



The Role of Land in Jewish Identity

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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.	א) ויאמר ה' אל־אברם לך־לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל־הארץ אשר אראך:
2) I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you; I will make your name great, And you shall be a blessing.	ב) ואעשך לגוי גדול ואברכך ואגדלה שמך והיה ברכה:
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."	ג) ואברכה מברכך ומקללך אאר ונברכו בך כל משפחת האדמה:

Rabbinic Approaches

Part A

2. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ketubot 110b

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.	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.
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3. Tosefta, Avoda Zara, 4:3

<p>A person should always live in the Land of Israel, even in a town in which the majority of inhabitants are Gentiles, and not live abroad, even in a town in 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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
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Part B

4. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot 8a

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>והיינו דאמר רבי חייא בר אמי משמיה דעולא: מיום שחרב בית המקדש אין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו אלא ארבע אמות של הלכה בלבד.</p>
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5. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah 29a

<p>They were exiled to Babylonia, and the Divine Presence went with them, as it is stated: "For your sake I have sent to Babylonia" (Isaiah 43:14). So too, when, in the future, they will be redeemed, the Divine Presence will be with them, as it is stated: "Then the Lord your God will return with your captivity" (Deuteronomy 30:3). It does not state: He will bring back, i.e., He will cause the Jewish people to return, but rather it says: "He will return," which teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will return together with them from among the various exiles. The Gemara asks: Where in Babylonia does the Divine Presence reside? Abaye said: In the synagogue of Huzal and in the synagogue that was moved and resettled in Neharde'a.</p>	<p>גלו לבבל שכינה עמהן שנאמר (ישעיהו מג, יד) למענכם שלחתי בבלה ואף כשהן עתידין ליגאל שכינה עמהן שנאמר (דברים ל, ג) ושב ה' אלהיך את שבותך והשיב לא נאמר אלא ושב מלמד שהקב"ה שב עמהן מבין הגלויות בבבל היכא אמר אביי בבי כנישתא דהוצל ובבי כנישתא דשף וייתיב בנהרדעא.</p>
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Contemporary Approaches to the Meaning of Land

6. 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.

7. 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."