

Parschas Devarim 5772

YERUSHALAYIM — A.K.A. JERUSALEM

THE PROPER PRONUNCIATION OF THE CITY'S NAME AND ITS ETERNAL RAMIFICATIONS

Did you ever wonder about the origin and the significance of the name **יְרוּשָׁלַיִם**? The Chasam Sofer (*D'rashos, D'rush L'zayin B'av, 5593*) makes some enlightening comments on the subject:

At first, the city was known simply as **שְׁלַם**. This was the name of the city during the reign of King Malki Tzedek (the alias of Shem, the son of Noah), as the verse states: "And Malki Tzedek, king of Shaleim, took out bread and wine" (*Bereishis 14:18*). After the episode of the *akeidah* (the binding of Yitzchak), Avraham crowned the city with a new appellation: **יִרְאָה** (literally, "shall see"), as mentioned in the verse: "And Avraham called the name of that place 'Hashem Yireh'" (*Bereishis 22:14*). As the Medrash relates, this presented a quandary: how should the city be referred to in a way that would not upset either party? Hashem devised a solution: He combined the two titles. Hence, "Yeru-Shaleim" was born (*Bereishis Rabbah 56:10*).

SHIFTING POSITIONS

The naming issue resurfaces at a later date, through another event that occurred at that location: the dream of our patriarch Ya'akov. As he lay on that spot, he had a vision of a **סִלְסִלָּם** (ladder) that extended to the Heavens, "And angels... were ascending and descending on it" (*Bereishis 28:12*). The intent and import of this dream is the subject of much discussion amongst the commentators. The Ramban explains who these "angels" were: they were celestial representatives of the "Four Kingdoms"; that is, the four

regimes who would, in the future, exercise dominion over Yisrael. Through this vision, Hashem was revealing to Ya'akov that He would be with Ya'akov's offspring throughout their exiles and travails.

In any event, the *sulam* thus comes to symbolize the trials of *galus* (the Diaspora). This gives rise to yet another rendering and understanding of the city's name. The aforementioned term "Yerushalayim" carries with it an uplifting connotation: one "will behold" ("Yeru") "peace/fullness" (*shaleim*). But this version is dependent on the middle letter of the name — the *shin*. With its dot positioned on its right side — **ש** — the name is pronounced as above: Yerushalayim. Notice what occurs, however, when the dot is shifted to the left — **שׁ** — transforming the letter into a *sin*, with its associated pronunciation. The name can now be rendered Yerusalem — a composite of "Yeru" ("he will behold") "**Sulam**" ("the ladder"). And this version carries much darker connotations, as it refers to the *galus*.

In other words, the obviously preferable version of the city's name is the familiar Yerushalayim, which reflects its glory and tranquility. Alternatively, though, the city can be rendered Yerusalem (quite similar to the popular Anglicized version), which invokes the state of affairs of the post-Temple era, after the city was destroyed and its inhabitants dispersed.

As we shall see, the Chasam Sofer uncovers an interesting application of this name with its double-connotation, an idea which is, at the same time, both intriguing and sobering.

THE RECIPROCITY FACTOR

The Torah instructs us to pursue a life of *kedushah* (holiness) through adherence to and immersion in the Torah. Sometimes, an individual acceding to the call of

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his inclination, may try to shirk his responsibilities and “escape” from his Torah duty; but his efforts are doomed to failure. This notion is illustrated by the following Mishnah in Avos (3:5):

כָּל הַמְקַבֵּל עָלָיו עַל תּוֹרָה, מַעֲבִירֶיךָ מִמֶּנּוּ עַל מַלְכוּת וְעַל דְּרָךְ אֶרֶץ. וְכָל הַפּוֹרֵק מִמֶּנּוּ עַל תּוֹרָה, נוֹתֵנִי עָלָיו עַל מַלְכוּת וְעַל דְּרָךְ אֶרֶץ.

“Whoever accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah will be relieved from the yoke of governmental interference and other mundane pressures. But whoever casts off the yoke of Torah will be subject to the yoke of governmental and mundane pressures.”

Here we have someone who thought he could “enjoy life” by throwing off what he perceived as the shackles of Torah study. He was rewarded with a shower of life’s inconveniences, which surely upset his “vacation plans.”

Chazal state that an eerily similar phenomenon takes place in a similar area: one’s attitude to the *Churban* (destruction of the Temple). “Whoever mourns over (the destruction of) Yerushalayim will merit to behold its joyous resurgence; but whoever does not mourn for Yerushalayim will not behold its future joy” (*Ta’anis 30b*).

Who does not participate in its mourning? One who does not regard its unique sacredness as a worthwhile aspect; he is more interested in copying the ways of foreign cities and blending in with the other nations. And so Chazal tell us that the fate of such an individual will resemble that of the renegade mentioned in the Mishnah above. He desired an enhanced relationship with the nations; instead, he will remain under their strict dominion and be excluded from the joyous events of the Redemption from Exile.

Drawing on the notion of the city’s two names, the Chasam Sofer finds an allusion to this idea in the words of the well-known verse (*Tehillim 137:5*): אִם-אֶשְׁכַּחְךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right be forgotten.” Conventionally, the verse is understood as referring to the right hand, as the supplicant expresses his desire that his right hand should lose its power should he forget the sacred city. The Chasam Sofer, however, perceives this verse as reflecting the phenomenon of the city’s names. As stated, “Yerushalayim” is the title of preference, as it conjures up comforting visions of the restoration to its original grandeur. Such is the prospect for those who remember the city and participate in mourning for it, as the Gemara in *Ta’anis* remarked.

What of those who “forget” the city, and neglect its memory? “If I forget you... my ‘right’ will be forgotten.” That is, the *shin* (which is punctuated with a dot on its *right* side) will transform into a *sin* (with the dot on the *left*; that is, the dot has been omitted from the “right” and transferred to the other side). For such an individual, the city will be only “Jerusalem”— he will be subject to the harsh rule of foreign conquerors, a far cry from his misguided dream of blending in with and mimicking the ways of the nations.

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