I

Exile and Expulsion in Jewish History

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From the Cain of Augustine as figure or symbol of the Jewish people, to Ahasueros the Wandering Jew of the Middle Ages, to Leopold Bloom in Joyce's Dublin, the Jews have been and remain the archetype of exile in the Western imagination. And properly so. For exile—*galut*—has been a fundamental datum of Jewish history and Jewish consciousness for over two and a half millennia.

Though one might assume that any comprehensive history of the Jews is already intrinsically also a history of Jewish exile, it seems to me that a genuine historical anatomy of Jewish exile has yet to be written. The closest attempt we have, Yehezkel Kaufmann's magisterial *Golah ve-Nekhar* (1929–1930), still not fully appreciated, is replete with brilliant insights. Yitzhak Baer's little book *Galut*, a marvel of concision published in Nazi Berlin in 1936, is a valuable charting of certain focal points. Both remain mandatory reading. Each, in retrospect, is also transparently programmatic and inevitably bears the mark of the historical moment in which it was written. Another kind of history may be possible today.

You will obviously not expect such a history from me in the space of one essay. All I can offer here is an initial meditation on the subject of galut in which context, later on, I shall also raise the specific issue of expulsion (*gerush*) which is the focal point of this volume. I confess at the

very outset that what I should like to know most often exceeds what I know and that my questions outnumber the answers, themselves tentative, I shall propose. I console myself with the testimony of Columbia's late Nobel physicist I. S. Rabi that when he came home from school as a child his mother would invariably greet him with "Did you ask a good question today?"—and that you will judge me by the same charitable yet implacable standard.

The common notion of Jewish exile seems simple enough. At least up to modern times (some would argue even today) exile, almost by definition, meant living outside the Land of Israel, with all the consequences (largely negative) of not having a land of one's own. However, as we begin to question and reflect, we soon realize that the historical dynamics of Jewish exile are more intricate than we thought. One of the tasks of the historian, it seems to me, should be to complicate what appears simple and obvious, for it is through an awareness of complexity that we ultimately win our way to clarity.

I

One can only be amazed at the extent to which, from earliest times, the notion of exile threads its way through the texts of Jewish thought and the textures of Jewish life. All genres of Jewish literature are saturated with it.

Already in the Hebrew Bible exile is a leitmotiv that presents a series of paradoxes:

Universal history begins with an exile—the expulsion from Eden. *Va-yegaresh 'et ha-'Adam*—"He expelled the man." This is in itself not unique, for many religious myths of human origins tell analogous tales of a primordial expulsion from a paradisiacal state.

What appears to be exceptional is that Jewish history should itself begin with an exile, albeit a curious one, the exile of Abraham at God's behest from his native land: *Lekh-lekha*—"Go forth from your country, from your homeland, from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." Granted that this is an exile with a positive goal, from native land to Promised Land, yet an exile all the same, from the familiar to the unknown.

Most striking, perhaps, is the fact that biblical and later Jewish consciousness recalls the origins and formation of the Jewish people as taking place outside the Land. I know of no parallel to this among the other peoples of the ancient Near East. Indeed, the decisive event, the revelation and covenant at Sinai through which the people is constituted and receives its identity, takes place prior to the acquisition of the Land.

Equally if not more astonishing—as Jewish history begins before the possession of the Land, so is the threat of exile made even before the people enters it. It is like being threatened with eviction even before moving into one's house. In all this I am not now concerned with the actual dating of the different documents and strata of the Pentateuch. The overriding fact is that this is how, at a very early time, the history of land and people became ensconced in Jewish collective memory. From the beginning, the possibility of exile is already an implicit and integral part of the idea of the Land itself. Possession of the land is always conditional. The threat of exile looms perennially as punishment for the sin of disobedience.

And what a threat. Exile is perhaps the most dire of all the curses known to the Bible, and it is described in the most graphically terrifying terms. I need not repeat here the litany of maledictions associated with exile in Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, or, for that matter, in the prophets. Suffice it to recall the summation in Deuteronomy:

> And among these nations shall you have no repose. . . . And your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you shall fear night and day. In the morning you shall say: "Would that it were evening," and in the evening you shall say: "Would that it were morning!"—because of what your heart shall dread and your eyes shall see.

Yet history does not always conform to even the most canonical texts. In reality, though the course of Jewish history would certainly have its horrific moments, life in exile was not to be merely a tale of horror. Deeply embedded in the very idea and experience of Jewish exile there is a dual dialectic, the most familiar of the two being that of exile and redemption. Though the Land is conditional, the Covenant is eternal. Exile, conceived as national expiation, must at some point inexorably be followed by restoration. This dialectical aspect of the Covenant is the nucleus of all later Jewish messianism. "He who scattered Israel will gather them" (Jeremiah 31:10). And in the vivid rabbinic dictum: *Ba-yom she-ḥarav Bet ha-Mikdash nolad ha-go'el*—"On the day the Temple was destroyed the Redeemer [i.e., the Messiah] was born."

The other dialectic, more subtle and often ignored, is central to my present purposes. I shall call it, provisionally and inadequately, Exile and Domicile, by which I mean the simultaneous awareness of being in exile, yet the profound sense of attachment to the land or place in which one lives, the sentiment *in exile* of feeling at home. Exile and Domicile, I shall argue, are only superficially contradictions. In reality they have often coexisted in a dialectical tension. This dialectic too is already implicit in the Bible. We have only to consider two well-known biblical texts directly linked to the Babylonian exile that, when juxtaposed, become almost paradigmatic.

> Psalm 137:
> By the rivers of Babylon there we sat and wept
> as we remembered Zion. There upon the willows
> we hung up our lyres, for our captors asked us
> there for songs, our tormentors for amusement,
> "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."
>
> How can we sing a song of the Lord
> on alien soil?
> If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
> let my right hand forget her cunning.

The other, equally familiar text, is Jeremiah's epistle (chap. 29) to the first exiles already in Babylon (a decade before the destruction of the First Temple and mass deportation of 586 *b.c.e.*), arguing against the prophets and soothsayers who were blithely forecasting an imminent return:

> Thus says the Lord of hosts . . . unto all the captivity whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.
>
> Build houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat the fruit of them; take wives and beget sons and daughters . . . and multiply there and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city to which I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall you have peace. . . . Let not the prophets that are in the midst of you, and your diviners, beguile you . . . for they prophesy falsely unto you in My name; I have not sent them.

Jeremiah's counsel apparently prevailed. And it would seem that Babylonia proved not at all an awful place to be. Its reality certainly did not correspond to the descriptions of exile as it had been anticipated.

Some fifty years later, when Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylonia and granted the Jews permission to return to their land, only a minority actually roused itself to do so.

Without placing value judgments on this development, let us merely note that the Jewish dispersion continued even after it became possible to return to the Land of Israel. The essential fact, then, is that the diaspora has been a permanent feature of Jewish history at least since the Babylonian exile and undoubtedly even earlier. Indeed, the ancient Jewish diaspora was more the result of natural migration than of forced banishment from the Land. Even in the latter case, however, Jews tried their best to turn exile into domicile. It was, in a sense, inevitable. The seventy years of exile that Jeremiah envisioned turned into centuries and millennia. Jews bought houses, and planted gardens, and procreated, and yes—without forgetting Jerusalem—they even sang on alien soil, perhaps nowhere so exquisitely as in Spain, but not in Spain alone.

II

Diaspora and exile are not synonymous. During the Hellenistic period, at least prior to the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 c.e., the communities of what was already a vast Jewish dispersion seem to have regarded themselves less as exiles than as colonies, branches of a living center. In Alexandria the Jews occupy two out of five residential quarters. Their status is far above that of the native, non-Hellenized Egyptians. They have extensive privileges. Certainly there is anti-Semitism, even a pogrom. But these Alexandrian Jews, who speak and write Greek, who translate the Bible into Greek, do not seem to feel themselves "in exile."

That, at least, is the impression we receive from Philo. The Jewish world, as Philo conceives it, extends from Rome to the Euphrates, from Macedonia to Libya. The Jews are everywhere, throughout the *oikoumené*—the habitable world. Philo does not attribute the diaspora to exile. He declares that

> so populous are the Jews that no one country can hold them, and therefore they settle in very many of the most prosperous countries in Europe and Asia both in the islands and on the mainland, and while they hold the Holy City where stands the sacred Temple of the most high God to be their *mother city*, yet those which are theirs by inheritance from their

> fathers, grandfathers, and ancestors even farther back, are accounted in each case to be their fatherland in which they were born and reared, while to some they have come at the time of their foundation as immigrants to the satisfaction of the founders.

Jerusalem and the Temple play important roles in Philo's thought. But it is precisely with regard to them that he reveals a significant dichotomy between ideal and reality. For example, he knows very well the Deuteronomic demand that one be personally present at the Jerusalem Temple for the three annual pilgrimage festivals. Certainly some Alexandrian Jews made the pilgrimage, but for most it was difficult. Philo resolves the problem in his characteristic way, by allegorizing. The true Jerusalem, the true Temple, is at least in part a state of the soul: "What house shall be prepared for God the King of kings . . . ? Shall it be of stone or timber? One worthy house there is—the soul that is fitted to receive Him." And even more radically—"It often happens that people who are actually in unconsecrated spots are really in most sacred ones."

In the mentality of Hellenistic Judaism, diaspora does not yet carry all the heavy freight of the term *exile*, that is, so long as there exists the Temple cult in Jerusalem—and even if Jerusalem, like the entire Land of Israel, is already under Roman domination. The catastrophic dimension of exile really begins to unfold with the destruction of the Temple. Note, however, that unlike the Babylonians the Romans did not expel the entire Jewish population of Judaea. The disaster of the year 70 is initially more the loss of the Temple than the loss of the Land. It is this loss that is at the heart of the ensuing crisis and that begins to endow the diaspora with a genuine sense of galut.

III

Galut, exile, always had both theoretical and actual aspects.

Theoretically: From a religious perspective exile is the fundamental condition of Jewish existence from the destruction of the Second Temple until the ultimate arrival of the Messianic redemption. In multiple ways, Jewish thought elaborates a veritable metaphysics of exile that filters down to the humblest Jew. In theory exile is almost always tragic. From childhood on the consciousness of living in exile is inculcated in every Jew through liturgy and ritual, through three annual historical fast days, through the aggadah, and thus internalized. One prays always for redemption.

This awareness of being in exile is later reinforced by the polemical pressures of Christianity and Islam, for whom the exile of the Jews is a cardinal proof of God's rejection of the Jewish people. All three religions are in accord on one point—that the Jews are in exile because of their sins. They only disagree on the question of which "sin."

From the point of view of Jewish political theory Jewish exile is at its root lack of sovereignty and political independence—*shi'abud malkhuyot*—servitude among the nations. In another context and with other nuances the medieval Christian church and state will call it *servitus Judaeorum*. From whichever side it is conceived, exile as servitude carries with it a cluster of dismal connotations—alienation, spiritual and physical oppression.

On the theoretical plane virtually all Jews until modern times would probably have acknowledged that they were indeed in exile. But in their daily lives did Jews always feel exile as a curse? If living in exile had always been intolerable or almost so, why, then, did the majority of Jews not attempt to return en masse to the Land of Israel? Why, until Sabbatai Ẓevi in the seventeenth century, were active messianic movements always the work of minorities? Why did the Jewish dispersion always expand outward, to the far reaches of the Persian and Roman empires, to India and China, indeed to Spain, where Jews first settled in Roman times and which, after the Muslim conquest of the early eighth century, was the Islamic "Far West" and drew hordes of new immigrants?

Certainly there were periods when conditions in the Land of Israel were too difficult, at times impossible. But there were other times when such a return was quite feasible. In fact there were individual Jews and sometimes entire groups who installed themselves there and who, despite vicissitudes and adversities, maintained viable and sometimes important communities and institutions.

Judah Halevi, who not only yearned for Zion but actually left Spain to go there, was hardly representative of Spanish Jewry. Quite to the contrary, the anonymous friend who, in Halevi's poem *Devarekha bemor 'over rekuhim* tries to persuade him to stay put, undoubtedly reflected the majority opinion. The same is true of Abraham Ibn Daud, writing only a generation later, after the Almohad invasion of 1147 had

put an end to Jewish life in Andalus and sent thousands of Jewish refugees flocking into the Christian territories. Typically, Ibn Daud does not counsel his fellow Jews to abandon the Iberian Peninsula. On the contrary, he seems full of optimism that Jewish life in the Christian North will be a repetition of the glories achieved earlier in the Muslim South. And even if the late Gerson Cohen was correct in arguing that Ibn Daud's *Sefer Ha-Qabbalah* contains an esoteric messianic message, the important point would remain that Ibn Daud's Hispanocentrism was such that he saw the messianic scenario as unfolding first in Spain itself.

I trust I will be taken at my word if I say that in asking why the Jewish diaspora always expanded rather than contracted, why its momentum was centrifugal rather than centripetal, I imply no criticism. Zionism, in its thoroughly different modern sense, is not at issue here. Conversely, if I now make an effort to understand certain inner forces that, through the ages, kept most Jews outside the Land of Israel, I do so not as a diaspora apologist. Sometimes, though we resist the notion, history is radically discontinuous. From what I have to say about the past nothing can or should be deduced concerning the current situation of world Jewry, which is, in these respects, literally unprecedented.

IV

It seems to me that among the factors that inhibited most Jews from taking an active initiative to return to their land of origin two were of primary importance.

The first, often discussed, was the powerful grip of Jewish messianic faith in the form in which it had developed. In brief, although originally the messianic "end of days" was conceived as something that would take place in a very near future, especially after the disastrous failure of three messianic revolts against Rome, the dominant tendency was to place the redemption in the hands of God alone, at His initiative, and in an indefinite future.

The second factor, worth dwelling upon, was the very success of Jewish life in dispersion and exile. Was galut, we have asked, intolerable or virtually so? Obviously at certain times and in certain places it was. But over the long haul, what the French more elegantly call *la longue durée*, it was far more than tolerable.

If, therefore, I concur with Salo Baron's lifelong rejection of what he termed the "lachrymose conception" of Jewish history (and especially of the Jewish Middle Ages as a constant vale of tears), it is not out of filial piety but because along with him I believe it to be a distortion of that history. Nor does it mean that I ignore the fact that this conception has very venerable pedigrees or that I do not recognize that there have been many occasions for tears in Jewish history. But all human history is full of tears, and Walter Benjamin's angel of history faces backward toward the past and sees only an ever-mounting heap of debris.

Nor are historical calamities themselves unique to exile and always attributable to it. Peoples who always remained in their lands have been periodically devastated by foreign invaders. Individuals and groups who were never exiled have been, and continue to be, unjustly persecuted and even slaughtered in their own sovereign countries. It will bear recalling that life for many Jews under some of the kings of ancient Judah and Israel, or some of the later Hasmoneans, was not always a bed of roses but rather an often oppressive, albeit native, *servitus Judaeorum*. Conversely, medieval Jews knew very well that the phrase did not mean that they were literally slaves or serfs. They were quite aware that their quality of life was generally far superior to that of the peasants who made up the bulk of the population and that in actuality their so-called servitude reflected a relatively high status, a direct relationship to the ruler that bypassed lower jurisdictions. *'Avadim 'anaḥnu li-melakhim*, wrote Baḥya ben Asher of Saragossa, *ve-lo 'avadim la-'avadim*—"We are servants of kings, and not servants of servants."

Without losing sight of any of its manifestly negative aspects, the fact is that on the whole Jews not only adapted to the conditions of exile but often flourished within it materially and spiritually, while managing to preserve a vivid sense of their distinctive national and religious identity. Except for times of active persecution it was quite possible to believe wholeheartedly in an ultimate messianic redemption, to pray for its speedy advent, but at the same time to wait comfortably for the arrival of the Messiah in God's own time without taking any deliberate initiative to hasten it. It is here, on the psychological plane, that what I have termed the dialectics of exile and domicile really begin to reveal themselves. What I propose is that it is simultaneously possible to be ideologically in exile and existentially at home.

V

We tend, of course, to focus on one side of the dialectic—that of exile as alienation. The other—that of what I have called "domicile," of *feeling at home within exile itself*—has received no comparable attention, would indeed be denied by many as a contradiction in terms. The lachrymose conception has perhaps contributed to this neglect. Certainly there is also a paucity of sources. Medieval Jews naturally tended to record their afflictions in the places of their exile rather than their attachments to them. The chronicles, such as they are, emphasize the sudden and dramatic catastrophe and ignore the longer but duller stretches of the quotidian. Nevertheless, out of occasional hints and fragments, sometimes indirectly and by deduction, we can at least recover sporadic echoes of a Jewish sense of rootedness and "at homeness" in the cities and lands of the dispersion that our conventional images of galut would not lead us to suspect. The point, it seems to me, is not without relevance to the theme of this volume. For only if we begin to realize the extent of the attachment of Jews to their places of residence can we also begin to savor with them the full bitterness of the experience of expulsion.

I shall not dwell upon the obvious—that even in adversity human beings become naturally bound by myriad ties to the place in which they were born, to the familiarity of its streets and the landscape of its countryside, to the house, however modest, that echoes with so many voices, so many memories. That Jews should have shared such universal feelings requires no elaboration. We should probe further.

That in both Christian and Muslim theology and law the Jews were, in effect, tolerated aliens is an objective historical fact. Given the irreducible difference and tension with the dominant religions, Jews were themselves inevitably conscious of the palpable differences that divided them from their non-Jewish neighbors. On this level one can safely state that Jews in galut were always aliens and felt themselves to be so.

One should come to realize, however, that in other dimensions Jews did not necessarily feel themselves to be strangers and that their sense of alienation varied widely in time and place. In daily life relations between Jews and Christians were often amicable, even intimate. It took a deliberate and protracted effort on the part of the Church, from the earliest councils to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, to demand increasingly rigid social barriers between them, and even so, as the repeated fulminations of popes and clerics reveal, the conciliar declarations were ignored with surprising frequency.

This is not to minimize the ultimately calamitous effects of the "teaching of contempt." It is merely to suggest that the barriers were never absolute and, moreover, that if Jews inevitably felt themselves to be aliens on certain levels, this did not prevent them from feeling themselves indigenous and at home in other respects. Virtually every European Jewry, not only Sephardic Jewry, had origin myths tracing its beginnings back to the destruction of the First or Second Temples or even earlier. While these traditions may have begun with an apologetic or polemical intent, they would not have been possible or believable without a deep sense of ancient and continuous rootedness in the land.

No Jewish community, and again I am not merely referring to Spain, was ever sealed off from its environment. In daily life Jews almost everywhere spoke the vernaculars of their surroundings. Linguistic assimilation was only one striking expression of a larger cultural assimilation that ranged from folklore to philosophy. World Jewry in exile, as Kaufmann correctly insisted, was religiously unified but culturally diverse. Because of the unique fusion of Jewish religion and peoplehood, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Yemenite, or Persian Jews all had a sense of belonging to one people, with a common heritage and a common destiny. At the same time each group displayed the markedly particular cultural characteristics of its milieu. Does this mean that these Jews felt themselves to belong to the nations among whom they lived? To be more specific, did Spanish Jews, as Kaufmann once asks, consider themselves "Spanish"? Such questions, prior to the rise of the modern nation-state, are almost meaningless. *Spain* is more a convenient and relatively modern rubric than the medieval reality of separate kingdoms and regions, each with its own political, cultural, even linguistic identity. Ironically, if there was any group in the different Spanish kingdoms that had a vivid sense of a unity that transcended these and other boundaries, it was the Jews, for whom the whole of Spain was *Sefarad*.

Yet *Sefarad*, *Zarfat*, or *Ashkenaz* were not merely fabricated Jewish equivalents for Spain, France, or Germany; they were Hebrew place names lifted out of their biblical contexts and superimposed over the map of contemporary Europe. But that was not all. In Castile the very topography of Toledo was assimilated to that of Jerusalem. Tradition

had it that this and other cities in the region were named by the ancient exiles from Judaea and that their current names had Hebrew etymologies. Thus Toledo was really *Toledot*, or else *Toletula*, from the Hebrew *tiltul*—"migration" or "wandering." Escalona was derived from biblical Ashkelon, Maqueda from its biblical homonym (Joshua 10, 12, and 15), Yepes from the Hebrew *Yafo* (Jaffa). Samuel Ha-Nagid, the eleventh-century poet, scholar and vizier of Granada, moves through a biblical landscape. "I am David in my generation," he writes, identifying with King David, the poet-warrior. In his great battle poem *'Eloha 'oz*, his enemy Zuhair, king of Almeria, is called "Agag," and the latter's army is composed of " 'Amalek" (Slavs), " 'Edom" (Christian mercenaries), and "the sons of Qeturah" (Arabs). Nor is the phenomenon limited to Spain. Bohemia is "Canaan." The city of Nîmes in Provence is also *Kiryat Ye'arim*, literally "city of the forests," a town mentioned in Joshua and other books of the Bible and aptly applied here because Nîmes was generally thought to derive from the Latin *nemus*, "forest."

Such transpositions, I would urge, are more than mere wordplay. They reveal something about Jewish mentalities that deserves far more serious attention than it has received. They betray an intrinsic, oscillating duality. On the one hand, ongoing links to the ancient land of origin. On the other, the ability to somehow endow the place of exile with familiarity, to perceive it as "Jewish." And here, perhaps, we have a key to the larger phenomenon.

For ultimately what really made Jews feel "at home" in galut was *the Judaization of exile*. The outstanding success of Judaism in adapting itself to the absence of the Temple and the loss of the Land itself does not require extensive comment. While never forgotten, the loss of the Sanctuary and of political independence in the Land of Israel was counterbalanced (though never replaced) by surrogate institutions. For the Temple, the synagogue; for sovereignty, Jewish communal and sometimes supracommunal autonomy based on the rule of Jewish law; for the Land, the Jewish quarter or street—*juderia, juiverie, Judengasse*—a Jewish territory in microcosm where, even in times of alienation from the gentile population, one could always feel Jewishly "at home." To say nothing of cities, towns, and villages where Jews constituted a majority of the population. A tenth-century Arabic historian called Granada "Granada of the Jews," while both a ninth-century Babylonian gaon and a twelfth-century Muslim historian referred to Lucena as a Jewish city (*madinat al-yahud*).

But a Jewish majority was hardly necessary. What was decisive in creating the Jewish map of exile and in making Jews feel "at home" was the portability of "Torah" in its largest sense, the ability to study and observe wherever Jews lived, the rise and movement of great centers of Jewish learning. Let us deliberately choose two examples beyond Spain and, for once, pay the closest attention to the language in which they are couched.

Describing the situation when Jewish life was at its heyday in Provence, and with obvious reference to the Mishnah Sanhedrin (chap. 11), which speaks of the three courts of law in ancient Jerusalem, one text states that in difficult decisions "one needs three courts: The one that sits on the Temple Mount, which is *Ha-Har* [literally "The Mountain," one of the medieval Hebrew names for Montpellier]; the second dwells at the gate of the Temple Courtyard—*be-fetah ha-'azarah*—which is Lunel; and the third sits in the Chamber of Hewn Stone—*lishkat ha-gazit*—from which Torah goes forth to all its surroundings, and that is Nîmes."

Southern Italy was one of the earliest centers of Jewish learning in Europe. In what is surely one of the most famous verses in the prophet Isaiah we read: *Ki mi-Zion teze' Torah u-devar 'Adonai mi-Yerushalayim*—"For out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." In a twelfth-century text citing an earlier one, this becomes: *Ki mi-Bari teze' Torah u-devar 'Adonai mi-Otranto*—"For out of Bari shall go forth the Law and the word of the Lord from Otranto."

Montpellier, Lunel, Nîmes, Bari, Otranto (there are many other instances) can all be homologized to Jerusalem. (We will recall Philo's remark that people "who are actually in unconsecrated spots are really in most sacred ones"). These "new Jerusalems" are not in heaven but on earth, in the lands of exile, as in later centuries Amsterdam would be the "Dutch Jerusalem" and Vilna the "Jerusalem of Lithuania." Yes, of course these phrases are hyperboles, and the true Jerusalem is never forgotten—is yearned for, prayed for. But that Jerusalem is an eschatological Jerusalem, while these exist in the here and now, and within them one feels "at home."

Perhaps the point will become clearer if we turn momentarily to the great Hispano-Hebrew poet Moshe Ibn Ezra who was forced, sometime after the Almoravid capture of Granada in 1090, to flee to the Spanish Christian territories. Now, Ibn Ezra wrote a host of moving liturgical poems expressing longing for Zion and the Holy Land. Their utter sincerity need not be doubted. But he also wrote other poems suffused with aching nostalgia for the lost paradise of his beloved Granada and expressing his hope of yet returning there. The passion of these poems is at least as intense as those of Zion and, one senses, more personal and immediate.

One of them, virtually untranslatable, begins: "Till when in exile have my feet been sent forth and still have not found repose?" "Exile" here is not exile from Jerusalem but from Granada and Andalus. Toward the end, thinking of his Granadan friends, he writes: "*Tishkah yemini*"—"let my right hand forget her cunning [a direct quote from Psalm 137, which we cited earlier] if I have forgotten them." And—if the Lord will return him to the splendor of Granada (*hadar Rimon*; *Rimon*, "pomegranate," was a Hebrew name for Granada), then he will drink from the waters of the river Genil and he will be in "the land in which my life was sweet and the cheeks of Time spread out before me." He ends by praying to God that He "call to freedom the captive of separation [*'asir ha-peredah*]." Separation from where? Not from Zion, but Granada.

This sense of what, for lack of a better word, I have called *domicile*, can be inferred from a close and alert reading of texts throughout the ages. I choose at random.

Estori Parhi, one of the victims of the French expulsion of 1306 (to which we shall yet return) actually made his way to the Land of Israel. He writes:

> From the schoolhouse they took me out, my shirt they stripped off and dressed me in exile's clothes, in the midst of my studies they expelled me from my father's house *and from my native land* [*me-'erez moladeti*]. . . . I found no repose until the King to whom peace belongs brought me . . . from captivity to the Land of the Hart—*'Erez Ha-zevi* [i.e., the Land of Israel].

But another French refugee cries out, *Hen gorashti me-'Erez Ha-zevi*!—"Behold, I have been expelled *from* the Land of the Hart!" thus

applying the phrase *'Erez Ha-zevi*, which is always associated with the Land of Israel, to the Kingdom of France itself.

Moledet in its various declensions is not only "birthplace" but "homeland," and it is not used loosely. In his *Shevet Yehudah*, Shlomo Ibn Verga conjures up a dialogue between the Jews and the Almohad leader Ibn Tumart who has threatened them with conversion or death. They plead with him: "Let not our lord be angry, for you are our king and we are your people, and if we do not do your will, then expel us to another land. And where is there vengeance such as this, that we should leave our homeland [*'arzenu u-moladetenu*] and go to a people whom we have not known?"

Thus, on the scale of catastrophe exile is a lesser evil than forced conversion, but it is terrifying enough. It means to leave "our homeland" (literally—"our land and birthplace"). The Spanish exile Jacob Ibn Habib ponders, though only in retrospect, that it is sinful that "the lands of the gentiles were our homeland [*'erez moladetenu*] and our fathers and forefathers were buried there, and neither they nor we attempted by strength of hand to live in the Land of Israel." Similarly, among the retroactive consolations offered by Isaac Abravanel to his fellow exiles from Spain, we hear: "If leaving the land that is natural for you is difficult . . . do not regret this land of yours whose people curse you because you are far from their faith." The phrase that should catch our attention is the reference to Spain as "the land that is natural for you" (*ha-'arez ha-tiv'it lekha*). In 1526, in Siena, Italy, the banker Ishmael da Rieti, whose home is described as "a sanctuary for Torah and science," was visited by the messianic adventurer David Reuveni to whom he offered hospitality but no financial assistance for his project. Reuveni reports, "I said to him—'What do you want? Jerusalem, or to stay where you are?' And he replied—'I have no desire for Jerusalem, and neither will nor craving, except for Siena.' "

There is, for our purposes, a remarkably eloquent passage in the *Shevet Yehudah* concerning the recall of the Jews to France by Louis X. Ibn Verga attempts to describe the hesitations and inner conflicts of the French refugees:

> Out of love for their country and homeland [*le-'ahavat 'arzam u-moladetam*] many returned to their cities . . . [while others said]: "But even though the king promises us security, if the masses rise how can we

> be secure? . . . Therefore let us remain where we are and not bring the anguish of expulsions upon ourselves, and let us never experience them again!" But after a while they changed their minds and said: "Come, let us return to the territories of our homeland [*le-'arẓot moladetenu*], for she is our mother [*ki hi' 'imenu*].

At this point I think we can finally turn from the question of exile to that of expulsion.

VI

Expulsion, gerush, is part of the negative history of exile, galut. It is, in a real sense, a double exile, an exile within exile. If, as I have proposed, Jews most often domesticated exile into domicile, then surely any expulsion of an entire Jewry or Jewish community was an expulsion from home, a wrenching, traumatic ordeal. Expulsion, no less than massacre or forced conversion, abruptly closes whatever gap there may have been between exile as ideology and as lived experience, bringing the perception of galut to full consciousness, in its original, archetypal meaning.

Curiously, although the mass expulsion of entire populations was a common phenomenon in the ancient Near East, in the Middle Ages there were no such expulsions of Jews from Muslim lands. The policy of expelling Jews appears only in Christendom, and even then, if we except the still obscure expulsion of Jews from the city of Alexandria by the Bishop Cyril in 414, it surfaces relatively late—not until the end of the thirteenth century (though there was an abortive precedent in France under Philip Augustus in 1182). Why all this should have been so may well be worthy of reexamination. But the question I want to pose is of a different order.

I ask myself, given the history of Jewish expulsions, why is it that the expulsion from Spain has assumed such primacy in Jewish collective memory, overshadowing all others? After all, the Spanish expulsion was hardly the first. The earlier expulsion from France in 1306 was no paltry affair. Gersonides wrote of the number expelled as "twice those who left Egypt," which, though an obvious exaggeration, still testifies to an event of major proportions. Yet I am not aware that any conference was held in 1906 on the six hundredth anniversary of the expulsion from France nor, I suspect, will there be any on the seven hundredth.

Undoubtedly the antecedent glories of Spanish Jewry are a factor in the pride of place accorded this particular expulsion, as is the unusual articulateness of the Spanish exiles themselves. Compared to the richness of the texts in which they described their disaster and their reactions to it, firsthand Jewish accounts of other expulsions are sparse and, in some cases, nonexistent. To be sure, there may well have been texts that have not survived, but this can hardly be the entire explanation for the disparity. Sheer numbers may also be a factor (just how many Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 can still turn otherwise serene scholars into matadors, but whatever the case the number must have exceeded those of any other single expulsion). Yet this too seems to me inadequate.

I would rather suggest that the profusion of personal and historical accounts emanating from the Spanish expulsion must somehow be related to the traditionally high, even inflated, degree of self-awareness on the part of Spanish Jews of their special identity and destiny as "the exile of Jerusalem that is in Spain" (*galut Yerushalayim 'asher bi-Sefarad*). "For the portion of God is His people," writes Isaac Abravanel,

> and that was the exile of Jerusalem in Spain while it dwelt in the land of its abode. . . . This is what the Holy One had in His world. . . . From where the sun rises to where it sets, from north to south, the likes of it never was before, a people treasured for praise, renown, and glory in its beauty and graciousness. And after it there will be no other like it.

To fall suddenly from such high estate—at least as it was perceived—into dire misfortune is the essence of tragedy, almost in an Aristotelian sense, and as such perhaps it demands and inspires at least a verbal catharsis.

Granted the plethora of sources, what else? The expulsion from Spain, I have stressed, was by no means the first. But perhaps this is itself the pivotal point. The importance of the Spanish expulsion is precisely that it was—not in a technical yet in a vital sense—*the last*, the culmination of a long series, of a chain of expulsions that had begun elsewhere in Europe several centuries earlier. Let us review them quickly.

In 1182 the Jews of the French kingdom were expelled by Philip Augustus, but the royal territory was still limited, the measure halfhearted, and the episode had relatively minor consequences; the Jews were back by 1198. The real chain of European expulsion began about a century later.

In 1290 the Jews were expelled from England. In 1306 they were expelled from the now much enlarged kingdom of France. Recalled in 1315, they were expelled again in 1322 and recalled once more in 1359. The final and definitive expulsion of the remnants of French Jewry took place in 1394.

In the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Jews were expelled from most of the major cities of Central Europe.

Finally, in 1492 came the expulsion from Spain and, within a year, from its overseas possessions such as Sicily and Sardinia. The Low Countries being at that time under Spanish domination, no Jewish residence was permitted there to begin with.

But even the Spanish expulsion was not the end; there were epiphenomena. In 1492 many Spanish exiles crossed over into neighboring Portugal. They were accepted by John II upon the payment of considerable sums of money and on condition that their sojourn would only be temporary. The drama that subsequently unfolded in Portugal deserves to be recounted in detail, but let us turn directly to the decisive event. In 1497 John's successor, King Manuel, ordered the forced conversion of all the Jews within his borders, that is—both the native Portuguese Jews and those Spanish refugees who had not succeeded in leaving during the previous five years. In sum, though Manuel had issued a decree of expulsion in 1496, most of the Jews were not expelled. Rather, in 1497, through a mass forced conversion of singular brutality, Manuel rid Portugal not of the Jews but of any open manifestation of Judaism. And even this was not yet the end.

The Jews were expelled from the tiny but still independent Kingdom of Navarre in 1498. In 1501 they were expelled from Provence. In 1510 they were expelled from the Kingdom of Naples—in effect, from most of Southern Italy.

I would submit that the expulsion from Spain was—for the generation that experienced it and those that followed—more than the tragic uprooting of a once great Jewry. It was also emblematic, the quintessential symbol of a process through which, step by step, the Jewish presence was virtually eliminated from Western Europe and the global locus of Jewish life shifted from West to East.

Is this an artificial construct? I think not. On the perception of the Spanish expulsion as the climax of the larger process, let us take Abravanel as our primary witness:

> Know that from the time that Judah was exiled and Israel scattered in their exile in the lands of the nations, there came upon them in the lands of Edom and Ishmael great persecutions, whether to destroy and slaughter, or whether to convert them by the sword. . . . But expulsion—that the kings of a land and its guardians should expel the Jews from their land, saying "Arise, go forth out of the midst of my people, you may not live in this land of ours"—this was unheard of.
>
> The beginning was in France [i.e., the expulsion under Philip-Augustus], which was not all-inclusive, only from certain towns. But the first total expulsion from a kingdom was from the island that is called "end of the earth" which is *Inglaterra* [England]. . . . And after this in 5,066 [1306] was the first total expulsion from France during the reign of Philip [i.e., Philip IV], son of Philip, son of Louis. [Abravanel then describes the subsequent recalls and expulsions of French Jews until 1394, and continues]: And from thence there followed in our time the expulsions from Savoy and Provence and Milan and Ashkenaz and this last one itself, the expulsion of Jerusalem that was in Spain, and Sardinia and Sicily.

In his commentary on Deuteronomy 28:15, he writes:

> And the meaning of "you shall perish among the nations . . . " [Leviticus 26] is that it refers to the afflictions and the slaughters that have passed over Israel in exile, that many died of hunger, plague, and the sword . . . and the expulsion of the Jews from England *and the other lands of the West*, and especially the expulsions from the whole of France . . . and even now in the expulsion of the exile of Jerusalem in Spain, which exceeded all the expulsions.

Abravanel is acutely conscious that the West has been emptied of Jews but, like others, he desperately tries to salvage some providential reason for this. On Isaiah 43: "We have seen with our eyes that the Lord roused the spirit of the kings of the lands of the West to expel all the Jews from their territory . . . in such a way that they emerged *from all sides of the West* and all of them passed toward the Land of Israel."

Perhaps the most succinct and telling expression of the larger significance of the Spanish expulsion is embedded in the remarks of the astronomer and halakhic chronicler Abraham Zacuto, who had gone from Spain to Portugal, then to North Africa, and finally to Jerusalem. He tells in his *Sefer Yuḥasin* how his great-grandfather had found refuge

in Spain when he was expelled from France and notes the terrible contrast with his own time:

> And we, for our sins, have seen . . . the expulsion from Spain, Sicily, and Sardinia in 1492, and in the year 1497 after the expulsion from Portugal. For from France [in 1306] they came to Spain. But we [in Portugal] had the enemies on one side and the sea on the other [*Ve-lanu ha-'oyevim mi-ẓad 'eḥad ve-ha-yam mi-ẓad 'aḥer*]!

It can therefore hardly be accidental that not until the generation following the Spanish expulsion and Portuguese conversion do we for the first time hear a Jew, in this case the former Marrano Samuel Usque, indict not one particular country but cry out: "Europe, which swallowed me with its noxious mouth, now vomits me out." And again: "Now, Europe, O Europe, my hell on earth!" (*Póis Europa, Europa, mi inferno na terra!*)

With this my meditation, for it is hardly more than that, is at an end. We have traveled from exile as home to exile as hell. Both were realities.

PART II

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