

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15

Lech Lecha, Sicha 5

The Context:

On three separate occasions in parshas Lech Lecha, G-d promises the Land of Israel to Avraham and his children:

When G-d appeared to Avraham at the beginning of the parshah, "He said, "To your seed I will give this land..." (Bereishis 12:7)

When Avraham parted from Lot, G-d reassured him that "all the land that you see I will give to you and to your seed for eternity." (Ibid 13:15)

And prior to the Covenant Between the Parts, G-d said, "I am G-d, Who brought you forth from Ur... to give you this land to inherit it." To which Avraham responded, "O God, how will I know that I will inherit it?" (Ibid 15:7) Which prompted G-d's declaration at the Covenant, "To your seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt until the great river, the Euphrates river." (Ibid 15:18)

The Rogetchover draws a distinction between the first two declarations and the

third at the Covenant: In His first statements G-d says He will "give" the Land to Avraham's descendants, in the third, G-d, as well as Avraham, uses the expression, "to inherit it." Implied is that there are two forms of possession of the land, through a gift, and through an inheritance.

These two forms, the Rogetchover continues, correspond to the two "sanctifications of the Land," the first arrival by Yehoshua, who conquered the land, and the second arrival led by Ezra after the destruction of the First Temple, who possessed the land and established ownership through settling the land.

The Question:

What is the thematic connection between the first conquest and the concept of the land as a "gift," and the second settlement and the concept of the land as an "inheritance"?

The Preface to the Explanation:

Rambam elaborates on the distinction between the two sanctifications of the land: Because Yehoshua took possession of the land through force and conquest, its sacredness was not eternal. Once the

Jewish people were expelled from the land, their hold on it was lost, and the holiness of the land departed. Therefore, the mitzvos that are contingent on the land, such as tithes, were no longer operative. Ezra, however, possessed the land through establishing ownership through settling it. Therefore, even when the people were expelled, the holiness of the land remained, and the mitzvos contingent on the land are still operative. (Hilchos Beis Habechirah, end of ch. 6)

The Kesef Mishnah challenges Rambam's rationale: What material difference is there if the land was conquered through force or through settlement? In both instances, when the people are expelled, their hold on the land ceases. Why is settlement considered to be more everlasting than conquest, if, in the end, the people are exiled?

And either way, did Yehoshua's generation not settle the land after their conquest? Why is their conquest and subsequent settlement not more decisive than Ezra's generation who settled the Land without conquest?

The Explanation:

There are two elements in G-d's giving the Land to the Jewish people: 1) The ownership of the land. This was accomplished when G-d said to Avraham, "To your seed I have given this land," in the past tense. 2) The holiness of the land. This is only endowed by G-d when the people actually entered the land.

When the first generation entered the Land, they did so by G-d's command to take up

arms and conquer the land. Thus, the sacredness of the land was endowed by G-d through the act of conquering, not settling. When land is taken and sanctified through conquest, the sacredness is contingent on the conquering party's dominion over the conquered. When the nations threw off the yoke of the Jewish people's rulership, their conquest was revoked, as was the holiness it engendered.

This aligns with the mystical conception of the first conquest, which sees the Jewish people of that generation as righteous people who were free from sin. The righteous person, in contrast to the person who struggles with sin, does not engage with the material realm, does not seek to refine it and uplift it. But, rather, he dominates the physical, runs over it roughshod and disregards it. The downside to this is that the righteous person has not been truly tested. If he does encounter real-world temptation, who is to say his righteousness will remain intact?

This is the weakness of the first conquest. Because G-d made the holiness reliant on the force and power of conquest, when that power waned, so did the holiness.

But regarding Ezra's generation's ascent to the land, G-d said, "For at the completion of seventy years of Babylon I will remember you, and I will fulfill My good word toward you, **to restore you to this place.**" (Yirmiyahu 29:10) This means that G-d desired that the people would take possession of the land not through conquest, but through settling it, restoring themselves to their rightful land. When a person makes a legal claim of prior ownership, the current owner or

government in the land is irrelevant. G-d had given the Land of Israel to the Jewish people's ownership in the days of Avraham. By settling it in the days of Ezra, they were just reclaiming that original right. When the holiness is endowed through this form of entry into the land, then it cannot be broken, because it is tied to the incontestable ownership of the Jewish people, not their force of conquest.

This aligns with the mystical conception of the second sanctification, which defines the Jews of the time as penitents, people who had sinned and been banished from the Land, but who now returned. The penitent is familiar with the material world but has elevated it and transformed it into a source of spiritual growth. To the penitent, the material world is not a challenge that has to be conquered, it is part of their spiritual journey. Therefore, their connection with G-d is more durable and everlasting than the righteous person's.

This is the advantage of the second sanctification, because it is based on the strength of ownership and settlement, not of conquest, it will endure forever.

This is the thematic connection between the concepts of gift and inheritance, and the first and second sanctification. A gift is a gesture from the giver, it does not take the receiver into account. The receiver is at the mercy of the giver to desire to gift him something. When a relationship is so vertical, it can rupture if the giver no longer desires to continue giving the gift.

This is like the first sanctification, which was accomplished through conquest, through top-down force, and therefore was subject to reversal when that force weakened.

An inheritance, on the hand, is the right of the heir. His relationship to the benefactor gives him legal claim to the inheritance. Because the inheritor's claim comes from their own relationship, not just the desire of the giver, it is more durable than the claim of the recipient of a gift. Thus, the second sanctification, which is based on the right of ownership and, therefore, everlasting, corresponds with the idea of Land of Israel as an inheritance of the Jewish people.
