

1. On returning from ארץ ישראל, first of all: טובה הארץ מאד מאד. People are still going about their everyday lives, לימוד התורה flourishing, pulses still with vibrant life.

And there is a feeling of reprieve.

2. At the same time - moral crises. Frustrated and perplexed at hatred directed at Israel from all sides. And - in certain sectors of society - a deep hatred of religion and of religious Jews that has no parallel elsewhere in the Jewish world. A spate of books and plays meant to vilify the religious community.

3. Understandable. The Zionist movement was born in a desire to solve the problem of anti-semitism and Jewish disenfranchisement by re-establishing Jewish life on a national basis. If the Jews would take their place among the nations of the world - if Jewish identity would be based on nationality, rather than on a religious tradition that separated Jews from the rest of mankind - than anti-semitism would disappear.

Instead, anti-semitism has taken on new life & virulence and directed itself precisely against the Jewish state itself. And Israeli society does not know how to come to terms with that.

4. There is a great irony here. And to appreciate it fully - observation about our parsha:

השמים שמים להי והארץ. Difficulty: Doesn't it say: כי גרים ותושבים אתם עמדי, כי לא הארץ נתן לבני אדם?

כי לי הארץ, it is ארץ ישראל; but outside of ישראל, it is ספורנו:

5. R' Leib Bakst: First apartment in Detroit, בעל הבית lived upstairs. Very difficult; if he made noise, if he banged a nail in the wall, if he left the lights burning - immediately he got into trouble. Later moved into apartment where בעל הבית lived a few miles away. Much easier - accounting at the end, but there wasn't that feeling of an immediate reaction.

6. Imagine living in the *same* apartment with the בעל הבית. Every little thing - would provoke a reaction. You would have to be careful all the time.

7. That is the difference between חו"ל and ארץ ישראל. In חו"ל we say הארץ נתן לבני אדם. Certainly הקב"ה watches - and there is an accounting at the end. But still there is a sense that He is distant, transcendent. But to live in ארץ ישראל means to live in the same apartment as the בעל הבית - כי - גרים ותושבים אתם עמדי כי לי הארץ.

Joke: local phone call.

8. The great irony - the early Zionists were, in a sense, running away from the רבשייע, away from Yiddishkeit, away from Torah. We will lock the rabbis up in their synagogues, Herzl wrote, And where did they run? To ארץ ישראל, to the הרשב"ע's palace.

To the one place where He is most present.

To the one place where He cannot be ignored.

To the one place where the slightest infraction brings an immediate reaction.

To the one place where the anger & hatred of the nations of the world, who spurned His Torah, is most directed.

To the one place where קדושה beckons almost audibly; where Jews from all over the world come to discover the רבשייע and His Torah.

Reminded of Ibn Gabirol's poem: אברח ממך אליך - I ran from you - to you.

9. Life in Israel is peculiarly intense. All the great issues of Jewish life & survival are being played out. עס קאקט זיך, things are always on the boil - how else could it be - in the same apartment with the בעל הבית.

And because He really is the בעל הבית we are sure that those who live with Him will sooner or later be brought to recognize Him, as Rav Kook with great foresight almost a century ago: שעתידים להיות כולם בעלי תשובה.

10. And as for us, in this extraordinary times it is important that we attach ourselves as much as we can to this process, as much as we can to ארץ ישראל. We need to educate our youth to yearn for ארץ ישראל. We need to educate ourselves to yearn for the קדושה of ארץ ישראל. And - we need to talk more about the possibility of moving to ארץ ישראל. Even if we cannot do it today, or tomorrow - but there is value in thinking about it, in setting that as a goal. אחד say חז"ל - someone who yearns for ארץ ישראל, who yearns to be in ארץ ישראל, is - in a sense - already there. Let us be there - in spirit, and - as soon as we can - in body. So that when ובא לציון גואל he will find us there, waiting for him,

בב"א.