

9ADAR RESOURCE: Land for a People or People for a Land?

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Source Sheet

Central Question: Does the Land of Israel have inherent holiness or is its purpose only functional?

Biblical Text

Text 1

Genesis 12:1-3

1) *The Lord said to Avram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.*
2) *I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you; I will make your name great, And you shall be a blessing.*
3) *I will bless those who bless you and curse him that curses you; And all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you."*

בראשית יב:א-ג

א) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרַאֲךָ.
ב) וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָדוֹל וְאַבְרָכָךָ וְאֶגְדְּלֶךָ שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה.
ג) וְאַבְרָכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אָרָר וּנְבָרְכוּ בְךָ כָּל מְשֻׁפְחוֹת הָאָדָמָה.

1a) Why is Avram (Avraham) commanded to go to the Land of Israel? How is the Land connected to his mission?

1b) What can take place in the Land of Israel that might not be possible anywhere else?

Conflicting Rabbinic Approaches

Text 2

Tosefta Avoda Zara, 4:3

A person should always live in the Land of Israel, even in a town which the majority of inhabitants are Gentiles, and not live abroad, even in a town which all the inhabitants are Jews. This teaches that living in the Land weighs as much as all of the commandments. Anyone who is buried in the Land of Israel is buried under the altar.

תוספתא מסכת עבודה זרה (צוקרמאנדל) פרק ד הלכה ג

ישרה אדם בארץ ישראל, ואפילו בעיר שרובה גוים, ולא בחוצה לארץ, ואפילו בעיר שכולה ישראל. מלמד ששיבת ארץ ישראל שקולה כנגד כל מצוות שבתורה וכל הקבור בארץ ישראל קבור תחת המזבח.

2a) Why would one's Jewish life be more meaningful in the Land of Israel without Jewish community than outside of the Land of Israel with Jewish community?

2b) What are the assumptions this text has about the value of the Land and Jewish identity?

Text 3

Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 111a

Anyone who resides in Eretz Yisrael is considered as one who has a God, and anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered as one who does not have a God. As it is stated: "To give to you the land of Canaan, to be your God." (Leviticus 25:38) And anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael has no God? Rather, this comes to tell you that anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered as though he is engaged in idol worship. And so it says with regard to David: "For they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave to the inheritance of the Lord, saying: Go, serve other gods." (I Samuel 26:19) But who said to David: Go, serve other gods? Rather, this comes to tell you that anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered as though he is engaged in idol worship.

תלמוד בבלי, כתובות קיא ע"א

שכל הדר בארץ ישראל דומה כמי שיש לו אלוה, וכל הדר בחוצה לארץ דומה כמי שאין לו אלוה שנא' "לתת לכם את ארץ כנען להיות לכם לאלהים." (ויקרא כה:לח) וכל שאינו דר בארץ אין לו אלוה? אלא לומר לך כל הדר בחו"ל כאילו עובד עבודת כוכבים וכן בדוד הוא אומר "כי גרשוני היום מהסתפח בנחלת ה' לאמר לך עבוד אלהים אחרים." (שמואל א כו:יט) וכי מי אמר לו לדוד לך עבוד אלהים אחרים? אלא לומר לך כל הדר בחו"ל כאילו עובד עבודת כוכבים.

3a) Why do you think the text compares living outside the Land of Israel to idolatry?

3b) What might living in the Land have to do with one's relationship with G-d?

3c) How might Land signify more than geography?

Text 4

Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 8a

Rav Hisda said as follows: What is the meaning of the verse: "The Lord loves the gates of Zion [Tziyyon] more than all the dwellings of Jacob"? (Psalms 87:2) This means that the Lord loves the gates distinguished [metzuyanim] through the study of halakha more than the synagogues and study halls.

Rabbi Hiyya bar Ami said in the name of Ulla: Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, Blessed be He, has only one place in His world, the four cubits of the halakha.

תלמוד בבלי, ברכות ח ע"א

אמר רב חסדא מאי דכתיב "אהב ה' שערי ציון מכל משכנות יעקב"? (תהילים פז:ב) אוהב ה' שערים המצויינים בהלכה יותר מבתי כנסיות ומבתי מדרשות.

והיינו דאמר רבי חייא בר אמי משמיה דעולא: מיום שחרב בית המקדש אין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו אלא ארבע אמות של הלכה בלבד.

4a) What is the effect of replacing "Zion" (Jerusalem) with a meaning that connotes excellence in Torah study?

4b) What is significant about limiting the Divine Presence to the four cubits of *halakha* (Jewish Law)?

The Centrality of the Land of Israel in Contemporary Zionism

Text 5.1

Rav Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook: Excerpt from "The Lights of the Land of Israel," Chapter 1, 1920.

The Land of Israel is not something external from the soul of the Jewish people; it is no mere national possession, serving as a means of unifying our people and buttressing its material or even its spiritual survival.

Eretz Yisrael is part of the very essence of our nationhood; it is bound organically to its very life and inner being. Human reason, even at its height, cannot begin to understand the unique holiness of Eretz Yisrael.

רב אברהם יצחק הכהן קוק: אורות ארץ ישראל, פרק א

ארץ ישראל איננה דבר חיצוני, קנין חיצוני לאומה, רק בתור אמצעי למטרה של ההתאגדות הכללית והחזקת קיומה החמרי או אפילו הרוחני.

ארץ ישראל היא חטיבה עצמותית קשורה בקשר חיים עם האומה, חבוקה בסגולות פנימיות עם מציאותה. ומתוך כך אי אפשר לעמוד על התוכן של סגולת קדושת ארץ ישראל.

Text 5.2

Leo Pinsker – Excerpt from *Auto-Emancipation*, 1916.

If we would have a secure home, give up our endless life of wandering and rise to the dignity of a nation in our own eyes and in the eyes of the world, we must, above all, not dream of restoring ancient Judaea. We must not attach ourselves to the place where our political life was once violently interrupted and destroyed. The goal of our present endeavors must be not the "Holy Land," but a land of our own. We need nothing but a large tract of land for our poor brothers, which shall remain our property and from which no foreign power can expel us. There we shall take with us the most sacred possessions which we have saved from the shipwreck of our former country, the God-idea and the Bible.

Source: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/quot-auto-emancipation-quot-leon-pinsker>

5a) How might these two approaches to land also reflect a fundamental debate about the purposes and goals of Zionism? Must the Land of Israel stand at the center of the Zionist project?

5b) How might these views reflect contemporary views of Israel today?

This Mahloket in Other Historical Contexts

The Meaning of Land: West Meets Not-West

Text 6.1

On the Law of War and Peace, written by the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius in 1625.

The property of subjects is under the eminent domain of the state, so that the state or those who act for it may use and even alienate and destroy such property, not only in the case of extreme necessity, in which even private persons have a right over the property of others, but for ends of public utility, to which ends those who founded civil society must be supposed to have intended that private ends should give way. But, when this is done, the state is bound to make good the loss to those who lose their property.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eminent_domain_in_the_United_States

MAHLOKET MATTERS

HOW TO DISAGREE CONSTRUCTIVELY



Text 6.2

Letter from a Cherokee named Aitooweyah to the Principal Chief of the Cherokees, named John Ross, 1830.

"We, the great mass of the people think only of the love we have to our land for...we do love the land where we were brought up. We will never let our hold to this land go...to let it go it will be like throwing away...[our] mother that gave...[us] birth."

Source: <http://www.powersource.com/cocinc/history/quotes.htm>

Text 6.3

Paula Gunn Allen (October 24, 1939 – May 29, 2008) a Native American poet of Laguna Pueblo and literary critic, activist professor, and novelist.

We are the land...that is the fundamental idea embedded in Native American life. The Earth is the mind of the people as we are the mind of the earth. The land is not really the place (separate from ourselves) where we act out the drama of our isolate destinies. It is not a means of survival, a setting for our affairs...It is rather a part of our being, dynamic, significant, real. It is our self..

It is not a matter of being 'close to nature'...The Earth is, in a very real sense, the same as our self (or selves)...That knowledge, though perfect, does not have associated with it the exalted romance of the sentimental 'nature lovers', nor does it have, at base, any self-conscious 'appreciation' of the land...It is a matter of fact, one known equably from infancy, remembered and honored at levels of awareness that go beyond consciousness, and that extend long roots into primary levels of mind, language, perception and all the basic aspects of being.

6a) What different approaches to land are reflected in these sources?

6b) How might these different sources about land help us understand the Jewish sources above?

Bringing this *Mahloket* into the Present

Please consider the following two questions:

7) Do you think that all Jews should aspire to live in Israel? Is Jewish life in the Land of Israel more meaningful than life in a strong Jewish community in the diaspora?

8) In your opinion, should Israel withdraw and remove Jewish residents from territories over the Green Line for the sake of a peace agreement with the Palestinians?

Thank you for participating! Please share your feedback at www.pardes.org.il/MM9Adar-feedback.



MAHLOKET MATTERS

HOW TO DISAGREE CONSTRUCTIVELY



Mahloket L'Shem Shamayim

In Jewish tradition, constructive conflict is known as *mahloket l'shem shamayim* (disagreements for the sake of Heaven). It includes:

- arguing the issues while respecting and maintaining good relationships with the other side,
- making sure that one's personal motivation is to come to the best solution and not just to 'win,'
- at times admitting to being wrong,
- acknowledging that sometimes both sides might be right.

See <http://elmad.pardes.org/g-dcast> to learn more.

Mahloket Matters: How to Disagree Constructively

Utilizing Jewish texts and wisdom, *Mahloket Matters: How to Disagree Constructively* seeks to increase people's motivation and ability to understand and engage more constructively with opinions that differ from their own, thereby contributing to improved personal relationships as well as civil discourse. See <http://www.pardes.org.il/MM>.

9Adar: Jewish Week of Constructive Conflict

The 9Adar Project: Jewish Week of Constructive Conflict seeks to cultivate a culture of constructive conflict across personal, political, religious and other divides. The 9th of the Hebrew month of Adar marks the day that approximately two-thousand years ago healthy disagreements "for the sake of Heaven" turned destructive. It serves as a powerful reminder of what can happen when these values and skills are neglected.

The 9Adar Project was created in 2013 by Rabbi Dr. Daniel Roth, founder of the *Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict Resolution*, and since then hundreds of schools, campuses, synagogues, Jewish organizations, and conflict resolution organizations have participated. See <https://www.9adar.org/> for more information and resources.

The Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies

The Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies is an open, inclusive, diverse and intellectually challenging Jewish learning community based in Jerusalem with programs worldwide. Students of all ages encounter and grapple with classic texts and traditions of Judaism, while exploring their relevance to today's most pressing issues. Pardes offers year, semester, short-term, and drop-in learning experiences in Jerusalem as well as events throughout the world and on-line. Learn more at: <http://pardes.org.il/programs>.

