

Chosenness: Between Otherness and Exceptionalism

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1. Genesis 12

See Tanakh

2. Deuteronomy 4:5-8, 19-20

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3. Leviticus 20: 22-26

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4. Sifra Kedoshim 10

(כב) ואבדיל אתכם מן העמים להיות לי, אם מובדלים אתם מן העמים הרי אתם לשמי ואם לאו הרי אתם של נבוכדנצר מלך בבל וחביריו, ר' אלעזר בן עזריה אומר מנין שלא יאמר אדם אי איפשי ללבוש שעטנו אי אפשי לאכול בשר חזיר, אי איפשי לבוא על הערוה, אבל איפשי מה אעשה ואבי שבשמים גזר עלי כך ת"ל ואבדיל אתכם מן העמים להיות לי נמצא פורש מן העבירה ומקבל עליו מלכות שמים.

"...and I have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine": "If you are separated from the nations, lo, you are for my Name, and if not, lo, you belong to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia, and his associates." R. Eleazar b. Azariah says, "How do we know that someone should not say, 'I do not want to wear mixed fibers, I don't want to eat pork, I don't want to have incestuous sexual relations.' "Rather: 'I do want (to wear mixed fibers, I do want to eat pork, I do want to have incestuous sexual relations.) But what can I do? For my father in heaven has made a decree for me!' "So Scripture says, 'and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.'

5. JT Baba Metzia 2:5

"מצא בחנות הרי אילו שלו וכו'" אמר רבי לעזר כיני מתניתא על גבי כסא שלו ע"ג תיבה שלו. שמעון בן שטח הוה עסיק בהדא כיתנא אמרין ליה תלמידוי ר' ארפי מינד ואנן זבנין לך חדא חמר ולית את לעי סוגין. ואזלון זבנון ליה חדא חמר מחד סירקאי ותלי ביה חדא מרגלי. אתון לגביה אמרין ליה מן כדון לית את צריך לעי תובן. אמר לון למה אמרין ליה זבנין לך חד חמר מחד סירקאי ותלי ביה חדא מרגלי. אמר לון וידע בה מרה אמרין ליה לא א"ל לון איזל חזר. לא כן אמר רב הונא ביבי בר גוזלון בשם רב התיבון קומי רבי אפילו כמאן דמר גזילו של עכו"ם אסור כל עמא מודיי שאבידתו מותרת. מה אתון סברין שמעון בן שטח ברברין הוה. בעי הוה שמעון בן שטח משמע בריך אלההון דיהודאי מאגר כל הדין עלמא

"What one found in a store is his," etc. Rabbi Eleazar said, so is the Mishnah: On his chair, on his counter Simeon ben Shetah was working with linen. His students said to him, Rabbi, in order to make it easier for you we want to buy a donkey, then you will not have to work so hard. They went and bought a donkey from a Saracen; a pearl was hanging on its neck. They came to him saying, because of this you will not have to work anymore. He said to them, why? They told him, we bought for you a donkey from a Saracen and a pearl is hanging on its neck. He asked them, does its owner know about this? They answered, no. He told them, go and return it. But did not Rav Huna, Be'vay bar Gozlan, in the name of Rav say, they objected before Rabbi: Even according to him who says that an object robbed from a Gentile is forbidden, everybody agrees that what he lost is permitted. Do you think that Simeon ben Shetah was a barbarian? Simeon ben Shetah wanted to hear: Praised be the God of the Jews, more than any gain in this world.

6. Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Kaspā 2 s.v. "The Ox of Thine Enemy"

שור אויבך. זהו גוי עובד אלילים, דברי רבי יאשיה, וכן מצינו שעובדי אלילים קרויים אויבים לישראל בכל מקום, שנאמר (דברים כג י) כי תצא מחנה על אויבך, (שם/דברים/ כא י) כי תצא למלחמה על אויבך. - רבי אליעזר אומר, בגר שחזר לסורו הכתוב מדבר. - רבי יצחק אומר, בישראל משומד הכתוב מדבר. - [ר' נתן אומר, בישראל עצמו הכתוב מדבר], אלא מה תלמוד לומר אויבך, אלא אם הכה את בנך, או שעשה עמך מריבה, נעשה אויב לשעה.

The Ox of Thine Enemy. R. Josiah says: This means of a heathen worshiping idols. For thus we find everywhere that the heathen are designated as enemies of Israel, as it is said: "When thou goest forth in camp against thine enemies" (Deut. 23.10), "When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies" (ibid. 21.10). R. Eliezer says: This passage refers to a proselyte who has relapsed into his former evil predilection. R. Isaac says: This passage refers to an apostate Israelite. R. Jonathan says: This passage actually refers to an Israelite. How then can Scripture say: "Thine enemy? It is simply this: If one has beaten his son or has had a quarrel with him, he becomes his enemy for the time being. (J.Z. Lauterbach translation, pp. 163-164)

7. Exodus 19:1-8

See Tanakh

8. Genesis 18:16-25

See Tanakh

9. Isaiah 49:1-6

See Tanakh

10. Amos 9: 7-15

See Tanakh

11. Maimonides, Hilkhoh Shmitah ve-Yovel 13:12-13

יב ולמה לא זכה לוי בנחלת ארץ ישראל ובביזתה עם אחיו : מפני שהובדל לעבוד את ה' ולשרתו, ולהורות דרכיו הישרים ומשפטיו הצדיקים לרבים--שנאמר "יורו משפטיך ליעקוב, ותורתך לישראל" (דברים לג, י). לפיכך הובדלו מדרכי העולם--לא עורכין מלחמה כשאר ישראל, ולא נוחלין, ולא זוכין לעצמן בכוח גופן ; אלא הם חיל ה', שנאמר "ברך ה' חילו" (דברים לג, יא), והוא ברוך הוא זיכה להם, שנאמר "אני חלקך ונחלתך" (במדבר יח, כ).

יג ולא שבט לוי בלבד, אלא כל איש ואיש מכל באי העולם אשר נדבה רוחו אותו והבינו מדעו להיבדל לעמוד לפני ה' לשרתו ולעובדו לדעה את ה', והלך ישר כמו שעשהו האלוהים, ופרק מעל צווארו עול החשבונות הרבים אשר ביקשו בני האדם--הרי זה נתקדש קודש קודשים, ויהיה ה' חלקו ונחלתו לעולם ולעולמי עולמים ; ויזכה לו בעולם הזה דבר המספיק לו, כמו שזיכה לכוהנים וללויים. הרי דויד אומר "ה', מנת חלקי וכוסי--אתה, תומיך גורלי" (תהילים טז, ה).

Why did the Levites not receive a portion in the inheritance of *Eretz Yisrael* and in the spoils of war like their brethren? Because they were set aside to serve God and minister unto Him and to instruct people at large in His just paths and righteous judgments, as [Deuteronomy 33:10] states: "They will teach Your judgments to Jacob and Your Torah to Israel." Therefore they were set apart from the ways of the world. They do not wage war like the remainder of the Jewish people, nor do they receive an inheritance, nor do they acquire for themselves through their physical power. Instead, they are God's legion, as [*ibid.*:11]: states: "God has blessed His legion" and He provides for them, as [Numbers 18:20] states: "I am your portion and your inheritance."

Not only the tribe of Levi, but any one of the inhabitants of the world whose spirit generously motivates him and he understands with his wisdom to set himself aside and stand before God to serve Him and minister to Him and to know God, proceeding justly as God made him, removing from his neck the yoke of the many reckonings which people seek, he is sanctified as holy of holies. God will be His portion and heritage forever and will provide what is sufficient for him in this world like He provides for the priests and the Levites. And thus David declared [Psalms 16:5]: "God is the lot of my portion; You are my cup, You support my lot."

12. Maimonides, Hilkhoh Avoda Zara 11:1

אין הולכין בחוקות הגויים, ולא מידמין להן--לא במלבוש, ולא בשיער, וכיוצא בהן: שנאמר "ולא תלכו בחוקות הגוי" (ויקרא כ,ג), ונאמר "ובחוקותיהם, לא תלכו" (ויקרא יח,ג), ונאמר "הישמר לך, פן תינקש אחריהם" (דברים יב,ל). הכול בעניין אחד הוא מזהיר: שלא ידמה להן--אלא יהיה הישראלי מובדל מהן וידוע במלבושו ובשאר מעשיו, כמו שהוא מובדל מהן במדעו ובדעותיו. וכן הוא אומר "ואבדיל אתכם מן העמים" (ויקרא כ,כו). לא ילבוש במלבוש המיוחד להן. ולא יגדל ציצית, כמו ציצית ראשם; ולא יגלח מן הצדדין ויניח השיער באמצע, כמו שהן עושין, וזה הוא הנקרא בלורית; ולא יגלח השיער מכנגד פניו מאוזן לאוזן ויניח הפרע מלאחריו, כדרך שהן עושין. ולא יבנה מקומות כבניין היכלות של עבודה זרה כדי שייכנסו בהן רבים, כמו שהן עושין. וכל העושה אחת מאלו, וכיוצא בהן--לוקה.

We may not follow the statutes of the idolaters or resemble them in their [style] of dress, coiffure, or the like, as [Leviticus 20:23] states: "Do not follow the statutes of the nation [that I am driving out before you]," as [Leviticus 18:3] states: "Do not follow their statutes," and as [Deuteronomy 12:30] states: "Be careful, lest you inquire after them."

[All these verses] share a single theme: they warn us not to try to resemble [the gentiles]. Instead, the Jews should be separate from them and distinct in their dress and in their deeds, as they are in their ideals and character traits. In this context, [Leviticus 20:26] states: "I have separated you from the nations [to be Mine]."

[Thus,] one may not wear a garment which is unique to them or grow the tresses of our hair as they do. We may not shave our heads from the sides and leave hair in the center as they do. This is called a *blorit*. We may not shave the hair on the front of our faces from ear to ear and leave a growth at the back of our heads as they do. We may not build Temples in order that many people may enter as they do. Whoever performs one of the above or a deed of this nature is [liable for] lashes.

13. Isaiah 2: 1-4

See Tanakh

14. Micah 4:1-4

See Tanakh

15. Isaiah 11

See Tanakh

16. Joel 4: 9-17

See Tanakh

17. Ezekiel 38: 14 – 39:17

See Tanakh

18. Maimonides, Hilkhhot Yesodei Ha-Torah, 5:1

כל בית ישראל מצווין על קידוש השם הגדול הזה, שנאמר "ונקדשתי, בתוך בני ישראל (ויקרא כב, לב) ומוזהרין שלא לחללו, שנאמר "ולא תחללו, את שם קודשי" (שם). כיצד--בשעה שיעמוד גוי ויאנוס את ישראל לעבור על אחת מכל מצוות האמורות בתורה או יהרגנו, יעבור ואל ייהרג: שנאמר במצוות, "אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם" (ויקרא יח, ה) ולא שימות בהם. ואם מת ולא עבר, הרי זה מתחייב בנפשו.

The entire house of Israel are commanded regarding the sanctification of [God's] great name, as [Leviticus 22:32] states: "And I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel." Also, they are warned against desecrating [His holy name], as [the above verse] states: "And they shall not desecrate My holy name." What is implied? Should a gentile arise and force a Jew to violate one of the Torah's commandments at the pain of death, he should violate the commandment rather than be killed, because [Leviticus 18:5] states concerning the mitzvot: "which a man will perform and live by them." [They were given so that] one may live by them and not die because of them. If a person dies rather than transgress, he is held accountable for his life.

19. BT Yoma 86a

R. Matthia b. Heresh asked R. Eleazar b. Azariah in Rome: have you heard about the four kinds of sins, concerning which R. Ishmael has lectured? He answered: They are three, and with each is repentance connected — If one transgressed a positive commandment, and repented, then he is forgiven, before he has moved from his place; as it is said: Return, O backsliding children. If he has transgressed a prohibition and repented, then repentance suspends [the punishment] and the Day of Atonement procures atonement, as it is said: For on this day shall atonement be made for you ... from all your sins. If he has committed [a sin to be punished with] extirpation or death through the Beth din, and repented, then repentance and the Day of Atonement suspend [the punishment thereon], and suffering finishes the atonement, as it is said: Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with strokes. But if he has been guilty of the profanation of the Name, then penitence has no power to suspend punishment, nor the Day of Atonement to procure atonement, nor suffering to finish it, but all of them together suspend the punishment and only death finishes it, as it is said: And the Lord of hosts revealed Himself in my ears; surely this iniquity shall not be expiated by you till ye die. What constitutes profanation of the Name? — Rab said: If, e.g., I take meat for the butcher and do not pay him at once. Abaye said: That we have learnt [to regard as profanation] only in a place wherein one does not go out to collect payment, but in a place where one does not go out to collect, there is no harm in it [not paying at once]. Rabina said: And Matha Mehasia is a place where one goes out collecting payments due. Whenever Abaye bought meat from two partners, he paid money to each of them, afterwards bringing them, together and squaring accounts with both. R. Johanan said: In my case [it is a profanation if] I walk four cubits without [uttering words of] Torah or [wearing] tefillin. Isaac, of the School of R. Jannai, said: If one's colleagues are ashamed of his reputation, that constitutes a profanation of the Name. R. Nahman b. Isaac commented: E.g. if people say, May the Lord forgive So-and-so. Abaye explained: As it was taught: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God, i.e., that the Name of Heaven be beloved because of you. if someone studies Scripture and Mishnah, and attends on the disciples of the wise, is honest in business, and speaks pleasantly to persons, what do people then say concerning him? 'Happy the father who taught him Torah, happy the teacher who taught him Torah; woe unto people who have not studied the Torah; for this man has studied the Torah look how fine his ways are, how righteous his deeds! . Of him does Scripture say: And He said unto me: Thou art My servant, Israel, in, whom I will be glorified. But if someone studies Scripture and Mishnah, attends on the disciples of the wise, but is dishonest in business, and discourteous in his relations with people, what do people say about him? ' Woe unto him who studied the Torah, woe unto his father who taught him Torah; woe unto his teacher who taught him Torah!' This man studied the Torah: Look,

how corrupt are his deeds, how ugly his ways; of him Scripture says: In that men said of them,: These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of His land.