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CENTER FOR JEWISH LEARNING

Oh Jerusalem: A Conversation

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Have someone read the Psalm out loud. The last three verses is the Psalmist's prayer for the peace of Jerusalem. After someone reads the whole Psalm out loud, have another person read verses seven through nine for emphasis.

Psalms Chapter 122

א	שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד שִׁמְחֵתִי בְּאִמְרֵיהֶם לִי בַּיִת יְהוָה זְכָרְךָ:
ב	עֲמֻדוֹת הָיִו רַגְלֵינוּ בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם:
ג	יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם הַבְּנוּיָה כְּעִיר שֶׁחֻבְּרָה-כֶּהָ יַחְדָּו:
ד	שָׁשׂוּ עָלֶיךָ עֹבְרֵי-יָם עֹבְרֵי-יָבֵשׁ יְהוָה עֲדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַדוּת לְשֵׁם יְהוָה:
ה	כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשָׁבוּ כְּסָאוֹת לְמוֹשֶׁפֶט כְּסָאוֹת לְבַיִת דָּוִד:
ו	שָׂאוּ שָׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם יִשְׁלִי אֱהַבְּךָ:
ז	יְהִי-שָׁלוֹם בְּחִיכְךָ עֲלֵנוּ בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ:
ח	לְמַעַן-אֲחֵי וְרֵעֵי אֲדַבְּרָה-נָא שָׁלוֹם בָּךְ:
ט	לְמַעַן בַּיִת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲבַקֶּשׂה טוֹב לָךְ:

1. A Song of the Steps of David. I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.
2. Our feet shall stand inside your gates, O Jerusalem.
3. ***Jerusalem is built as a city which is sewn together;***
4. There the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
5. For thrones of judgment were set there, the thrones of the house of David.
6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; those who love you shall prosper.
7. Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.
8. For my brothers and companions sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you.
9. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good.

YOUR PSALM NAVIGATOR

1. Look around you and explain why Jerusalem is called a “city which is sewn together.”
2. Thousands of years ago, the Psalmist wrote a “Prayer for the peace of Jerusalem.” Is it relevant today? Why, or why not?

Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 5a

Is there such a thing as a heavenly Jerusalem? Yes, as it is written: *Jerusalem is built as a city which is sewn together.*

YOUR TALMUD NAVIGATOR

1. How is the Talmud understanding the verse in Psalms?
2. Why do you think the rabbis felt there had to be a heavenly Jerusalem?
3. Why is this a holy city? Is it history, geography, or is it accidental?
4. Is Jerusalem a holy city for you? Why?

Midrash Esther Rabba 1:17

עשרה חלקים של גבורה בעולם תשעה ביהודה ואחד בכל העולם עשרה חלקים של יופי בעולם תשעה בירושלים ואחד בכל העולם עשרה חלקים של חכמה בעולם תשעה בארץ ישראל ואחד בכל העולם עשרה חלקים של תורה בעולם תשעה בא"י ואחד בכל העולם עשרה חלקים של הנופה בעולם תשעה בירושלים ואחד בכל העולם הה"ד (ירמיה כ"ג) כי מאת נביאי ירושלים יצאה הנופה לכל הארץ :

There are ten portions of courage in the world, nine in Judaea and one in the rest of the world. There are ten portions of beauty in the world, nine in Jerusalem and one in the rest of the world. There are ten portions of wisdom in the world, nine in the Land of Israel and one in the rest of the world. There are ten portions of the Torah in the world, nine in the Land of Israel and one in the rest of the world. There are ten portions of *hypocrisy* in the world, nine in Jerusalem and one in the rest of the world, as it is written, “For from the prophets of Jerusalem is hypocrisy gone forth into all the earth.” (Jeremiah 23:15)

YOUR MIDRASH NAVIGATOR

1. Look at the two statements written about Jerusalem. What does “beauty” have in common with hypocrisy?
2. Why does only the last statement about Jerusalem require a proof text from the Bible (Jeremiah)?
3. What point is this midrash trying to make? Are you surprised by this statement?