

Group Members: _____

Text 1:

וּשְשׁ שָׁנִים, תִּזְרַע אֶת-אֶרְצָךָ; וְאָסַפְתָּ, אֶת-תְּבוּאָתָהּ. וְהִשְׁבִּיעַתָּ תְּשֻׁמְטָנָהּ וְנִטְשָׁתָהּ, וְאָכְלוּ אַבְיָנֵי
עִמָּךָ, וְיִתְרָם, תֹּאכְלוּ חֵיטְ הַשָּׂדֶה; בֵּן-תַעֲשֶׂה לְכַרְמְךָ, לְזֵיתְךָ.

Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but in the seventh you shall let it rest and lie fallow. Let the needy among your people eat of it, and what they leave, let the wild beasts eat. You shall do the same with your vineyards and your olive groves.

-Exodus (*Shemot*) 23:10-11

1. Paraphrase this text. What does it mean?
2. What is the importance of Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) in this text?
3. What is the relationship between the Jewish people and Eretz Yisrael in this text?
4. What lesson does this text teach us about our relationship with Eretz Yisrael and our responsibilities to it?

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Text 2:

כי-תצור אֶל-עיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְשׂוּהָ, לֹא-תִשְׁחִית אֶת-עֵצֶיהָ לְנִדְחֵי עָלְיוֹ גְּרוֹן-כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל, וְאֵתוֹ לֹא תִכְרֹת: כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה, לְבֹא מִפְּנֵיךָ בַּמְצוֹר.

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city?

-Deuteronomy (*Devarim*) 20:19

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Text 3:

Two people were once fighting over a piece of land. Each claimed ownership, and each bolstered the claim with apparent proof.

After arguing for a long time, they agreed to resolve their conflict by putting the case before a rabbi. The rabbi sat as an arbitrator and listened carefully, but despite years of legal training the rabbi could not reach a decision. Both parties seemed to be right.

Finally the rabbi said, “Since I cannot decide to whom this land belongs, let’s ask the land.” The rabbi put an ear to the ground, and after a moment stood up. “My friends, the land says it belongs to neither of you—but that you belong to it.

-Source unknown

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Text 4:

יֵד לָכֵן הַנְּהִי-יָמִים בָּאִים, נְאֻם-יְהוָה; וְלֹא-יֵאמֹר עוֹד חַי-יְהוָה, אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלָה אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. טוּ בֵי אִם-חַי-יְהוָה, אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלָה אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ צָפֹן, וּמִכָּל הָאָרְצוֹת,
אֲשֶׁר הֵדִיחַם שָׁמָּה; וְהִשְׁבֹּתִים, עַל-אֲדָמָתְם, אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי, לְאֲבוֹתְכֶם.

Assuredly, a time is coming—declares the Lord—when it shall no more be said, “As the Lord lives who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt,” but rather, “As the Lord lives who brought the Israelites out of the northland, and out of all the lands to which He had banished them.” For I will bring them back to their land, which I gave to their fathers.

-Jeremiah (*Yirmiyahu*) 16:14-15

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Text 5:

אם-אֶשְׁכַּח יְרוּשָׁלַם- תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי.
תִּדְבַק-לְשׁוֹנִי, לְחִכִּי- אִם-לֹא אֶזְכְּרֶיךָ:
אִם-לֹא אֶעֱלֶה, אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַם- עַל רֹאשׁ שְׂמֹחָתִי.

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand wither;
Let my tongue stick to my palate
If I cease to think of you,
If I do not keep Jerusalem in memory
Even at my happiest hour.

-Psalms (*Tehilim*) 137:5-6

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Text 6:

תנו רבנן: לעולם ידור אדם בארץ ישראל, אפילו בעיר שרובה נכרים ואל ידור בחוצה לארץ ואפילו בעיר שרובה ישראל. שכל הדר בארץ ישראל דומה כמי שיש לו אלוה, וכל הדר בחוצה לארץ דומה כמי שאין לו אלוה, שנאמר "לתת לכם את ארץ כנען להיות לכם לאלהים."

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."

-Babylonian Talmud, *Ketubot* 110b

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Text 7:

בְּשֵׁם שֶׁהַטְּבוֹר הַזֶּה נִתּוֹן בְּאֶמְצַע הָאִישׁ, כִּי אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל נִתּוּנָה בְּאֶמְצַע הָעוֹלָם... אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל
יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶמְצַעֵיתוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, וִירוּשָׁלַיִם בְּאֶמְצַעֵיתָהּ שֶׁל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּאֶמְצַע
יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, וְהַהִיכָל בְּאֶמְצַע בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, וְהָאֲרוֹן בְּאֶמְצַע הַהִיכָל, וְאֲבֵן שְׁתֵּייה לְפָנֵי הָאֲרוֹן,
שֶׁמִּמֶּנָּה נִשְׁתַּת הָעוֹלָם.

As the navel is set in the centre of the human body,
so is the Land of Israel the navel of the world...
The Land of Israel is situated in the centre of the world,
and Jerusalem in the centre of the land of Israel,
and the sanctuary in the centre of Jerusalem,
and the holy place in the centre of the sanctuary,
and the ark in the centre of the holy place,
and the foundation stone before the holy place,
because from it the world was founded.

-Midrash Tanchuma, Kedoshim

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Text 8:

I believe that a wondrous generation of Jews will spring into existence. The Maccabees will rise again. Let me repeat once more my opening words: The Jews wish to have a state, and they shall have one. We shall live at last as free men on our own soil, and die peacefully in our own home. The world will be freed by our liberty, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness. And whatever we attempt there to accomplish for our own welfare will react with beneficent force for the good of humanity.

-Theodor Herzl, The Jewish State

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Text 9:

It needs not an independent State, but only the creation in its native land of conditions favorable to its development: a good-sized settlement of Jews working without hindrance in every branch of culture, from agriculture and handicrafts to science and literature. This Jewish settlement, which will be a gradual growth, will become in course of time the centre of the nation, wherein its spirit will find pure expression and develop in all its aspects up to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable.

-Ahad Ha-Am

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