



Yeshivat Ma'alot

Parashat Ekev

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ישיבת מעלות

פרשת עקב

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Torah and Eretz Yisrael

"And you will eat, and you will be satiated, and you will bless Hashem for the good land he gave you."¹

According to our tradition, this verse is a positive mitzva to bless Hashem after eating a satisfying amount of food. The verse also teaches us that it is necessary to recite a special bracha to Hashem for giving Eretz Yisrael to our ancestors. Chazal have included in this bracha several matters related to the land, such as Brit Milah, Torah, and the life itself.

The Talmud Yerushalmi, in Berachot, gives a source for the special link between the Torah and Eretz Yisrael: "One who does not mention the Torah with Eretz Yisrael is required to return (that is, to repeat the blessing). Why is this so? It is written, 'He gave them lands of the Gentiles, and they inherited the labors of the other nations'². Why? 'Because they will observe His laws and guard His Torah'³."

Since Hashem gave us lands from other nations, we must ask ourselves, why do we deserve the land and not them? To this question there is only one answer: "will observe His laws and guard His Torah." At times when parts of Eretz Yisrael appear to be in danger of being traded, G-d forbid, the words of our sages echo in our ears: "One who does not mention the Torah with Eretz Yisrael is required to return." This is the reason that "Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, If you see cities torn from their place in Eretz Yisrael, know that they did not pay the salaries of the scribes and the teachers. As is written, 'Why was the land lost? ... And Hashem replied, because they abandoned my Torah'⁴."⁵ This helps to explain the verse, "He declared to His nation the power of His actions by giving them the heritage of the nations."⁶ If Hashem had given us a new land, there would be no need to understand the reason for our privilege. However, since we were given "the heritage of the nations," we must understand why we have more rights than they do. The answer is that "He declared to His nation the power of His actions," by giving us His

¹ Devarim 8:10

² Tehillim 105:44

³ Ibid. 105:45

⁴ Yirmiyahu 9:11-12

⁵ Eicha Rabba, Petichta

⁶ Tehillim 111:6

Torah. And just as Eretz Yisrael is linked to the Torah, so the Torah is linked to the land.

"And if Bnei Yisrael are exiled from the land, there is no greater desecration of the name of G-d possible, as is written, 'Her king and her ministers are among the nations- there is no Torah⁷.'" Outside the land, the life of the nation is not considered life and the Torah is not a living Torah. The conclusion is correct from both points of view: The blessing of the land is not valid without Torah, and the Torah cannot be fulfilled without the land.

⁷ Eicha 2:9