



RABBI AARON

GOLDSCHIEDER

Editor, Torah Tidbits

The Mitzvot That Ground Us

“Any person that does not have land in his possession is not a person...” (Yevamot 63a), the same can be said in regard to our spiritual standing - namely, ‘mitzvot that are dependent on the Land’ are a spiritual acquisition, which is foundational to the nation of Israel as a whole, and also to the sanctity of its notable individuals, they (i.e. the “mitzvot dependent on the Land”) are comparable to the stature of ‘land which makes the man,’ and ‘the mitzvot that are not dependent on the land’ are [comparable to] movable items, which are acquired merely on account of [ownership of] the land.’ (Eretz Chefetz 3:2)

In the above excerpt Rav Kook makes the assertion that *mitzvot hatelyot ba’aretz* (‘mitzvot dependent on the Land’) are the most central or fundamental. The other mitzvot - those ‘not contingent on the Land’ - should be viewed as being merely ancillary.

How can we possibly substantiate the assertion that the small subsection of mitzvot - *mitzvot hatelyot ba’aretz* - be deemed to be the most ‘foundational to the nation of Israel’?

It is noteworthy that Rav Kook was not the first to make this daring declaration. We find the Maharal of Prague making a similar assertion: “The majority of the mitzvot of the

Torah are dependent on the Land of Israel” (*Gur Aryeh* 1:2). The Maharal then cites the following three examples: *Terumot*, *Ma’asrot*, and building the *Beit HaMikdash*.

An obvious question arises regarding this assertion: These three examples clearly are not the majority of mitzvot. How then can the Maharal, and Rav Kook as well, aver that “mitzvot dependent on the Land” are representative of the bulk of mitzvot?

Perhaps the Maharal and Rav Kook are suggesting that *mitzvot hatelyot be’aretz* represent the majority - not in quantity - but in quality.

A prime example of this notion is the rebuilding of the Temple which can only be realized in the Land embodies the most lofty vision of the nation of Israel. Namely, with its rebuilding, the knowledge of God will be known to the nation of Israel and to the world as a whole. In a word, the ambition to make a residence on this earth for the Divine is an underlying objective of the Torah.

Our Ultimate Vision: The Beit Hamikdash

Concerning the exalted vision of the Beit Hamikdash being re-established in the Holy City, Rav Kook writes:

“The Beit Hamikdash is the foundation of the ancient religious practice, which will forever be new, which dealt a death-blow to idolatry and all its abominations and gave humanity a sublime, pure basis for spiritual life, from which went out light

and freedom that increasingly develop in human history...There is no end to the joyous song that will break out in all the world as it awakens to this exalted sight: the renewal of the original antiquity of the source of divine song that is in Israel at its mightiest...All will rejoice in this enlightened, natural spectacle, precisely as it is, with all the innocence of its antiquity. Only then does it reveal its full spectrum of colors, spreading then in Israel and to greater humanity” (*Orot, Hatechiya 5*, Naor translation, pp. 160-161).

Rav Kook teaches that building the Temple embodies not only the construction of a physical structure but building a new world order. This is the Jewish people’s most noble mission. Namely, to announce that God’s light fills the world and that His presence be more directly discerned to all humanity. ■

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