

# Why the Land of Israel?

**BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE**

Of all the possible places in the world, why Israel? There are many more attractive sites to which God could have led the Jewish people. Surrounding lands are richer in natural resources and more secure from invasion. So why Israel?

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes, "Israel is a place from which it is impossible to build an empire. The geography is wrong. The Judean hills in one direction, the Sinai desert in the other, block easy access to the surrounding lands...So Israel would almost invariably be a small country at the juncture of powerful empires..." Judaism was supposed to be a light, not a conquering empire. The land ensured that fate.

Israel also teaches the importance of connections. It is a land bridge connecting two giant empires — Babylonia and Egypt. Israel is, in its geographic essence, a bridge. As the first global people, Israel's legacy was linkage.

Perhaps it simply is that way, antecedent to explanation. Testifying before the Peel commission, Chaim Weizmann was asked why the Jews didn't simply accept land in Africa, which would be so much less fraught for the British to arrange. His answer: "Sir, that would be like asking you why you drove 50 kilometers to see your mother last week when there are so many lovely old ladies on your street."