

Part One: The First Experience of Exile (15 minutes)

In the Bible, the Book of Jeremiah describes how the People of Israel were sent into exile in Babylon for seventy years. Jeremiah was a prophet during the reign of King Josiah in the 6th century BCE. He was among the F9:1;99G K C after the destruction of the First Temple.

Text #2: Jeremiah 29:10-14. English translation [bold text] and abridged commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

כִּי־כֹה אָמַר ה' כִּי לֹא־יָמְלוּ לְבָבֶל שְׁבַע־עִים שָׁנָה אֶפְקֹד אֶתְכֶם וְהִקְמַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־דְּבַר־יְהוָה הַטּוֹב לְהַשִּׁיב אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה:
כִּי־אֲנֹכִי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־הַמַּחְשְׁבֹת אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי חָשַׁב עֲלֵיכֶם נְאֻם־ה' מִחֻשְׁבוֹת שְׁלוֹם וְלֹא לְרָעָה לְתַת לָכֶם אֶת־הָרִית וְתִקְוָה:
וְיִרְאוּתֶם אֹתִי וְהִלַּכְתֶּם וְהִתְפַּלַּלְתֶּם אֵלַי וְשָׁמַעְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם:
וְבִקְשַׁתֶּם אֹתִי וּמְצֵאתֶם כִּי תִדְרֹשְׁנִי בְּכָל־לְבַבְכֶם:
וְנִמְצָאתִי לָכֶם נְאֻם־ה' וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוּתְכֶם [שְׁבוּתְכֶם] וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וּמִכָּל־הַמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדְחִיתִי אֶתְכֶם שָׁם נְאֻם־ה' וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר־הִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִשָּׁם:

10 For so said the Lord: For at the completion of seventy years for Nebuchadnezzar's empire in Babylon, I will remember you, and I will fulfill for you My good word to restore you to this place. 11 For I know the designs that I am devising in your regard — the utterance of the Lord — designs of peace and not for evil, to give you a remnant and hope. I want you to prosper and thrive. **12 You will call Me and you will go, and you will pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek Me and you will find, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 And I will be found for you;** I will make Myself available to you and will answer you — **the utterance of the Lord — and I will restore your returnees to their former status, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I banished you — the utterance of the Lord — and I will restore you to the place from which I exiled you.** Now is your opportunity to return to God and worship Him with all your heart.

Ask:

1. Who is speaking in this text, and why is that significant? What is being promised? What are the terms and conditions of exile?
2. If the Exile lasted seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10), how many generations do you think came and passed in that time? Would that generation gap be enough to make living in Babylon “normal” and the homeland a more distant memory?
3. Do you think anyone in the first generation of the Exile believed that their children or grandchildren would return? How might this Exile have affected the culture of the exiled people if it had been described as permanent, rather than only seventy years?

This journey into exile, and the return from exile years later, was in many ways the origin of the Jewish diaspora. The first test of going into exile was whether we would survive as a people without a land. Peoplehood and Land are strongly connected. In order to survive as a people outside of their land, it was imperative to balance the longing for the old life, the hopes for a bright future, and the ability to make the best out of the in-between period.

This push and pull between longing for return and looking forward to the future is present in every era of Jewish history, from biblical times to the present day. Let's now compare the Babylonian Exile to later instances of Jewish life outside the Land of Israel.

Part Two: From Exile to Diaspora (20 minutes)

Text #3 is also from the Book of Jeremiah. As you read it, keep in mind Text #2, and compare them.

Text #3: Jeremiah 29:4-7. English translation [bold text] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

כִּי אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכָל־הַגּוֹלְיָה אֲשֶׁר־הִגַּלְתִּי מִירוּשָׁלַם בְּבָבֶלָה: בְּנֵי בָתִּים וְשָׁבוּ וְנִטְעְנוּ גִּבּוֹת וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־פְּרִיָן: קָחוּ נָשִׁים וְהוֹלִידוּ בָנִים וּבָנוֹת וְקָחוּ לְבָנֵיכֶם נָשִׁים וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֵיכֶם תִּנּוּ לְאִנְשֵׁים וְתִלְדְּנָה בָנִים וּבָנוֹת וּרְבוּ־שָׁם וְאֶל־תִּמְעָטוּ: וְדַרְשׂוּ אֶת־שְׁלוֹם הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר הִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ בְעַדָּהּ אֵלַי: כִּי בְשָׁלוֹמָהּ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שְׁלוֹם:

4 So said the Lord of hosts, God of Israel, to the entire exile that I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses, and dwell in permanent residences, and plant gardens, and eat their fruit. It is advisable for you to engage in agriculture for your livelihoods, and you should even plant for the long term, as your stay in Babylon will not be brief. **6 Take wives, and beget sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, and they will bear sons and daughters; and you will multiply there, and do not be diminished.** You should settle in the land, bear children, and live normal lives, as a lengthy exile awaits you. Therefore, there is no point in living in anticipation of your imminent return to your land. **7 And moreover, seek the peace of the city to which I exiled you, and pray to the Lord on its behalf.** You are now citizens of another state, and you must pray for that country's welfare, **as in its peace there will be peace for you.**

Ask:

1. Who is speaking in this text, and why is that significant? What is being promised? How is this different from the implications of Text #2?
2. Does this difference in attitude surprise you? How and why?
3. What might this text tell us about the individual's responsibility for the survival of the Jewish People?

It is interesting to note that the permission to build a life in exile appears in Jeremiah 29:4-7, before the promise of return in 29:10-14. This encouragement to live and thrive seems at odds with the idea of a promised return. In fact, many Jews settled in Babylon beyond the end of the Exile. Jeremiah acknowledges that even when there is no choice but to go *into* exile, you don't have to choose to live in mourning and sackcloth for generations. Instead, you can build community and continue living as Jews even when in another country.

What happens, then, when the years of exile come to an end? This is described in Text #4, from The Book of Ezra. Ezra the Scribe was a priest in the 5th century BCE. The Book of Ezra describes how the exiled Jews living in Babylon returned to Jerusalem and to Jewish traditions, under the guidance of Ezra. Text #5 is a commentary from Rashi on this text. Rashi lived in France in the 11th century. He is the most important commentator on the Bible and Talmud, and one of the most famous scholars in Jewish history. Text #6 is a commentary on The Book of Ezra by Rabbi Steinsaltz.

Ask participants to read Texts #4, #5, and #6 together in *chavruta*.

Chavruta is partnered learning. Learning with a friend or two allows you to share ideas and insights with one another as you read and discuss texts together.

Text #4: Ezra 1:1-4. English translation [bold text] and abridged commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

ובשנת אמת לכורש מלך פרס לקלות דבריה' מפי ירמיה הנביר ה' את-רוח פרש מלך-פרס ויעבר-קול בכל-מלכותו וגם-במכתב לאמר: כה אמר פרש מלך פרס כל ממלכות הארץ נתן לי ה' אלקי השמים והוא-פקד עלי לבנות-ליו בית בירושלם אשר ביהודה: מי-בכם מפל-עמו יקי אלקיו עמו ויעל לירושלם אשר ביהודה ויבן את-בית ה' אלקי ישראל הוא האלקים אשר בירושלם: וכל-הנשאֹר מפל-המקמות אשר הוא גר-שם ינשא-והו אנשי מקמו בקסף ובזהב וברכוש ובבהמה עם-הנזדָּה לבית האלקים אשר בירושלם

1 It was **in the first year** of the newly-independent rule of **Cyrus, king of Persia, once** the end of the allotted time according to **the word of the Lord from the mouth of Jeremiah, had been fulfilled**. Jeremiah had predicted that the exiles would return from Babylonia after seventy years. In that year, **the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, and he, Cyrus, circulated a proclamation throughout his entire kingdom. And** Cyrus not only issued an oral declaration, but he put it **also in writing, saying, 2 So said Cyrus, king of Persia: The Lord, God of the heavens, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth.** My reign is a gift from the Lord, the God of Israel. **And He has commanded me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.** This command came to me from God, and I wish to fulfill it. 3 The previous declaration had certain practical ramifications: **Any among you from His entire people,** the people of the God of heaven, the Jewish nation, **may his God be with him, and he may go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the House of the Lord, God of Israel, He is the God who is in Jerusalem...**[Cyrus] did not decree that all Jews must go back to their land. Rather, he called upon those Jews who felt as he did, that the Temple should be rebuilt, and invited them to arise and travel to Israel out of their own desire. 4 **Whoever remains, from any place where he resides, let the people of his place load him with silver, with gold, with goods, and with livestock, along with the gift to the house of God that is in Jerusalem.**

Text #5: Rashi. Commentary on Ezra 1:3-4.

וכל הנשאר. וכל יהודי הנשאר במקומו שלא יוכל לעלות מהמת שאין לו ממון: **ינשא-והו.** מצוה אני לאנשי מקומו שיעניקוהו וינשא-והו בכסף ובזהב ורכוש ובהמות למען יוכל לעלות לירושלים עם הנדבה אשר יתנדבו אנשי מקומו לבנין הבית שאף האומות יש בהם אשר היו מתנדבים נדבה לבנין הבית: לבית האלקים אשר בירושלים

And all that remains. And every Jew who remains in his place cannot immigrate because he has no money: **They will marry him.** I command the people of his place to give him and marry him with money and gold and property and cattle so that he can go up to Jerusalem with the donation, which the people of his place will volunteer for the building of the house, To the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

Text #6: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. Commentary on Ezra 1:4. English translation [bold text] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

It was clear to Cyrus that not all Jews would respond to his call, as Babylonia was far from the Land of Israel, and the journey was grueling. Therefore, he said: **Whoever** of the Jews **remains, from any place where he,** one who has decided to return to the Land of Israel, **resides, let the people of his place load him,** thereby helping financially, by providing him **with silver, with gold, with goods, and with livestock, along with** a contribution toward **the gift to the house of God that is in Jerusalem.** Cyrus exhorted any Jews who had decided not to return to at least help those who had chosen to go. He even urged them to send a free-will offering to Jerusalem. Cyrus may or may not have known that the returning Jews were about to encounter a virtually desolate land. However, he realized they would require more money than mere travel expenses. In addition, Cyrus himself, along with several other kings, donated money and goods to the Temple, and was adamant that the Jews themselves should participate in this voluntary enterprise. Thus Cyrus' statement was more than just the granting of permission for Jews to return to the Land of Israel. He was actively encouraging them to return, to build the Temple, and to establish for themselves a national home.

The Making of a Wandering People

► Ask in *chavruta*:

1. Ezra anticipates that Jews in exile may very well not return, referring to “all who stay behind”. Does this surprise you? How is this different from what Jeremiah envisions for the future of the exiled Jews?
2. Rashi presents one possible explanation as to why some people may not return to Israel. What do you think could be some other reasons not to return?
3. These texts suggest that it is acceptable to not return. Do you agree with that? Why or why not?

► Bring the group back together and have a few of the *chavruta* pairs share their answers.

Between the times of Jeremiah and Ezra, a part of the Jewish People went from seeing themselves as a nation in exile to seeing themselves as a nation able to live outside The Land of Israel, even when return was a possibility.

These texts suggest that The Exile, as an early example of that unwilling expulsion from the homeland, did not destroy the Jewish Nation. Instead, that first forced displacement forged the Jewish trait of resilience. Through that resilience and their portable culture, the Jewish People began the process of adapting to life in diaspora.

Part Three: Diaspora (20 minutes)

Text #7 is a poem by Yehudah HaLevi (c.1075–1141) about his life in the diaspora. A Jewish poet and philosopher who lived in both Muslim and Christian Spain, he left in 1140 for Israel and died shortly after arriving there.

Text #7: Yehudah HaLevi, “My Heart is in the East”.

לְבִי בְּמִזְרַח וְאַנְכִי בְּסוֹף מַעֲרָב
אֵיךְ אֶטְעָמָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶכֶל וְאֵיךְ יִעָרֵב
אֵיכָה אֲשַׁלֵּם נְדָרַי וְאֶסְרִי, בְּעוֹד
צִיּוֹן בְּתַקְלָל אֲדוֹם וְאֲנִי בְּכַבְּלֵי עֲרָב
יִקַּל בְּעֵינַי עֹזֵב כֹּל טוֹב סְפָרַד, כְּמוֹ
יִקַּר בְּעֵינַי רְאוּת עִפְרוֹת דְּבִיר גְּתֵרֵב

My heart is in the East, yet I am in the utmost West
How can I taste the food I eat, could it bring me any rest?
The vows and oaths I’ve sworn, can I heed them as I must
When Zion’s bound with Christian rope and I with Arab chains?
It seems as easy in my eyes to leave the charms of Spain,
As precious as my eyes would find the ruined Temple’s dust.

► Ask:

1. How does HaLevi feel living in Spain? What do you think he means by “the charms of Spain”?
2. When this poem was written, HaLevi had never been to Israel. What is he longing for?
3. Do you think this longing is common among those who lived outside of Israel in the past?
4. How did people live in the diaspora? Did they long for Israel? Did they forget Israel and move on with their lives?

HaLevi speaks of a longing for the Land of Israel which prevents him from fully enjoying life in Spain. Yet, there are others who did not feel the diaspora in the same way.

The Making of a Wandering People

Text #8 is from the prophet Micah, who lived in the 7th century BCE, and is a well-known verse that has been used in songs and poetry for centuries. Rabbi Jacob ben Meir, better known as Rabbenu Tam, was a 12th century French authority on Jewish Law and a grandson of Rashi. In Text #9, he writes about Jews living in Bari and Otranto (cities in what is now Italy), using a reference to Micah.

Text #8: Micah 4:2. English translation by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

וְהָלְכוּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים וְאָמְרוּ לְכוּ | וְנַעֲלֶה אֶל־הַר־ה' | וְאֶל־בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּזְרְנוּ מִדְּרָכָיו וְנִלְכְּהָ בְּאַרְחֵיהֶם כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וְדְבַר־ה' מִירוּשָׁלַם:

And the many nations shall go and shall say: “Come, Let us go up to the Mount of the LORD, To the House of the God of Jacob; That He may instruct us in His ways, And that we may walk in His paths.” For instruction shall come forth from Zion, The word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Text #9: Rabbenu Tam. *Sefer Hayashar*, Chapter 706, Page 90.

כי מבארי תצא תורה ודבר ה' מאוטרנטו.

For out of Bari shall go forth the Law and the word of the Lord from Otranto.

➤ Ask:

1. What do you think Rabbenu Tam means when he makes this reference to the verse from Micah?
2. If one is successful building a new life in a new place, will there still be a longing for the old place?
3. How does the continued connection to Torah help the Jews to exist outside The Land of Israel?

Micah, who lived nearly 150 years before the destruction of the Temple, made the now-famous statement that the Torah emanates from the Land of Israel. Rabbenu Tam references this line and subverts it, saying that the Torah might indeed emanate from Otranto and Bari. This is a very interesting text because it seems almost sacrilegious to compare Bari and Otranto to Zion and Jerusalem. Rabbenu Tam demonstrates how those who adapted to a new reality were able to build new communities from which Torah (in the broadest sense) was alive and well. After all, you may be exiled from a specific land, but you are not exiled from Judaism, from being a Jew.

Rabbenu Tam points out that, even though they were waiting for a chance to return to the Land of Israel someday, the 12th century Jews in Otranto and Bari felt at home outside of Israel. This interpretation is seen in other instances, for example in Renaissance Italy. There are many examples from different time periods, showing different approaches to living in diaspora. One such occasion is described by Dr. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (1932-2009), a rabbi, historian, and professor of Jewish History at Harvard and Columbia Universities.

Text #10: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. “Exile and Expulsion in Jewish History”, *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*. Benjamin R. Gampel, ed. Columbia University Press, New York, 1997.

In 1526, in Siena, Italy, the banker Ishmael da Rieti, whose home is described as “a sanctuary for Torah and science,” was visited by the messianic adventurer David Reuveni to whom he offered hospitality but no financial assistance for his project. Reuveni reports: “I said to him — ‘What do you want? Jerusalem, or to stay where you are?’ And he replied — ‘I have no desire for Jerusalem, and neither will or craving, except for Siena.’”

The Making of a Wandering People

➤ Ask:

1. How might Texts #8 and #9 change your perception of Jewish life in exile in Babylon? In the 12th century? In the 16th century? Today?
2. When making choices about moving to a new place, how might your connection to the Jewish People factor into your decisions? In what ways could you make that connection from a new environment?
3. In moving from one place to another, what — if anything — do you retain from the “old place” and the “old you”?
4. How might a wandering nation retain a connection to its place of origin?

Professor Yerushalmi’s research suggests that, whereas some people may feel their Jewish existence outside of the Land of Israel is something deeply painful, others settle into and love their new countries, having no longing for and no desire to return to Jerusalem. Even though it is acknowledged and the precedent set that we can stay “away” from the place we should “return” to, for some there is still a tug on the psyche to connect with that sense of return.

Conclusion: The Wandering People (10 minutes)

Throughout the centuries, wherever Jews are living — whether by choice or because they had been forced to leave Israel — they are able to build new lives and new communities. In different places and time periods, there were different means of connecting with Judaism, but throughout history the Jewish People were able to connect to each other through shared culture and shared journeys, which allowed for the survival of their Jewish identity.

So how can a nation or a people exist in diaspora? The portability of the Torah, Jewish Law, and Jewish thought through the journeys of exile and diaspora enables the Jewish people to move across the continents while retaining a collective identity as a people. Rabbi Steinsaltz writes:

➤ Read Text #11 aloud.

Text #11: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. *Passover: The Festival of Freedom.*

In all the years of exile and wandering, Jews had to make peace with their inability to be masters of their own fate in many areas of life, but their exile was not complete because they did not regard themselves as inferior. As long as they retained and nurtured their inner core, their spiritual life not only consoled them, but also served as their homeland, a refuge that could be neither harmed nor diminished.

➤ Ask:

1. What is Rabbi Steinsaltz’s understanding of how the People of Israel are the Nation of Israel? Do you agree with him? Why or why not? How might this change your perception of Jewish Peoplehood?
2. What are some of the similarities and differences you’ve seen in the journeys we’ve discussed today? Do you see any similarities with other major moments in the diaspora in recent times?
3. Has this discussion changed your understanding of Diaspora and Jewish wandering? How and why?

Introduction

Text #1: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. “Do We Have Our Own Set of Character Traits?” *We Jews*.

The Jewish people have suffered in a particular way from deliberate campaigns of destruction, from the wars of Bar Kokhba until our own time. But on the other hand, the Jewish people have also had many advantages with regard to their physical existence. Their exiled state, in spite of its inherent difficulties, provided the Jews with the possibility—which most inhabitants of other countries did not have—of wandering and migrating from place to place. Moreover, it also gave them a certain kind of flexibility and made them capable of adapting to new conditions, as other people were not. For example, nations that were composed mainly of farmers bound to their land were extremely vulnerable to every natural disaster that befell them, whereas the Jews were not affected by such catastrophes.

Part One: The First Experience of Exile

Text #2: Jeremiah 29:10-14. English translation [bold text] and abridged commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

כִּי-כֹה אָמַר ה' כִּי לִפְנֵי מִלְאֵת לְבַבְךָ שְׁבָעִים שָׁנָה אֶפְקֹד אֶתְכֶם וְהִקְמַתִי עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת-דִּבְרֵי הַטּוֹב לְהָשִׁיב אֶתְכֶם אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה:
 כִּי אֲנֹכִי יָרָעְתִי אֶת-הַמְחֻשְׁבֹּת אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי חָשַׁב עֲלֵיכֶם נְאֻם-ה' מִחֻשְׁבוֹת שְׁלוֹם וְלֹא לְרָעָה לְתַתּ לָכֶם אֶת־רֵיחַ הַתְּקוּהָ:
 וַיִּקְרָאתֶם אֹתִי וְהִלַּכְתֶּם וְהִתְפַּלַּלְתֶּם אֵלַי וְשָׁמַעְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם:
 וּבִקְשַׁתֶּם אֹתִי וַיִּמְצְאֶתְכֶם כִּי תִדְרֹשׁוּנִי בְּכָל-לְבַבְכֶם:
 וְנִמְצְאֹתִי לָכֶם נְאֻם-ה' וְשָׁבַתִי אֶת-שְׁבִיַתְכֶם [שְׁבוּתְכֶם] וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֲתֶכֶם מִכָּל-הַגּוֹיִם וּמִכָּל-הַמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדְחִיתִי אֶתְכֶם שָׁם נְאֻם-ה' וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם
 אֲשֶׁר-הִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִשָּׁם:

10 For so said the Lord: For at the completion of seventy years for Nebuchadnezzar’s empire in Babylon, I will remember you, and I will fulfill for you My good word to restore you to this place. 11 For I know the designs that I am devising in your regard – the utterance of the Lord – designs of peace and not for evil, to give you a remnant and hope. I want you to prosper and thrive. **12 You will call Me and you will go, and you will pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek Me and you will find, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 And I will be found for you; I will make Myself available to you and will answer you – the utterance of the Lord – and I will restore your returnees to their former status, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I banished you – the utterance of the Lord – and I will restore you to the place from which I exiled you.** Now is your opportunity to return to God and worship Him with all your heart.

Part Two: From Exile to Diaspora

Text #3: Jeremiah 29:4-7. English translation [**bold text**] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

כֹּה אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכֹל־הַגּוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר־הִגַּלְתִּי מִירוּשָׁלַם בָּבֶלָה: בְּנֵי בָתִּים וְשָׁבוּ וְנִטְעֵנוּ גֵזְזִים וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־פְּרִיָן: קָחוּ נָשִׁים וְהוֹלִידוּ בָנִים וּבָנוּת וְקָחוּ לְבָנֵיכֶם נָשִׁים וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֵיכֶם תִּנּוּ לְאֻנָּשִׁים וְתִלְדְּנָה בָנִים וּבָנוּת וּרְבוּ־שָׁם וְאֵל־תִּמְעָטוּ: וְדַרְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׁלוֹם הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר הִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ בְעַדָּהּ אֵלַי: כִּי בְשָׁלוֹמָהּ יִהְיֶה לְכֶם שְׁלוֹם:

4 So said the Lord of hosts, God of Israel, to the entire exile that I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses, and dwell in permanent residences, **and plant gardens, and eat their fruit.** It is advisable for you to engage in agriculture for your livelihoods, and you should even plant for the long term, as your stay in Babylon will not be brief. **6 Take wives, and beget sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, and they will bear sons and daughters; and you will multiply there, and do not be diminished.** You should settle in the land, bear children, and live normal lives, as a lengthy exile awaits you. Therefore, there is no point in living in anticipation of your imminent return to your land. **7 And moreover, seek the peace of the city to which I exiled you, and pray to the Lord on its behalf.** You are now citizens of another state, and you must pray for that country's welfare, **as in its peace there will be peace for you.**

Text #4: Ezra 1:1-4. English translation [**bold text**] and abridged commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

וּבְשַׁעֲת אֲחֻת לְכוּרְשָׁל מֶלֶךְ פָּרְס לְקִלּוֹת דְּבַר־ה' מִפִּי יְרֻמְנָה הַעִיר ה' אֶת־רוּחַ כְּרִשׁ מֶלֶךְ־פָּרְס וַיַּעֲבֵר־קוֹל בְּכָל־מַלְכוּתוֹ וְגַם־בְּמַמְלַכְתּוֹ לֵאמֹר: כֹּה אָמַר בֶּרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרְס בַּל מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ גָּמַן לִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהוּא־פָקֵד עָלַי לְבָנוֹת־לֵוֹ בְּיַד בִּירוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בִּיהִנֵּנָה וְיָבוּ אֶת־בֵּית ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם: וְכִלְיֵה־הַנְּשָׂאָר מִכָּל־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אֲשֶׁר הוּא גָר־שָׁם יִנְשְׂאוּהוּ אֲנֹשֵׁי מְקוֹמוֹ בְּכֶסֶף וּבַזָּהָב וּבְכִרְוֹשׁ וּבְכֶהֱמָה עִם־הַנְּדָבָה לְבֵית הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

1 It was **in the first year** of the newly-independent rule of **Cyrus, king of Persia, once** the end of the allotted time according to **the word of the Lord from the mouth of Jeremiah, had been fulfilled.** Jeremiah had predicted that the exiles would return from Babylonia after seventy years. In that year, **the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, and he, Cyrus, circulated a proclamation throughout his entire kingdom.** And Cyrus not only issued an oral declaration, but he put it **also in writing, saying, 2 So said Cyrus, king of Persia: The Lord, God of the heavens, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth.** My reign is a gift from the Lord, the God of Israel. **And He has commanded me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.** This command came to me from God, and I wish to fulfill it. 3 The previous declaration had certain practical ramifications: **Any among you from His entire people,** the people of the God of heaven, the Jewish nation, **may his God be with him, and he may go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the House of the Lord, God of Israel, He is the God who is in Jerusalem...**[Cyrus] did not decree that all Jews must go back to their land. Rather, he called upon those Jews who felt as he did, that the Temple should be rebuilt, and invited them to arise and travel to Israel out of their own desire. **4 Whoever remains, from any place where he resides, let the people of his place load him with silver, with gold, with goods, and with livestock, along with the gift to the house of God that is in Jerusalem.**

Text #5: Rashi. Commentary on Ezra 1:3-4.

וכל הנשאר. וכל יהודי הנשאר במקומו שלא יוכל לעלות מחמת שאין לו ממון: ינשאוהו. מצוה אני לאנשי מקומו שיעניקוהו וינשאוהו בכסף ובוזהב ורכוש ובהמות למען יוכל לעלות לירושלים עם הנדבה אשר יתנדבו אנשי מקומו לבנין הבית שאף האומות יש בהם אשר היו מתנדבים נדבה לבנין הבית: לבית האלקים אשר בירושלים.

And all that remains. And every Jew who remains in his place cannot immigrate because he has no money: **They will marry him.** I command the people of his place to give him and marry him with money and gold and property and cattle so that he can go up to Jerusalem with the donation, which the people of his place will volunteer for the building of the house, To the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

Text #6: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. Commentary on Ezra 1:4. English translation [bold text] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

It was clear to Cyrus that not all Jews would respond to his call, as Babylonia was far from the Land of Israel, and the journey was grueling. Therefore, he said: **Whoever** of the Jews **remains, from any place where he**, one who has decided to return to the Land of Israel, **resides, let the people of his place load him**, thereby helping financially, by providing him **with silver, with gold, with goods, and with livestock, along with** a contribution toward **the gift to the house of God that is in Jerusalem**. Cyrus exhorted any Jews who had decided not to return to at least help those who had chosen to go. He even urged them to send a free-will offering to Jerusalem. Cyrus may or may not have known that the returning Jews were about to encounter a virtually desolate land. However, he realized they would require more money than mere travel expenses. In addition, Cyrus himself, along with several other kings, donated money and goods to the Temple, and was adamant that the Jews themselves should participate in this voluntary enterprise. Thus Cyrus' statement was more than just the granting of permission for Jews to return to the Land of Israel. He was actively encouraging them to return, to build the Temple, and to establish for themselves a national home.

Part Three: Diaspora

Text #7: Yehudah HaLevi, "My Heart is in the East".

לְבִי בְּמִזְרַח וְאַנְכִי בְּסוֹף מַעֲרָב
 אֵיךְ אֶטְעָמָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶכֶל וְאֵיךְ יַעֲרֵב
 אֵיכָה אֲשַׁלֵּם נְדָרֵי וְאֶסְרִי, בְּעוֹד
 צִיּוֹן בְּחֶבֶל אֲדוּם וְאֲנִי בְּכַבֵּל עֲרָב
 יִקַּל בְּעֵינַי עֹזב כֹּל טוֹב סִפְרַד, כְּמוֹ
 יִקַּר בְּעֵינַי רְאוֹת עִפְרוֹת דְּבִיר נְהָרָב

My heart is in the East, yet I am in the utmost West
 How can I taste the food I eat, could it bring me any rest?
 The vows and oaths I've sworn, can I heed them as I must
 When Zion's bound with Christian rope and I with Arab chains?
 It seems as easy in my eyes to leave the charms of Spain,
 As precious as my eyes would find the ruined Temple's dust



The Making of a Wandering People

Text #8: Micah 4:2. English translation by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in *The Steinsaltz Tanakh*, Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

וְהָלְכוּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים וְאָמְרוּ לָכֵן | וְנִשְׁעָלָה אֶל־הַר־ה' וְאֶל־בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּזְכְּרוּ וַיִּזְכְּרוּ מִדְרָגָיו וְנִלְבָּה בְּאֶרְצוֹתָיו כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וְדִבְרֵי־ה' מִירוּשָׁלַם:

And the many nations shall go and shall say: “Come, Let us go up to the Mount of the LORD, To the House of the God of Jacob; That He may instruct us in His ways, And that we may walk in His paths.” For instruction shall come forth from Zion, The word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Text #9: Rabbenu Tam. *Sefer Hayashar*, Chapter 706, Page 90.

כי מבארי תצא תורה ודבר ה' מאוטראנטו.

For out of Bari shall go forth the Law and the word of the Lord from Otranto.

Text #10: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. “Exile and Expulsion in Jewish History”, *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*. Benjamin R. Gampel, ed. Columbia University Press, New York, 1997.

In 1526, in Siena, Italy, the banker Ishmael da Rieti, whose home is described as “a sanctuary for Torah and science,” was visited by the messianic adventurer David Reuveni to whom he offered hospitality but no financial assistance for his project. Reuveni reports: “I said to him — ‘What do you want? Jerusalem, or to stay where you are?’ And he replied — ‘I have no desire for Jerusalem, and neither will or craving, except for Siena.’”

Conclusion: The Wandering People

Text #11: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. *Passover: The Festival of Freedom*.

In all the years of exile and wandering, Jews had to make peace with their inability to be masters of their own fate in many areas of life, but their exile was not complete because they did not regard themselves as inferior. As long as they retained and nurtured their inner core, their spiritual life not only consoled them, but also served as their homeland, a refuge that could be neither harmed nor diminished.



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