

***FROM SIDDUR KOL YAAKOV  
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**IT IS IMPORTANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT FACING JERUSALEM IS NOT ENOUGH; EVERY JEW IS OBLIGATED TO MAKE A FIXED RESOLUTION TO LIVE IN ERETZ ISRAEL, AND PRAY BEFORE THE PALACE OF THE KING.**

It is well known that a person who prays is required to face Jerusalem, and as cited above there are sources for this throughout the Tanach. It is important to emphasize that facing Jerusalem is not enough; every Jew is obligated to make a fixed resolution to live in Eretz Israel, and pray before the palace of the King. [This applies even in the present age,] for even though the Holy Land is destroyed, the Divine Presence has not left it.

It is possible that we will be prevented from actually living in Eretz Israel by forces beyond our control, in which instance we are under no obligation, and G-d will consider it as if we had actually done so. But even so, that cannot substitute for actual deed. And in a time when we are not held back by forces beyond our control and there is prosperity, every person should actually go to live in Eretz Israel (i.e., when he can support himself through a profession or through commercial activity or by receiving his needs from others, so that we can settle our Holy Land, which is lying desolate without its children). Indeed, a person who lives in the Diaspora is like one who “lives without the true G-d.” Thus when King David was forced to take refuge in the land of the Philistines while fleeing from King Saul, he said (I Samuel 26:19): “They have driven me out today from dwelling in the heritage of G-d, saying ‘Go serve other G-ds.’” And our Sages state (Avodah Zarah Sa) that a Jew who lives in the Diaspora is considered to be one who serves other G-ds in purity.

Therefore, listen to me, my brethren who are living in a land that is not our own, an impure land. Remember G-d, and keep Jerusalem alive in your hearts. Persist, do not remain silent. “Take no rest. And Give Him no rest until He establishes her, until He makes Jerusalem an object of praise” (Isaiah 62:6-7).

**DO NOT THINK OF PERMANENTLY SETTING IN THE DIASPORA. THIS WAS THE SIN OF OUR ANCESTORS, THE JEWS WHO LEFT EGYPT, WHO BROUGHT ABOUT LAMENTATION FOR ALL TIME. FOR THEY “DESPISED THE CHERISHED LAND,” (PSALMS 106:24)**

thus, bringing about an exile, where we are continually the object of persecution. never have we enjoyed lasting peace and prosperity in these lands, wearily we have fled from persecution to persecution without respite. We have become forgotten, because we have forgotten Eretz Israel entirely. There is not even one out of a thousand who considers settling in the land, merely, one man in a country, two people in an entire generation. No one seeks her welfare or desires to see her.

**WHEN WE LIVE IN PROSPERITY IN OTHER COUNTRIES, IT IS AS IF WE HAVE FOUND A NEW PROMISED LAND AND A NEW JERUSALEM. PRECISELY THIS IS THE ATTITUDE THAT HAS CAUSED ISRAEL ALL OF THE DIFFICULTIES SHE HAS SUFFERED THROUGH HER PROLONGED EXILE.**

For example, from the time of the First Temple onward, the Jews had been living in Spain. But when in their prosperity, they forgot they were living in exile, mixed among the gentiles and learned their way of life, G-d caused them to be driven out from that land to the extent that no reminder of Israel was left there.

“This is Zion, for whom no one cares” (Jeremiah 3 0:17). She is forsaken, and forgotten. We have not remembered our desire to return to our native land, nor have we sought out the city where our ancestors are buried. We have desired to establish a dwelling among the nations where there is no Torah. It is written (Ibid. 9:11-12): “Who is the wise man that understands this?... For what reason was the land destroyed, becoming parched like a desert?... G-d said: ‘Because you have forsaken My Torah.’”

The Jewish people are referred to as “the heritage of G-d” (II Samuel 20:19), and our Holy Land is referred to by that same term. Implied is that the Torah cannot exist without these two factors: the people of G-d living on the land that is His heritage. And when one is forsaken, the other is also abandoned. Thus, the Midrash states (Bereishis Rabboh 46:9): “If you enter the Land, you accept Me as G-d. If not, your acceptance is lacking.”

There is no need to elaborate on this point. For the Talmud, the Midrash, the Zohar, the books of wisdom, and the commentaries on the Torah. (e.g., the Ramban and Rav Avraham Ibn Ezra) are filled with praise of Eretz Israel and those who dwell there. In particular, this is true of the holy text, the Kuzari, which devotes much attention to the importance of Eretz Israel, and indeed, concludes on this note.

The Talmud (Ketubot 110b) records the opinion of Rav Yehudah, who says that anyone who ascends from Babylon to Eretz Israel commits a transgression. Nevertheless, that view is refuted by the Talmud, which demonstrates that the proof-text that he cites refers to the sacred vessels...Despite all the advantages the Talmud mentions (Kesubos 111a) with regard to those who live in Babylon - that they will not be affected by the birth pangs of the coming of Moshiach, and that Babylon will be called “a refuge” - leading Sages of the Talmud left their dwelling places and endured hardship to live in the land that Moses and Aaron did not merit.

**IT IS THUS OBVIOUS WHAT WE SHOULD DO - WE WHO LIVE IN THE FAR NORTH WHERE THE LIGHT OF G-D'S PRESENCE HAS NEVER BEEN REVEALED, FAR FROM THE HOLY LAND AND THE HOLY TONGUE. SURELY, WE SHOULD STRIVE TO ASCEND TO OUR CHERISHED LAND, USING ANY MEANS OF CONVEYANCE.**

Rain and snow should not hold us back. Nor can danger be used as an argument during a time of peace. For the fact that we must travel on ship over seas and through deserts cannot be considered a danger. First, the mitzvah we are striving to perform will protect

us. And furthermore, we see that kings and princes travel by ship. And so do merchants and laborers for the sake of personal gain. Indeed, to make a profit people will journey to Africa, to India and to Western lands, but they will not undertake such effort for the sake of the glory of their Creator, the satisfaction of their souls and the attainment of a portion in the world to come....

...As I mentioned, even in the era of the Talmud the Sages of Babylon would ascend to Eretz Israel. On this basis, we can understand the statement of our Sages' that the Sages of Babylon excel because they do not study in their native locales; i.e., they ascend to Eretz Israel. It is true that Ray Assi did not perceive these qualities in the Babylonian students, for they were more fashionably dressed than the students of the Torah in Eretz Israel and did not appear to be genuine Torah scholars. But Rabbi Yochanan did. Although the Torah scholars of Eretz Israel surpassed those of Babylon to the point that the Babylonians would think that one scholar from Eretz Israel was equal to two from Babylon, when the scholars from Babylon ascended to Eretz Israel, they increased in stature to the point that one immigrant Babylonian was equivalent to two native Israelis.

The relationship between Babylon and Eretz Israel can be further understood on the basis of the following passage (Nedarim): The Sages sent a message from Eretz Israel to Babylon with the directive: "Take care of personal hygiene, study with a colleague and provide for the poor, for they will become a source of Torah knowledge."

As explained in that source, a lack of personal hygiene leads to insanity. It is necessary to issue this warning to the inhabitants of Babylon, because the Biblical curses (Deuteronomy 28:65): "And there G-d will give you a frantic heart, unsatisfied longing and suffering of soul" apply "there," in the lands to which the Jews were dispersed, but not to Eretz Israel. **Because these qualities of spiritual unrest are more prevalent in the Diaspora, greater precautions have to be taken there to prevent insanity from arising.**

Similarly, it was necessary to urge the Babylonians to study with a partner, because the failure to do so can have negative consequences. In Eretz Israel, there is less to fear from these negative consequences, for "the atmosphere of Eretz Israel makes one wise" (Bava Basra 158b). Also, the Babylonians were warned to provide for the poor - i.e., for poor Torah scholars who would ascend to Eretz Israel. For if these poor scholars would not have their needs provided for and could not dress in a respectable manner, they would not ascend to Eretz Israel....

....This decline in respect came about because the scholars lived in the Diaspora. Although they studied the Torah there, they did not find success in their studies, nor did they retain what they had learned. Therefore, they did not win the respect of the common people.

...And once the honor of the Torah is nullified, there will be no awe [for the sages], and ultimately, the study of the Torah will be nullified. This is hinted at in the words of the

prophet (Eichoh 2:9): "Among the nations, there is no Torah." All of this came about because their Torah study was not intended for the sake of heaven, as manifest by the fact that they did not seek to [ascend to Eretz Israel,] the reservoir of the Torah, where the company of other sages would enable their knowledge to be retained....

...One may protest: Why such severe criticism of the scholars of the Diaspora for forgetting their studies? This is not willful. And as our Sages taught (Avos 3:10), a person is not held responsible for forgetting his studies unwillingly. Nevertheless, in the Diaspora there is no excuse, because this forgetfulness could be prevented by ascending to Eretz Israel. This is alluded to in the conclusion of the proof-text "nor walked in its [path]" - i.e., they have not journeyed to Eretz Israel for the Torah's sake. [The need to travel to retain one's Torah knowledge is alluded to by the verse (Deuteronomy 33:3):] "They follow Your footsteps" - to Eretz Israel - "and they raise high Your word" - the Torah, Similarly, it is said! "When you weary your feet by traveling from land to land, you will merit to receive the Divine Presence."

There are many mitzvos that can only be performed in Eretz Israel and cannot be performed in the Diaspora. [This has an effect not only on the practice of the Torah, but also on its study,] for "study is great because it leads to deed" (Kiddushin 40b). (And when a person studies without intending to observe, he is not worthy of life, for his study is not for G-d's sake.) In such a situation, it is appropriate that the Torah be forgotten and that our Holy Land lose its strength to nurture. Therefore the land demands its respect; it blames those who abandoned her for its loss of potency, and seeks to be restored to its function of sustaining those who desire to bask in its glory.

I have elaborated on this matter for the sake of the glory of our holy land which is forsaken and left desolate. For the sake of Zion, I will not remain silent. For the sake of Jerusalem, I will not be still. (Isaiah 62:1) A voice is crying out; clear a path for the nation, remove the obstacles, allow the people to approach without tarry.

In truth, it is a continuous source of wonder: Why do the holy Jewish people who are stringent in the observance of many Mitzvot, sparing neither money nor effort to observe them in a complete manner, remain remiss in the observance of this cherished Mitzvah on which the entire Torah depends? It is a great challenge for a person to leave his native land and move, traveling to a distant land through countries with whom he is not familiar, nor does he know their language. And every journey causes a person certain losses.

**NEVERTHELESS, WHEN WE CONTEMPLATE THE UNCERTAIN STATUS OF OUR DWELLING IN EXILE IN THE DIASPORA, IT WILL BE EASIER FOR US TO DIRECT OUR PATHS TO G-D AND SEEK OUT OUR INHERITANCE. TO BE MORE SPECIFIC: WHEN G-D HAS GRANTED A PERSON WEALTH AND PROPERTY, AND HE IS NOT LACKING ANYTHING THAT HE DESIRES, IT IS LUDICROUS - AND EVEN A SIGN OF ILLNESS - TO ASSUME THAT G-D WILL NOT GRANT HIM THE OPPORTUNITY TO REJOICE IN HIS PORTION AND ESTABLISH AN INHERITANCE IN OUR LAND. INDEED, IT IS WRITTEN (PSALMS 3 7:29): "THE RIGHTEOUS WILL INHERIT THE LAND AND WILL DWELL FOREVER UPON IT."**

(Moreover, even with regard to the land's business potential, there is nothing lacking. You will partake of the labor of your hands and be happy. [Everyone will be granted his needs. Nevertheless,] one should not seek to pursue the vanities of the world there. With regard to such people, it is said (Jeremiah 2:7): "And they came and defiled My land.")

Perhaps people will say that before preaching to others, I should correct my own personal situation. In truth, for many years, this has been my intent. I resolve - without tying myself to a vow - that if G-d will grant me life and health, and remove the obstacles to my path, I will not be daunted by the many harrows of the journey and my weak body. May G-d who showed me difficult travail and yet sustained me in life, grant me in His wondrous kindness the potential to ascend to His chosen land and there attain the perfection of my soul in the holy land.

He knows our hidden thoughts. "A broken and a crushed heart, G-d will not despise" (Psalms 51:19). In truth, being forced to continue living in the Diaspora is against my will and my desire. Although I have been granted a dwelling of honor and the opportunity for Torah study and prayer, my eyes are always looking toward Mt. Moriah. Nevertheless, while there is conflict among the nations, it is impossible to make a journey by sea. And while my children are young, I am unable to journey by foot. Moreover, in both a spiritual and a material sense, I have not prepared myself sufficiently for the journey. For one should not approach the palace of the King with empty hands. Were it not for these factors, I would to ascend to the mountain of G-d. May it be His will that this delay be beneficial, enabling myself and others the potential to gain merit.

You the children that G-d granted me as signs and wonders in Israel, listen to Jacob your father and to what I command you with regard to Eretz Israel. For it is time to be gracious unto her earth and stones; the appointed time has come.

...Listen to me and take pleasure in your souls. May you merit the fulfillment of the prophecy (Isaiah 58:14): "You will delight in G-d, and [He] will cause you to ride on the high places of the earth and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father," a heritage without any boundaries.

**WHEN A PERSON MAKES A FIRM RESOLVE TO ASCEND TO ERETZ ISRAEL WHEN HE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO, AND HE TARRIES IN THE DIASPORA ONLY BECAUSE OF FORCES BEYOND HIS CONTROL, HIS RESOLVE WILL BENEFIT HIM, AND HIS PRAYERS WILL BE ACCEPTED AS IF HE RECITED THEM WHILE STANDING IN ERETZ ISRAEL. AND INDEED, HIS PRAYERS WILL HELP MAKE STANDING IN ERETZ ISRAEL A REALITY FOR HIM.**