

מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות  
לכ"ק אדמו"ר

נדפס ע"י  
הרה"ת ר' אברהם צמח הלוי וזוגתו  
מרת דבורה לאה ומשפחתם שיחי  
ראזענפעלד

# Let's Talk About Eretz Yisroel

THROUGH THE LENS  
OF THE REBBE'S TORAH

PART 3:  
**Proclaim  
The Truth**

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**T**he struggle for Eretz Yisroel goes beyond the physical skirmishes, battles, and wars in our homeland. For thousands of years, our connection to the land has been challenged by others, and defending our legitimate claim to it is foundational to our identity as Jews.

As our guide to life, the Torah provides clear direction on this issue: Tell the truth. Eretz Yisroel was given to our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov as an eternal inheritance for their descendants. No claims to the contrary can change this.

To appreciate why this approach is a winning strategy when dealing with the nations of the world—and to do so with confidence—we must analyze the relevant sources. The primary source on this issue is the first Rashi in Torah, which we reviewed in last month's article.

As the Torah educator of every Jewish child, Rashi's interpretations must be understood by "the five-year-old Chumash student," and be relevant and applicable to his or her life experience. This makes his opening interpretation of the Torah quite perplexing, as it seems to have no impact on understanding the meaning of the first *posuk* in Torah, nor does it reflect on issues the child is currently facing.

Even before explaining the details of the story of creation, Rashi addresses why the Torah, a guide to how we should act, begins with the story of creation and not with the first mitzvah, Kiddush Hachodesh. The answer:

משום כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים (תהילים קי"א), שאם יאמרו אמות העולם לישראל לטטים אתם, שכבשתם ארצות שבעה גוים, הם אומרים להם כל הארץ של הקדוש ברוך הוא היא, הוא בראה ונתנה לאשר ישר בעיניו, ברצונו נתנה להם, וברצונו נטלה מהם ונתנה לנו:

*"Because [as it states in Tehillim 111:6] 'The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations.' For if the nations of the world should say to the*



*Jews, 'You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan,' they will reply, 'The entire Earth belongs to the Hashem; He created it and gave it to whomever He deemed proper. When He wished, He gave it to them, and when He wished, He took it from them and gave it to us.'*

In all probability, five-year-old Jewish children learning in Cheder were never caught up in such debates. However, with this teaching Rashi presents the context in which every Jewish child should be introduced to Torah. This is not merely a book of laws; it is the guide to understanding and navigating reality: Hashem is the creator of the universe and controls everything in it. Every conversation and every interaction should be on the Torah's terms.

Rashi explains to the five-year-old child in medieval France that if you ever encounter non-Jews who taunt you for being Jewish and for claiming a connection to a land you lost over a thousand years ago, this is how to respond. Declare that Hashem is in charge of everything in this world and Hashem determined that Eretz Yisroel belongs to every Jewish man, woman, and child wherever they may be, forever.

This truth is not only relevant in Shul, in Cheder, around your Shabbos table, and among friends. This is the reality everywhere, even when engaging with antagonists.



Will this response convince all the challengers?

First, most people today believe in the Torah and accept it as the word of Hashem, which explains why Eretz Yisroel is referred to as the "Holy Land" in almost every language and why even the most prominent among them acknowledge that the "Holy Land" belongs to the "Holy People." These

challengers are fully aware of the truth, and they are leveling these accusations to see if the Jew believes in the truth as well.

And for those who claim to not believe in the divinity of the Torah, the purpose of vocally and publicly proclaiming our eternal connection to the land is not to convince them, but rather to express to them our conviction, which will certainly elicit their (perhaps begrudging) respect for our position.

It is also important to appreciate the more sinister narrative the challengers seek to create through such accusations. By framing the conversation about primary ownership, they accuse us of being immoral. "*You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan.*" How can Jews, the receivers of Hashem's Torah—the moral guide for humanity—behave so immorally?

In response, we acknowledge that the Canaanites were indeed settled in the land before Avraham Avinu came there and before Yehoshua Bin Nun led the Jewish conquest of the land from them in the year 2488. But we flip the narrative by reframing the conversation. The Canaanites were not there by chance. Hashem, the creator of the universe, who controls everything that happens, gave it to them for a while, and then took it from them and gave it to us. Since Hashem defines morality, challenging Hashem's choice is the most immoral thing you can do.

Having this attitude to the conversation allows us to set the narrative and saves us from engaging in dangerous behaviors such as endangering the lives of millions of people by negotiating to give away land that is crucial to their security. (A topic that will be discussed at length in future articles.)



Our ironclad commitment to keeping every inch doesn't stem from stubbornness. It is the only moral thing one can do with Hashem's eternal gift.



Since this approach is dictated to us by the Torah, it is the only way to ensure divine success in “Jewish diplomacy” and foreign relations, as illustrated by the following two stories.

When Sara Imeinu passed away, Avraham approached the nation of Cheis to purchase the Me'aras Hamachpeila as burial grounds for his family. Here is how he started the conversation: (Chayei Sara 23:4)

גַּר־וְתוֹשֵׁב אֲנִי עִמָּכֶם תְּנוּ לִי אֶחְזוֹת־קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָה מִתִּי מִלְפָּנֶיךָ:

*“I am a stranger and an inhabitant with you. Give me burial property with you, so that I may bury my dead from before me.”*

Avraham employed the two contradictory terms of “stranger” and “inhabitant” as he negotiated the first Jewish purchase of land in Eretz Yisroel to explain to the Bnei Cheis how he intended to do business with them. If they cooperated and transferred the property to him, he was willing to behave as a stranger and pay a steep price for the land. However, if they refused to do so, he would behave like an inhabitant and take what was rightfully his due to Hashem's promise to him.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 91a) relates that in the days of Alexander the Great the Canaanites accused the Jews of stealing the land of their ancestors. Geviha ben Pesisa, a hunchback with no public reputation, volunteered to respond to the accusation.

“The same Torah which states that the land originally belonged to the descendants of Canaan also states that Canaan was cursed to be a slave of Shem,” he said. “What belongs to

the slave belongs to his owner. It follows that the land belongs to us as the descendants of Shem, and all you accusers owe us some work...” Unable to respond, the Canaanites fled.

Avraham Avinu's attitude set the standard for how Jews ought to represent their presence in Eretz Yisroel to the nations of the world. And Geviha ben Pesisa illustrated how to set the tone of the conversation according to the Torah narrative. Notwithstanding the possibility for the accusers to deny the validity of the Torah, when a Jew makes a Torah claim with confidence and pride, it has a real impact.

Unfortunately, the fact remains that for decades diplomats representing the Jews in Eretz Yisroel have accomplished very little by utilizing every other claim to legitimize our presence there aside from the claim set forth in the first entry of Rashi published in every basic Chumash found in millions of Jewish homes. The time has come to embrace our true connection to Eretz Yisroel and proudly proclaim it to the world. **T**

**NEXT MONTH:**

Why is the Jewish connection to our homeland so different from the connection all other nations have to their homelands?

**Primary Sources:** *Yud Shevat* 5730; *Toras Menachem* vol. 59 p. 108, *Shabbos Parshas Shelach* 5734; *Toras Menachem* vol. 76 p. 351, *Yud Alef Nissan* 5735; *Toras Menachem* vol. 60 p. 43, *Yud Alef Nissan* 5736; *Sichos Kodesh* 5736 vol. 2 p. 53, *Shabbos Parshas Bereishis* 5738; *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 20 p. 273, *Lag B'Omer* 5738; *Sichos Kodesh* 5738 vol. 2 p. 339, *Shabbos Parshas Bereishis* 5739; *Sichos Kodesh* 5739 vol. 1 p. 220.