



## **“Zion in the Diaspora”: How Jews Imagined They Lived in Zion Wherever they Actually Lived**

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## Babylonian Talmud Ketubbot 111a

<p><b>I.</b> Said R. Judah said Samuel, “<i>Just as it is forbidden to go forth from the Land of Israel to Babylonia, so it is forbidden to go forth from Babylonia to other lands.</i>”</p> <p><b>II.</b> Said R. Judah, “<i>Whoever dwells in Babylonia is as though he dwelt in the Land of Israel: ‘Ho, Zion, escape, you who dwells with the daughter of Babylonia’ (Zech. 2:11)...</i>”</p>	<p>אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: כְּשֵׁם שְׁאָסוּר לְצֵאת מֵאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבָבֶל כֵּן אָסוּר לְצֵאת מִבָּבֶל לְשָׂאֵר אֶרְצוֹת</p> <p>אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה: כָּל הַדָּר בְּבָבֶל כְּאִילוֹ דָּר בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂנֵאָמַר: “הוֹי צִיּוֹן הַמְלֵטִי יוֹשְׁבֵת בֵּית בָּבֶל”</p>
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## Babylonian Talmud Megillah 29a

- I. R. Shimon ben Yohai says: Come and see how dear [the nation of] Israel is before The Holy One, Blessed Be He, *for wherever they were exiled, the Divine Presence was with them.*
- [When] they were exiled to *Egypt*, the Divine Presence was with them, as is said, "was I not exiled to your father's house when they were in Egypt" (1 Sam. 2:27). [When] they were exiled to *Babylonia*, the Divine Presence was with them, as is said, "for your sake I sent to Babylonia" (Is. 43:14).
- II. "Where in Babylonia [is the Divine Presence]?"
- Said Abbaye: In the synagogue of Hotzal, and in the synagogue of Shaf VeYativ in Nehardea.

תנא, רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר: בוא וראה כמה חביבין ישראל לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא, שבכל מקום שגלו — שכינה עמהן. גלו למצרים — שכינה עמהן, שנאמר: "הנגלה נגליתי לבית אביך: בהיותם במצרים וגו'". גלו לבבל — שכינה עמהן, שנאמר "למענכם שלחתי בבלה"

בבבל היכא? אמר אביי: בבי פנישתא דהוצל, ובבי פנישתא ד"נשף ויתב" בנהרדעא

**Samuel Usque, *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel* (1<sup>st</sup> half 16<sup>th</sup> cent.)**

You will rise to a higher degree of consolation... in the great nation of Turkey. This country is like a broad and expansive sea which our Lord has opened with the rod of His mercy, as Moses did for you in the Exodus from Egypt, so that the swells of your misfortunes... might cease and be consumed in it. Here the gates of liberty are always wide open for you that you may fully practice your Judaism; they are never closed. Here you may restore your true character... This is a sublime mercy from the Lord, for He has granted you such abundant freedom in these realms that you may now take the first step toward your belated repentance.

There is a city (Salonika) in the Turkish kingdom which formerly belonged to the Greeks, and in our days is a true mother-city in Judaism. For it is established on the very deep foundations of the Law. And it is filled with the choicest plants and most fruitful trees presently known anywhere on the face of the globe. These fruits are divine... The majority of my children who have been persecuted and exiled from Europe... have taken refuge in this city, and she embraces them and receives them with as much love and good will *as if she were Jerusalem*, that old and ever pious mother of ours.

**Maharal of Prague (2<sup>nd</sup> half 16<sup>th</sup> century), *Netzah Yisrael***

Ch. 24: If Israel had a special land, since they left the land that was special to them, this would be their loss. But they are scattered throughout the world, and God did not give them a special land, rather, the whole world is their land. And this is fitting for Israel, for it is already known that everything has a place that corresponds to its qualities. And since without Israel the world would not have been created, for this reason *the whole world is their place*. Therefore, when they were exiled from the Land [of Israel], they were exiled throughout the world. And if so, even if they dwelled in a particular land, it is not theirs, for they are not in their place.

Ch. 25: And that which the Talmud said—“pray with the congregation” (Berakhot 8a)—there is no doubt that when there is a slight measure of leaving exile, as when Israel [in community prayer] unite and are no longer divided, that is considered their leaving the exile. For in their exile they are scattered among the nations, and when Israel unite, this is considered to be their leaving exile.

**Elimelekh of Lizhensk (18<sup>th</sup> cent.), *Noam Elimelekh***

It is said in the gemara (Berakhot 30a), “one who stands outside of the Land of Israel and prays should direct his heart toward the Land of Israel...” So a person who wants his prayer to be heard should have the intention that he is, as it were, praying in the Land of Israel and the Temple is built and the altar is in its proper place, and *it is as though he lives now in the Land of Israel*, and in this way he comes to a clarity and complete cleaving (to God), praying with complete intention and love and fear, *as though he is standing in the Holy of Holies*. (emphasis added)

**R. Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl:**

Even though the Land of Israel has a physical reality, in any case its essence is spiritual and vital, and it is Life [or: the Life force] from the Creator, blessed be He. And even though we are outside the Land, in any case we have the quality of The Land of Israel... because in all the synagogues and study halls there flows from the Creator, blessed be He, the Life force of the Land of Israel... When one stands in the synagogue or the study hall and stands and prays with the thought within the speech, then he is in the Land of Israel, that is to say, within the Life of the Creator, blessed be He.

**R. Nachman of Bratzlav, *Likutei Mohoran*:**

(61, 2), “A place where Jews have dwelt for a while, even outside the Land of Israel, has the quality of the sacredness of the Land of Israel, the quality of ‘the small sanctuary’ (Ezekiel 11:16).”

(55, 2) “The sacredness of the Land of Israel is now in exile.”

(*Likutei* II, 78),

Israel, the holy nation, sometimes comes to places that are very, very far from the holiness of [the people of] Israel, such as a place that originally belonged to idolators, and even now they may be under the authority of a nation that is distant from the holiness of Israel. But Israel comes there, and conquers the place, and sanctifies it as a Jewish place, and this [territory now] too has the aspect of the Land of Israel... and on account of this we have the right to conquer the entire world and to sanctify it with the holiness of the Land of Israel.