



RABBI AARON

GOLDSCHIEDER

Editor, Torah Tidbits

A Genuine Oral Torah

“The Oral Torah is nourished intimately from the heavens and becomes manifest from the earth.

And it is necessary that the Land of Israel be developed, with all of Israel dwelling upon it, arranged in all its order, complete with a Temple and royal monarchy, with priesthood and prophecy, with judges and enforces, and all of their procedures. Only then will the Oral Law thrive in all her glory, budding, blooming, and connecting to the written Torah with her full stature.” (Eretz Cheftetz 2:1)

The Oral Torah is extremely delicate. On the one hand it is the explanation and elucidation of the written Torah which constitutes the divine will - “the Oral Torah is nourished from the Heavens.” Additionally, however, it is assigned to man to deduce and extrapolate

the Torah’s meaning based on the reality and circumstances of the day - “and becomes manifest from the earth.”

Rav Kook argues that there is a remarkable relationship between the Torah and Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Kook once wittingly remarked that the Hebrew word *Mishkan* is an acronym: *Mel-ech* (Kingship), *Shoftim* (Judges), *Kohanim* (Priests), and *Neviim* (Prophets). When all the national institutions of the Jewish people function holistically, the Oral Torah flourishes and generates the most authentic version of the will of God. An active priesthood, prophecy and judges are all prerequisites to the Oral Torah’s wholeness. Rav Kook argues that in truth the long exile has caused harm to the true appreciation of the Written Torah and to the pureness and clarity of the Oral Law: “In exile the twins were separated. The Written Torah ascended to its holy heights while the Oral Torah descended to the depths.” (Eretz Cheftetz 2:1).

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The Written Torah, which “ascended to its holy heights” - has largely been ignored in exile. Perhaps, this is because much of the written Torah deals with the nation as whole and the Land, and it therefore took a backseat to the interests and anxieties of a people on the run. The lack of serious study of Prophets and Writings over the past centuries in particular, is striking. The re-emergence and creative study in this area over the past fifty years in the Land of Israel is powerful.



The Oral Law has also been adversely affected. Of the six orders of the *Mishna*, half of them - *Zeraim*, *Taharot*, *Kodshim* - all deal with laws of the Land and the holiness of sacrifices and the Temple. Thus, a substantial portion of the Oral Law received less attention and study.

In this context, it is worth noting the personal relationship that developed between the young Rav Kook and the renowned Chafetz Chaim. The Chafetz Chaim firmly believed that the time of redemption was fast approaching. He discussed with Rav Kook the pressing need, especially for the *kohanim*, to become proficient in the area of law that relates to the worship in the Beit Hamikdash. These two eminent figures shared the honor of being Kohanim. The Chafetz Chaim persuaded Rav Kook to study these areas of law

with the eye towards its practical employment. (*Bein Shnei Kohanim Gedolim*, p.22).

In a similar vein, the Chafetz Chaim wrote a booklet “*Kuntres Tzipitah LeYeshua*” which is a treatise on hope and expectation; hope more than ever before for our Geulah, and an expectation that it is more imminent now than ever before in our history. The Chafetz Chaim writes that if our desire for *Geulah* is truly strong, then it must be accompanied by a demonstrable expression of that yearning and the development of expertise in the service of the Beit Hamikdash. (*Kuntres Tzipitah LeYeshua*, English translation entitled *Mazel Elul*, 2009, Introduction)¹ ■

1 A final note regarding the Chofetz Chaim’s yearning for the Land. Printed in a collection of *divrei Torah* from Chafetz Chaim on the Torah is a farewell letter he wrote to his community as he had made his final preparation to journey to Israel. On Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5685 (1925) he wrote:

“To my brothers, Bnei Yisrael...Now, as I plan to go up to the Holy Land, with His help to take pleasure in her stones and cherish her dust (*Tehillim* 102:15), I want to say farewell to my brothers and and my people who reside in these lands, and take leave of you with words of blessing.” (*Chafetz Chaim On The Torah*, Vol. 2, p. 423)

A sudden illness of the Chafetz Chaim’s *rebbeztin* just a few days before their planned departure delayed the trip. In the end, the Chafetz Chaim was unable to make the journey. (*Ibid.*)

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