



## THE TORAH OF THE KLAL

TORAT ERETZ YISRAEL IN THE EYES OF RAV KOOK

To understand the concept of *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, we must first comprehend the scope of Torah in general.

Torah is all-encompassing: *Am Yisrael's* way of life as a nation, and every Jew as an individual. Moreover, since *Eretz Yisrael* is the natural habitat – both physically and spiritually – for Jews, it is only there that the full gamut of Torah learning, and therefore Jewish life, can be achieved. Thus our Sages declared: “because Israel has been exiled from her Land, there is no bigger *bitul* Torah than this” (Chagiga 5b).

Yes, throughout almost two millennia, Jews in exile produced such seminal works as the Talmud Bavli, the Shulchan Aruch, and much more. But nearly all these dealt only with the Jew as an individual, not as a nation. As our Sages wrote: “From the day the *Beit HaMikdash* was destroyed, G-d has no place in His World but the four cubits of *halacha*” (Berachot 8a). Limited in scope, the Torah of the *Galut*, *Torat chutz laAretz*, ignored those areas of national Jewish existence in our own Land. More than half the subjects dealt with in the *shisha sidrei Mishnah*, for example, are not dealt with in the Talmud Bavli. Not even one tractate deals with the *mitzvot teluyot baAretz* – commandments dependent on the Land of Israel. The Shulchan Aruch essentially deals in *Torat haYachid* – laws pertaining to the individual Jew. Only the Rambam, in *Yad HaChazaka*, covers the laws of both the individual and the nation. He addresses the issues of *Am Yisrael* as a functioning nation in its own Land, from the *mitzvot* dependent on *Eretz*

*Yisrael* to the laws of kings and waging war.

The term *Torat Eretz Yisrael* appears in Vayikra Rabbah 13:5: “And the gold of the Land is good,’ teaches that there is no Torah like *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, and there is no *chochma* – wisdom – like *chochmat Eretz Yisrael*.” And in Bava Batra 158b, Rabbi Zeira declares “the air of *Eretz Yisrael* makes one wise.”

On the most basic level, one can distinguish *Torat chutz laAretz* from *Torat Eretz Yisrael*: only in *Eretz Yisrael* can one potentially perform all of the *mitzvot* in the Torah. Even today, without a *Beit HaMikdash*, all individual *mitzvot* and many of the *mitzvot* dependent on the Land can be fully observed. Of course, there is also the well-known concept brought by the Sifrei, Rashi and Ramban on Parashat Eikev (11:18), that even the observance of individually-oriented *mitzvot* in *chutz laAretz* has less value than keeping those same *mitzvot* in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Rav Kook writes in *Orot HaTorah*, Chapter 13: “*Torat chutz laAretz* deals only in repairing the individual soul... whereas *Torat Eretz Yisrael* is always concerned with the *klal*, in favor of the national soul in its entirety.” Thus, we can understand that *Am Yisrael* can only live a completely fulfilled life in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Therefore, *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, despite all the current limitations of living without a *Beit HaMikdash*, is the Torah not only of the individual Jew but of the Jewish nation in its entirety, as we move ever closer to the ultimate Redemption.

In that context, we can understand the words of Rabbi Chiya (Yerushalmi, Berachot): “Such is the coming redemption, in the beginning, little by little...” And as explained by the Maharal in his introduction to *Or Chadash*, “the redemption will not occur all at once, but in stages.”

When the State of Israel was established in 1948, Yom HaAtzmaut was celebrated by Jews across the religious and political spectrum for the miracle that it represented. Sadly, as time passes, as we come ever closer to the next stage in our national redemption, many of our fellow Jews, although still living in truly miraculous times, no longer see the reality. As Rabbi Elazar said: “even one to whom a miracle happens, fails to recognize it” (Niddah 31a).

It behooves us to strengthen our connection to *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, thereby intensifying our commitment to *Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael*, and fully live the miracle as we work together to bring the ultimate Redemption ever closer.

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