

Geulas Yisrael 72: Bereishit

The first battle for Yerushalayim

Moshe Taragin

It was the first act of violence in history, and it launched a tragic legacy of bloodshed and murder. In a moment of rage Kayin slayed his brother Hevel in cold blood and, ever since, Mankind has been victimized by the hideous crime of murder.

This first homicide in history was provoked by a mysterious quarrel between two brothers. The Torah describes Kayin and Hevel having “words” in the field, but we aren’t informed the topic of their dispute. It must have been an explosive issue to elicit such a murderous response.

Rebbi Yehuda Halevi, the 12th century Spanish author of the Kuzari, fills in the blanks. The two brothers were arguing over land rights. As the only two children alive, they each enjoyed unlimited real estate options, yet, they each coveted a particular parcel of land. They were vying for ownership of Har Habayit and Yerushalayim and this clash became bloody.

The bickering brothers innately sensed the surpassing value of this small mountain. Unaware of the future religious import of this mountain, they still felt a primal draw to the site from which human history was launched. Man was created from dirt collected from the Temple Mount, and Kayin and Hevel were lured to the site of their father’s birthplace, and the birthplace of humanity. Though this “pull” was indecipherable and could not be fully understood, it was powerful enough to kill for.

Kayin and Hevel were not the last “ancients”, to intuit the importance of this mountain. Thousands of years later, the first stirrings of religious consciousness sprouted upon this mountain. Even before Avraham discovered Hashem, a community of morally sensitive people flocked to this locale, seeking to build an ethical city. They were guided by a king-priest named Malki Tzedek or the "king of justice". These righteous people inhabited an otherwise dark and savage world, but they dreamed of a better state for humanity. They hoped to improve or even "perfect" the human condition, so they named this city Shalem or perfection.

Their imaginations weren't capable of conceiving "one" G-d, but they did possess a shadowy sense that Man was placed on Earth for a higher "religious" or moral calling, and that this lifestyle could be best grasped by living near this mountain. Humanity was inching closer to religious maturity, and its moral imagination was riveted to this mountain. The city of Shalem would eventually be transformed by Avraham into Yerushalayim.

A generation later, a Philistine king named Avimelech also sensed this 'draw'. He partnered with Avraham, struck a covenant, and gained a better understanding of Avraham's G-d. As part of this partnership and the related land negotiations, Avimelech demanded that this city remain in the possession of his descendants for four generations. As a consequence of these promises and guarantees, Yerushalayim was the last city in Israel to be settled by the Jews. Several generations of the "Yevusi" tribe, Avimelech's descendants, occupied Yerushalayim and built heavy fortifications, obstructing Dovid Hamelech's ability to take possession of the city. Even Avimelech, instinctively understood the importance of the city above which the G-d of Avraham resided.

Throughout the book of Breishit this small patch of land exerted a primal sway over generations of people who hadn't yet discovered Hashem, but still had a vague notion that this land was the point of origin of humanity and the source of higher wisdom. This mountain magnetized the human imagination.

The rise of monotheism

Fast forward thousands of years later and humanity had advanced toward a more mature religious experience. The ancient world of paganism, black magic and superstition gradually morphed into a world of science, reason, and rudimentary forms of monotheism. Humanity was gradually progressing toward a better understanding of Hashem and, unsurprisingly, it identified that the truths of monotheism ran through Yerushalayim. Worldwide religions such as Christianity and Islam were more successful at distilling monotheism, even though they still corrupted some of its core beliefs. Still, as humanity achieved a sharper concept of a one God, it became even more convinced that this

small parcel of land provided access to divine knowledge and to supernatural prophecy. What had begun as a vague notion had now evolved into a full-fledged conviction that Yerushalayim was the epicenter of religion.

Sadly, for hundreds of years gruesome and deadly battles were waged in the continuing struggle to occupy this epicenter. Tragically, Jews were often caught in the crossfire of these bloody wars. The original quarrel between two brothers exploded into hundreds of years of carnage and bloodshed.

The Terminus

We have entered the final phase of history. Hashem's chosen people have finally returned to this city, establishing it as the capital of their renewed state in their ancient homeland. Subconsciously, humanity is still haunted by a gnawing sense of the historical and religious importance of Yerushalayim. Humanity realizes that Yerushalayim will be the terminus of history and the site in which all nations gather to herald Hashem and to celebrate his chosen people.

The Midrash cites : אמר רבי יוחנן עתידה ירושלים להעשות מטרפולין לכל – הארצות – one day Yerushalayim will be the worldwide metropolis – and every other major city in the world will become Messianic suburbia.

Humanity realizes that Yerushalayim isn't just the channel of religious inspiration but is also the historical terminus, and for this reason it *shudders* at the prospect of Jews returning to this city. Jews living in the North of Israel or along the coast doesn't cause an international *shudder*. Jews living in Yerushalayim and the Biblical corridor of Judea and Samaria causes a worldwide shudder.

For some religions and nations, the shudder manifests as Messianic fervor. The children of G-d have returned to His city, and this portents an end-of-days scenario. For others the shudder manifests as militant opposition, as the land is too vital to cede to history. As in the past, the world subconsciously realizes what is at stake upon this mountain and its surrounding regions.

Are you surprised?

Politically, the aggressive opposition to Jewish presence in Yerushalayim, is frustrating and the futile measures attempting to halt history are exhausting. However, when viewed through *prophetic* lenses we should expect no less than stiff opposition to our presence. This land has been coveted throughout the millennia and longing for this mountain is not about to end. In an odd way we are “pleased” that humanity continues to be drawn to this mountain. One day they will all assemble and acknowledge the clear and unmistakable presence of Hashem. We should not expect them to lose interest in this mountain. The world is still broken, and their interest still expresses itself as opposition to our presence.

One day everything will align, and the clouds of confusion will be swept away by the overwhelming presence of Hashem. The world hasn't abandoned its longing of this mountain and we are *interested* in their *remaining interested*. We just wish that their interest would not erupt with hostility. One day all the hostility will turn into acclaim and all the calumny into praise. They will never lose interest though. Good thing.