



Z3 2020

Visions of A Shared Future: A Six-Chapter Story

There have been several epochs in Jewish history that required a new vision for how the land of Israel affects the possibilities for Jewish unity.

Each of these time periods have inspired some of the most provocative texts of the Jewish canon.

HERE ARE A FEW.

Let the words on the page help you understand the context for how today's dispersed Jewish community can be inspired by our past to keep creating visions of a shared future.

And let the words on the page help you question each of the concepts that comprise this mission of revisioning a shared future: Who leads the vision making process? Have we ever had a shared vision? What kind of future do you want to see?

This curriculum can be divided into 6 separate sessions, or, can be consolidated into one session by choosing excerpts of the primary texts. The recommended excerpts are marked in blue.

For more opportunities to learn traditional texts of the Jewish canon in a way that inspires your Jewish life today, please contact: The Jewish Content Department of the Oshman Family JCC in Palo Alto, CA.

UNIT 1 - Entering the Land

1. Numbers 32: 1-27

The Reubenites and the Gadites owned cattle in very great numbers. Noting that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were a region suitable for cattle, **the Gadites and the Reubenites came to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the chieftains of the community, and said,** “Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon—the land that the LORD has conquered for the community of Israel is cattle country, and your servants have cattle.

It would be a favor to us,” they continued, “if this land were given to your servants as a holding; do not move us across the Jordan.” Moses replied to the Gadites and the Reubenites, “Are your brothers to go to war while you stay here? Why will you turn the minds of the Israelites from crossing into the land that the LORD has given them? That is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to survey the land. After going up to the wadi Eshcol and surveying the land, they turned the minds of the Israelites from invading the land that the LORD had given them. Thereupon the LORD was incensed and He swore, ‘None of the men from twenty years up who came out of Egypt shall see the land that I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for they did not remain loyal to Me—none except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they remained loyal to the LORD.’

The LORD was incensed at Israel, and for forty years He made them wander in the wilderness, until the whole generation that had provoked the LORD’s displeasure was gone. And now you, a breed of sinful men, have replaced your fathers, to add still further to the LORD’s wrath against Israel. If you turn away from Him and He abandons them once more in the wilderness, you will bring calamity upon all this people.” Then they stepped up to him and said, **“We will build here sheepfolds for our flocks and towns for our children. And we will hasten as shock-troops in the van of the Israelites until we have established them in their home, while our children stay in the fortified towns because of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return to our homes until every one of the Israelites is in possession of his portion. But we will not have a share with them**

חָלוּץ אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן לְפָנָי ה' עַד הוֹרִישוּ אֶת אִיבֵי מִפְּנֵי: (כב) וְנִכְבְּשָׁה הָאָרֶץ לְפָנָי ה' וְאַחַר תָּשׁוּבוּ וְהִיִּיתֶם נְקִיִּים מֵה' וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְהִיִּתְּהָ הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לָכֶם לְאַחֲזָהּ לְפָנָי ה': (כג) וְאִם לֹא תַעֲשׂוּן כֵּן הִנֵּה חֲטֹאתֶם לֵה' וְדַעוּ חֲטֹאתְכֶם אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא אֶתְכֶם: (כד) בָּנוּ לָכֶם עָרִים לְטוֹפְכֶם וּגְדֵרֹת לְצִנְאֲכֶם וְהִיצָא מִפִּיכֶם תַּעֲשׂוּ: (כה) וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנֵי גַד וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן אֶל מֹשֶׁה יֹאמֶר עֲבָדֶיךָ יַעֲשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר אָדָנִי מִצְוָה: (כו) טַפְנוּ נַשִּׁינוּ מִקְנֵנוּ וְכָל בְּהֵמַתְנוּ יִהְיוּ שֵׁם בְּעָרֵי הַגְּלֵעָד: (כז) וְעֲבָדֶיךָ יַעֲבְרוּ כָל חָלוּץ צָבָא לְפָנָי ה' לְמַלְחָמָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָדָנִי דִּבֶּר:

2. Joshua 22

Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and said to them, “You have observed all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed me in everything that I commanded you. You have not forsaken your kinsmen through the long years down to this day, but have faithfully observed the Instruction of the LORD your God. Now the LORD your God has given your kinsmen rest, as He promised them. Therefore turn and go to your homes, to the land of your holdings beyond the Jordan that Moses the servant of the LORD assigned to you. But be very careful to fulfill the Instruction and the Teaching that Moses the servant of the LORD enjoined upon you, to love the LORD your God and to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and soul.” Then Joshua blessed them and dismissed them, and they went to their homes. To the one half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had assigned territory in Bashan, and to the other Joshua assigned [territory] on the west side of the Jordan, with their kinsmen. Furthermore, when Joshua sent them off to their homes, he blessed them and said to them, “Return to your homes with great wealth—with very much livestock, with silver and gold, with copper and iron, and with a great quantity of clothing. Share the spoil of your enemies with your kinsmen.”

So the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh, in the land of Canaan, and made their way back to the land of Gilead, the land of their own holding, which they had acquired by the command of the LORD through Moses. When they came to the region of the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a great conspicuous altar. A report reached the

Israelites: “The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar opposite the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, across from the Israelites.” When the Israelites heard this, the whole community of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh to make war on them.

But [first] the Israelites sent the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead, accompanied by ten chieftains, one chieftain from each ancestral house of each of the tribes of Israel; they were every one of them heads of ancestral houses of the contingents of Israel. **When they came to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead, they spoke to them as follows: “Thus said the whole community of the LORD: What is this treachery that you have committed this day against the God of Israel, turning away from the LORD, building yourselves an altar and rebelling this day against the LORD!** Is the sin of Peor, which brought a plague upon the community of the LORD, such a small thing to us? We have not cleansed ourselves from it to this very day; and now you would turn away from the LORD! If you rebel against the LORD today, tomorrow He will be angry with the whole community of Israel. If it is because the land of your holding is unclean, cross over into the land of the LORD’s own holding, where the Tabernacle of the LORD abides, and acquire holdings among us. But do not rebel against the LORD, and do not rebel against us by building for yourselves an altar other than the altar of the LORD our God. When Achan son of Zerah violated the proscription, anger struck the whole community of Israel; he was not the only one who perished for that sin.”

The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the contingents of Israel: They said, “God, the LORD God! God, the LORD God! He knows, and Israel too shall know! If we acted in rebellion or in treachery against the LORD, do not vindicate us this day! If we built an altar to turn away from the LORD, if it was to offer burnt offerings or meal offerings upon it, or to present sacrifices of well-being upon it, may the LORD Himself demand [a reckoning]. We did this thing only out of our concern that, in time to come, your children might say to our children, ‘What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel? The LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between you and us, O Reubenites and Gadites; you have no share in the LORD!’ Thus

your children might prevent our children from worshipping the LORD. So we decided to provide [a witness] for ourselves by building an altar—not for burnt offerings or [other] sacrifices, but as a witness between you and us, and between the generations to come—that we may perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, our sacrifices, and our offerings of well-being; and that your children should not say to our children in time to come, ‘You have no share in the LORD.’ We reasoned: should they speak thus to us and to our children in time to come, we would reply, ‘See the replica of the LORD’s altar, which our fathers made—not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, but as a witness between you and us.’ Far be it from us to rebel against the LORD, or to turn away this day from the LORD and build an altar for burnt offerings, meal offerings, and sacrifices other than the altar of the LORD our God which stands before His Tabernacle.”

When the priest Phinehas and the chieftains of the community—the heads of the contingents of Israel—who were with him heard the explanation given by the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the Manassites, they approved. The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar said to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the Manassites, “Now we know that the LORD is in our midst, since you have not committed such treachery against the LORD. You have indeed saved the Israelites from punishment by the LORD.” Then the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar and the chieftains returned from the Reubenites and the Gadites in the land of Gilead to the Israelites in the land of Canaan, and gave them their report. The Israelites were pleased, and the Israelites praised God; and they spoke no more of going to war against them, to ravage the land in which the Reubenites and Gadites dwelt. The Reubenites and the Gadites named the altar [“Witness”], meaning, “It is a witness between us and them that the LORD is [our] God.”

יהושע כב

אֲזַ יִקְרָא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ לְרֵאשֵׁי בְנֵי וְלַגְדֵי וְלַחֲצֵי מִטֵּה מְנַשֶּׁה: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם אַתֶּם שִׁמְרֹתֶם אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֶתְכֶם מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה וְתִשְׁמְעוּ בְקוֹלִי לְכָל אֲשֶׁר־צִוִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם: לֹא־עֲזַבְתֶּם אֶת־אֲחֵיכֶם זֶה יָמִים רַבִּים עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְשִׁמְרֹתֶם אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת מִצְוַת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: וְעַתָּה הִנֵּיחַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְאַחֵיכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לָהֶם וְעַתָּה פָּנּוּ וּלְכוּ לְכֶם לְאֵהֲלֵיכֶם אֶל־אֶרֶץ אַחֲזַתְכֶם אֲשֶׁר | נָתַן לְכֶם מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן: כִּן | שִׁמְרוּ מֵאֵד לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַמִּצְוָה וְאֶת־הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֶתְכֶם מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְלַכֵּת בְּכָל־דַּרְכָיו וּלְשַׁמֵּר מִצְוֹתָיו וּלְדַבְּקָה־בּוֹ וּלְעַבְדּוֹ

וַיִּשְׁמַע פִּינְחָס הַכֹּהֵן וְנִשְׂאִי הָעֵדָה וְרֹאשֵׁי אֶלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר אֵתוּ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרוּ בְּנֵי־רְאוּבֵן
וּבְנֵי־גָד וּבְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּיטֵב בְּעֵינֵיהֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר פִּינְחָס בֶּן־אֱלֶעָזֶר הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־בְּנֵי־רְאוּבֵן וְאֶל־בְּנֵי־גָד
וּמְנַשֶּׁה הַיּוֹם! יִדְעוּנָה כִּי־בִתּוּכֶנּוּ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־מַעַלְתֶּם בְּיְהוָה הַמַּעַל הַזֶּה אֲזַי הִצַּלְתֶּם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד
יְהוָה: וַיָּשָׁב פִּינְחָס בֶּן־אֱלֶעָזֶר הַכֹּהֵן וְהַנְּשִׂאִים מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־רְאוּבֵן וּמֵאֵת בְּנֵי־גָד מֵאֶרֶץ הַגִּלְעָד אֶל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן
אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אוֹתָם דָּבָר: וַיִּיטֵב הַדְּבָר בְּעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְבָרְכוּ אֱלֹהִים בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא אָמְרוּ
לְעֹלֹת עֲלֵיהֶם לְצַבֵּא אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בְּנֵי־רְאוּבֵן וּבְנֵי־גָד יֹשְׁבִים בָּהּ: וַיִּקְרָאוּ בְּנֵי־רְאוּבֵן וּבְנֵי־גָד
לְמִזְבֵּחַ כִּי עַד הוּא בִּינְתֵינוּ כִּי יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** The events described above are our earliest record of a divergence in the Jewish people regarding our relationship to the land of Israel. What are the reasons given that cause this difference in perspective? How does this perspective relate to our time?
- 2.** What vision is offered for creating a shared future in this case?
- 3.** This text expresses a fear about the tribes splitting up. What is at risk? What is the recommended solution? How does the vulnerability expressed in this text show up in our moment, too?

Unit 2 - Judaea and Israel

Background: King Solomon, the third king of Israel, reigned over the united kingdoms of Judah and Israel. After a long and peaceful kingship, Solomon's son, Rehoboam, is next to be named king of Judah and Israel. This text tells us that, at this pivotal moment in Jewish history, one of King Solomon's enemies returns to the story. Here we see Jeroboam, son of Nebat, returning from Egypt. This enemy is being claimed the rightful ruler by the tribes of the kingdom of Israel as a protest against Rehoboam's hard hand.

Kings 1: 12

(1) Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to acclaim him as king. (2) Jeroboam son of Nebat learned of it while he was still in Egypt; for Jeroboam had fled from King Solomon, and had settled in Egypt. (3) They sent for him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam as follows: (4) "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke which your father laid on us, and we will serve you." (5) He answered them, "Go away for three days and then come back to me." So the people went away.

(6) King Rehoboam took counsel with the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. He said, "What answer do you advise [me] to give to this people?" (7) They answered him, "If you will be a servant to those people today and serve them, and if you respond to them with kind words, they will be your servants always." (8) But he ignored the advice that the elders gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. (9) "What," he asked, "do you advise that we reply to the people who said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father placed upon us?'" (10) And the young men who had grown up with him answered, "Speak thus to the people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us.' Say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. (11) My father imposed a heavy yoke on you, and I will add to your yoke; my father flogged you with whips, but I will flog you with scorpions.'"

(12) Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, since the king had told them: "Come back on the third day." (13) The king answered the people harshly, ignoring the advice that the elders had given him. (14) He spoke to them in accordance with the advice of the young men, and said, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father flogged you with whips, but I will flog you with scorpions." (15) (The king did not listen to the people; for the LORD had brought it about in order to fulfill the promise that the LORD had made through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.)

(16) When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered the king: "We have no portion in David, No share in Jesse's son! To your tents, O Israel! Now look to your own House, O David." So the Israelites returned to their homes. (17) But Rehoboam continued to reign over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah. (18) King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was in charge of the forced labor, but all Israel pelted him to death with stones. Thereupon King Rehoboam hurriedly mounted his chariot and fled to Jerusalem. (19) Thus Israel revolted against the House of David, as is still the case.

(20) When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent messengers and summoned him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the House of David. (21) On his return to Jerusalem, Rehoboam mustered all the House of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 picked warriors, to fight against the House of Israel, in order to restore the kingship to Rehoboam son of Solomon. (22) But the word of God came to Shemaiah, the man of God: (23) "Say to King Rehoboam son of Solomon of Judah, and to all the House of Judah and Benjamin and the rest of the people: (24) Thus said the LORD: You shall not set out to make war on your kinsmen the Israelites. Let every man return to his home, for this thing has been brought about by Me." They heeded the word of the LORD and turned back, in accordance with the word of the LORD.

מלכים א, פרק יב

(א) וַיֵּלֶךְ רְחֹבָם בְּעַם שָׂכָם כִּי שָׂכָם בָּא כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַמְלִיךְ אֹתוֹ: (ב) וַיְהִי כַשְׂמַעַי וְרַבְעָם בְּנֵי־נָבֹט וְהוּא

עודנו במצרים אשר ברח מפני המלך שלמה וישב ירבעם במצרים: (ג) וישלחו ויקראו-לו ויבא ירבעם וכל־קהל ישראל וידברו אל־רחבעם לאמר: (ד) אביך הקשה את־עלנו ואתה עתה הקל מעבדת אביך הקשה ומעלו הכבד אשר־נתן עלינו ונעבדך: (ה) ויאמר אליהם לכו עד שלשה ימים ושובו אלי וילכו העם:

(ו) ויועץ המלך רחבעם את־הזקנים אשר־היו עמדיים את־פני שלמה אביו בהיותו חי לאמר איך אתם נועצים להשיב את־העם־הזה דבר: (ז) וידברו אליו לאמר אם־היום תהיה־עבד לעם הזה ועבדתם ועניתם ודברת אליהם דברים טובים והיו לך עבדים כל־הימים: (ח) ויעזב את־עצת הזקנים אשר יעצהו ויועץ את־הילדים אשר גדלו אתו אשר העמידים לפניו: (ט) ויאמר אליהם מה אתם נועצים ונשיב דבר את־העם הזה אשר דברו אלי לאמר הקל מן־העל אשר־נתן אביך עלינו: (י) וידברו אליו הילדים אשר גדלו אתו לאמר כה־תאמר לעם הזה אשר דברו אליך לאמר אביך הכביד את־עלנו ואתה הקל מעלינו כה תדבר אליהם קטני עבה ממתני אבי: (יא) ועתה אבי העמים עליכם על כבד ואני אוסיף על־עלכם אבי יסר אתכם בשוטים ואני יסר אתכם בעקרבים:

(יב) ויבוא ירבעם וכל־העם אל־רחבעם ביום השלישי כאשר דבר המלך לאמר שובו אלי ביום השלישי: (יג) ויען המלך את־העם קשה ויעזב את־עצת הזקנים אשר יעצהו: (יד) וידבר אליהם כעצת הילדים לאמר אבי הכביד את־עלכם ואני אוסיף על־עלכם אבי יסר אתכם בשוטים ואני יסר אתכם בעקרבים: (טו) ולא־שמע המלך אל־העם כִּי־היתה סבה מעם יהוה למען הקים את־דברו אשר דבר יהוה ביד אחיה השילוני אל־ירבעם בן־נבט:

(טז) וירא כל־ישראל כִּי לא־שמע המלך אליהם וישבו העם את־המלך דבר לאמר מה־לנו חלק בדוד ולא־נחלה בבן־ישׂי לאהלך ישראל עתה ראה ביתך דוד ויך ישראל לאהליו: (יז) ובני ישראל הישבים בערי יהודה וימלך עליהם רחבעם: (יח) וישלח המלך רחבעם את־אדרם אשר על־המס וירגמו כל־ישראל בן־אבן וימת והמלך רחבעם התאמץ לעלות במרכבה לגוס וראשלים: (יט) ויפשעו ישראל בבית דוד עד היום הזה:

(כ) ויהי כשמע כל־ישראל כִּי־שב ירבעם וישלחו ויקראו אתו אל־העדה וימליכו אתו על־כל־ישראל לא הנה אחרי בית־דוד זולתי שבט־יהודה לבדו: (כא) ויבא רחבעם ורושלם ויקהל את־כל־בית יהודה ואת־שבט בנימין מאה ושמונים אלף בחור עשה מלחמה להלחם עם־בית ישראל להשיב את־המלוכה לרחבעם בן־שלמה: (כב) ויהי דבר האלהים אל־שמעיה איש־האלהים לאמר: (כג) אמר אל־רחבעם בן־שלמה מלך יהודה ואל־כל־בית יהודה ובנימין ויתר העם לאמר: (כד) כה אמר יהוה לא־תעלו ולא־תלחמו עם־אחיהם בני־ישראל שובו איש לביתו כי מאתי נהיה הדבר הזה וישמעו את־דבר יהוה וישבו ללכת כדבר יהוה:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1)** This text records a peak moment of tension between the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel during the time of the first Temple in Jerusalem. How does the text explain the background to this tension? What is the cause of the tension between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the other tribes of Israel?
- 2)** What could have prevented this escalation in tension?
- 3)** What can this chapter in the Jewish story teach us about relationships between various sub-communities of the Jewish people?

Unit 3 - The Second Temple

Ezra 1:1-5; 10-1

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled, the LORD roused the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation throughout his realm by word of mouth and in writing as follows:

“Thus said King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has charged me with building Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. **Anyone of you of all His people—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the LORD God of Israel, the God that is in Jerusalem; and all who stay behind, wherever he may be living, let the people of his place assist him with silver, gold, goods, and livestock, besides the freewill offering to the House of God that is in Jerusalem.**”

So the chiefs of the clans of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites, all whose spirit had been roused by God, got ready to go up to build the House of the LORD that is in Jerusalem.

וּבְשָׁנָה אֶחָדָה לְכוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרְסַי לְכָלוֹת דְּבַר־יְהוָה מִפִּי יִרְמְיָהוּ הַעֵיִר יְהוָה אֶת־רוּחַ כְּרֹשׁ מֶלֶךְ־פָּרְסַי וַיֵּעֲבֹר־קוֹל בְּכָל־מַלְכוּתוֹ וְגַם־בְּמִכְתָּב יֵאמָר: כֹּה אָמַר כְּרֹשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרְסַי כָּל־מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ נָתַן לִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהוּא־פָקֵד עָלַי לְבָנוֹת־לוֹ בַּיַּת בִּירוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בִּיהוּדָה: מִי־בְכֶם מִכָּל־עַמּוֹ יֵעַל לִירוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בִּיהוּדָה וְיִבְנֶה אֶת־בַּיִת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם: וְכָל־הַנְּשָׂאֵר מִכָּל־הַמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר הוּא גָר־שָׁם יִנְשְׂאוּהוּ אֲנָשֵׁי מְקוֹמוֹ בְּכֶסֶף וּבַזָּהָב וּבְרִכּוּשׁ וּבְבַהֲמָה עִם־הַחֲדָדָה לְבַיִת הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם: וַיְקוּמוּ רָאשֵׁי הָאֲבֹת לַיהוּדָה וּבְנֵי־מִן וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם לְכָל הַעֵיִר הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־רוּחוֹ לַעֲלוֹת לְבָנוֹת אֶת־בַּיִת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

When the builders had laid the foundation of the Temple of the LORD, priests in their vestments with trumpets, and Levites sons of Asaph with cymbals were stationed to give praise to the LORD, as King David of Israel had ordained.

They sang songs extolling and praising the LORD, “For He is good, His steadfast love for Israel is eternal.” All the people raised a great shout extolling the LORD because the foundation of the House of the LORD had been laid. Many of the

priests and Levites and the chiefs of the clans, the old men who had seen the first house, wept loudly at the sight of the founding of this house. Many others shouted joyously at the top of their voices. The people could not distinguish the shouts of joy from the people's weeping, for the people raised a great shout, the sound of which could be heard from afar.

וַיִּסְדּוּ הַבָּנִים אֶת־הַיֵּכַל יְהוָה וַיַּעֲמִידוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים מִלְבָּשִׁים בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת וְהַלְוִיִּם בְּנֵי־אֶסָף בְּמִצְלֹתָיִם לְהַלֵּל אֶת־יְהוָה עַל־יְדֵי דָוִד מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיַּעֲנוּ בְּהַלֵּל וּבַהוֹדֹת לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב כִּי־לְעוֹלָם חָסְדוֹ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל־הָעָם הִרְיעוּ תְרוּעָה גְדוֹלָה בְּהַלֵּל לַיהוָה עַל הוֹסֵד בַּיֵּהוּדָה: וְרַבִּים מֵהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם וְרֵאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת הַזְקֵנִים אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ אֶת־הַבַּיִת הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּיַסְדּוֹ זֶה הַבַּיִת בְּעֵינֵיהֶם בְּכִים בְּקוֹל גְּדוֹל וְרַבִּים בְּתְרוּעָה בְּשִׂמְחָה לְהַרְיֵם קוֹל: וְאִין הָעָם מִכִּירִים קוֹל תְרוּעַת הַשִּׂמְחָה לְקוֹל בְּכֵי הָעָם כִּי הָעָם מְרִיעִים תְרוּעָה גְדוֹלָה וְהַקּוֹל נִשְׁמַע עַד־לְמִרְחֹק:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) This text expresses a great moment of hope and triumph in Jewish history. How is the message received by the community? What are the various responses?
- 2) For those members of the community who do not plan to return to Israel, what does the text suggest as their future relationship to the community in Israel?
- 3) The community that returns to Israel has a mixed reaction to this “homecoming.” What is the psychological experience being expressed by this mixed reaction? How can we today relate to this mixed-bag-of-emotions when it comes to Israel?

Unit 4- The Diaspora

Libi B'Mizrach - Yehuda HaLevi

My heart is in the East-
and I am at the edge of the West.
How can I possibly taste what I eat?
how could it please me?
How can I keep my promise
or ever fulfill my vow,
When Zion is held by Edom
and I am bound by Arabia's chains?
I'd gladly leave behind me
all the pleasures of Spain-
If only I might see
the dust and ruins of your Shrine.

לבי במזרח
יהודה הלוי
يهودا اللاوي

לְבִי בְּמִזְרָח וְאֲנִי בְּסוֹף מִעֶרֶב
אֵיךְ אֶטְעֶמָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲכַל וְאֵיךְ יַעֲרֵב
אֵיכָה אֲשַׁלֵּם נְדָרֵי וְאֶסְרִי, בְּעוֹד
צִיּוֹן בְּחֶבֶל אֲדוֹם וְאֲנִי בְּכַבֵּל עֶרֶב
יִקַּל בְּעֵינַי עֵזֶב כָּל טוֹב סִפְרָד, כְּמוֹ
יִקַּר בְּעֵינַי רְאוֹת עֶפְרוֹת דְּבִיר נְחָרֵב

The Pittsburgh Platform, 1885

We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore

expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1)** Although written in very different eras of Jewish life, both of these texts are informed by the assumption that Diaspora Jews experience a “longing” for Israel. How does each of these texts relate to this longing?
- 2)** Do you experience longing? Where does that longing come from? How is longing transmitted? What is useful about longing, and what is hurtful about longing?
- 3)** How can the longing of Yehuda HaLevi, or the disavowal of longing expressed by the Pittsburgh Platform, inform our visions for a shared future today? Do either of these models work today? What would be a third option?

UNIT 5 - Zionism

"An Open Letter to My Brethren in the Spirit" - by Ahad Ha'am (1891)

"Whatever betide, it is our duty," adds our late leader, "to aid and abet the cause of colonization in Palestine as much as lies in our power. In the land of Israel we can and we must establish a spiritual national center."

Colonization in the holy Land, not with the object of self-emancipation, but for the sake of establishing- a spiritual, national center! How had this idea entered his mind, an idea not hinted at in his brochure, one that has no connection with the plan unfolded there? So I seem to hear you ask wonderingly, and in all probability the consistent logicians among you will explain it as a mere "compromise" between complete despair on the one side and the labor of years on the other. As for myself, I find a much more recondite source for this new idea in his spiritual life.

This final proposition of his-that the plan of self-emancipation can relieve itself of the encumbrances connected with Palestine by seeking a "safe retreat" elsewhere-did not remove all obstacles. The inner "rotteness" remained in full force-a "psychic disorder" for which no remedy has yet turned up. What boots it to find us a: fit land, if we, the people, are not fit. "National feeling, whence shall we obtain it? "That words alone cannot create it out of nothing, had been made plain to him by the fate of his brochure; that even sacred associations fail to raise it to the requisite degree of warmth, he had learned from the results achieved by the "Lovers of Zion," Whence obtain the feeling, then? Where was there a visible, unfailing source of Jewish national feeling from which all sections of his scattered people might draw warmth and life, and whose waters would wash away the rotteness that was putrefying the whole body?

Such reflections lead up to the realization of our primary need, transcending in importance even the "national resolution," What we lack above all is a fixed spot to serve as a "national, spiritual center," a "safe retreat," not for the Jews, but for Judaism, for the spirit of our people. The establishing and development of such a center is to be the limited work of all the members of our nation wherever they

may be scattered. Their common efforts are to effect the mutual approximation of those hitherto separated in space and spirit, and the visible center created by their limited striving is in turn to exert an influence upon every point at the periphery of the circle reviving the national spirit in all hearts, and strengthening the feeling of national kinship. Arrived at this stage, even if he has not, like Pinsker, been devoting days and years to the colonization of Palestine, the thinker cannot escape the next following thought, tile inevitable conclusion from his own mental processes-that only in the land of Israel we are able, and there we are compelled, to establish a national, spiritual center in this sense of the word.

Prime Minister David Ben Gurion's letter to Jacob Blaustein, President of the AJC

http://www.ajcarchive.org/AJC_DATA/Files/511.PDF

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1)** Try to summarize the different visions of Zionism that are elaborated here. What did Ahad Ha'Am believe? What did David Ben Gurion believe?
- 2)** One of the major differences between these writings, of course, is the year they were written. How does the historical founding of the State of Israel change the story? How is one's relationship to Israel affected by the State of Israel's existence?
- 3)** Think about the Diaspora Jewish community today. What does Ahad Ha'am's vision offer? What does Ben Gurion's vision offer?

End with a text by Natan Alterman, who expresses Ben Gurion's approach in whitty language and sarcasm:

New Pumpedita / Natan Alterman (1950)

It's really possible - the wise of secrets is witness!

That we need two centers:

In the state of Israel,

may it blossom and rejoice,

the sages of Tiberias, Morocco, and Tunisia will dwell.

But the rest of the wise and the rest of the Amorites
Will reside In Cincinnati Ohio.

This is how your chosen people will sit in Brooklyn
And will be citizens of New Pumpedita.

And without losing the residency and the "pass",

Will conduct, as the legacy of Babylon, the Talmud.

They will assemble the Gemara, seal the Babylonian
Talmud.

Isn't it lovely?

It has been this way before (a returning wheel) -

And even then the nation did not lose. No, sir.

The people will twice develop and be beautiful

If we promise it two centers

And a branch.

- - It is possible. Especially when there is historical
philosophical reasoning

Almost deep.

And in any case

It's good to have vibrant thinking

Among a Zionist audience

United States!

The brains are awake and tireless

And every time a new idea comes up.

It is just a little weird that their train of thought
that sharp one

Is mainly going so far

In one direction:

ניו-פומפדיטא / נתן אלטרמן (1950)

יִתְכַּן בְּאֵמֶת – עַד חֲכָם הָרְזִים! כִּי דְרוּשִׁים
לָנוּ

שְׁנֵי מְרָקְזִים.

בְּמִדְיַת יִשְׂרָאֵל

שְׁתַּפְּרַח וּתְשִׁישׁ,

יִשְׁכְּנוּ חֲכָמֵי טַבְּרִיָּה, מְרוֹקוֹ, תּוֹנִיס.

אָבֵל שְׂאֵר חֲכָמֵיָא וּשְׂאֵר אֲמוֹרֵיָא

יִשְׁכְּנוּ לָהֶם

בְּסִינְסִינְטִי אוֹהִיוֹ.

כֶּךָ בְּבִרוֹקְלִין יִשְׁבוּ כָּל הָעָם שְׂרָצִית

וְיִהְיוּ אֲזַרְחֵיהָ שֶׁל נִיּוּ פּוּמְבֵּדִיתָא.

וּמִבְּלֵי לְאֲבֵד הַנְּתִיבוֹת וְהַ"פֶּס",

יִחְבְּרוּ. כְּמוֹרְשֵׁת בָּבֶל, אֶת הַשֵּׁ"ס.

יִחְבְּרוּ אֶת הַשֵּׁ"ס, יִחְתְּמוּ תַלְמוּד בְּבִלֵי.

אִיזְנִיט אִיט לולִי? (Isn't it lovely?)

כֶּכָר הַיְתֵה כְּזֹאת פְּעַם (גִּלְגַּל שְׁחוֹזָר) –

וְגַם אָז הָאֵמָה לֹא הִפְסִידָהּ. נוּ, סָר.

הֵן פִּי שְׁנַיִם הָעָם יִתְפַּתַּח וַיִּף

אִם נִבְטִיחַ לוֹ שְׁנֵי מְרָקְזִים

וּסְנִיף.

– – יִתְכַּן. בִּיחּוּד כְּשֵׁיֶשׁ הַנְּמָקָה

פִּילוֹסוֹפִית-הִיסְטוֹרִית

כְּמַעַט עֲמָקָה.

וְעַל כָּל פָּנִים

טוֹב שְׁתַּסִּיָּסָה מַחֲשַׁבְתִּית

יֵשׁ בְּקֵהֶל צִיּוֹנִי

אַרְצוֹת הַבְּרִית!

הַמְּחוֹת הֵם עֲרִים וְכַחֵם אֵינוֹ תֵשׁ

וְכָל פְּעַם עוֹלָה רַעִיוֹן חֲדָשׁ.

רַק מוֹזָר קִצַּת שְׁקוֹ מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם

זֶה הַחֲדָד

כֹּה הֵתַר בְּעִיקָר

בְּכַוֵּן אֶחָד:

It mainly aspires to interpret and discover
Why there is no need
To make Aliyah.

הוא חותר בעיקר לפרש ולגלות
למה אין מרחים
לעלות.

Unit 6 - Now

[In An Era With Two Jewish Centers, We Need A New Zionism](#) - Zack Bodner, The Forward

[American Judaism Takes Root in Judean Desert](#) - Amanda Borschel-Dan, The Times of Israel

[A.B. Yehoshua: Americans, Unlike Israelis, Are Only Partial Jews](#) - Revital Blumenfeld, Haaretz

Discussion Questions:

- 1)** Each of the three contemporary texts above presents a different approach on the relationship between Israelis and diaspora Jews. Can you define each in a few words?
- 2)** Which parts do you agree with? Which parts don't you agree with?
- 3)** How can these three opinions inspire a creative thinking of the future of Israeli Diaspora relations?