



RABBI JUDAH

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Simple Faith

Rebbe Avraham Dov of Avritch, zy'a, the "Bas Ayin", was a leading disciple of the Kedushas Levi, Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, and one of the great Chasidic masters of Ukraine in the early 19th Century. A Rebbe for over forty years, the Bas Ayin moved to Eretz Yisrael in his mid 60's where he encountered a series of extraordinary challenges and tzaros. He survived a kidnapping and a pogrom at the hands of Arabs, in addition to the poverty and deprivation experienced by most olim. He also saw the miraculous salvation of his congregants during the devastating earthquake that decimated Tzfat in 1837, and led the Jewish community in the period of rebuilding.

The first year of their aliyah was particularly difficult and Reb Avraham Dov had strong doubts about their decision to leave their family, talmidim and a thriving Chasidic community behind. They had settled in the Galil, which was still underdeveloped. After a year under extremely difficult living conditions, the Bas Ayin came to the conclusion that he and his wife would be better off returning to the shtetl.

One balmy autumn afternoon, the Bas Ayin was walking back home from shul and was taken aback by all sorts of noises — banging, clanging and chatter coming from

the surrounding rooftops. The Rebbe asked one of the local women who was climbing down a makeshift ladder from her roof what exactly was going on.

The balabusteh seemed surprised by the question. "Rebbe! We're clearing our roofs!" The Bas Ayin was still uncertain as to what she was talking about. "Rebbe, all summer long we make use of our flat roofs for storing our winter cooking utensils and dry goods. Today, we're bringing all of our pots, pans and supplies inside so they don't get soaked by the rain!"

The Bas Ayin looked upward; it was sunny, with nary a cloud in the sky. He was even more confused than before.

"Forgive me, but surely the Rebbe remembers that tonight is the 7th of Mar-Cheshvan, and that we will switch our nusach to include ותן טל ומטר לברכה, 'And give dew and rain for blessing!' If we don't bring in all of our supplies before davening this evening, the rains will wash everything away!"

Reb Avraham Dov was awestruck by the

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depth of the woman's emunah p'shutah, simple faith, and rushed home to share the encounter with his wife. That day, they committed themselves to staying in the Holy Land.

Our sedra features the continuation of Moshe Rabbeinu's final address to Klal Yisrael, and includes the blessing and reassurance of our entering the Land of Israel, where we will enjoy the Divine providence and revealed good of the land flowing with milk and honey:

אֶרֶץ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ דָּרַשׁ אֹתָהּ תָּמִיד עֵינֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּהַמְרָשִׁית
הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרֵית שָׁנָה:

“The land that Hashem looks after; the eyes of Hashem your God are always upon it, tamid, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year (Devarim, 11:12).

Rashi notes that while Hashem obviously

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cares for all lands, אלא כביכול אינו דורש אלא, אותה, “it is as if the Ribbono Shel Olam is only doreish, ‘actively looking after’, Eretz Yisrael.” Only through the care and special concern which Hashem bestows upon Eretz Yisrael, does He care for all the other lands along with it. Being in the Holy Land is an experience of being in the physical presence of the Melech, and within the armono shel Melech, palace of the King.

Our sedra further accentuates the blessing and privilege of being in “God’s Land”, in His dwelling place:

לְמַעַן יִרְבוּ יְמֵיכֶם וְיְמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לְאַבְרָהָם לְתַתּ לָהֶם כִּימֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

“...in order that your days may increase and the days of your children, on the land which Hashem promised to your forefathers to give them, as the days of heaven above the earth.” (11:21)

The Sages of the Gemara calculate שְׁנוֹתָיו וְשָׁל אֶדָם, the length of a person’s life: “And how long is a person’s life? Seventy years. But subtract the first twenty years of his life — one is not punished for sins committed then, since in Heavenly matters, a person is only punished from age twenty. Fifty years remain for him. And subtract twenty-five years of nights (as he is usually asleep or taking care of his needs); twenty-five years remain for him. Subtract twelve and a half years during which one prays and eats and uses the restroom, and a mere twelve and a half years remain for him.” (Shabbos, 89b)

Reb Aharon, the holy Rebbe of Belz, zy’a, reflected on the higher implication of our pasuk in light of living in Eretz Yisrael. Every moment we dwell in the Holy Land, we are surrounded by Kedusha and fulfilling a positive commandment. In the Upper

Worlds, the “length” of a person’s life is measured specifically in terms of the time they spend in active, conscious service of Hashem. Therefore, even while passively fulfilling the commandment to live in Eretz Yisrael, our “days are increased.”

Furthermore, if we live with the intent of fulfilling the injunction בְּכָל-דְרָכָיִךָ יְדַעְהוּ, “Know Him in all your ways” (Mishlei, 3:6), we are actively engaged in avodas Hashem throughout our days and nights. Then, from the bedroom to the boardroom and everywhere in between, our every choice and physical movement reflects a higher purpose. Living with a consciousness of knowing Hashem b’chol derachecha shifts the existential accounting of our lives to include every moment as having been truly lived.

And this, explains the Belzer Rebbe, is another meaning of Hashem’s promise that we will experience life עַל-הָאָרֶץ, “for as long as the heavens exist above the earth/upon the land”. In other words, when we ‘know Him in all our ways’, when with faith we live with ‘upon the Land’, in the palace of the King, all our ‘days on the earth’ are qualitatively equal to ‘days in heaven’. Our whole life comes alive with the revealed good, the Heavenly milk and honey of emunah p’shutah.

May our lives be increased — both in quantity and quality! And wherever we may be, in all our ways, may we live with the Kedusha and the simple faith that flows from Eretz Yisrael. ■

Every person who was not born in Israel and lives in the Holy Land should celebrate his/her **ALIYANIVERSARY** annually!
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