

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all **people**; for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. xix. 5, 6).  
 "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any **people**; for ye were the fewest of all **people**; but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers" (Deut. vii. 7, 8).

Amos (iii. 2): "You only have I singled out [R. V., "known"] of all the families of the earth: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities."

Deut. xiv. 2: "Thou art an holy **people** unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath **chosen** thee to be a peculiar **people** unto himself, above all **peoples** that are upon the face of the earth," and *ib. xxiv. 18, 19, R. V.*

(Isa. xlii. xliii. 1-7; xliiii. 10. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have **chosen**"; *ib. verse 21, R. V.,*

"The **people** which I formed for myself that they might set forth my praise"; compare xlii. 1, 2; xlix. 6, 7).

As God's **chosen people**, Israel is also called His "inheritance" (Deut. iv. 20; ix. 26, 29; xxxii. 9; Ps. xxxiii. 12: "The **people** whom he hath **chosen** for his own inheritance"; I Kings viii. 53, Jer. x. 16; and elsewhere). As the children of the Patriarchs they are His **chosen** ones (Ps. cv. 6).

Seforno and choseness in the Torah

Kuzari

26. Al Khazari: If this be so, then your belief is confined to yourselves?

27. The Rabbi: Yes; but any Gentile who joins us unconditionally shares our good fortune, without, however, being quite equal to us. If the Law were binding on us only because God created us, the white and the black man would be equal, since He created them all. But the Law was given to us because He led us out of Egypt, and remained attached to us, because we are the pick of mankind.

28. Al Khazari: Jew, I see thee quite altered, and thy words are poor after having been so pleasant.
29. The Rabbi: Poor or pleasant, give me thy attention, and let me express myself more fully.
30. Al Khazari: Say what thou wilt.
31. The Rabbi: The laws of nature comprise nurture, growth, and propagation, with their powers and all conditions attached thereto. This is particularly the case with plants and animals, to the exclusion of earth, stones, metals, and elements.
32. Al Khazari: This is a maxim which requires explanation, though it be true.
33. The Rabbi: As regards the soul, it is given to all animated beings. The result is movement, will power, external as well as internal senses and such like.
34. Al Khazari: This, too, cannot be contradicted.
35. The Rabbi: Intellect is man's birthright above all living beings. This leads to the development of his faculties, his home, his country, from which arise administrative and regulative laws.
36. Al Khazari: This is also true.
37. The Rabbi: Which is the next highest degree?
38. Al Khazari: The degree of great sages.
39. The Rabbi: I only mean that degree which separates those who occupy it from the physical point of view, as the plant is separated from inorganic things, or man from animals. The differences as to quantity, however, are endless, as they are only accidental, and do not really form a degree.
40. Al Khazari: If this be so, then there is no degree above man among tangible things.
41. The Rabbi: If we find a man who walks into the fire without hurt, or abstains from food for some time without starving, on whose face a light shines which the eye cannot bear, who is never ill, nor ages, until having reached his life's natural end, who dies spontaneously just as a man retires to his couch to sleep on an appointed day and hour, equipped with the knowledge of what is hidden as to past and future: is such a degree not visibly distinguished from the ordinary human degree?

42. Al Khazari: This is, indeed, the divine and seraphic degree, if it exists at all. It belongs to the province of the divine influence, but not to that of the intellectual, human, or natural world.

43. The Rabbi: These are some of the characteristics of the undoubted prophets through whom God made Himself manifest, and who also made known that there is a God who guides them as He wishes, according to their obedience or disobedience. He revealed to those prophets that which was hidden, and taught them how the world was created, how the generations prior to the Flood followed each other, and how they reckoned their descent from Adam. He described the Flood and the origin of the 'Seventy Nations' from Shem, Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah; how the languages were split up, and where men sought their habitations; how arts arose, how they built cities, and the chronology from Adam up to this day.

Kuzari

1st Maamar, os 95:

1) By the time the Jewish people had become a nation, with people such as Moshe, Aharon, Miriam, Betzalel, Yehoshua etc. even though there were sinners who were hated by God [for what they did], there is no doubt that they too were segula for from their root and nature they were segula, and in the future they would give birth to children who would be segula.

2) The children of Yaakov were all segula and were distinguished from the rest of mankind in their godly characteristics, for He made them as a distinct, angelic species [he actually writes, that asking why non-Jews cannot be like Jews is like asking why animals can't talk]

In his 5th Maamar, os 20 he sums up his position and writes that one must concede that:

3) In creation there are higher and lower levels. A being with awareness, grasp and senses is evidently higher than one without it ... 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 among those who fulfill the mitzvot [who he explained earlier can only be the Jewish people] is higher than the greatest who do not have mitzvos.

4) Even a Jew who sins is better than one who lacks mitzvos [i.e. a non-Jew] ... Furthermore, if offered the choice, a Jew would not choose to be on the level of those who lack mitzvos [i.e. non-Jew], just as a human being who is sick and

suffers, if given the choice to be a horse or fish or bird, although these all live contentedly without suffering ... would not choose this.

## Explanation

### 1. Choseness

a. Not better, just ahead and leading

R. Hirsch (19th letter)

Netsiv

And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; and the days of Yaakov, the years of his life, numbered one hundred and forty seven years" (xlvii, 28) "

And the reason for this is that most of our lives will be spent in exile, for Hakadosh Baruch Hu revealed to Avraham that his sons were created in order to serve as a light to the nations, and this is possible only when they are scattered in exile. Likewise when our father Yaakov went to Egypt, which was the main center in those times, Hashem's blessed Name was exalted when His providence over Yaakov and his descendants was displayed."

b. Kaminski – family model, three groups

### 2. Segula

1 Maharal:

Avot, chapter 3, mishnah 17 (in the Vilna edition, mishnah 14), "He used to say, 'beloved is man for he is created in [G-d's] image,' a greater love spreads upon him because he was created in [G-d's] image, as it is written: 'For with G-d's image He made man,' beloved are Israel, for they are called G-d's children. A greater love spreads upon them, for they are called G-d's children, as is written, 'You are the children of the Lord, your G-d:'"

The Maharal wrote in his commentary on Avot, "Derech Chaim," (Hanig edition, page 146, in R' Chaim Pardes's edition, page 354): "Even though it says 'Beloved is man,' this does not include all human beings, for Chazal said: 'You are called men and the nations are not called men' -- as though the completeness of the Creation, which is given to man in particular, is given to the Jews and not to the other nations... And even though this advantage is only possessed by Israel, he said on this matter 'beloved is man' and not 'beloved are Israel,' because there is a great difference [between the two]. Even though this

advantage is also possessed by Israel in particular, nevertheless, there does exist the form of man in the nations also. However, the principal form of man does not appear in the nations. In any case, this image does exist amongst the rest of the nations, but it is worthless, and therefore he did not say 'beloved are Israel who were created in G-d's image.' Additionally, when man was created, this advantage was only possessed by Adam and Noah, even though they are not called 'Israel.' Though after G-d chose Israel this image was lessened amongst the nations, nevertheless His image belongs to man in essence, and this matter is clear" ( see also "Netzach Yisrael," page 73).

How does this differ from the view of Kuzari?

2. You have seen what I did to Egypt, and I have borne you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me. And now, if you hearken well to Me and observe My Covenant, you shall be to Me a *Segula* of all nations, for Mine is the entire world. You shall be to Me a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the Children of Israel." (SHEMOT 19:4-6)

Before bestowing Israel with the Torah at Sinai, Hashem commands Moshe to relate these instructions to the entire Nation. These words are in fact the prerequisite understanding for receiving the *mitzvot* as only through understanding the function of Israel can the Nation fully grasp the Torah's true objective.

3. The Ohr HaChaim writes an extensive description on the word *Segula*, for which he brings three basic definitions:

1. The *Segula* is something special possessing supernatural properties, meaning that it is beyond what is commonly viewed as normal. The *Segula* of Israel is something illogical to human wisdom built into the system of nature.
2. Israel is a *Segula* when compared to other nations, who worship idols of one form or another while only Israel serves Hashem directly.
3. There are sparks of sanctity that are scattered throughout the world. These sparks cannot be gathered together without the Hebrew Nation and its preoccupation with the Torah. *Am Yisrael*, as a sovereign Nation unified in the Land of Israel, is to act as a magnet to attract these sparks of holiness from wherever they exist in the world. The Kingdom of Israel is to become a healthy concentration of sanctity in this world and the Torah is the instrument enabling it to fulfill this Divine charge.