Jerusalem Past, Present, and Future:
Midrashim on the Holy City

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Summary

Number of Chapters: Four Chapters, plus Introduction and Conclusion.

Contribution of the Thesis: The Thesis demonstrates that texts regarding Jerusalem, from the Bible until the period of the *Yalkutim,* reflect various points of view regarding the city and visions of its past, present, and future. In particular, the texts and midrashim studied and analyzed in this work serve as means for the authors and Rabbis to express their deepest feelings, longings, frustration, and praise over Jerusalem.

Goal of the Thesis: The goal of the Thesis was to understand how and why various stories developed regarding Jerusalem and her symbolic meaning in the Bible, Second Temple, and Rabbinic Literature.

Division of the Thesis: The Thesis is composed of an Introduction which explains the content and purpose of the thesis. It continues with a chapter on biblical concepts of Jerusalem, three chapters on the past, present, and future descriptions of the city, and concludes with a summary of key points and findings of the Thesis.

Types of Material Used: The Thesis uses biblical verses, Second Temple texts translated into English, *aggadic* texts from the Babylonian Talmud, Exegetical, Homiletical, and Historical Midrashim, Midrashic Anthologies, and secondary sources related to concepts found in the Thesis.

Acknowledgements

I give my profound and heartfelt gratitude first and foremost to my teacher and advisor, Dr. Norman Cohen. It was in his class on *Pirke de-Rebbe Eliezer* that I first came up with the idea of writing my Thesis on the subject of midrashim relating to Jerusalem. His clear passion for midrash, kindness toward myself and fellow students throughout my years at the College, and his ability to transform ancient texts into living, breathing, and incredibly relevant material have inspired me in my work as a student both at the College and in my various capacities outside of the school. Throughout this long process, Dr. Cohen has inspired me to push myself more and more, giving me honest feedback, frank criticism, fresh ideas, and above all, compassion and a warm smile. I know I have been blessed and fortunate to work with him, and I know that I will continue to learn from and with him long into the future.

I also have to thank my family, friends, and classmates who have kept me sane, pushed me to study, and understood when I have had to rearrange my schedule in order to keep the process going in a timely and progressive fashion.

Finally, I must give thanks to my wonderful husband, Shalom. He has taught me so much about Judaism and about life, and throughout this process, I have been able to turn to him for advice, laughter, and a caring heart. I am so blessed to have Shalom as my life-partner. Every day with him is a joy and a blessing.

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Introduction

Eliezer ben Hyrkanos is a farmer, but he is not a very good one. While his brothers are plowing arable land, Eliezer's plot is stony. His thoughts are elsewhere. Eliezer wants to study Torah. He goes to Jerusalem, learns with the great Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai, and becomes an extraordinary teacher of Torah. The story of Eliezer's life, an unlearned man turned great scholar in the second century CE, transformed by his experience in Jerusalem, is appended to the beginning of a midrashic compilation named for him, *Pirke de-Rebbe Eliezer* which expounds upon and creates midrashim based on narratives from the Tanakh.

It was in studying this text in a class taught by Dr. Norman Cohen that I decided to create this Thesis. I would investigate the role of Jerusalem in classical midrash, a broad branch of Rabbinic Literature with seemingly unending possibility, and try to discover exactly why and how this Holy City has been a place of reverence and transformation for people over the course of literally thousands of years. In my Thesis, I will attempt to shed some light on the complexities that make up Jerusalem using all relevant midrashim.

I spent my first year of Hebrew Union College studying on the Jerusalem campus. There is something very special about the city, as Yehuda Amichai once wrote, "The air over Jerusalem is saturated with prayers and dreams/ Like the air over industrial cities/ It is hard to breathe."[1] Jerusalem is a city where you can almost feel the weight of thousands of years of blood, toil, and tears. She is a beautiful city, full of parks and

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[1] Yehuda Amichai, "Ecology of Jerusalem," in *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai,* trans. Chana Bloch (Jerusalem: Ramah Israel Institution, 2001), 41.

promenades, bustling avenues, and quiet spots for contemplation and deep study. Rabbi Eliezer was transformed in this place, and I, too, was transformed.

This thesis therefore was born out of a desire to make sense of that transformation, to not only see what the city meant to the rabbis of old, but also to attempt to figure out the city's place in my own life. However, to try and gain a deeper sense of Jerusalem and its importance based on the huge corpus of literature surrounding the city, I needed some structure.

With the guidance of Dr. Norman Cohen, a long research process began. We decided the best place to begin would be with the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, using a concordance, I began to look at significant passages related to Jerusalem. After translating passages from Hebrew to English, I wrote a brief summary of my findings. Through this, I was able to begin to sense the huge amounts of both material and possibilities surrounding the topic, and I was also able to start isolating certain themes; namely those of destruction, praise, hope, and holiness.

The second stage in my research involved searching for midrashim which interpreted the biblical passages I had already translated and briefly analyzed. I did this by using the *Torah HaKethubah VeHaMessurah,* a biblical verse index covering the entire Tanakh, providing the researcher with the exact location of the interpretive material in subsequent literature and commentaries vis a vis each important verse.[2]

At the same time, I began to gather secondary reading material. While reading various books and articles, I noted additional sources, both primary and secondary, that I needed to look up.

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[2] Rabbi Aaron Hyman, *Torah HaKethubah VeHaMessurah* (Tel Aviv: Dvir Publishing Company, 1979).

At the end of this long process of gathering, the next stage of preliminary organizing began. I painstakingly went through every text, in Hebrew, English, and occasionally, in Aramaic. I would first translate, and then begin to organize texts by the commonalities they shared with one another, as well as by theme. Some of these included texts which shared similar or even parallel structural styles, thematic emphasis, key words, or overarching points of view.

It was at this point that I was able to begin focusing upon central questions and themes. I decided that the best way to organize the entire thesis would be to divide the midrashim on Jerusalem in term of a timeframes: the past, the present, and the future. This has proven both to be a blessing and a challenge; a blessing, because it provided me with a way to structure my Thesis, and a challenge, because the rabbinic concept of time was very different from our own, modern concept. Some texts could be seen through the lens of only one period of time, but a great many of them held relevance and implications for all of them. Nevertheless, I did organize them accordingly and am convinced this was a useful way to categorize the material.

After texts were divided into past, present, and future, I began to arrange the material in each of the chapters as well, using ideas from the secondary material, based around themes and sub-themes. We decided a first chapter on biblical analysis would serve as the foundation and starting point for the remainder of the Thesis.

Chapter One, therefore, is specifically focused on Jerusalem's portrayal in the Bible. It moves through books of the Bible in order of the canon, beginning with Genesis and ending with Lamentations. The first chapter which is almost exclusively focused on

the biblical material also underscores themes that will appear in the three subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two is an exploration of Jerusalem past. The questions I wanted to answer were: How was the city created according to the Rabbis? What is the meaning of Jerusalem's creation vis a vis its physicality? How does Jerusalem relate to the concept of the center of the world? This chapter addresses those questions by looking at a variety of texts for insight as to what the creation of the city meant to the Rabbis in their midrashim.

Chapter Three is an exploration into how the Rabbis perceive Jerusalem in the present. It addresses the meaning of the names of Moriah and Jerusalem in addition to other names bestowed on the city. It also examines concerns and transformations of people who live in the city, and biblical stories that are reset to take place within or near the city. Questions addressed in this chapter include: Why are Moriah and Jerusalem both given names of praise as well as negative names? How does living in Jerusalem add to or subtract from the quality of people's lives? How are the residents of Jerusalem influenced by living in the Holy City?

Chapter Four centers around rabbinic conceptions of the future city. Like the chapter on the past, this chapter will also begin by dealing with physical concerns: How will the city be expanded in the future? What will be added to it? It then moves into the relationship between heavenly and earthly Jerusalem: Are they two separate cities? Finally, the chapter ends by looking at rabbinic conceptions of renewal, hope, and redemption: What role will Jerusalem play in the redemption of the world?

Throughout my research, I became both excited and frustrated by the various answers to these questions provided in the texts analyzed. It seemed that for every text I found affirming one point of view, I would find a different text that would come to the complete opposite conclusion. I guess this is both the beauty and the difficulty of our textual tradition; it is almost never possible to truly state what "the Rabbis" as a collective whole believed, because each Rabbi in his midrash had his own opinion, and even that could change over time.

In spite of the plethora of ideas and viewpoints, I was hopeful of gaining overarching conclusions about Jerusalem described in the midrashim. The city, past, present, and future is incredibly important to the Rabbis, and they have the utmost concern, dedication, and love for the well-being of the city and its residents. Jerusalem for the Rabbis was not just some destination; a village or habitation like any other. Rather, the city, with all of its complexities, served as a mirror for their own lives and experiences. This Thesis will attempt to closely examine these midrashim and in so doing, will discover what the city meant to the rabbis and, potentially, what it can mean to us, present day students and lovers of Jerusalem. The Holy City, which so profoundly transformed Rabbi Eliezer, also transforms the person who is blessed to study so many texts about this awesome place. Please join me on my journey.

Chapter One:

The Symbolism of Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible

Introduction

Jerusalem is mentioned in the Bible more than six hundred and fifty times. All of these citations come in the sections known as *Nivi'im* (prophets) and *Ketuvim* (writings). It is surprising that there is no mention of the name Jerusalem in the Pentateuch itself, even though there are many verses dedicated to the promise of the land to our patriarchs. This first chapter will explore certain biblical verses which mention Jerusalem and other places or features which will eventually become associated with Jerusalem. This chapter will move through the Hebrew Bible's canon, beginning with the first mention of Mount Moriah and coming full circle where Moriah is associated with Jerusalem in Second Chronicles. Along the way, various verses will be used to demonstrate that the biblical authors had their own notions of the meaning of Jerusalem which will be expanded upon, debated, and altered throughout the ensuing chapters. Jerusalem in the Bible will serve as a base for how later authors and Rabbis will treat and deal with the city in their own commentaries and interpretations.

A. Moriah in the *Aqeda* Narrative

> And God said, "Take your son, your only one, who you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as an offering on one of the hills which I will say to you."[3]

This passage marks the first mention of Moriah in the Hebrew Bible. It comes at the beginning of the story known as the *aqeda* in the Book of Genesis. The verse begins with generalities, moves toward specificity in the center of the verse with the names of Isaac and Moriah, and then concludes again with generalities. What becomes clear upon

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[3] *Tanakh.* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1999.) Genesis 22:2. All translations throughout the Thesis are the author's unless otherwise noted.

further examination of this verse is that it is ambiguous; Moriah is not named as a mountain, but rather as a region, which presumably contains many hills. However, in relationship to Jerusalem and its geography, it becomes clear that there is debate over whether the city itself rests on top of one hill or includes many hills within it. This initial story would point toward Jerusalem containing many hills, if indeed, Jerusalem is Moriah. Moriah here is not mentioned as a city, and there are no geographical hints other than *eretz* (land) and *ehad he-harim* (one of the hills). Abraham is clearly told to take his son, Isaac, and offer him to God, but the ambiguity in the rest of this verse becomes an opportunity to create midrashim.

The episode of the *aqeda* continues, with Abraham on the verge of sacrificing Isaac until a heavenly being intervenes. Abraham then looks up, sees a ram caught by its horns in the thicket, and sacrifices the ram instead. After this, Abraham gives thanks to God, and provides a new name to the place:

> And Abraham called the name of the place "*Adonai yir'eh,*" (God will see) which is still said today: "On the mountain of Adonai, (God) will be seen."[4]

This verse already provides the reader with a midrash of sorts. Abraham renames the place in a strange manner, and the verse comments upon this renaming as if the ancient audience should know why and how this place was named. The renaming of Moriah is curious because in the episode, God speaks to Abraham at the beginning, but by the end, the closest Abraham comes to encountering God is through the heavenly messenger. Again, this issue becomes putty in the hands of the Rabbis, who will write countless midrashim on the name Moriah and its renaming by Abraham of *Adonai yir'eh.*

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[4] Genesis 22:14.

This episode brings Abraham and Isaac to Moriah, but then Moriah fades into the background and is only revived later in the Bible where it is directly connected to Jerusalem in the following, curt statement:

> And Solomon began to build the House of God in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah where God appeared to David, his father, where David had prepared the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite.[5]

Here, the House of God is associated with Moriah which is now clearly considered within the bounds of the city of Jerusalem. Moriah is a specific hill, *har ha-Moriah,* whereas in Genesis it is referred to as the 'land of Moriah.' Additionally, there is another connection between Genesis and Chronicles. In Genesis, Abraham renames the mountain, *Adonai Yir'eh,* God will see. In this verse, the reader is told that Moriah is the place where God appeared (*nir'ah*) to David. The tense of the verb is different, but the root and meaning are the same. Perhaps then Abraham's naming of the place was a narrative anticipation of the monarchy and David's meeting with God at that place. This is the only instance in the Bible where Moriah is directly connected to Jerusalem, and later midrashists will use this verse as a proof text to setting midrashim about the *akeda* in the city of Jerusalem rather than strictly on the mountain.

B. Conquering the City in the Books of Joshua and Second Samuel

The earliest mention of Jerusalem's full name in the Hebrew Bible can be found in the Book of Joshua where the text explains the conquering of the city by Joshua and his army. It is first mentioned as a seemingly small detail where the verse pertains to the capture of other cities:

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[5] 2 Chronicles 3:1.

> When King Adonitzedek of Jerusalem learned that Joshua had captured Ai and proscribed it, treating Ai and its king as he had treated Jericho and its king, and that moreover, the people of Gibeon had come to terms with Israel and remained among them, he was very frightened.[6]

Here, Jerusalem is mentioned as the residence of a named king. He has been informed about what happened to Ai; Joshua and all the Israelites had captured it, like Jericho. All the residents, save for Rahab and her family in Jericho, had been slaughtered, including presumably the kings. However, the king also heard what happened to the residents of Gibeon. Chapter Nine explains how they lie, saying they are from far away and swear allegiance to Adonai . Joshua discovers this fib, but because of a pact that had been created between the king and his armies, he cannot kill them. Instead, they become water-bearers for the Israelites. King Adonitzedek knows his options. He and the residents of Jerusalem can either fight and face certain death, or can allow Joshua to enter the city peacefully and merely become their slaves. Verse three again mentions that Adonitzedek is king of Jerusalem, but by verse five, he has become one of the anonymous five Ammorite kings. Their towns are named and Jerusalem is named first among them. The kings attack the Israelites at Gibeon and are defeated. That is the last time Adonitzedek is mentioned.

In this warlike episode, it is interesting that Adonitzedek is mentioned as King of Jerusalem. There may be a linguistic link between him, and Melchitzedek who, in Genesis Chapter Fourteen, is named the king of Salem. Salem clearly could be the precursor to Jerusalem, and Melchitzedek could be an ancestor of Adonitzedek. However, in the long time between Abraham and Joshua, it is clear that Adonitzedek has a very different reaction to hearing about a foreign troupe about to attack than did

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[6] Joshua 10:1-2, New JPS translation.

Melchitzedek who came out to Abraham bearing peace gifts of bread and wine.[7] In either case, later Midrash will comment on the relationship between the city and *tzedek,* whether the *tzedek* of its ruler or the *tzedek* of its inhabitants in general.[8] However, this particular Adonitzedek, probably due to his notorious title as a frightened king who later attacks the Israelites and loses, fades from the midrashic interpretation surrounding Jerusalem.

Another mention of Jerusalem in Joshua identifies the city as situated within the tribe of Benjamin. This mention of the city is again part of a geographical list, the way Jerusalem appeared before in Joshua Chapter One as one of many cities which will be conquered by Joshua and his army:

> And Tzela, Elef and the Jebusite—(it) is Jerusalem, Givat, K'riat, fourteen towns and their villages, this is the portion of Benjamin by their families.[9]

This last verse of Chapter Eighteen identifies "the Jebusite town" as being Jerusalem. The reader learns that this town and the others mentioned are in the tribe of Benjamin's territory. Chapter Eighteen describes Joshua sending out three men from each tribe to spy upon the conquered Land of Israel and describe it. After the men have finished, Joshua will cast lots to give various tribes the land. The description of the Benjaminites is mentioned first, and it is a lengthy description regarding the borders of their tribe's land. At the end, Jerusalem is described just as one of the fourteen towns situated within their borders. Again, Jerusalem is mentioned simply as part of a list, with no special characteristics given other then it is known also as the Jebusite town. The Hebrew used in the text is *ha-Yevusi,* and the *yud* at the end of the word most likely means Jebusite, as

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[7] Genesis 14:18.
[8] See Chapter 4, p. 64.
[9] Joshua 18:28.

in people and not city. However, there is an ambiguity in the text: is Jerusalem a city identified with Jebusites? Or is it simply another name for the town of Jebes? Here, Jerusalem, described as being within the territory of the tribe of Benjamin, does not maintain any special status. This will change in later texts.

Second Samuel describes the Davidic Monarchy. Chief among its descriptions of King David, both the highs and lows of his life, is his conquering of Jerusalem and the relocation of his capitol from Hebron to Jerusalem.

> David was thirty years old during his reign (when he became king) and for forty years he reigned. In Hebron he was the king of Judah for seven years and six months and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty three years over all of Israel and Judah. The king and his men went to Jerusalem to the Jebusites the dwellers of the land. And they said to David, "Do not come here because the blind and the lame will make you go back saying, "Do not come here, David." And David captured the fortress of Zion which is the City of David. And David said on that day, "All shall strike the Jebusites and approach the water-channel. The lame and the blind are the haters of David. That is why they say the blind and lame don't come to the House." And David resided in the fortress and called it the City of David and David built around it from the Milo toward the house. And David was strengthened, and Adonai the God of Hosts was with him.[10]

These verses describe in brief David's conquering of Jerusalem. First, the emphasis is on David's age, then the text shifts to the length of his various reigns. However, a question which the text does not answer is why David wished to move the monarchy from Hebron to Jerusalem? The Biblical text does not give insight into David's decision, but one possibility, solidified by the assertion in Joshua that Jerusalem was situated in the tribe of Benjamin's territory, is that by David conquering Jerusalem, he became not only the ruler of Judah, but also the ruler of Benjamin or the House of Israel in general. Moving from Hebron to Jerusalem gave the king and the monarchy more power. This text asserts that notion, stating that David now reigned "over all of Israel and Judah."

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[10] 2 Samuel 4:4-10.

In addition to this text describing David's conquering of Jerusalem, there seems to be another, almost midrashic factor, at play here. This verse is concerned with the blind and the lame, and it seems to be an etiological story for why blind and lame people were absent or even prohibited from Jerusalem. It is they who specifically tell David not to come to Jerusalem. This infuriates the King and when he comes, he makes a proclamation that the blind and lame, "haters of David," may not come into his house. They made a statement demonizing him and, in turn, when he gains power, he forbids them entry into his new capitol city.

Finally, these verses do also emphasize David's gaining of power and strength with the conquering of Jerusalem. First, David takes the fortress of Zion and gives it his own name and then he builds around it, creating some sort of settlement between the fortress and his own dwelling. In verse ten, the word *gadol* is used to describe David's power. With the conquering of the city, David has become greater in power. God does not play an enormous part in these verses, but interestingly, the only mention of God describes God as *Adonai Elohai Tziva'ot*, the 'God of Hosts," which is also the most militaristic terminology for God.

Joshua begins the process of conquering the city, invoking fear in the local leaders. However, it is David who makes Jerusalem the capitol city of both kingdoms and it is during his time that the king and the city gain in power and stature. The conquering of the city and militaristic views of it in general are fleshed out in later midrashim as later authors look for different explanations as to how the city came to be conquered.

C. King Solomon and Jerusalem

King Solomon, the son of David, is the king who was able to build the First Temple. The Bible reasons that he is given this holy task because there is not blood on his hands like David. Solomon is rather a peacemaker, and both wisdom and peace are often attributed to him. In First Kings, Chapter Three, King Solomon asks for wisdom from God, that he may rule justly and fairly. The following verses describe this exchange between King Solomon and God:

> And it was good in the eyes of Adonai because Solomon asked for this. And God said to him, "Because you asked for this, and you did not ask for long life, and you did not ask for riches and you did not ask for the life of your enemies. Rather, you asked for understanding to hear law. Therefore I have given you a wise heart and understanding. There was none like you before and after you there will not arise any person like you. And although you did not ask, I will give you riches and honor of which there has not been. If you walk in my ways to keep my laws and *mitzvot* as David your father did, then I will lengthen your days." And Solomon awoke and it was a dream. He came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of Adonai and offered sacrifices and made a feast for all of his servants.[11]

This episode comes soon after David dies and Solomon is made king. He marries an Egyptian, the daughter of the Pharaoh, moves into the palace and constructs the walls of Jerusalem. However, in a dream, Solomon finds himself overwhelmed. He does not believe that he can dispense justice to all of his subjects. God asks him what he would like and he asks for wisdom and knowledge. God is pleased with this and emphasizes twice that God is happy that Solomon did not ask for more "selfish" things, like riches, or honor, or long life. However, God does tell Solomon in this dream that because of what he has asked for, God will grant him long life.

Then in verse fifteen, the text reminds us that this was a dream that Solomon had as he was participating in sacrificial rituals in Gibeon. Immediately following the

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[11] 1 Kings 3:10-15.

information that this was all a dream, Solomon goes to Jerusalem, stands before the ark and thanks God and also makes a feast for all of his servants.

The language here emphasizes that a covenant has just been made between God and God's new king. Solomon desires to rule with justice and wisdom. God appreciates this and as a reward, decides to grant Solomon the monarchy for a long time. Solomon then goes to Jerusalem, the place that his father conquered and made a capitol, in order to stand before the "ark of the covenant of Adonai," sealing the pact through the act of animal sacrifice in Jerusalem. He travels from Gibeon to Jerusalem. Even though the sacrifice has been made in Gibeon, Solomon understands the importance of traveling to Jerusalem to enact this important pact. This text also serves as a precursor to many midrashim because there exists an emphasis on physical descriptions in relationship to Jerusalem. Not only does Solomon come (*yavo*) to Jerusalem, he stands (*omeid)* before the ark. There is something holy about altering one's physical status that the text seems to emphasize through the very simple word of "standing."

D. Four Isaiah Texts on Jerusalem

The Book of Isaiah makes multiple mentions of Jerusalem. The prophet mentions the city as an opportunity to associate it with praise and shame, denigration and redemption. Many of Isaiah's verses regarding the city become proof texts throughout Second Temple and Midrashic literature. These following four texts are the most common which are used by later authors. They demonstrate the prophet's ease at invoking the name of Jerusalem to make a greater point, whatever his point may be.

The first text to be examined comes from Isaiah Chapter Twenty-two. In this prose passage, the prophet offers a prophecy in which the ruler, like Solomon and David before him, will be given strength and authority to govern the residents of the city.

> And it will be on that day and I will call my servant Elyakim, son of Chilkiyahu. And I will dress him with your robe and your girdle and I will strengthen him and your authority I will give to him. He will be a father to the dwellers of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.[12]

In summary, Elyakim will be the successor to Shebna, the current steward of the palace. God has become angry at the people and declared that God is going to ruin the city. Not only that, but God has threatened to literally turn the order of things upside down and instill a new order and ruler, with Elyakim at the helm. After this, God expects there to be a period of chaos and instability in which God will rectify it by strengthening the new ruler, installing him as a "father to the dwellers of Jerusalem."

The city here is described as a place that is constantly undergoing transition and even violent change. The prophet's description, although it may be in the future tense, is most likely a reflection on what has already happened at least once in the city. The prophet sees the injustice and the chaos within the city walls and feels the need to both remind residents that this will happen again and that ultimately, God is in charge and does have some sort of plan even amidst the chaos. This notion of God having great plans for the city makes its way into many midrashim which attempt to make sense of the city's many different upheavals.

A second text from Isaiah that is utilized in later midrashim describes Jerusalem in a different manner. Here, the prophet is trying to speak with words of comfort, that Jerusalem will rise again from the ashes and again take her place of prominence among the nations of the world:

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[12] Isaiah 22:20-21.

> Arise arise!/ Get up Jerusalem/ which drank from the hand of Adonai/ the cup of his anger/ the quivering goblet/ you drank to the dregs.[13]

This particular verse is complicated. Clearly, God is angry and as a result, Jerusalem has suffered through drinking from the cup of God's wrath. However, the overall message of this pronouncement is comfort, and Jerusalem's redemption is the idea that most often is drawn from midrashic literature. The idea of Jerusalem rising out of her ruins like a woman who has been wronged specifically finds its way into the midrash.[14] Jerusalem here is personified as a woman, drinking from the hand of God, and the language around Jerusalem is feminine. Like other passages regarding Jerusalem, the spatial language becomes important, urging Jerusalem to rise up from her denigrated state. As King Solomon stood in front of the ark after his wonderful dream, Jerusalem, too, is told by the prophet to stand back on her feet; the city, as it will later, takes on physical, particularly human characteristics.

Another similar passage to the one above is located in the next chapter of the Book of Isaiah. Yet, this text is much more positive then the previous one and although it begins the same, it expands and builds upon on the previous concepts:

> Awake awake!/ Dress in your strength, Zion/ Dress in the clothing of your splendor/ Jerusalem the Holy City/ For no more will they come to you again/ uncircumcised and impure. Arise from the dust, rise/ sit Jerusalem/ Open the bonds from your neck/ captive daughter of Zion[15]

Here, as in Isaiah Chapter Fifty-one, Jerusalem is personified and told to garb herself in robes of splendor. There is also an allusion to the Second Samuel text describing David's conquering of the city. Just as King David would not let the lame or blind into the city, now it is the uncircimsized and impure who cannot come in. The difference between the

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[13] Isaiah 51:17.
[14] See Chapter 4, p. 104.
[15] Isaiah 52:1-2.

two texts is that blindness and lameness cannot be helped. People can always become circumcised or, except in certain cases, purify themselves. Isaiah's vision of the city here seems to be that she should be a place of purity where every person follows the particular laws set out in Torah and which the prophets demanded must be observed. Another interesting point in the text is that Jerusalem is directly referred to here as, *ir ha-kodesh,* the Holy City. The descriptions of David's conquering and Solomon's building the city certainly allude to Jerusalem being a special and unique place, but this text makes it abundantly clear that Jerusalem carries with it a status seemingly unlike any other city in the world.

In verse two, there is once again a play on spatial language, with Jerusalem being told to arise and then sit. It seems that the 'rising up' represents a rising from the ashes, destruction, and captivity. The 'sitting' refers to one who sits on a throne to rule anew in peace. Thus, the rising here would represent uprising and upheaval and rebuilding, and the sitting could represent calm, peace, and rule of law to follow. All of these ideas also become expanded upon throughout the midrashim.

A final Isaiah text to be examined comes toward the end of the book, in Chapter Sixty-two. Here, three verses make reference to Jerusalem as a place of righteousness, honor, and glory, a trio of descriptions that will be applied to Jerusalem especially in an eschatological sense:[16]

> For the sake of Zion I will not be quiet/ And for the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet/ Until her victory comes out with her righteousness/ And her salvation will burn like a torch. And the nations will see your righteousness/ And all the kings your honor/ And (he) will call you a new name/ Which the mouth of Adonai will direct. And you will be a crown of glory/ By the hand of Adonai/ And a royal diadem/ In the palm of your God.[17]

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[16] See Chapter 4, p. 103.
[17] Isaiah 62:1-3.

This poetic phrase begins with a first person pronouncement that the prophet will continue to speak out. It equates Zion with Jerusalem, making them essentially interchangeable terms. The language, especially in verse one, remains militaristic with the usage of torch, victory, and salvation.

This entire passage, coming towards the end of the Book of Isaiah, remains positive and predicts Jerusalem's restoration. The word *tzedakah* is used twice, suggesting that it is just that which will serve as a light to the other nations and kings of the world. This idea, that Jerusalem is a place of righteousness, is a part of Jerusalem's essential nature and naming, and an allusion to the eventual creation of the celestial city.[18] It is also clear to the reader here that this restoration of Jerusalem will not happen in a vacuum. God will direct the giving of the new name, and in verse three, Jerusalem is twice referred to as fitting into the hand of God. It is almost as if God will be the one to take God's hand and place the crown onto Jerusalem's head after her victory has taken place.

The Book of Isaiah personifies Jerusalem. It includes verses in which the city will receive a new name, will wear a crown of glory, and will arise from the ashes. The city described mostly in strategic military terms in Joshua and Second Samuel, is finally personified in the Book of Isaiah. This provides opportunities for the midrashists, who love to describe the city in terms of her personality. In doing so, they are able to richly expand upon what the city means to them and what it should mean to the entire world.

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[18] See Chapter 3, p. 64, and Chapter 4, p. 103.

E. Jerusalem in the Psalms

Jerusalem, personified in Isaiah, becomes further personified and described in the Book of Psalms, which often demonstrate praise for, or solidarity with, Jerusalem. This section will examine three different passages from the Book of Psalms that demonstrate various views of the city, all of which become expanded upon in later literature.

Psalm One Hundred-twenty two is part of the "Songs of Ascent" category of psalms. These psalms are likely sub-titled in that manner because it is very possible that pilgrims would sing or chant psalms as they ascended the steps of the Temple Mount to make sacrifices during pilgrimages. Psalm One Hundred-twenty two in particular shows a great love for and awe toward Jerusalem.

> A song of ascent by David: I was happy when they said to me/ To the house of Adonai we will go. Our feet were standing in your gates, Jerusalem. Jerusalem rebuilt like a city where we gathered together in her. There, the tribes went up/ the tribes of Yahweh/ An ordinance for Israel/ to give thanks to the name of God. For there sat the thrones of judgment/ thrones of the House of David. Ask for the peace of Jerusalem/ May your lovers rest tranquilly. May there be peace in your ramparts/ peace in your castles. For the sake of my brother and my friend/ I will speak of peace for you. For the sake of the House of Adonai, our God, I will ask for your good.[19]

This psalm seems to be split into two parts. Verses one to five seem to refer to the past and verses six through nine to the present. Verses one to five explain the glorious history of Jerusalem, where tribes would "go up" to Jerusalem to thank God by sacrificing in the Temple. It is not so much a personification of Jerusalem as it is a description of the physical space. This is embodied by the reference to the "feet standing in your gates." The gates would often serve as the transition point between the wilderness of the outside and the urbanity inside the gates. "Standing inside the gates" seems almost wistful, as if

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[19] Psalm 122.

the author is remembering the first time he went through the gates, reminiscing over the feelings he used to have as he walked inside. It is almost as if the image of the gates, and the past tense verbs used in the first five verses, indicate that this time of glory is over. Whereas people from different tribes used to gather together in Jerusalem, this is no longer the case.

The tense switches in verse six. Here the author does not describe Jerusalem and what used to happen there. Rather, he offers a prayer for peace. Indeed, in the last four verses, the word "peace" is found an astonishing four times! Jerusalem is portrayed as a physical place, with courtyards and ramparts, but there is still a deep longing for a return to a time of peace. Peace, and the peace of the city become the prominent element of many different midrashim. Additionally, there is also a striking parallelism in verses eight and nine. They both begin with, "for the sake of" and they both end with a first person request; first for peace and then for goodness. Peace and goodness become two of the major aspirations for the city throughout Rabbinic literature.

A second psalm in the "Song of Ascents" category, Psalm One Hundred-twenty five, likewise mentions Jerusalem. This time, however, only two verses of the text speak directly of the city, and the thrust of the Psalm is greater than the city itself. The opening two verses offer a vision of the city which is different from the one that was just described:

> A song of ascents. The ones who trust in Adonai/ Are like the hill of Zion/ They don't move/ Forever they sit. Jerusalem—Hills surround her/ And God surrounds God's people/ From now until forever.[20]

These two verses portray those who trust in God and Jerusalem as worthy of Divine protection. The verses utilize the words *le'olam,* and *ad olam* to emphasize the eternity

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[20] Psalm 125:1-2.

of God's protection. Those who trust in Adonai are like the hill of Zion, or like the house of God, the Temple itself. Just like God, these things will exist forever and ever. The imagery of the second verse is truly magnificent. Just as Jerusalem is pictured as being surrounded by many hills, which also serves as a poetic parallel to the mentioning of the hill of Zion in the first verse, so, too, God surrounds and protects God's people. Both the city and its residents are guaranteed physical and spiritual protection. Jerusalem here is not so much wistfully remembered, but rather is seen as a symbol for the hope of eternal protection of God toward God's people and God's holy city.

Psalm One Hundred Thirty-seven provides a different view of Jerusalem all together. This psalm is described from the viewpoint of a people who have been exiled from their homeland and have no access to Jerusalem and the Temple. It is a psalm filled with painful memories as well as hope for a time when the people will once again be able to return to the city. This particular text appears in many traditions describing the destruction of the city, and it is often associated with the Book of Lamentations.

> By the rivers of Babylon/ There we sat/ and we also cried/ In our remembrance of Zion. On the poplars in her midst/ We hung up our harps. For there, our captors asked for our words of song/ our tormentors for happiness/ "Sing us a song of Zion." How can we sing our song of Adonai/ in the land of a stranger? If I forget you Jerusalem/ My right hand will be forgotten. My tongue will stick to my palate/ If I will not remember you/ If I will not elevate Jerusalem/ above my happiest. Remember Adonai the sons of Edom/ the day of Jerusalem/ Those who said, "Make her naked, make her naked,"/ to her foundation. Daughter of Babylon, destroyer./ Happy (is he) who pays you back/ how you have dealt with us. Happy is he who grasps and shatters your babies/ on the rock.[21]

This psalm is set in a foreign land with a deep sadness as the people remember Jerusalem. There is a connection between the tears of the captors and the people who are sitting by the waters of Babylon. Physicality, too, plays a role in this passage. The people are

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[21] Psalm 137.

sitting, but not in the manner one would sit upon a throne and rule. Rather, they are sitting in mourning, sadness, and defeat.

The people also have put away their musical instruments so often used in the psalms as tools for praising God. Their captors want them to sing, but they are most likely mocking the Israelites who refuse their request. They do not want to give any satisfaction to their captors. Indeed, in verse four, it becomes abundantly clear that the people have no desire, and do not even know how to sing their songs, play their instruments, be joyful, or praise God in the situation in which they find themselves.

Verse five marks a shift in the psalm. Jerusalem is equated with the right hand, which probably is understood as the most important part of the body. The right hand traditionally is the dominant hand, and also in a spiritual sense, often the "righteous" are portrayed as sitting at the right hand of God. The author vows that if he forgets about Jerusalem, it will be like he is losing himself, and he will have a very difficult, if not impossible time functioning. Jerusalem again is tied physically to the human body.

This sentiment continues into verse six where again certain words such as "tongue" and "happiest" refer back to the earlier verses about song and rejoicing. If Jerusalem is forgotten and if the Israelites remain in this situation, they will no longer even have the basic ability to sing songs.

Again, there is a shift in the psalm in verse seven. The author's feelings seem to have moved from sadness and despair to anger and revenge. The author recalls how the conquerors stripped Jerusalem, destroyed her and abused her. Then, the final verses invoke the horror that the people who call for revenge, or even kill babies, will be

praised. It is unclear whether the revenge here seems inhumane or irrational, but it is possible that this is simply rhetoric rather than a real call to dash babies upon rocks

These psalms demonstrate the people's extreme longing for Jerusalem and the special, emotional place Jerusalem holds in their hearts. Even in the darkest of times when they are crying and weeping, they know they must keep alive the memory of Jerusalem or their lives will have no purpose. Jerusalem in the Book of Psalms is a place desired and loved, and this theme appears in many different later texts regarding Jerusalem.

F. Jerusalem's Destruction in Lamentations

The Book of Lamentations is an account of the destruction of the First Temple and indeed of the entire city by the Assyrian army in the year 586 BCE. The entire book is focused on the destruction of the city. This section will only examine the first six verses of the book to suggest a few thoughts about how destruction is portrayed in the Bible and then how that portrayal gets carried over into Second Temple and midrashic literature.

> Woe!/ The city sits alone/ there (used to be) many people/ she was like a widow/ there (used to be) many among the nations/(she) was like a slave-labor. She verily cries in the night/ And her tears are on her cheek/ Nobody gives her comfort/ Of all her lovers/ All her companions have betrayed her/ they became her enemies. Judah has been exiled/ From poverty and from hard work/ She sits among the nations/ She cannot find rest/ All of her pursuers overtook her/ Between the narrows. Zion's ways are in mourning/ With nobody coming for the festivals/ All of her gates are desolate/ Her priests sigh/ her young girls are unhappy/ And she is bitter onto herself. Her enemies are now the heads/ Her enemies are content/ Because Adonai has afflicted her/ On account of her many sins/ Her babies went into captivity/ Before the enemy. And left from the daughter of Zion/ all her glory/ Her ministers were like rams/ They did not find pasture/ And they walked without strength/ Before the pursuer.[22]

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[22] Lamentations 1:1-6.

Jerusalem itself is not mentioned in these verses, but the terms "the city" and "Zion" make it pretty clear this is about the destruction of Jerusalem. Again, this passage is concerned with physicality. The word "sits" occurs twice in this passage in verses one and three. Immediately, the reader understands that Jerusalem is isolated. The image here is akin to a desolate young woman, crying and huddled, sitting alone on the floor. This image is reinforced at the end of verse four, where the text makes it even clearer that she is completely inconsolable, and the bitterness and sadness is perhaps even self-inflicted. In the second use of the term *yoshev*, "sits," Jerusalem is sitting among the nations. If Jerusalem is supposed to be "above" the other nations, this is no longer true. With her destruction, she has been brought low and is now on the same level as the others. This concept of Jerusalem's height, status, or lack thereof which is drawn out in midrashic literature, in this passage emphasizes the city's downtroddeness.

Another interesting idea in this passage is that God is the one blamed for the destruction mentioned in the fifth verse. Her enemies are certainly happy about what has happened, but they are not directly blamed for the destruction. It is true that they have overtaken Jerusalem, and the babies have been sent into captivity, but the author of this passage seems careful not to place direct responsibility on the nations.

The imagery here of Jerusalem and her residents is also striking. The priests, young maidens, and ministers are mentioned. However, here all of their portrayals are negative. The priests are sighing rather than performing their priestly duties, the young maidens are upset, and the ministers/leaders are referred to as rams. The ram is a powerful animal and in other texts, the ram is a symbol of agility and strength. However here, the ram is tired and is not able to find a safe haven. The ram has no strength left

which makes capturing it relatively simple for the pursuer. In addition, Jerusalem seems to be completely barren. There are no people entering or leaving the gates, and the pilgrimages to the Temple have been interrupted.

The narrative tone here seems to be utterly hopeless. It is not clear whether or not the author witnessed the actual destruction, but it seems that he has clearly been affected by what has happened. Lamentations, the story of the destruction of the city, mourns over the city having lost the glory that is so richly described in the Prophets and in the Psalms. All seems hopeless, and it is not until the very end of the Book of Lamentations that some hope is offered.

Conclusion

Jerusalem is a complicated place, and the Bible underscores many different views. The first mentions of the city focus on it being attacked and conquered. It takes on a special status first with David, then with Solomon, and finally is understood as a place of holiness in the Prophets and in Psalms. It is mourned over in Lamentations, as that holy city which has been lost. The myriad of ideas regarding Jerusalem sets up a diverse body of literature which will further examine and expand upon these ideas, sometimes accepting them as described in the Bible, sometimes changing them into something all together new. The next three chapters will look at Jerusalem through the prism of later literature, but it is impossible to begin to understand the characterization of the city in that literature without seeing its underpinnings in the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter Two:

Jerusalem Past: On Navels and Mountains

Introduction

Jerusalem was considered to be that place at the earth's core from which the entire world was created. She is the city at the very center of the earth. This concept of Jerusalem's singular importance through its geographical centrality stems from the interpretation of a particular biblical verse, developing through the Second Temple era and into Rabbinic Literature. Along the way, the concept of Jerusalem as center of the world is interpreted and reinterpreted in a pleothora of ways using different allusions, metaphors, and images. Each text that will be analyzed in this chapter demonstrates a fascination and deeply rooted sense of belief that this place was created in a uniquely divine manner. Specifically, this chapter will focus on two major themes that one encounters in a close examination of Jerusalem's origins in biblical, post-biblical and Rabbinic Literature. The first half of this chapter will focus on Jerusalem as the "navel" of the world, and the second half will look at Jerusalem's creation vis a vis the three holy mountains of Moriah, Sinai, and Zion. By highlighting these two concepts and showing their developments chronologically and thematically, this chapter will demonstrate that Jerusalem's very origins designate it as a city with a special status and unique qualities that set it apart from all other places in the world.

A. Jerusalem at the Center: The Navel of the Earth

The most prominent theme that emerges regarding Jerusalem's physical creation is that this city was created at the center of the earth. The image most commonly used to describe this centrality is that of a navel. The Hebrew word used for "navel" is the word *tibbur*. This word appears twice in the Bible and then many times thereafter. To trace

the development of the concept of Jerusalem as center of the world, one needs to trace the word *tibbur* from its first mentions in the Bible and beyond.

1. Early Conceptions of Jerusalem and the Center

The word *tibbur* only occurs twice in the Bible, and only once does it apply to Jerusalem. The first usage of *tibbur* is found in Judges. However, here the text does not refer to Jerusalem. "Gaal spoke up again, "Look, an army is marching down from *Tibbur-Erez,* and another column is coming from the direction of *Elon-me'onenim.*"[23] The usage of *tibbur* in this verse is a geographical description. A battle is raging and an army is descending down a hill. It is clear from the context of the verse that this battle is taking place in the northern part of the Land of Israel, and not any place near the center where Jerusalem is located.

The second mention of *tibbur* is the more important one and the one that gets used as a proof text most frequently throughout Rabbinic Literature. It occurs in the Book of Ezekiel: "To turn you against repopulated wastes, and against a people gathered from among the nations, acquiring livestock and possessions, living at the center of the earth."[24] Chapter Thirty-seven of Ezekiel is what is commonly referred to as the "Dry Bones Prophecy," where the Prophet reassures the people that they will be resurrected and returned to the Land of Israel. The following chapter serves as a warning to the people that after they have returned to their land, they will still be in danger. The people living in cities, specifically living on *tibbur ha'aretz* (the navel of the land), need to protect themselves from enemy attack. In later midrashim, *tibbur haaretz* becomes

[23] Judges 9:37, New JPS translation.
[24] Ezekiel 38:12, New JPS translation.

linked to Jerusalem as the city located at the center of the earth. The Judges text alludes to a group of people descending from a hill, but the Ezekiel text describes a people actually dwelling in the center of the world, on the navel of the land.

The concept of Jerusalem as the navel of the earth is utilized in texts dating from the Second Temple Period. Josephus acknowledges this phenomenon. He writes in regards to Jerusalem that, "Some have, with sagacity enough, called that city the navel of the country."[25] Thus, Josephus is familiar with the accounts of Jerusalem as navel of the earth. Here, Jerusalem is limited to be the navel of the country and not the navel of the entire world. Nor does this text mention explicitly Jerusalem's centrality. However, this seemingly small comment about Jerusalem's geographical situation demonstrates that by the time of the Second Temple, Jerusalem's position as navel has begun to develop.

A contemporaneous text to Josephus, that of the Book of Jubilees, is the first to explicitly mention Jerusalem as having been created at the center and subsequently resting upon the navel of the entire earth, linking center to navel. The text reads, "And Mt. Sinai (was) in the midst of the desert and Mt. Zion (was) in the midst of the *navel* of the earth."[26] The context of this verse is that the sons of Noah are being assigned various portions of the earth. Shem gains the territory of which Jerusalem is a part. This territory is the holiest of all the territory, as it includes the Garden of Eden, Mount Sinai, and Mount Zion within its territory. However, as Phillip S. Alexander observes, "The phrase 'center of the navel of the earth' seems curiously tautological and we might suspect that 'navel' has been added secondarily, perhaps in the Greek. Why not simply say, "center

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[25] Flavius Josephus, "The Wars of the Jews" in *The Life and Works of Josephus,* trans. and ed. William Whiston (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 714.
[26] "The Book of Jubilees" in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English,* ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 8:19.

of earth" matching "center of the desert?"[27] Alexander believes that the phrase "navel of the center of the earth" is redundant. According to him, the author's intent is unclear. Yet, perhaps the Jubilees author was not being redundant but instead bringing together two ideas that had become common; Jerusalem situated at the center and the other, Jerusalem as the navel, combining them into one seemingly coherent statement to suggest that the navel of the earth IS the center of the earth and this is Jerusalem. This makes sense, especially considering that Josephus alludes to Jerusalem's location as centrally located in the territory of Judah and explicitly writes of Jerusalem as navel.

There is also the possibility that the concept of Jerusalem as the navel of the earth was not entirely engrained in the Second Temple period. Three other texts, First Enoch, the Letter of Aristeas, and the Psalms of Solomon, do mention Jerusalem as being central, but not as navel. In First Enoch, the author describes his journey into Jerusalem as follows: "And from there I went into the center of the earth and saw a blessed place, shaded with branches which live and bloom from a tree that was cut. And there I saw a holy mountain."[28] Enoch has gone into the center of the earth and there is a mountain there but there is no mention of navel. Likewise in the Letter of Aristeas, Jerusalem is located in the center of the land on a high and exalted mountain, but again the notion of the navel is absent from the text.[29] The Psalms of Solomon encourages the city to, "Stand on a high place, Jerusalem, and look at your children from the east and the west assembled together by the Lord. From the north they come in the joy of their God. From

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[27] Philip S. Alexander, "Jerusalem as the *Omphalos* of the World: On the History of a Geographical Concept," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,* ed. Lee I. Levine (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1999), 105.

[28] 1 Enoch 26:1, R. H Charles edition.

[29] Letter of Aristeas 84, R. H. Charles edition.

far distant islands God has assembled them."[30] So here, navel is not mentioned and even "center" is not explicitly stated. What is clear is that by mentioning people coming to Jerusalem from three of the four cardinal directions, the author is implying Jerusalem's centrality on top of a mountain.

Jubilees serves as the unique Second Temple era text which combines the concepts of center and navel, while the other Second Temple era texts, apart from Josephus, mention Jerusalem as center, but they do not mention Jerusalem as navel. It can be assumed that the ideas of centrality and navel are starting to come into focus, but are not yet completely central to the literature. It will take the minds of the Rabbis to take these concepts and further develop and creatively interpret them.

2. The Navel in Midrashim

The concept of Jerusalem as a navel makes its way into many midrashim. What sets these texts apart from those of the Second Temple period is the multiplicity of ways in which the navel is described. Three major themes involving the navel emerge. The first theme is anthropomorphic: just as a human being has a navel, so, too, does the world. The second theme is that of "foundation:" the navel of the world is in Jerusalem because this is also the location of the *'even shettiyah,* best translated as "the foundation stone of the entire world." The third is of the navel as Torah, which is life-giving; the navel of the world is in Jerusalem because Jerusalem is the home of the Torah which

[30] Psalms of Solomon 11:2-3, R. H. Charles edition.

gives life to humanity.[31] All of these texts demonstrate the clear association in the Rabbinic mind of Jerusalem as the navel of the world, as a place of utmost importance.

An early text to compare man's anatomy with the land's anatomy is Ecclesiastes Rabbah. This particular text is notable for its brevity and its simple, list-like comparisons. There is no mistaking the author's intent here; whatever a man possesses, so, too, does the land.

> Man has hands and the land has hands, as it is written, "And the land behold! It has wide hands."(Gen 34:21) Man has thighs and the land has thighs, as it is written, "I will gather them from the thighs of the land" (Jer 31:8) Man has a navel and the land has a navel, as it is written, "They who dwell on the navel of the land."(Ezek 38:12)[32]

The comparison is clear here and it moves in an interesting manner. The first text used compares a man's hands to those of the land. Hands are considered an extremity of the human body and along with feet, they are the body part which is located farthest away from the center of the body. Next comes the comparison of thighs, which are located closer to the center of the body and finally the navel which is more or less in the center of the body. The text here moves spatially from outer to inner, a pattern which will be followed throughout comparisons to Jerusalem's position at the center of the earth.

The Ecclesiastes Rabbah text has a close parallel in Midrash Tanhuma Buber.[33] The difference, however, is that the Tanhuma text compares the land to a woman. The "feminization" of this comparison adds some unique elements that would be impossible to use in the comparison of a man to the land. The Tanhuma text moves from both woman and land having a mouth and then, like in the Ecclesiastes Rabbah text, states that both woman and land have hands, using the same proof text from Genesis Chapter

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[31] Isaiah 2:2-3.
[32] Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:1
[33] Midrash Tanhuma Buber to *Va'erah* 18. For an additional parallel, see *Pitron Torah* to *V'Ethanan*, p. 244.

Thirty-four. The thigh comparison between man and land is missing here, and the navel comparison, nearly identical to the Ecclesiastes Rabbah text, follows directly after the verse about hands. What comes next is fascinating. The text reads,

> Just as a woman swells and gives birth, so, too, does the land as it is written, "Can a land pass through travail in a single day? Or is a nation born all at once?" (Isaiah 66:8) This is Israel, who the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought them and let them enter into Jerusalem for the first time.[34]

Here, the meaning of navel is connected to a woman's ability to give birth. A woman has a navel which is her center. The people Israel are brought to the center, Jerusalem, by God, after they have been born. So center means the place which creates and sustains life. According to the Midrash Tanhuma Buber author, the nation, born in the Isaiah text, becomes the people of Israel who are then brought to the navel of the land, to Jerusalem, in order that they may live. Thus, the notion of woman having much in common with the land adds an element of nurturing and the ability to procreate that is missing from the initial text of Ecclesiastes Rabbah.

Midrash Zuta expands the previous two mentioned texts and adds in added actions ascribed to both land and man.[35] It begins with the basic comparison found in Ecclesiastes Rabbah. However, after describing how a man and land each have a head, eyes, and ears, it interjects actions in between. The actions begin positive and then become more and more negative: Just as a man drinks, the land drinks, just as a man quakes, the land quakes, just as a man can become drunk, the land can become drunk, and just as a man vomits, the land vomits. Then the text returns to anatomical comparisons: just as a man has a navel, the land has a navel, just as a man has thighs, the land has thighs, and just as a man has legs, the land has legs. The first thing one notices upon

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[34] Tanhuma Buber to *va'erah* 18.
[35] Midrash Zuta to Ecclesiastes 1:1.

comparing this to the previous two texts is that the order is rearranged. Instead of culminating at the navel, the navel is placed in the middle of the text, and it instead ends with the legs comparison. Additionally, whereas the Tanhuma Buber text uses imagery of giving birth, this text mentions three functions a person performs, but none of them seems necessarily connected to the navel. It is almost as if Midrash Zuta brings together various independent traditions and the focus has become blurred. In the first two mentioned texts, the navel, birth, and God have prominent places. Here, the text seems to be going in a variety of contrasting directions. Just as the land can give life to its inhabitants, it can also vomit them up and presumably destroy or exile them. Midrash Zuta certainly does not equate Jerusalem as navel in the glowing terms the way it has been previously described.[36]

Other midrashim follow the pattern established by the Ecclesiastes Rabbah text, but they add additional elements to their comparisons. In the Midrash on Psalms, the text reads as follows:

> The heavens have a heart before the Holy One Blessed be He, as it is written, "The mountain was ablaze on fire unto the heart of the sky." (Deut 4:11) And likewise there is a heart to the sea, as it is written, "The deeps froze in the heart of the sea." (Ex 15:8) The land has a navel before the Holy One Blessed be He, as it is written, "They who dwell on the navel of the land." (Ezek 38:12) And it has a mouth before the Holy One Blessed be He as it is written, "And the earth opened its mouth." (Num 16:32) And it has legs before the Holy One Blessed be He, as it is written, "And the earth forever stands." (Eccl 1:4)[37]

The comparisons between man and earth now shift to comparisons between man and heavens, man and sea, and then man and land. Depending on one's perception, one could see the heavens as most important followed by sea and then land, or if one follows the sequence set by the Ecclesiastes Rabbah text, then one would find the land to be most

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[36] For a close parallel text, see *Yalkut Shimoni* vol II, *remez* 967.
[37] The Midrash on Psalms 19:3.

important as it comes after heavens and sea. The evidence for the land as being the most important of the three is strengthened by the fact that whereas the heavens and sky have a heart, the land has a navel, a mouth, and legs. Additionally, the words "navel," "mouth," and "legs" are preceeded by the phrase *lifnay ha-kadosh baruh hu,* before the Holy One, Blessed be He. It is as if the land is given its navel, mouth, and legs directly by God. God's name here, repeated three times, adds sanctity. As a human being dwelling exclusively on the land, it fits that the author of Midrash Tehilim would consider the land to be the most important of the three. Here, navel is one of three major features of the land. The proof texts are virtually indistinguishable from the texts already studied, but the addition and supposed supercession of land over sky and sea forms the impression that the land, and especially its navel, could be considered even holier than the heavens above or the seas below.

A text in the midrashic collection *Yalkut Shimoni* adds a nuanced but important interpretation of the idea of the land having a navel. It begins by basically using a pattern that the skies and seas do not have hearts, and it is only through God's will that the skies and seas are given hearts. This pattern then includes the land and its navel. The text reads, "The land does not have a navel or thighs, but before the Holy One Blessed be He for they dwell on the navel of the earth. The earth stands forever and He gathered them from the thighs of the earth."[38] The text does not cite the proof texts, but it clearly has brought together the common text used for navel from Ezekiel 38:12 along with Ecclesiastes 1:4 and Jeremiah 31:8. Basically, the text attributes the land's navel directly to God. The land, like the heavens and the seas, does not have any human attributes until

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[38] *Yalkut Shimoni* vol. II, *remez* 672.

God grants them. Although the land is important, the author of this particular text wants there to be no confusion. It is God who gives the land its navel and then, similar to the Tanhuma Buber text, allows the people to dwell on the land and assures them that the land will stand forever. Thus, while *v'haaretz ein tibbur,* and the land has no navel, may be linguistically the opposite from the very first text of Ecclesiastes Rabbah, it is here where God and the navel are most closely connected; without God there can be no navel and therefore no human habitation in Jerusalem, the city sustained by the navel of the world.

3. The Foundation Stone of the World

The navel of the land is clearly linked with the human navel, and it is also linked throughout Rabbinic Literature with an object believed to be at the center of the earth, the *'even shetiyyah*, or foundation stone. Just as the navel has been compared to the human navel, so, too, it is compared with the *'even shetiyyah* as the exact location from which all life developed. As S. Alexander writes, "The "navel" is linked with the *'even shettiyah*, a stone or rock supposedly located within the Temple which marked the exact spot from which the world developed like a fetus from the umbilical cord."[39] Thus, just as the land is linked to navel and a woman giving birth, it, too, is linked to an actual rock that is thought to have given birth to the entire world. This concept begins to take shape in the Babylonian Talmud, and like the concept of the linking of human navel with land as navel, it develops and changes through the Rabbinic imagination.

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[39] Phillip S. Alexander, "Jerusalem as the *Omphalos* of the World," p. 114.

The first text to explicitly link the creation with the world with the *'even shetiyyah* comes in the Babylonian Talmud.[40] The discussion centers around the meaning of the word *shetiyyah.*. An anonymous *tanna* answers, that *she'mimenah hoshetet ha-olam,* for from this rock was the world founded. The link here is purely linguistic. *Shetiyyah* and *hoshetet* have the same root and thus the *'even shetiyyah* is called the foundation stone because it is the very place of the world's origin. The discussion continues, bringing in Zion and presumably Jerusalem, as another anonymous *tanna* states that from Zion the world was created. This anonymous *tanna* uses proof from Rabbi Eliezer, who is quoted here as saying that the world was created from its center. So here, Zion and center are linked, although the term *tibbur* is not used. From this Talmudic text then, the *'even shettiyah* has been solidly placed in Zion at the world's center, but the notion of *'even shetiyyah* explicitly as navel has not yet been formulated.[41]

This idea will become formulated in the Tanhuma texts, the Tanhuma Buber and the Tanhuma ha-Nidpas.[42] Both texts are able to explicitly link the *'even shetiyyah* with the navel of the world even as they differ on exactly how that link will occur. Both texts begin by quoting the BT *Yoma* text, that the *'even shetiyyah* is so called because from it, the entire world was founded. King Solomon knows this and because of this fact, the text teaches that he is able to go to Kush and plant flowers there from the seeds that came from this place at the center of the world. Both texts more or less include this version of the story. However, after that, they differ. The Tanhuma ha-Nidpas continues by exclaiming that he gave to the Kushites trees of every variety, and just as the navel was

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[40] BT *Yoma* 54b.
[41] For a parallel text, see PT *Yoma* 42c.
[42] Tanhuma Buber and Tanhuma ha-Nidpas to *Qedoshim* 10.

placed in the center of the land, so the land of Israel was placed In the center of the world. Then the typical Ezekiel proof text is used, followed by a statement that clearly links the *'even shetiyyah* to the navel. It reads, "From here the foundations of the earth were spread out." Thus linguistically, the link that is made in the Talmud text between foundations and foundation stone is expanded to include navel. So just as the woman in the previous Tanhuma Buber text has a navel and the power to give life, so, too, do the navel and the *'even shetiyyah* provide for the creation of the entire world to take place.

The Tanhuma ha-Nidpas text continues with a form found in the Rabbinic texts previously analyzed; that of moving from broader to smaller, from general to more specific, from less importance to more. It reads,

> The Land of Israel dwells in the center of the earth, and Jerusalem is in the center of the Land of Israel.. The Temple is in the center of Jerusalem, and the hall is in the center of the Temple. The ark in the center of the hall, and the *'even shettiyah* is before the ark, for from it the world was founded. King Solomon, who was wise, stood on its roots that went out from it to the entire world, and he planted all types of trees that made fruit, therefore he said, "I have made gardens and orchards."[43]

As the Ecclesiastes Rabbah text moved from outward to inward, this text also goes from outward to inward and culminates with the great King Solomon who, through his knowledge, seemed to understand this concept and was able to take advantage of it and plant trees throughout the entire world. God is replaced by King Solomon, the agricultural sustainer. The Tanhuma ha-Nidpas text thus does link *'even shettiyah* to navel, but then in its description, it chooses to use the word *emtza,* which simply means "center." The Temple and Jerusalem are dwelling at the center of the world, but it is not entirely clear if center here means navel, although that can be reasonably inferred by the close proximity of the word *tibbur* to the rest of this text.

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[43] Tanhuma ha-Nidpas, *Qedoshim* 10.

The parallel text to this one in Tanhuma Buber is similar in many respects. The major difference comes in the level of explicitness found in the text. Whereas the Tanhuma ha-Nidpas text reads, "Just as a man has a navel, the Land of Israel was placed in the center of the earth," the Tanhuma Buber text is explicit: "Just as a navel is placed in the center of a man, so the Land of Israel is the navel of the world."[44] Here the Land of Israel is explicitly mentioned as *tiburah shel olam.* The land is feminized, and so is the noun describing it. A man has a *tibbur,* and this text includes the word *tibburah,* the feminized land's navel.

These two texts then perhaps answer the question about the Book of Jubilees' supposed redundancy in using the term "navel at the center of the earth." It is not redundant at all, but rather denotes an ancient understanding of the varying degrees of centrality. If the entire Land of Israel is the navel of the earth as the Tanhuma Buber *Qedoshim* text states, then the varying levels of centrality for the Land of Israel are understood to be fairly large. By Tanhuma Buber's analogy, the entire land is the navel, but Jerusalem is at the center, the Temple is in the center of that, the hall in the center of that, and the *'even shetiyyah* and the ark are at the very center. So, to answer Alexander, there seems to be many centers of the world, all of them existing inside this thing called the navel. This concept of the varying levels of centrality is widely existent in rabbinic tradition, as the well known text in BT *Berachot* regarding prayer demonstrates.[45] The farther from the center one is, the more general the descriptions of the direction in which one is supposed to pray. The closer to the center, the more specific the instructions. The center is a small place, a rock and an ark, but the greater center and navel is the entire

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[44] Tanhuma Buber, *Qedoshim*, 10.
[45] BT *Berachot* 30a.

Land of Israel. The Land of Israel is central, Jerusalem is more central and the *'even shetiyyah* is the ultimate center. Therefore, the navel of the earth includes different degrees of centrality and perhaps, holiness.

The navel and the *'even shetiyyah* are drawn even closer together in the rabbinic mindset over the passage of time. A good text to demonstrate the close association between these two concepts can be found in the Midrash to Psalms.[46] This particular text follows Jacob's first dream which leads to his taking a stone and anointing it with oil. The text situates this dream in Jerusalem, and then examines what happened to the rock. Basically, God pushes the rock into the depths of the ocean with God's right foot, and then the rock emerges as a small wedge of land which the text names the *'even shetiyyah, she'sham tibbur ha-aretz,* for there is the navel of the land. The text continues by stating that from there the whole land opened up, and on top of it is placed the sanctuary of God. This entire interpretation comes from the one verse in Genesis: "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, shall be God's abode."[47] This stone upon which Jacob sleeps becomes the foundation stone, the navel of the world, and the house of God in one short statement. The rock Jacob anointed has a history as the foundation of the entire world, situated in Jerusalem in the navel of the center of the earth. The stone is sanctified by both Jacob and God, and indeed Jacob's declaration in the Bible becomes a fulfilled prophesy for the Rabbis that God dwells with Jerusalem in the world's navel.[48]

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[46] The Midrash on Psalms 91:7.
[47] Genesis 28:22, New JPS translation.
[48] For a parallel text, see *Yalkut Shimoni* I, *remez* 120.

The *'even shetiyya* and the navel are closely linked with God, and that link is strengthened in Midrash Aggadah to Leviticus.[49] This text closely follows the texts of the Tanhuma ha-Nidpas and the Tanhuma Buber, but it asks an additional question. That question is; Why does God's presence appear from Zion? That is answered, "Because here was the *'even shetiyyah* which was called the *'even shetiyyah* because from there the world was created." The text continues with the comparison between a land's navel and that of a person, then moving onto the varying levels of centrality. What is fascinating here is that clearly God's presence and not just God's Temple, dwell in the navel of the earth. The Midrash Aggadah author must have felt as if explaining the reasoning for the Temple's location in Jerusalem was not sufficient; that the reason must also be extended to include God's essential presence. God appears at the center of the earth from whence God creates everything else. The navel, the *'even shetiyyah* and the awesome appearance of God all become conflated into one narrative.

4. The Navel and the Sanhedrin

A final text which examines the concept of Jerusalem as navel of the earth but adds another element to the interpretation can be found in *Pesikta Rabbati*.[50] Here, the question asked is, "To what institution in Israel did God allude when He said, *Thy navel?"* The answer the text gives is that it is the great Sanhedrin, which was established in Jerusalem. The author goes on to explain that Jerusalem is situated in the middle of the world as the navel is in the middle of a man. Yet this explanation is not satisfying enough for the author, so an alternate explanation is given: "Even as the fetus drinks

[49] Midrash Agadah to Leviticus 19.
[50] *Pesikta Rabbati, piska* 10:2.

from the goblet of life through the umbilical cord, this entire people is sustained through the Sanhedrin, which is continually engaged with arriving at verdicts based upon Torah."[51] So the culmination of the author's point here is that Jerusalem, at the navel and center of the world, is sustained by the Sanhedrin because their decisions are based upon Torah. Therefore, Torah is the life-giving force that through its interpretation by the Sanhedrin, is able to sustain the people of Jerusalem and allow them to dwell successfully on the navel of the earth. This is unique to this text as it shows that the author believes the people have been given the tool to sustain themselves and that tool is Torah. Whereas a woman can give birth and the land can give birth according to Midrash Tanhuma, *Pesikta Rabbati* takes this notion one step further and declares that the people, when they study Torah, give themselves life and indeed have that life-giving force located inside of them. All life, through Torah, emanates and flows directly from the Sanhedrin which is at the navel of the earth, which is Jerusalem. Jerusalem then, becomes the unique source of all life.

5. The Eye

Many of the previous texts build upon the concept of going from broader to smaller, from extremity to center, from less important to more so. There is an additional text that takes all of these ideas, but instead of using the human body or the land itself, the analogy is made to the very small human eye:

> The world is like a human eye. The white is like the ocean which surrounds the earth. The pupil is like the earth. The opening in the pupil is like Jerusalem. The reflection in the opening is like the Temple—may it be built speedily in our days in the days of all Israel![52]

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[51] *Pesikta Rabbati, piska* 10:2.
[52] *Derech Eretz Zuta* 7:38, Hammer translation.

The text here takes the reader from the planet through the seas to dry land to Jerusalem to the Temple. As the original Ecclesiastes Rabbah text moved from outer to inner, this text does something similar. What makes this text unique is that it combines the past, the world created, with the future. If the purpose of the eye is to refract light and shape it into images that the human mind can then process, then Jerusalem at the center is the light of the world. However, the reflection, which is not real, represents the potential of what will be. The author of this text is not content with remaining in the past, so he adds the element of the future through his prayer that the Temple, at the center of Jerusalem, will be rebuilt. Combining this text with the *Pesikta Rabbati* text, one discovers that light and Torah both emanate from the center, navel, and eye of the world. Jerusalem, from its creation at the center of the world, is that unique place from which all light and Torah go forth. The Rabbis, through these various midrashim, have demonstrated their firm belief that Jerusalem was created and placed at the center of the world. It is this special status that lends the city a unique character unlike any other place in the world.

B. Jerusalem as a High Place: Moriah, Sinai, and Zion

Jerusalem is often referred to as a city dwelling on a high place and indeed, this is true. The city's topography is such that when one travels to Jerusalem, no matter from which direction, one will ascend. That Jerusalem becomes associated with three holy mountains, Moriah, Sinai, and Zion, is not surprising. What is surprising is how the mountains are interchanged, confused, and given special characteristics and qualities. All three mountains play distinct roles in the biblical text, and the Jewish interpretive

tradition enjoys playing with the mountains' roles. This section will explore Jerusalem's creation vis a vis the three holy mountains and will attempt to demonstrate that all three of them do become closely linked with this holiest of cities.

1. The Mountains in the Bible

The first holy mountain in the Bible is Mount Moriah. It is here, in the land of Moriah, that Abraham is asked to sacrifice his son Isaac. The specific mountain is never named in the text, but it is given a strange name by Abraham himself after the near sacrifice of Isaac takes place. Abraham names the place *adonai yir'eh* which can be translated in a variety of ways, but it has something to do with God seeing or appearing. This provides for a great number of interpretive possibilities.[53] However, the only biblical verse directly connecting Moriah to Jerusalem occurs in the Book of Second Chronicles, where the text describes King Solomon as building the Temple in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah.[54] The other connections are made in later interpretations.

Sinai is possibly mentioned first in a genealogical list of peoples begot by Canaan immediately following the flood.[55] However, here the reference clearly is to a people named the "Sinites," with seemingly no connection to the mountain. The next few direct references to Sinai come in the form of *Midbar Sinai*, the Wilderness of Sinai.[56] Just like Mount Moriah exists in the Land of Moriah, so, too, does Mount Sinai exist in the Wilderness or Land of Sinai. The mountain, *har,* is first mentioned in Exodus 19:11, where the people are told: "On the third day the LORD will come down , in the sight of

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[53] See Chapter 1, p. 12.
[54] 2 Chronicles 3:1.
[55] Genesis 10:17.
[56] Exodus 16:1, 19:1-2.

all the people, on Mount Sinai."[57] Like Moriah, Sinai is immediately associated with the appearance of God's presence, making the mountain a prime object for rabbinical imagination, both in spiritual and geographic terms.

Zion, like Moriah and Sinai, is also first mentioned independent of a name of a mountain. The first mention of Zion recalls that David captured the "Stronghold of Zion" which is now called the "City of David."[58] Zion, like the two other mountains, connotes much more than a hill from its first appearance in the biblical text. Yet, the first time it is mentioned as a mountain, it is tied directly to Jerusalem: "For a remnant shall come forth from Jerusalem, survivors from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts shall bring this to pass."[59] This verse is a piece of a prophecy given by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, to King Hezekiah concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria. Clearly here, Zion is used interchangeably with Jerusalem. The two mentions of Zion, first as being renamed City of David and secondly, its parallel with Jerusalem in the Second Kings text, demonstrate that Zion for all practical purposes is Jerusalem.

Mount Zion's tie to Jerusalem is made clear by the text, Moriah's is supported somewhat by the verse in Second Chronicles, and Sinai it seems is located in another geographical entity entirely. Yet, these three mountains for the Rabbis come to symbolize Jerusalem or at least certain aspects of the city. The next few pages will explore how that came to be.

2. Second Temple Sources

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[57] Exodus 19:11, New JPS translation.
[58] 2 Samuel 5:7.
[59] 2 Kings 19:31, New JPS translation.

Besides explaining Jerusalem's position at the center of the navel of the earth, there is an early tradition in the Book of Jubilees which describes the creation of the Garden of Eden, Mount Sinai, and Mount Zion. The text reads:

> He knew that the Garden of Eden was the Holy of Holies and the Dwelling of the LORD. And Mount Sinai (was) in the midst of the desert and Mount Zion (was) in the midst of the navel of the earth. The three of these were created as holy places, one facing the other. And he blessed the God of gods, who placed in his mouth the word of the LORD, and also the Eternal God.[60]

This text seems to be concerned with geography, but not entirely. It is correct in placing Mount Sinai in the middle of the desert, and Zion in Jerusalem, the navel of the earth. What is strange, however, is the addition of the Garden of Eden as the location of the Holy of Holies and the Dwelling of the LORD. Even more shocking is the notion that these three mountains were created facing one another. If they are all in different locales, and Sinai is in the desert and Zion in the navel, they simply cannot be facing each other in a purely physical or geographical sense. This text seems to already be pointing to the fact that Sinai is beginning to lose importance in regards to Jerusalem in the rabbinic mind. Sinai is in the midst of the desert, surrounded by barren wilderness. It is dry and unnourished. The Garden of Eden, where God dwells, is a holy and life-giving place. The symbolism of the garden as a means of sustenance, both material and spiritual, is significant. Finally, Zion's location at the navel of the earth clearly ties it to a place of central importance. Yet, the fact that all three are created facing one another demonstrates that each of these places is holy. Perhaps man's journey then has to begin at Sinai in the wilderness. Then, just like the ancient Israelites, they are given Torah which provides enough sustenance to survive the desert and bring them toward Zion and Jerusalem. Eventually, they will be worthy of returning to the Garden of Eden where

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[60] Jubilees 8:19-21.

God dwells. That these three are created facing one another not only shows their importance from creation, but it hints at the notion that these three places are extraordinarily important in the past, present, and future.

Three other Second Temple texts already mentioned in regards to the navel of the earth also mention Jerusalem's geography as a high place. The Letter of Aristeas mentions that Jerusalem is at the center of a land on top of a high, exalted mountain. The mountain itself is not named, but Jerusalem clearly stands higher than its surroundings.[61] When Enoch is transported to the middle of the earth, he is brought to a "blessed place," not on top of one mountain, but located in the midst of seven hills.[62] Perhaps Enoch's description is more geographically accurate than the others, for Jerusalem is located in many hills. It is possible too, that the author is comparing Jerusalem to Rome, for Rome is a city known to be situated on seven hills. This comparison would make sense, as both peoples saw their city as the eternal city and center of the world. The Psalms of Solomon also implore the city to stand on a high place and look at the people coming from all over the world to Jerusalem.[63] Again, a specific mountain is not mentioned, but the usage of the word "stand" is significant. Jerusalem, because of its height, is able to stand up and above the others. She stands up physically, and stands out as a spiritual center of the entire world. Even though none of these texts mention specific mountains, all of them clearly follow the Jubilees notion that Jerusalem is located on a mountain or mountains in a position of physical and spiritual centrality.

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[61] Letter of Aristeas 84.
[62] 1 Enoch 26:1.
[63] Psalms of Solomon 11:2-3.

3. The Midrashim

The idea of Jerusalem's height and centrality was changed into a sense of its superiority in early midrashim. In Sifre Deuteronomy, the author clearly believes that the Land of Israel and the Temple, due to their height, are simply the best places in the entire universe:

> A place which is higher than other places is better than they. The Land of Israel is higher and therefore better than other places, as it is said: "Let us go up and we shall gain possession of it." (Num. 13:30) The Temple is higher and therefore better than all other temples, as it is said: "And the many peoples shall go and shall say: Come, let us go up to the mount of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob" (Isa. 2:3).[64]

Here, the author is not simply comparing Jerusalem to Rome, as perhaps the author of First Enoch was trying to do. The Sifre author is clearly stating that Israel, by virtue of its height and stature, is better than all other places. From a strategic perspective, this makes perfect sense. Ancient cities tended to be built on hills and mountains so the people could see what was around them and be better equipped to deal with enemy attacks. Yet, Sifre is not content to leave things there. It adds that Jerusalem is spiritually also better than other places, because the Temple is higher and therefore more important than all other temples. Mountains are not specifically used in this text, but the author does use the proof text from Isaiah which mentions people ascending a mountain in order to reach the house of God. Thus, this text is similar to the Second Temple texts in that it praises Jerusalem based on her height.

Another early text to stress Israel's, Jerusalem's, and the Torah's importance is in Leviticus Rabbah.[65] Here, Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai creates a list of God's measurements. God measures everything, and finds nothing worthy except for Israel,

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[64] Sifre Deuteronomy, *pisqa* 37.
[65] Leviticus Rabbah 13:2, Hammer translation.

Torah, and Jerusalem. The text begins with God measuring all the nations and finding the only one worthy to receive the Torah is Israel. It continues with God measuring all generations and deciding the only generation worthy enough to receive Torah is the generation of the wilderness. The next piece finds God measuring all nations and finding the only nation worthy of having God's presence rest upon it is Israel. God then measures all cities and finds none worthy of having the Holy Temple except for Jerusalem. The final two measurements are geographical; the only mountain worthy of having Torah given upon it is Sinai and the only land worthy of the people Israel is the Land of Israel. The proof text cited is Habbakuk[66]

This list format has much in common with the texts comparing a human navel to earth's navel. What is different is the way the mountains are used. All of the measurements seem to make sense in light of the Bible, but the order in which they are used is confusing. It goes from nation, to time, to city, but then back again to revelation on Sinai, concluding with the promise of the people's own land. God dwells on Moriah but first gives the Torah on Sinai. The people must then take the Torah from Sinai and carry it with them as they grow and evolve as a people before they are worthy of dwelling in Jerusalem with the presence of God enthroned upon Moriah.

This link between Sinai and Moriah is concretized in the Midrash to Psalms.[67] The text reads:

> The foundation of the world is Jerusalem on the merit of two holy mountains: Mount Sinai and Mount Moriah. Rabbi Pinchas in the name of Rabbi Reuven said, "In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will bring together Sinai and Tavor and Carmel and place Jerusalem on top of them, as it is written, "In the days to come, the Mount of the LORD's House shall stand firm above the mountains." (Isa. 2:2)[68]

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[66] Habbakuk 3:6.
[67] For a parallel text, see *Yalkut Shimoni* vol. II, *remez*, 836.
[68] Midrash to Psalms 87:3.

Jerusalem here is linked to being the foundation of the world because of two holy mountains, Sinai and Moriah, which are associated with one another even though this is a geographical impossibility. This demonstrates that the Rabbis are not concerned with geography. It stresses the importance of Jerusalem as the place where God and the Torah rest. The Torah begins its journey on Sinai and then makes its way to Moriah, Zion, and Jerusalem. Thus the mountains, created facing one another in Jubilees, are now physically brought together in Rabbinic Literature, making Jerusalem worthy of being the foundation of the entire world. Here, neither mountain is made more important, but both, as critical aspects of the people's journey, are needed to support the city. The mention of additional mountains in the future perhaps points to the author's feeling that the journey needs to be continued; that there are other holy mountains worthy of supporting Jerusalem.

Conclusion

Jerusalem is located on mountains in the midst of the center of the navel of the earth. It is created as a holy place and remains uniquely central and holy for the Rabbis. The early authors and rabbis took biblical ideas centered on Torah and Jerusalem and expanded them to strengthen the ties between Jerusalem and its physical geography as well as to praise its spiritual uniqueness. Jerusalem past is a city created by God at the center of the world as a place unlike any other. The Rabbis elevate her status to make Jerusalem more than a city. She, in the rabbinic mind, becomes a place of light, vision,

and life-giving sustenance. In short, the very survival of the people Israel and indeed the entire world depend directly upon this most awesome and holy of cities.

Chapter Three:

Jerusalem Present: The City and Her People

Introduction

This chapter's focus is on Jerusalem in the present and the people who live in the city. The chapter will begin by examining the naming of the city. Names tell a great deal both about the place or person as well as those who have participated in the naming. Thus, the midrashim surrounding the multiplicity of Jerusalem's names will serve as a starting point for an examination of the perception of the present-day city. The second section of this chapter will look at biblical characters, and how they come to be identified with Jerusalem. This section will also examine the consequences, new meanings, and rationales for moving a narrative set in another place into Jerusalem. When a biblical narrative is suddenly "recast" or updated to take place in Jerusalem, the meaning of the entire narrative can be portrayed in a different light. Finally, the last section of this chapter will examine sage stories about Jerusalem. Many stories about the Rabbis take place in Jerusalem or with the characters coming to or leaving Jerusalem. Often the city has a direct impact on or influence over the characters. Jerusalem in its present reality has a powerful influence on how people live their lives.

A. Meanings of the Name Moriah

So much of what makes Jerusalem special is the unique name of the city itself. There is not one simple explanation, meaning, or translation for Jerusalem, so the ancient authors and Rabbis were able to develop intriguing and complicated reasons for how the city's name came to be. Likewise, for Mount Moriah. Already in the Biblical text, there is a certain degree of ambiguity over its name.[69] Jerusalem and Moriah are not the only

[69] See Chapter, 1 p. 12.

names for this incredible place. There are many names that are used throughout literature and history for Jerusalem. As Avigdor Shinan correctly notes, "The Rabbinic tendency to call any one entity by many names attests to its multifaceted and complex nature."[70] The complexity of the naming of these places demands further investigation.

Mount Moriah is renamed by Abraham after the *aqeda* episode. However, even the Biblical authors seem unsure of its exact meaning, offering their own interpretation of the naming of the place. This ambiguity regarding exactly what "Moriah" means carries over into Rabbinic Literature, which attempts to come up with a variety of explanations regarding Moriah's etymology. There are positive and negative meanings, but it is clear that all of the different stories over the origin of Moriah's name point to the fact that the Rabbis were clearly concerned with the lesson that could be taught regarding this lofty peak.

Certain explanations of the naming of Moriah can be categorized as positive and universal. The following conversation is found in Tanhuma Buber:

> What is the meaning of Moriah? Rabbi Yannai and Rabbi Hiyya differ. Rabbi Yannai says, "What is Moriah? The place from which light went forth to the world, as it is stated, "You are awesome *(nora),* O God, out of your holy places (Ps. 68:36)." Rabbi Hiyya said, "The place from which instruction *(hora'ah)* went forth to the world, as it is stated, "From Zion shall come forth the Torah (Isaiah 2:3, Micah 4:2)."[71]

Rabbis Yannai and Hiyya certainly do differ in their opinions. Both take Moriah and try to find words, *norah* and *hora'ah,* which share the same root as Moriah. However, light and instruction do not seem so different from one another; especially since the Torah is often referred to as light. This does not appear to be a substantial disagreement, but

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[70] Avigdor Shinan, "The Many Names of Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism Christianity, and Islam,* ed. Lee I. Levine (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1999), 120.

[71] Tanhuma Buber *Vayikra* 4.

rather, as slightly differing interpretations based on language plays These opinions are stated as well in Genesis Rabbah,[72] and the language used is nearly identical. Both Rabbi Yannai and Rabbi Hiyya believe the Moriah is the origin of good forces in the world, and both of these forces spread throughout the entire world. Their explanations of Moriah have universal implications.

These two opinions seem to be the most straightforward explanations of the meaning of Moriah. However, both Tanhuma Buber and Genesis Rabbah contain other explanations of the name Moriah. Note, in this regard, the following tradition:

> Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said, "The place from which the righteous give instructions (*moreh)* to the Holy One and He acts upon them, as it is stated: "And by lots they organized them, one group with another,."(1 Chron. 24:5) Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman said, "What is the meaning of Moriah? The place where the Holy One gives instructions (*moreh)* for the wicked and casts them down to Gehinnom, as it is stated: Like sheep they are appointed for sheol, death is their shepherd; the upright shall rule over them in the morning, and their form shall waste away with no lofty dwelling for it (Ps. 9:15)."[73]

These two Rabbis also use a language play to explain how the name of Moriah came to be. They find the same linguistic connection of *moreh* with *moriah.* However, unlike Rabbis Hiyya and Yannai, they come to completely opposite conclusions. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi believes that Moriah is the place where the righteous can give instructions to God and God will listen to them and enact them. Thus, his opinion only applies to the righteous, whoever they may be, and is interesting because he believes that Moriah serves as the place where the righteous can ask God to do something on their behalf, and not the other way around. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman agrees that Moriah is a place of instruction, but for him this instruction specifically applies to the wicked and a place where they will be cast down to Gehenom. Both Rabbis utilize biblical proof texts to

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[72] Genesis Rabbah 55:7.
[73] Tanhuma Buber, *Vayera* 4.

shore up the meaning of their explanations. These two Rabbis come to directly opposite conclusions over the meaning of Moriah, something also seen in another text on this matter.

Genesis Rabbah includes the discussion between Rabbis Yannai and Hiyya, but then the Rabbis continue their conversation and come to the same contradictory conclusions reached by Joshua ben Levi and Shmuel bar Nahman.

After focusing on Moriah, the Rabbis move to the meaning of the word *d'vir,* or inner sanctuary. Presumably, they are speaking now about the Temple, which supposedly stood upon Mount Moriah. One unidentified Rabbi believes that the sanctuary is really a place of *dibbur,* divine speech, whereas the other believes that the sanctuary is really a place of *dever,* best translated as "pestilence." What is different here than the above text is that this text remains universal; either it is a place of divine speech for the entire world or a place of pestilence for the entire world. There is no difference whether or not people are good or evil, Moriah holds the same meaning for all humanity.

An additional opinion which states that Moriah is the place of teaching is that of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. In both Tanhuma Buber and Genesis Rabbah, it is Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who says that Moriah is "a place of teaching (*moreh*) situated directly under the Holy Temple." The proof text he uses comes from Exodus, and it states, "Oh Lord, you have made a site for yourself to dwell in, a sanctuary O Lord, which your hands have established."[74] The fact that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's opinion is quoted exactly the same way in both texts means that this tradition was most likely widely known. Although previously discussed texts dealing with the meanings of Moriah have

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[74] Exodus 15:17.

spoken about instruction, this text is significant because it adds the element of Moriah's special location under the Temple.

Another theme besides good and evil, righteousness and wickedness, which finds its way into the conversation about the meaning of the naming of Moriah is that of emanation in the sense of "shooting forth,." This particular verb, *yarah,* also shares a linguistic link with Moriah as did the words for "light," and "instruction." In the Tanhuma Buber text, Rabbi Judah ben Palma explains that Moriah is the place of emanation. The proof text explains: "No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely emanate (or shoot forth)." (Ex. 19:13) So for Rabbi Judah ben Palma, Moriah is a place of shooting forth.

In the Tanhuma Buber text, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi is cited as giving the opinion that Moriah is the place where the righteous give instructions and God heeds them. However, in Genesis Rabbah, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi is attributed with having given a totally different opinion. Here, he is quoted as saying that Moriah is the place where the Holy One shoots at the nations of the world, bringing them down to Gehenna. This text is similar to Rabbi Judah ben Palma's assertion that Moriah is a place of shooting forth. Both utilize the same play on language, but both reach different conclusions. Rabbi Judah ben Palma's explanation seems positive. Moriah serves as a place presumably whence good things emanate. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi's opinion is overtly negative. At first glance, it seems bizarre that Rabbi Joshua ben Levi is cited as having given such a radically different opinion then he did in the Tanhuma Buber text. However, upon closer examination, his opinion here is not very different than the opinion following his in the Tanhuma Buber tradition attributed to Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman who believes that

Moriah is the place where the wicked will go down to Gehennom. In fact, these two opinions seem very similar. It is possible then that an editor took a look at one of the texts, got confused, and simply inserted Rabbi Joshua ben Levi's name where Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman's name should have been. In any case, both opinions opine that Moriah will be the place whence evil will either enter into the world, or be cast down to hell.

A final theme that emerges regarding the meaning of Moriah is that it is a place where incense will be offered. This opinion, found in the Genesis Rabbah text and not in the Tanhuma Buber text, quotes a group of anonymous Rabbis who believe that Moriah is a place in which incense will be offered. The proof text used here comes from the Song of Songs, and the verse is about a couple going to the mountain of myrrh.[75] Myrrh in Hebrew is *mor*, and there is an obvious linguistic link forged between *mor* and Moriah.

Mount Moriah, the place of instructions, of life to the blessed, of death and exile to the wicked, of light, of myrrh, is clearly a place that has many meanings associated with it. There is a tension built into the midrashim regarding reward and punishment. Both are associated in different midrashim with the mountain. Perhaps it is suitable that this mountain in particular becomes associated with the Temple and Jerusalem itself as they, too, are subject to a wide variety of interpretations. The naming of Moriah certainly is complex, but its many names are few compared to the many more which find their way into the naming of the city of Jerusalem.

B. Meanings of the Name Jerusalem

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[75] Song of Songs 4:6.

There are many explanations of how Jerusalem came to be called as such. Two explanations in Genesis Rabbah attempt to show a link between biblical characters and the naming of the city. In both of these cases, the concept emerges that Jerusalem has an impact on its residents and likewise, its residents have an impact upon the city. The first story states:

> "And Melchitzedek, King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine (Gen 14:18)." Melchitzedek means that this place caused its inhabitants to be righteous. Another interpretation: "And the King of Tzedek (Joshua 10:1). Jerusalem is called "*tzedek*," as it is written, "Tzedek (righteousness) lodged within her (Isaiah 1:21)"[76]

This one small explanation of the origin of the city's name is rather complex. Jerusalem is clearly identified with Salem. As a result, Salem becomes one half of the city's name. Beyond that, however, Melchitzedek, as the gift-bearing King who goes out to greet Abraham in peace, is portrayed as a righteous resident of Jerusalem. Melchitzedek's name connects righteousness with the city. In the second interpretation, Jerusalem is known as *zedek*, as the place of righteousness, and the proof text used is from Isaiah. So this text both claims that Jerusalem makes people righteous, and also that Jerusalem is the epitome of righteousness itself. What becomes the most clear from this text is that according to this particular author, Jerusalem is the "righteous city."

A second Genesis Rabbah text attempts to figure out the origins of the naming of the city, but does so in a very different manner. The first text plays with linguistic commonalities, while this text takes two episodes from the Bible and pulls them together into one coherent narrative:

> Abraham called the place appointed for the Temple "*yi'reh*" because he knew it would be the abiding place for the fear of God. But Shem gave it the name "*shalem,*" or place of

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[76] Genesis Rabbah 43:2.

> peace. God did not want to offend either Abraham or Shem, so the Holy One, Blessed be He, united the two names, calling the city *"yireh-shalem,"* or Jerusalem.[77]

This text seems to be a Divine compromise between two different visions of the city. Shem, one of Noah's sons, sees it as a place of peace. Perhaps it also represents to him a new place of wholeness, following the destruction wrecked by the flood. Abraham, traumatized by the experience he has just gone through on the mountain, believes that this place represents fear. Clearly, the texts on the naming of Mount Moriah demonstrate that the Rabbis believe contradictory things about its naming and perhaps its very essence. Jerusalem can represent opposing ideas; a place of wholeness but at the same time, a place of fear. God names the city Jerusalem, and in doing so, establishes this city as a place both of peace and of fear. Both exist and both elements find their way into many midrashim about the city.

The naming of the city also serves as a prelude to other names which will become associated with Jerusalem. The city is given many other titles other than its proper name. Different authors call the city different names, depending on their own feelings and motivations. Just as the naming of the city is complicated, so, too, are the names which become associated with Jerusalem.

Two texts which may shed some light upon the many names of Jerusalem are *Avot de-Rebbe Natan* and *Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim.* The *Avot de-Rebbe Natan* text includes twenty different names for the city and has no parallels in Rabbinic Literature. The *Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim* text includes seventy names for the city and has parallels in *Midrash ha-Gadol*[78] and *Yalkut ha-Machiri.*[79] The list of twenty names in *Avot de-Rebbe*

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[77] Genesis Rabbah 56:1.
[78] *Midrash ha-Gadol* to Genesis 46:8.
[79] *Yalkut ha-Machiri* to Isaiah 62:4.

Natan follows Mishna tractate *avot* Chapter five which lists ten miracles that were witnessed in the Temple of Jerusalem. After this comes another list on how Jerusalem is superior to other lands. The next and final list includes the twenty names for Jerusalem. The first ten names of mostly praise are: City (*'ir),* City (*qirya*), Faithful, Espoused, Sought out, I delight in her, The Lord is there, Righteousness, Peace, and Jebusite.[80] The first three names and the eighth name all appear together in one verse of Isaiah.[81] Three of the other names, Espoused, Sought out, and I delight in her, also come from Isaiah, and they all describe Jerusalem as a woman and also point toward the future.[82] However, the order of the names seems somewhat random. The other names, specifically the two which involve "City," do not seem to be names of praise. They rather seem to be neutral terms that could be names for any place. The name "Jebusite" simply seems to be an historical explanation for Jerusalem's origins.

The next list of ten names involves disgrace: Widow, Harlot, Bereaved, Barren, Exiled, Disdained, Forsaken, Rejected, Unhappy, and Storm-tossed.[83] These names, unlike the first list, all seem completely negative. None of these terms could be seen as neutral. Additionally, the list of praise includes three names that could be linked to a woman, and in this list, all of the terms could used to describe a woman. Again, many of these terms come from the Book of Isaiah, and Jerusalem in her destruction is often portrayed as a disgraced woman or as a widow. As Avigdor Shinan writes, "A common thread clearly runs through Isaiah's choice of names and epithets for Jerusalem. He draws his metaphors for the city from the semantic field of a woman's relationship with

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[80] *Avot-de Rebbe Natan* 5:6.
[81] Isaiah 1:26.
[82] For more on Jerusalem as woman, see Chapter 4, p. 104.
[83] *Avot de-Rebbe Natan* 5:6.

her husband and family, and therefore the great majority of Jerusalem's names are colored with that particular motif."[84]

The first list of ten names of praise and the second list of ten names of disgrace seem like two completely separate lists that are melded together. The author of *Avot de-Rebbe Natan* clearly believes that Jerusalem is associated with equal amounts of good and negative characteristics. How he drew all of these terms together is unclear, but what is clear is that Jerusalem is linked to a woman who is sometimes delighted in, but more often than not, serves as a symbol of disgrace, ruin and shame. The names associated with the city here point to the rabbinic fixation both on Jerusalem's destruction and on her longed for future restoration. The Rabbis, in their context, see Jerusalem as she is to them, a destroyed city that used to be great, and hopefully one day will be great again.

A second list, more extensive than the one in *Avot-de Rebbe Natan*, is found in *Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim*. This list again appears after an earlier list of the seventy names of Israel, and prior to a list about the seventy names of Torah. It is significant that the number here is seventy, as seventy finds its way into other aspects of Rabbinic Literature; there were seventy nations of the world, seventy vessels in the Temple, seventy members of the Sanhedrin, seventy languages in the world, and seventy faces of the Torah. To the Rabbis, seventy represents a sense of totality. To put Jerusalem in that same list of things having to do with the number seventy is to ascribe to Jerusalem utmost importance. The text is very complicated, and in includes many of the same praiseworthy terms as the *Avot de-Rebbe Natan* text. Additionally, the list of seventy names is followed by proof texts which validate about twenty of those names.

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[84] Shinan, "The Many Names of Jerusalem," p. 123.

The text differs from the *Avot de-Rebbe Natan* text in that it has many more names, but they are not divided evenly between positive and negative. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the names here are positive. This could have to do with the fact that there are seventy names, and seventy is seen as an overwhelmingly positive number. Or, it could demonstrate a development over time. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* is a fairly early text, and *Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim* is a later text. By the time of its appearance, perhaps the authors felt a need to focus more on the positive, for the Jerusalem they knew of only existed in their minds. The authors were further removed from the destruction of the city.

The naming of Moriah and Jerusalem and the names associated with these places demonstrate a complexity of visions about these sites. Both are ascribed as sources of goodness for the world, and both also serve as places where evilness and evil people will be punished. Moriah and Jerusalem are, above all, complex places which are named as such by a wide variety of teachings which lead to differing conclusions about the mountain and city, reflecting its all-encompassing symbolism and importance.

C. Bible Stories "Reset" in Jerusalem

The residents of Jerusalem are influenced by the city and their presence also has an influence upon the city, its life and the perception of the city as well. However, many of its residents are fictional. There exist many midrashim which take biblical stories and reset them in Jerusalem. No matter what the original biblical setting was, the midrashists find a way to move the action of the story to Jerusalem, or at the least to hint that the biblical story happened at a place that now falls within the city limits. The author may

reset the story for a variety of reasons, and this section will explore some of those reasons, including the fact that moving a story to Jerusalem often strengthens the spiritual underpinnings of the story, and may also add an eschatological element that was absent in the original biblical story.

1. Adam and Eve in Jerusalem

The Garden of Eden is often associated with paradise, past and future, and both of these concepts are also often associated with Jerusalem. It is not surprising therefore, that two midrashim take this farther and also attempt to place Adam in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Genesis Rabbah and *Pirke de-Rebbe Eliezer* are concerned with clearly identifying the location of the Genesis story, and in doing so, they are able to add an element of redemption to what is commonly perceived of as the first sin committed by humanity.

The text of Genesis Rabbah describes Adam and Eve's banishment from the garden.[85] It then discusses Adam's first experience with Shabbat, and how when the sun went down, he was seized with an enormous sense of fear. He said, "Woe is me! Because I sinned, the world is darkened and it will again become void and without form. Thus will be executed the punishment of death which God has pronounced against me!"[86] Adam is stating that he believes that darkness will coincide with the end of his existence as well as the existence of the entire world. Additionally, Adam takes responsibility for the darkness, believing that his sin is the cause of this downfall. This fits the biblical text in which God explains to Adam and Eve their sin and subsequent punishment. However,

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[85] Genesis Rabbah 24:9.
[86] Ibid.

in the biblical text, Adam and Eve are banished, but the reader is not given any insight into their thoughts on the matter or if they think their sin is going to have an effect beyond themselves. In the midrash, after Adam's statement, he weeps throughout the night and Eve weeps with him. However, when the sun begins to rise in the morning, Adam understands what has happened; that he and Eve will not die and that the world is not going to come to an end. So Adam finds a unicorn, sacrifices it, and then the text states that the sacrifice was made "on the place that the altar was to stand in Jerusalem."[87]

Adam's sacrifice, therefore, actually becomes the first offering made on the altar of the Temple. The biblical text maintains that Adam and Eve are expelled from paradise, but this midrash asserts that they have been exiled to a place which one day will become the holy city and, looking ahead, perhaps a second sort of Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve are created in paradise, sin and are exiled from paradise. Adam goes through a process of *teshuvah*, repentance, in which he understands that the exile has stemmed from his sin. Then, Adam is redeemed and the text declares that one day he and Eve will experience ultimate redemption. The Genesis Rabbah text adds to the biblical story elements of redemption and an eschatological point of view. All of this is achieved by simply stating that Adam sacrificed the unicorn on the spot where the altar would one day be erected in Jerusalem.

A similar midrash exists in the *Pirke de-Rebbe Eliezer* text. Gerald Friedlander actually labels Chapter Twenty as "Adam's Penitence." The chapter begins in the same manner as the Genesis Rabbah text, with Adam experiencing his first *havdallah,* the separation ceremony at the conclusion of the Sabbath. Here, the text finds ways to show

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[87] Genesis Rabbah 24:11.

how Adam observed *havdallah* with fire, and then moves into a halachic discussion over the usage of wine in the ceremony. Then comes Adam's penitence. He immerses himself in the Gihon River up to his neck and fasts for seven days. He asks for forgiveness from God, both in this world and the world to come, and believes that death will remove him from his sins. To that end, Adam decides to build himself a mausoleum next to Mount Moriah. This mausoleum then becomes the Cave of Machpelah, where Adam is described as being buried along with Eve as well as "Abraham and his help-mate, Isaac and his help-mate, and Jacob and his help-mate."[88]

This text offers a similar narrative arc as the Genesis Rabbah text: Adam and Eve are banished, Adam repents, and then comes the reference to Jerusalem. However, here the text seems to indirectly bypass Jerusalem, stating instead that Adam created his mausoleum next to Mount Moriah which became the Cave of Machpelah. Machpelah is situated in Hebron which is a fair distance away from Jerusalem. However, this text does link the mausoleum and Mount Moriah, so there does exist at the very least a spiritual link between the two places. Adam situates his burial place in relationship to the holy mountain, so that he and all the patriarchs and matriarchs who will come after him will be forever entombed close to Mount Moriah and presumably to the House of God. Adam's repentance in both of these texts thus allows him to live, both in this world and the world to come, close to God even as he must remain outside of the garden. Adam was born in the garden, leaves the garden, but one day will return. Jerusalem becomes associated with the Garden of Eden, where one day, Adam and Eve will be able to dwell again because of their penitence.

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[88] *Pirke de-Rebbe Eliezer* 20, Friedlander's translation.

2. Abraham and Jerusalem

Another prominent biblical narrative which brings Jerusalem into the text is the *aqeda,* most commonly known as the Binding of Isaac. This narrative takes place on Mount Moriah, which the Bible itself associates with Jerusalem.[89] Genesis Rabbah, as it did with the Adam and Eve narrative, takes this particular narrative a step farther. In the Bible, Abraham stretches out his arm, knife in hand, to slay his son, but an angel stops him. Genesis Rabbah adds the following:

> "Abraham stretched forth his hand (Gen. 22:10)." He stretched forth his hand to take the knife while the tears streamed from his eyes, and these tears, prompted by a father's compassion, dropped into Isaac's eyes. Yet even so, his heart rejoiced to obey the will of his Creator. The angels assembled in groups above. What did they cry? "The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth; He hath broken the covenant, He hath despised the cities (Isaiah 33:8)." Has He no pleasure in Jerusalem and the Temple, which He had intended giving as a possession to the descendants of Isaac?[90]

This midrash adds Abraham's overwhelming show of emotion at the moment he is about to slaughter his son. The angels here also play a key role in the midrash, seemingly crying along with Abraham. They are confused by God's actions, and believe that if God allows Abraham to kill Isaac, then Abraham will have no descendants and presumably Jerusalem and the Temple will not exist either. This text is not reset in Jerusalem as the story of Adam seems to be. Rather, Jerusalem becomes an object of concern for the angels over the near murder of Isaac. The reestablishment of Jerusalem will only happen if Isaac is allowed to live and to create descendants. Abraham weeps for his son, and the angels weep for the possibility that God's holy city and Temple will not come to be.

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[89] 2 Chronicles 3:1.
[90] Genesis Rabbah 67:4.

3. The Red Sea and Jerusalem

There is another midrash where concern over Jerusalem is evident as it was in the above midrash. That text is from the Mekhilta de-Rebbe Ishmael.[91] This particular text, like the one above, recounts the biblical text, this time in the form of the Israelites at the Red Sea. Moses has asked for God's intervention to split the sea, and God, according to Rabbi Ishmael, answers back, "For the sake of Jerusalem, I will divide the sea for them." After this comes a proof text from Isaiah, "Awake, awake, Jerusalem, put on strength and glory!" [92]

Like the retelling of the *aqeda,*, this retelling finds it necessary to insert something lacking in the biblical text, namely a reason why God splits the sea. Of course the reason is for the sake of Jerusalem. This verse strengthens the story's theme of salvation. The Israelites cross the Red Sea in order that they may save themselves from the advancing Egyptian armies, and God parts the sea in order that one day Jerusalem may undergo a similar salvation. The proof text echoes this idea, with the eschatological notion that Jerusalem will rise up and be saved. Thus, even though this text is written in the present-tense, it inevitably points toward the future. Biblical actions, according to these two texts, happen in order that Jerusalem will come into existence and also one day be rebuilt.

4. Jonah and Jerusalem

In addition to strengthening biblical ties to Jerusalem, some midrashim add in the Jerusalem element. One example of this is in *Pirke de-Rebbe Eliezer's* midrash on

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[91] Mekhilta de-Rebbe Ishmael, *parashah Beshallach* 4.
[92] Isaiah 52:1.

Jonah.[93] The biblical story of Jonah takes place in Jaffa, on the sea, and in Ninevah, but Jerusalem nor any words even related to Jerusalem are mentioned. By adding Jerusalem, the author entirely changes the meaning of the story. In addition to all of that, the overall framework of the story is altered, as the story is set on the fifth day of creation. Jerusalem is mentioned twice in the text. The first mention of Jerusalem comes at the very beginning of the midrash, and it simply alerts the reader that before Jonah was told to prophecy to Nineveh, he went to Jerusalem. God has decided to destroy the city, but then Jonah goes to Jerusalem and God changes God's mind.

This first addition does not seem entirely significant and merely shows that Jonah has had a long career of prophesizing. However, the second mention of the city is fascinating. When Jonah is swallowed by the giant fish, the text mentions that the fish becomes like a sanctuary to Jonah. In fact, the text states, "The two eyes of the fish were like windows of glass giving light to Jonah."[94] This "portable" sanctuary then takes Jonah on a journey. They go down to the bottom of the sea, and the fish shows Jonah the Temple of God. Then, the text states, "Hence we may learn that Jerusalem stands upon seven hills."[95] Jonah went to Jerusalem at the beginning of this midrash, and here he journeys past Jerusalem, which is located with the Temple of God at the bottom of the sea.

So Jerusalem in this midrash on Jonah shows that Jonah and his prophecy are connected to creation by placing the story during the fifth day of creation. The story takes place on the fifth day because it was on this day in the biblical narrative that the

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[93] *Pirke de Rebbe Eliezer* Chapter 10.
[94] *Pirke de Rebbe Eliezer* Chapter 10, Friedlander translation.
[95] Ibid.

"great sea monsters" were created, and these sea monsters, including the Leviathan, play a prominent role in *Pirke de-Rebbe Eliezer's* midrash on Jonah.[96] Jonah visits present-day Jerusalem at the beginning of the midrash, and then, in the belly of the fish, he visits Jerusalem of the future via the Temple of God. By adding the element of Jerusalem to the story, an additional layer is added. Jonah is truly transformed here by his journey in the fish. He, like Adam in the midrashim, goes on a journey from sin in disobeying God's word through repentance to ultimate redemption, as is demonstrated by his visit to Jerusalem in the depths of the ocean. The importance of Jerusalem to the Rabbis is made clear by this text; the city must be visited in the present and will serve as a reward in the future for those who are worthy.

5. Saul, Jonathan, and Jerusalem

A final midrash which inserts Jerusalem into a biblical narrative is that of the deaths of Jonathan and Saul. In the Bible, these two die in battle and then are buried. This midrash, from Numbers Rabbah, adds a whole new layer.[97] In the midrash, men from David's army cross the Jordan, retrieve the bones of Saul and Jonathan, cross back over the Jordan, and bring them to the outskirts of Jerusalem for burial. Then, David orders the residents of the city to come out of their homes to honor Saul and Jonathan. God is so pleased with this conduct that God sends down rain.

This narrative provides a nice ending and closure to this narrative. Additionally, bringing Jerusalem into the story as well as the rain serve as a symbol of redemption and resurrection. God is pleased with the people's conduct and rewards them with something

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[96] Genesis 1:21.
[97] Numbers Rabbah 8:4.

extremely valuable. Just as the midrash on Jonah shows the salvational aspect of Jerusalem, so, too, this midrash with its emphasis on paying respect to the fallen who will be buried close to the Holy City, portrays God who will one day redeem humanity as God resurrects the dry earth by using rain.

The midrashim which take biblical narratives and somehow infuse Jerusalem into them add elements of salvation into the text. The text becomes an example of how God will save and redeem the fallen and those who have sinned. By putting Jerusalem or the concept of Jerusalem into a particular text, the Rabbis reflect upon their own lives. The city becomes a metaphor for their lives; although it was destroyed, the city, like them, is destined for ultimate redemption. Jerusalem present is also Jerusalem eternal.

D. Sage Stories in Jerusalem

Many biblical stories are reset in Jerusalem, but there also exists in Rabbinic Literature many stories which do not come from the Bible at all. These stories, sometimes known as sage stories, may teach a valuable lesson. This section will examine certain sage stories which are set in Jerusalem, and demonstrate that by placing the story in Jerusalem, the author may be making a greater point about the nature of the city and its effect upon people who live or visit there.

1. The Importance of Torah Study in Jerusalem

Many sage stories take into account the destroyed Jerusalem, and how that destruction has influenced their lives. One such *sugiya,* from BT *Shabbat* 119b looks for

explanations for why the city was destroyed. Many reasons are given. The first is that Jerusalem was destroyed because the Sabbath was desecrated. The second reason is that the city was destroyed because *Shema* was not recited. Then, the text moves into issues of how people treat one another. The first reasons here is that Jerusalem was destroyed because the great and the small were considered equal. The second reason is because the residents of Jerusalem would not rebuke one another. The final reason given for the destruction is because the people demeaned Torah scholars.

This text has an interesting structure. It beings with specific ritual elements which were neglected, moves into general human conduct, and concludes with negative conduct toward one particularly revered group, the Torah scholars. Thus destruction according to this *sugiya,* is a direct result of people not observing the *mitzvot* and behaving badly towards scholars. The city does not automatically confer life and blessings, but the very survival of Jerusalem depends upon people observing the commandments, and treating one another humanly and with respect. When those elements are lost, the city can no longer stand. Torah must play a prominent role, and if it is degraded, then the city is lost.

A second *sugiya* dealing with destruction places a different emphasis. In this particular sugiya,[98] Rabbi Yose was walking along the road. He arrived at a ruin in Jerusalem and prays there. Elijah the prophet appears and reprimands Rabbi Yose for praying there, telling him that he should have prayed on the road and not in a place of ruin.

Like the first *sugiya* studied, this *sugiya* features the destroyed city as its focus. It is almost a post-script to the first *sugiya*: the city is destroyed because of human sinfulness.

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[98] BT *Berachot* 3a.

Prayer alone will not redeem or revive the city, and prayer also should certainly not occur in a place of destruction. Jerusalem, in this *sugiya,* is a godless place unsuitable for prayer. But the appearance of Elijah, the prophet, often associated with the Messiah, adds another element. Elijah's presence informs the reader that although Rabbi Yose's prayer is inappropriate at the present time, one day God will redeem the city and prayer will once again happen there. Even in the destroyed ruin of the city, a guarantee of redemption is underscored through the appearance of Elijah.

Both of these *sugiyot* are concerned with human behavior in Jerusalem; human behavior caused the destruction of the city, and presumably one day human behavior in the form of prayer will once again become acceptable. However, it is not only people who strengthen the city, but the city strengthens its people. In a separate *sugiya,*[99] a verse from Psalms is quoted: "Our feet are standing at your gates, Jerusalem."[100] The text then inquires of the meaning of this text. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's answer is that the gates of Jerusalem support the feet which are standing ready for battle, because even the gates of the city have immersed themselves in Torah study.

The first *sugiya* mentioned here claims that Jerusalem was destroyed because Torah scholars were demeaned. This *sugiya* asserts the opposite, that because Torah was so widely studied (even the walls were engaged in it), the city was able to stand and support its residents in a presumably victorious battle. Not only that, but the proof text strengthens this point: "For one day in your courtyards is better than a thousand sacrifices."[101] The "one day" mentioned in the following anonymous statement is said to

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[99] BT *Makkot* 10a.
[100] Psalm 122:3.
[101] Psalms 84:11.

refer to Torah study. Torah study is so important that it keeps the whole city and its residents alive, and its importance even surpasses the importance of offering sacrifices to God.

A final *sugiya* points directly to the importance of Torah study.[102] A family whose members would die young is mentioned, and Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai comes along and tells the family to study Torah and they will live. Miraculously, they study Torah and no family member dies young again. The study of Torah is life-giving to the city and its residents. The very survival of the city and its dwellers completely depend upon it. Jerusalem is therefore the place where those who study Torah thrive and when Torah study is demeaned, the whole city collapses.

2. Jerusalem and Purity

Jerusalem is not simply supported by Torah study. There are also certain midrashim which discuss Jerusalem in terms of purity. In the Sifra, whose focus is on the laws of purity in Leviticus, the following verse is quoted, "A person is subject to uncleanliness through plagues."[103] Yet, the Sifra asserts that Jerusalem is not subject to uncleanliness. Rabbi Judah nuances this, adding that he believes this only applies to the Temple.

This midrash derives from a *halachic* conversation about purity. The text is trying to understand the laws of uncleanliness, attempting to figure out when and to whom they apply. This section is especially telling, because the Bible describes how a house can become impure. Jerusalem then, contrasted with the house, cannot become impure. The city is somehow set above uncleanliness. But perhaps Rabbi Judah's view

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[102] BT *Rosh Hashanah* 18a.
[103] Leviticus 14:34.

is more realistic. He believes the city can become impure, and only the sanctuary, the very dwelling of God, is not subject to impurity. According to Rabbi Judah, the city, like a normal house, can become unclean. Thus, there is an element to this midrash of the very names for the city given in *Avot de Rebbe Natan.*[104] The city is subject to both positive and negative forces like any other city, but the Temple remains separate.

An additional text from the Sifra includes a discussion about the purity of Jerusalem.[105] The conversation here centers around whether a person who has had contact with the scapegoat is impure. Rabbi Judah says once the goat goes beyond the walls of Jerusalem, it is subject to uncleanliness. Rabbi Yose determines that the goat imparts uncleanliness once it reaches the ravine. Finally, Rabbi Simeon believes the goat imparts impurity only to the one who throws it into the ravine.

This text, like the other from Sifra, is concerned with laws of purity and if the city imparts a special status. All of the Rabbis seem to agree that the goat while still inside the city cannot impart impurities to anybody who comes in contact with it. Jerusalem, therefore, becomes a place of purity for all who dwell in it, even if they come into contact with impure things.

3. Jerusalem and the Nations

Jerusalem, besides being a city supported by Torah and being a pure place, is not always described positively in the midrashim. Two midrashim from the Sifre to Deuteronomy debate Jerusalem's place in the wider human community. The first text takes a negative view and the second, a more positive one.

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[104] See Chapter 3 p. 66.
[105] Sifra, Weiss ed. p. 134.

> "New Gods that came up of late (1 Kings 32:17)." So that whenever someone from another nation saw it, he would say, "This is an idol of the Jews," as it is said, "As my hand hath reached the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did exceed them of Jerusalem and of Samariah (Isaiah 10:10)." This shows that Jerusalem and Samaria supplied molds to all mankind.[106]

This midrash seems in line with the midrash at the beginning of the chapter which explains Moriah as the place where idol worship went out to all humanity.[107] This text is overtly negative, and points to Jerusalem as a place where the very molds, the blueprints of all idol-worship in the world began. In this portrayal, Jerusalem is an evil place where even the Jews are idol worshippers in the eyes of the other nations.

Yet this particular *piska* is balanced by a separate *piska* that comes to a completely opposite conclusion.[108] In this particular midrash, the nations of the world observe the Jews going up to Jerusalem. They would see them worshipping one God and eating only one kind of food, whereas among themselves, they worshipped many nations' gods and ate many nations' foods. Based on this, they decide that the Jews are the best nation and that they should cling to them. Jerusalem here becomes the ideal, not only for the Jews, but for the entire world, who are awed by the uniformity and discipline of practice by the Jews. Perhaps this midrash is only rabbinic fantasy, but it certainly demonstrates a pride in their practice. These two texts then, both from the Sifre to Deuteronomy, come to opposite conclusions; the first that Jerusalem is a place whence idol worship enters the world and the second, that Jerusalem and its strict monotheism, is a place to which the whole world aspires.

4. The Wisdom of Jerusalem's Children in Lamentations Rabbah

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[106] Sifre to Deuteronomy, *Piska 318:2.*
[107] See Chapter 3 p. 58.
[108] Sifre to Deuteronomy, *Piska 354:1.*

Jerusalem is a place of wisdom, where locals, especially children, outsmart foreign visitors. A series of sage stories in Lamentations Rabbah demonstrates this. In one story, an Athenian comes to Jerusalem, meets a local child, and gives him money so the child may bring him grapes. The child brings the man lousy grapes, and the man becomes upset. He then bets all of the grapes in a game with the child, but the child wins and takes all of the grapes.[109]

In another story, an Athenian comes to Jerusalem and again meets a child and gives him money, asking for food he can take with him. The child brings back salt. The man becomes angry and the child informs him that salt can indeed be eaten on the journey.[110]

In a final story, an Athenian comes to Jerusalem, meets a child, gives him money, and asks for eggs and cheese. The man asks the child if he knows which cheese comes from a white goat and which from a black goat. The child talks back and chastises the grown man for asking such a question, then poses a question of his own; if the man knows which egg came from a white hen and which egg from a black hen. [111]

These sage stories from Lamentations Rabbah demonstrate the Jerusalemite child's mental superiority over the grown Athenian. In all three stories, the Athenian makes reasonable requests of the child, who somehow turns the requests against the man and manages to humiliate him in the process. Jerusalem is a city where the residents are clever, at least as portrayed in these rabbinic stories. Like the *Pesikta Rabbati* midrash in which the nations of the world decide they should follow the Jews, these Lamentations

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[109] Lamentations Rabbah I, 1:6.
[110] Lamentations Rabbah I, 1:7.
[111] Lamentations Rabbah I, 1:9.

Rabbah midrashim are rabbinic fantasy wherein the conquerors of their city are portrayed as simple and easily manipulated. The Lamentations Rabbah stories demonstrate that the Rabbis are hopeful that one day, the superior intellectual capabilities of Jerusalem's residents will help to liberate their city from these simpletons.

Conclusion

Jerusalem is a place inevitably connected to human life, death, and eternal life. It is a place that can give wisdom to its residents, and its survival depends almost completely on Torah study. The city cannot survive without its residents engaged in study, and the residents cannot survive within the city without using their skills. Jerusalem is also a place of purity where even coming in contact with normally impure items may not make its residents impure. Jerusalem also is portrayed as a setting for many biblical stories which adds eschatological or redemptive elements to texts that originally lacked those elements. Sometimes Jerusalem is portrayed as a city like any other, and sometimes it is described as a city worse than others whence idolatry and evil emanate. Present-day Jerusalem is described by the Rabbis in a wide variety of different, sometimes conflicting ways, even as it is always associated with both the past and the future.

Chapter Four:

Future Visions of Jerusalem

Introduction

Jerusalem of the future cannot be separated from Jerusalem of the past or present. The city, created uniquely, existing as a unique entity unlike any place on earth, will continue to be a special place in the future. This chapter will explore various concepts surrounding expectations of Jerusalem's future. Section A will deal with its spatial aspects; namely the height and expansions of the restored city. Section B will focus on the relationship between earthly and heavenly Jerusalem, section C will explore the relationship between the rebuilding of the city and ultimate redemption. Jerusalem's future is eagerly anticipated by the Rabbis, who write about the city with an air of confidence. They seemed to know in their hearts and minds that this once great city would once again be redeemed along with the rest of humanity. Jerusalem's future holds a fascinating and complex place in the rabbinic worldview. This chapter will decipher exactly what Jerusalem meant to them as a unique place of hope and anticipation.

A. The Physical Description of the Future City

The concept of Jerusalem as a real city, which will be expanded and changed over time, is prominent throughout Second Temple and Midrashic Literature. The overarching thread running through these texts is that the city in its past and present state will look radically different in the future. Notions of Jerusalem's importance past and present, explored in the previous chapters, also influence the idea of Jerusalem's unique importance in the future. Just as the city, according to the Rabbis, was created in a unique manner and is markedly different from all other cities, Jerusalem will remain special in the Time to Come. This idea of Jerusalem's special status in the future will be

explored, focusing on three of its aspects that are found in a variety of texts; first, Jerusalem's height; second, the notion of adding material wealth and prosperity to the life of the city; and finally, Jerusalem's physical expansion beyond her current, "earthly" city limits. All of these point to the strongly held belief that Jerusalem has yet to see her finest days.

1. Jerusalem and Height

Concern with Jerusalem's height may be traced back to the Bible. Zecheriah 14:10 reads,

> Then the whole country shall become like the Arabah, from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. The latter, however, shall perch high up where it is, and shall be inhabited from the Gate of Benjamin to the site of the Old Gate, down to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses.[112]

This verse falls in the middle of one of the prophet's visions regarding future eschatological battles. He is very descriptive in utilizing the geography of the city, using real places that have already been named in relationship to historical figures and groups to paint a picture in the reader's mind. More interesting than all of this, however, is Zecheriah's assertion that although the land will become dry like the Aravah desert, Jerusalem will be placed on high and throughout all of the battles and destruction, will remain inhabited. The prophet is declaring quite literally that Jerusalem is destined to stay above the fray, physically and spiritually. The city will be spared destruction because of its height; a physical demonstration of God's protection.

This notion of height makes its way into Second Temple literature, specifically into texts that were explored in the chapter on Jerusalem's past. For example, the Psalms

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[112] Zecheriah 14:10, New JPS Translation.

of Solomon encourage Jerusalem to, "stand on a high place,"[113] where she can see the people from many directions streaming toward her. Here, as in the Zechariah text, it is clear that Jerusalem is higher than other places. Other midrashic texts, such as Sifre Deuteronomy *pisqa* 37, declares Jerusalem and the Temple's superiority based on their respective heights. Sifre Deuteronomy even adds an element of the future into the text by using the proof text from Isaiah 2:3, "Come let us go up to the mount of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob."

All of these texts clearly demonstrate a feeling of superiority and importance regarding the height of Jerusalem. Yet, it is when Jerusalem's future status is further explored that the conversations regarding height become more interesting and nuanced.

One such text that introduces many different ideas regarding Jerusalem's height is located in BT *Baba Batra*. The beginning of the *sugiya* reads as follows:

> And Rabba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will raise up Jerusalem three *parsiot* high, as it says, "Jerusalem hall perch up high where it is. (Zech 14:10)" And how do we know (it will be raised up) three *parsiot?* Rabba said, "An old man told me I saw the first Jerusalem, and it was three *parsiot."* Maybe you will say, "It will be painful to go up." Scripture states, "Who are those that float like a cloud/ like doves to their cote-windows? (Isa. 60:8)" Rav Papa said, "We learn from this that the height of a cloud is three *parsiot.*[114]

The opening idea of Jerusalem being raised up is taken directly from Zechariah 14:10 as the proof text indicates. However, a specific numerical value of three *parsiot* is added to the Zechariah text and then explored. According to the Jastrow, a *parsa* can be most accurately described as a "Persian mile."[115] It seems, therefore, that three *parsiot* is a great distance. An anonymous source asks how the value of three *parsiot* was

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[113] Psalms of Solomon 11:2-3.
[114] BT *Baba Batra* 75b.
[115] *A Dictionary of the Targumim, The Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, And the Midrashic Literature,* ed. Marcus Jastrow (Jerusalem: Horev Press, 1903), p. 1233.

determined, and proof is given that an old man saw the "first Jerusalem" and his measure of the city was three *parsiot.* Obviously, this proof is dubious, but it indicates that the Rabbis felt as if the new Jerusalem would be connected to the old: if the old Jerusalem measured three *parsiot* across, then certainly the "new" Jerusalem would share the same measurements. The idea of the raising up of Jerusalem from Zechariah is thus expanded, debated, and the conclusion is that the two Jerusalems, Jerusalem past and Jerusalem future, are linked through their physical dimensions.

The text explores the physicality by posing a problem. Three *parsiot* must have seemed awfully high to the Rabbis, for they worry that it could cause pain to ascend. However, the Rabbis immediately reassure themselves by using a proof text from Isaiah, which connects humanity to clouds and birds, giving the impression that in the future, the earthly groundings of humanity will no longer be a factor. Jerusalem is the same height as a cloud, and if Isaiah's prophecy declares that humanity may be raised to the same heights as the clouds and the birds, then humanity can also be raised up without pain in order to enter into Jerusalem on high.

This desire to measure Jerusalem's exact height is also found in Genesis Rabbah.[116] This particular midrash parallels Jacob's first dream in which he sees the angels ascending and descending the ladder which is grounded in the earth and stretches into the heavens. The Rabbis use the first part of their interpretation to make a point about the future Temple's height above the original one. According to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, "The Temple on high is only eighteen *mil* above the Temple below."[117] Much like *Baba Batra*, the author produces a specific numerical value to denote the exact

[116] Genesis Rabbah, 69:17.
[117] Ibid.

height of the Temple. However, here the proof comes from the hermeneutical method of interpretation known as *gematria* in which Hebrew words and letters are also assigned numerical value. The value of eighteen is supposedly derived from Jacob's comment that he makes upon seeing the ladder when he declares, "*V'ZEH sha'ar hashamayim.* (And this is the gateway to heaven.)"[118] The word *v'zeh* (this) is made up of the letters *vav, zion,* and *hay*, which when added together equal the number eighteen. Therefore, the future Temple will stand eighteen *mil* above the original one.

2. The City's Expansions

These two aforementioned texts share a desire to measure accurately the height of the celestial city and Temple. Other texts examine the height of the heavenly city, although not so much with numbers in mind. Instead, the majority of these texts focus on measuring Jerusalem by using benchmarks other than numbers. One of these texts is in BT *Pesachim,* which states, "In the future the Holy One will enlarge Jerusalem so that it will occupy the space a horse could cover running from morning until midday."[119] This text may be seen in comparison to both the *Baba Batra* and the Genesis Rabbah texts previously analyzed. Like the first two, this text also seeks to categorize the size of Jerusalem. However, rather than use a number as a measurement, it uses the distance a horse is able to run in half a day's time. This seems like a great distance, but when one considers the rocky terrain of the area around Jerusalem, it does not seem quite so enormous. In any case, this text like the previous two does two things. First, it imposes a limit on Jerusalem's future expanded size. It does not allow Jerusalem to become

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[118] Genesis 28:17.
[119] BT *Pesachim* 50a, R. Hammer translation.

infinitely enlarged, as will other texts. Additionally, it uses measurements that most likely would have been at least somewhat familiar to the ancient audience. Finally, this text unlike the other two does not mention Jerusalem's height, and it is unclear whether the city will be expanded horizontally, vertically, or both. This text is not so much concerned with placing Jerusalem in the sky, but more with demonstrating to the ancient audience that Jerusalem is going to become a huge city in the future.

Midrash Tanhuma ha-Nidpas expands upon the idea of Jerusalem's enlargement seen in BT *Pesachim,* but it makes the city even greater. Here, there is no limit imposed on how big Jerusalem can become.

> You will find in the World to Come that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will expand Jerusalem, as it is said, "The structure became wider from level to level" (Ezek 41:7) -- Until it reaches the heavens. Once she reaches the heavens, she will say, "This place is narrow." What will the Holy One, Blessed be He, do? He will bring clouds and elevate (her) from heaven to the second firmament and thus to all (of the firmaments). Said Rabbi Eliezer, "Until she reaches the Throne of Glory."[120]

All the previous texts imposed limits on Jerusalem's height and expansion. Here, she will be expanded and when she becomes so large, she will ascend through another firmament into another level of heaven. Eventually, she will reach up to the celestial throne of glory and presumably to God's own dwelling place. Whereas the first texts kept Jerusalem somewhat firmly measured, this one implies that there is no real limit to her expansion. Additionally, this text, like the one from *Baba Batra,* makes use of the cloud metaphor, here used not as a vehicle for human beings, but as a lifting device for God to keep elevating the city whenever she runs out of space. This text, perhaps because of its usage of the heavenly *sefirot,* does not appear to be as concerned with how

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[120] *Tanhuma ha-Nidpas* to *Tzav* 12:1.

humanity will reach the city. Its focus is more on the heavenly setting and nature of Jerusalem.

This text has a parallel in *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana.*[121] The text follows the same idea that Jerusalem will be expanded until it is so large God has to carry it up on clouds to the next heavenly realm. However, the text uses a different proof text, this one from Isaiah and continues by adding an additional element of God protecting the city by acting as a wall of fire. This same idea is found in Exodus Rabbah, where God declares, "When Zion is rebuilt, I shall be a wall unto her."[122] In both cases, Jerusalem will be a city that is protected by God. Not only will God physically expand the city, but also God will add to it a wall of fire that will serve as Divine protection.

3. Additions to Jerusalem

This concept of additions being made to the city finds its source in the next portion of the *Baba Batra* text. After the Rabbis discuss the future city's height, their discussion turns to what exactly will be added to the city. They come to the following conclusions:

> Reish Lakish said, "In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will add to Jerusalem one thousand gardens, one thousand towers, and one thousand fortresses. Each of these (additions) will be like Tziporri in its prosperity. Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rav Papi in the name of Rabbi Joshua of Sichnin, "If, in the world to come, there will be three Jerusalems, each one will have thirty dwellings upon it. If there will be thirty Jerusalems, then each one will have three dwellings, one over the other.[123]

Not only will Jerusalem be physically expanded and protected, but she, too, will be beautified through gardens, and further defended by fortresses and towers. Additionally, Jerusalem is compared to another city, Tzipori (Sepphoris), a place known for the

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[121] *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* 20:7.
[122] Exodus Rabbah 40:1.
[123] BT *Bava Batra* 75b.

interactions between Romans and Jews. In comparing Jerusalem to Tzipori, the author is making a statement that Jewish cities will be as prosperous if not more so than Roman ones.

This concept of Jerusalem having many gardens ties it into an eschatological framework. The city becomes linked to the Garden of Eden, and in so doing, is joined both to past and future. Sandra Shimoff writes, "These gardens represent a new, eschatological Gan Eden."[124] The beginning of time is linked with the future and the end of time. The city becomes not only the city of the future, but the eternal place linked to the first and the last gardens.

Jerusalem in the future is a city which will be expanded both in terms of height and in terms of material wealth. She is a city destined to look very different than her appearance in the present day. The Rabbis envision a place that will be so large, it may even reach all the way to God's throne. Jerusalem, the expanded city, will be unlike any other city on earth.

B. Heavenly and Earthly Links: One Jerusalem or Two?

Jerusalem is clearly destined to be a unique city in terms of what will happen to it in the future. What is less clear is how the future city will emerge from the current one. To this end, the Rabbis focused on two differing concepts of Jerusalem, *Yerushalayim shel mata,* or earthly Jerusalem, and *Yerushalayim shel ma'ala,* or celestial Jerusalem. To look strictly at these Hebrew translations, one would conclude that these concepts are polar opposites; *mata* means below and *ma'ala* means above. However, the ways in

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[124] Sandra R. Shimoff, "Gardens: From Eden to Jerusalem," *Journal For the Study of Judaism* 26,2 (1995), 155.

which these concepts develop over time suggests otherwise. This section will demonstrate the interplay of these two concepts.

The root of the idea of two Jerusalem's, a heavenly one emerging from the earthly, can be derived from Isaiah, Chapter Six. This chapter describes the prophet's vision of various angels calling out God's praise in the holy celestial dwelling. The prophet is given the gift of prophecy, and then he is told what will become of the earth. "But while a tenth part yet remains in it, it shall repent. It shall be ravaged like the terabinth and the oak, of which stumps are left even when they are felled: its stump shall be a holy seed."[125] So even as the earth is destroyed, new life will grow from the old. The remainder will sprout anew as a "holy seed," allowing new life to flourish. The new Temple and thus the new Jerusalem by extension, according to this philosophy which will be played out in later midrashim, are dependant on the old even as they mark the beginning of the new, future time.

This line of thinking based on the Isaiah text certainly makes its way into the rabbinic tradition, but it is a text from Hosea that serves more commonly as a proof text for the creation of the celestial Jerusalem. The text comes in the middle of one of the prophet's many rebukes of Israel. God is quoted as saying, "For I am God and not man/ the Holy One among you/ And I will not enter into the city."[126] This somewhat ambiguous idea of God not entering into the city serves as an opening for the Rabbis to question and debate this statement in terms of earthly and heavenly Jerusalem.

In addition to these two biblical texts, there are others which precede the Rabbis that most likely had an impact upon their thinking. Although Second Temple texts, like

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[125] Isaiah 6:13, New JPS translation.
[126] Hosea 11:9.

the Biblical ones, do not explicitly use the terms *yerushalayim shel mata* or *yerushalayim shel ma'ala,* they do indicate a curiosity about Jerusalem and its heavenly and earthly traits. The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch mentions that heavenly Jerusalem "is prepared beforehand here from the time when I took counsel to make paradise."[127] Therefore, as Jerusalem was connected to the past using the gardens, likewise here heavenly Jerusalem is portrayed as having been created alongside paradise or Gan Eden. The text continues to speak about how the current Temple is not the same one as the future one. Again connecting the future to the past, the text states that the future Temple was revealed to Adam, but then was concealed upon his sin. This text therefore, although it does not explicitly mention the celestial Jerusalem, does demonstrate the notion of the creation of two separate entities. There is a Temple, but there is also one that was created at the beginning of time, revealed to Adam and then concealed, which will be revealed again at the End of Days. This brings up another point which will work its way through the interplay of earthly and heavenly Jerusalem; that they are dependant both on each other as well as on human behavior.

Another Second Temple text, Fourth Ezra, includes two passages which discuss the appearance of the future city. In one of Ezra's prophecies, the prophet declares, "Then shall the city that now is invisible appear, and the land which is now concealed be seen."[128] The second text reads that no person should "come into the field where there is no foundation of any building, for in the place where the City of the Most High was about to be revealed, no building or work of man could endure."[129] The first text shares the

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[127] Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 4:3.
[128] IV Ezra 7:26, Charlesworth edition.
[129] IV Ezra 10:54, Charlesworth edition.

notion about concealing and revealing with the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch text: the heavenly Jerusalem exists, but it is invisible and one day it will reappear. Additionally, the notion of a "concealed land" makes its way into this text, suggesting that there may be more to the celestial than simply the city itself. The second text also shares a commonality with the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, namely that the building, whether that be the Temple or another structure, will eventually be replaced by something more magnificent that will be revealed in the future. What is different about these two verses is that they do not make reference to human beings as partners in this work. Whereas in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch text, Adam is responsible for the Temple's initial disappearance, here there are no signs of human involvement in bringing about the celestial city. All of this will happen when God determines the time to be right.

A final Second Temple text, the Book of Enoch, takes the concepts of something new replacing the old, and specifies what the prophet believes is going to happen. He uses very specific imagery, allowing his notion of the new replacing the old to become concretized in the mind of the reader:

> And I stood up to see till they folded up that old house; and carried off all the pillars, and all the beams and ornaments of the house were at the same time folded up with it, and they carried it off and laid it in a place in the south of the land. And I saw till the Lord of the sheep brought a new house greater and loftier than the first, and set it up in the place of the first which had been folded up.[130]

God here becomes the shepherd, both the figure who leads the sheep and the one who brings the new house and places it exactly where the first house stood. The new house does not hover above the old as the previous section may have described, rather it is in the exact same place. The celestial will replace the earthly, but it will be "greater and loftier," and it will not come to be until the old house is folded up. Unlike the previous

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[130] Enoch 90:28, Charlesworth edition.

Second Temple texts which imply the celestial had been created and is simply waiting for the proper time to be revealed, here it appears that the celestial will not come into existence until the end of the earthly. The two are dependant on one another, but only with the destruction of the earthly will come the creation of the heavenly.

Second Temple texts point to the idea that people are considering a separation of Jerusalem into heavenly and earthly realms, but it is not until the beginnings of agaddic literature in the Talmud and early homiletical midrashim that the phrases *yerushalayim shel mata* and *yerushalayim shel ma'ala* are actually used. The earliest example of this can be found in the Babylonian Talmud tractate *Ta'anit.*[131] This text explores the aforementioned verse of Hosea 11:9, "I will not enter unto the city," as the Rabbis try to determine the verse's meaning. The text is used, and Rabbi Yochanan interprets Hosea's words to mean, "I will not enter the celestial Jerusalem until I enter the earthly one.." After Yochanan's statement, an anonymous question is posed, "Is there a heavenly Jerusalem? *(Yerushalayim shel ma'ala)*" The Talmud answers, "yes," and provides another proof text, this one from Psalms 122:3. The verse from Psalms speaks of Jerusalem as a city connected, *huvra,* together. The root used is *chet bet resh,* which can also denote friendship and unity. So Rabbi Joshua ben Levi concludes this particular discussion by declaring that the proof text's real meaning is that "It means a city which makes all Israel into one fellowship (*chaverim*)."

This text mentions celestial Jerusalem, questions its existence, and then affirms that it is indeed a real place. Interestingly, the interpretation from Psalms seems to connect the unity of the city with the notion that earthly and celestial Jerusalem is one place.

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[131] BT *ta'anit* 5a.

There is no separation between the two, rather it seems as if the celestial Jerusalem must emerge as a completed, knit-together version of the earthly one. Another way to interpret this would be that celestial Jerusalem is earthly Jerusalem, just a perfected, unified version of it. Additionally, Rabbi Yochanan's interpretation of the Hosea verse indicates the very humanistic nature of this text. God will not enter into the heavenly city until God enters the earthly one. Thus, the very existence of the heavenly city as a place where God dwells cannot happen until God first enters into the earthly city. In other words, the only way in which heavenly Jerusalem may come into existence is through God's presence literally entering unto the earthly realm. Unlike the Second Temple literature, there is no mention in this text of concealed or revealed places; rather the two Jerusalem's are completely dependent on one another. Eventually, the two cities will exist, woven together with divinity and humanity likewise intertwined.

Tanhuma ha-Nidpas takes the ideas found in Ta'anit and changes them around.[132] It begins by stating that the throne of glory on high is distinct from the original one on earth. Then it continues by declaring that celestial Jerusalem is located opposite earthly Jerusalem. Thus, unlike the *Ta'anit* text, this text makes it clear that there are two separate Jerusalems. It, therefore, shares more in common with the Second Temple texts, which are concerned about showing the separate existence of the two cities. However, then the Tanhuma text uses the same Psalms proof-text that *Ta'anit* has used, declaring that heavenly and earthly Jerusalem will one day be knit together. This text seems slightly confused about whether or not heavenly and earthly Jerusalem are separate entities or the same. Perhaps it is trying to demonstrate that they are separate, but there

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[132] Tanhuma ha-Nidpas, *pikkudei* 1.

exists potential for them to be unified. One day, in the messianic times, (the text invokes the common phrase asking for the End of Days to happen now of *bimhaira b'yameinu*) the two will exist together.[133]

The idea of both a celestial and earthly Jerusalem also is found in the Midrash on Psalms.[134] This particular midrash begins in the same manner as the *ta'anit* text, with the conversation surrounding whether or not celestial Jerusalem exists. However, it expands upon the theme of the two Jerusalems being "knitted together" by explaining that it is the city itself which causes people to become "knit together." Much as Jerusalem's name is seen as giving *tzedek* to the residents of the city, here the text stresses that the city is able to unite the various tribes into one unity, who are then able to go up to the Temple as one to worship God. So, in this midrash, not only is the city unified as a whole, but it is responsible for the unification of the residents of the city. The future Jerusalem will be a place where humanity is one.

This notion of the heavenly Jerusalem as a place of ultimate unification can be seen most clearly in the tractate *Avot de-Rebbe Natan.* Here, the author notes that the city will expand to be so large that all nations and kingdoms will be gathered into it. Thus, because the city's expansion will be so great, all people will automatically come under its jurisdiction and will presumably become unified as one. Much like the idea in Midrash Psalms of the tribes becoming unified, *Avot de-Rebbe Natan* looks to the day when all peoples on the entire earth will be gathered into the heavenly Jerusalem.

The concepts both of heavenly and of earthly Jerusalem can be traced back to the Bible, and the midrashim described in this section comment upon the interaction between

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[133] For a parallel text, see *Midrash Lekach Tov, Shemot* 23.
[134] Midrash on Psalms 122:4.

these two sometimes separate, sometimes intertwined cities. Jerusalem of the future is a city with dualistic tendencies; she can exist on earth and on heaven, possibly at the same time, possibly not. Whatever the case, it is clear that for the Rabbis, Jerusalem has the potential to become a holy meeting place of the divine and the earthly, a place where both realms will eventually intersect.

C. On Comfort and Ultimate Redemption

Jerusalem of the future will be a place that will provide comfort and shelter to her residents and, in certain cases, to the entire world. In addition to expanding physically and being considered a celestial realm, the Rabbis determine that she is destined to serve as a place of justice, mercy, and ultimate redemption. After the tumultuous existence of the city, when human history comes to an end, Jerusalem will be the place which is able to provide humanity with so much for which it longs.

One of the earliest texts which looks to Jerusalem as more than a physical place can be found in a tradition by Philo. It comes from his Treatise on Dreams, which consists of many philosophical visions and ideas in which he outlines his idea of where the "City of God" can truly be found:

> But that which is called by the Hebrews the City of God is Jerusalem, which name being interpreted means, "the sight of peace." So do not look for the city of the living God in the region of the earth, for it is not made of wood or of stone, but seek it in the soul which is free form war, and which proposes to those who are endowed with acuteness of sight a contemplative and peaceful life.[135]

According to Philo, Jerusalem does not really exist, at least not in the form of an existing city made of material elements. Rather, for Philo, heavenly Jerusalem exists inside of each person. Every individual has the opportunity to find his or her own

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[135] Philo, "On Dreams," Book 2, p. 406.

personal Jerusalem. There is no sense here of a communal Jerusalem, or a Jerusalem meant to serve the tribes or all humanity as was demonstrated by the midrashim in the previous section. Rather, Jerusalem is a philosophic notion of a place of individual comfort and peace.

Philo's idea, that Jerusalem is a place of peace and tranquility, makes its way through the sphere of Jewish textual tradition, but no other text seems to understand Jerusalem in the same philosophical vein. Rather, Jerusalem is seen as a place of redemption for the entire people. It will not be a place sought by individuals, but rather by the community as a whole. An early example of this can be found in a story from the Sifre to Deuteronomy.[136] In this tale, Rabbis Gamliel, Eleazer ben Azariah, Joshua, and Akiba are making their way up to Jerusalem. When they reach the Temple mount, they see a fox scampering away from the Holy of Holies. Clearly they are in the ruins of the Temple, and weeds and small creatures have overrun the place. All of the Rabbis weep at this sight except for Rabbi Akiva, who laughs at the situation. Of course, all the Rabbis are horrified by Akiva's reaction and demand an explanation. Akiva brings up two different prophecies; those of Uriah, a First Temple Priest, and Zechariah, a Second Temple Priest. According to Sifre, Uriah's prophecy is that the city will be destroyed, and Zecheriah's prophecy is that the city will be rebuilt. The text continues that Zecheriah's prophecy can only happen after Uriah's. Therefore, Akiva laughs because he has seen Uriah's prophecy fulfilled and he now knows that Zecheriah's is destined to be fulfilled as well. Upon hearing Akiva's words, the other Rabbis declare, "You have comforted us, you have comforted us."

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[136] Sifre Deuteronomy *pisqa* 43.

Among the group of Rabbis, only Akiva has the foresight and audacity to laugh at what could be perceived as such a depressing situation. It is as if he is somehow able to look at the scene through a different lens than the other Rabbis. Akiva knows that there can be no redemption without destruction, that one is dependant on the other. Like the Philo text, this one clearly demonstrates that ultimately Jerusalem cannot be found in the physical world. Jerusalem, in its future perfected state, exists as an idea, and that idea can be discovered intellectually and philosophically as Philo did, or through textual interpretation like Akiva. Jerusalem and her future are therefore more than just a city of stone or wood, it is a comforting concept that exists in the mind.

This idea that Jerusalem can bring peace and tranquility is expanded upon to include other sentiments that may accompany the ushering in of the celestial state. Chief among these sentiments is that of righteousness. In many midrashic texts, the Rabbis explain that only through righteousness can Jerusalem be redeemed. This manifests itself in the Babylonian Talmud in four different texts.

The first Talmud text comes from Tractate *Megillah*.[137] This particular *sugiya* is interested in trying to figure out the order of the *Amidah*. The Rabbis ask why each blessing follows a particular one, and their insights into the end of the *Amidah,* which includes blessings for righteousness, Jerusalem, and peace, are especially interesting. The Rabbis explain that the blessing for the righteous follows the blessing for the wicked because once the wicked perish, "the horn of the righteous will be exalted." The next verse of the *sugiya* justifies the placement of the blessing for Jerusalem next

[137] BT *Megillah* 18a.

because, "the horn of the righteous will be exalted in Jerusalem." The proof text used is Psalm 122:6, and it reads, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem/ those who love you will be serene." Following the prayer for Jerusalem comes the prayer for the restoration of the Kingdom of David because, "Once Jerusalem is established, David will come." For the Rabbis, the End of Days will follow the order set in the *Amidah:* first the wicked will perish, then the righteous will be exalted which will bring into being the celestial Jerusalem which will be followed by the messiah. What is notable too here is that righteousness and peace are both mentioned regarding Jerusalem. Jerusalem will come into being because of righteous people, and the proof text clearly mentions that one should pray for Jerusalem's peace; righteousness and peace are essentially interchangeable in this instance.

There is a parallel in the Babylonian Talmud between this idea of the exaltation of the righteous being linked to the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In Tractate *Berachot*, Rabbi Yochanan explains that when the Temple was destroyed, so, too, were the homes of the righteous.[138] In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will restore the homes to be inhabited once again. Following this, like in the *Megillah* text, the *sugiya* concludes with the idea that just as Mount Zion (the Temple) will be restored, so, too, will the homes of the righteous. Both are dependant on divine action and on one another. According to this mindset, there can be no Temple existing without righteous people and the restoration of both will occur concurrently. In both of these texts, righteousness and restoration lead to ultimate redemption.

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[138] BT *Berachot* 58b.

It is not only the righteous whom the Talmud juxtaposes to Jerusalem. In fact, the Talmud also compares Jerusalem's state to that of a woman; in one instance a *niddah,* a woman in a state of menstrual impurity,[139] and, in another, a widow.[140] In both cases, the hope is that Jerusalem, like the tragic woman, will be restored. The texts are essentially parallel. They begin with the opening of Lamentations: "She that was great among the nations/ Has become like a widow."[141] They then both go on to compare Jerusalem to a widow, with the *ta'anit* text adding the *niddah* element of impurity. In both texts, the Rabbis see the woman's state as temporary; the period of *niddah* will pass, the husband will somehow return. Just as Akiva sees Jerusalem destroyed, but knows the future will bring redemption, so, too, do these four Talmudic texts express their conviction that Jerusalem will be the place of ultimate redemption.

Righteousness is certainly the prevailing element surrounding Jerusalem's future restoration in the Talmud, but this becomes expanded in other midrashim. For instance, Deuteronomy Rabbah expands upon the notion of peace, and announces that peace is so great, that God will announce the redemption of Jerusalem with peace. [142] The proof text used comes from Isaiah 52:7, and it states, "How wonderful on the mountains/ The footsteps of the herald/ Announcing peace and heralding goodness/ Announcing salvation." Thus, here peace, goodness, and salvation all come together. Not only will Jerusalem be restored with righteousness, but when Jerusalem is restored, peace will come as well. This idea seems to match Philo's notion, that

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[139] BT *Ta'anit* 20a.
[140] BT *Sanhedrin* 104a.
[141] Lamentations 1:1, new JPS translation.
[142] Deuteronomy Rabbah 5:15.

Jerusalem, as the City of God, is really synonymous with peace and wholeness. However, here Philo's inner peace of the soul is transformed into a place of wholeness for all humanity.

It is not only peace and righteousness that will herald the final redemption. According to Midrash Tanhuma ha-Nidpas, the Holy One will bless Jerusalem and Zion (Zion here referring to the entire Land of Israel and not just the city) only when the city will be rebuilt and the exiles will be ingathered.[143] So, in addition to peace and righteousness, the city must serve as a place of return for all of those who were exiled. God's blessing on the city, according to this text, must be accompanied by a massive wave of people returning to Jerusalem. The proof text used, again from Psalms, mentions that the blessing will come, "Like the dew of Hermon that falls upon the mountains of Zion."[144] The blessing will therefore be spread over a wide area, and the entire land will be included in the city's redemption. The blessing will blanket the entire land like the dew blankets the land. Dew is made of water which is a symbol of salvation and redemption. Jerusalem's redemption is contingent upon and goes hand in hand with human redemption.

Jerusalem as the place of ultimate redemption is also connected to light. The Second Chapter cited a text from *Derech Eretz Zuta*, in which Jerusalem is compared to an eye and the future Temple allegorized as the reflection of the light in the eye. Seen through a futuristic lens, this text takes on a different meaning. The eye, or Jerusalem in the future, will serve to reflect and also spread light into the world. This concept is expanded in the *Yalkut Shimoni,* where the text states that Jerusalem is the

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[143] Tanhuma ha-Nidpas, *Ki Tavo* 4 Hammer translation.
[144] Psalm 133:3.

light of the world.[145] However, this differs somewhat from the *Derech Eretz Zuta* text. Instead of the Temple being the reflection of the center of the eye, the question is posed of who is the light of Jerusalem? The answer of course is God. So here, the center of everything, the source of ultimate light is God who gives light to Jerusalem, which in turn gives light to the entire world. In the future, Jerusalem will be the beacon of light radiating to every corner of the earth,

The ancient authors and Rabbis believe that in the future, Jerusalem will be a city unlike any other; it will be expanded and physically changed, it will have a heavenly nature, and its restoration will accompany a new day of righteousness, peace, and even light for all humanity. The future is closely connected to the past and present, but it is clear that the texts all demonstrate a confidence that despite the current situation of Jerusalem as an earthly, mundane, and even desolate place, the future of the city is filled with Divine promise.

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[145] *Yalkut Shimoni* vol. II, *remez* 501.

CONCLUSION

This Thesis has explored the relationship of the Rabbis to images of Jerusalem past, present, and future through the use of a variety of midrashim as well as Second Temple texts. It traced various concepts of Jerusalem from the Bible through the period of the *Yalkutim,* the medieval midrashic anthologies, and then organized based on categories of time.

The first chapter served as a foundation for the other three. It observed the development of concepts surrounding Jerusalem in the Bible. Jerusalem was portrayed as a place in which God appears, a city to be conquered, the spiritual and military capital of a nation, and a city longed for from a distance.

Chapter Two examined rabbinic perceptions of Jerusalem at its inception. It began with an exploration on the creation of the city, looking at Jerusalem situated at the navel and center of the world, and continuing with Jerusalem's association with height and mountains. All the texts, from Jubilees to *Derech Eretz Zuta,* mention Jerusalem's unique position as a city located in the geographic and spiritual center of the world. Jerusalem is a city created as a place of light and life-giving sustenance upon which the existence of all of humanity is dependant.

Chapter Three evaluated Jerusalem from a present-day perspective. It examined how the Rabbis felt about the place of the city in their own, or in other people's lives. The chapter began by examining the names of Moriah and Jerusalem, and how interpretations of the various names affected the city. Then the chapter moved into examining biblical stories that were reformatted to take place in or around Jerusalem. By placing Adam in the vicinity of Jerusalem, for example, the midrash adds an element of

redemption to the biblical story of humanity's first sin.[146] Finally, the chapter examined sage stories about Jerusalem, discovering how the Rabbis viewed Jerusalem's residents. Interestingly, the city by itself does not give life. Her residents must still engage themselves in Torah in order to survive.[147]

Chapter Four was an exploration into images of Jerusalem's future. It began by examining, like the first chapter, the physicality of the city, only this time, from what will happen to the city during the Days to Come. Next, the chapter examined the relationship between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalems, beginning with a question posed in the Talmud as to whether or not heavenly Jerusalem exists and coming to the conclusion that indeed it does or will exist together or in relationship to the earthly city. Finally, this final chapter examined the city as a place that will bring redemption and comfort to humanity.

Through the process of creating this Thesis, I learned a great deal about Jerusalem. Above all, the city is a place that defies easy analysis or description. The texts I examined were nuanced and complicated, often portraying different or even contradictory points of view. However, I do believe I was able to answer some of my overarching questions. Jerusalem was created as a holy city, a place destined for greatness. Yet, as special as the city is, Jerusalem would be nothing without *ahavat tzion,* without the people who love and dedicate their whole existence to this place. Rabbi Eliezer may or may not have become a great teacher of Torah without undertaking his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but it is doubtful the City would mean so much to so many

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[146] See Chapter 3, p. 69.
[147] See Chapter 3, p. 79.

without continued interaction with the city, physically and spiritually, past, present, and future.

Perhaps for me, the text that I related to the most was the one used in both the past and future chapters on Jerusalem; the text in *Derech Eretz Zuta.*[148] This text offers, in a few verses, an explanation of the founding of the city by comparing it to a living human being through its similarity to the eye, and a hope for the future with the notion that the Temple and the future, perfected city exist as a reflection of our best selves, and of our most sacred and hopeful visions. Above all, Jerusalem must always remain in our sight, whether that be figuratively or literally, if we are to live full, covenanted lives in relationship to the Holy Blessed One. The midrashim I translated, read, and analyzed reminded me that Jerusalem, in its mundane form, is a reflection of our own insecurities and struggles, but in its celestial form, represents the hope for peace and completion for all of humanity.

This Thesis examined a great many texts, but it also purposefully left many issues unresolved or unexamined due to limitations of time and focus. For example, there is an enormous corpus of midrashim which focus on the destruction of the city. I felt as if there was simply too much material to explore in depth, so I chose to focus on the texts describing Jerusalem's destruction only relationship to its resurrection and redemption.

This Thesis examined texts from a wide range of time; from Genesis all the way to the *Yalkut Shimoni,* which can be dated approximately to the Fourteenth century CE. However, these texts are but one small fraction of the corpus of Jewish writings about Jerusalem. This Thesis did not address the Biblical Commentators' views of Jerusalem,

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[148] See Chapter 2, p. 47, and Chapter 4, p 104.

philosophical writings of the medieval or modern periods, nor the whole genre of codal literature. It would be interesting to see how these texts view Jerusalem, its importance and symbolism, and whether they carry over themes from the classic midrashim and Talmud.

Another issue that this Thesis did not really address was the importance of Jerusalem for other faiths. Obviously the city is holy to Christians as the place of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to Muslims as the place of Mohammed's night journey. However, I felt that this limited Thesis could not do these traditions justice, so instead, they remain for continued research.

Jerusalem is still very much alive and enigmatic. Throughout my year living there, I was amazed at the constant contrasts between the modern and ancient, between the sacred and profane. I could be dancing with friends in a modern night club in the Russian Compound and twenty minutes later, be *davening* at the Western Wall (a route I actually did follow one late night).

My view of Jerusalem today is that it is a very earthly city, with the same problems as any other modern metropolis and a few issues unique unto itself. However, writing this Thesis showed me that I actually have something in common with the Rabbis. I live in the present, in an imperfect world with imperfect people somewhat obsessed with a very imperfect city. Yet, my prayers and my heart always reach toward Jerusalem because I know she, at the same time, is a magnificent symbol of perfection. I, like the Rabbis, believe that someday, Jerusalem on earth will become more heavenly than earthly, more welcoming than divided, more holy than degrading. Jerusalem is that

reflection forever in my eyes, and one day I pray that I will have the privilege to behold her as a place of beauty and peace, as God's Temple for all humanity on earth.

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