



## Rethinking Diaspora in post-Temple Judaism

### A. Diaspora Reactions to the Destruction: Some Modern Comments

1. Martin Goodman, "Diaspora Reactions to the Destruction of the Temple", p. 27 - "There is...every reason to suppose that the raising of the Temple horrified diaspora Jews as much as their Judaeen compatriots. Jews outside Palestine seem to have presumed the central importance of the Temple in Jewish worship despite the physical obstacles to their frequent attendance at the cult. ..it is a fair assumption that even those diaspora Jews within the Roman empire who had not themselves suffered in the war of AD 66-70 were profoundly affected by its consequences".

2. Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 35-36 - "The loss of the temple first of all removed the inequality...between the Palestinian Jews, able to keep the whole law, and those outside Palestine, able to keep only part of it. ..For Jewish universalism the temple was an obstacle and a hindrance. It was a forceful reminder of the connection between the Jewish religion and the territory of Palestine. ..In destroying Jerusalem the Romans forcibly dissociated the Jewish religion from the Jewish state, for manifestly the former continued whereas the latter did not. In this the Romans in the long run did Judaism a service. Bouche-Leclercq says very rightly: "Far from overthrowing Judaism the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem relieved it of the embarrassment of the cult..."...It is not impossible that in certain Jewish circles these events were seen, indeed, in a more positive light, and were actually greeted as signs heralding new and better days.

3. Gedaliah Alon, *The Jews in their Land*, vol. 1 p. 10: Hegemony of the Homeland: The hegemony of Palestine over Jewish communities within the Roman Empire was expressed in the following ways: 1) Religion...Halakhic questions; 2) Law...Jewish civil law 3)Judiciary...Jewish judges in the diaspora were appointed by the Patriarch 4)Communal organization...through their legates the Patriarchs could appoint and dismiss leaders of Jewish communities abroad 5) Discipline...The leadership exercised religious supervision over the communities abroad, including the power to impose sanctions 6) Support...taxes to the Patriarch and the sages

### B. The "Jewish Tax" following the Destruction, and revised perceptions of "Judaism"

4. Suetonius, *Domitianus* 12:2 (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, II, p. 128) - Besides other taxes, that on the Jews was levied with the utmost vigour, and those were prosecuted who without publicly acknowledging that faith yet lived as Jews, as well as those who concealed their origin and did not pay the tribute levied upon their people. I recall being present in my youth when the person of a man ninety years old was examined before the procurator and a very crowded court, to see whether he was circumcised.



(cf. Stern. p. 130 - "Domitian made the levy of the tax more rigorous by exacting it both from those who were not Jews by origin but adhered to the Jewish way of life, and from those who were Jews by birth but tried to evade the tax by concealing their origin"; cf. also M. Goodman: "The Roman state, and Romans in general, for the first time came properly to appreciate that people of non-Jewish origin could become Jews...After 96 CE the definition of a Jew by the Roman state was, for the purpose of the tax, a religious one. For Romans, Jews were those who worshipped the divinity whose temple had been destroyed in Jerusalem and who refused to worship other gods. I suspect that this innovation had a profound effect on the self-perception of Jews in the diaspora."

### C. Commitment to "The Land" in Rabbinic Literature

5. Tosefta Avoda Zara 4:3 - A person should always live in the Land of Israel, even in a town in which the majority of residents are gentiles, and not abroad, even in a town in which all the residents are Israelites. This teaches that living in the Land of Israel is weighed against (=is equal to) all the commandments of the Torah.

6. BT Ketubot 110b - ...for whoever lives in the Land of Israel may be considered to have a God, but whoever lives outside the Land may be regarded as one who has no God. For it says in scripture: "[I am the Lord your God who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt] to give you the land of Canaan to be your God" (Lev. 25:38).

7. Tosefta Avodah Zara 4:5 – Whoever leaves the land in a time of peace and goes abroad, it is as if he worships idols, for it is written: "I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul" (Jer. 32:41).

8. Tosefta Avodah Zara 4:4 - A person should not go abroad unless wheat sells at the price of two *seahs* for a *sela*. R. Shimon said: Under what circumstances? Only in a case when he cannot find any to buy (even at that price). But if he finds some to buy, even if one *seah* sells for a *sela* - he may not go abroad. For thus would R. Shimon teach: Elimelech was one of the great men of his generation and a leader of the community, and because he went abroad (Ruth 1:1) he died there with his sons in famine, while all of Israel survived in their land, as it is written: [And when they came to Bethlehem] *all the city* was stirred because of them" [Ruth 1:19]; this teaches that all of the town had survived, but he and his sons died in the famine.

9. Sifre Deut. 80 - It happened that R. Judah b. Bathyra and R. Matya b. Harash and R. Hananiah the nephew of R. Joshua and R. Yonatan were going abroad, and they reached Platana and remembered the Land of Israel. They raised their eyes [heavenward] and wept, and rent their garments and recited the verse: "And ye shall possess it and dwell therein, and ye shall take care to do all the statutes and the ordinances" (Deut. 11:31-32), they said: Dwelling in the Land of Israel is equivalent to all the other commandments of the Torah.



It happened that R. Eleazar b. Shamu'a and R. Yohanan ha-Sandlar were going to Nisibis to R. Judah b. Bathyra to study Torah from him; they reached Sidon and remembered Eretz Israel, they raised their eyes...and said: Dwelling in the Land of Israel is equivalent to all the other commandments of the Torah and came (back) to Eretz Israel.

10. Tosefta Ketubot 13:2 (Vienna ms. 12:5) – He (= the husband) desires to come to Eretz Israel and she (= his wife) does not wish to come, she is coerced to come; if she wishes to come and he does not – he is coerced to come (this according to the Vienna ms of the Tosefta; in the Erfurt ms.: he is not coerced). If he wishes to leave Eretz Israel and she does not, she is not coerced to leave. If she wishes (to leave) and he does not – she is coerced not to leave. (cf. BT Ketubot 10b – If she wishes to go up (to the Land) and he refuses – he is coerced to go up, and if he refuses he must divorce her and pay her *ketubah*). 11. Tosefta Berakhot 3:15 – Those standing abroad (in prayer) direct their hearts towards the Land of Israel, as it is written: "And they pray through their land" (2 Chron. 6:38).

11. PT Moed Katan 3:1 81c – A certain priest (*cohen*) approached R. Hanina (bar Hamma) with the following question: (My brother has passed away, leaving a childless widow). Is it permissible to leave (the Land) for Tyre to perform a mitzvah, either of levirate marriage (*yibbum*) or *halitza* (releasing the widow from her bond to me; cf. Deut. 25:5-10)? He replied: Your brother left (the land) – blessed is God that killed him, to you wish to follow in his steps? And some say he replied: Your brother abandoned his mother's bosom (הִיָּק אִמּוֹ) and embraced a foreign bosom (הִיָּק נְכַרִּיָּה) – blessed is God that killed him, do you wish to follow in his steps?

12. Gen. Rabbah 96 (ed. Theodor-Albeck p. 1240) – R. bar Qoraiya and R. Eleazar were sitting and studying Torah in the *ilasis* of Tiberias when they saw coffins arriving from abroad. Said R. bar Qoraiya to R. Eleazar: regarding these I apply the verse: In your lifetime "you made my possession abhorrent" (Jer. 2:7), and in your death – "you came and defiled my land" (Jer. 2:7). He 9=R. Eleazar) said to him: Not so, when they come to the land of Israel, they place upon them a lump of earth thus atoning for their sins. On what basis (is this assertion made)? "And the land doth make expiation for His people" (Det. 32:43 וּכְפַר אֲדַמְתּוֹ עַמּוֹ).

13. Sifre, Deut. 333 (ed. Finkelstein p. 383) - "And the land doth make expiation for His people (וּכְפַר אֲדַמְתּוֹ עַמּוֹ)" R. Meir used to say, "The Land of Israel makes expiation for anyone who dwells in it, as it says: "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven for iniquity"—הָעַם הַיּוֹשֵׁב בָּהּ נִשְׂוָא עִוֹן—(Isa. 33.24). Nevertheless, this matter is still in doubt (i.e., the scripture is ambiguous), for we do not know (according to the Hebrew text) whether they must suffer their iniquities in it, or whether their iniquities are atoned for by it. But when scripture states: "And the land doth make expiation for His people" (Deut. 32:43)—we learn that their iniquities are atoned for by it, and not that they bear their sins. And thus R. Meir used to say, "He who lives in the Land of Israel, and recites the *Shema* ' morning and evening, and speaks in the sacred tongue,



he is assured of the world to come”

13. BT Yoma 9b – Resh Laqish was swimming in the Jordan one day, when Rabbah bar bar Hannah appeared and offered him his hand. He (Resh Laqish) proclaimed: By God, how I hate you people! For it is written: "If she shall be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver; if she be a door – we will enclose her with borders of cedar" (Song 8:9) – Had you made yourselves like a wall and had you all come up in the days of Ezra, you would have been compared to silver, which cannot rot. Now that you have come up like doors you are like cedar wood, where rotteness prevails.

14. Exodus Rabbah 52:3; Tanhuma, ed. Buber, Pekudei 7 – It once happened that a disciple of R. Shimon b. Yohai went abroad and returned wealthy; and all the disciples saw him and wished also to go abroad. R. Shimon was aware and removed them to the valley near his town of Miron. There he prayed before God: 'O valley, fill up with golden dinars!' – and it filled up with golden dinars. He told them: Whoever wishes to take – let him come and take, but know you that whoever takes now, makes a withdrawal against his reward in the next world.

#### **D. Rabbinic Travel to the Diaspora**

15. PT Sanhedrin 7, 25d - A story: R. Eliezer and R. Joshua and Rabban Gamliel went to Rome, they entered a place and found children making small piles and saying: This is what the residents of Eretz Israel do, they say: 'This is *terumah*, this is *ma'aser*'. They (= the rabbis) said: It appears that there are Jews here.

16. BT Niddah 69b - Our Rabbis taught: Twelve questions did the Alexandrians address to R. Joshua b. Hananiah. Three were of wisdom (Rashi: halakha), three were matters of aggada, three were of ignorance, and three were matters of conduct.

17. Mishna Yevamot 16:7 - R. Akiva said: When I went down to Nehardea to proclaim leap year...

18. BT Rosh Hashana 26a - What proof is there that the word *yobel* (Josh. 6:5) means ram? — As it has been taught: R. Akiba said: When I went to Arabia, they used to call a ram *yobla*. R. Akiba further said: When I went to Gallia, they used to call a *niddah* 'galmudah' ...[As much as to say], *gemulah da* [this one is isolated] from her husband. R. Akiba further said: When I went to Africa, they used to call a *ma'ah* 'kesitah'. What is the practical importance of this? — For explaining [the Scriptural expression] a hundred kesitah (Gen. 33:19)

19. Tosefta Yevamot 14:5 (PT Sotah 16, 15d) – R. Akiva said: When I once set sail at sea I saw a ship sink and was distressed because of a disciple of the sages that was aboard. When I arrived at the land of Cappadocia (PT reads: Mazaca of Cappadocia) I saw him sitting before me and asking questions of halakha, and I said to him: My son, how did you come up from the sea, and he said: a wave came...