

The “Place” and the “Name”: Deuteronomy 12:2-5

[<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/05/world/asia/modi-temple-ayodhya.html>

(August 5, 2020)]: In a moment of triumph that India’s Hindu nationalists had worked toward for years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday set the ceremonial cornerstone for a new Hindu temple at the site of a destroyed mosque in Ayodhya.

[<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53366307> (July 10, 2020)]: The world-

famous Hagia Sophia museum in Istanbul - originally founded as a cathedral - has been turned back into a mosque. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the decision after a court annulled the site's museum status. Built 1,500 years ago as an Orthodox Christian cathedral, Hagia Sophia was converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest in 1453. In 1934 it became a museum and is now a Unesco World Heritage site. Islamists in Turkey long called for it to be converted to a mosque but secular opposition members opposed the move. The proposal prompted criticism from religious and political leaders worldwide. Defending the decision, President Erdogan stressed that the country had exercised its sovereign right in converting it back to a mosque.

[Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synagogue_of_Santa_Mar%C3%ADa_la_Blanca]:

The Ibn Shoshan Synagogue in Toledo, constructed ca. 1200 by Muslim architects working under Castilian (Christian) auspices. It looks more like a mosque than a synagogue, possibly reflecting a previous structure on the site. It was converted into a church in 1411, at which time the *bimah*, Torah ark, and seats for the congregation were destroyed. In 1550 the building became the property of monks who renamed it Santa María la Blanca. After the monastery abandoned the building, it was used as an armory for a company that manufactured bullfight swords. The building was declared a national memorial site and restored in 1856. In 2013 the Jewish

community of Toledo asked the Roman Catholic Archbishop to transfer ownership and custodianship of the building to them. The request has not met with success.



The scallop-shell-topped arch at the center of the Ibn Shoshan Synagogue was the location of the Torah ark. In many synagogues in both Israel and the Diaspora, the scallop shell motif marks the location for a portable ark. The scallop shell motif also has a long history in Christian art and architecture as a signifier of divine protection.



Ellen Levitt has made a photographic record of former synagogues in New York City that have been converted into churches, community centers, etc. Ms. Levitt's first synagogue, Shaare Torah in Flatbush, merged with the Flatbush Jewish Center in the 1960s. The building became the Salem Missionary Baptist Church, retaining the original synagogue façade. [See <https://www.aish.com/jw/s/Lost-Synagogues-of-New-York-City.html>.]

[http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/2019_71_01_00_zweiter.pdf]:

“European congregations did not have the option of purchasing church buildings and turning them into synagogues. The cultural and religious barriers that existed between Jews and non-Jews in Europe, even in the post-emancipation era, were such that houses of worship belonged to one faith community and stayed that way.... In the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, a number of prominent Orthodox congregations in New York used former church buildings as their sanctuaries. In 1827, Congregation B’nai Jeshurun moved into 119 Elm Street in Manhattan, formerly the First Coloured Presbyterian Church, and in 1850 Congregation Shaare Zedek moved into 38 Henry Street in Manhattan, formerly a Quaker house of worship.... Orthodox congregations would continue to turn churches into synagogues well into the twentieth century, and the propriety of doing so would continue to be an issue.”¹

➔ Is there a quality inherent in certain places or objects that makes them seem propitious for worship? Bethel is a biblical case in point; in Genesis 28:16-17, when Jacob wakes up from his dream-theophany there:

(טז) וַיִּיקָץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ ה' בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי:
 (יז) וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמֶר מִה־נִּזְרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין זֶה בֵּי אִם־בַּיִת אֱלֹהִים וְזֶה
 שָׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם:

¹⁶Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is present in this place, and I did not know it!” ¹⁷Shaken, he said, “How awesome is

¹ Oran Zweiter, “Turning a Church into a Synagogue: Jewish Law Meets Communal Politics on New York’s Lower East Side,” *American Jewish Archives* 71 (2019), pp. 1-17.

this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven.”

Abraham Ibn Ezra (Spanish, ca. 1089-1164)

(טז) אכן יש ה' הטעם בעבור שימצאו מקומות יראו שם נסים, ולא אוכל לפרש למה זה, כי סוד מופלא הוא: (יז) כי אם בית אלהים שיתפלל אדם בו בשעת צרכו ותשמע תפלתו כי המקום נבחר....

Surely the Lord—means that there are certain places where miracles occur. I cannot explain why because it is a wondrous secret. **None other than the abode of God**—in that a person will pray there in an hour of need and the prayer will be heard because it is a chosen place.

Deuteronomy 12:1-5

[1] אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּן לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיךָ לְךָ לְרִשְׁתָּהּ כָּל-הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם חַיִּים עַל-הָאָדָמָה:

[JPS:] ¹These are the laws and rules that you must carefully observe in the land that the Lord, God of your fathers, is giving you to possess, as long as you live on earth.

[2] אֲבִדוּ וְהָאֲבָדוּן אֶת-כָּל-הַמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ-שָׁם הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹרְשִׁים אֹתָם אֶת-
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם עַל-הַהָרִים הַרְּמִים וְעַל-הַגְּבְעוֹת וְתַחַת כָּל-עֵץ רַעֲנָן: [3] וְנִתְּצוּם אֶת-מִזְבְּחֹתָם
וְשִׁבְרֹתָם אֶת-מִצְבְּתָם וְאֲשִׁרְיָהֶם תִּשְׂרֹפוּן בָּאֵשׁ וּפְסִילֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם תִּגְדְּעוּן וְאֲבַדְתֶּם אֶת-
שָׂמֶם מִן-הַמְּקוֹם הַהוּא: [4] לֹא-תַעֲשׂוּן כֵּן לָהּ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: [5] כִּי אִם-אֶל-הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-
יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל-שִׁבְטֵיכֶם לְשׂוֹם אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שָׁם לְשַׁכְּנוֹ תִּדְרְשׁוּ וּבָאתָ שָׁמָּה:

²You must destroy all the sites at which the nations you are to dispossess worshiped their gods, whether on lofty mountains and on hills or under any luxuriant tree. ³Tear down their altars, smash their pillars, put their sacred posts [their

asherahs] to the fire, and cut down the images of their gods, obliterating their name from that site. ⁴Do not worship the Lord your God in like manner, ⁵but look only to the site that the Lord your God will choose² amidst all your tribes as His habitation, to establish His name there. There you are to go....

Mishnah Avodah zarah 3:5 (beg.)

הַגּוֹיִם הָעוֹבְדִים אֶת הַהָרִים וְאֶת הַגְּבָעוֹת, הֵן מִתְּרִין וְיֵמָּה שְׂעֲלִיָּהֶם אֲסוּרִים, שְׁנֹאֲמַר לֹא תַחַמַּד בְּסֶף וְזָהָב עֲלֵיהֶם וְלִקְחָתָּ.

If the nations worship mountains and hills those are permitted; but what is upon them is prohibited, as it is says, [**You shall consign the images of their gods to the fire;**] **you shall not covet the silver and gold on them and keep it for yourselves, [lest you be ensnared thereby; for that is abhorrent to the Lord your God]** (Deuteronomy 7:25).

Sifre Deuteronomy §60

אֲבָד תֵּאבְדוּן אֶת כָּל הַמְּקוֹמוֹת, מִנֵּין אֶתְּךָ אֹמֵר שֶׁאֵם קִצַּץ אֲשִׁירָה וְהַחֲלִיפָה אֶפִּילוּ עֶשֶׂר פַּעֲמִים שְׁחִיב לְקַצֵּץ תִּלְמוּד לֹמֵר אֲבָד תֵּאבְדוּן.

You must destroy all the places – Whence do we learn that if one cuts down an *asherah* and it grows back even ten times, one must cut it down repeatedly? Scripture says, **You must destroy**.³

² The centralization formula, which occurs 22x in Deuteronomy, accompanied 9x by the additional name formula (highlighted): **12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 14:23, 24, 25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 23:17; 26:2; 31:11**. When Ibn Ezra's calls Bethel a "chosen place" (*maqom nivhar*), he echoes the language of the formula.

³ The tautological doubling of the verb connotes repeated action.

את כל המקומות אשר עבדו שם, מגיד שהיו כנענים שטופים בעבודה זרה יתר מכל אומות העולם.

All [*kol*] the sites at which [the nations] worshiped [their gods] – This informs us that the Canaanites were more steeped in idolatry than all [*kol*] the nations of the world.

אשר אתם יורשים אותם את אלהיהם, מפני מה אתם יורשים את אלהיהם שלא תעשו כמעשיהם ויבואו אחרים וירשו אתכם. רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר יכול אפילו עובדים את ההרים ואת הגבעות את מצווה לאבדם תלמוד לומר על ההרים הרמים ועל הגבעות ותחת כל עץ רענן, אלהיהם תחת כל עץ רענן ולא עץ רענן אלהיהם אלהיהם על הגבעות ולא הגבעות אלהיהם ומפני מה אשרה אסורה מפני שיש בה תפיסת יד אדם וכל שיש בו תפיסת יד אדם אסור אמר רבי עקיבה אני אהיה אבין לפניך כל מקום שאתה מוצא הר גבוה וגבעה נשאה ועץ רענן דע שיש שם עבודה זרה לכך נאמר על ההרים הרמים ועל הגבעות ותחת כל עץ רענן סליק פיסקא

[at which the nations] you are to dispossess [worshiped] their gods – Why dispossess their gods?⁴ So you do not follow their ways, lest others come and dispossess you. R. Yose Hagalili says, is it even possible that if they worship the mountains and the hills it is a commandment to destroy them? Scripture says, **whether on lofty mountains and on hills or under any luxuriant tree**, that is, their *gods* under the luxuriant trees; the luxuriant trees are not their gods. Their *gods* on the hills; the hills are not their gods. Why is the *asherah* forbidden? Because it is human handiwork and whatever is human handiwork is forbidden.⁵ R. Aqiva said, I will clarify for you: wherever you find a high mountain or a hill or a luxuriant tree, there you will find an idol, as it says, **whether on lofty mountains and on hills or under any luxuriant tree**.

⁴ The midrash misparses the verse in order to make a point.

⁵ The *asherah* was understood to be a tree that was planted to serve as an object of worship or altered for that purpose. More recently, scholars have discussed the possibility that the *asherah* was an actual or vestigial symbol of the Canaanite goddess Asherah.

Sifre Deuteronomy §61 (beg.)

ונתצתם את מזבחותם, זו אבן שחצבה מתחילה לעבודה זרה, ושברתם את מצבותם, זו שהיתה חצובה ועבדה, ואשיריהם תשרפון באש, זו אשירה שנעשית מתחילה לעבודה זרה, ופסילי אלהיהם תגדעון, זו שהיתה נטועה ועבדה.

Tear down their altars – this is a stone that was hewn originally for idolatry. **Smash their pillars** – this is a pillar that was hewn for worship. **Put their *asherahs* to the fire** – this is an *asherah* that was made originally for idolatry. **Cut down the images of their gods** – this refers to [an *asherah*] that was planted [first] and [then] worshipped.

Mishnah *Avodah zarah* 3:7

שְׁלֹשָׁה בָּתִּים הֵן. בֵּית שֶׁבָּנוּי מִתְחִלָּה לְעִבּוּדָה זָרָה, הָרִי זֶה אָסוּר. סִידוֹ וְכִיָּרוֹ לְעִבּוּדָה זָרָה וְחִדּוּשׁ, נוֹטֵל מֵה שֶׁחִדּוּשׁ. הַכֶּנֶס לְתוֹכָהּ עִבּוּדָה זָרָה וְהוֹצִיאָהּ, הָרִי זֶה מֻתָּר.

There are three types of houses [=houses of worship]: A house that was built originally for idolatry is prohibited. If they plastered and tiled [an ordinary house] to renovate it for idolatry, one may remove the renovations. If one brought an idol into it and removed it, [the house] is permitted.

שְׁלֹשׁ אֲבָנִים הֵן. אֶבֶן שֶׁחִצְבָהּ מִתְחִלָּה לְבִימוֹס, הָרִי זֶה אָסוּרָה. סִידָהּ וְכִיָּרָה לְשֵׁם עִבּוּדָה זָרָה וְחִדּוּשׁ, נוֹטֵל מֵה שֶׁחִדּוּשׁ. הָעֵמִיד עָלֶיהָ עִבּוּדָה זָרָה וְסִלְקָהּ, הָרִי זֶה מֻתָּרָה.

There are three kinds of stones: A stone that one hewed originally to serve as a pedestal [for an idol]⁶ is prohibited. If one plastered and tiled it to renovate it for

⁶ Greek βωμός (*bōmós*), “altar” or place of religious ceremony.

idolatry, one may remove the renovation and then it is permitted. If one set an idol upon it and removed it, [the stone] is permitted.

שֵׁלֶשׁ אֲשֵׁרוֹת הֵן. אֵילָן שֶׁנִּטְעַן מִתְחִלָּה לְשֵׁם עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה, הָרִי זֶה אֲסוּר. גָּדְעוּ וּפְסְלוּ לְשֵׁם עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה וְהִחֲלִיף, נוֹטֵל מֵהַשְּׁהַחֲלִיף. הַעֲמִיד תַּחְתֵּיהָ עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה וּבִטְלָהּ, הָרִי זֶה מִתֵּר. אֵיזוֹ הִיא אֲשֵׁרָה, כֹּל שֵׁשׁ תַּחְתֵּיהָ עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה. רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אֹמֵר, כֹּל שֶׁעוֹבְדִין אוֹתָהּ. וּמַעֲשֵׂה בְּצִידָן בְּאֵילָן שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹבְדִין אוֹתוֹ, וּמִצְאוּ תַּחְתָּיו גָּל. אָמַר לָהֶן רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן, בְּדַקּוֹ אֵת הַגָּל הַזֶּה, וּבְדַקּוֹהוּ וּמִצְאוּ בוֹ צוּרָה. אָמַר לָהֶן, הַזֵּאֵל וְלַצּוּרָה הֵן עוֹבְדִין, נִתֵּיר לָהֶן אֵת הָאֵילָן :

There are three kinds of *asherah*: a tree that was planted originally for idolatry is prohibited. If one pruned and carved it for idolatry, and it sprouted afresh, one removes the new growth. If one only set an idol under it and removed it, [the tree] is permitted. What is an *asherah*? Any [tree] beneath which there is an idol. Rabbi Shimon says: any [tree] that they worship. It happened in Sidon that there was a tree that was worshipped and they found a pile of stones beneath it. R. Shimon said to them, “examine this pile.” They examined it and found an image in it. He said to them, “since it is the image that they worship, we permit the tree for you.”

Sifre Deuteronomy §61 (exc.)

יכול אף מצווה לרדוף אחריהם בחוצה לארץ תלמוד לומר ואבדתם את שמם מן המקום ההוא, בארץ ישראל אתה מצווה לרדוף אחריהם, ואין אתה מצווה לרדוף אחריהם בחוצה לארץ.

Should you think that you are commanded to pursue their destruction even outside the land of Israel, Scripture says, **obliterate their name from *that* site**, meaning that in the land of Israel⁷ you are commanded to pursue their destruction, but you are not commanded to pursue their destruction outside the land of Israel.

⁷ Deuteronomy 12:1 stipulates: **These are the laws and rules that you must carefully observe *in the land*.**

Rambam (Spanish, ca. 1135-1204), “Laws of Idolatry” 7:1

מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה הֵיא לְאַבֵּד עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים וּמִשְׁמָשִׁיָּהּ וְכָל הַנֶּעֱשֶׂה בְּשִׁבְלֶיהָ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אֲבֵד תִּאֲבֹדוּן אֶת כָּל הַמְּקוֹמֹת וְנֶאֱמַר כִּי אִם כֹּה תַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם וְגו'. וּבְאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִצְוָה לְרַדֹּף אַחֲרֶיהָ עַד שֶׁנֶּאֱבֵד אוֹתָהּ מִכָּל אֶרֶצָנוּ. אֲבָל בְּחוּץ לְאֶרֶץ אֵין אָנוּ מִצְוִין לְרַדֹּף אַחֲרֶיהָ אֲלֵא כָּל מְקוֹם שֶׁנִּכְבַּשׁ אוֹתוֹ נֶאֱבֵד כָּל עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים שָׁבוּ. וְאֲבִדְתֶם אֶת שְׁמֵם מִן הַמְּקוֹם הַהוּא. בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל אִתָּהּ מִצְוָה לְרַדֹּף אַחֲרֶיהָ וְאִי אִתָּהּ מִצְוָה לְרַדֹּף אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּחוּץ לְאֶרֶץ:

It is a positive commandment⁸ to destroy idol worship, its accessories, and everything that is made for it, as it is said, **You must destroy all the places...** and **Instead, this is what you shall do to them: [you shall tear down their altars, smash their pillars, cut down their sacred posts, and consign their images to the fire]** (Deuteronomy 7:5). In the land of Israel, it is a commandment to pursue idol worship until we eradicate it from our entire land. In the Diaspora, however, we are not required to pursue it. Rather, whenever we conquer a place, we must destroy all the idolatry therein. **And you shall obliterate their name from that site** [implies that] you are obligated to pursue them in the land of Israel, but you are not obligated to do so in the Diaspora.

Hizquni (alt. Hazzequni; 13th-century French) on Deuteronomy 12:5

כִּי אִם אֵל הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר לֹא פִי הַמְּקוֹם לְפִי שֶׁהַשְּׂכִינָה שֶׁרַתָּה בְּכַמָּה מְקוֹמוֹת כְּמוֹ גִלְגָּל שִׁילָה נוֹב וְגִבְעוֹן וּבֵית עוֹלָמִים וְחַיִּיב אָדָם לְשַׁנּוֹת לְתַלְמִידוֹ דֶּרֶךְ קִצְרָה.

only to the site that [the Lord your God] will choose – He did not specify the place because the Presence abided in several places such as Gilgal, Shiloh, Nob, Gibeon, and the Temple, but one is obliged to teach a student concisely.⁹

⁸ Cf. *Sefer ha-mitzvot*, Positive Commandment #185; *Sefer ha-hinnukh* #436.

⁹ Must “the place” (*ha-maqom*) denote only a single place? For a minority view to the contrary, see Frederick E. Greenspahn, “Deuteronomy and Centralization,” *Vetus Testamentum* 64 (2014), pp. 227-

Bahya b. Asher (Spanish, 1255-1340) on Deuteronomy 12:5

כי אם אל המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלהיכם מכל שבטיכם. המקום הזה הר המוריה הוא, והיה נודע ומפורסם באומות כי ידעו מעלתו בקבלה, אין צריך לומר ישראל במדבר שהיו יודעין זה מן האבות בהיות שם עקדת יצחק.

only to the site that the Lord your God will choose amidst all your tribes – This place is Mt. Moriah, as was well known among the nations who knew of its traditional stature, and it goes without saying to Israel in the wilderness who knew this from their ancestors as the site of the binding of Isaac.

ומה שסתם הכתוב המקום הזה ולא אמר בפירוש שהוא הר המוריה הנודע והמפורסם לכל, כתב הרמב"ם ז"ל בספר המורה כי העלמת המקום לשלשה ענינים: האחד, אילו ידעו האומות כי שם התפלה מקובלת והקרבנות שם לרצון ירצו כל אומה ואומה להחזיק בו ותרבה המריבה וההריגה בין האומות, והשני, כי הכנעניים יושבי הארץ אלו היו יודעין כי ישראל עתידין לירש את ארצם ולעבוד הש"י ולהקריב קרבנותיהם באותו מקום היו משחיתים אותו בכל מה שהם יכולין, והשלישי, כי היו השבטים מריבים זה עם זה, כל אחד ואחד מבקש שיהיה המקום ההוא בנחלתו ותפול המריבה והמחלוקת ביניהם כמו שנפלה בבקשת הכהונה, ולכך העלים וסתם הכתוב המקום הזה ולא פרסמו, ואין צריך לומר האומות כי אפילו ישראל לא ידעוהו, כי אף על פי שידעו הכל מעלתו של הר המוריה לא היו יודעין כי הוא המקום אשר יבחר ה':

As for the reason that Scripture used the generic “place” and did not state explicitly that it was Mt. Moriah, well known to all, Rambam wrote in *Guide of the Perplexed* [3:45] that the concealment of the place was for three reasons:

First, if the nations had learnt that this place was to be the centre of the highest religious truths, they would occupy it, or fight about it most perseveringly.

235. According to Greenspahn, “the syntax of Deuteronomy 12 (especially verses 5 and 13-14) does not require that sacrifice be limited to a single place, though these verses may have come to be understood that way.”

<p>[Rambam:] Secondly, those who were then in possession of it might destroy and ruin the place with all their might.</p>	<p>[Baḥya:] Secondly, that if the Canaanites who were living in the land had known that the Israelites were going to take possession of their land and worship God and offer their sacrifices in that place, they would have destroyed it in any way that they could.</p>
---	---

Thirdly, and chiefly, every one of the twelve tribes would desire to have this place in its borders and under its control; this would lead to divisions and discord, such as were caused by the desire for the priesthood.¹⁰

That is why Scripture concealed the name of the place and did not make it public knowledge for the nations, for even Israel did not know it. Even though everyone knew the stature of Mt. Moriah they did not know that it was **the site that the Lord your God will choose**.

Levi b. Gerson (Ralbag; French, 1288-1344) on Deuteronomy 12:5 (partly based on Sifre Deuteronomy §62)

כי אם אל המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלהיכם מכל שבטיכם וגו' - רוצה לומר: לא תעשון כן לה' אלהיכם כמו שהיו עושים הגוים לעבוד אלהיהם במקומות רבים, כאמרו: אבד תאבדון את כל המקומות אשר עבדו שם הגוים וגו'; כי אתה לא תעבדהו כי אם במקום מיוחד, והוא המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלהיכם מכל השבטים - שם לבד תהיה זאת העבודה לה', להעיר על ייחוד הנעבד בה; ולזה היתה במקום מיוחד ועל יד משפחה מיוחדת.

¹⁰ Citing Rambam in Friedlander's translation. Baḥya's rendering is a paraphrase, the second reason according to Baḥya differing markedly from the original. Rambam states at the beginning of the chapter, "It is known that idolaters selected the highest possible places on high mountains where to build their temples and to place their images. Therefore Abraham, our father, chose Mount Moriah, being the highest mount in that country, and proclaimed there the Unity of God."

only to the site that the Lord your God will choose, etc. – in other words, **Do not worship the Lord your God in like manner**, the way the nations would worship their gods in many places, as it says, **You must destroy all the sites [pl.] at which the nations...worshiped their gods**. Rather, you must worship God in a single place, namely **the site that the Lord your God will choose amidst all your tribes**. Worship of God will take place only there to attest to the unity of the One who is worshiped there, and for that reason in a single place by means of a specific family.

והנה אמר מכל שבטיכם, לפי שמקום בית המקדש - קנוהו כל השבטים, כמו שנתבאר במה שנוכר בסוף שמואל, שכבר קנה דוד את הגורן ואת הבקר בכסף שקלים חמשים, ובמקום אחר הוא אומר שקנהו בשש מאות שקלים, להורות שמכל אחד מהשבטים לקח חמשים שקלים. אמנם ירושלים היה מאחד מהשבטים, כמו שנתבאר בספר יהושע, ולזה אמר אחר זה במקום אשר יבחר ה' באחד שבטיך לשום שמו שם, רוצה לומר: להשרות שכינתו שם.

Now it says **all your tribes** because site of the Temple was purchased by all the tribes, as is explained at the end of the Book of Samuel. David already had purchased the threshing floor and the oxen for 50 shekels [2 Samuel 24:24], and elsewhere [1 Chronicles 21:25] it says that he purchased it for 600 shekels to indicate that he took 50 shekels from each tribe. Yet Jerusalem was from one of the tribes, as is explained in the Book of Joshua [15:63], and that is why it says, “the site that the Lord your God will choose in one of your tribes to establish His name there,”¹¹ in other words, to cause His Presence (*shekhinah*) to abide there.

ויהיה הרצון בזה, שישים שמו שם לשכנו. או יהיה בזה מעניין ברכת כהנים, שנאמר שם ושמו את שמי על בני ישראל, ולזה אמר אחר זה לשכנו, רוצה לומר: להשרות שכינתו שם. ואע"פ שברכת כהנים נאמרת בכל מקום, שנאמר: בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתיך, הנה נלמד מזה ששם המפורש לא יהיה נזכר על יד הכהנים כי אם בבית המקדש, ולזה אמר לשום את שמו שם.

¹¹ A conflation of Deuteronomy 12:14 + 12:21.

אך בשאר המקומות יזכרוהו בכנוי, ולזה אמר אשר אזכיר את שמי, שהוא מעניין אזכרתה, כמו שבארנו שם רוצה לומר, שאריח שם שמי אך לא יהיה נזכר שם ככתבו, כמו ריח הדבר, שאינו הדבר בעל הריח.

The intention in this is that He would establish it as His name's dwelling place, or it might be related to the priestly blessing, where it says, **They shall place My name with the people of Israel** [Numbers 6:27]. That is why it continues to say [in Deuteronomy 12:5] **as His habitation**, in other words, to cause His Presence to abide there. Even though the priestly blessing may be uttered anywhere, as it is said, **in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you** [Exodus 20:21], we learn from this that the ineffable name was mentioned by the priests only in the Temple. That is why it says, **to establish His name there**. This is related to “reminder” [*azkaratah*, Leviticus 2:2], as we explained there, which means that I shall leave the “aroma” [=memory, calling to mind] of my name, but it will not be mentioned as written, just as the lingering aroma of something is not the thing that produces the aroma.

- What does the “name” connote and what does it evoke?
- Is the name located within a place or within the people (or both)?
- Is the name bound to a specific place or is it moveable?
- Should the actual name (as opposed to a euphemistic substitute) be restricted to the Temple and High Priest in the post-Temple era?