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Living in The Land

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1.

THE PROHIBITION TO LEAVE BABYLON

On the verse,¹ “You shall rid the land {of its inhabitants} and you shall settle in it, for to you I have given the land to possess it,” Ramban explains:

In my opinion,² this is a positive mitzvah, in which He commands the Jewish people to dwell in the Land and inherit it, because He has given it to them... Our Rabbis have extolled the significance of the mitzvah of settling in the Land of Israel, stating that it is forbidden to leave it... {the source of all these statements is} here {in this verse} where we have been given this mitzvah.

Furthermore, Ramban, in his critical glosses³ on Rambam’s *Sefer HaMitzvos*, considers this to be a distinct mitzvah (unlike Rambam’s approach). He elaborates and argues that this is the reason why the Gemara states:⁴ “Whomever leaves (the Land of Israel) and settles in the Diaspora should be in your eyes as if he worships idols, as the verse says,⁵ ‘For they have driven me out today, so that I cannot have a share in Hashem’s inheritance {but am told, ‘Go, worship other gods’}.”

Although Rambam does not include “settling in the Land of Israel” in his count of mitzvos, nor does he consider it a mitzvah at all,⁶ Rambam does issue many rulings regarding the prohibition of leaving the Land of Israel for the Diaspora. One of these rulings:⁷

A person should always dwell in the Land of Israel, even in a city where most of the residents are gentiles, rather than live outside of the land, even in a city where most of the residents are Jewish. For anyone who leaves to the Diaspora is as if he worships

¹ *Bamidbar* 33:53.

² {Among the great scholars who enumerated the individual 613 Commandments, Ramban was the first to regard this commandment (to conquer and settle in the Land of Israel, etc.) as binding for all times. In his notes on Rambam’s *Sefer Hamitzvos* (Book of the Commandments), in the section on “additional” positive commandments, No. 4, Ramban discusses this opinion at length. Here, in his commentary on the Torah, he mentions it briefly, relying presumably on his explanation in the work quoted above.}

³ {Ramban takes issue with Rambam’s inclusion of certain mitzvos, deleting some and adding others.}

⁴ *Kesubos* 110b.

⁵ *Shmuel I* 26:19.

⁶ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” ch.5, par. 9, ff.

⁷ *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*, par. 12.

idols, as it says, “for they have driven me out today, so that I cannot have a share in the Hashem’s inheritance, but am told, ‘Go, worship other gods.’”

2.

TWO TEACHINGS FROM RAV YEHUDAH

In order to clarify Rambam’s approach, we first need to explain the continuation and conclusion of the above ruling:

Just as it is forbidden to leave the Land {of Israel} for the Diaspora, so it is forbidden to leave Babylon for any other country, as it says,⁸ “They shall be brought to Babylon, and there shall they be.”

The source of this ruling is (as *Kesef Mishneh* notes) in tractate *Kesubos*, where the Gemara quotes two teachings of Rav Yehudah:⁹ “Rav Yehudah said: Anyone who ascends from Babylon to Eretz Yisrael transgresses a positive *mitzvah*, as the verse says, “They shall be brought to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day I remember them.”” The Gemara then quotes a second teaching: “Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel:¹⁰ ‘Just as it is prohibited to leave the Land of Israel and go to Babylon, so, too, is it prohibited to leave Babylon for other lands.’”

There are known¹¹ difficulties regarding these teachings:

a) How can Rambam combine both Talmudic teachings into one ruling? Rav Yehudah quotes the verse (“They shall be brought to Babylon...”), in the first teaching, regarding the prohibition of leaving Babylon for the **Land of Israel**. Rambam, however, quotes this verse in the context of the prohibition to leave Babylon for the **Diaspora** (which is the second teaching of Rav Yehudah)!

⁸ *Yirmeyahu* 27:22.

⁹ *Kesubos* 110b.

¹⁰ *Kesubos* 111a.

¹¹ See *Maharit*, *Kesubos* 111a; commentary of *Lechem Mishneh* on *Mishneh Torah*, loc. cit.

In light of this, we are in a quandary: If with his wording, “it is forbidden to leave Babylon for any other country,” Rambam means to include the Land of Israel (as *Kesef Mishneh* explains), because he understands that the verse, “They shall be brought to Babylon” excludes **all other** lands, then we must clarify: What does Rav Yehudah’s second teaching (in the name of Shmuel), which prohibits {a person} “...to leave Babylon for **any of the other** lands,” add to the first teaching of Rav Yehudah (which is not stated in the name of Shmuel), which derives the prohibition to leave Babylon for the **Land of Israel** from the verse, “They shall be brought to Babylon...”? After all, the verse {according to Rambam} implies that the Land of Israel and all other lands are included.

If, however, the derivation from the verse, “They shall be brought to Babylon,” in the first teaching {of Rav Yehudah}, excludes leaving only Babylon for the Land of Israel, and not other lands, while the second teaching that establishes the prohibition to leave Babylon “for **all the other** lands,” means only for other lands but not for the Land of Israel, then Rambam should have quoted (either the wording of the first teaching from Rav Yehudah) “so it is forbidden to leave Babylon for **the Land of Israel**,” or, since he says “for any of the other lands,” he should not have quoted the derivation from the verse, “They shall be brought to Babylon,” as in the second teaching.

b) Rambam’s wording itself seems contradictory: The beginning of his ruling, “**Just as** it is forbidden to leave the Land of Israel, **so** it is forbidden to leave Babylon...” implies that the prohibition to leave Babylon is derived logically, based on the same rationale for the prohibition “to leave the Land of Israel.” Then, however, Rambam concludes: “As it says, “They shall be brought to Babylon,” which implies that this is not a logically deduced prohibition (“just as... so...”), but, it is on account of the verse, which is unrelated to leaving the Land of Israel for the Diaspora.

c) The teaching itself needs clarification: How can Rambam prove the prohibition to leave “Babylon for the other lands” from the verse, “They shall be brought to Babylon,” which is speaking about the **holy vessels** {from the

Temple}? The Gemara itself points out this difficulty; and therefore, Rav Yehudah quotes a different verse.¹²

3.

NUANCES IN RAMBAM'S WORDING

We must also clarify several nuances in Rambam's wording, which differs from the wording of the Gemara:

a) The Gemara says, "Just as it is prohibited to leave the Land of **Israel**," whereas Rambam says, "...the Land" {without specifying the Land of Israel}.

We cannot say that Rambam's intention is to write concisely because in that same paragraph,¹³ and in the previous paragraphs as well,¹⁴ Rambam frequently uses the term "**the Land of Israel**."

b) The Gemara says, "Just as it is prohibited to leave the Land of Israel and go to **Babylon**," whereas Rambam says, "...to leave the Land for the **Diaspora**."

c) The Gemara quotes the rest of the verse, ("They shall be brought to Babylon, and there shall they be) until I the day I remember them, declares Hashem," whereas Rambam only quotes the first clause, "They shall be brought to Babylon, and there shall they be."

¹² Kesubos 111a.

¹³ {In this context, a "paragraph" means a single, discrete *halachah*.}

¹⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, "*Hilchos Melachim*," ch.5, par. 9-11.

4.

THE REASON FOR THE PROHIBITION

The explanation:

There are two opinions as to why emigrating from Babylon is forbidden: Rambam cites the verse, “They shall be brought to Babylon,” whereas Rashi explains,¹⁵ “Because of the yeshivas there {in Babylon} that disseminate Torah constantly.” The practical difference: According to Rashi, the prohibition of leaving Babylon is contingent upon the presence of yeshivas in Babylon; however, at such time that yeshivas are no longer found there, leaving is permitted. In contrast, according to Rambam’s approach, the prohibition is based on the verse, “They shall be brought to Babylon,” implying that the prohibition is always in force.

However, we must clarify: The verse addresses the period of the first exile when the Jewish people were expelled to Babylon. But in the exile that followed the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jews were not expelled to Babylon; why then, should the restriction, “They shall be brought to Babylon,” apply to the exile of Edom?

*Tosafos*¹⁶ answers: “We can say that the verse was also restrictive concerning the second exile.” This itself needs to be clarified: What suggests that Scripture also meant to impose a restriction during the second exile (even though the Jews then were not exiled to Babylon)?

We must further clarify: The *Kesef Mishneh* maintains that when Rambam codifies the prohibition not “to leave Babylon for any other country,” he includes the Land of Israel. Accordingly, how do we explain the departure of numerous Babylonian *Amoraim*¹⁷ to the Land of Israel?

¹⁵ See also *Meiri* on *Kesubos* 111a.

¹⁶ *Kesubos* 111a, s.v., “*bavelah*.”

¹⁷ {Sages of the era of the Gemara.}

In fact, even the teachers of Rav Yehudah (the author of this teaching), Rav and Shmuel,¹⁸ who originally studied in Babylon, left Babylon for the Land of Israel, and ultimately returned to Babylon!¹⁹ Seemingly, based on all the above, they were originally forbidden to leave Babylon for the Land of Israel; and subsequently, they were forbidden to leave the Land of Israel to return to Babylon.

It would be strained to suggest that all those who left Babylon for the Land of Israel, and specifically Rav and Shmuel, disagreed with Rav Yehudah's teaching (or with Rav Yehudah's teaching, as stated in the name of **Shmuel**²⁰). Moreover, {if we do assume that all these Sages disagreed with this teaching, it would be difficult to understand why} Rambam, nonetheless, rules that "just as it is forbidden to leave the Land for the Diaspora, so it is forbidden to leave Babylon for any other country."

5.

TWO THEMES OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL

The gist of the explanation:

In **general**, the Land of Israel is distinct from other lands in two respects: (a) the Midrash says, "The Land of Israel is treasured because Hashem has **chosen** it";²¹ and (b) the Land of Israel is a **holy** land, as *Mechilta* puts it,²² "Until the Land of Israel was chosen, all the lands were suitable for **prophecy**; once the Land of Israel was chosen, all other lands were precluded."

These two aspects reflect how the Jewish people are connected with the Land of Israel: (a) on account of Hashem having **chosen** them, as our Sages say, "He chose the Land of Israel... He chose the Jewish people as His portion..."

¹⁸ See *Sukkah* 9a, Rashi, s.v., "ki amrisa."

¹⁹ See *Seder Hadoros*, entry "Shmuel," sec. 3.

²⁰ {Seemingly, the name of *Shmuel* is in bold to emphasize the question: How is it possible that Shmuel acted contrary to his own teaching?}

²¹ *Tanchuma*, "Reeh," par. 8.

²² Beg. of *Mechilta*.

Hashem said, “The Jewish people shall come, for they have come to My portion; and they shall inherit the Land, which came to be My portion”;²³ (b) on account of the **holiness** inherent both in the Land of Israel and the Jewish people, who are a “holy nation.”²⁴

The difference between these two aspects is expressed in the name of the Land (among other things): On account of its “holiness,” the land is called specifically, the “Land of Israel” and not the “Land of **Canaan**,” or the like, because its holiness has no connection with the “Land of **Canaan**.” In contrast, Hashem **choosing** the Land of Israel does not necessitate the land being called the “Land of Israel,” specifically. It could also be referred to as the “Land of **Canaan**,” and so forth. This is because Hashem’s **choice** was made at the very outset of Creation:²⁵ “**When He created the world**, He allocated the lands to the other nations, and He **chose** the Land of Israel.”²⁶

In light of this, we can say that the prohibition to leave the Land of Israel also reflects these two properties: (a) On account of the land’s holiness (which is also relevant for the mitzvos that may be fulfilled only in the Land of Israel); and (b) on account of Hashem choosing the Land of Israel, which He gave to the Jewish people.

²³ See *Tanchuma*, quoted above.

²⁴ {Cf. *Devarim* 7:6, et al.}.

²⁵ {*Tanchuma*, loc. cit.}

²⁶ {Meaning, the land was not yet called the *Land of Israel*.}

6.

THE LAND THAT HASHEM HAS CHOSEN

In light of the above, we can understand Rambam's wording, "Just as it is forbidden to leave the Land for the Diaspora, so it is forbidden to leave Babylon for any other country":

The prohibition to leave the Land, on account of the Land's holiness, is only relevant to the Land of **Israel**. In contrast, in regard to the prohibition of leaving the Land, on account of Hashem choosing the land as a habitation for the Jewish people, Babylon (at a specific period) was equivalent to the Land of Israel: *Just as* Hashem chose the Land of Israel for the Jewish people to be the place where the freedom and redemption from the Egyptian exile would be complete,²⁷ and for many years thereafter {when the Jewish people lived peacefully and securely} (when the Jewish people behaved properly), so, too, did Hashem choose Babylon as the place to banish the Jewish people for the period of exile (as long as the Jewish people remain in a sinful state).

Therefore, Rambam says advisedly, "Just as it is forbidden to leave **the Land...**," and not, "Land of Israel," but, "*the* Land" ("the" implying a known land): **the** Land that was always distinct from all the other lands because Hashem **chose** it. This emphasizes that the prohibition to leave discussed **here** is not on account of the **holiness** of the Land of Israel, but on account of Hashem's choice of this Land for the Jewish people. During exile, the same rationale applies to the prohibition of leaving Babylon, just like the prohibition of leaving the Land of Israel.

²⁷ See *Shemos* 6:6-8.

ANOTHER DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RASHI AND RAMBAM

Following this ruling, Rambam quotes the verse, “They shall be brought to Babylon, and there shall they be.” This proves that Hashem had chosen Babylon as the place for the exile of the Jewish people.

Although this verse refers to the holy vessels, and Maharsha²⁸ explains that this verse is not a command, but a prophecy — “Yirmeyahu prophesied.” Rambam, however, does not understand the verse in this way. He maintains that this is a command even regarding the **holy vessels**. Meaning, even if an opportunity should arise, it is forbidden to remove the holy vessels from Babylon. Rather, “there shall they be.”

By extension, we also understand that the same limitation applies to the Jewish people. Hashem chose Babylon as the place for the Jewish exile and they are forbidden to leave.

Consequently, it is understood that there is no difference between the first and second exile, since we find that Hashem specifically chose Babylon to be the established place of exile — in a fashion described by the verse, “and there shall they be.” It is analogous to Hashem’s choice of the Land of Israel as the established place of Jewish freedom, as long as the Jewish people behave properly.

In light of this, another practical difference emerges between the opinions of Rashi (and Meiri) and Rambam: According to Rashi, who maintains that the reason for the prohibition was that “the yeshivas there disseminate Torah constantly,” it is understood that when the yeshivas that disseminated Torah were (no longer in Babylon, but) in another country, this prohibition to leave Babylon for other countries should apply also in that place. According to Rambam, however, since the prohibition is on account of Hashem choosing Babylon as the place of exile, it is understood that the prohibition only applies to

²⁸ *Chiddushei Aggados Maharsha on Kesubos 110b.*

leaving Babylon (and not another place that is an established place of Torah). This prohibition, then, is like the prohibition to leave “the Land for the Diaspora.”

8.

IS THE END OF THE VERSE RELEVANT?

In light of the above, we can explain the other nuances:

- a) Why doesn't Rambam say, “Just as it is forbidden to leave the Land for **Babylon**”?
- b) Why doesn't he say (according to the understanding of the *Kesef Mishneh*), “so it is forbidden to leave Babylon for **the Land of Israel**”?
- c) Why doesn't Rambam quote the conclusion of the verse, “until the day I remember them — declares Hashem,” as the Gemara does?

{To explain:} From the standpoint of Hashem choosing the land, the prohibition to leave the Land of Israel applies, and includes, Babylon, the same as all the other countries of the Diaspora. Similarly, from the standpoint of the prohibition to leave **Babylon**, on account of Hashem **choosing** it (as the place of exile), the Land of Israel is like any other land (according to *Kesef Mishneh*). In light of this, understandably, only the clause, “**they shall be brought to Babylon, and there shall they be,**” is relevant, but not the end of the verse, since {it is this clause that highlights} Hashem had chosen Babylon as an established place of exile.

In the Gemara, though, Rav Yehudah does quote the end of the verse because he says, “Anyone who ascends from Babylon to **Eretz Yisrael** transgresses a positive mitzvah.” The idea of moving to the Land of Israel is also (and primarily) emphasized by the end of the verse: “until the day I remember them, declares Hashem.” In other words, we are not to return to the Land of Israel “until the day I {Hashem} remember them.”

9.

ANOTHER DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RASHI AND RAMBAM

On this basis, the flow and sequence of Rambam's paragraphs {in *Mishneh Torah*} are understood: Following the detailed laws regarding the prohibition to live in Egypt²⁹ and explaining the reason: "because their actions are more **immoral** than all the other nations...," Rambam explains the converse in paragraph nine: "It is forbidden to ever leave the Land of Israel for the Diaspora." This is **mainly** because of the superior, inherent **holiness** of the Land of Israel over other lands.

Rambam continues to explain this idea of the holiness of the Land of Israel in the following paragraph:³⁰ "Great Sages would kiss the border of the Land of Israel... our Sages have said that the sins of anyone who dwells in the Land of Israel are forgiven...."

Only in paragraph twelve does Rambam quote the ruling, "A person should always dwell in the Land of Israel, even in a city where most of the residents are not Jewish, rather than live outside of the Land.... For anyone who leaves to the Diaspora is considered as if he worships idols, as the verse says,³¹ 'For they have driven me out today, so that I cannot have a share in Hashem's inheritance, but am told, "Go and worship other gods.'" Similarly, concerning {prophecies of} retribution, it says,³² "They shall not come to the Land of Israel."

From this ruling, there is no decisive support as to the reason for the prohibition. There are two possible rationales: (a) Because of the special holiness of the Land of Israel due to the *Shechinah*'s³³ presence {there}. This is inferred from the wording, "anyone who leaves to the Diaspora **is considered as if he worships idols.**" (b) Because Hashem **chose** the Land of Israel and gave it to the Jewish people. (This is inferred from the verse that Rambam cites, which

²⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, "Hilchos Melachim," ch. 5, par. 7-8.

³⁰ {*Mishneh Torah*, "Hilchos Melachim," ch. 5, par. 10-11.}

³¹ {*Shmuel I* 26:19.}

³² {*Yechezkel* 13:9.}

³³ {Hashem's revealed presence in this world.}

(provides the reason, and) refers to the Land of Israel as “Hashem’s inheritance.”) [This also makes Rambam’s wording more palatable: “Anyone **who leaves to the Diaspora** is considered as if he worships idols.” (In other words, his departure conflicts with Hashem’s choice of the Land of Israel.) His wording differs from the Gemara’s. The Gemara says, “Anyone who **lives in the Land of Israel** is considered as someone who has a G-d; and **anyone who lives in the Diaspora** is considered as someone who has no G-d.”³⁴ Afterwards, Rambam alludes to the second rationale, elaborating and concluding, “and to the Land of **Israel**...”³⁵]

For this reason, Rambam issues this ruling at the *end* of all the laws about the virtues of the Land of Israel, not (as one would think the order should have been) at the *beginning* of the laws of the Land of Israel, before stating that “**it is forbidden to leave** the Land of Israel,” because here he addresses (also) the virtue of Hashem’s choice in the Land of Israel.

Therefore, when Rambam teaches, following this ruling, the prohibition to leave Babylon to the other lands based on Hashem’s choice {of Babylon}, he specifically says, “Just as it is forbidden to leave the **Land**” {without specifying “the Land of Israel”}. This emphasizes that the prohibition to leave that is mentioned here is on account of Hashem’s choice, which in this regard, the prohibition to leave the Land of Israel and the prohibition to leave Babylon are similar, as discussed above.

³⁴ {To explain: the Gemara’s wording, “Anyone who lives in the Land of Israel is considered as one who has a G-d, and anyone who lives in the Diaspora...” (does not directly mention the prohibition of leaving Israel, but) focuses on the advantage of continued and permanent dwelling in Israel (and the disadvantage of living in the Diaspora), which is due to the holiness that Israel contains, (“is considered as one who has a G-d”), (and the lack of holiness in the Diaspora). Rambam’s wording however, “Anyone who leaves to the Diaspora is considered as if he worships idols,” focuses (not on the importance of remaining in Israel, but) on (the negative effect of) leaving. Additionally, Rambam does not emphasize here the holiness of the land.

To explain: Rambam is focusing on the element of Hashem’s choice of the Land of Israel. Accordingly, it is the act of leaving the land that is considered idolatrous, since at this moment one is leaving (and rejecting) the land which Hashem had chosen and gave to the Jews. The Gemara, however, is focusing on the holiness of the Land of Israel. From that perspective, it is the remaining in the Diaspora that is considered as idolatrous, since one lacks the holiness of the land.}

³⁵ {i.e., Here the verse speaks of Israel not as “Hashem’s inheritance” (which connotes *choice*) but “Israel,” which connotes the aspect of holiness (see Sec. 5 above).}

10.

PERMISSION TO LEAVE

In light of this, it is understood why numerous *Amoraim* left Babylon for the Land of Israel. And we don't have to presume that they disagreed with Rav Yehudah (or with {the second teaching, expounded by} Rav Yehudah in the name of Shmuel):

The prohibition of leaving Babylon to the Land of Israel (and to all other lands) is analogous to the prohibition of leaving the Land of Israel to Babylon. Both prohibitions are on account of Hashem choosing the Land (and not because of some special reason, such as to comply with the desire of the Babylonian regime) — “**Just as** it is forbidden... **so** it is forbidden.” Understandably, then (moreover, it can be concluded *a fortiori*) that both prohibitions have the same dispensations under which it is permissible to leave. In other words, just as there are certain circumstances when a person is allowed to leave the Land of Israel for the Diaspora — as Rambam rules³⁶, “in order to study Torah... and likewise for business” — the same applies regarding leaving Babylon for the Land of Israel (or all other lands): It is permissible to do so in order to study Torah or to conduct business (and so forth).

A person is **permitted** to leave only to accomplish a specific purpose (to study Torah or conduct business). Therefore, just as a person who leaves to the Diaspora of Israel under these circumstances is still considered a resident of the Land of Israel (in this regard) and must return, the same applies to a person who, for these reasons, leaves Babylon for the Land of Israel. Even while he is in the Land of Israel, he remains a resident of Babylon (on account of Hashem choosing it as the place of exile), and he is obligated to return.

The difference pertains to the conditions and purpose of leaving the Land of Israel (or leaving Babylon): When a person leaves to **conduct business**, there is a set limit: After making a profit, he must return home. In contrast, a

³⁶ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” ch. 5, par. 9.

person who leaves to study Torah, a pursuit that has no limit, is permitted to remain in the Land of Israel as long as he can advance in his Torah study .

In this light, we readily understand why numerous *Amoraim* left Babylon for the Land of Israel, since they left on the strength of **this** condition. Those that stayed permanently did so because this was required by **their** style of Torah study.

Rav, and similarly, Shmuel, also left Babylon for the Land of Israel to study Torah. However, once they had fully integrated the instruction from Rebbi, and others, into their own Torah studies, Rav and Shmuel had to return to Babylon.

Furthermore, specifically in Babylon could they later fully appreciate what they had learnt in the Land of Israel, in terms of the in-depth analysis and deliberations of Torah (and the deliberations of the **disciples**). In this respect, Babylon was superior to the Land of Israel.

11.

ANOTHER DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RASHI AND RAMBAM

Just as the Land of Israel has two virtues — that from all the other lands, Hashem chose it; and the holiness it contains — these two virtues are also possessed by the Jewish people: The Jewish people were chosen by Hashem and they also possess a holiness³⁷ on account of their connection with Torah and mitzvos.

The difference between them: Hashem did not choose the Jewish people from the other nations — “You chose us from all the **nations**”³⁸ — because of their stature and holiness on account of their connection with Torah and mitzvos. If this were the case, it would not be considered a free choice. True free choice is possible only when the options are comparable,³⁹ and the power of free

³⁷ See *Devarim* 7:6, 14:2, and *Rashi* on *Devarim* 14:2.

³⁸ {Liturgy of “*Ahavas Olam*,” the blessing before the morning *Shema*.}

³⁹ See *Tanya*, ch. 49, (70a)

choice is the only determining factor of what he chooses. Therefore, since the virtue of their holiness and the virtue of Torah and mitzvos distinguishes them incontrovertibly from all other nations, the concept of free choice is not applicable. We must conclude that Hashem's choice of the Jewish people is not on account of their holiness, but on the contrary, by choosing them, Hashem caused them to be infused with holiness, etc.

In light of this, it emerges that the connection between Hashem and the Jewish people resulting from Hashem choosing them is an essential connection. It affects the essence of the Jewish soul more than their connection {with Hashem} on account of their holiness and Torah and mitzvos. These are only supplemental, as it were {to the pre-existing essential connection}.

Stated more clearly: The connection between a Jew and Hashem that is accomplished by Hashem choosing him reflects how Hashem's essence and being is connected with the essence and being of the Jew. The connection of a Jew to Hashem because of his "holiness" stems from studying Torah and fulfilling mitzvos, which are Hashem's wisdom and will. (The word "mitzvah — מצוה" is etymologically related to the word "connection — צוותה,"⁴⁰ for a *mitzvah* connects a Jew with Hashem. Similarly, through Torah study, "the Jewish people connect with Torah, and Torah is connected with Hashem.")⁴¹ This is not a connection in which the essence of the Jew is (originally) connected with the Essence of Hashem. Rather, this connection is created through Torah and mitzvos.

In light of this, we understand the wording of the *Zohar*: "There are **three** interconnected bonds: the Jewish people connect with Torah, and Torah connects with Hashem." Seemingly, this dictum only describes two links (the Jewish people with Torah, and Torah with Hashem)! The explanation: Aside from the connection between Hashem and the Jewish people that is created by the Torah, there is an additional connection between Hashem and the Jewish people with no intermediary, but because Hashem chose them. Consequently,

⁴⁰ *Likkutei Torah*, "Vayikra," 45c.

⁴¹ *Zohar*, vol. 3, 73a.

there are three interconnected bonds (based on the analogy of a ring which is a continuous circle).

12.

TORAH AND MITZVOS REVEAL HASHEM'S CHOICE

Previously, we explained that the difference between Rashi (and Meiri) and Rambam is that Rambam maintains that the prohibition to leave the Land of Israel is on account of Hashem choosing the Land. In contrast, Rashi maintains, “Because of the yeshivas there that disseminate Torah constantly.”

Normally, we try to minimize disputes.⁴² Therefore, we can posit that Rashi and Meiri also agree that Hashem's choice in Babylon is a factor. However, this choice itself is on account of the holiness of the Torah that exists in Babylon. Consequently, when Torah study is no longer disseminated in Babylon, Hashem's choice in the land is rescinded. The choice of the Land of Israel is different. Hashem's choice here is not on account of the holiness of the land. (On the contrary, its sanctity derives from, and comes after, Hashem's choice). Hashem's choice in the Land of Israel expresses His Essence (from when He created the world);⁴³ it is Hashem's inheritance, which He has given to the Jewish people as an eternal covenant to be the **essential** dwelling place for them (unlike Babylon, which is only a place of exile). Therefore, this choice is eternal, and the holiness of the Land of Israel also reveals this particular choice.

This last point will be understood by first explaining this concept as it applies to the Jewish people:

Although the connection of the Jewish people with Hashem engendered by Hashem's choice has an advantage because it relates to His Essence, there is also

⁴² *Darchei Shalom, Klalei HaShas*, sec. 30, par. 257.

⁴³ {Meaning - at that time, it wasn't the Land of Israel. Nevertheless, Hashem chose this land. This shows that it was a choice from His essence.}

an advantage to the connection that is based upon their holiness stemming from their Torah and mitzvos:

Although the connection forged on account of “choice” is not based on any specific virtue the Jewish people possess, but only on **Hashem** Himself, even after Hashem makes His choice, the choice is not clearly discernible in the Jewish people.

In contrast, the connection that is made on account of their holiness of Torah and mitzvos is itself a revealed advantage. It itself is G-dliness in a revealed state. Consequently, the connection forged through Torah and mitzvos reveals the deeper bond between the Jewish people and Hashem, a connection that is attributable to Hashem’s choice.

In light of this, we understand the necessity of “the Jewish people are connected with Torah, and Torah with Hashem.” Although the Jewish people are connected with Hashem Himself because He has chosen them, nevertheless, the bond which Hashem has chosen with the Jewish people is revealed through their connection with the Torah.

13.

THE INHERITANCE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

On this basis, the same also pertains, understandably, to the Land of Israel: Hashem's choice is something eternal, and it becomes integrated into the essence-character of what was chosen. Nevertheless, since this quality stems from Hashem's choice, its revelation is correlated with the actual holiness of the Land of Israel.

Perhaps, this is why, when addressing the prohibition of leaving the Land of Israel for any other land, Rambam does not **explicitly** differentiate between the two advantages of the Land of Israel — Hashem's choice and the holiness of the land. (Rather, he emphasizes this when he addresses the prohibition of leaving Babylon, as discussed above.) The rationale is that the **revelation** of the advantage of Hashem's choice is correlated to the holiness of the Land of Israel.

The consummate fulfillment of this revelation will come about with the imminent arrival of Moshiach. "The Jewish people, who are referred to as an *inheritance*, will come to the land, which is called an *inheritance*. And they will build the *Beis Hamikdash*, which is called an *inheritance*; in the merit of the Torah, which is called an *inheritance*."⁴⁴

— From talks delivered on 10th of *Shevat* and *Shabbos parshas Beshalach*, 5736 (1976)

⁴⁴ *Mechilta, Shemos 15:17.*