

Images of our Exile and the Purpose of *Galut*

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The Purpose of *Galut*

What is the purpose of our exile? The most well-known reason for exile is sin, as we say in the holiday *mussaf* prayer מארצנו גלינו מארצנו—because of our sins You have exiled us from our land. From this perspective, redemption can take place only when we have rectified our misdeeds.¹

¹ The question of whether repentance is a precondition to Redemption is considered in the Talmud:

רבי אליעזר אומר: אם ישראל עושין תשובה - נגאלין, ואם לאו - אין נגאלין. אמר ליה רבי יהושע: אם אין עושין תשובה - אין נגאלין? אלא, הקדוש ברוך הוא מעמיד להן מלך שגזרותיו קשות כהמן, וישראל עושין תשובה ומחזירין למוטב. **סנהדרין צ"ז:**
R. Eliezer said: if Israel repents, they will be redeemed; if not, they will not be redeemed. R. Yehoshua said to him, if they do not repent, will they not be redeemed! But the Holy One, blessed be He, will set up a king over them, whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman's, whereby Israel shall engage in repentance, and he will thus bring them back to the right path.

Sanhedrin 97b (Adapted from the Soncino translation of the Talmud).

It seems that even R. Yehoshua concedes that teshuva must precede redemption. The dispute is merely over whether redemption will be natural and spontaneous, or in response to persecution (see, however, Yerushalmi, *Ta'anit* 1:1).

Rambam writes that the Torah promises we will repent at the end of days. (This raises thorny issues of free will.):

כל הנביאים כולן צוו על התשובה ואין ישראל נגאלין אלא בתשובה וכבר הבטיחה תורה שסוף ישראל לעשות תשובה בסוף גלותן ומיד הן נגאלין שנאמר והיה כי יבאו עליך כל הדברים וגו' ושבת עד ה' אלהיך ושב ה' אלהיך וגו'. **הל' תשובה פ"ז הלכה ה'**
All of the prophets commanded [us] regarding repentance **and the Jewish people will only be redeemed through repentance.** The Torah **guarantees** that the Jewish people will eventually repent at the end of their exile and then they will be redeemed immediately, as it states: "And it will be, when all these things come upon you ... and you will return to the Lord, your God ... then, the Lord, your God, will bring back." **Hilchot Teshuva 7:5**

While Rambam is clear that repentance is a precondition to redemption, Ramban seems to offer contradictory perspectives. The first passage appears in Ramban's commentary to *Parshat Nitzavim*, where the Torah depicts the future redemption:

דברים פרק ל': (א) והיה כי יבאו עליך כל הדברים האלה הנכרחה והקללה אשר נתתי לפניך והשבת אל לבבך בכל הגוים אשר הדיחה ה' אלהיך שמה: **(ב)** ושבת עד ה' אלהיך ושמעת בקלו ככל אשר אנכי מצוך היום אמה ובנייה בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך: **(ג)** ושב ה' אלהיך את שבותך ורחמך ושב וקבצך מכל העמים אשר הפיצה ה' אלהיך שמה:

*And it will be, when all these things come upon you the blessing and the curse which I have set before you that you will consider in your heart, among all the nations where the Lord your God has banished you, and you will return to the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and you will listen to His voice according to all that I am commanding you this day you and your children, then, the Lord, your God, will bring back your exiles, and He will have mercy upon you. He will once again gather you from all the nations, where the Lord, your God, had dispersed you. **Devarim, Ch. 30***
(Judaica Press Translation).

According to Ramban, the verses describe profound repentance before the Jews are gathered from exile. Ramban is explicit that eventual repentance thus is guaranteed to occur:

However, *galut* is more than a mere consequence of sin. Some sources inform us that certain things must be accomplished before the exile can end.

R. Yosi stated: the Son of David (i.e. *mashiach*) will not come before all the souls in "guf" have been disposed of, since it is said, "For the spirit that enwraps itself is from Me, and the souls that I have made."

Niddah 13b²

א"ר יוסי: אין בן דוד בא עד
שיכלו כל הנשמות שבגוף,
שנאמר כי רוח מלפני יעטוף
ונשמות אני עשיתי.
גדה דף יג:

According to R. Yosi, the redemption will not come until no unborn souls remain in heaven.³ One way to understand this statement is that God gives every soul a fair chance to freely achieve *shleimut*. Thus, *mashiach* will not arrive until every soul has had a chance to experience the world of free will, since (according to Ramban, Devarim 30:6⁴) people no longer will be rewarded for their good deeds in messianic times. Accordingly, *mashiach* can come only once every soul has had a chance.

רמב"ן דברים פרשת ניצבים פרק ל
(ו) ומל ה' אלהיך את לבבך ... מבטיחך שתשוב אליו בכל לבבך והוא יעזור אותך.
(יא) ... אבל "המצוה הזאת" על התשובה הנזכרת, כי והשבות אל לבבך (בפסוק א) ושבת עד ה' אלהיך (בפסוק ב) מצוה שיצוה
אותנו לעשות כן. ונאמרה בלשון הבינוני לרמז בהבטחה כי עתיד הדבר להיות כן.

(6) *And the Lord, your God, will circumcise your heart ... this guarantees that you will return to Him with all of your heart and He will help you. (11) However, "this mitzvah" refers to repentance because "you will consider in your heart" and "you will return to the Lord your God," is a commandment that He commanded us to follow. It is written in a neutral tense to hint that there is a guarantee that this will happen in the future. Ramban, Parashat Nitzavim Ch. 30*

In his commentary on *Parshat Ha'azinu*, though, Ramban paints a dramatically different picture:

רמב"ן דברים פרשת האזינו פרק לב: (מ) ... והנה אין בשירה הזאת תנאי בתשובה ועבודה, רק היא שטר עדות שנעשה
הרעות ונוכל, ושהוא יתברך יעשה בנו בתוכחות חימה, אבל לא ישבית זכרנו, וישוב ויתנחם ויפרע מן האויבים בהרבו הקשה
והגדולה והחזקה, ויכפר על חטאתינו למען שמנו. אם כן. השירה הזאת הבטחה מבוארת בגאולה העתידה על כרחן של מינין ...
Behold, this song is not contingent on repentance or worship. Rather, it is a document of evidence that we will do bad things and God will rebuke us harshly, but He will not destroy us, and will eventually reverse course and relent and exact retribution on the enemies with His large and mighty sword and He will atone for our sins, for His sake. Therefore, this song is a clear guarantee of the future redemption, despite what the heretics say. Ramban, Parashat Ha'azinu Ch. 32

Here, Ramban implies that redemption is guaranteed, whether or not we do *teshuva*. Resolving this fascinating contradiction lies beyond the scope of this *dvar Torah* but gets to the very heart of nature of the messianic era. Another factor to consider when assessing the role of *teshuva* in the messianic era is consideration of the notion of the *keitz*, or a fixed time by when *mashiach* must come.

² Adapted from the Soncino translation of the Talmud.

³ Rav Huna (*Yevamot* 62a) derives from here that one has fulfilled the mitzvah of *pru u-rvu* even if his children die since the souls have been brought into the world. Halacha does not follow R. Huna's view, but nevertheless, we learn from this concept the importance of having additional children even if one has already fulfilled *pru u-rvu*.

⁴ The question of free will during the messianic era relates integrally to the purpose of the messianic era. Consideration of this question is beyond the scope of this *dvar Torah*, however, let us briefly summarize the positions.

According to Ramban we will no longer desire to do evil after the coming of *mashiach*. Rambam (*Melachim* 11:3) disagrees, following the view of Shmuel that "There will be no difference between the current age and the messianic era except the emancipation from our subjugation to the gentile kingdoms" (*Brachot* 34b).

The question of free will during the messianic era is debated in numerous places in the Talmud. In *Shabbat* 151b, the issue revolves around the Talmud's understanding of the following two verses:

קהלת יב, א - וזכר את בוראיו בימי בחורתיך עד אשר לא יבאו ימי הרעה והגיעו שנים אשר תאמר אין לי בהם חפץ.
And remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of evil come, and years arrive about which you will say, "I have no desire in them." Kohelet 12:1

Another dimension of exile can be seen in the Talmudic statement that highlights spiritual opportunities that can be uniquely achieved in *galut*:

R. Elazar also said: The Holy One, blessed be He, exiled Israel among the nations in order that proselytes might join them, for it is said, "And I will sow her to Me in the land"; surely, a man sows a se'ah in order to harvest many kor! R. Yochanan deduced this from here: "And I will have compassion upon she that has not obtained compassion."

Pesachim 87b

ואמר רבי אלעזר: לא הגלה הקדוש ברוך הוא את ישראל לבין האומות אלא כדי שיתוספו עליהם גרים, שנאמר וזרעתיה לי בארץ. כלום אדם זורע סאה - אלא להכניס כמה כורין. ורבי יוחנן אמר מהכא: ורחמתי את לא רחמה.⁵
פסחים פז:

The Talmud states that the purpose of exile is to attract converts, which is surprising in light of the non-proselytary nature of Judaism. Maharsha understands that the Talmud is not referring to formal conversion, but the opportunity to spread the message of God's existence to all humanity:

[How does the Talmud know that the purpose of exile is to attract converts?] Because if exile is entirely meant as punishment for sin, it would be possible to punish them in other ways. Rather, the purpose of exile is to attract converts, in other words, to publicize our faith in God even among the idolaters.

Maharsha, Chiddushei Aggadot, Pesachim 87b

לא הגלה כו'. דאי משום עונש חטאם אפשר היה לו לעונשם בדברים אחרים אלא כדי שיתוספו עליהם גרים דהיינו לפרסם האמונה גם בשאר עובדי כוכבים: מהרש"א,
חידושי אגדות פסחים פז:

In fact, Ramban (in the beginning of *Torat Hashem Temimah*) describes the pervasive impact that the Torah has made on the civilized world.⁶

Other sources adopt a more mystical understanding of this idea. For example, R. Tzadok writes that attracting converts is an allegory for collecting the holy sparks that are dispersed throughout the world:

The Holy One, blessed be He, exiled Israel among the nations in order that proselytes might join them. Some have explained that this does not refer to actual converts, but rather to the holy sparks that have a hidden existence among the nations, and

... לא הגלה הקב"ה את ישראל וכו' אלא כדי שיתוספו עליהם גרים ופירשו ז"ל שאין המכוון על גרים ממש רק על ניצוצות קדושות וחיות שיש באומות בסוד ואתה מחיה את כולם וזה מוציאים על ידי

דברים טו, יא - כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ על פני אנכי מצוה לאמר פתח תפתח את ידך לאחיך לעניך ולאיבך בארץך
For there never will cease to be needy within the land. Therefore, I command you saying, "You shall surely open your hand to your brother, to your poor one, and to your needy one in your land." Devarim 15:11

R. Shimon ben Elazer understands the first of these verses as telling us that in messianic times, we no longer will desire to do evil. Shmuel, on the other hand, sees in the second verse a reflection of a broader principle—that the only thing that will change is that we will no longer be persecuted. Remarkably, R. Shimon ben Elazer understands the messianic era as *מי הָרָעָה*. This parallels the intense mourning of the demise of the *yeitzer ha-ra* described in *Zecharya* Chapter 12:11 (according to one view in *Sukkah* 52b).

⁵ Rashi notes that the proof is from the continuation of the verse, (Hoshea 2:25)—ואמרתי ללא עמי עמי אתה—And I will say to those that are not My people, “You are My people.”

⁶ This idea is major theme in the writings of the Netziv (see, for example, *Bamidbar* 14:21) and R. S. R. Hirsch (see, for example, *Nineteen Letters*, Letter 9).

You will revive them and they will be removed through exile.

Pri Tzaddik, Shemot, Parashat Parah

הגלויות.

ר' צדוק הכהן מלובלין - פרי צדיק שמות
פרשת פרה: [ג]

We should note that the above themes need not be seen to contradict the notion that *galut* is as a result of sin. Conceivably these goals could have been accomplished in a different manner had we not been exiled due to sin. Rather, these sources are meant to emphasize that there are positive accomplishments that we are meant to achieve during our exilic experience. Accordingly it would seem that redemption is not merely dependent upon our rectifying our misdeeds; it also depends upon our accomplishing the goals and purposes of exile.

The State of the Jewish People at the Time of Redemption and Yechezkeil's Prophecy of the Resurrection of the Dry Bones

Some of the above sources may paint a rosy picture of our current state of affairs in *galut*. However, further investigation indicates that the matter is not so simple. Various commentaries paint graphic images of our deplorable spiritual stature in *galut*. Consideration of these descriptions may prove helpful in igniting the feelings of mourning that we are meant to experience on Tisha B'Av. We begin with a comment from David ha-Melech:

When David asks Shaul why he has chased him, forcing him to leave the Holy Land, he says:

For they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of Hashem, saying: Go, serve other gods.

Shmuel I 26:19

כי-גרשוני היום מהסתפח בנחלת ה'
לאמר לך עבד אלהים אחרים.⁷
שמואל א' כ"ו יט

Did they really force David to serve idolatry? He was only forced to leave the land of Israel. The Talmud derives from here that living outside of Israel is tantamount to serving idolatry— כל הדר תלמוד מן הארץ כעבוד אלהים אחרים.⁸ Ramban understands that this refers to our tenuous connection

⁷רד"ק שמואל א פרק כו פסוק יט לך עבוד אלהים אחרים - כאלו אומר לו לך עבוד אלהים אחרים כי מגרשי אותי מנחלת ה' לגור בין העכו"ם אעפ"י שעדיין לא יצא מארץ יהודה ידע כי יצטרך לצאת כי לא יוכל לברוח מפני שאול אחר זה והוא בארץ יהודה וישראל וגם הצטרך לו לצאת כשהלך אל אכיש מלך גת וגם כן הלך למצפה מואב והניח אביו ואמו לפני מלך מואב וישבו שם אעפ"י שהוא ואנשיו היה הולך ושב בארץ יהודה וי"ת למימר איזיל דוד ביני עממיא פלחי טעווא:

Go worship other gods—It is as if he is telling him to go worship other gods because "I am being chased away from the inheritance of God to live among the nations." Even though he didn't yet leave the Land of Judah, he knew that he would be forced to leave because he would not be able to run away from Shaul after this. Radak, Shmuel I 26:19

⁸כתובות קי: ת"ר: לעולם ידור אדם בא"י אפי' בעיר שרובה עובדי כוכבים, ואל ידור בחו"ל ואפילו בעיר שרובה ישראל, שכל הדר בארץ ישראל - דומה כמי שיש לו אלוה, וכל הדר בחוצה לארץ - דומה כמי שאין לו אלוה, שנא': (ויקרא כ"ה) לתת לכם את ארץ כנען להיות לכם לאלהים, וכל שאינו דר בארץ אין לו אלוה? אלא לומר לך: כל הדר בחו"ל - כאילו עובד עבודת כוכבים; וכן בדוד הוא אומר: (שמואל א' כ"ו) כי גרשוני היום מהסתפח בנחלת ה' לאמר לך עבוד אלהים אחרים, וכי מי אמר לו לדוד לך עבוד אלהים אחרים? אלא לומר לך: כל הדר בחו"ל - כאילו עובד עבודת כוכבים.

Our Rabbis taught: One should always live in the Land of Israel, even in a town most of whose inhabitants are idolaters, but let no one live outside the Land, even in a town most of whose inhabitants are Israelites; for whoever lives in the Land of Israel may be considered to have a God, but whoever lives outside the Land may be regarded as one who has no God. For it is said in Scripture, "To give you the Land of Canaan, to be your God." Has he, then, who does not live in the Land, no God? But [this is what the text intended] to tell you, that whoever lives outside the Land may be regarded as one who

to God outside of Israel.⁹ The degree of providence and closeness to the Divine is inherently restricted when we are not at home, to the extent that David declared the Jew in exile is Godless.

Ramban goes even further when interpreting an episode from the book of Yechezkeil. The prophet Yechezkeil describes the resurrection of dry bones:

1 The hand of Hashem was upon me, and Hashem carried me out in a spirit and set me down in the midst of the valley, and it was full of bones; 2 and He caused me to pass by them round about, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. 3 And He said to me: "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered: "Hashem, God, You know." 4 Then He said to me: "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them: 'You dry bones, hear the word of Hashem: 5 "Thus says the Hashem, God, unto these bones: 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, bring up flesh upon you, cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am Hashem.' 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold, a commotion, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 And I beheld, and, lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. 9 Then He said to me: "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath: 'Thus says Hashem, God: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'"" 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great host. 11 Then He said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say: 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' 12 Therefore prophesy, and say unto them: 'Thus says Hashem, God: "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am Hashem, when I have opened your graves, and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. 14 And I will put My

א הַיְהוָה עָלַי, יְד-ה', וַיּוֹצֵאֲנִי בְרוּחַ ה', וַיְנַחֲנֵנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּקָעָה; וְהִיא, מְלֵאָה עֲצָמוֹת. ב וְהֵעֲבִירַנִי עֲלֵיהֶם, סָבִיב סָבִיב; וְהִנֵּה רַבּוֹת מְאֹד עַל-פְּנֵי הַבְּקָעָה, וְהִנֵּה יְבֵשׁוֹת מְאֹד. ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי--בֶּן-אָדָם, הֲתַחְיֶינָה הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה; וְאָמַר, אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה אַתָּה יִדְעָתָּ. ד וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי, הֲנִבְאָ עַל-הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה; וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם--הָעֲצָמוֹת הַיְבֵשׁוֹת, שְׁמַעוּ דְבַר-ה'. ה ה כֹּה אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה, לָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה: הִנֵּה אֲנִי מְבִיא בָכֶם, רוּחַ--וְחַיִּיתֶם. ו וַנִּתְּתִי עֲלֵיכֶם גִּידִים וְהַעֲלֵתִי עֲלֵיכֶם בָּשָׂר, וְקָרַמְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם עוֹר, וַנִּתְּתִי בָכֶם רוּחַ, וְחַיִּיתֶם; וַיִּדְעַתֶּם, כִּי-אֲנִי ה'. ז וַנִּבְאֵתִי, כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי; וַיְהִי-קוֹל כְּהִנָּבְאִי, וְהִנֵּה-רַעַשׁ, וַתִּקְרְבוּ עֲצָמוֹת, עֶצֶם אֶל-עֶצְמוֹ. ח וַרְאִיתִי וְהִנֵּה-עֲלֵיהֶם גִּידִים, וַיְבָשֶׁר עֲלֵהֶם, וַיִּקְרַם עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹר, מְלֻמָּעָלָה; וְרוּחַ, אִין בָּהֶם. ט וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי, הֲנִבְאָ אֶל-הָרוּחַ; הֲנִבְאָ בֶן-אָדָם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל-הָרוּחַ כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה, מֵאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת בְּאֵי הָרוּחַ, וּפְחִי בְּהַרוּגִים הָאֵלֶּה, וַיְחִי. י וְהִנְבֵּאתִי, כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי; וַתְּבוֹא בָהֶם הָרוּחַ וַיְחִי, וַיַּעֲמְדוּ עַל-רַגְלֵיהֶם--חַיִל, גָּדוֹל מְאֹד-מְאֹד. יא וַיֹּאמֶר, אֵלַי, בֶּן-אָדָם, הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כָּל-בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה; הִנֵּה אֲמַרְיִם, יְבֹשֶׁת עֲצָמוֹתֵינוּ וְאַבְדָּה תִקְרָנוּ--נִגְזְרָנוּ לָנוּ. יב לָכֵן הֲנִבְאָ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם, כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה, הִנֵּה אֲנִי פֹתַח אֶת-קְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם וְהַעֲלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִקְבְּרוֹתֵיכֶם, עִמִּי; וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם, אֶל-אֶדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל. יג וַיִּדְעַתֶּם, כִּי-אֲנִי ה': כִּפְתַחְתִּי אֶת-קְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם, וַיְהַעֲלוֹתִי אֶתְכֶם מִקְבְּרוֹתֵיכֶם--עִמִּי. יד וַנִּתְּתִי רוּחִי בָכֶם

worships idols. Similarly it was said in Scripture in [the story of] David, "For they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave to the inheritance of the Lord, saying: Go, serve other gods." Now, whoever said to David, "Serve other gods"? But [the text intended] to tell you that whoever lives outside the Land may be regarded as one who worships idols.

Ketubot 110b (Soncino Talmud Translation)

⁹ Ramban references this Gemara in his commentary to Vayikra 18:25 and in his Hasagot to Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot, Aseh no. 4. See also, Ramban's commentary to Bereishit 24:3 and Devarim 11:18.

spirit into you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; and you shall know that I Hashem have spoken and performed it, says Hashem.”

Ezekiel Chapter 37

וְחַיִּיתֶם, וְהִנַּחֲתִי אֶתְכֶם עַל-אֲדָמַתְכֶם; וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי-אֲנִי ה', דְּבַרְתִּי וַעֲשִׂיתִי--נְאֻם-ה'.
יחזקאל, פרק לז

Who are these dry bones and when will they be resurrected? Ramban¹⁰ understands that the awakening of the dry bones portrayed in Yechezkeil is not referring to the resurrection at the end of days (*tehiyat ha-meitim*), but rather to the messianic redemption. Who then are the dry bones? They are us—the Jewish people in exile. We are dead. In our current state of affairs we are like a corpse. The redemption is compared to resurrection in that we will be brought back to life. To fully appreciate this startling notion, let us carefully examine Ramban’s comments which concern Yaakov’s death in Egypt.

Based on the principle of *ma’aseh avot siman la-banim* (the actions of the forefathers serve as a model for future generations), Ramban writes that Ya’akov’s descent into Egypt and eventual burial in Israel serve as the model for our current exile and future redemption.¹¹ He identifies numerous parallels between Ya’akov’s exile to Egypt and our current exile in the hands of the fourth beast (described in Daniel¹²), which corresponds to Edom. Ramban’s comments are reproduced below in a way that highlights the parallels:

I have already mentioned that Yaakov’s descent to Egypt parallels our current exile in the hands of the fourth beast, the wicked romans. [We can discern the following parallels between Yaakov’s experience in Egypt and our current situation. With respect to Yaakov:]

1. *Yaakov’s sons themselves caused their descent to Egypt through their sale of their brother Yosef.*
2. *Yaakov descended there because of famine.*
3. *He thought only to be saved from starvation with his son Yosef in the house of one who loved him, for Pharaoh loved Yosef, and Yosef was like his son.*
4. *Yaakov’s children intended to return to their homeland as soon as the famine ended, as it says “we have come to sojourn in the land since there is no grazing for your servants’ flocks for the famine is intense in the land of Canaan.” But they did not go back; rather, the exile became protracted.*
5. *And Yaakov died there and only his bones went up.*

- ויחי יעקב בארץ מצרים שבע עשרה שנה - כבר הזכרתי (לעיל מג יד)¹⁶ כי רדת יעקב למצרים הוא גלותינו היום ביד החיה הרביעית (דניאל ז ז) רומי הרשעה,
1. כי בני יעקב הם עצמם סבבו רדתם שם במכירת יוסף אחיהם,
 2. ויעקב ירד שם מפני הרעב,
 3. וחשב להנצל עם בנו בבית אוהב לו, כי פרעה אוהב את יוסף וכבן לו,
 4. והיו סבורים לעלות משם ככלות הרעב מארץ כנען, כמו שאמרו (לעיל מז ד) לגור בארץ באנו כי אין מרעה לצאן אשר לעבדיך כי כבד הרעב בארץ כנען. והנה לא עלו, אבל ארך עליהם הגלות,
 5. ומת שם ועלו עצמותיו,

¹⁰ See the commentaries on this verse. Kuzari, Gra, and Rav Kook all adopt this interpretation as well.
¹¹ The *ma’aseh avot siman la-banim* is not the redemption of the Jewish people but Ya’akov’s burial. This is because *ma’aseh avot siman la-banim* is limited to the *avot* themselves and to the book of *Bereishit*.
¹² The seventh chapter of the book of Daniel records Daniel’s dream of four beasts that come out of the sea: a lion with an eagle’s wings; a bear with three tusks; a leopard with four wings and four heads; and a beast with iron teeth, ten horns, one little horn, and human eyes. These beasts correspond to the four exiles: Babylonian, Median, Greek, and Roman. The Rishonim debate whether the fourth beast is referring exclusively to Rome/Edom or includes Yishmael as well (as indicated by the feet being composed of both clay and metal).

6. *And the elders of Pharaoh brought him back.*

7. *And made for him "a grievous mourning."*

Likewise, we are with Rome and Edom:

1. *Our brothers [the Chashmonaim] caused our coming under their control for they made a pact with the Romans.¹³*

2. *And Agrippa II, the last king of the Second Temple period, fled to them for assistance.¹⁴ [Parallel to 3 above]*

3. *And because of the famine the people of Yerushalaim were captured by the Romans. [Parallel to 2 above]*

4. *And the exile has become extremely protracted for us. We don't know its end, as we did in other exiles.*

6. וזקני פרעה ושריו העלוהו,

7. ועשו עמו אבל כבד:

וכן אנחנו עם רומי ואדום.

1. אחינו הסיבנו ביאתינו בידם, כי כרתו ברית עם הרומיים.

2. ואגריפס המלך האחרון לבית

שני ברח אליהם לעזרה,

3. ומפני הרעב נלכדו אנשי

ירושלים,

4. והגלות ארך עלינו מאד, לא נודע

קצו כשאר הגליות.

5. ואנחנו בו כמתים אומרים יבשו

¹³ Judah (יהודה המכבי) sought an alliance with the Roman Republic to remove the Greeks. Josephus reports: "In the year 161 B.C.E., he sent Eupolemus the son of Yochanan and Jason the son of Elazar 'to make a league of amity and confederacy with the Romans'" (*Jewish War*; translation adapted from that of William Whiston). Later, Jonathan sought alliances with foreign peoples. He renewed the treaty with the Roman Republic. Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, Simon's great-grandsons, became pawns in a proxy war between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great. See *Yosipon*, chapters 23 and 45.

¹⁴ The later Herodian rulers Agrippa I and Agrippa II both had Hasmonean blood, as Agrippa I's father was Aristobulus IV, son of Herod by Mariamne I, but they were not direct male descendants of the Hasmoneans. During the First Jewish-Roman War of 66–73, Herod Agrippa II (born A.D. 27/28), known as Agrippa, sent soldiers to support Vespasian, showing that, although a Jew in religion, he was entirely devoted to the Romans. After the capture of Jerusalem, he went with his sister Berenice to Rome, where he was invested with the dignity of praetor and rewarded with additional territory. Ramban presumably means that just as Yosef depended on the friendship of Pharaoh, so too Agrippa relied on the friendship of Rome. See *Yosipon*, chapter 64.

¹⁵ ויה וְאֲנֹכִי, מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם וּמַחֲשֵׁבֹתֵיהֶם--בָּאָה, לְקַבֵּץ אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם וְהַלְשִׁנוֹת; וּבָאוּ, וְרָאוּ אֶת-כְּבוֹדִי. יֵט וְשָׁמְתִי בָהֶם אוֹת, וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי מֵהֶם פְּלִיטִים אֶל-הַגּוֹיִם תַּרְשִׁישׁ פּוּל וְלֹוד מִלְשֵׁי קִשְׁת-הַחַבֵּל וְנִין: הָאֵיִם הָרַחֲקִים, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ אֶת-שְׁמִעִי וְלֹא-רָאוּ אֶת-כְּבוֹדִי--וְהִגִּידוּ אֶת-כְּבוֹדִי, בְּגוֹיִם. כִּי וְהִבִּיאוּ אֶת-כָּל-אֲחֵיהֶם מִכָּל-הַגּוֹיִם מִנְחָה לַיהוָה בְּסוּסִים וּבַרְכָב וּבַצִּבְיִים וּבַכְּרָדִים וּבַכְּרָרוֹת, עַל הַר קְדְשִׁי יְרוּשָׁלַם--אָמַר יְהוָה: פֶּאֶשֶׁר יָבִיאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַמִּנְחָה בְּכָלִי טְהוֹר, בֵּית ה'. יִשְׁעִיה, פֶּרֶק סו

18 For I [know] their works and their thoughts; [the time] comes, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see My glory. 19 And I will work a sign among them, and I will send such as escape of them to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tuvai and Yavan, to the isles far off that have not heard My fame nor have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the nations. 20 And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an offering to Hashem, upon horses, in chariots, in litters, upon mules, and upon swift beasts to My holy mountain, Jerusalem, says Hashem, as the children of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel into the house of Hashem. **Isaiah Chapter 66**

Ramban compares the return of Ya'akov's corpse for burial to the redemption from Edom: just as Ya'akov is returned to Israel with the aid of non-Jews, so too the Jews will return to Israel in messianic times with the help of non-Jews.

¹⁶ רמב"ן בראשית פרשת מקץ פרק מג: (יד) ... ולשון אחר דרשו שם בבראשית רבה, אמרו רבי יהושע בן לוי פתר קריא בגליות, ואל שדי יתן לכם רחמים לפני האיש, זה הקדוש ברוך הוא שנאמר (שמות טו ג) ה' איש מלחמה, וכתוב (תהלים קו מז) ויתן אותם לרחמים. ושלה לכם את אחיכם, אלו השבטים, אחר ואת בנימין, זה יהודה ובנימין. ואני כאשר שכלתי בחורבן ראשון שכלתי בחורבן שני. לא אשכל עוד. [לפנינו: כאשר שכלתי בחורבן ראשון ובשני (לכאור' יוסף ושמעון) לא אשכל עוד.] זה לשונם ז"ל. והכונה כי ירידת יעקב למצרים ירמוז לגלותינו ביד אדום כמו שאפרש (ריש פרשת ויחי). וראה הנביא הענין מתחלתו והתפלל סתם לשעה ולדורות. והכתוב זה כפי מדרשם יש לו סוד גדול. כי אמר ואל שדי, במדת הדין, יתן לכם רחמים שלפניו, יעלה אתכם ממדת הדין למדת רחמים. והמשכיל יבין:

Our Rabbis state: And I, as I am bereaved about the destruction of the First Temple, so too am I bereaved about the destruction of the Second Temple and I will not become bereaved again. And their intent is that Jacob's descent to Egypt hints to our exile in the hands of Rome as I will explain. Ramban, Bereishit 43:14

5. *And we are like dead men, exclaiming "our bones are dried out... we are doomed" (Yechezkeil 37:11).*
6. *[But in the end] "they will bring us up from among all the nations, a tribute to Hashem."¹⁵*
7. *And they will have "a grievous mourning" upon seeing our glory. And we will see God's vengeance, may He preserve us and we will live before Him.*

Ramban Bereishit (Vayechi) 47:28

Many aspects of this comparison are striking. For example, the Egyptians participate in the burial of Ya'akov, showing him great honor. The parallel to this is the universal recognition of God and His people that will take place at the time of redemption, when the non-Jews will participate in and contribute to the redemption. In this piece, Ramban also compares the Jewish people in exile to a corpse: just as Ya'akov dies in Egypt, so too we will "die" in exile. Like the dry bones described in Yechezkeil, however, we will be resurrected and redeemed. Thus, the resurrection described by the prophet is not meant literally, but instead refers to a spiritual rejuvenation so striking that it is compared to actual resuscitation.

This comparison, which emerges directly from the verses in Yechezkeil, is remarkable insofar as we generally consider our current state of affairs to be vibrant, despite our exilic state. R. Yehdua ha-Levi also compares the Jewish people in exile to scattered bones. Responding to the Khazar king's comment that without prophets and priests the Jewish people are like a being without a head and heart, the Rabbi says:

The Rabbi: What you say is true! Moreover, we have no real bones, just scattered bones, akin to the dry bones that Yechezkeil saw in his vision. Nevertheless, King of Khazars, these bones have some remnant of life in them, for they once were utensils for the head, heart, life force, spirit, and soul. They therefore are better than the intact bodies whose head, eyes, ears, and the remaining parts are made of stone and plaster. These bodies never had the spirit of life rest within them, nor is it possible that they ever will. Rather, they are forms that resemble man, but are not really man....

Kuzari, Ma'amar no. 2

עצמותינו נגזרנו לנו,
 6. ויעלו אותנו מכל העמים מנחה
 לה',
 7. ויהיה להם אבל כבוד בראותם
 כבודנו. ואנחנו נראה בנקמת ה',
 יקימנו ונחיה לפניו:
רמב"ן פרשת ויחי מז:כה

ל. אמר החבר: כן הוא, כאשר אמרת,
 ועוד ולא גוף, אבל עצמות מפוזרות כמו
 העצמות היבשות אשר ראה יחזקאל, ועם
 כל זה מלך כוזר, אלו העצמות אשר נשאר
 בהם טבע מטבעי החיים, וכבר היו כלים
 לראש וללב ורוח ונפש ושכל, טובים
 מגופות מצויירות מאבן וסיד בראש
 ועינים ואזנים וכל האברים, ולא חלה בהם
 מעולם רוח חיה ואי אפשר שיחול בהם,
 אך המה צורות דומות לצורות אדם ואינם
 אדם.

ספר הכוזרי מאמר ב

Consolation and Conclusion

Sources such as the above Ramban and Kuzari appear to contrast the various positive aspects of *galut* described in the first section. What emerges is a portrayal of *galut* that is more complex than we usually presume. Indeed, unanswerable questions are a refrain that permeates the entire *galut* experience. Let us then conclude with one final image that ties these themes together.

Picture a crying baby with furrowed brows. The infant, uncomfortable and hungry, cries out in pain not knowing if her needs will be met. In an instant, everything changes. When she suckles

on her mother's breast, it is clear that her pain has been relieved, her uncertainty restored, and her fears vanquished.

Now imagine a barren desert. Upon seeing it, a person concludes that it is void of all life. He returns one week later to see a carpet of green grasses and colorful flowers. Sounds of life and vitality surround him. What has changed? The rain has finally come.

These are some of the images used by the prophet in the final chapter of Yeshaya to depict the redemption. Our mother will comfort us. Our doubts will dissipate. Our questions will be resolved. Our revival will be breathtaking.

The details of how and when this will occur are unknown to us at present. For now, we are like the desert that thirsts for water and the baby who yearns for her mother. We must anticipate redemption—may it come speedily in our days.¹⁷

¹⁷ My thanks to R. Nathan Hyman and Aviyam Levinson for their help in preparing this piece.