example. Therefore, we have reached our current situation. This is the cause of our troubles.

Apparently, this explains the following Midrash: If we were worthy we

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would have read, No man will desire your Land (Shemot 34:24). But now that we were unworthy, we read, The persecutor spread out his hand on all of her pleasant things (Eichah I:10). (Peticha DeEichah Rabba 11)

THAT IS, HAD WE BEEN WORTHY OF CONSTANTLY THINKING OF ERETZ ISRAEL, AND HAD WE NOT BECOME SETTLED HERE IN THE DIASPORA, WE WOULD HAVE READ, "NO MAN WILL DESIRE YOUR LAND". FOR THEN, EVEN OUR SOJOURN IN EXILE WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED DWELLING IN ERETZ ISRAEL, AS SEFER CHAREIDIM AND SEFER HACHAYIM (BY THE MAHARAL'S BROTHER) ASSERT.

...On the third Shabbat, I addressed a large gathering and spoke about our holy nation's predicament here in Europe. I poured out my soul and spoke so emotionally that the entire audience wept. I concluded that the only way we can recover from this bitter exile is to return to our Holy Land the moment Hashem delivers us from distress, and that each and every Jew has a sacred obligation to strive with all his might to leave the lands of exile and return to his mother's bosom, Eretz Israel. I explained that Hashem brought this bitter exile in order to awaken us from the slumber of exile and motivate us to yearn and desire to return to our forefathers' inheritance.

The Talmud states: "And my eye will weep sorely and run down with tears (Yirmiyah 13:17). Why three tears? One for the First Temple, one for the Second Temple, and one for the Jews who were exiled from their place" (Chagigah 5b). Woe to us that this has occurred in our times. May Hashem have mercy on the survivors and gather our dispersed ones, not to their original place in exile, but to our forefathers' Land, which is the desirable Land. We do not look forward to returning to our original place in exile, but to our forefathers' Land, which is the desirable Land. Our wounds will not be healed any other way, and our nation, which has been broken into many pieces, will not be cured simply by remaining in its original place, hidden in the shadows of exile. King David referred to this when he said, Hashem is the Builder of Yerushalaim, He will gather the outcasts of Israel. He is the Healer of the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds (Tehillim 147:2-3). That is to say, only building Yerushalaim and ingathering the outcasts of Israel will cure the brokenhearted of Israel and bind up their wounds. Subsequently, I found this stated in Midrash Tehillim (17:4).

MESSAGE AGAINST THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE SETTLERS OF ERETZ ISRAEL AND WHO CONSTANTLY SPEAK AGAINST MAKING ALIYAH

...Does the Torah not don sackcloth on account of this? Is Eretz Israel - our mother - not disgraced and insulted by this? Her sons insult her greatly by interfering with anyone who wants to raise his voice and inspire the masses to strengthen her and raise her from the dust, as the Holy One Blessed be He has commanded us. Today's pseudo-saints defame and degrade her so much that it is forbidden to speak in public for the sake of Yishuv HaAretz. And if, by chance, someone courageously and fearlessly states the truth as it is, they say that it is forbidden to listen to his sermon. With my own ears, I heard not one, but many people say that thousands and tens of thousands of Jews were punished because they engaged in the settlement and rebuilding of the Land. Is this not blasphemy, an insult to our holy Torah? Does this not cause grief and sorrow to the holy Shechinah, which is Kingship (Malchut), and to Eretz Israel, the mother of Israel, which is also Kingship? Woe to the ears which have heard this. It is obviously a grave sin to even utter such things.

EVERY INTELLIGENT PERSON WITH A BRAIN IN HIS HEAD WILL REALIZE THAT THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED WITH YEHOSHUA AND CALEV. THEY WERE NOT AFRAID TO DECLARE THE TRUTH IN PUBLIC, OPPOSING THE ENTIRE CONGREGATION, INCLUDING THE PRINCES WHO "SANCTIFIED" THEMSELVES BY DISRUPTING AND PREVENTING ISRAEL FROM ENTERING ERETZ ISRAEL.

The Midrash states: That generation (of the spies) could not taste any fruits of the Land. R. Akiva said: "When the merchants would uncover a basket of fruits from the Land, they [the Israelites] would die. Thus, it says, Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good Land (Devarim 1:35): [They will not see] any good that comes from the Land." (Tanchuma, Chukat 19)

Observe what R. Akiva said. The Holy One Blessed be He withheld all the goodness of the Land from those people who slandered it and its inhabitants; and any pleasure that came from Eretz Israel was dangerous to them. Now, all those who scorn, blaspheme, and despise the people who settle and build the Land: how can they not fear for their souls?! Perhaps

they will fall into the category of the spies and receive their harsh punishment!

WAKE UP EXILE JEW

FURTHERMORE, I AM ASTONISHED AT YOU, "EXILE-JEW." YOUR EYES ARE SO BLINDED THAT YOU DO NOT SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND YOU. YOU SEE HOW THE OPPRESSORS TORTURE YOUR BRETHREN, BEATING AND AFFLICHTING THEM TERRIBLY, AND YOU ARE NOT MOVED AT ALL! YOU SEE YOUR BROTHERS' BLOOD FLOWING ON THE GROUND LIKE WATER AND YOU ARE NOT FRIGHTENED, FOR YOU BELIEVE THAT THE HOUR IS STILL PROPITIOUS. YOU SAY IN YOUR HEART THAT THESE THINGS WILL NOT AFFECT YOU AT ALL BECAUSE YOU ARE STANDING IN A SAFE PLACE, AND YOU BLESS YOURSELF IN YOUR HEART SAYING THAT YOU WILL HAVE PEACE. IF ONLY YOUR WORDS COULD BE TRUE! SO MAY HASHEM SAY.

O "exile-Jew" listen and pay heed to my words. Open your eyes and see that your brethren, upon whom this calamity has fallen, also dwelt in a safe place like you do. But in the end, the tables were turned, and they were plundered and murdered (may the Merciful One protect us). How are you so sure and confident that you will be spared this fate? Why are you not afraid? And why is your heart not softened by your friend's misfortune?

The explanation for this is as I stated above: The exile has made the Jew into an "exile-Jew." It separated and detached him from the collective nation and made him live an isolated life in exile. He no longer lives a nationalistic life, nor does he feel for his nation and inheritance. He only knows about his own affairs. This is the true description of an "exile-Jew," and this is what has brought us to our present situation.

THE WAY TO RECTIFY THE SIN OF THE SPIES IS TO MAKE OUR FELLOW JEWS LOVE THE LAND OF ISRAEL AND TO MAKE THEM DESIRE TO LIVE THERE

As I already mentioned, the angel of the holy volume, Maggid Meisharim, told our master, the Beit Yosef, that Moshe Rabbeinu sent the spies expecting that they would return and extol Eretz Israel and its special qualities. This would arouse within the hearts of Israel a burning desire and an intense yearning to enter Eretz Israel as soon as possible. This burning

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desire would make the Jews worthy of inheriting the Land, even though they were not worthy of it on their own merit. However, because of their selfish motives, the spies did exactly the opposite. Using various methods and expending much effort, they caused the nation to hate and abhor Eretz Israel, as I explained above.

Thus, if we want to rectify this sin, we must strive to arouse the Children of Israel, wherever they may be, to love and desire the desirable Land of our forefathers. Then, a fire will burn within them to come and inherit the Holy Land, and they will desire it more than anything in the world. This will be the complete rectification of the great sin mentioned above. In this way, we will pay off the ancient debt that we incurred at the inception of our nation, the debt which causes us, to this very day, such diverse and frequent troubles that we have practically perished, G-d forbid. When we complete this rectification, our bill of debt will be torn up and the day of salvation will arrive with great wonders and grandeur. This is the day for which we have waited, let us exult and rejoice in His salvation, speedily in our days. Amen

However, my dear brother, you must be aware of what Chazal say in the Midrash: Righteous people rectify their sins in the same manner that they commit them (Tanchuma, BeShalach 24). Therefore, we must inspire the hearts of Israel and kindle within them the fire of desire for Eretz Israel using the same methods that our ancestors used to undermine Israel's desire for the Land. The generation of the spies united the entire congregation against Eretz Israel and put a great deal of effort into propaganda. They established an entire propaganda organization - what we would call today a propaganda department - which organized people to convince others to oppose Eretz Israel. Similarly, we must establish a propaganda apparatus which will permeate every Jewish home and try to convince every Jewish soul to support Eretz Israel.

THERE IS NO REASON TO REMAIN IN THESE IMPURE LANDS

At that time, (The time of the Spies in the Wilderness) the leaders of the congregation spread evil propaganda against Eretz Israel. Therefore, today, as well, the leaders of the congregation must propagandize for the sake of Eretz Israel, in order to pay off their "bad loan." They must be the first ones to open the nation's eyes. They must explain that there is no reason for us

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to remain in the foreign, impure, and polluted atmosphere of exile, nor to expend our energies in vain while the Gentiles rob the fruits of our labor from before our very eyes. The leaders must speak to the people in this fashion and arouse within them a fire and a spark of love for our desirable Land. This alone will make us worthy of redemption, as I cited above from the Beit Yosef's Maggid.

The Maharsha also writes that when the people of Israel cherish the stones and dust of Eretz Israel they bring the appointed time of redemption closer. Thus, the leaders will unite all of Klal Israel together for the sake of Eretz Israel, and then our "bad debt" will be paid off.

However, if the leaders neglect this matter, there is a danger that they themselves will have to pay for the bad loan that they took back then. The halachah states that if two partners borrow money from someone, the lender can collect the entire debt from whichever partner he wishes, because each partner becomes a guarantor for his friend. (See Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 77:3) The same applies to the "bad debt" that the spies and their entire generation incurred. Since they all joined together [against Eretz Israel], (See the Midrash I cited above (pp. 396-97).) they became like partners who borrowed from the Holy One Blessed be He. Therefore, if Hashem wants He can collect the debt - which Klal Israel incurred by causing the exile - entirely from Israel's leaders. Moreover, the leaders have a greater obligation to pay off this debt, because they were the primary cause of this "loan" to begin with.

THIS EXPLAINS THE WORDS OF OUR MENTOR, THE OR HACHAYIM. HE WRITES THAT ISRAEL'S LEADERS THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FACT THAT WE ARE STILL IN EXILE, BECAUSE THEY SHOULD HAVE INSPIRED THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TO LOVE ERETZ ISRAEL. (OR HACHAYIM, VAYIKRA 25:25)

The brilliant prince of the Torah from Dvinsk concurs in his pamphlet, Yeshivat, Eretz Israel p. 58a: The gaonim who sit in the tents of Torah and wisdom and upon the seats of the Rabbinate (may Hashem grant them long life) have a foremost obligation to publicize this beloved, lofty, and profound mitzvah, which affects the overall existence and character of our nation. For, the great length of the exile made many people practically forget about this mitzvah. There are even those who are stubborn enough

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to oppose it publicly. This error can not be uprooted easily unless our brilliant Rabbis, who sit in Judgment, arouse themselves to reform these stubborn people”

...NOW, BASED ON THE PRECEDING IDEAS, WE CAN UNDERSTAND THIS BETTER. JUST AS DURING THE TIME OF THE SPIES ALL OF ISRAEL UNITED FOR EVIL, TO OPPOSE ERETZ ISRAEL; TODAY AS WELL, WE MUST UNIFY ALL OF ISRAEL FOR GOOD, TO SUPPORT ERETZ ISRAEL. THIS WAY, WE WILL PAY OFF OUR DEBT, TEAR UP OUR RECORD OF LIABILITY, AND CAUSE THE GLORY OF HASHEM TO SHINE UPON US WITH THE COMPLETE REDEMPTION, SPEEDILY IN OUR DAYS. AMEN.

BUT, AS LONG AS WE FAIL TO DO THIS, ALL OF OUR COMPLAINTS TO THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE ABOUT THE LENGTHINESS OF OUR EXILE ARE IN VAIN. IN VAIN WE PRAY IN OUR SYNAGOGUES AND STUDY HALLS, "OUR FATHER, OUR KING, ERASE THROUGH YOUR ABUNDANT MERCY ALL OF OUR BILLS OF DEBT." FOR, THE DEBT THAT WE INCURRED BY DESPISING THE DESIRABLE LAND STILL HOVERS OVER US. HOW CAN WE PRAY THAT G-D SHOULD ERASE THIS BILL OF DEBT WHEN IT IS UP TO US TO PAY IT OFF AND RECTIFY IT? THIS IS LIKE A DEBTOR WHO ASKS HIS CREDITOR TO RIP UP THE BILL OF DEBT BEFORE HE HAS PAID. THE CREDITOR WILL CERTAINLY DO NO SUCH THING! THE SAME IS TRUE OF US.

HE WHO HAS A PORTION IN THE LAND IS CONSIDERED A BEN OLAM HA BA

Yaakov arrived complete at the city of Shechem which is in the Land of Canaan..., and he bought the portion of land (Bereshit 33:18-19). Rashi comments, "Like a person who says to his friend, 'So and so escaped from the lion's teeth and has returned unharmed (lit., complete).'" The Ibn Ezra writes: He bought the portion of land: a portion in the Land. Scripture mentions this to demonstrate that Eretz Israel has great virtues, and he who has a portion in it is considered as [if he has] a portion in the World to Come.

...The actions of these builders (Of Eretz Israel), whom the complainers call sinners and rebels, will give rise to exceedingly lofty events, including the

elevation of Israel's pride, the elevation of the pride of Mashiach, and the building of the House of David. I also cited our mentors, the Maharal of Prague, the Midrash Shmuel, the Shach, and the Noam Elimelech (who all possessed Ruach HaKodesh) as saying that great and holy things must develop from mundane matters and through sinners. These sacred rabbis are more reliable than all of today's distinguished men. How can these men compare to those "lions"?

DO NOT BE SURPRISED THAT GREAT MEN CAN ERR IN THEIR OPINION

Do not be surprised that righteous and distinguished men speak ignorantly, for I will show you an even greater [example] of this. I already stated that the angel of Maggid Meisharim told our mentor, the Beit Yosef, that Moshe chose the wisest and most righteous men to be the spies. Nonetheless, the Midrash refers to them as "foolish messengers," since they spread an evil report about the Land (Bamidbar Rabba 16:3; Tanchuma, Shelach 2). The same is true today. Our tzaddikim are certainly no more righteous or learned than the spies were. Even R. Zeira, who was very careful about his speech, (See Megillah 28b, Ta'anit 20a) called the Babylonians "foolish" (Beitzah 16a). He did so even though they were gedolei Torah, because they did not ascend to Eretz Israel at the time of Ezra. Furthermore, now that we have remained few in number, due to our numerous sins, and we are the survivors of the sword, logic dictates that we embrace each other and extend a hand to one another.

THEREFORE, MY FRIENDS AND BROTHERS, DO NOT PAY ANY ATTENTION TO THOSE WHO SLANDER THE LAND, EVEN IF THEY ARE TRULY RIGHTEOUS. FOR, I MENTIONED ABOVE THAT THE BRILLIANT MENTOR OF ERETZ ISRAEL, R. YOSEF CHAYIM SONNENFELD Z"L, DERIVED FROM THE WORDS OF THE SHELAH THAT EVEN TZADDIKIM CAN BE SPIES. REALIZE THAT ALL THOSE WHO OPPOSE ALIYAH AND THE BUILDING AND RESETTLEMENT OF THE LAND BELONG TO THE CAMP OF THE SPIES. BUT, ALL THOSE WHO CHOOSE ALIYAH BELONG TO YEHOSHUA AND CALEV'S CAMP.

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OUR MENTOR, THE CHATAM SOFER, (DERASHOT CHATAM SOFER, DERUSH FOR SHABBAT HAGADOL 5558 [1798], VOL. 2, P. 233A) EXPLAINS:

...CHAZAL STATE, "ONE TORAH SCHOLAR FROM ERETZ ISRAEL IS LIKE TWO FROM BABYLONIA. AND, ONE OF US [FROM BABYLONIA] WHO ASCENDS TO ERETZ ISRAEL IS LIKE TWO OF THEM" (KETUVOT 75A).

THUS, ANY TZADDIK FROM THE DIASPORA WHO ASCENDS TO ERETZ ISRAEL IS EQUAL TO FOUR TZADDIKIM. NOW, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT HE DOES NOT HAVE TO ACTUALLY ASCEND. EVEN IF HE JUST DESIRES TO ASCEND, BUT FAILS, HE IS CONSIDERED LIKE FOUR TZADDIKIM AND IS WORTHY TO HAVE A MIRACLE OCCUR ON HIS ACCOUNT. FOR, ANYONE WHO CONTEMPLATES DOING A MITZVAH, BUT IS UNABLE TO DO SO, SCRIPTURE CONSIDERS IT AS IF HE DID IT (BERACHOT 6A).