



MRS. LEAH FEINBERG

OU Israel Faculty

Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

בס"ד

Choosing Holiness

"It is permissible to for Jews to live anywhere in the world, with the exception of the land of Egypt." So states the Rambam (Hilchot Melachim 5:7), citing three biblical verses that prohibit the return of Jews to Egypt. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Sukkah 5:1) records that there were three instances in which Jews did return to Egypt, with tragic consequences: Once in the days of Sanheriv, the Assyrian king who destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel - this group was condemned by the Navi Yeshayahu; once in the time of Yochanan ben Kareach, as described by Yirmiyahu, who condemned this group as well; and a third group during the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan, with tragic consequences graphically described by the gemara.

What is the reason behind this prohibition? In the halacha following the one

above, the Rambam writes: "For their deeds are more depraved than all other lands." The verse brought by Maimonides to substantiate this contention is somewhat difficult, for it seems to equate the corrupt behavior of the Egyptians to that of the nations of Canaan: "Like the deeds of the land of Egypt where you resided you shall not do, and like the deeds of the land of Canaan to which I am bringing you you shall not do..." (Vayikra 18:3). Historically, one could argue as well that many other countries in which Jews have resided throughout the centuries of exile impacted negatively upon our spiritual identity.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l (Likkutei Sichot 19: Ki Tetzei 2) raises another question regarding the Rambam's statement. Regarding the law prohibiting marriage to an Egyptian, the Rambam himself decreed that the prohibition is no longer in effect, since when Sanheriv conquered Egypt, he uprooted the indigenous population and replaced it with people from other nations he had conquered, as was his policy across the Assyrian empire. In consequence, we can no longer consider the people living in Egypt today to be those prohibited by the Torah to enter the congregation of Hashem; therefore, teaches the Rebbe, if the Rambam maintained it was still in effect, the prohibition to return to Mitzrayim must be connected to the land itself rather than to its inhabitants. Furthermore, in Hilchot Melachim, the Rambam went on to say that if the land of Egypt were to be conquered

THE APPLIANCE DOCTOR
SHLOMO ROSHGADOL
 058-558-2630

All brands, all models

In Jerusalem, Gush Etzion, Bet Shemesh
 and everywhere in between.
 Service within 24 hours.

by a Jewish king with the authority of a Bet Din, then it would be permissible to settle there. The Rebbe explains that such a conquest would bring about a change in the essence of the land, which would change its halachic status.

What essential characteristic of the land would be changed by its conquest by a Jewish king? Rav Chaim Vital taught in the name of the Arizal that wherever a Jew lives, his mission is to reveal the sparks of holiness that are hidden in that place. When the Jews left Mitzrayim at the time of the exodus, the pasuk states: וַיִּנְצְלוּ אֶת מִצְרָיִם. *They emptied Mitzrayim*. On the surface, the verse is teaching that the Jewish people left Mitzrayim with great wealth, as promised in Brit bein HaBetarim. On a deeper level, explained the Arizal, when the Jewish people left Mitzrayim they emptied it of all the sparks of holiness that had been trapped there, leaving it spiritually empty. That is why it's prohibited for Jews to settle there, until the time when holiness may be restored by the establishment of a Jewish kingdom.

The determination of the remnant of the Jews who had survived the Churban and the massacre in Mitzpa to flee to Mitzrayim, despite Yirmiyahu's prophecy that they should remain in Eretz Yisrael and begin to rebuild the land, was rooted in their lack of interest in living a life of holiness. Life in Israel can be challenging. It is a life grounded in Emunah and Bitachon. Hashem's Presence is manifest in every grain of sand, in every raindrop or lack thereof. It takes commitment and determination to live here, and is a great privilege and responsibility. The followers of Yochanan ben Kare'ach rejected that option, preferring to return to

Ben Zimra

בס"ד

REAL ESTATE

The best deals in Jerusalem

FOR SALE

GREAT INVESTMENT IN RASKO, CLOSE TO KATAMON - Nice 3 rooms + garden, with potential to get a new 4 room apt: 97m, 12m balcony with view, storage room, parking, rented 6000 Nis/month, 2,880,000 Nis

BAKA - Nice 3 rooms, 71m, in a modern building with Shabbat elevator, large balcony with view, master bedroom, shelter, storage room, parking, sunny, quiet, rented 6200 Nis/month, 3,090,000 Nis

GREAT DEAL ON RACHEL IMEINU ST
Nice 4 rooms, 80m neto, in an Arabic style building with Shabbat elevator, sukkah balcony, master bedroom, sunny, quiet, rented 7500 Nis/month. Exclusive, 3,400,000 Nis

CLOSE TO OLD KATAMON, GANEI ZION
Large 4 room apt, 105m, in a modern building with Shabbat elevator, balcony with view to the park, good shape, large living room, master bedroom, mamad, quiet, storage room, double parking, rented 8200 Nis/month, 4,550,000 Nis

28, Kovshei Katamon Street, Jerusalem
Tel: 02.5633008 - www.ben-zimra.com

a place devoid of sanctity, and their spiritual degradation led to their physical end. Today, as we return in greater and greater numbers to Eretz Yisrael, may we do so with consciousness of the holiness of this place in which we are privileged to live as we await the ultimate redemption and rebuilding, במהרה בימינו, אמן. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi series**, which just began its fourth cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women's Initiative to register for additional content.