**Dvar Torah - Parashat Ki-Tisa**

The Torah in Parashat Ki-Tisa restates the *mitzva* of *aliya le-regel*, requiring all males from *Bnei Yisrael* to go to the *Beit Ha’mikdash* during the three festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot.  In Parashat Ki-Tisa, the Torah adds an accompanying guarantee that *Bnei Yisrael*'s properties would remain secure even when all the men are away in Jerusalem: "No man shall covet your land when you go to be seen by the Lord your Hashem three times a year" (34:24).

The Gemara (Pesachim 8b) derives from this verse that the obligation of *aliya le-regel* applies only to those who own property; men who own no land or houses are not required to make the tri-yearly pilgrimage.

 Rav Yissachar Frand observed that this *halakha* might affect our understanding of the reason behind the *mitzva* of *aliya le-regel*.  Instinctively, we might assume that the pilgrimage is intended to ensure regular pilgrimages to the Beit Ha’mikdash and thereby disrupt one's daily routines for the purpose of religious inspiration.  *Aliya le-regel* ensures that one does not become overly preoccupied in his professional pursuits, by refocusing his mind on Hashem and his religious obligations.

In light of the condition of land ownership, however, a more specific purpose may be attributed to this *mitzva*: to remind the landowner of the One who truly owns his land, that he lives on his property only through the grace and kindness of the Almighty.  The Torah requires one to leave his property to come and pray and bring offerings to Hashem in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, to impress upon him that Hashem is the true owner over the entire earth.  This obligation requires one to trust in Hashem's ability to protect his land during his absence, further emphasizing His unlimited power and control over the entire earth.

It should be noted that both here and in Parashat Mishpatim, the section that mentions this *mitzva* includes as well the obligation of *bikkurim* – bringing one's first fruits to the *Mikdash* (23:19, 34:26).  This *mitzva*, too, serves as an expression of Hashem's ownership over the land; the farmer brings his fruits to Hashem just as a sharecropper transfers a percentage of his crop to the field's owner.  Similarly, the parallel section in Parashat Mishpatim includes the *mitzva* to desist from agricultural activity during the *shemita* year (23:11), an obligation that is intended – at least in part – to remind the farmer of his limited control and authority of his land. **Thus, *aliya le-regel*, too, serves to remind *Benei Yisrael* that it is Hashem, and not they, who enjoys full ownership and control over the land in which they settle.  Three times each year, *Benei Yisrael* leave their homes and fields to give honour to Hashem in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, trusting in his promise and ability to protect their properties from intruders.**