

...And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. --- Numb. 33:53

Why does the Torah even begin with the book of Genesis? Because *He revealed to His people His powerful works, in giving them the heritage of nations.* (Ps. 111:6) If the nations will say to Israel: you are bandits, you stole the land of Israel from the seven nations who dwelled there...then Israel can say to them: the whole earth belongs to the Holy One, Praised be He; He created it and gave it as He saw fit. He chose to give it to them, and then He chose to take it from them and give it to us. --- Rashi, based on **Midrash Bereshit Rabbah** 1:2

God said to Jacob: *Return to the land of your fathers where you were born, and I will be with you.* (Gen. 31:3) He is telling Jacob...your father is waiting for you, your mother is waiting for you, I Myself am waiting for you. --- **Midrash Bereshit Rabbah** 74:1

Everyone may compel [their spouse] to go up to the land of Israel, but none may compel [their spouse] to leave. Everyone may compel [their spouse] to go up to Jerusalem, but none may compel [their spouse] to leave. The same is true for both men and women and [slaves]. If a man married a woman in the land of Israel and divorced her in the land of Israel, he must pay her [her ketubah] in the currency of the land of Israel. --- **Mishnah Ketubot** 13:11

A person should always dwell in the land of Israel, even in a city mostly inhabited by idolaters, rather than dwell outside the land, even in a city mostly inhabited by Jews. For the latter is like one who has no God, as it says: *I the Lord am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God.* (Lev. 25:38) Does this mean that whoever dwells outside the land of Israel has no god? It means that whoever dwells outside the land is as if he worships idols. Similarly, King David said: *For they have driven me out today, so that I cannot have a share in the Lord's possession, but am told: go, and worship other gods.* (I Samuel 26:19) No one told David to go serve other gods, but this teaches that whoever dwells outside the Land of Israel is as if they served idols. --- Talmud, **Ketubot** 110b

The picture is however not complete without referring to its other side. Just as the former inhabitants of the land had been expelled for their misdeeds, so would "God's own country" vomit the Israelites, should they contaminate it with their practices. The Divine gift of the land was not unconditional, but, as stated at the end of our sedra (35:33-34): *You shall not pollute the land in which you live...You shall not defile the land in which you live, in which I Myself abide, for I the Lord abide among the Israelite people.* --- Nechama Leibowitz, 20th c. Israel

The entire land of Israel is more holy than all other lands, for within it one brings the **omer** offering, the two loaves of bread, and the first fruits, which one does not bring from other lands. --- Maimonides, **Mishnah Torah**, **Hilkhot Beit ha-Bechirah 7:12**

...And you shall take possession of the land: In my opinion, this is a positive commandment. He commands them to settle in the land and take possession of it; He gave it to them and they should not abhor God's inheritance...And our rabbis have stressed the commandment to settle in the Land of Israel (see above, **Ketubot 110b**) and forbade leaving it... --- Nachmanides

I believe that the Zionist vision does not emanate from persecution, but that it is deeply impressed in the Jewish people's desire for national existence; in its historical willpower to maintain its independence on the soil of the homeland in which it sprouted and in which its national genius was molded. --- David ben Gurion, Credo, 1937

Traditional and modern sources point to **aliyah** as an existential need for the Jewish people, the individual, Conservative Judaism, and the state of Israel. Each Jew's religious imperative to reside in Israel is expressed in one of the Torah's basic commands: *And you shall dwell in the land which I have given to your ancestors.* --- Rabbi Joseph Wernick

“Only the Conservative movement, with the flexibility inherent in its approach to **halachah**, can deal with a key issue ignored to date by halachists: the bestowal of a special **halachic** status on the state of Israel, which would endow it with a legitimate, recognized standing within Jewish tradition. The Conservative movement is in a unique position to bring both Judaism and Zionism into a healthy and constructive relationship with the best of modern culture.” --- Rabbi Lee Levine