

A PEOPLE NEEDS A LAND...

AND A LAND NEEDS A PEOPLE



From the time of Abraham and Sarah, our understanding of Judaism has been inextricably linked to the Land, even during the many centuries when most Jews lived far from it. And when Jews have lived in the Land as a sovereign nation, it has often flourished. As if the soul of the people and the soul of the land are intertwined.

This pack from the US Education team for Israel Connection Shabbat will examine why a people needs a land and the land needs the people, with a particular focus on our situation today and promoting greater religious connection to the Jewish people and Israel. It can be used in community groups, small groups or for individual study and reflection.

In the sources and extracts overleaf, we shall examine two matters in particular:

SHABBAT
FOR שבת
ISRAEL
8-9TH
MARCH
2024
ישראל



1. THE LAND AND THE START OF OUR NATIONAL STORY

בראשית פורשת לך לך פרק יב

- (א) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ עֵבֶר וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ:
(ב) וְאָעֲשֶׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאֲבָרְכְךָ וְאֲגַדְלֶה שְׁמֶךָ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה:
(ג) וְאֲבָרְכָה מִבְּרַכְיֶיךָ וּמִקְלָלְךָ אֶאֱרָא וּבְרַכּוּ כָּךְ כָּל מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה:

Bereshit Parashat Lech Lecha, Perek 12

- 1) And God said to Abraham (who was called Abram at that point), "Go for your own sake from the land of your birth and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.
2) And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.
3) And I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.

QUESTIONS:

1. From the beginnings of our national story, Judaism has been connected to a land, the Land of Israel. Why do you think this is so and what opportunities does it provide?
2. Why do you think God commanded Abraham to travel to the Land of Israel? What does that teach us about how we live and what comparisons does it suggest with our lives?
3. Blessing is a significant element of God's message to Abraham. Why is the Land the place for blessings for Abraham and others? What vision can you think of as a result of these verses?

Bereshit 15:18

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּרַת ה' אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּרִית לֵאמֹר לְזַרְעֲךָ נָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִנְּהַר מִצְרַיִם עַד־הַנְּהַר הַגָּדֹל נְהַר־פָּרָת:

On that day God made a covenant with Abram: "To your offspring I assign this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates—

Bereshit 19:21

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶבְל שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ יִלְדָת לְךָ בֵּן וְקִרְאתָ אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יִצְחָק וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתּוֹ לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְזַרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו... וְאֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֶקִּים אִתְּיִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵד לְךָ שָׂרָה לְמוֹעֵד הַזֶּה בְּשָׁנָה הַאֲחֵרָת:

But My covenant I will maintain with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year."...God said, "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac; and I will maintain My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants to come.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think God made this (and other) covenants with Abraham as well as later with Isaac and his son Jacob, especially since they lived long before we became a people? What does that tell you about the "long views" of Jewish history?
2. These covenants were between God and the Jewish people and included the Land of Israel as our inheritance. What does that say to us today?



2. CONTINUITY: FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

בראשית פרשת תולדות פרק כו

(א) וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִלִּבְדּוֹת הָרָעִב הָרִאשׁוֹן
אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בְיַמֵּי אַבְרָהָם וַיֵּלֶךְ יִצְחָק אֶל
אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ פְּלִשְׁתִּים גְּרָרָה:
(ב) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל תֵּרַד מִצְרַיִם
שָׁכֵן בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהֶיךָ:
(ג) גֹּר בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְאֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ וְאֶבְרַכְךָ
כִּי לֹךְ וְלֹזְרֶךָ אֲתֹן אֶת כָּל הָאֲרָצָה הָאֵל
וְהַקְּמֹתִי אֶת הַשִּׁבְעָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי
לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ:
(ד) וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת זֶרְעֶךָ כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנָתַתִּי
לֹזְרֶךָ אֶת כָּל הָאֲרָצָה הָאֵל וְהַתְּבַרְכוּ
בְּזֶרְעֶךָ כָּל גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ:
(ה) עֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקִלְי וַיִּשְׁמֹר
מִשְׁמֵרָתִי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרֹתַי:

Bereshit 26:1-5

There was a famine in the land—aside from the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham—and Isaac went to Avimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar.

God had appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land which I point out to you:

Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; I will assign all these lands to you and to your heirs, fulfilling the oath that I swore to your father Abraham.

I will make your heirs as numerous as the stars of heaven, and assign to your heirs all these lands, so that all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your heirs— inasmuch as Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge: My commandments, My laws, and My teachings."

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the inheritor of God's promise to Abraham? Why?
2. Does Isaac's experience in this passage appear to mirror Abraham's in the previous passage? What does your answer tell you about our life today?
3. What is the trigger for the blessings that God describes and what does this tell you about the sanctity of the Land?
4. How do you see the State of Israel today as a continuation of these blessings?

ויקרא פרשת קדושים פרק כ

(כג) וְלֹא תִלְכוּ בְּחֻקֵּי הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִשְׁלַח
מִפְּנֵיכֶם כִּי אֶת כָּל אֲלֵה עֲשׂוּ וְאֶקְזָב בָּם:
(כד) אָמַר לָכֶם אַתֶּם תִּירְשׁוּ אֶת אֲדֹמְתָם וְאֲנִי
אֲתַנְּנָה לָכֶם לְרִשְׁתָּהּ אֶתֶּה אֶרֶץ זֹבַת חֶלֶב
וְדָבַשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הִבְדַּלְתִּי
אֶתְכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים:
(כה) וְהִבְדַּלְתֶּם בֵּין הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה לְטִמְאָה
וּבֵין הָעוֹף הַטָּמֵא לְטָהוֹר וְלֹא תִשְׁקָצוּ
אֶת נַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם בַּבְּהֵמָה וּבְעוֹף וּבְכָל אֲשֶׁר
תִּרְמַשׁ הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר הִבְדַּלְתִּי לָכֶם
לְטִמְאָה:
(כו) וְהָיִיתֶם לִי קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה'
וְאֶבְדַּל אֶתְכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים לְהִיּוֹת לִי:

Vayikra 20:23-26

You shall not follow the practices of the nation that I am driving out before you. For it is because they did all these things that I abhorred them

and I said to you: You shall possess their land, for I will give it to you as a possession, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am your God who has set you apart from other peoples.

So you shall set apart the pure beast from the impure, the impure bird from the pure. You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through beast or bird or anything with which the ground is alive, which I have set apart for you to treat as impure.

You shall be holy to Me, for I God am holy, and I have set you apart from other peoples to be Mine.

QUESTIONS:

1. The wording in this passage is very strong. Would you expect such language to be linked to the mitzvot in this passage or to mitzvot about the Land specifically, such as observance of the Shemita (sabbatical year)?
2. What does this tell you about the relationship between the 'soul' of the Jewish people and the 'soul' of the Land, especially about how the Jewish people can bring blessing to the Land and beyond?



A STORY OF REVIVAL POST OCTOBER 7TH



Roi Assaraf, Oct. 7 Survivor, Shares His Powerful Story with the YU Community

By: Mijal Gutiérrez | Features | February 11, 2024

<https://yucommentator.org/2024/02/roi-assaraf-oct-7-survivor-shares-his-powerful-story-with-the-yu-community/>

Roi Assaraf, who survived Hamas' attack at the Supernova Music Festival on Oct. 7, shared his story of miracles and survival to a crowd of hundreds of Yeshiva University students on Jan. 24.

Roi told students, who had gathered to hear him in Furst Hall, that he had looked forward to attending the festival. Due to the pandemic and other

economic hardships the family endured, Roi, a hairdresser by trade, and his wife, Yonah, had been unable to enjoy many leisure activities for almost four years prior to Oct. 7. A friend had recommended to Roi that he and his wife take some leisure time to enjoy the festival, so the couple, along with Roi's brother and some friends, agreed to attend the event together.

Roi and Yonah had set an alarm to wake up early on the morning of Oct. 7. Strangely enough, it did not ring in time, and consequently, they were late to the event by a couple of hours. Due to being late, they were only able to enter a parking area far from the main stage once they reached the event. The group went inside the festival and as they were enjoying the music, Roi took out his cellphone in order to film himself and the festival around him. As he was recording, he noticed something strange at the left corner of his camera: a dark cloud growing bigger and bigger. It quickly became clear that rockets were being fired, and the sound of distant gunshots and cries grew stronger and nearer.

"My mind went blank besides the two faces that appeared in my mind — the faces of my daughters. Before I knew it, my flight response had kicked in, and I grabbed my wife and began turning towards the exit, desperate to survive and be able to see my daughters once more."

Roi then recounts a series of incredible, miraculous, and scarring events. As he and his wife made their way out, he saw a man inside a car who lay calmly asleep, unaware of the chaos around him. Roi recalled the Jewish idiom which states, "whoever saves one life is as if he has saved the world" and, although this placed his life at risk, Roi stopped to go wake the man and inform him of the situation so he could save himself before the attackers could reach them. Roi later found out that the man they had awoken ended up saving over 20 lives that day.

He continued to seek his way to the car, desperately trying to get in touch with his brother and friends who had accompanied him to what had just been an innocent music festival. Though Roi and his wife and brother were able to escape — through an emergency exit that he was only able to access due to being late — many of his friends could not. Some of his friends were able to survive by hiding for over 6 hours. Some friends were taken hostage by the Hamas terrorists, and are still being held in Gaza. Others were tragically murdered in the attacks.

As Roi and his family drove in an attempt to escape, they passed by a military vehicle with what appeared to be Israeli uniforms and soldiers. His wife expressed relief believing these were our soldiers, who had finally come to protect them against the attack. The relief was short-lived, as the moment they got closer to the vehicle, the undercover attackers began to fire at all the people nearby. They were terrorists disguised as soldiers, mass shooting at anyone fleeing from the festival. Roi immediately yelled at his

brother who sat in the back seat to duck and held his wife's head under the dashboard before ducking himself. Pure fear and panic rushed through his body as he kept his foot on the pedal and drove — without a clue as to where he was headed — as bullets rained all throughout their vehicle. He drove until they were sure they weren't under fire anymore, until finally, they were able to make their way back home to their daughters.

They had barely survived.

Roi and his wife were reunited with their daughters, one of whom could barely recognize him after he walked in shaken and shocked from what he had just survived. They soon found out about the bloody attack that had taken place. Little by little they began to find out about the friends who had been taken hostage, whose bodies had been found, or those who had managed to survive. Roi recalls that life has not been the same since that day.

On one hand, he shares about how this experience helped him realize what a real "worry" is. All his life he had spent worrying about how he was going to provide for himself and his family, how

"My mind went blank besides the two faces that appeared in my mind — the faces of my daughters..."

his business as a hairdresser would continue, and so on. Now he was more than sure that these things are, and have always been, in God's hands. They were not real objects of true worry.

The days following the attack he and his life took part in efforts to assist in providing aid for soldiers or fellow Israelis. Roi closed his hair studio and he and

his business partner gave free haircuts to soldiers in the army. As he watched the Jewish nation come together as a family after suffering from such a terrible loss, he understood how it shouldn't take for such a horrible tragedy to take place for the Jewish nation to come together. Sinat Chinam (baseless hatred) had been plaguing us, Roi believes, meaninglessly standing as an obstacle to the Jewish brother and sisterhood. Since the attack, Roi began to see God's works more and more, and he found a profound sense of meaning in his life and a renewed and strengthened sense of Emunah (faith) in God.

In search of establishing an even stronger connection with God, Roi began to take on more and more mitzvot. Though his family had always been traditional and strong believers, he was not used to an observant lifestyle but now more than ever felt the desire to connect with God through his actions. Roi and his wife wrote a book based on their experiences on October 7th, along with the stories of approximately 80 other survivors, and now go around the world sharing their miraculous stories and inspiring attitudes.

QUESTIONS:

1. How does Roi relate to the ideas of covenant which we have discussed previously in section one?
2. How do you think Roi relates to the 'soul' of the Land and its links to the 'soul' of the Jewish people?
3. What does Roi's story tell you about the significance of interpersonal mitzvot and the holiness of the Land of Israel, based on the sources we have seen from the Torah, especially in section two?



OCTOBER 7 HAS IGNITED THE JEWISH SPARK

Adapted from a Jerusalem Post article on 22nd December 2023 by ANDREA SAMUELS

<https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-779096>

As hard as it is to live in a country at war – with the sirens, the disruptions, the overwhelming sadness that runs through everything – I wouldn't be anywhere else. And I'm not alone.

There are those born into the tribe who see themselves as being Jewish in name only. For them, being a Jew is something that doesn't have any effect on their lives. It doesn't affect their choice of partner, where they live, or anything else, for that matter. The fact of being Jewish is of no moment for them whatsoever; it is purely incidental.

This all changed for a significant number of Jews-in-name-only on October 7. The Jewish spark, otherwise known in Yiddish as pintele Yid, which had lain dormant, was ignited in many by the events of that day, growing steadily brighter as the days, weeks, and months have passed. No longer could they ignore their heritage or remain silent in the face of this modern-day atrocity.

For Mancunian Joshua Ben Joseph, who had been "totally estranged from the Jewish community for years," October 7 was a turning point, causing him to reach out to some of his old Jewish school friends: "Yes. I am sadder and wiser. I know who my friends are now," he laments.

And he's not alone. Since October 7, there's been a renewed vigour among Diaspora Jews, not only in claiming but also in proudly displaying their Jewish identity, starting with wearing a Star of David necklace.

As Londoner Jonathan Glass told *The Jewish Chronicle*, "My Magen David, that I hadn't worn for 40 years, is now back around my neck. It's mainly a way of saying I don't care how much you hate us, I'm proud to be Jewish, it's central to who I am and I'm not going anywhere."

British jewelry designer Talya Paskin has also seen a 600%

The fact of being Jewish is of no moment for them whatsoever; it is purely incidental. This all changed for a significant number of Jews-in-name-only on October 7

increase in sales of her Star of David necklace along with other designers who report similar trends regarding their Jewish-themed jewellery...

While antisemitism – the societal scourge that has grown exponentially since October 7 – may be one of the driving factors behind this anticipated increase, another important factor is the yearning for a more meaningful existence...

A growing flicker of light and hope has emerged since then as Jews around the world ignite their inner spark.

QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do you agree with the sentiments in this article? Why?
- 2) Do you feel a Jewish spark has been ignited within you? Why?
- 3) What do you now do differently in light of your answer to questions 1 and 2 above?
- 4) What hope do you see for the future and why? What will you do to help this happen?

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The State of Israel is a small country with few natural resources, a population of under 10 million people, living under the shadow of terror and war.

Yet despite this, since the state was declared in 1948, it has, with God's help, absorbed hundreds of thousands of immigrants and produced world class technology with astonishing creativity in the face of adversity. Like the Jews in ancient Egypt, "*vecha'asher ya'anu oto, ken yirbeh ve'chein yifrotz*", the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied (Shemot 1:12)

It has demonstrated the potency of the Biblical prophecies – whether those of Jeremiah describing the return of the Jewish people to their land or Zecharia telling of children playing in its streets – the flourishing of both the land and the people, of how God redeemed us not just from ancient Egypt but also in our times too.

Its challenges remain, as do its opportunities. So, let us give thanks from the bottom of hearts to God for the State of Israel and pray to Him for its peace and that of its neighbours, on this Shabbat of connection to Israel and as we do every Shabbat.

Shabbat Shalom

