

לזכות
החיילים בצבאות ה'
חנה, לוי, פערל, שלום דובער,
שיינא, סטרנא, אברהם שיחי

נדפס ע"י הוריהם
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו
מרת ח' מושקא שיחי
לברטוב

Let's Talk About Eretz Yisroel

THROUGH THE LENS
OF THE REBBE'S TORAH

PART 9 Settle the Land

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Following its miraculous victory in the Six-Day War, the world expected Israel to absorb all of the territories liberated during this defensive war: the Old City of Yerushalayim, the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. Aside from the fact that many of these areas are part of the biblical heritage of the Jewish nation, they contain numerous properties that legally belong to Jews, most notably the Old City of Yerushalayim and the city of Chevron. In addition, every inch of these areas is vital to maintaining the safety and security of the millions of people living in Eretz Yisroel from its surrounding enemies.

In 1948, when Israel fought its first defensive war, it liberated many areas that had not been allocated to it by the UN Partition Plan of 1947. Cities such as Lod and Ashkelon had significant Arab populations and were assigned by the UN for an Arab state. When the Israelis repelled the many invaders and gained control of these cities, they were henceforth considered part of the sovereign territory of Israel, just like Tel Aviv and Haifa. Although Yerushalayim was designated by the UN as an "international city," once the war was over, Israel claimed the parts under its control as its own and even proclaimed it its capital city and the seat of its government.

To everyone's surprise, in 1967, the Israeli government refused to absorb the liberated territories as its rightful borders, nor did it support or facilitate settling the land with Jewish settlements. This cardinal error set in motion the ongoing pressure campaign from our enemies, and even many allies, that Israel "return" all the territories it liberated during the Six-Day War.

A Security Necessity

From 1936 to 1939, Arabs living in Eretz Yisroel terrorized the Jews living in the major cities and throughout the land in a violent uprising protesting Jewish immigration under the British Mandate. To protect Jews living in isolated and far-flung Yishuvim and Kibbutzim, the Haganah (precursor to the IDF) established 57 Jewish settlements in a series of one-day operations known as "Tower and Stockade."



TOWER AND STOCKADE COMPLEX IN ONE OF THE SETTLEMENTS CREATED DURING THE OPERATION.

These new settlements enhanced Jewish security and solidified Jewish claims to the land. Although the activities violated the policies of the ruling British authorities, the speed and stealth with which these settlements were established created “facts on the ground” which the British accepted after the fact.

“Tower and Stockade” was an example of how to employ three essential principles in ensuring security for Jews living in Eretz Yisroel, under the unique and challenging circumstances of the region and its many enemies.

1. The only way to protect your borders when surrounded by enemies is by building many small, strategically placed, civilian settlements all along the borders.
2. Even if this behavior may evoke anger and condemnation from the nations of the world, everyone will be forced to accept it as reality once the settlements are a matter of fact.
3. Establishing the settlements swiftly and quietly is the most pragmatic way to allow everyone to save face. Public announcements are counterproductive.

Instead of following these principles, the Israeli government not only failed to settle the liberated territories, it even forbade Jews from returning to cities and towns where they had lived for centuries, including the Old City of Yerushalayim and Chevron.

This policy was not only flawed from a strategic security standpoint, as explained above, but was also a moral failing with devastating consequences. Since our valid claim to Eretz Yisroel is as our eternal inheritance from Hashem, abstaining from settling the entire inheritance projects to the world, and most dangerously to our enemies, a rejection of this divine promise. This posture erodes our legitimacy to these historically Jewish areas, tempts the international community to demand we relinquish these territories on so-called “moral grounds,” and emboldens our enemies to inflict more war and terror on the inhabitants of the Holy Land to achieve this goal.

Despite the government’s “principled” opposition to settlements, many Jews in Eretz Yisroel took the initiative and, with great self-sacrifice, established towns and villages throughout the liberated territories with the support of individual members of the government and military. Over time, the government timidly approved the establishment of several large cities in these areas, such as Kiryat Arba near Chevron. But these developments came at an avoidable cost of life and limb to many soldiers as well as the civilians who settled there, due to the awkward political and diplomatic position of these settlements.

While the *mesirus nefesh* of the settlers to hold on to every inch of Eretz Yisroel is virtuous and should be celebrated, the private settlement of these territories

without the official endorsement, investment, and coordination of the government meant that the negative consequences of its official policy regarding settlements remain. The security of settlers, and by extension, the rest of the country, remains fragile, and the international community is not impressed with settlements established in places that the Israeli government officially does not claim as its rightful territory.

Another painful result of this policy is that the Jews living in these areas are considered a separate class in society, denigrated by half the country's population for political reasons, and are subjected to unfair treatment by official government institutions as well as international condemnation.

It Can Still Be Done

Although the Israeli government squandered the most auspicious opportunity to settle the land in the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day War, throughout the decades, even today, implementing a program of maximum settlement is still very practical.

There is no need to devise grand plans of mass immigration to populate hundreds of settlements since there always were, and continue to be, many natives who are eager and willing to move to new towns and cities—as long as the government treats these areas like the rest of the country. Since there is plenty of open space in the liberated territories, these settlements can be built without encroaching upon areas currently inhabited by Arabs.

According to Israeli law, the establishment of these settlements only requires the approval of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Settlements. There is no need to debate the policy in the Knesset, discuss it in the media, or cause any uproars. By focusing on real action instead of political posturing and pompous announcements, these

settlements can quickly become a reality.

To address the concerns for the potential ramifications of furious international backlash to such a program, consider how Israel handled the reaction to its nuclear weapons program. When the United States discovered Israel was building a nuclear bomb, the pressure campaign to stop it was blistering and intense. Nevertheless, Israel insisted the program was crucial to the country's security, refused to bow to pressure, and, after a decade, became the fourth nuclear power in the world. Eventually, the Americans simply demanded that the Israelis officially deny the existence of the program and even started secretly helping them with it.

The same is true regarding settlements. If the government adopted maximum settlement as an official policy, vital to the security of all its residents, and the natural result of our moral right to these territories, international pressure would eventually evaporate.

Hashem told Avraham Avinu, "I have given your descendants this land" (Lech Lecha 15:18) and "Arise, walk through the land, covering its length and breadth", (ibid. 13:16) to teach us we must disregard those who claim we are thieves in the land, and establish Jewish settlements throughout the entire length and breadth of the land. To emulate the example of Avraham Avinu, who set up a *mizbeiach* for Hashem wherever he settled, these settlements must be vibrant Jewish communities with Shuls, Batei Medrash, and Mikvaos. **T**

NEXT MONTH:

The tragedy of the disastrous Camp David Accords.

Primary Sources: *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 20, p. 311; *Sichos Kodesh* 5738 vol. 2, p. 38; *Igros Kodesh* vol. 25, p. 226; *Berega Haemet* Chapter 8; *Make Peace* Chapter 12.