

ארץ ישראל

The Land of Israel

The land of Israel – the precious one of Israel. It is well-known that its virtue is extraordinary, as is described in the holy Zohar (Section 3, page 72b) and in the other holy books. The individual that is chosen by G-d will be brought near unto it to see the pleasantness of G-d and to visit in His sanctuary. Every person's eyes and heart should be directed unto it all of his days. This idea is expressed in the verse (Tehillim 42:3), "My soul thirsts for the Lord, the living G-d. When shall I come and appear before the Lord?" Therefore, a person should strive with all of his strength to establish his dwelling in the land of Israel. However, he must open his eyes first to examine closely the idea so that he should not come to regret his earlier decision and be forced to leave. It is recommended that he not go there until his older years when his wife no longer experiences menses and will not give birth. He should not bring with him sons or daughters. If G-d granted him wealth, then he may bring with him a daughter who will eventually leave him. But, a son he should not take at all, for then there will be more children, and one does not know what each day will bring. It is true that the air of the land of Israel makes one wise. However, according to what our eyes see, the attaining of one's daily needs

is more difficult in the land of Israel. In the majority of cases, people need to leave and grasp a mission related to some mitzvah that takes them out of the country for ten years or more. A life of pain they endure, and their wives even more so. So great is the travail of constant travel for both the body and the soul, as it is well-known! This is not the case of those who reside in the Diaspora – they find ample provisions in their towns. When an elderly husband and wife emigrate as is fitting, they will be able to have a good retirement there. Even if they experience a life of difficulty, it will still be considered a good life due to the abundance of all of the good in their lives.

It is a great mitzvah for the children to make every effort, with all of their financial means and soul, to provide satisfaction for their father and mother and transport them to Israel. This honor is greater than thousands of gold and silver coins. Likewise, a man should help his brother with great strength and power if one of them wants to locate his home in the land of Israel. How good and pleasant is the dwelling of brothers together where one helps the other! For his brother is like his own flesh, and it is written (Yishayahu 58:7), "... and from your flesh you shall not hide." And, it is also well-known that great is the one who causes others to do [a mitzvah].

Many are the evils that result from being an officer or designee of those who are going to Israel. Such a person needs to adjudicate with others for things that have nothing to do with him. Sometimes he needs to allow a person to fall who has suffered a financial setback. For what does a person need such trouble? In truth, it is a great mitzvah to help someone moving to Israel, but the wise man anticipates the future, that he should not end up regretting

his commitment. Every clever person must act with perspicacity! If he is able to dismiss himself and there are others – that is good. If not, he must know that which he must do and the path which he must take. He should make conditions such that he is more likely to gain than to lose. Everything that we said applies to a stranger; however, a brother is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. Therefore, there is an obligation on his brothers to assist him, and it is impossible for them to just say, "No."

Someone who G-d has granted financial success should not refrain from assisting those people who are moving to the land of Israel in accord with the extent of G-d's goodness unto him – whether at the time of their going or by sending them gifts. It will be considered a great mitzvah! In truth, it seems that those people act improperly who go from city to city and impose on the communities to support their moving to Israel. People speak about them saying, "Who asked them to impose on others so that they might go to Israel? If they do not have means of their own, they should not go! Behold, there are wealthy men, great rabbis, and outstanding sages whose resting place is in the Diaspora! Is this mitzvah greater than the mitzvah of lulav, or any of the other Taryag (613) mitzvot? A person who does not have the financial means is not obliged, and is not required to go begging on others' doorsteps in order to fulfill any mitzvah. In truth, our Sages said (Berachot 6a), "A person who thought to do a mitzvah, but did not, due to circumstances beyond his control, is considered as if he did it." The Sages also said (Shabbat 118a), "Make your Shabbat ordinary, and do not require the charity of others."

If one is a diseased individual, stricken by G-d and afflicted, who has endured many evils and troubles, without question going

to Israel is a necessity in order for him to alleviate his pain and as a bandage for his wounds. But if not for this, it would seem that those who want to go to Israel act inappropriately and there is no reason to have pity on them. Yet, since we see that not many people actually do this – perhaps there is only one from a city whose spirit has been awakened and his soul desires to go – this is a sign that his direction is from G-d; from Heaven they have designated him. "The legs of a person are his guarantor; they transport him to the place that he is needed. (Sukka 53a)" Therefore, it is proper to support him generously in order that he may perform the will of our Father in heaven.

The halachic decisors (Yoreh Deah, 251:3) have already written that the concept of "the poor of your city take precedence" applies to the poor people in the land of Israel, because they indeed are called "the poor of your city". They live like chickens in a coop; they are not able to earn a living, and there is almost no one who has pity upon them. Their eyes are uplifted to the inhabitants of the Diaspora, whether for letters to inform them of the well-being of their relatives, or for financial aid to give life to their souls and to rejoice their hearts. A great act of charity and kindness is done by one who writes them a letter and sends them gifts, whether a lot or a little – each man according to the gift of his hand, according to G-d's blessing upon him. It will be considered a great mitzvah! It is a good idea that when a man writes a letter to another city that he writes about all of the people who live in his city. For sometimes it could happen that because of his letter others will know about the well-being of their relatives, and he will cheer up the hearts of the unfortunate. He will receive a blessing from G-d and men, and his mitzvah will endure forever.

The primary purpose of going to Israel is for the perfection of the soul. The spirit shall return to G-d who gave it as He gave it, and the soul will praise G-d. This is because the sanctity of the place and the respite from the hassles of life is a great help in this regard. As such, a man who merits going there should be holy and devout. Even if G-d bestows upon him material abundance, he should not delight in sensual pleasures. Rather, a life of pain he should live and in the ways of penitence and in all manners of piety he should conduct himself. Someone who is not well-versed in these matters must go to a sage that will teach him, and guide him in the circles of righteousness such that virtue will be the belt of his thighs. He should be "one who grows smaller, and it is good for him" – he should take from his body and prepare for his soul. He must be attentive with all of his powers to fulfill the mitzvot of the land with all of his soul and all of his might, for this is the ultimate "fruit" of living in the land of Israel. The pure sage, the author of the Sefer Charedim, has already brought together all of the mitzvot of the land in the end of his book.

It is well-known that when one sins in the land of Israel his punishment is twice as great as the one who sins in the Diaspora, for the former is the palace of G-d. Therefore, every sensitive soul should have pity on his being, and he should embrace G-d and His Torah day and night. He should never be silent, and should atone for every wrongdoing that he committed all the days of his life. It is a time of graciousness, and he must greatly distance himself from idleness. Accordingly, he must be holy like a nazirite – it is a tremendous personal obligation. The general rule is that all of the days that they are upon the land shall be genuinely like Yom Kippur – the fear of Heaven should hover over them. Great

is the power of prayer in that place, the land that is so desired. There are awesome prayers which they pray on behalf of the inhabitants of the Diaspora. From their mouths we live. Each one of them should pray for his relatives according to the eloquence of his tongue. He should pray for the rebuilding of the Temple, the ingathering of the exiles, and that G-d, may His Name be blessed, should redeem us with a complete redemption, speedily in our days, Amen. (I, the indigent one, have already composed a prayer which I recorded in Beit Tefilotai.) One who resides in the land of Israel must constantly be happy by virtue of his constant fulfillment of that very mitzvah. All of his suffering should be alleviated by his love for the land.

