

# *Calls for a Return to Zion and Opposition to Life Outside the Land* *Prof. Isaiah Gafni*



## **1. 2 Maccabees 1:1-6**

The Jews in Jerusalem and those in the land of Judea,  
To their Jewish kindred in Egypt, Greetings and true peace.

May God do good to you, and may he remember his covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, his faithful servants. May he give you all a heart to worship him and to do his will with a strong heart and a willing spirit. May he open your heart to his law and his commandments, and may he bring peace. May he hear your prayers and be reconciled to you, and may he not forsake you in time of evil. We are now praying for you here.

## **2. 2 Maccabees 1:18**

Since on the twenty-fifth day of Chislev we shall celebrate the purification of the temple, we thought it necessary to notify you, in order that you also may celebrate the festival of booths and the festival of the fire given when Nehemiah, who built the temple and the altar, offered sacrifice

## **3. 2 Maccabees 2:16-18**

Since, therefore, we are about to celebrate the purification, we write to you. Will you therefore please keep the days? It is God who has saved all his people, and has returned the inheritance to all, and the kingship and the priesthood (cf. Ex.19:6 - "A kingdom of priests) and the consecration, as he promised through the law. We have hope in God that he will soon have mercy on us and will gather us from everywhere under heaven into his holy place, for he has rescued us from great evils and has purified the place.

#### **4. Josephus, Apion 2:38**

His (=Apion's) astonishment at the idea of Jews being called Alexandrians betrays similar stupidity. All persons invited to join a colony, however different their nationality, take the name of the founders. It is needless to go outside our race for instances. Our Jewish residents in Antioch are called Antiochenes, having been granted rights of citizenship by its founder Seleucus...For it was not lack of inhabitants to people this city (i.e. Alexandria), whose foundation he had so much at heart, that led Alexander to assemble in it a colony of our nation. This privilege he conferred on our people, after thorough and careful scrutiny, as a reward of valour and fidelity... Alexander's opinion of the Jews of Alexandria was shared by Ptolemy, son of Lagus. He entrusted the fortresses of Egypt to their keeping, confident of their loyalty and bravery as guards. And when he was anxious to strengthen his hold upon Cyrene and the other cities of Libya, he sent out a party of Jews to settle there.

#### **5. Philo, Flaccus 46**

For so populous are the Jews that no one country can hold them, and therefore they settle in very many of the most prosperous countries in Europe and Asia both in the islands and on the mainland. And while they hold the Holy City, where stands the sacred Temple of the most high God, to be their mother city, yet those which are theirs by inheritance from their fathers, grandfathers and ancestors even farther back, are in each case accounted by them to be their fatherland, in which they were born and reared, while to some of them they have come at the time of their foundation as immigrants to the satisfaction of the founders.

#### **6. 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.

#### **7. 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 famine.

**(cf. Ex. Rabbah 42:3)**

A disciple of R. Shimon b. Yohai went abroad and returned wealthy, and the students saw him and were jealous and wished also to go abroad. R. Shimon saw this and took them to a valley near Miron. He prayed: O valley fill up with golden dinars; golden dinars poured forth. He said to them: If it is gold you desire, behold here is your gold, take it. But be aware that anyone who takes now, it is his reward in the world to come that he takes...)

**8. 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).

**9. 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)

**10. 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, do you wish to follow in his steps? And some say he replied: Your brother abandoned his mother's bosom (חיק אמו) and embraced a foreign bosom (חיק נכריה) - blessed is God that killed him, do you wish to follow in his steps?

**11. PT Kilayim 9: 32c; Gen. Rabbah 74:1 BT Ket. 111a**

R. Shimon b. Laqish ( var. R. Levi) said: "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. 116:9) - But are not 'the lands of the living' Tyre and its environs, Caesarea and its environs, [for] there (everything is) cheap. there there is abundance?! (Pesikta. Rabbati 1, p. 2b adds: "Now is the Land of Israel really the land of the living? Do not men die in it?). R. Shimon b. Laqish in the name of Bar Qapparah said: [The Psalmist means] a land whose dead will come to life first in the days of the Messiah. On what (scriptural) basis? - "Who gives breath to the people upon it" (Isaiah 42:5).

### **12. PT Kilayim, idem**

But if so our sages in the golah have lost out! R. Simai said: The Holy One Blessed be He, will bore through the earth before them and they will roll through like wine-skins and when they arrive in Eretz Israel their souls return to them (cf. BT Ket. 111a - R. Elai said: [they will be revived by rolling (ע"י גלגול)]. R. Abba Sala the great demurred: Will not the rolling be painful to the righteous? Abayye said: Tunnels (מחילות) will be made for them in the ground).

### **13. 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 =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 וכפר אדמתו עמו)

### **14. BT Ketubot 110b - 111a**

R. Zera was avoiding Rav Judah, for he (Zera) wished to go up to the Land of Israel, and Rav Judah said: All who go up from Babylonia to the Land of Israel transgress a positive commandment, for it says: "They shall be carried to Babylon and there they shall remain until I remember them, said the Lord" (Jer. 27;22). [And how might] R. Zera [respond]? That scripture refers to the vessels of ministry! [What scripture then supports] Rav Judah? There is another scripture: "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem...[that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till it please" (Song of Songs 2:7)], And R. Zera? [He would reply that] this scripture refers to the prohibition of going up as a wall ( i.e. en masse).

### **15. Tosefta Bava Qamma 7:3 (Lieberman p. 291)**

Why were Israel exiled to Babylonia more than all other lands? Because the house of Abraham our patriarch is from there. To what might this be likened? To a woman who has misbehaved towards her husband. To where does he send her? To her father's home! (cf. BT Pesahim 87b).