

Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

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Children of Zion

“And of Zion, it will be said: this person and the one who was born in her” (T'hilim 87:5)

Rav Kook once requested an urgent audience with the British High Commissioner. Despite England's promises to establish a national home for the Jewish people, the British government had imposed strict limits on Jewish immigration to the country. The authorities were arranging to deport illegal immigrants, and Rav Kook asked that the deportations be halted.

The Commissioner was surprised. “I know that you respect law and order”, he replied. “After all, the Talmud teaches DINA D'MALCHUTA DINA – one must obey the law of the land. These people have violated the law by entering the country illegally. How can you argue in their favor?”

“The law refers to new immigrants”, Rav Kook said. “But these people are not new immigrants; they are returning citizens.”

The Commissioner was flabbergasted. “Why do you say that? They are not native to the country!”

“Since you quoted the words of our Sages regarding “dina d'malkhuta dina”, I am confident you will also heed other statements of theirs. In the Book of Psalms – which you hold in high esteem – it says, “And of Zion, it will be said: this person, as well as the one who was born in her.” What do you think this means? Who are these children of Zion?”

At a loss for an answer, the Commissioner merely shook his head.

“Our Sages explained,” Rav Kook continued, “that the one who was born in Zion, as well as one who looks forward to seeing her, are both considered to be children of Zion. (Ketuvot 75a). In other words, a person who was born outside the country, yet yearns to see Zion and Jerusalem – he or she is also a child of Zion!

“Spurred by great love and yearnings for Zion, these new arrivals took significant risks and traveled by circuitous routes to come here. As the rabbis wrote, these Jews are children of Zion. They are not new immigrants, but returning citizens.”

Rav Kook concluded warmly, “Our country should receive them with open arms, like an overjoyed mother welcoming home children who return after long years wandering in distant lands.”

Adapted from Mo'adei HaRe'iyah, pp. 517-518