



## **Where Are We Now?**

# **Rethinking Exile, Diaspora and Home in Israel and America**

***Dr. Arnold Eisen***

Arnold M. Eisen, one of the world's foremost authorities on American Judaism, is chancellor emeritus of The Jewish Theological Seminary and professor of Jewish Thought. During his tenure as chancellor, he transformed the education of religious, pedagogical, professional, and lay leaders for North American Jewry, with a focus on graduating highly skilled, innovative leaders who bring Judaism alive in ways that speak authentically to Jews at a time of rapid and far-reaching change.

Professor Eisen is the author, among other works, of *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflection on Homelessness and Homecoming*, and *Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community*, and co-author of *The Jew Within*. As chancellor, Professor Eisen placed significant emphasis on strengthening Jewish learning in our communities, creating programs that extend the reach of JTS's scholarship and resources beyond the campus to Jewish learners around the world. Professor Eisen's initiatives also included the Block / Kolker Center for Spiritual Arts; the interfaith Center for Pastoral Education; the Hendel Center for Ethics and Justice; and the Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue.

Before coming to JTS, Professor Eisen served on the faculties of Stanford, Tel Aviv, and Columbia universities. He has contributed regularly to print and online media, including the Wall Street Journal, The Jewish Week, Huffington Post, Tablet, and Fortune, and he discussed Jewish education, philosophy, and values on his blog, *On My Mind: Arnie Eisen*. He is a lifelong and devoted Conservative Jew.

Professor Eisen sits on the advisory boards of the Tanenbaum Center, the Covenant Foundation, and the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture.

**Marc Tracy, “Is Israel Part of What It Means to Be Jewish?” from NY Times, Jan 14 2024 (excerpt)**

Last month, on the first night of Hanukkah, more than 200 people packed an old ballroom on the third floor of a restored synagogue in Brooklyn. A few came fresh off the subway from a protest in Manhattan that was organized by left-wing Jewish groups calling for a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war.

They were there to hear from Shaul Magid, 65, whose long, thin white beard and shaved head made him look more like a roadie than a rabbi. A professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth as well as (yes) a rabbi, Mr. Magid was there to spread the message elucidated in a new book, “The Necessity of Exile,” that Jews today outside Israel — 75 percent of whom live in the United States — should embrace diaspora, the state of living outside a homeland, as a permanent and valuable condition.

“If there’s a diasporic reality where Jews have been able to live as Jews, flourish as Jews, not to be oppressed and persecuted — whether they choose to be a Satmar Hasid or Larry David, it doesn’t matter — if they’re allowed to live the Judaism they want, why would that be a tragedy?” he said.

Mr. Magid’s outlook is one of several burgeoning visions for the future of Jewish life that fall under the umbrella of “diasporism.” The idea has been getting a new look since Hamas’s horrific attack on Israel three months ago and Israel’s pulverizing bombing campaign and invasion in Gaza. Those events have forced Jews everywhere to reckon anew with what they think about Israel and the central role it plays in Jewish life — the kind of charged moment when members of spiritual communities can ask themselves what really matters, and sometimes reach radically different conclusions.

Some versions of diasporism are secular, often hearkening back to the un-religious, anti-Zionist Jewish Labor Bund that arose in late 19th-century Eastern Europe — the same time and place where political Zionism was born — to agitate for Jewish rights in the European empires of the day. The Bund’s slogan of “doikayt,” a Yiddish word that roughly means “hereness,” has been adopted by younger left-wing Jews.

“This socialist, secular, liberatory philosophy,” said Molly Crabapple, an artist and writer working on a history of the Bund, “whether it was the Bund or the larger world of Yiddish socialism, is deeply interwoven into our heritage,” and “can provide a moral compass and help people reject exclusionary and violent ideologies.”

Other flavors are religious. The Berkeley professor emeritus Daniel Boyarin has called the Babylonian Talmud — a rulebook for living Jewishly, composed in exile — the true Jewish homeland.

## Genesis 21:22-34

(22) At that time Abimelech and Phicol, chief of his troops, said to Abraham, “God is with you in everything that you do. (23) Therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my kith and kin, but will deal with me and with the land in which you have sojourned as loyally as I have dealt with you.” (24) And Abraham said, “I swear it.” (25) Then Abraham reproached Abimelech for the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized. (26) But Abimelech said, “I do not know who did this; you did not tell me, nor have I heard of it until today.” (27) Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a pact. (28) Abraham then set seven ewes of the flock by themselves, (29) and Abimelech said to Abraham, “What mean these seven ewes which you have set apart?” (30) He replied, “You are to accept these seven ewes from me as proof that I dug this well.” (31) Hence that place was called Beer-sheba, *\*Beer-sheba* i.e., “well of seven” or “well of oath.” for there the two of them swore an oath. (32) When they had concluded the pact at Beer-sheba, Abimelech and Phicol, chief of his troops, departed and returned to the land of the

## בראשית כ"א:כ"ב-ל"ד

(כב) וַיְהִי בַעֲתָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וּפִיכֹל שַׂר־צְבָאוֹ אֶל־אַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר אֱלֹהִים עִמָּךְ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה: (כג) וְעַתָּה הִשְׁבַּעָה לִּי בְּאֱלֹהִים הַנְּהָ אִם־תִּשְׁקֹר לִי וּלְנִינִי וּלְנִכְדָּי כַחֲסֹד אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי עִמָּךְ תַּעֲשֶׂה עִמָּדִי וְעִם־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־גָּרַתָּה בָּהּ: (כד) וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֲנֹכִי אֲשָׁבַע: (כה) וְהוֹכַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ עַל־אֲדוּת בְּאֶרֶץ הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר גָּזְלוּ עַבְדֵי אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ: (כו) וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ לֹא יָדַעְתִּי מִי עָשָׂה אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְגַם־אַתָּה לֹא־הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי וְגַם אֲנֹכִי לֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי בְלִתִּי הַיּוֹם: (כז) וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם צֹאן וּבָקָר וַיִּתֵּן לְאַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וַיִּכְרְתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּרִית: (כח) וַיֵּצֵב אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שֶׁבַע כְּבָשֹׂת הַצֹּאן לְבִדְוָהוּ: (כט) וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ אֶל־אַבְרָהָם מָה הֵנָּה שֶׁבַע כְּבָשֹׂת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר הִצַּבְתָּ לְבִדְוָנָה: (ל) וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי אֶת־שֶׁבַע כְּבָשֹׂת תִּקַּח מִיָּדִי בְּעִבּוֹר תִּהְיֶה־לִּי לְעֵדָה כִּי חָפַרְתִּי אֶת־הַבְּאֵר הַזֹּאת: (לא) עַל־כֵּן קָרָא לְמָקוֹם הַהוּא בְּאֶרֶץ שֶׁבַע כִּי שָׁם נִשְׁבַּעוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם: (לב) וַיִּכְרְתוּ בְרִית בְּבִאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיָּקָם אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וּפִיכֹל שַׂר־

Philistines. (33) [Abraham] planted a tamarisk at Beer-sheba, and invoked there the name of יהוה, the Everlasting God. (34) And Abraham resided in the land of the Philistines a long time.

צָבְאוֹ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אֶל־אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים : (לג) וַיִּטֵּעַ  
אֵשֶׁל בְּבֵאֵר שָׁבַע וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה אֵל  
עוֹלָם : (לד) וַיֵּגֶר אַבְרָהָם בְּאֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים  
יָמִים רַבִּים : {פ}

### Genesis 26:26-29

(26) And Abimelech came to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his councilor and Phicol chief of his troops. (27) Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me, seeing that you have been hostile to me and have driven me away from you?” (28) And they said, “We now see plainly that יהוה has been with you, and we thought: Let there be a sworn treaty between our two parties, between you and us. Let us make a pact with you (29) that you will not do us harm, just as we have not molested you but have always dealt kindly with you and sent you away in peace. From now on, be you blessed of יהוה!”

### בראשית כ"ו:כ"ו-כ"ט

(כו) וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ הַלֵּד אֵלָיו מִגֶּרָר וְאַחֲזַת  
מִרְעֵהוּ וּפִיכֹל שַׂר־צְבָאוֹ : (כז) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם  
יְצֻחֶק מִדָּוַע בְּאַתֶּם אֵלָי וְאַתֶּם שָׂנֵאתֶם אֹתִי  
וַתִּשְׁלַחֻנִי מֵאַתֶּכֶם : (כח) וַיֹּאמְרוּ רָאוּ  
רְאִינוּ כִּי־הָיָה יְהוָה אִעֲמֹד וְנֹאמַר תְּהִי נָא  
אֵלֶּה בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ בֵּינֵינוּ וּבֵינֶךָ וְנִכְרַתְתָּ בְרִית  
עִמָּךְ : (כט) אִם־תַּעֲשֶׂה עִמָּנוּ רָעָה כַּאֲשֶׁר לָא  
נִגְעַנּוּךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂינוּ עִמָּךְ רַק־טוֹב וְנִשְׁלַחֲךָ  
בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶתְּהָ עִתָּה בְרוּךְ יְהוָה :

### Mishnah Avodah Zarah 1:1-3

(1) On the **three days before the festivals of gentiles** the following actions are prohibited, as they would bring joy to the gentile, who would subsequently give thanks to his object of idol worship on his festival: It is **prohibited to engage in business with them; to lend items to them or to borrow items from them; to lend money to them or to borrow money from them; and to repay debts owed to them or to collect repayment of debts from them. Rabbi Yehuda says: One may collect repayment of debts from them because this causes the gentile distress.** The Rabbis **said to** Rabbi Yehuda: **Even though he is distressed now, when he repays the money, he is happy afterward** that he is relieved of the debt, and therefore there is concern that he will give thanks to his object of idol worship on his festival.

### משנה עבודה זרה א' א'-ג'

(א) לִפְנֵי אֵיִדִּיהֶן שֶׁל גּוֹיִם שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים  
אָסוּר לְשַׂאת וְלָתֵת עִמָּהֶן, לְהַשְׂאִילָן  
וְלִשְׂאֵל מֵהֶן, לְהַלְוֹתָן וְלִלְוֹת מֵהֶן, לְפָרְעוֹ  
וְלִפְרַע מֵהֶן. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, נִפְרָעִין  
מֵהֶן מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא מֵצֵר לוֹ. אָמְרוּ לוֹ, אַף  
עַל פִּי שֶׁמֵּצֵר הוּא עֲכָשְׁיוֹ, שְׂמַח הוּא  
לְאַחַר זְמַן:

(2) **Rabbi Yishmael says:** On the **three** days **before** the festivals of gentiles **and** on the **three** days **after** them, it is **prohibited** to engage in business with those gentiles. **And the Rabbis say:** It is **prohibited** to engage in business with them **before their festivals**, but it is **permitted** to engage in business with them **after their festivals**.

(ב) רבי ישמעאל אומר, שלשה ימים לפניהם ושלשה ימים לאחריהם, אסור. וחקמים אומרים, לפני אידיהן אסור, לאחר אידיהן מתר:

(3) **And these are the festivals of gentiles:** Kalenda, Saturnalia, and Kratesis, and the day of the festival of their kings, and the birthday of the king, and the anniversary of the day of the death of the king. This is the statement of Rabbi Meir. **And the Rabbis say:** Every death that includes public burning is a festival that includes idol worship, and any death that does not include public burning is not a festival that includes idol worship. **But** in the case of the day of shaving his, i.e., a gentile's, beard and his locks, and the day of his ascent from the sea, and the day that he left prison, and also in the case of a gentile who prepared a wedding feast for his son and celebrates on that day, engaging in business is prohibited only on that day and with that man.

(ג) ואלו אידיהן של גוים, קלנדא, וסטרנונרא, וקרטיסים, ויום גנסיא של מלכים, ויום הלידה, ויום המיתה, דברי רבי מאיר. וחקמים אומרים, כל מיתה שיש בה שרפה, יש בה עבודה זרה. ושאיין בה שרפה, אין בה עבודה זרה. יום תגלחת זקנו ובלוריתו, יום שעלה בו מן הים, ויום שיצא בו מבית האסורים, וגוי שעשה משתה לבנו, אינו אסור אלא אותו היום ואותו האיש בלבד:

## Mishnah Avodah Zarah 2:1

(1) **One may not keep an animal in the inns [befundekaot] of gentiles because they are suspected of bestiality.** Since even gentiles are prohibited from engaging in bestiality, a Jew who places his animal there is guilty of violating the prohibition: “You shall not put a stumbling block before the blind” (Leviticus 19:14). **And a woman may not seclude herself with gentiles because they are suspected of engaging in forbidden sexual relations. And any person may not seclude himself with gentiles because they are suspected of bloodshed. A Jewish woman may not deliver the child of a gentile woman, because in doing so she is delivering a child who will engage in idol worship. But one may allow a gentile woman to deliver the child of a Jewish woman. Similarly, a Jewish woman may not nurse the child of a gentile woman, but one may allow a gentile woman to nurse the child of a Jewish woman while the gentile woman is on the Jewish woman’s property.**

## משנה עבודה זרה ב' א'

(א) אין מעמידין בהמה בפנדקאות של גוים, מפני שחשודין על הרביעה. ולא תתיחד אשה עמהו, מפני שחשודין על העריות. ולא יתיחד אדם עמהו, מפני שחשודין על שפיכת דמים. בת ישראל לא תילד את הנכרית, מפני שמילדת בן לעבודה זרה. אבל נכרית מילדת בת ישראל. בת ישראל לא תניק בנה של נכרית, אבל נכרית מניקה בנה של ישראלית ברשותה :



### Mishnah Avodah Zarah 3:4

(4) A wise gentile, **Proclus ben Plospus**, once asked a question of **Rabban Gamliel** in the city of **Akko** when he was bathing in the bathhouse of the Greek god **Aphrodite**. Proclus said to him: **It is written in your Torah: “And nothing of the proscribed items shall cleave to your hand”** (Deuteronomy 13:18). **For what reason do you bathe before an idol in the bathhouse of Aphrodite?** Rabban Gamliel said to him: **One may not answer** questions related to Torah **in the bathhouse. And when he left** the bathhouse, Rabban Gamliel gave him several answers. **He said to him: I did not come into its domain; it came into my domain.** The bathhouse existed before the statue dedicated to Aphrodite was erected. Furthermore, people **do not say: Let us make a bathhouse as an adornment for Aphrodite; rather, they say: Let us make a statue of Aphrodite as an adornment for the bathhouse.** Therefore, the main structure is not the Aphrodite statue, but the bathhouse. Rabban Gamliel continued: **Alternatively,** there is another answer: Even **if people would give you a lot of money, you would not enter** before your object of **idol worship naked, or as one who experienced a seminal emission** who comes to the bathhouse to purify himself, **nor would you urinate before it. This statue stands upon the sewage pipe and all the people urinate before it.** There is no prohibition in this case, as **it is stated** in the verse **only: “Their gods”** (see Deuteronomy 12:2), which indicates that a statue **that people treat as a deity is forbidden**, but one **that people do not treat** with the respect that is **due to a deity is permitted.**

### משנה עבודה זרה ג'ד'

(ד) שאל פרוקלוס בן פלוספוס את רבן גמליאל בעכו, שהיה רוחץ במרחץ של אפרודיטי, אמר לו, כתוב בתורתכם, ולא ידבק בידך מאומה מן החרם. מפני מה אתה רוחץ במרחץ של אפרודיטי. אמר לו, אין משיבין במרחץ. וכשיצא אמר לו, אני לא באתי בגבולה, היא באתה בגבולי, אין אומרים, נעשה מרחץ לאפרודיטי נוי, אלא אומרים, נעשה אפרודיטי נוי למרחץ. דבר אחר, אם נותנין לה קמון הרבה, אי אתה נכנס לעבודה זרה שלך ערום ובעל קרי ומשתין בפניה, וזו עומדת על פי הביב וכך העם משתינין לפניה. לא נאמר אלא אלהיהם. את שנוהג בו משום אלוה, אסור. ואת שאינו נוהג בו משום אלוה, מתיר:

**Selections from *Zionism: The Sequel*, edited by Carol Diament, with Introductions by Gideon Shimoni and Arnold Eisen**

**A. Golda Meir, “What We Want of the Diaspora,” p. 54**

We have nothing against Jews in the *galut*. It is against the *galut* itself that we protest...We have always believed, and I personally have thought, that the foundation of Zionism is more than geographical independence. I have always believed that Zionism means Jewish emancipation in every sense, including the spiritual and cultural, so that a Jew who creates cultural values may do so as a free man. It may be assuming on my part, but I believe that there is no Jew in the *galut* creating as a free man and as a free Jew. Only a Jew in Israel can do so. If a Jew lives in Israel and creates as a free Jew and as a free man, writes about various problems in the world, about Jewish life and non-Jewish life, about science, art, and literature, his writing will not be less universal than that of a Jew who lives in the *galut*-in every *galut*, even in the best of them, for there he must, willingly and unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, adapt himself to his surroundings. Then he is not a free man...

**B. A. B. Yehoshua, “The Golah: The Neurotic Solution,” pp. 99-102**

Zionism emerged the end of the last century not from renewed longings for *Eretz* Israel, nor from sudden abhorrence of exile. The Jews always hated the *golah* and longed with all their soul for *Eretz* Israel! But the hatred of exile and the longing for *Eretz* Israel did not budge the Jews. Zionism began with the fear of the *golah*. How dangerous and terrible this existence could be suddenly became clear to the Jews. And among a few the fear of the *golah* overcame the fear of *Eretz* Israel.

...

But if someone still needs final and irrefutable proof of the Jewish people's dubious attitude to *Eretz* Israel, of the fact that it did not make a serious attempt to return to its land, of its fear of return and its stubborn clinging to the *golah*, all he needs do is take a look at the thirty years of the Jewish State's existence. The gates are open, the possibilities great-but the olim do not come. The waves of immigration that arrived here were comprised for the most part of people fleeing distress: refugees of the Holocaust, refugees from the Arab countries, refugees from communist countries, and so on. Only an insignificant minority came to Israel of its own free will, and this minority again proves, paradoxically, as did the small immigrations of earlier centuries that it is also possible to come to Israel as a matter of free choice.

...

What we see, then, is on the one hand hatred and total rejection of the situation of exile, and on the other hand a powerful drive to maintain it and live in it ....

What reveals itself here is behavior of a clearly neurotic sort: the nation hates the *golah* and dreams of *Eretz* Israel, the nation rejects exile at all levels of its authentic spiritual activity, but at the same time all its historical activity is preoccupied with one end: how to endure in exile, how to continue to maintain this hated existence ....

And so we come back to the fundamental question: Why? What is the reason for the painful obsessive opting for exile? Why do the Jews have such a fear of normal, sovereign life in their own country? That, I believe, is the number one question of the Jewish people, deserving of all our spiritual energies...

**D. Arthur Hertzberg, "The American Context of *Galut*," pp. 135-8**

It is daring and even offensive to say to Jews in Western countries, and particularly in America, that they are in a *galut*, that is, exile. The presumption of Israeli leaders, headed by the most redoubtable of them all, David Ben Gurion, in maintaining this point, has led to notable and bitter interchanges between him and various American Jews. Even American Zionist leaders of the front rank have joined in expressing outrage at such a presumption. This estimate of the condition of the Jew outside of Israel denies the great dream of a new liberal world in which the Jews participate as equals. Did not our ancestors come to America in order to experience that which could be found "only in America," the blessedness of enjoying a society of "Americans all"? For any-one to say to American Jews that they are in any sense in exile, therefore, means to many of his hearers that he is calling the American experience a self-delusion. That they react with anger to so threatening a thought is understandable ....

Whether [American] Jews can and ought to assimilate, or whether they are in exile, cannot be considered in terms only of Jewish will and Jewish needs. We are inevitably involved in an estimate of what is America and in some projection of the probable future of American culture and society. Clearly the Jews who remain in Yemen are in exile. Most Jews believe that this is true at this very moment of the Jews in Russia. Certainly the American situation is different from both of these-but what is the American situation? ...

There can be no denying the proposition that American society, for all its secularization, is not neutral. It is Christian. For all the matters that are crucial to the actual experience of the individual Jew, as Jew, within America, the tempo of life as such has inevitably to favor Christianity and to act against Judaism.

We are by now so accustomed to this mode of living that it usually does not even occur to us to identify it for what it inevitably is, an experience of alienation. The day of rest is Sunday. No matter how successful we may be in getting some legal redress for Sabbath-observing Jews, as a matter of social experience the Jewish Sabbath costs every individual Jew who is mindful of it an act of will. The majority of Jewry has abandoned the Sabbath

under pressure of its inconvenience in a society that is attuned against it. What is this if not a phenomenon of exile? Nor is this an economic compulsion, rooted in the need of Jews to make a living. From the very beginning of public school, field trips, parties, dances, and football games; all take place on Saturday as the most convenient time. The Jewish child either participates or abstains; in either case he experiences his radical otherness. For that matter much of the weight, or lack of weight, that is being given to Jewish holidays is related to the pressure of a majority culture. A prime example is, of course, Hanukkah, which has now become that which it was never intended to be, the Jewish equivalent of Christmas.

This distinction is therefore clear. It is possible for the Jew to maintain within our democracy that he is no alien to the state. He could make the same claims about society only if a new order were created in which it would be equally comfortable, or uncomfortable, to be a Jew or a Christian. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that this situation is essentially beyond change ....

Jews say that they are like all other Americans; they even fervently hope that the others will believe them. The gentile majority in America, including its own Afro-American minority, knows that this is not so. It knows that the Jews are different because they are alien to the Christian history and style of the majority in all its components...

....

The Jew remains in America what he has always been in the history of the West, a co-founder who is yet a resident alien. In religion he may have lost faith to a greater degree than the Christian majority, but an enormous distance remains even between those who never go to the synagogue and those who never go to church ....

For all those Jews who stop short of conversion there must always remain a specifically Jewish sense of alienation, which is quite different from any momentary travail of Western man. It is the feeling of being not

quite inside a culture even when one dominates much of its literature. It is, in short, not alienation, but exile, *galut*.

**E. Ben Halpern, “Exile-Abstract Condition and Concrete Community,” pp. 73-4**

It might help to still the interminable controversy about *shlilat hagalut* (negation of the exile) and *hiyyuv hagolah* (affirmation of the exile), or at least confine it within sensible bounds, if people were more careful in their usage. The Hebrew *galut* means the abstract condition of exile, or bondage. Golab refers to a concrete community in exile. If the strict sense of these terms were respected, any normal person would have to repudiate the abstract condition of bondage; and few people would normally disapprove of a community because it is oppressed. Because this distinction is not always noted, the quarrel often degenerates into a verbal misunderstanding between those who are accused of loving bondage and those who are accused of hating Jews. If there is to be any fruitful discussion, it ought to begin with the stipulation by both sides that *sholelei* (negators) *hagalut* (not *sholelei hagolah*) need not hate any Jewish community and *mehayyevei* (affirmers) *hagolah* (not *mehayyevei hagalut*) need not love the condition of bondage.

Jacob Klatzkin once defined the real issues of the debate in terms of two questions: whether the diaspora can, in fact, survive, and whether it deserves to survive. Present-day defenders of the diaspora as an adequate base for Jewish living tend to invert the questions. They ask, is Israel today guaranteed to survive, or is life in Israel today an adequate base for truly Jewish living? These may be stimulating or even significant questions about Israel; but if one is discussing the prospects and quality of diaspora life today, it is irrelevant and evasive to take refuge in an attack on the prospects and quality of Jewish life in contemporary Israel.

### **Listing of materials referenced in this session:**

1. Gerson Cohen, "The Blessings of Assimilation in Jewish History," in Jewish History and Jewish Destiny
2. A.B. Yehoshua, "The A. B. Yehoshua Controversy," published by the American Jewish Committee 2006
3. Ahad Ha'am, "Slavery om Freedom," in Selected Essays of Ahad Ha'am, ed Leon Simon
4. L.A. Jewish Journal, Dec 22-28m 2023, "Is Israel the Most Dangerous Place to be a Jew" and "Is it Time for Jews to Move to Israel?"