

OZTORAH SETTLING & DWELLING

VAYEISHEV YAAKOV... (B'reishit 37:1) means "Yaakov dwelt".

Pir'kei d'Rabbi Eliezer understands this as "Yaakov dwelt in security and ease in the land of his birth, the land of his ancestors' sojourns."

B'reishit Rabba 84 explains why life in Israel gave him ease and security: "Yaakov had no satisfaction from any dwelling place until he settled in the land where his father Yitzchak sojourned."

Midrash HaGadol says, "Living outside the Land of Israel is not called 'dwelling'. The term only applies to living in the Land of Israel."

Before 1948 the Jewish community in the Holy Land was "The Yishuv - the Settlement".

These days "settlement" has a pejorative political connotation but it really isn't the post-1967 Settlement Movement that is the problem (if there is one).

The so-called settlements occupy no more than about 2% of Judea and Samaria and most will remain Israeli if and when the peace process achieves results. Any problem existed before 1967.

It was the Yishuv as a whole, the reality that the Children of Yaakov have come home to the ancestral land with a feeling of ease, security and fulfilment.

A high percentage of Israelis tell the statisticians that they feel happy with their lives. Can the peoples of other lands, including the Arab nations, say a similar thing?

Rabbi Apple served for 32 years as the chief minister of the Great Synagogue, Sydney, Australia's oldest and most prestigious congregation. He was Australia's highest profile rabbi and held many public roles. He is now retired and lives in Jerusalem. Rabbi Apple is president of the RCA Israel Region. He blogs at www.oztorah.com