

Parashat Vayeshev 5785, 2024:

“*Libi b’Mizrach-My Heart is in the East*”

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**ה' יעזור וירחם על אחינו כל בני ישראל, בארץ ישראל ובכל חלקי הארץ**

*Parashat Vayeshev* begins with the *pasuk*: “*Ya’akov dwelt (vayeshev) in the land of his father’s sojournings (b’eretz megurei aviv), in the land of Canaan.*” (*Sefer Bereishit 37:1*, this and all Tanach citations with my emendations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*) At first glance it seems unnecessary, since the Torah previously stated: “So Rachel died, and she was buried on the road to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem...And it came to pass when *Yisrael* dwelt in that land...” (*Sefer Bereishit 35: 19 and 22*) If so, what is our *parasha*’s initial verse coming to add?

A 1974 Boston public lecture by my rebbe and mentor, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik *zatzal* (1903-1993), helps us understand the singular import of this *pasuk*. He notes that “*vayeshev*” signifies the sense of permanent settlement: “This verse strongly emphasizes that it was Jacob’s intention at this point to attach himself to the Land of Israel.” Why was this the case? The next phrase, “*b’eretz megurei aviv*,” provides the answer: “The words *b’eretz megurei aviv* connote not merely a geographical location, but a love for the land that was both his father’s and his grandfather’s home.” (*Chumash Mesoras HaRav, Sefer Bereishit 37:1*, page 273)

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi (1075-1141) was one of the greatest exponents in Jewish history of *Ahavat Tzion* (Love of the Land of Israel). Little wonder, then, that his celebrated line of poetry, “*libi b’mizrach v’anochi b’sof ma’arav*—My heart is in the East, and I am at the edge of the West,” has come to epitomize his powerful affection for *Eretz Yisrael*. In so doing, he emulated the very same devotion for the land that was demonstrated by the *Avot*. In passage after passage of his classic

*sefer* on Jewish thought, *The Kuzari*, he underscored the singular significance of *Eretz Yisrael*.

Here is one telling example:

The Rabbi said: “*Eretz Yisrael* was established to rectify the entire world...Avraham himself was designated for cleaving to Divinity and for making a covenant with Hashem only after he was living in the land at the time of the *Brit Bein HaBetarim* (Covenant of the Pieces). How much more then, when discussing the entire chosen nation, were they worthy of being called the ‘*Am Hashem Aleh*—These are the People of Hashem’ (*Sefer Yechezkel* 36:20) only when they were living in the specially designated land called the ‘*nachalat Hashem*—the heritage of Hashem.’” (*Sefer Shmuel* I:26:19) (*The Kuzari*, translation with my emendations, Rabbi N. Daniel Korobkin, page 163, underlining my own)

May all of *klal Yisrael* soon be *zocheh* (merit) to once again live in *nachalat Hashem* as “*Am Hashem Aleh*.” As we wistfully say in the weekly *Shemoneh Esrei*: “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*, page 106) *V’chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom

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\*\*\* My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at: [Tefilah and Tanach](#)

\*\*\* 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.