

Parshiot Acharei Mot - Kedoshim 5780, 2020:

The Glory of Eretz Yisrael

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yecheil, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh and Jersey City, and the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, Moshe ben Itta Golda, Yocheved Dafneh bat Dinah Zehavah, Reuven Shmuel ben Leah and the safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

Midrash Tanchuma, Parashat Yitro 10, teaches us that Torah study is comprised of three essential categories: *Talmud* — logical analysis, *Halacha* — Jewish law, and *Aggadot* — non-halachic expository sources. *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Megillah* IV:I maintains that each of these were given to Moshe at Mount Sinai. The *p'sak* of the widely accepted *posek*, the Radbaz (Rabbi David ben Zimra, 1479-1573) highlights the great significance of the *Aggadot*:

G-d forbid that anyone would dare suggest that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi held that *Aggadah* is false and inessential to Jewish learning. Rather, it was given [to Moshe] from Heaven, just like the rest of the Oral Law. Moreover, just like the halachic portion of the Oral Law is based upon the 13 hermeneutic principles [of Rabbi Yishmael], the *Aggadah* is derived from the 36 hermeneutic principles [of Rabbi Eliezer the son of Rabbi Yossi HaGalili]. (*Sheilot u'Teshuvot Radbaz*, Section IV: 232, translation and brackets my own)

The following midrashic passage on Parashat Kedoshim is particularly significant in light of the halachic ruling of the Radbaz:

Another way of understanding “You will send forth Your help from Your sanctuary...” (*Sefer Tehillim* 20:3) Rabbi Levi said: “All which is good, all blessings, all consolations that the Holy One blessed be He will give to the Jewish people will come solely from Zion. [This includes:] Salvation...Power...Blessings...The Shofar [of *Mashiach*] ... Dew, Blessing and Life...Torah... Help and Heavenly Support... (*Midrash Rabbah Vayikra*, Parashat Kedoshim IV:4, translation and brackets my own)

In this midrash, Rabbi Levi supports each of his statements with a variety of *pasukim* from Tanach. Throughout this process, *Eretz Yisrael* emerges as Hashem's unique sanctuary from which everything that is truly good will ultimately spring forth. In some ways, his presentation is a paean of praise for our beautiful and blessed land, reminiscent of the stirring words of another Rabbi Levi, namely, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi (1075-1141), who emphasizes the eternal link that binds *Eretz Yisrael* to *Am Yisrael* and the Torah:

The land's distinguished qualities are manifest first and foremost in the nation, which is the precious treasure and heart... The land is then aided by the deeds and laws [of the Torah] that relate to it, which are like the cultivation of the vineyard [of the Khazar king]. Ultimately, this precious nation cannot achieve Divinity anywhere else, just as the vineyard cannot successfully grow anywhere else except on [its special] mountain. (*The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith*, translation, Rabbi N. Daniel Korobkin, page 155, with my emendations)

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi's phrase, "Ultimately, this precious nation cannot achieve Divinity anywhere else..." is powerful indeed, and echoes a celebrated statement of *Chazal* (our Sages of blessed memory):

Our Rabbis taught: "One should always live in the Land of Israel, even in a town wherein most of its inhabitants are idolaters, but let no one live outside the Land, even in a town wherein most of its inhabitants are Jews; for whoever lives in the Land of Israel may be considered to have a G-d, but whoever lives outside the Land may be regarded as one who has no G-d. For it is said in Scripture, 'To give you the Land of Canaan, to be your G-d.' (*Sefer Vayikra* 25:38)" (*Talmud Bavli, Ketubot* 110b, translation, *The Soncino Talmud*, with my emendations)

Little wonder, then, that Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi penned his famous poem, *Libi b'Mizrach*:

My heart is in the East, and I in the uttermost West —

How can I truly taste that which I eat? How shall it be sweet to me?

How shall I fulfill my vows and my bonds, while yet Zion lies beneath the fetter of Edom, and I in Arab chains?

A light thing would it seem to me to leave all the good things of Spain —

Seeing how precious in mine eyes to behold the dust of the desolate sanctuary.

(Translation, Nina Salaman, with my emendations)

May the time come soon and in our days when the *Mashiach* will bring us to *Eretz Yisrael*, where we will reap its endless blessings and witness the fulfillment of the *bracha*: “Sound the great shofar for our freedom, raise the banner to gather our exiles and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who gathers in the dispersed of His people Israel.” (Translation, *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur*) *V’chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom and may Hashem in His great mercy remove the *magafah* from *klal Yisrael* and the entire world.

Past *drashot* may be found at my blog-website: <http://reparashathashavuah.org>

They may also be found on <http://www.yutorah.org> using the search criteria Etengoff and_the *parasha*'s name.

The email list, *b'chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mailto:rdbe718@gmail.com>.

*** My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

*** I have posted 164 of **Rabbi Soloveitchik's** English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link.