

You shall be Holy: “The Holy Land”

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אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים כָּל הַשּׁוֹכֵן בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל · וְאָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים כָּל הַשּׁוֹכֵן בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲוֹנוֹתָיו מְחֻלִּין. שְׁנֵאמַר עֲוֹנוֹתָיו מְחֻלִּין. שְׁנֵאמַר בֵּל יֵאמֵר שְׁכֵן חֲלִיתִי הָעַם הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּהּ נִשְׂאָ עֹן". אֶפְלוּ הֵלֶךְ בָּהּ אַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת זֹכָה דְּבָרִים לֵב) לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וְכֵן הַקְּבוּרָה בָּהּ נִתְכַפֵּר לוֹ. וְכֵאֱלוּ הַמְּקוֹם שֶׁהוּא בּוֹ מְזַבַּח כְּפָרָה. שְׁנֵאמַר עַל אֲדָמָה טְמֵאָה תָּמוּת". וְאֵינוֹ דוֹמָה " (עֲמוּס ז יז) וְכִפֹּר אֲדָמָתוֹ עִמּוֹ". וּבִפְרָעֵנוֹת הוּא אוֹמֵר " (מג קולטתו מִחַיִּים לְקוֹלְטָתוֹ אַחֵר מוֹתוֹ. וְאֵף עַל פִּי כֵן גְּדוּלֵי הַחֲכָמִים הָיוּ מוֹלִיכִים מִתֵּיהֶם לְשֵׁם. צֵא וְלִמַּד מִיַּעֲקֹב אֲבִינוֹ וְיוֹסֵף הַצַּדִּיק:

Our Sages have said that the sins of anyone who dwells in Eretz Yisroel are forgiven, as it says, *“And the inhabitant shall not say, ‘I am sick’, the people who dwell therein shall be forgiven for their iniquity”* (Isaiah 33:24). Even if one were to walk but four cubits in the Land, he merits The World To Come. The sins of anyone buried in the Land are forgiven. It is as if his grave becomes an altar for atonement, as it says, *“and makes expiation for the land of His people”* (Deut. 32:43) ...The greatest of the Sages would escort their dead to there. Learn from Jacob our father and Joseph the Righteous.

גְּדוּלֵי הַחֲכָמִים הָיוּ מְנַשְׁקִין עַל תְּחוּמֵי אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמְנַשְׁקִין אֲבָנֶיהָ וּמִתְגַּלְגְּלִין עַל עֲפָרָהּ. וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: "כִּי רָצוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ אֶת אֲבָנֶיהָ וְאֶת עֲפָרָהּ יִחַנְּנוּ [תהילים קב טו](#)

The greatest of our Sages would kiss the borders of Eretz Yisroel and its stones and roll in its dust. And so it says, *“As your servants desired her stones, and loved her dust”* (Psalms 102:15).

How do we understand the expression “The Holy Land.” Shabbat is Holy. People can be Holy. Holidays are Holy. Food can be Holy. The Holy Temple was Holy. How does the Rambam understand the holiness of the Land of Israel? How does our experience of the State of Israel in its current historical context bring a different kind of holiness that Rambam in the Middle Ages is speaking of?