

**Moshe Abelesz for The Lookstein Center,
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Yom Ha'atzmaut

Name: _____

Your objectives for this lesson are to understand:

- a) Some prophecies the Torah gives regarding the Jews and Eretz Yisrael.
- b) Some prophecies regarding the Jewish People's exiles from the land.
- c) Some prophecies regarding the return of the Jewish People to Eretz Yisrael.

Section 1: Ownership of the Land

1. Read the following source and answer the questions below, quoting from the source:

“I will establish My covenant as an everlasting covenant, between Me, you and your descendants that follow you, to be a God for you and for your descendants. I will give the land of your sojourning, the whole land of Canaan to you and your descendants for everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” *Bereshit 17:7-8*

a) Who are the descendents to whom God has given “the whole land of Canaan”?

b) How long was this covenant supposed to last?

a) _____

b) _____

2. Explain what additional information the following source provides about God's promise:

“Be careful lest your heart is seduced, that you turn away and serve other gods and that you bow down to them. And then the Lord's anger will burn against you and He will shut up the heavens and there will be no rain and the land will not yield its produce. You will be quickly cut off from the good land that the Lord is giving to you.” *Devarim 11:16-17*

Section 2: The Land in Exile

3. Read the following sources and answer the questions below:

“I will turn Jerusalem into a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals. I will make the cities of Judah into a desolation without inhabitant.” *Yirmiyahu 9:10*

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“I will bring the land into desolation that your enemies who come to dwell in it will stand aghast at the sight of it. *Vayikra* 26:32

a) What will happen to the land of Israel according to these sources? Explain.

b) Read the Rashi below and explain how he sees the devastation of the land as a blessing from God.

I will make the land desolate “This is a positive tiding for Israel as its enemies will not find any peace of mind in their land, it will be desolate of inhabitants.” Rashi on *Vayikra* 26:32

a) _____

b) _____

4. Read what Mark Twain wrote about upon his visit to Eretz Yisrael in 1867:

“We traversed some miles of desolate country whose soil is rich enough but is given wholly to weeds, a silent, mournful expanse... A desolation is here that not even the imagination can grace with pomp of life and action... We never saw a human being on the whole route. We pressed on toward the goal of our crusade, renowned Jerusalem. The further we went the hotter the sun got and the more rocky and bare, repulsive and dreary the landscape became...There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country. No landscape exists that is more tiresome to the eye that which bounds the approaches to Jerusalem...Jerusalem is mournful, dreary and lifeless...”

Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* or *The New Pilgrim's Progress* Volume II, Harper and Brothers (New York:1922).

a) How does Mark Twain describe Eretz Yisrael?

b) How does his description compare to the promises the Torah gave about the land, in the three sources of question 3? Explain.

a) _____

b) _____

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Section 3: The People in Exile

5. Read the following sources and answer the questions below:

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will be cut off quickly from the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy. You will not remain there long, for you will be wiped out. God will then scatter you among the nations and you will be left few in number among the nations to which God will lead you.” *Devarim 4: 26-27*

“You will become an (object of) ridicule, an example (of derision) and an (insulting) byword from all the nations to which the Lord will lead you.” *Devarim 28:37*

“Those of you who survive in the lands of your enemies, I shall make fainthearted, and the sound of a rustling leave will chase them, they will flee headlong, as if from the sword, and they shall fall though no one pursues them; stumbling over one another as if to escape a weapon, while no one is after them, so helpless will you be to take a stand against your foes. You will perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies will consume you.” *Vayikra 26:36-38*

- a) Where will the Jews live after they have been exiled from Israel?
- b) What will the attitude of the nations be towards the Jews?
- c) How will the Jews feel about their new homes?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

6. Read the following quote from Martin Gilbert’s *Jewish History Atlas*, Oxford 1985.

“But as my research into Jewish history progressed, I was surprised, depressed and to some extent overwhelmed by the perpetual and irrational violence which pursued the Jews in ever country and to almost every corner of the globe. If, therefore, persecution, expulsion, torture, humiliation and mass murder, haunt these pages, it is because they also haunt the Jewish story.

Explain the conclusions that can be drawn from this quote.

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Section 4: The Return of the Jews

7. Read the following source:

“The Lord your God will return your captives and will have compassion upon you. He will return and gather you from among all the nations to which the Lord your God has scattered you. Even if your dispersed ones will be at the edge of the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and fetch you. The Lord your God will bring you to the land that your ancestors have inherited and you will possess it and He will do you good and multiply you more than your fathers.” *Devarim* 30:3-5

a) What do you think the Torah means when it says: “will be at the edge of the heavens”? Explain.

b) Do you think that this has happened? Explain.

a) _____

b) _____

8. Read the following source:

“As for you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people of Israel, for their return is close at hand. For behold, I am with you and I shall turn to you, then you shall be tilled and sown. I will multiply men upon you, the entire house of Israel. They will settle your cities, and rebuild all the ruins. I will multiply upon you men and animals and they shall increase and bear fruit; and I will inhabit you like in your former times, and I will make you even more prosperous than you were in your beginnings. You will know that I am your God.” *Yechezkel* 36:8-11

What will happen to the Land of Israel according to Yechezkel’s prophecy? Explain.

9. Read Rabbi Abba’s comments about these verses and Rabbi Chiya Ruba’s comments below:

“Rabbi Abba Said: There can be no clearer sign of redemption than this, as it is written: ‘As for you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people of Israel, for their return is close at hand’”.
Sanhedrin 98a

“Rabbi Chiya Ruba and Rabbi Shimonbar Chalafta were walking in the Arbel Valley as dawn was breaking. They saw the morning star breaking its light. Rabbi Chiya Ruba said to Rabbi Shimonbar Chalafta: ‘Thus is the redemption of Israel. In the beginning it moves very slowly, but as it progresses it becomes brighter.’”
Yerushalmi Yoma 14a Chapter 3, Halacha 2

a) According to Rabbi Abba what is a clear sign that the redemption of the Jewish people is at hand? Explain.

b) How does Rabbi Chiya Ruba explain the redemption? Explain.

a) _____

b) _____

10. The Israeli Chief Rabbinate have called the State of Israel: "*reishit tzmichat geulateinu*". Considering the sources you have studied in this lesson, do you think that this term is appropriate?

