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# THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

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There are few concepts that offend the sensibilities of the modern world more than that of the Chosen People. For an audience raised with the Western value of equality, the idea of chosenness is so intellectually foreign that few are open to accepting it. This class will present an inspiring and positive view of the notion of the Chosen People, including a number of approaches to bridge the gap between this view and those who challenge its political correctness. Ultimately, this shiur will show that the concept of the Chosen People is not racism; that many non-Jews also accept this idea; that it is intellectually defensible; and that it is, in fact, truly inspiring.

This class will address the following issues:

- ∞ What meaning and purpose is implied by the concept of chosenness?
- ∞ When, why, and how were the Jewish people chosen?
- ∞ Does history bear out the chosenness of the Jewish people?
- ∞ Is there a contradiction between equality and chosenness?
- ∞ Is chosenness an issue of race? Can anyone be “chosen”?

## Class Outline

Section I: The Chosen People of the Bible

Section II: The Chosen People of History

Section III: The Meaning of Chosenness – Israel and the Nations of the World

Section IV: The Extended Meaning of Chosenness – A Light unto the Nations

Section V: The Concept of the Chosen People is not Racism

Part A: Uniqueness vs. Superiority

Part B: There is no “Jewish Race”

Part C: The Torah Respects Non-Jews

Part D: Non-Jews Can Achieve Spiritual Greatness

Section VI: The Equality Issue

Section VII: Why Were the Jewish People Chosen?

## SECTION I: THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF THE BIBLE

A glance at numerous verses in the Torah will leave little doubt as to the status of Israel. From the time of the Patriarchs (Avraham/Abraham, Yitzchak/Isaac, and Yaakov/Jacob), the people of Israel were chosen as the nation of God. They are called His sons, they are treasured by Him, and they possess an everlasting covenant with Him. Even non-Jewish leaders honest enough to take Scripture at face value readily accept the concept of chosenness.

### 1. Bereishit (Genesis) 17:7 – The Covenant with Avraham.

And I will establish this covenant between Me and you, and your children after you; throughout their generations it shall be an eternal covenant, that I shall be God to you and your children after you.

והקמתי את בריתי ביני ובינך ובין זרעך אחריו לדורותם  
לברית עולם; להיות לך לא-להים ולזרעך אחריו:

### 2. Devarim (Deuteronomy) 7:6 – God's chosen treasure.

You are a holy nation to the Lord, your God; the Lord, your God, has chosen you to be for Him a treasured nation from all of the nations which are on the face of the earth.

כי עם קדוש אתה לה' א-להיך; בך בחר ה' א-להיך  
להיות לו לעם סגולה מכל העמים אשר על פני האדמה:

### 3. Ibid. 14:1 – Children of God.

You are children to the Lord, your God.

בנים אתם לה' א-להיכם:

### 4. Pope John XXXIII, Prayer of confession and repentance, Commentary Magazine, January 1965 – The beauty of Thy chosen people.

We are conscious today that many, many centuries of blindness have cloaked our eyes so that we can no longer see **the beauty of Thy chosen people**, nor recognize in their faces the features of our privileged brethren.

We realize that the mark of Cain stands upon our foreheads. Across the centuries our brother Abel has lain in the blood which we drew, or shed tears which we caused by forgetting Thy love.

Forgive us for the curse we falsely attached to their name as Jew.

The election of the Jewish people was sealed with the giving of the Torah. We proclaim this fact every morning and every time we are called to the Torah.

### 5. Blessing over the Torah, Morning Prayers – The Jewish people were chosen to receive the Torah, the word of God.

Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the world, who chose us from all the nations, and gave us His Torah.

ברוך אתה ה' א-להנו מלך העולם אשר בחר בנו מכל  
העמים ונתן לנו את תורתו.

## KEY THEMES OF SECTION I.

- ☞ The Torah is unequivocal: the Jewish people were chosen by God to be His nation. This implies that we have a special relationship with God and that we have a unique calling among the nations of the world.

## SECTION II: THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF HISTORY

It is not only the Torah that states that the Jews are the Chosen People. History itself reveals that there is something special about the Jewish people. In accordance with the prophecies, the Jewish people, homeless and hated by the nations, have somehow survived while other peoples have vanished. For the intellectually honest observer, this miraculous survival is a clear indication of the unique status of the Jewish people.

### 1. Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 30:11 – The survival of the Jewish people in contrast with other nations.

For I am with you to save you, says God; I will bring annihilation upon all the nations among whom I scattered you, but upon you I will not bring annihilation.

כי אתך אני נאם ה' להושיעך כי אעשה כלה בכל הגוים אשר הפצותיך שם אך אתך לא אעשה כלה ויסרתיך למשפט ונקה לא אנקד:

### 2. Mark Twain, Concerning the Jews, Harper's Magazine, March 1898 – What Yirmiyahu prophesied came to pass.

The Egyptian, the Babylonian and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?

### 3. Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Yoma 69b – The survival of the Jewish people is proof of God's Providence.

Without His awe, how could a single nation survive among the nations?

שאלמלא מוראו של הקדוש ברוך הוא היאך אומה אחת יכולה להתקיים בין האומות

### 4. John Paul II, address concerning relations with Jews, 6th March 1982 – The permanence of Israel.

The permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without a trace) is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God's design ... It remains a chosen people, "the pure olive on which were grafted the branches of the wild olive which are the gentiles."

... We must remind ourselves how the permanence of Israel is accompanied by a continuous spiritual fecundity, in the rabbinical period, in the Middle Ages, and in modern times.

5. **Leo Tolstoy, What is the Jew? quoted in The Final Resolution p. 189, The Jewish World Periodical, 1908 – The embodiment of eternity.**

What is the Jew? ... What kind of unique creature is this whom all the rulers of all the nations of the world have disgraced and crushed and expelled and destroyed; persecuted, burned and drowned, and who, despite their anger and their fury, continues to live and to flourish? What is this Jew whom they have never succeeded in enticing with all the enticements in the world, whose oppressors and persecutors only suggested that he deny (and disown) his religion and cast aside the faithfulness of his ancestors?! The Jew – is the symbol of eternity ... He is the one who for so long had guarded the prophetic message and transmitted it to all mankind. A people such as this can never disappear. The Jew is eternal. He is the embodiment of eternity.

6. **Winston Churchill, Illustrated Sunday Herald, February 8, 1920 – The most remarkable race.**

Some people like Jews and some do not, but no thoughtful man can doubt the fact that they are beyond all question the most formidable and the most remarkable race which has ever appeared in the world.

7. **Dr. Huston Smith, The Religions of Man, Harper & Row, 1965, pp. 292-3 – This clearly special people, in their humility, ascribes their specialness to God.**

We have already quoted the judgment of a sociologist that “by every sociological law the Jews should have perished long ago”; to which we may now add that of a noted philosopher, Nicholas Berdyaev: “The continued existence of Jewry down the centuries is rationally inexplicable.”

If what these facts and judgments attest is true and Jewish history and achievement *have* been atypical, there are two possibilities. Either the credit belongs to the Jews themselves, or it belongs to God. Given this alternative, the Jews instinctively turned the credit Godward. One of the striking features of this exceptional people has been their refusal to see anything exceptional in themselves *as people* ... The only alternative was that it had come from God’s special grace. Thus it is that a concept which looks at first to have been prompted by national arrogance [i.e. that of chosenness] turns out to be the humblest interpretation of the facts they saw coming their way.

**KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:**

- ☞ History clearly shows that there is something special about the Jews. Not only did the Jewish people survive – a survival that defies all the odds and baffles any honest historical appraisal – they even thrived with full vigor, reaching totally disproportionate achievements in almost every field of human endeavor.

## **SECTION III: THE MEANING OF CHOSENNESS – ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD**

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The fundamental notion of the Chosen People is expressed in the distinction between “Israel” on the one hand, and the “Nations of the World” on the other. The Talmudic definition of nations other than Israel as “Nations of the World” means to convey the central idea behind the Divine choice of Israel: we were chosen to connect the world to an unworldly elevation, raising the world beyond its earthly level. The pinnacle of this achievement is the Temple, which forms a spiritual “embassy of God” within the physical world.

### 1. Bereishit 28:12; Bereishit Rabbah 68:12 – Yaakov's Ladder.

“He dreamt; and behold, a ladder stood on the ground, and its head reached the heavens. And behold, angels of God ascended and descended upon it.”

Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yanai: one explained that they ascended and descended on the ladder, and the other explained that they ascended and descended on Yaakov ... They ascended to the heavens and beheld the image of Yaakov, and they descended to the ground and found him asleep.

ויחלום והנה סולם מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה והנה מלאכי אל-הים עולים ויורדים בו.

ר' חייא ורבי ינאי חד אמר עולים ויורדין בסולם וחד אמר עולים ויורדים ביעקב... עולים למעלה ורואים איקונין שלו ויורדים למטה ומוצאים אותו ישן.

### 2. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, Nefesh HaChaim 1:5, (in the footnote) – Yaakov as a rope stretching from this world to upper spiritual worlds.

The person who is complete is planted in Worlds Above, in the source of his soul, and passes through thousands of spiritual domains, until the lower part of his soul enters the physical body. This is the meaning of the verse “For the portion of God is His nation, *Yaakov is the rope of His inheritance*” – his elevated soul is “a portion of God,” from which he descends like a rope until he reaches the physical body. Every physical deed therefore has the power to make an impact at the elevation of the source, like a rope, whose upper end moves when its lower end is shaken.

שהאדם השלם כראוי עיקרו הוא נטוע למעלה בשרש נשמתו העליונה ועובר דרך אלפי רבואות עולמות עד שקצהו השני הוא נכנס בגוף האדם למטה, זהו כי חלק ה' עמו יעקב חבל נחלתו שעיקרו קשור ונטוע למעלה חלק הו"ה ממש כביכול, ומשתלשל כחבל עד בואה לגוף האדם (ועיין לקמן פרק י"ז), וכל מעשיו מגיעים לעורר שורשו העליון כענין החבל שאם ינענע קצהו התחתון מתעורר ומתנועע גם ראש קצהו העליון.

The nation of Israel is named after Yaakov, the third and most perfected Patriarch, who was renamed Israel. Just as Yaakov united two worlds, the spiritual world above and our physical world, so the continued role of Israel is to unite two worlds.

### 3. Rabbi Shimshon Pinkus, Shabbat Malketa p. 179 – The purpose of Israel is to reveal God in the world.

This is the intention and purpose of the creation of the nation of Israel: they should be a singular nation in the Land of Israel, and there the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) will dwell, thereby reflecting Divine dispositions of holiness among the nation itself. Therefore, the nation is called *Knesset Yisrael* (the assembly of Israel), referring to the Heavenly Kingdom, for Israel is precisely like the moon opposite the sun [i.e. reflecting its light] ... and through them the glory of God is reflected into the world.

זו הכוונה והתכלית בבריאת ישראל, שיהיו עם לבדד בארץ ישראל, ושם תשרה השכינה, וממילא ישתקפו מתוכם תכונות אלוקות של קדושה עליונה. ועל כן נקראת כנסת ישראל מידת מלכות שמים, שישראל הם ממש כמו הירח מול השמש... ודרכם משתקף כבוד השי"ת בעולם.

#### 4. **Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Dispositions and Service of God p. 571 – The essence and purpose of the Shechinah in the world.**

What is the resting of the Shechinah in Israel? This is the connection between God and Israel, as the verse states, “I will dwell among the Children of Israel” (Shemot/Exodus 29:46) ... This is the purpose of the construction of the Tabernacle [and the Temple], that the Shechinah should actually reside there; and there God will connect with the earthly creatures, Israel. This is the fundamental purpose of the Creation of the world, as the Sages state, “The principle dwelling of the Shechinah was in the lower world. When Adam sinned, the Shechinah departed to the first sky ... Moshe (Moses) stood and brought it back down” (Bereishit Rabbah 19:7).

מהי השראת השכינה בישראל? השראת השכינה היא הקשר שבין הקב"ה לכלל ישראל, כמו שכתוב (שמות כט, מב) "ושכנתי בתוך בני ישראל".... וזו המטרה של בניית המשכן, שתשרה בו השכינה בפועל, ושם התקשר הקב"ה עם התחתונים בני ישראל, שהיא התכלית הרצויה של בריאת העולם כמו שאמרו חז"ל (ב"ר יט, ז), "עיקר שכינה בתחתונים היתה. כיון שחטא אדם הראשון נסתלקה שכינה לרקיע הראשון ... עמד משה והורידה מלמעלה למטה."

#### 5. **Rabbi Reuven Leuchter – Chosen for bringing a third dimension to the world.**

The focus of non-Jewish life is earthly existence, incorporating a broad range of norms all geared toward the ordering and taking full advantage of the world on a “two-dimensional” plane. The Seven Noahide Commandments all reflect this idea: they relate to life within the set boundaries of physical existence, within an autonomous world that knows only two dimensions.

The Sages thus term non-Jewish nations “Nations of the World.” They are essentially “of the world.”

Jewish life, by way of contrast, revolves around a third dimension, a plane of existence that connects the physical world with a higher, Divine existence. Unlike the Nations of the World, the deeds with which Israel is charged are therefore little understood by their human perpetrators – for they pertain to a Divine sphere that is “not of the world.”

It is this that the Jewish people are chosen for: for making a heaven-earth connection, for imbuing the world with a spiritual light, and for bringing the Shechinah to reside among mankind.

#### 6. **Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap, Mei Marom, Vol. III, p. 45 – The division of roles between Israel and the nations.**

Israel is the chosen and cherished nation, and the essence of its mission is to reveal His Holy Name, such that they should be the teachers of Divine wisdom and the pavers of the way to live a life of Divine holiness [even in this world]. To this end, the nations of the world are given the purpose of mending and developing the world, bringing it beauty and order, for all these are preparations [for the Divine revelation] that Israel must reveal.

להיות ישראל עם הנבחר לסגולתו, ויסוד תפקידו לגלות שם קדשו, שיהיו הם המאלפי בינה חכמת האלקות והסוללים דרך לחיות חיי אצילות. בשביל זה נועד התפקיד לשאר העמים לשכלל את העולם בהתפתחות החומרית וחיי היופי והסדר, שגם כל אלה מכשירים המה ... ושעל ישראל לגלות אותם.

## 7. Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Dispositions and Service of God p. 571 – The different outlooks of Jew and non-Jew.

The nations of the world state: “High above all nations is God, above the heavens is His glory” (Tehillim/Psalms 113:4). This implies that God is aloof, above and beyond the world, for it is not befitting His honor that He should deal with the lower creatures and reveal Himself to them. We, however, the nation of Israel, believe that “Who is like the Lord, our God, Who is enthroned on high – yet stoops to look down upon the heavens and the earth?” (ibid. 5-6).

אומות העולם אומרים (תהלים קיג, ד) “רם על כל גוים ה' על השמים כבודו”. דהיינו, שאין זה לפי כבודו לטפל בתחתונים ולהתגלות אליהם. אך לעומתם, אנו בני ישראל מאמינים “מי כה' אלוקינו המגביהי לשבת המשפילי לראות בשמים ובארץ” (שם ה-ו).

### KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ☞ Israel is a nation that dwells alone (Bamidbar/Numbers 23:9). Whereas all the nations are “Nations of the World,” Israel is a nation “not of the world.”
- ☞ The nations are rightly interested in developing the world in a *human* sense, which may include such noble ideas as human dignity and rights, democracy, morality, the welfare state, etc.
- ☞ By contrast, Israel's primary interest is not developing the world in its *human* sense, but in its *Divine* sense. Its mission is to bring God into the world, to forge a connection between heaven and earth, and to live a life whose principles are dictated not by human rationale but by Divine decree, irrespective of whether or not those decrees are humanly understood.
- ☞ Is the Jewish status of being “not of the world” an enviable one? Perhaps – though the question warrants serious discussion. The crucial aspect from a Jewish perspective is the realization that we are chosen for a purpose, chosen to be “not of the world.” In this – in being chosen – we have no choice.

## SECTION IV: THE EXTENDED MEANING OF CHOSENNESS – A LIGHT UNTO THE NATIONS

We have already discussed the purpose of Israel in bringing the Divine Presence to reside within the world. By way of extension, this purpose involves an added facet: “Being a light unto the nations.” As the primary vehicle by means of which God enters the world, the nation of Israel is charged with a responsibility. As managers of the Divine embassy upon earth, our behavior reflects, as it were, on God Himself. It is our duty to sanctify His Name.

### 1. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 42:6 – A light unto the nations.

I am God; I have summoned you with righteousness; I will strengthen your hand; I will protect you; I will set you for a covenant to the people, for a light unto the nations.

אני ה' קראתיך בצדק ואחזק בידך ואצרך ואתנך לברית עם לאור גוים:



2. **Ibid. 43:21 – Created for the sake of God’s glory.**

This nation I have created for Myself, [in order that] My glory they shall tell.

עם זו יצרתי לי תהילתי יספרו:

3. **Shemot 19:6 – A kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**

And you shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש:

4. **Seforno, ibid. – Instructing the nations.**

“And you shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” – and with this shall you be a treasure from amongst all of them, for you shall be a kingdom of priests to understand [to make understood] and to instruct all of mankind to call out in unison in the Name of God.

ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים. ובוזה תהיו סגולה מכלם כי תהיו ממלכת כהנים להבין ולהורות לכל המין האנושי לקרוא כלם בשם ה'.

5. **Netziv, Bereishit 17:5 – Mission of faith to the nations.**

Therefore, the nation of Israel was created to be a light unto the nations, to rectify each nation with faith ... this is the purpose of the entire Creation: “So that all the nations of the world will know that the Hand of God is strong; that you will fear God.” The beginning of this process was in the days of Yehoshua (Joshua), who was instructed to write the Written Law [the Pentateuch] in seventy languages, and it continues by means of the dispersion of Israel among the nations, such that Avraham, and all his descendants, are “fathers unto multitudes of nations” (Bereishit 17:5).

ולזה נוצר ... עם ישראל להיות לאור גוים, לתקן כל עם באמונה ... וזהו תכלית הבריאה “למען דעת כל עמי הארץ את יד ה' כי חזקה היא למען יראתם את ה'”. ההתחלה לזה בימי יהושע שנצטווה לכתוב על האבנים תורה שבכתב בשבעים לשון, ואח"כ בא והגיע ע"י הפיזור הגדול של ישראל לזה התכלית, ולזה מבואר דאברהם וכל זרעו אבות המון גוים הם. וכל זרעו "אבות המון גוים הם".

6. **Winston Churchill, speech given in Jerusalem, 1921, cited in Martin Gilbert, Churchill and the Jews, p. 307 – What civilization owes the Jews.**

We owe to the Jews ... a system of ethics which, even if it were entirely separated from the supernatural, would be incomparably the most precious possession of mankind, worth in fact the fruits of all other wisdom and learning put together. On that system and by that faith there has been built out of the wreck of the Roman Empire the whole of our existing civilization.

7. **The Purple Jacket People – Classes given by Rabbi Benzion Klatzko and Rabbi Ozzie Birnham.**

There was once a king who was just, wise, and powerful. He had only one problem; his subjects were rotten. Throughout his kingdom there was rampant dishonesty and theft. Murder and rape were common. Whatever he tried, he could not change them ... Eventually he left his kingdom and built another one. It was a wonderful place with every amenity. He advertised that only those who agreed to live at the highest ethical level could come. Many did come and for a while, everything was great.



Eventually, however, stories of crime began to circulate. The king despaired. What could he do now? His closest advisor suggested, “Call in a select few and give them a special training course in the highest standards of behavior. Then give them a mission to be examples to others and a special uniform: a purple jacket.”

At first the plan went wonderfully. The behavior of the entire nation began to improve. When a man began to argue with his wife, he would pause and ask, “What would a Purple Jacket Person do?” When someone had an opportunity to cheat someone else out of some money, he would ask, “What would a Purple Jacket Person do?”

But over time things started to slip. The king began to hear reports that even the Purple Jacket People were beginning to act badly. He told them that he had no choice. Since they had the mission to uphold the highest moral standards, and they were known as his representatives, they would have to be punished to show everyone that such behavior was not correct.

By now you may have guessed whom we are really talking about. The just, wise, and powerful king is God and the Jewish people are the Purple Jacket People ...

#### KEY THEMES OF SECTION IV

- ☞ The purpose of Israel is bringing the Divine Presence to reside within the world. By way of extension, this purpose involves an added facet: “Being a light unto the nations.”
- ☞ In this sense, the Jewish people brought monotheism to the world, and ushered in the system of ethics that defines the so-called “Judeo-Christian” tradition.
- ☞ In days to come, they are destined to usher in the Kingdom of God, when the Name of God will be sanctified in the face of the entire world.

## SECTION V. THE CONCEPT OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IS NOT RACISM

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Most Westerners feel an instinctive discomfort with the idea of chosenness, associating it with such concepts as racism, apartheid, or the Nazi idea of a “supreme race” that has a God-given right to enslave all inferior races.

Our analysis thus far should already serve to dispel this notion. As we have seen, the essential concept of chosenness defines the nature and task of the Jewish people as pertaining to the *Divine dimension* of the world, as opposed to the *human dimension* with which non-Jews are occupied. This matter of definition is unrelated to racism.

Do non-Jews *want* the responsibility and duty that the Chosen People status places on the life of a Jew? Surely not. For example, they do not want the laws of kashrut, Shabbat, marriage, sexual relationships and the Jew’s daily routine.

Although we view being Jewish as a unique privilege, the concept of chosenness is therefore distant from any form of racism. As befitting their calling, non-Jews deal with the development and perfection of the world in

a worldly sense, whereas the labor of Jews pertains to the world in the sense of its Divine connection. There is a division of duty – but there is no racism.

In addition to this, there are several concepts that demonstrate how Judaism does not espouse any semblance of racism, which will be examined in this section.

## **PART A: UNIQUENESS VS. SUPERIORITY**

Does the Chosen People concept imply superiority, an attitude of “better-than-thou” on the part of the Jewish people? The answer to this question is: not necessarily.

It would be false to deny that several authorities have explicitly mentioned the concept of chosenness as implying Jewish “superiority.” Yet, this idea of superiority relates to an inner spiritual essence, and not to a tangible supremacy (like the Nazi idea) with all its negative associations.

The central point of the chosenness doctrine is not superiority, but having a unique calling. After understanding that we have a singular role in the world, each person can decide for himself whether that uniqueness implies a certain spiritual superiority or not.

### **1. Lord Jacobowitz, former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, quoted in Wikipedia, Jewish Principles of Faith – Chosen as the pioneers of religion and morality.**

Yes, I do believe that the Chosen People concept as affirmed by Judaism in its holy writ, its prayers, and its millennial tradition [is valid]. In fact, I believe that every people – and indeed, in a more limited way, every individual – is “chosen” or destined for some distinct purpose in advancing the designs of Providence. Only, some fulfill their mission and others do not. Perhaps the Greeks were chosen for their unique contributions to art and philosophy, the Romans for their pioneering services in law and government, the British for bringing parliamentary rule into the world, and the Americans for piloting democracy in a pluralistic society. The Jews were chosen by God to be *peculiar unto Me* as the pioneers of religion and morality; that was, and is, their national purpose.

### **2. Derek Prince, (Christian Bible teacher and scholar), Promised Land p. 106 – Divinely ordained roles of different nations.**

One thing is sure: God will carry out His predetermined plan for all nations, as revealed in Scripture. Once we have been confronted with the revelation of God’s Will, the decision required of us does not vary according to our racial or religious background. Whether we are Jews or Arabs, Africans, Asians or Americans, we are all required to renounce any plans or preconceptions contrary to the Will of God and then to find our appointed place in the outworking of God’s plan. Of course, the details of His plan will vary for nations as they do for individuals. We are not all cast in the same role. God has a specific place and function for each nation, as we have seen.

### **3. Dr. Huston Smith, The World’s Religions, p. 290 – Judaism is not chauvinistic.**

The outlook of the Jews on being God’s chosen people is not chauvinistic. God’s choosing, to them, was a call to serve and to suffer in a mandate to obey a demanding moral code far more stringent than for any other people. It is not, then, universally exclusive of all of God’s people.

### **4. Ibid. pp. 290-293**

The Jews did not take themselves to have been chosen primarily as recipients of special privilege; they

were chosen to serve and to suffer the ordeals such service entails. By requiring that they “do and obey all that the Lord hath spoken,” their election imposed on them a far more exacting morality than that of their contemporaries ... For acceptance of the Torah opened the Jews to penalties for its violations ... In the realm of historical fact, no people have suffered as much as the Jews.

#### 5. **Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, Sefer HaKuzari, Ma’amar 5, #20 – The superiority doctrine: A different level of being.**

There are higher and lower levels of existence. A being that can recognize, grasp, and sense is evidently higher than one that cannot ... The lowest plant is higher than the most important inanimate item. The lowest of animals is higher than the highest plant. The lowest of humans is higher than the highest animal.

Similarly, the lowest people among those who fulfill the mitzvot [who can only be the Jewish people, as explained by the author earlier] is higher than the greatest who do not have mitzvot.

כי יש במציאות מדרגות עליונות ותחתונות הנמצא  
שיש לו הכרה תפיסה ותחושה הוא למעלה מן הנמצא  
שאין לו כל אלה ... והפחות שבצמחים מדרגתו  
למעלה מן החשוב שבמחצבים והפחותה שבבהמות  
היא למעלה במדרגה מן העליון שבצמחים והפחות  
שבבני אדם נעלה מן העליונים שבבעלי החיים

ובדומה לזה הפחות בבני אדם מקימי מצוות האלוה  
ית' מדרגתו למעלה מזו של העליונים במחסרי מצוה.

We should add that we do not necessarily see any evidence of such superiority. Everyone has met wonderful gentiles and horrible Jews. The Kuzari and others are speaking of a very deep level, which the Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto) refers to as the level of Torah.

#### 6. **Ramchal, Derech Hashem, (The Way of God) 2:4:1 – Different only on the level of Torah.**

One of the deepest concepts of God’s Providence involves Israel and the other nations. With regard to their basic human characteristics, the two appear exactly alike. From the Torah’s viewpoint, however, the two are completely different, and are treated as if they belong to completely different species.

מן הענינים העמוקים שבהנהגתו ית' הוא ענין ישראל  
ואומות העולם, שמצד טבע האנושי נראה היותם  
שונים באמת, ומצד עניני התורה הם שונים שינוי גדול  
ונבדלים כמינים מתחלפים לגמרי.

### **PART B: THERE IS NO “JEWISH RACE”**

It is important to remember that the Jewish people is not a race in any sense of the word. Hereditary Jewishness is *matriarchal* – a person is born a Jew if, and only if, his mother is Jewish, and irrespective of his father’s identity. Of course, racial identification cannot depend solely on a person’s mother.

Furthermore, a non-Jew who wishes to do so, and is prepared to make the sacrifices and commitments involved, is able to become an equal member of the Jewish nation. Because of the inherent difficulties of practicing Judaism, it is hardly surprising that not many take up the offer. Yet, the possibility of conversion clearly indicates that Judaism is not about exclusion or racism. Anybody can become “chosen.”

#### 1. **Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 268: 1 and 2 – The conversion procedure.**

A non-Jew who enters the community of Israel

גר שנכנס לקהל ישראל, חייב מילה תחילה ...

[to convert] is first obligated to be circumcised ... Thereafter he must perform a proper immersion ... *and once he has immersed, he becomes a full member of Israel.*

... ואח"כ מטבילין אותו טבילה הוגנת ... וכיון שטבל הרי הוא כישראל.

## 2. **Rabbi Yonaton Eibeshitz, Ya'arot Dvash 2:2 – The Messiah himself will be descended from several converts.**

The tribe of Yehudah (Judah) is trained in accepting converts: Yehudah accepted Shua and Tamar; Boaz accepted Ruth; Shlomo (Solomon) accepted Naamah the Moabite – and from them emerged the lineage of the house of David, and even the final redeemer.

למוד אותו שבט לקבל גרים יהודה, שוע, ותמר, ובועז, רות, ושלמה, נעמה העמונית, ומהם יצא כל זרע בית דוד, וגואל האחרון אי"ה.

## 3. **Rabbi Tzvi Freedman, Chabad.org – Judaism does not exclude anyone.**

Do we exclude others? Absolutely not. Any person who wishes to join the Jewish people and their holy mission is welcome, regardless of race, color, sex or family background. We only ask that they commit to keeping the rules God gave us, just as the Jewish people accepted those rules when they received the Torah at Mount Sinai some 3,300 years ago. And if they opt not to join, we believe that the righteous people among the nations will share in the rewards of the time to come. I don't know of any other religion so liberal as to say such a thing: You don't have to join us, you don't have to do the things we do, just believe in One God and fulfill the basic requirements of every human being to society, and you're in.

## PART C: THE TORAH RESPECTS NON-JEWS

Whereas all forms of racism denigrate those elements against which they discriminate, the Torah, far from dehumanizing non-Jews, elevates them. In teaching that all men are fashioned in the Image of God, the Torah provides the foundation for the universal concept of human dignity.

### 1. **Rabbi Beryl Gershenfeld – Non-Jews are created in the Divine Image (Class for Ner LeElef on the Chosen People).**

In general I find that most of the hostility people have for the concept of the Chosen People is mitigated before that issue ever comes up; they discover the great value the Torah imbues in non-Jews as made *b'tselem Elokim*, in the Divine Image. As Rav Shimon Shwaab always used to say, a Jew has to see more value in a gentile than any gentile ever sees in gentiles. A review of the various approaches to the entire concept of *tselem Elokim* will serve to demonstrate this. The Maharal (Derech HaChaim, p.142) writes that the term, *tselem Elokim*, means that the form of a man's body is a metaphor for God's conduct of the world. The Seforno on Bereishit 1:26, followed by the Ramchal, says that the concept refers to human free will ...

Not only is this the Torah's explicit reason for prohibiting murder, but we find a contemporary authority, Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, ruling that we must bury the bodies of fallen enemy soldiers because they were made in the Divine Image (Tzitz Eliezer X: 25:9). This idea is not apologetics but *halachah*, a concrete legal ruling. To miss the need to value non-Jews is to miss a concept that permeates both the internal attitude and the external conduct we should have toward them.

2. **Bereishit 9:6 – The prohibition of murder on account of the human Divine Image in all people.**

Whoever sheds the blood of man; by man shall his blood be shed; for in the Image of God He made man.

שפך דם האדם באדם דמו ישפך כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם.

3. **Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 3:14 – All humanity is beloved because it is made in God's Image (see commentaries of Tosafot Yom Tov and Tiferet Yisrael).**

Beloved is Man, for he was created in God's Image, as it is written, "For in the Image of God He made Man" (Bereishit 9).

חביב אדם שנברא בצלם. חבה יתרה נודעת לו שנברא בצלם שנאמר (בראשית ט') בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם.

4. **Talmud Bavli, Berachot 17a – It is proper to greet non-Jews with "Shalom" (implying a unified achievement of completion).**

They said about Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai that no one ever said "Shalom" to him before he said it to the other, even a gentile in the market place.

אמרו עליו על רבן יוחנן בן זכאי שלא הקדימו אדם שלום מעולם ואפילו נכרי בשוק.

5. **Rabbi Malkiel Kotler, Dean of Lakewood Yeshivah (written statement, issued December 16, 2003) – The Image of God.**

Our philosophy asserts that every human being is created in the Image of the Lord and the primacy of integrity and honesty in all dealings without exception. I strongly repudiate any assertions in the name of Judaism that do not represent and reflect this philosophy.

**PART D: NON-JEWS CAN ACHIEVE SPIRITUAL GREATNESS**

Judaism recognizes the spiritual role of other nations in the Divine scheme, and makes no attempt to convert others to Judaism. If we are the Chosen People because we alone were given the entire Torah, we appreciate that there are elements of the Torah that are accessible to non-Jews. Spiritual achievement is available to non-Jews, just as to Jews.

1. **Maimonides (Rambam), Hilchot Teshuvah (Laws of Repentance) 3:5 – The righteous among the nations have a share in the World to Come (and, by implication, in the Divine destiny of things).**

So too the righteous among the nations of the world have a share in the World to Come.

וכן חסידי אומות העולם יש להם חלק לעולם.

2. **Tanna D'vey Eliyahu, Eliyahu Rabbah, Ch. 9 – Non-Jews can reach the very highest level of connection with God.**

I call upon the Heavens and Earth to testify for me that whether Jew or gentile, whether man or woman, whether slave or maidservant, according to the actions that he does, Divine Inspiration rests upon him.

מועיד אני עלי את השמים ואת הארץ, בין ישראל בין גוי בין איש בין אשה בין עבד בין שפחה, הכל לפי המעשה שהוא עושה, כך רוח הקודש שורה עליו.

### 3. **Sifra, Acharei Mot 13; Talmud Bavli, Bava Kama 38a – Judaism is universal. The seven Noahide commandments are the ethical values for non-Jews.**

Even a non-Jew who fulfills the Torah [i.e. the seven Noahide commandments] is considered to be on the level of the High Priest.

Even a non-Jew who studies the Torah [i.e. the seven Noahide commandments] is considered to be on the level of the High Priest.

אפילו גוי ועושה את התורה הרי הוא ככהן גדול:

אפילו נכרי ועוסק בתורה הרי הוא ככהן גדול:

The Noahide commandments are identified in Sanhedrin 56a as: (1) establishing a judicial system; and the prohibition of the following: (2) cursing God, (3) idol worship, (4) forbidden sexual relationships, (5) murder and suicide, (6) theft, and (7) eating a limb severed from a living animal.

### 4. **Rabbi Shraga Simmons – The part of non-Jews in Torah.**

A human being need not to be Jewish to reach a high spiritual level. Chanoch (Enoch) “walked with God,” and Noach had quite a high level of relationship, though neither was Jewish. Our tradition is that all of the seventy nations must function together and play an integral part in that “being” called humanity ...

Torah is for all humanity. King Shlomo built the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and he specifically asked God to heed the prayer of non-Jews who come to the Temple (Melachim/Kings I, 8:41-43). The Temple was the universal center of spirituality, which the prophet Yeshayahu referred to as a “House of Prayer for all nations.” Non-Jews were welcome to bring offerings to the Temple as well. In fact, the service in the Holy Temple during the week of Sukkot featured a total of seventy bull offerings, corresponding to each of the seventy nations of the world. [Though the last day – Shemini Atzeret – is reserved for Israel alone.]

#### KEY THEMES OF SECTION V.

- ☞ We should not feel uncomfortable with the special status of being a Jew. If we *are* special, possessing a unique purpose and an intimate relationship with God, this does not involve looking down on others.
- ☞ On the contrary, we value non-Jews and appreciate that they too were made in God’s Image, and are able to attain lofty spiritual heights.
- ☞ Moreover, the door remains open for anyone who wants to join the Jewish people.

## SECTION VI: THE EQUALITY ISSUE

Judaism, to be sure, does not maintain that every human being is equal. Neither, however, does anybody else. Each person is different; the sexes are different; each race and nationality is different; every individual is different. Indeed, it would be a very gray world if everyone were to be the same!

The hallowed concept of equality does not claim that this is false. It only asserts that although every human being is different, all should be given *equal opportunities* to make the most of their individual abilities and skills. Judaism does not contradict the equal opportunity doctrine. Both Jews and non-Jews, each with their respective roles, deserve an equal opportunity to fulfill their inner purpose in life.

1. **Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb, *The Informed Soul*, pp. 112-14 – Are all people equal?**

*Descriptive equality*: “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal ...” The Declaration of Independence thus states its belief that people *are in fact equal* to one another ... Now in some respects this is clearly true. We are all born ... we all die, we all breathe, eat, sleep, excrete, etc. Certain experiences affect us with pleasure (love, success, ice cream) and pain (failure, a visit to the dentist). But in other respects it is clearly false. We vary considerably in physical characteristics (height, weight, strength, coordination, color, beauty), intelligence, personality traits (sympathy, sensitivity, industry, self-control) and certain sources of pleasure (Bach is preferred by some, the Beatles by others). Given all these differences, does a blanket assertion of equality make any sense? ... What we cannot do is oppose chosenness by a blind, blanket commitment to equality: “You say Jews are different? We believe that all people are equal so you must be wrong” ... Thus Judaism has no difficulty with descriptive equality.

2. **Erich Fromm, *Science and Human Responsibility*, 1960 – Equality should not mean sameness.**

Perhaps I could add here that I think we have misunderstood a great deal the concept of equality. We mean today very often by equality sameness, as if we had a right to be equals, as if we had a right for freedom and independence only if we were not different. I would say, in the tradition of Kant, that real equality means that each person is an end in himself and must never be a means to anybody else, under the condition that we are different and not that we are the same.

3. **Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb, *The Informed Soul*, ArtScroll, pp. 116-7 – Ideal equality is not in conflict with Judaism.**

*Ideal equality*: This idea takes for granted that people *are* different, and should be treated differently. It asserts that one *goal* of this treatment ought to be the reduction of differences between people, insofar as this is possible ... This is an ideal with which Judaism can wholly agree. Chosenness in no way opposes efforts to reduce differences, when those efforts take realistic account of the inherent limitations the differences impose.

4. **Dr. Ze’ev Maghen, *On Love and Lennon (Azure # 7)* – The flaw in the equality espoused by John Lennon (in Imagine).**

John’s beautiful ballad is a death march, a requiem mass for the human race. His seemingly lovely lyrics constitute in truth the single most hideous and most unfortunate combination of syllables ever to be put to music. The realization of his dream, or even just a large part of it, would perforce entail the wholesale and irreversible destruction of the dreams, hopes, happiness and very reason for living of yourself and every single person you know. If we, who for so long have unthinkingly admired and warbled Lennon’s words, were to live to see his wish come true, the result would be more staggeringly horrific and more devastatingly ruinous than you could ever possibly – *imagine* ...

Do you know who nearly managed to pull off John Lennon’s vision of no religions, no nations, no countries, one world – *right here on earth*? Do you know who almost succeeded – even if only within relative geographic and demographic microcosms – in bringing about that beautiful dream of universal love, no barriers, no walls, and no special or distinct human cliques or clans? How about these fine-



feathered fellows: Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot. Any of *these* names ring a bell? Because the only way to ... see to it that they do not divide up – as people who love at all naturally do – into distinct socio-cultural and sociopolitical communities and associations, is by *forcibly ensuring that they all dress, eat, sleep, talk, sing, dance, work, play and think the same* – and killing them if they diverge.

There's your "One World," John, with all the divisions and barriers erased, there's Ofer and Doron and Shira's magnificent, imploding, united utopia, where "all hearts are as one heart, all minds are as one mind, so that through the spirit of oneness you may heal the sickness of a divided community." Feast your eyes.

5. **Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, an interview in Parabola (1):8-15 – Only the Bible gives us the concept of equality.**

**Q.** We live in an egalitarian moment in which it is considered that everyone is equal and everyone is free, and the idea of hierarchy is perceived as an arbitrary imposition on the freedom of man. I wonder how realistic this conception is from your point of view.

**Steinsaltz.** My point of view is almost the opposite. Egalitarian ideas are not supported by any evidence. The inequality of man is blatantly apparent. The only way one can find any support for the idea of equality is in a very difficult religious concept: the concept that people are born in the Image of the Lord and are therefore equal [in some fundamental way]. There is no other argument that I have heard that serves any purpose. All egalitarian movements are an outcome of Judeo-Christian ideas that contain within them the notion of receiving a divine soul that for everyone is more or less the same ...

All forces everywhere, within and without, work against equality. People are so inherently different – not only different, but unequal – that it requires a constant struggle to accept the notion of some kind of equality. The only justification for the idea is what you may call a mystical one: even though people don't appear to be equal, there is something equal in them. From this point of view, whether it is a good thing or not such a good thing, hierarchy seems to me to be a given element, inherent in Creation and in nature. This is nature – everything else is an attempt to change nature.

**KEY THEMES OF SECTION VI:**

- ☞ We are not at war with the secular world's ideal of equality. With some thought it becomes clear that no secular thinker would claim that everyone is equal, should always be treated equally, or should be made equal when this means stifling one's individual potential.
- ☞ Nor does the Torah oppose limited equality. We are repeatedly commanded to treat everyone equally in court no matter how unequal they may be in every apparent respect. We are not arguing with such an equality if we say that just as each human being is born with unique talents, a unique psychological makeup, and unique physical appearance, so each nation may possess a unique character and have a unique purpose in God's scheme for the world.
- ☞ God's differentiated treatment of each nation can only be expected.
- ☞ (See also Peter Weston, "The Empty Idea of Equality," Harvard Law Review, 1982, and subsequent discussion in the Yale, Michigan, and Georgia Law Reviews.)

## SECTION VII: WHY WERE THE JEWISH PEOPLE CHOSEN?

We have left this section to last because the honest answer is: we cannot know. The ways of God are hidden to humankind, and many important “whys” must be left open-ended. Nonetheless, even from our limited perspective, the Torah gives us a number of pointers as to why the Jewish people was chosen for its unique mission. The two major landmarks in the history of Jewish selection are the choice of Avraham – who chose God – and the choice of Israel at Sinai, through the acceptance of the Torah.

### 1. Devarim 7:7-8 – God chose us out of love and because of the oath to our forefathers.

Not from your great numbers has God desired you and chosen you, for you are the smallest of all the nations. For it was because of God's love for you, and His guarding of His oath which He swore to your forefathers ...

לא מרבכם מכל העמים חשק ה' בכם ויבחר בכם  
כי אתם המועט מכל העמים: כי מאהבת ה' אתכם  
ומשמרו את השבעה אשר נשבע לאבותיכם ...

### 2. Ibid. 10:15 – Out of love for the Patriarchs.

Only the forefathers did God cherish to love them, and He chose their offspring after them – you – from among all the peoples, as this day.

רק באבתוך חשק ה' לאהבה אותם ויבחר בזרעם  
אחריהם בכם מכל העמים כיום הזה:

### 3. Rabbi Yitzchak Coopersmith, *The Eye of the Needle*, pp. 79-81, based on *Derech Hashem II:4* – The choice of Israel as the inheritor of Adam's initial role.

The Torah tells us that mankind was created to relate to God. However, after Adam's mistake in the Garden of Eden, the elevated level on which Adam related to God was no longer available naturally to him or to his descendants. If it were to be attained, it would have to be through the individual choices of each member of mankind.

The only person committed enough to attain this exalted level of relating to God was Avraham. As a result of Avraham's choices, God made a covenant with him and his descendants; a covenant that was not arbitrary but earned, through Avraham's efforts and dedication.

The Midrash relates that when the Jewish people were poised to become one nation at Mt. Sinai, God first offered the Torah to every nation of the world [see Source 6 below]. Of them all, only the Jewish people wanted His Torah and the privileged closeness that came as a result of assuming the role of God's ambassadors to the world.

Although that was the final opportunity for entire nations as a group ... the door was left open for the individual. Any person, regardless of national or racial background, can merit the benefit of this privileged relationship with God by choosing to accept the Torah and become part of the Jewish nation.

### 4. Ner LeElef, *The Chosen People – God chose Avraham because Avraham chose God*.

God chose Avraham because Avraham chose God. From Noach until the Egyptians, the actions of man had banished spirituality to exist only in the removed planes way above. In turn, Avraham and his descendants gradually reversed this process, bringing spirituality back down into the world. Avraham was given ten tests, and “Never in history had an unaided individual made such a complete break with his environment, overcoming all obstacles for a yet unknown faith.”

When Avraham recognized God, he set out to convince others, even though this was highly dangerous. Avraham persisted even after a narrow and miraculous escape from death. Avraham paid a high price for his commitment to teaching others. He did not achieve the exalted levels of spirituality which Chanoch, Shem, and Ever did, and he was instructed to leave everything he had built up. He left penniless, to continue his mission where we might have thought he would meet with less success, in a foreign land with a foreign tongue. But ultimately he was rewarded with enormous success. Unlike Shem, Ever and others, he took pains to ensure the continuity of the God-idea in the world ...

[This choosing of God on the part of the Patriarchs continued in the form of Yitzchak and Yaakov ...]

All of this amounted to generations of total commitment by the Jewish nation to living and dying for God and fulfilling His Will. Therefore, God's choosing us is a response to our first choosing Him, again and again, over many generations, under the most trying circumstances and exacting standards.

Understanding how we became "chosen," allows us to define the basic responsibility of a Jew: fulfilling the criteria that made us chosen. We, too, must "choose God," following the path of our ancestors whose deeds paved the road of the Chosen People.

#### 5. **Ramban (Nachmanides), Devarim 26:18 – God elevates the Jewish people because they accept the Torah.**

And God elevates you and makes you great through your acceptance of the Torah, so that you will be to Him a treasured people from all the nations.

"And to safeguard all His commandments" – for only to you was the Torah given ... and not to another nation, as it is written, "He tells His words to Yaakov, His laws and ordinances to Israel, which He has not done for any nation" (Tehillim 147:19).

והשם רומם וגדל אתכם בקבול התורה שתהיו לו לעם סגולה מכל העמים,

ולשמר כל מצותיו, כי לכם לבדכם יתן תורתו ויצוה אתכם בכל המצוות ... לא לעם אחר, כענין שכתוב (תהלים קמז יט כ) מגיד דבריו ליעקב הקיו ומשפטיו לישראל לא עשה כן לכל גוי:

#### 6. **Midrash Sifri, VeZot HaBerachah (2) – Other nations rejected the Torah (some interpret this allegorically: only Israel were spiritually prepared to accept the Torah).**

When God came to give the Torah to Israel, He did not only reveal Himself to Israel, but to all the nations. Initially He went to the sons of Eisav (Esau) and said to them, "Will you accept the Torah?" They replied, "What is written in it?" He replied, "Do not murder." They replied, "Master of the universe, the entire essence of our forefather was to be a murderer!" As it says, "The hands are the hands of Eisav" (Bereishit 27:22); and his father promised him about this, as it says, "You will live by your sword" (Bereishit 27:40).

God went to the descendants of Amon and

כשנגלה המקום ליתן תורה לישראל לא על ישראל בלבד הוא נגלה אלא על כל האומות בתחילה הלך אצל בני עשו ואמר להם מקבלים אתם את התורה אמרו לו מה כתוב בה אמר להם לא תרצח אמרו רבש"ע כל עצמו של אותו אביהם רוצח הוא שני' והידיים ידי עשו ועל כך הבטיחו אביו שנאמר בראשית כז על חרבך תחיה.

הלך לו אצל בני עמוז ומואב ואמ' להם מקבלים אתם

Moav and said to them, “Will you accept the Torah?” They replied, “What is written in it?” He said to them, “Do not commit adultery.” They replied, “Master of the universe, our entire essence is one of sexual immorality,” as it says, “And the two daughters of Lot conceived from their father” (Bereishit 19:36). He went and found the sons of Yishmael and said to them, “Will you accept the Torah?” They replied, “What is written in it?” He said to them, “Do not steal.” They replied, “Master of the universe, the entire essence of our forefather was to be a bandit.”

The nations of the world cannot say that God did not go and speak, and knock at their doors and ask them if they wanted to accept the Torah.

את התורה אמרו לו מה כתוב בו אמר להם לא תנאף אמרו לפניו רבש"ע עצמה של ערוה להם היא שני ותהרן שתי בנות לוט מאביהם. הלך ומצא בני ישמעאל אמר להם מקבלים אתם את התורה אמרו לו מה כתוב בה אמר להם לא תגנוב אמרו לפניו רבש"ע כל עצמו אביהם לסטים היה שנא' והוא יהיה פרא אדם.

לא היתה אומר באומות שלא הלך ודבר ודפק על פתחים מה ירצו ויקבלו את התורה.

#### KEY THEMES OF SECTION VII:

- ☞ The selection of the Jewish people as the People of God was not a random choice. Although we cannot fully comprehend the ways of God, it is clear that the Chosen People were chosen, at least to some degree, for their choosing of God.
- ☞ This took place in the first instance in the times of Avraham and the Patriarchs that followed him, and after that at Sinai, when Israel received the Torah.
- ☞ Even today, a non-Jew is able to follow a similar path and choose to become chosen. Like every other Jew, the name Israel is bestowed upon him/her, and he/she becomes either a son of Avraham or daughter of Sarah.

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING & SOURCES

Jacob Breuer, ed., Fundamentals of Judaism (Feldheim, NY), Ch. 7 and 8  
 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Collected Writings Vol. VII, Jewish Education  
 Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, Why the Jews? (Simon & Schuster, 1985), I:III