



GEULAS YISRAEL

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RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

Yom Yerushalayim: A City the World Cannot Ignore

In the Moreh Nevuchim (3:45), the Rambam addresses the striking absence of Yerushalayim from the Torah. Though Tanach later overflows with references to the city, the Torah itself never names it explicitly, even when describing visits to it. The Rambam explains that this omission is deliberate. Had the Torah clearly identified the site of the Mikdash and the resting place of the Shechinah, it would have drawn the attention and hostility of surrounding nations, who might have seized or desecrated it. The city would have been engulfed in violence.

Evidently, not every element of this plan, as described by the Rambam, has unfolded as envisioned. From as early as 500 BCE, Yerushalayim has stood at the center of relentless struggle, fought over, claimed, and reclaimed across generations. That struggle has not faded. To this day, we continue to grapple with asserting a fully recognized and internationally accepted Jewish sovereignty over our city.

Though the name Yerushalayim does not appear explicitly in the Torah, each of our Avot encountered this mountain. Avraham's original journey to the Akeidah already traces the future path and trajectory of our city.

A MORAL CITY

In truth, Avraham had already visited

Yerushalayim long before the Akeidah. After defeating the four tyrants who had imposed a reign of terror across the region, Avraham arrives at the city then known as Shalem. There he encounters a mysterious religious figure, Malki Tzedek, a priest-king who presides over the city.

Something about this place stands apart. Unlike Sedom, already marked by corruption, unlike the culture of Egypt which seizes women from their husbands, and unlike the empires of the four kings who ruled with brute force, this city carries a different tone. They offer bread and wine to a war-weary Avraham and extend hospitality and shelter as he recovers.

This behavior is not incidental. The city is called Shalem, suggesting a human striving toward moral wholeness, guided by a religiously attuned leader who seeks to shape a city worthy of that name.

It is also not incidental that the first moral city in Sefer Bereishit emerges on this mountain of Hashem. There is an instinctive recognition of a divine moral presence, and an attempt to shape human life in that image. Chazal identify this figure as Shem, the son of Noach who had already grasped a form of monotheism even before Avraham's discovery.

WITHOUT TRANSCENDENCE

This encounter between Avraham and Malki Tzedek shows what had already been achieved. It also shows what still remained beyond reach and begins to point toward what Avraham himself would later introduce. They had built a moral city and were striving for ethical refinement. Yet their vision of *shleimut* was limited. They could not grasp that full religious perfection or completion cannot be achieved on human terms, through human logic or moral intuition alone.

Religious perfection requires transcendence, an encounter with the Divine “Other,” a presence that does not conform to human categories. That encounter arrives in Parashat Vayeira, when Avraham is summoned up the mountain to meet Hashem on His terms, beyond human comprehension and beyond moral instinct, to perform a command that defies understanding.

HOSPITALITY, NOT SACRIFICE

This is why the Torah spotlights the bread and wine. Rashi comments that this gesture foreshadows the *korbanot* that Avraham’s descendants will one day bring upon this mountain, particularly the *menachot*, composed of flour and wine. There is a quiet contrast embedded in this moment. Malki Tzedek does not offer these items as a sacrifice. The bread and wine remain gestures of hospitality and expressions of human courtesy. They are noble gestures, but they remain within the human sphere. One day, Avraham and his children will take these same materials and place them upon a *mizbe’ach*, redirecting them toward a Higher Being and transforming them into a *korban*. The same bread and wine will be lifted from the human sphere of courtesy into the divine

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realm of *avodah*. From morality to divine encounter.

The meeting between Avraham and Malki Tzedek becomes a quiet transfer, a passing of the baton. Malki Tzedek and his community introduced moral aspiration into a violent and fractured world. But transcendence had not yet entered the picture. Avraham, by returning to this mountain for the Akeidah, acknowledges and absorbs what they achieved, yet recognizes that something deeper still lies beyond it.

SEEN, BUT NOT SEEING

At the Akeidah, Avraham hears the mountain named as the site where Hashem “sees,” or *behar Hashem yera’eh*. It is not a place where human beings come to see or comprehend Hashem. That remains beyond reach. Hashem cannot be grasped, and His commands, as the Akeidah so sharply illustrates, do not submit to the limits of the human mind. This is not a mountain we ascend to see Hashem, but to be seen by Him. It is not Shalem but Year’eh.

Eventually, the city carries both original names, preserving the achievement of Malki Tzedek alongside Avraham’s breakthrough. It is formed from the joining of Shalem and Yir’eh, becoming Yerushalayim.

For generations, we retraced Avraham’s steps, ascending to Yerushalayim three

times a year, not to behold Hashem but to stand before Him. *Shalosh pe'amim yera'eh kol zechurecha et pnei Hashem Elokecha*. We came without expecting to understand, without expecting to see, but ready to stand there before Hashem.

1967, BEYOND LOGIC

In 1967, we returned to this city in a manner that echoes the Akeidah- beyond calculation and beyond logic. In the weeks and months leading up to the war, fear dominated. The prospect of returning to Yerushalayim did not enter the imagination. It was a war for survival. A dark joke captured the mood: “the last one out should turn off the lights at Ben Gurion Airport.”

What followed defied expectation. In a sudden and astonishing turn, Hashem restored us to His city. The victory unfolded with a swiftness and scope unlike anything familiar in military history. Just as the natural world was formed in six days, so too, after thousands of years, the world of redemption took shape in six days. Not through the steady logic of history, but in a moment that stood beyond comprehension.

INTUITIVE ATTRACTION

The story of Malki Tzedek reveals a second dimension of Yerushalayim. Even without direct divine instruction or an explicit compass, humanity is drawn to the mountain upon which human history was launched. Hashem formed man from the earth of Har HaMoriah, and something within the human spirit recognizes that origin. People gravitate to this mountain and attempt to build upon it.

There is something subliminal about this site. Humanity senses it, even without the language to explain it. That was true then, and it has remained true across history. There is an intuition that this is where history begins and

where it will ultimately find its resolution. And for that reason, whenever Jews return to this place, it stirs the world. They recognize that when we return to Yerushalayim, history moves forward.

As we crossed the Yam Suf, far from Yerushalayim, there was already an awareness that our arrival there would unsettle the world. During the song of Az Yashir, we gave voice to that awareness: “The nations will hear and tremble; the inhabitants of the surrounding lands will be seized by fear; the leaders of Edom and Moav will panic; the residents of Canaan will melt away. And then we will be brought and planted upon the mountain of Hashem’s inheritance, the place He established as His dwelling, the sanctuary fashioned by His hands.”

When the people of Hashem return to Yerushalayim, the world reacts. History does not stand still. It begins to move forward in a visible way, and that movement unsettles. It stirred then, and it stirred again in 1967.

1948 VS. 1967

In 1948, the world did not respond in the same way. A fractured parcel of land was granted. In part, this reflected a world still burdened by the memory of the Holocaust and confronted by a Jewish refugee crisis. It was a necessary act, even a moral gesture, but it did not yet carry the weight of history shifting course.

1967 was different. The response was sharper and more charged. Some embraced it, and many religious non-Jews continue to support our presence with conviction. Others recoiled. This return signaled more than survival. It suggested that history itself was advancing, that Hashem’s presence was reentering the world in a more visible way.

In Shir HaShirim, the nations of the world

are described as the daughters of Yerushalayim. The Midrash teaches that in the future, every nation will stand in relation to Yerushalayim, as branches extending from a central city that reclaims its place at the heart of human experience, under the gaze of Hashem.

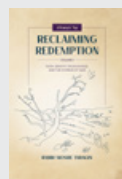
People sense, even if they cannot explain it, that Yerushalayim will one day stand at the center of history. That is why events in and around the city draw the attention of the entire world. Not everyone can articulate it. Malki Tzedek himself could not fully give it language. But the intuition remains. ■



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