



Yeshivat Ma'alot
Parashat Achrei Mot
Rav Yehoshua Weitzman shlit"a

ישיבת מעלות
 פרשת אזורי מות
 רב יהושע ויצמן שליט"א

The Exile of the Land

At the end of Parashat Acharei Mot, the Torah prohibits Bnei Yisrael to have incestuous relationships. In these p'sukim, the Torah highlights the connection between Am Yisrael's spiritual status and their right to settle Eretz Yisrael. "And the Land shall not spit you out if you defile it."¹ In the beginning of the parasha, Eretz Yisrael is referred to as Eretz Cna'an as the pasuk states "And the actions of Eretz Cna'an, that I am bringing you to, do not do, and do not follow in their ways."² Yet when the parasha describes Eretz Yisrael after Bnei Yisrael settle it, it is only referred to as "Ha'aretz," the Land. The Ramban explains that the word "Ha'aretz" refers to a much deeper level of the essence of Eretz Yisrael. It refers to a connection between Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael that is much more than what meets the eye. The Chesed L'Avraham³ expounds on this connection. He explains that every person who lives in Eretz Yisrael is considered a tzadik, a righteous person, even if outwardly it is not apparent. For if he was not righteous, the land itself would throw him out. Therefore, the fact that such a person is still living in Eretz Yisrael is proof of the fact that such a person is a tzadik.

Harav Kook zt"l explains⁴ that Eretz Yisrael is not a separate entity from Klal Yisrael. It is not a means to bring the Am Yisrael together or to strengthen Am Yisrael's existence. Rather, Eretz Yisrael has a vital connection with Am Yisrael, a connection which is embraced by the depth of who Klal Yisrael is and what Eretz Yisrael is. Therefore, it is impossible for one to grasp the holiness of Eretz Yisrael; there is no way that one can rationally understand what this holiness is.

As mentioned above, if Am Yisrael sins, the punishment is connected to Eretz Yisrael. Chazal explain in Torat Kohanim⁵ that when Klal Yisrael sin, the Land is liable for exile. Not only does the Land spit out those who do wrong within its borders, but it itself is also punished. What does it mean for the Land to be exiled? The Vilna Gaon explains that the intention of Chazal is that the Land becomes defiled by this inappropriate behavior. The Rash of Shantz explains that the Land itself isn't exiled, rather its inhabitants are.

¹ Vayikra 18, 28

² Vayikra 18, 3

³ Chesed L'Avraham: ma'ayan 3, nahar 12

⁴ Orot Eretz Yisrael 1

⁵ Sifra Acharei Mot, Parasha 9, Perek 13

It appears that Chazal intended that the Land itself is exiled. When Klal Yisrael tries to imitate the behavior of the other nations, the Land is exiled because the Land is an inherent part of Am Yisrael. Therefore, when things are brought into Eretz Yisrael that should not be there, the Land itself is defiled. This too is a sign that Klal Yisrael might not be worthy of being in Eretz Yisrael. The difficulty that stood before the different commentators, explaining how the Land could be exiled, is something that unfortunately we have seen with our own eyes. Giving parts of Eretz Yisrael to our enemies is in essence the exile of the Land, even though its inhabitants are not being exiled.