



LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

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<p>Noach</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AWARE THROUGH THE AIR</p> <p>Rabbi Zeira, one of the leading Sages in Babylon, disputed the opinion of a colleague, Rabbi Eila, in regard to a legal matter concerning inheritance. After Rabbi Zeira finally realized his dream of settling in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> he reconsidered his position and concurred with that of Rabbi Eila.</p> <p>"This is conclusive proof," exclaimed Rabbi Zeira, "that the very air of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> makes one wiser."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Bava Basra 158b</i></p>
<p>Lech Lecha</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WORTH MOVING FOR</p> <p>Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi, who studied Torah in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>, would leave their place of study when it became too hot and move to the shade. On cool days they would move from a cold spot to where they could get some warmth from the sun.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Kesuvos 112b</i></p> <p>They bothered to make these moves, explains Rashi, in order to avoid having any complaints about the climate of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>.</p> <p>These two Talmudic giants could apparently have endured the discomfort of heat or cold and would have preferred to do so rather than lose the precious time required for relocation. But this might have stirred a fleeting thought of discontent with the climate of the land they so loved. They therefore decided it was worth making this sacrifice.</p>
<p>Vayera</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHERE THE GOOD GOLD IS</p> <p>One of the rivers flowing out of the Garden of Eden is described as encircling <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> "where there is gold and the gold of that land is good." (<i>Bereishis 2:11-12</i>)</p> <p>The gold here refers to the words of Torah which are more precious than gold itself. "The gold of that land is good" teaches us that there is no Torah like the Torah of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> and no wisdom like the wisdom of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Bereishis Rabbah 16:4</i></p>
<p>Chayei Sarah</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">OTHER WORLDLY EXPERIENCES</p> <p>"Whoever resides in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>, recites the <i>Shma</i> in the morning and evening and speaks <i>lashon hakodesh</i> (the sacred Hebrew tongue) is considered a member of the World to Come."</p> <p>This statement by Rabbi Meir (<i>Sifri Parshas Ha'azinu 32:43</i>) does not relate to inheriting the World to Come, because we have already been taught (<i>Sanhedrin 90a</i>) that "All of Israel have a share in the World to Come;" not only those who perform these particular acts. It refers to how one can live a "World to Come" existence in this world. The Jew who lives in the holy land blessed by Hashem, pledges his allegiance to Him morning and evening and speaks in the language with which Hashem created His world and wrote His Torah is experiencing something of the intimacy with Hashem which the World to Come is all about. He is like a citizen of that infinite world who is on a temporary visit in this finite one.</p>

<p>Toldos</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SAGE ON THE BRIDGE</p> <p>When Rabbi Zeira finally realized his dream of reaching <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>, only a river separated him from his goal. Rather than wait for the next ferry to take him across, he decided to use a primitive bridge consisting of a log spanning the river, which he walked upon while holding on to an overhead rope to ensure that he wouldn't fall.</p> <p>A heathen observer of this rickety crossing cried out to him: "Impulsive people that you are, who put your mouths before your ears (when they said "we will do" before they said "we will hear" in accepting the Torah without knowing what it required of them), you are still acting impulsively. Why don't you wait for the ferry in order to make a safer and more comfortable crossing."</p> <p>To this Rabbi Zeira sighed: "A land which Moshe and Aaron did not merit to enter — who knows that if I wait any longer that I will have the privilege of entering it!"</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Kesubos 112a</i></p>
<p>Vayetze</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LAND OF THE DEER</p> <p>When a heathen skeptic scoffed at the claim made by the Sages that millions of Jews once lived in a part of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> called <i>Har Hamelech</i> he accused them of being liars because the area could not possibly hold so many people.</p> <p>To this Rabbi Chanina responded with the description given by the Prophet Yirmiyahu of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> as "the land of the deer." Why is it compared to a deer? When the skin of a deer is removed from its carcass it is impossible to once again have it envelop the deer's flesh because it has contracted. In similar fashion when Jews live in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> the land expands to absorb them but when they do not live in the land it contracts.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Gittin 57a</i></p>
<p>Vayishlach</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">KISSING THE EARTH</p> <p>"For Your servants hold dear her stones and cherish even her dust." (<i>Tehillim 102:15</i>)</p> <p>The touching scene of Jews kissing the earth upon their arrival in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> has its roots in the words of King David and in the actions of our Talmudic Sages. Rabbi Abba kissed the rocks at the port of Acco. Rabbi Chiya bar Gamda rolled in the dust of the land. Rabbi Chanina went even further by repairing the roads so that his beloved country would not have a bad reputation with those who traveled upon them.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Kesuvos 112</i></p>
<p>Vayeshev</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FIRST IN CREATION, FIRST IN IMPORTANCE</p> <p><i>Eretz Yisrael</i> was created first and afterwards the rest of the world as the passage states (<i>Mishlei 8:26</i>): Before He made <i>Eretz</i> (land) and <i>Chutzos</i> (outlying areas)."</p> <p>The term "<i>Eretz</i>" applies to <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> which was the main purpose of creation and therefore created first. All the other lands are considered secondary in importance as they were in the sequence of creation and are therefore referred to as "<i>Chutzos</i>."</p> <p>Even today we refer to the land we love simply as "<i>Eretz</i>" while the rest of the world is "<i>Chutz</i>," outlying areas of secondary importance.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Ta'anis 10a</i></p>

<p>Miketz</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STONES OF SUBSTANCE</p> <p>When Rabbi Chanina Hagadol went from Babylon to <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> there were no signposts or border guards to indicate that he had reached his destination. But he had his own litmus test. He would pick up stones and feel their weight. As long as the stones were still too light he would cast them aside with a sense of disappointment that he had yet not reached his goal. When he finally picked up some stones of real substance he declared that these were <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> stones and he kissed them in fulfillment of King David's words (<i>Tehillim 102:15</i>) that "Your servants hold dear her stones."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Shlach (quoted by Tosefos in Kesuvos 112a)</i></p>
<p>Vayigash</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FOUR CUBITS TO ETERNITY</p> <p>"Whoever walks a distance of four cubits in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> is assured of being a member of the World to Come."</p> <p>This statement cited in the name of Rabbi Yochanan is based on the passage (<i>Yishayahu 42:5</i>) in which Hashem is described as forming <i>Eretz (Yisrael)</i> and "giving life to those who walk in it."</p> <p>Our Sages saw such a powerful link between <i>Eretz</i> and "giving life to those who walk in it."</p> <p>Our Sages saw such a powerful link between <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> and the World to Come that one of them even declared that resurrection of the dead will take place only in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> and the remains of those buried elsewhere will have to roll to <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> through tunnels created for them.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Kesuvos 111a</i></p>
<p>Vayechi</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MADE FOR EACH OTHER</p> <p>The unique relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel is expressed in two Biblical passages:</p> <p>"This inheritance is suited to me" (<i>Tehillim 16:6</i>)</p> <p>"I clothed myself in righteousness and it clothed me." (<i>Iyov 29:14</i>)</p> <p>Sometimes there is a person who is of pleasant appearance but his garments are ugly, and sometimes there is a person who is ugly but his garments are of a pleasant appearance. The People of Israel and the Land of Israel, however, are both pleasant and suited to each other.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Midrash Rabba Bamidbar 23:6</i></p>

<p>Shmos</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE WATERPROOF LAND</p> <p>Noach knew when the waters of the Deluge had begun to recede when the dove he had released from the ark returned with an olive leaf in its mouth. (<i>Bereishis 8:11</i>)</p> <p>Where did the dove manage to find a leaf in a world so completely devastated by flood waters?</p> <p>From the branches in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>, says Rabbi Levi. This is in accordance with the opinion of the Sages who say that <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> was not affected by the Deluge, a view which finds expression in what Hashem told the Prophet <i>Yechezkel</i> about this land that "it was not rained upon in the day of fury." (<i>Yechezkel 22:23</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Midrash Rabba Vayikra 31:10</i></p>
<p>Vaera</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LAND OF MILK AND HONEY</p> <p>When he once visited Bnei Brak the Talmudic Sage Romi bar Yechezkel saw goats eating beneath a fig tree. Honey oozed from the ripe figs, milk dripped from the goats and the two combined into one flowing stream.</p> <p>This is the meaning, he exclaimed, of "a land flowing with milk and honey."</p> <p>Maharsha points out that the surface understanding of this tribute to <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> (<i>Shmos 3:8; 13:5</i>) is that it is a graphic description of the extraordinary bounty overflowing with wholesome and tasty natural resources. But then the Torah should have written "flowing with milk and flowing with honey." By using the term "flowing" only once it signaled that these two elements combined into a single flow. This became demonstratively clear to the sage when he saw how they actually blended.</p> <p>Perhaps the significance of his discovery is that not only is <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> blessed with wholesome and tasty natural resources, but that these two seemingly disparate dimensions of food are naturally and perfectly blended for the health and enjoyment of the inhabitants of the land "flowing with milk and honey."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Kesuvos 111b</i></p>
<p>Bo</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">BY ANY OTHER NAME</p> <p>Mount Hermon, "the Israeli Alps," which lies on Israel's border with the Amorites and the Tzidonites, is called by several other names in the Torah: Siryon, Senir, and Sion. These names were given to it by these neighboring nations: The Tzidonites called it Siryon, and the Amorites called it Senir. (<i>Devarim 3:9</i>)</p> <p>The Torah relates this to show how beloved <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> was even to the other nations. The names Siryon and Senir were originally names of mountains within the borders of the Land of Israel. The nations loved <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> so much that when they built cities on Mount Hermon, they graced those cities with names of mountains in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>.</p> <p>This appreciation takes on a special dimension when we note that Senir means "a snow-capped mountain." Even the uninhabitable mountain peaks of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> were so beloved by the nations that they called their great mountain-top cities by that name.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Chullin 60b</i></p>

<p>Beshalach</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE LAND OF RETURN</p> <p>When the Babylonian king Nevuchadnetzar sent his general, Nevuzradan, to take the Jews out of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>, he instructed him to prevent them from praying so that they would not be able to repent and be re-accepted by Hashem. Only when they reached the Babylonian border did the general tell his soldiers that they could stop driving their Jewish captives, because it was less likely that their repentance would be so readily accepted outside their land.</p> <p>This Midrash on Eicha is cited as an explanation of the statement by Rabbi Elazar that one who resides in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> lives without sin. There certainly have been sinners in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>, but their repentance there is more readily accepted than anywhere else.</p>
<p>Yisro</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A SACRED BIRTHRIGHT</p> <p>The most sacred part of the <i>Beis Hamikdash</i> was in the portion of belonging to the Tribe of Binyamin. Since this included the Holy of Holies and the Holy Ark, Binyamin is referred to as "the host of the Divine Presence." Why did Binyamin merit that the Divine Presence should be in his portion?</p> <p>Because all the other sons of Yaakov Avinu were born outside of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> and only Binyamin was born in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Mechilta Yisro 4:18</i></p>
<p>Mishpatim</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A SHARE IN THE LAND</p> <p>Why does the Torah (<i>Bereishis 33:19</i>) bother to inform us that Yaakov Avinu purchased the plot of land in Shechem where he pitched his tent, and how much he paid for it?</p> <p>This is to reveal to us how important <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> is. A share in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> is considered as valuable as a share in the World to Come.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra in his Commentary on the Torah</i></p>
<p>Terumah</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE MOTIVE OF MOSHE</p> <p>Why did Moshe Rabbeinu so desire to enter <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>? Surely it was not in order to eat its fruits and enjoy its goodness!</p> <p>Thus reasoned Moshe: Many of the <i>mitzvot</i> which the Jews have been commanded can be fulfilled only in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>. I therefore pray to Hashem to allow me to enter the Land so that I will be able to fulfill all of them.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Mesechta Sota 14a</i></p>
<p>Tetzave</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A CITY AND A THRONE</p> <p>Omri was the general at the head of the army of the Kingdom of Israel. When a junior officer by the name of Zimri rebelled against the king and usurped the throne, the people crowned Omri who crushed the rebellion and reigned as king for seven years. Why did Omri merit this greatness?</p> <p>The answer is found in the account of Omri purchasing a hill in Shomron and building a new city on it (<i>Melachim 1 16:24</i>). Because Omri added one city to <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> he rose to become a king.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Mesechta Sanhedrin 102b</i></p>

Ki Sisa

REMEMBERING THE LAND

Purim is not celebrated on the same day everywhere. In walled cities, we are told in Megillat Esther, the celebration is on the 15th day of Adar, while in cities without walls it is on the 14th.

The reason for this is that in the unwalled cities, the Jews overcame their enemies on the 13th of Adar and celebrated on the 14th, while in the walled capital of Shushan the battle still raged on the 14th and the Jews there could not celebrate their victory until the 15th. Therefore, all walled cities celebrate Purim on the 15th because of their similarity to Shushan.

The designation "walled city" does not depend on a city's present situation, but rather on whether it had a wall at the time Joshua led the Jewish nation in the conquest of *Eretz Yisrael*. But why is Joshua's time the criterion for the designation "walled city?" Wouldn't it have been more logical to make this determination based on the time of the Purim miracle?

The answer is found in the Jerusalem Talmud where Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi declares that this was done in order to accord honor to *Eretz Yisrael* which lay desolate at the time the Persian miracle.

Rabbi Nissan ben Reuven (*Ran*) explains this as follows: At the time of the Purim miracle there were hardly any cities in *Eretz Yisrael* with their walls still intact. Had the determination of "walled city" been made according to the situation at that time, almost all cities in *Eretz Yisrael* would have the status of unwalled cities. To avoid this disgrace, it was decided to base the status "walled city" on the situation of the city at the time of Joshua. This made many more cities in *Eretz Yisrael* eligible for this distinction.

Rabbi Yosef Karo (*Beis Yosef*) has a different approach. Our Sages wanted some memory of *Eretz Yisrael* in the celebration of this miracle which took place in a foreign land. In the spirit of "zecher lemikdash" — those laws and customs we follow to recall the *Beis Hamikdash* — the Sages linked the determination of "walled city" to *Eretz Yisrael* so that the Jews living abroad would not forget their holy land.

Vayakhel-Pekudei

GIVING EXPRESSION TO LOVE

When Moshe Rabbeinu was refused entry into *Eretz Yisrael* he complained to Hashem:

"The bones of Yosef shall enter the land and I shall not enter?"

"He who proudly admitted that this was his land shall be buried in it, replied Hashem, but he who did not admit that this was his land shall not be buried in it."

Yosef did not deny his Hebrew origin when Potifar's wife (*Bereishis 39:14*) derided him as a "Hebrew brought here to make fun of us." He even went further in describing himself to the chief butler (*Bereishis 40:15*) as one who "had been stolen from the land of the Hebrews."

But when the daughters of Yisro told their father that "an Egyptian man rescued us" (*Shmos 2:19*), Moshe made no effort to correct this false impression and stress his Hebrew origins.

Devarim Rabbah 2:8

<p>Vayikra</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GATEWAY TO HEAVEN</p> <p>One who prays outside of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> should face in the direction of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>, and one who prays in <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> face in the direction of <i>Yerushalayim</i>. Both of these directives are deduced from the prayer of King Solomon at the inauguration of the <i>Beis Hamikdash</i>, in which he appealed to Hashem to accept the prayers of His people in all places and all circumstances. Should they be taken away from their land into foreign captivity because of their sins, he asked that their repentful “prayers directed to Hashem through their land” be accepted (<i>Melachim I 8:48</i>). Should they be engaged in war in their own land he asked that their prayer for heavenly help “directed to Hashem through the city You have chosen” be accepted (<i>Melachim I 8:44</i>). Although King Solomon was referring to particular circumstances placing Jews outside their land and their city, he set the guidelines for how Jews in all times must direct their prayers to Heaven through the holy land and the holy city where stood the holy house of Hashem.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Berachos 30a</i></p>
<p>Tzav</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHERE WISDOM IS WIDESPREAD</p> <p>“Ten measures of wisdom descended to the world. <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> took nine of them and one the entire world.” (<i>Kiddushin 49b</i>)</p> <p>Wisdom is defined by Rashi as meaning both Torah and worldly matters.</p> <p>Nowhere else do we find Rashi incorporating worldly matters into the definition of the word wisdom used by the Talmudic Sages.</p> <p>The ten measures of wisdom, explains <i>Iyun Yaakov</i>, descended to the world at the time of creation as indicated by the number ten which corresponds to the ten divine statements which brought about creation. At the time of creation the Torah had not yet been given to man. The wisdom which descended from the Creator to man could therefore not refer to Torah only but also to worldly matters such as business and vocations which are a necessary complement to Torah study since one who studies Torah also needs a source of livelihood.</p>
<p>Shmini</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A BACKHANDED COMPLIMENT</p> <p>When Sancheriv, Assyrian conqueror of almost all of <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>, attempted to persuade the inhabitants of besieged Jerusalem to surrender he promised them (<i>Melachim II 18:32</i>) that he would take them away to “a land like your own land.” Even though he was trying to promote his land he did not dare to denigrate <i>Eretz Yisrael</i> as being inferior to it in any way.</p> <p>If this is highlighted by Scripture as a praiseworthy characteristic of Sancheriv, how much more credit is due to someone who makes a positive effort to praise <i>Eretz Yisrael</i>.</p> <p><i>Sifri Parshas Eikev</i></p>

Tazria- Metzora

A DESIRABLE PORTION

"My eye gives you counsel," Hashem says to us through King David (*Tehillim 32:8*), and our Sages in the Midrash interpret this as a Divine wink of the eye in regard to *Eretz Yisrael*.

A king once made a feast for everyone in his palace. When the serving plate was brought before them, the king winked a hint to his favorite guest to take a particularly good portion. When he realized that the hint was not understood, the king took the portion with his own hands and presented it to his beloved.

In similar fashion, when Hashem divided His world amongst the nations each of them selected a land double the size of *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem winked to the Jewish people to choose *Eretz Yisrael* but they were reluctant to do so because it was so much smaller than all the other lands. What did Hashem do? He took *Eretz Yisrael* into His hand and presented it to His favorite people.

This is what the Prophet Yirmiyahu alludes to when he says in Hashem's Name (*Yirmiyahu 3:19*) "I presented you with a desirable land."

Yalkut Shimon Tehillim 32