

לזכות הרה"ת שלום דוב בער שיחי'
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לשנת הצלחה בגו"ר



YERUSHAI

HASHEM'S
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ירושלם הבנויה בעיר שחברה לה יחדיו

(תהלים קכב, ג)

YERUSHALAYIM

An overview of the city of Yerushalayim, its significance in the Rebbe's Torah, and his relentless call for its integrity. Presented in connection with the Rebbe's kapitel this year—Tehillim 122.

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Yerushalayim. The very name evokes reverence, and love, in the Jewish heart. It is synonymous with holiness, with beauty, and is tied up in millennia of hopes and aspirations. Millions have longed to get but a glimpse of the city. Those unable to reach it in life sought to do so in death.

So central is this city to Yiddishkeit, that its name is repeated over and over in Jewish prayer, every single day. In Shemoneh Esrei we pray for the restoration of Hashem's Shechinah to Tzion, in Birchah Hamazon we ask for the rebuilding of Yerushalayim.

Its significance goes back to the beginning of time, when Hashem took soil from Har Hamoriah and used it to form the first human. It was the place where Avraham Avinu displayed his devotion to Hashem by binding his son Yitzchok as a sacrifice, where Yaakov Avinu dreamt of the ascending and descending angels and was told by Hashem of his place in creation and the destiny of his children.

The sacred city was later transformed into a base of power, where Dovid Hamelech set up his court. It was from there that he waged war against the enemies of Hashem and the Jewish people.

Upon achieving peace and supremacy in the region, his son Shlomo Hamelech set out to complete the monumental task of building a home for Hashem on earth, a physical

structure to contain a spiritual and unfathomable being. Shlomo expressed the paradox in his exclamation "האמנם ישב אלוקים על הארץ-הנה השמים ושמי השמים לא יכלכלוך, ואף כי י?—Has Hashem indeed settled on earth? Behold, the heavens cannot contain You, can it be that that this house can?!"

This paradox was especially clear in the placement of the Aron in the Kodosh Hakodashim, which didn't take up any physical space, a violation of the most basic laws of physics. This supernatural phenomenon highlighted the uniquely sublime nature of the place, where nature was suspended to make space for the Divine.

Another special quality of Yerushalayim is mentioned in Tehillim: "ירושלים הבנוי כעיר שחבורה לה יחדיו".¹ The Yerushalmi comments on this possuk "עיר שחבורה לה יחדיו-עיר שהיא עושה" "כל ישראל חברים". Yerushalayim has an extraordinary ability to effect unity among the Jewish people. The Rebbe points out that this function of Yerushalayim has practical ramifications in the physical world, regarding the consumption of korbanos, and the trustworthiness of all Yidden in Yerushalayim² regarding the Tahor status of Trumos and Maasros³. Another way to highlight this concept is the fact that ירושלים לא נחלקה לשבטים—it was not included in the division of

THE NAME "YERUSHALAYIM"

What is the source of its name?

Its first mention in the Torah is when Malchitzedek, identified by Chazal as Shem ben Noach, brings a tribute of bread and wine to Avraham Avinu after his victory over the four kings. Malchitzedek's title is king of Shalem, Yerushalayim's original name.

After Akeidas Yitzchak, the Torah tells us that Avraham renamed the site of the Akeidah as "Hashem Yireh," to symbolize how this is a mountain where Hashem can be seen. Putting the two names together gives us the name Yerushalayim, honoring the two tzaddikim, Malchitzedek and Avraham.

Looking deeper, the composite word Yerushalayim, Yireh and Shalem, can be read as 'complete awe.' This points to a special quality of the city. It empowers its inhabitants to attain a full measure of yiras Shamayim.⁴



RABBI SLONIM (CENTER) PICTURED WITH SEVERAL ASKANIM IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING PROJECT



SEEN FROM BEHIND YESHIVAS TORAS EMES ARE THE BUILDINGS THAT MAKE UP THE SHIKUN CHABAD NEIGHBORHOOD. AN ENTRANCE SIGN TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD BEARS THE NAME OF REB EZRIEL ZELIG SLONIM.

the land between the Tribes, for every Jew has ownership of this holy city.

CHABAD IN THE HOLY CITY

From already the early years of the Rebbe's nesius, the Rebbe urged Chabad askanim in Eretz Yisroel to found a Chabad neighborhood in Yerushalayim. Led by Reb Ezriel Zelig Slonim, this effort was initially hindered by bureaucratic obstacles and lack of initiative on the part of many members of the committee dealing with this issue. The Rebbe expressed his frustration about the lack of progress in a letter to Member of Knesset Zalman Shazar (later Israel's president) dated 22 Cheshvan 5720: "I must express my pain from the fact that... Shikun Chabad in Yerushalayim has not yet begun even the first stages of construction..."⁵

Later that year in 5720, the 200th anniversary of the Baal Shem Tov's passing, the cornerstone was finally laid. The Rebbe sent a special letter of bracha to the project's vaad (dated 9 Adar). The Rebbe also gave special instructions regarding the laying of the cornerstone, including that it be done by children, tinokos shel beis rabban. In the following days the Rebbe asked for detailed reports of the Hanachas Even Hapina.

On 4 Sivan, the Rebbe sent a telegram to Rabbi Slonim, urging him to, at the very least, begin the construction within the Yemei Tashlumin of Shavuos.

On 12 Sivan, the Rebbe held a special surprise farbrengen, a rare occurrence in those days. Among the reasons for it the Rebbe mentioned that "there was a desire that before Shavuos, construction should begin on a new Chabad neighborhood in Yerushalayim... However, as in all positive things, there were several obstacles [to this project]... I have now been notified that it was done within the Yemei Tashlumin, which have the same status as that of Shavuos.

Over the course of that summer, the Rebbe sent several telegrams to Rabbi Slonim, asking about the progress. The spiritual gravity the Rebbe placed on this matter was on full display in an astonishing telegram from 28 Av: "Telegram [to me] the state of construction. [It is] necessary

for a pidyon at the Ohel on Erev Rosh Chodesh Ho'rachamim." Rabbi Slonim received the telegram a day later and immediately responded that the foundation had been poured. Several days later, on 17 Elul, the Rebbe sent another letter requesting an update, "No later than the following Erev Shabbos Kodesh, and again for the first day of Selichos, since then too a pidyon will be read by the Ohel."

The new neighborhood was located in a sparsely populated area very close to the Jordanian border. In those days, there were numerous terrorist infiltrations from Jordan and occasional artillery shelling. In *yechidus*, Rabbi Slonim brought this concern to the Rebbe, mentioning that many Lubavitchers were reluctant to commit to the project because of its proximity to the Jordanian border. The Rebbe smiled and said, "When you build the neighborhood there, it will require the border to move forward within a short amount of time." This remarkable prediction was soon realized with the victory in the Six-Day-War some seven years later, when Israeli forces reunited Yerushalayim and pushed the Jordanian army past the Jordan river.

The project progressed throughout the 5720s, and the Rebbe continued to encourage Rabbi Slonim in letters and telegrams. On Shavuos 5722, the Rebbe publicly praised Rabbi Slonim for his tireless efforts: "He decided to build in Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh, although he was lacking funds and is not a 'businessman' etc. and because of this many people laughed at him, saying that he will certainly not succeed. Nevertheless, in a short time he succeeded in constructing buildings, residences, a Shul and Beis Midrash, which are already standing, and he will certainly add..."⁶

AFTER THE SIX DAY WAR

After the Six Day War and the liberation of the Old City, its Arab inhabitants constituted the overwhelming majority. The Rebbe wanted to change this and restore the Jewish character of the Old City but was met with fierce resistance. In a *yechidus* with the Israeli reporter Hillel Zeidman, the journalist told the Rebbe that Israel's president, Zalman Shazar, was requesting that



* 5720-1959/1960, 5720s-1960, 5722-1962

the Rebbe encourage Chassidim to populate the Old City and restore its Jewish character. The Rebbe responded that he was prepared to do so, but that “they [the current government] are looking for a way to keep the Old Quarter Arab. It is obvious that no government can compromise on Yerushalayim, but they are seeking a way that Yerushalayim should formally be in Jewish hands, but to practically preserve the status quo, and that no Jews should dwell there. If Lubavitch had a lot of money we would risk it, but we do not, and it is unwise to invest money in a *safek* (questionable situation)...”

The Rebbe spoke publicly many times against the idea of ‘giving back’ any part of Yerushalayim.⁷

Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen was deputy mayor of Yerushalayim at the time, and would discuss many issues related to the city in *yeichidus*. When the notion of splitting Yerushalayim between Jews and Arabs arose after the war, the Rebbe told him to strenuously object to it. The Rebbe told him that “Yerushalayim is the heart of *Am Yisroel*. *Har Habayis*, the site of the *Beis Hamikdash*, is the head of *Am Yisroel*, and a body cannot exist without its head and its heart!”⁸

TZEMACH TZEDEK SHUL

Yerushalayim’s main Chabad Shul, Tzemach Tzedek, was founded in 5618 by a group of Lubavitcher Chassidim. Although Chassidim had lived in the city for many years prior, they had not had their own Shul. This project was funded by a generous grant from the Sasson family of India and a loan from the renowned Jewish philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore.

During World War II, as the Jewish population in the Old City dwindled and there were no regular *minyanim* in the Tzemach Tzedek Shul, the Friediker Rebbe wrote a letter to Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel requesting that they hire *minyanim* of people to daven there regularly.

In 5708, as Jordanian legions conquered the Old City, they destroyed many ancient and historic Shuls, including the famed Churva Shul. The only Shul to remain standing was the Tzemach Tzedek Shul.

Immediately after the Six Day War, with the Old City once again in Jewish hands, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Slonim to start *minyanim* there right away. Even though the Shul was in disrepair, having been used as a goat pen in the interim, and notwithstanding the unsafe conditions in the city, which had no Jewish inhabitants at the time, Rabbi Slonim immediately began arranging rides for Chassidim to come daven there three times a day.

With all the bureaucratic hurdles in ensuring the ownership of the Shul, Chassidim failed to ensure that the general



EXTERIOR OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK SHUL IN YERUSHALAYIM. SEEN IN THE FOREGROUND IS A PORTION OF THE ‘CARDO’, A 2000 YEAR OLD BOULEVARD THAT RAN THROUGH THE OLD CITY.



INTERIOR OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK SHUL, HOUSED ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE BUILDING

character of the Shul should follow the spirit of *Chassidus Chabad*. The Rebbe was greatly pained by this and wrote to leading Chassidim in Yerushalayim to work on restoring the Shul’s Chabad character. A meeting of *askanim* was called and a plan was set in motion to rectify the situation. A Chabad Gabbai, Reb Yehoshua Yusevitz was appointed. Every Chossid in Yerushalayim committed to coming to the Shul at least once every two weeks, this way the atmosphere of the Shul would indeed change for the better.

On Shabbos Bereishis 5729, Chassidim from across the country gathered in the home of Reb Ezriel Zelig Slonim, from which they marched together to the Shul with joyful singing. One of the Chassidim went up to the *amud* and began to daven in the Chabad way. As the newly appointed *gabbai* called up the *olim* at the time of *Krias HaTorah*, the status of the Tzemach Tzedek Shul as a Chabad institution was firmly reestablished.

The Rebbe saw great significance in this Shul and viewed it as the property of the *Rabbeim* and their Chassidim. This came up in a property dispute with tenants on the first floor, who claimed the property as their own, having bought it from the government. Reclaiming the property from this family was a very complex process. The Rebbe was adamant

that the property must be returned to its rightful owners, Chassidei Chabad, in its entirety, saying "דאס איז מיין חלק" ("This is my portion and inheritance!")

The devoted Chossid Reb Avraham Parshan heard this and decided to act. He flew to Eretz Yisroel from his home in Canada and negotiated with this family, ultimately granting them his own home in the Old City, directly across from the Kosel, in exchange for vacating the premises of the Shul. Thus, the issue was resolved peacefully.

THE CHABAD NEIGHBORHOOD

On the fifth night of Chanukah 5740, the Rebbe launched a new project (referring to it as a "wild idea"), to build a Chabad city in Yerushalayim. After a year of correspondence and discussion between the Rebbe, the Chabad activists and the relevant offices, the Rebbe shelved it for the time being, writing that they are either unable or unwilling to pull it through. On 13 Nissan 5747, the Rebbe relaunched this effort for the immigrants who would very soon come from the Soviet Union, which ultimately resulted in the Shamir settlement in Yerushalayim.⁹

THE HOLINESS OF THE CITY

The Rebbe's reverence for the city of Yerushalayim can also be seen in his adamant stance on the issue of building secular and cultural institutions within the city.

An instance of this can be seen in the correspondence



THE REBBE WATCHES AS A FLOAT PASSES BY AT THE LAG B'OMER PARADE, DEPICTING THE REBBE'S RECENT CALL TO BUILD A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD IN YERUSHALAYIM FOR IMMIGRANTS FROM THE SOVIET UNION.

TEARING KRIAH UPON SEEING THE CITY

Halacha mandates that one must rend their garments when seeing the city of Yerushalayim in its ruined state, as a sign of *aveilus*. Additionally, there is a special *bracha* which must be recited upon seeing the holy cities that have been destroyed.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe visited Yerushalayim in 5689, he wrote a vivid letter to his youngest daughter, Rebetzin Sheina, describing his feelings while approaching the city and performing the ritual: "The journey from Lod to Yerushalayim takes about a half hour... As we got closer to Yerushalayim, waiting to tear *kriah* (it is written that when one sees Yerushalayim one should tear *kriah* (and in the present Yerushalayim, where theaters etc. were built, one is allowed to tear *kriah* twice))..."

In modern times, after the founding of the state and especially after the Six-Day-War, when the Old City of Yerushalayim was again in Jewish hands, many suggested that the traditional *kriah* must no longer be performed and the *bracha*-no longer recited.

The Rebbe sharply rejected this view on several occasions, positing that the present conditions in Eretz Yisroel do not constitute a "rebuilding of Yerushalayim." This is consistent with the Rebbe's general opposition to the idea of the state as the "*aschalta de'geulah*." In one letter the Rebbe writes, "Now it is even more important [to emphasize the need to recite these *brachos* upon seeing the holy cities] to negate the opinion that a UN decision in 1948 nullified these *brachos*."

It should be noted that when the Rebbe sent *Talmidim Hashluchim* to Australia, they would sometimes stop in Eretz Yisroel as part of their shlichus. The Rebbe instructed that the shluchim should visit the *Kosel HaMaaravi* in Yerushalayim and recite the *tefillos* that are customarily said there. On one occasion, the Rebbe added that they should follow the practice of writing "*kvitelach*" to be placed in the wall, requesting a special *bracha* for success in their shlichus. (See *Venichbesha Haaretz*, p. 100).

* 5740-1980, 5747-1987, 5720-1960, 5689-1929

of the Rebbe with the famed Jewish sculptor Jacques Lipchitz. In 1972, the new Israel Museum was set to host a sculpture garden in Yerushalayim. This effort was opposed by many frum groups in Eretz Yisroel and around the world. Mr. Lipchitz wrote to the Rebbe requesting that he settle the issue with a public endorsement.

The Rebbe sent a lengthy response in which he detailed his opposition to the project, writing that “a ‘Sculpture Park’ in Jerusalem is quite incongruous with the character of the Holy City, which has a tradition of holiness, not only for Jews but also for gentiles, for a period of the past 4,000 years. It has always been the symbol of monotheism, free from graven images of any form. You surely know as anyone else, how much blood was shed by Jews for the preservation of the sacred status of the city when the Romans tried to make it Aelia Capitolina [a pagan city founded by the Romans on the ruins of Yerushalayim].”

Lipchitz responded with a letter in which he claimed that “our bad memories of the Romans should not overshadow our responsibility to fulfill the prediction of Isaiah that Torah will emerge from Zion.” Lipchitz claimed that Torah includes not only halacha but “knowledge, light and progress,” meaning that displaying culture and art was part of the Jewish people’s mandate and the purpose of Yerushalayim.

The Rebbe responded by saying that he had brought up the Roman attempt to paganize Yerushalayim to underscore that “the Roman Empire knew well that the most deadly blow it could deal to the Jewish people was to convert Jerusalem into a city of idols.” In a later letter the Rebbe added that “I sincerely hope that eventually you will also come to agree with the opinions which I have cited, and which strongly oppose the idea of a Garden of Sculptures In Jerusalem.”

UNITING ALL THE JEWISH PEOPLE

One of the most demonstrative projects that the Rebbe connected with the city of Yerushalayim is the Sefer Torah L’Yaldei Yisroel—the special Sifrei Torah containing letters owned by each and every Jewish child across the globe, which the Rebbe insisted must be written within the city walls of Yerushalayim.¹⁰ “Eretz Yisroel is ‘singled out’ from all other lands,” the Rebbe explained, “thereby signifying the idea of *achdus*. However, within the land itself, the most unifying city is Yerushalayim—עיר שחברה לה יחדיו...”¹¹

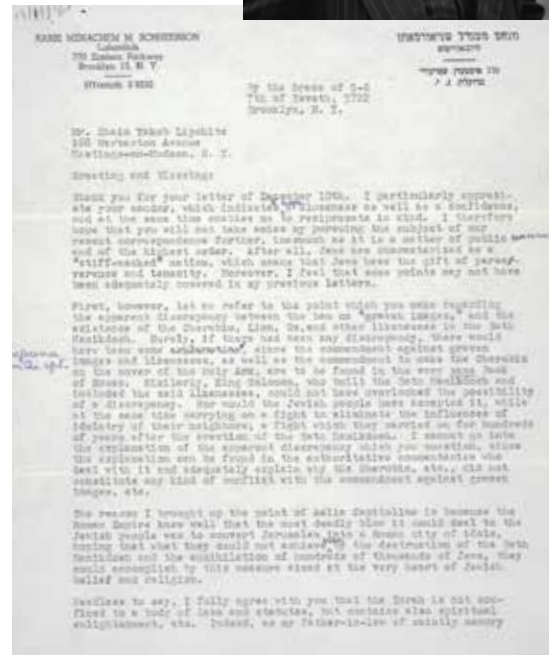
Indeed, nine Sifrei Torah have since been written within the city walls, uniting Jewish children, and by extension, all of *Am Yisroel*, through this special project.

The Rebbe once explained that by having the Sifrei Torah

JACQUES LIPCHITZ



AN EXCERPT OF ONE OF THE REBBE’S LETTERS TO JACQUES LIPCHITZ EXPLAINING HIS OPPOSITION TO THE PROJECT



written specifically in the walls of Yerushalayim, we ensure that the “protective walls” around our faith remain intact, in the spirit of Yerushalayim—*yirah-shalem*, complete and wholesome fear of Heaven. This will in turn lead to the rebuilding and completion of the holy city’s walls, speedily in our days!¹² ①

1. Tehillim, 122:3, The Rebbe’s *Kapitel* (5783-5784).
2. Even those who cannot be relied upon in this regard when they are elsewhere.
3. Sicha of 20 Cheshvan 5742.
4. Shabbos Bereishis (2) 5717.
5. Igros Kodesh vol. 19, p. 55.
6. Eved Melech (Sholom Ber Wolpe) chapter 26.
7. Sichas Shabbos Parshas Noach 5734.
8. Kfar Chabad #827 page 40.
9. See Sichas Yud-Gimmel Nissan 5747; Hisvaaduyos 5747 vol. p. 92.
10. See, *Unite the Children*, Derher Teves 5776.
11. Sichas Yud-Aleph Nissan 5741; Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 2, p. 132.
12. Sichas Shivah Asar B’Tammuz 5741; Likkutei Sichos vol. 23, p. 295.