YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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In memory of VBM author Rabbanit Dr. Avigail Rock z"l,

on the occasion of her sheloshim

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In memory of Esther Leah Cymbalista z"l  
Niftera 7 B'Av 5766.   
Dedicated by her family.

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Jeffrey Paul Friedman z"l

August 15, 1968 – July 29, 2012

לע"נ

יהודה פנחס בן הרב שרגא פייוועל ז"ל

כ"ב אב תשכ"ח – י' אב תשע"ב

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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[**The Meaning of Redemption**](https://www.etzion.org.il/en/meaning-redemption)

**Based on a sicha by**

**HaRav Yehuda Amital zt”l**

### From Exile to Redemption

The Ramban, at the beginning of his commentary to the book of *Shemot*, explains the central purpose of the book: "The book of *Shemot* addresses the matter of the first exile and the redemption from it."

The Ramban explains that the book of *Shemot* encompasses the entire process of exile and redemption. The beginning of the book describes the exile, while the end of the book marks the arrival of the redemption in the form of the resting of the *Shekhina* on the people of Israel with the building of the *Mishkan*:

And when they came to Mount Sinai and built the *Mishkan*, and the Holy One, blessed be He, once again rested his *Shekhina* upon them, they were then restored to the level of their forefathers… and then they were considered redeemed. Therefore, the book closes with the completion of the *Mishkan.*

The words of the Ramban raise an interesting question: Where does the Land of Israel enter the picture? On the face of it, the redemption will only be complete when the people of Israel reach the Promised Land – that is, forty years later! How can the Ramban, who famously emphasized the importance of settlement in the Land of Israel, say that the redemption occurred already in the wilderness, with the construction of the *Mishkan*?

### Redemption and the Land of Israel

It may be argued that the entire Torah is essentially the story of the arrival of the Jews in the Land of Israel. Rashi notes this point at the beginning of *Parashat Vayeshev*:

After it [Scripture] has described for you the settlements of Esav and his descendants in a brief manner – since they were not distinguished and important enough that it should be related in detail how they settled down and that there should be given an account of their wars and how they drove out the Chorites – it explains clearly and at length the settlement made by Yaakov and his descendants and all the event that brought these about. (*Bereishit* 37:1)

Whereas the Torah does not spell out the history of the other nations in detail, but simply tells us that they took possession of their lands ("And these are the generation of Esav… in Mount Seir"; *Bereishit* 36:9), the history of the family of Yaakov and the whole process of his descendants' settlement of the Land of Israel is described at great length. Why is it so important to detail the process of settlement in Israel?

On the one hand, the people of Israel's taking possession of the Promised Land can be viewed as a normal and natural state, as part of the way of the world. Every nation has its own homeland, and so it should be true regarding the people of Israel as well. But the people of Israel do not stop at the natural level; rather, they strive for redemption in the religious sense of the word, an event the significance of which transcends the natural course of events. This event can only take place when the people of Israel reach the level of their forefathers, as stated by the Ramban.

It is possible that this goal will be achieved for only a short time, as was the case during the period of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness and during part of the First Temple period. But this dismal historical reality does not detract from the fact that this is the ideal aspiration that stands before our eyes.

Just as, according to the Ramban, the redemption could occur already at Mount Sinai, the physical presence of the people of Israel in the Land of Israel does not guarantee redemption. Many people said that when we came to Israel, we reached redemption. But the truth is that despite the importance of the land, redemption is not merely a matter of territory, as it is for the French or the Belgians. There is still a long road ahead of us, and we must not sit on our laurels.

### The Rest in the Land of Israel is Still a Far Away Off

When I was a child in *chutz la’aretz*, I heard an interesting story from a Maggid*.* In a small town, there was a synagogue *shammash* named Yankele. Yankele the *shammash* was a righteous man. He stayed up late at night to clean and set up the *beit* *midrash*, he took care of all community needs, and he made sure that everything was ready in the synagogue for the holidays. When it was necessary, he delivered the daily *shiur*, and he also served as cantor when there was no one else to do it. In the week before Rosh Hashana, Yankele would stay up all night to clean the synagogue, and then he would wake up all of the town's residents before dawn to recite the *Selichot*.

On the eve of Rosh Hashana, when *Selichot* were recited earlier than usual, and after a week of hard work, Yankele could hardly open his eyes; after muttering God's name in the *Selichot*, he would fall asleep. The naughty children in the synagogue threw things at him to wake him up. "What do you want from me?" Yankele complained. "All year long I work hard for you; now, just leave me alone!" "Yankele," they replied, "you wake us up for *Selichot* at 5 AM, and you expect us to let you sleep through *Selichot*?"

For two thousand years, the people of Israel disturbed the peace and quiet of the nations. We roused the nations of the world to the values ​​of justice and integrity and tried to stir up their conscience. Now at last the people of Israel have returned to their land, "to the rest and to the inheritance," but the nations of the world will not allow us to rest.

(Translated by David Strauss)