

# РОЗДІЛ. ФЕНОМЕН МУЗИЧНОГО МИСТЕЦТВА В ІСТОРИКО-КУЛЬТУРОЛОГІЧНОМУ ДИСКУРСІ

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## JERUSALEM — THE HEART OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN POETRY AND SONG

*There are many cities all over the world, but our hearts have always yearned for one particular city throughout Jewish history. Jerusalem is a city that is a symbol. In this paper, we present several texts that have found a place in the nation's heritage and influenced many generations, including adages found in the Bible that have left an imprint in numerous locations across the world. Sometimes it seems that writers across generations wrote similarly about Jerusalem, whether they were in Spain, Yemen, Morocco, or Poland. Jerusalem has been and remains a source of inspiration through the ages.*

**Key words:** Jerusalem, Jewish people, poetry, song.

**Давидович Ніца**

**Єрусалим — серце єврейського народу в поезії і пісні**

*У світі існує багато міст, але наші серця завжди прагнули лише одного конкретного міста за всю історію євреїв. Єрусалим — місто, яке є символом. У статті наведено кілька текстів, які знайшли місце в спадщині нації й мали значний вплив на багато поколінь. До цього переліку, зокрема, входять і посилання, знайдені в Біблії, які залишили слід у багатьох місцях по всьому світу. Іноді здається, що письменники різних поколінь так само писали про Єрусалим, чи то були вони з Іспанії, Ємену, Марокко чи Польщі. Це місто було і залишається джерелом натхнення у всі віки.*

**Ключові слова:** Єрусалим, єврейський народ, поезія, пісня.

**Давидович Ніца**

**Иерусалим — сердце еврейского народа в поэзии и песни**

*В мире существует много городов, но наши сердца всегда стремились только к одному конкретному городу за всю историю евреев. Иерусалим — город, который является символом. В статье приведено несколько текстов, которые нашли место в наследии нации и имели значительное влияние на многие поколения. В этот перечень, в частности, входят и ссылки, найденные в Библии, которые оставили след во многих местах по всему миру. Иногда кажется, что писатели разных поколений так же писали об Иерусалиме, были ли они из Испании, Йемена, Марокко или Польши. Этот город был и остается источником вдохновения во все века.*

**Ключевые слова:** Иерусалим, еврейский народ, поэзия, песня.

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**I**ntroduction

Jerusalem is mentioned 656 times in the Bible. It appears many times in canonized post-biblical literature. Its description

in the Bible, Talmud, Midrash and liturgy offer strong inspiration for artists.

Jerusalem origins can be traced back to biblical times. Jerusalem is the object of yearning

and fascination. Any mention of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel refers to its everyday reality: It is a place of smells, sites, and emotions, its highlights and shortcomings, its beauty and its greatness, including everything in it that can be improved. It is a living, lively city. It is the Wailing Wall and the Mahaneh Yehuda market. The eyes of all Jews in the world are directed to Jerusalem, the eyes of all people in the world are directed to it (Arend, 2000).

Jerusalem is a city of opposites: Jerusalem is a symbol of destruction and of prosperity, a symbol of the Holocaust and of heroism. It is a city of

- Jews, Christians, and Arabs;
- Sacred and Secular;
- ancient buildings and modern skyscrapers;
- television antennas and church spires;
- Coca Cola advertisements and street sellers of fresh dates.

Jerusalem is a unique in that every person finds a special connection to the city. This is why it is the object of such strong desires and passions.

According to legend, our forefather Abraham named the site of the future city of Jerusalem. It was a combination of “yirah” and peace “shalem,” meaning a place where men find peace dwelling together, living in the fear of G-d. According to another source, Jerusalem means “Israel’s inheritance to the world.”

Jerusalem is also called Zion, after Mt. Zion on which part of the city was built. It also the name of the nation of Israel “*For from Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*” (Isaiah).

**Ariel** was another name for Jerusalem — a word combination of “lion” and “God.” Jerusalem is also known as “**The City of David**” or just “**The City**”, the capital and most important city for the kingdom of David, who conquered it from the Jebusites and gave it this name.

In his Zionist novel, *Altneuland* (Old New Land, 1902), Herzl mentioned Jerusalem in his description of the future Jewish state as a socialist utopia. “*It is clear that Jerusalem was once very beautiful! Maybe that is why our forefathers were never able to forget it! Maybe that is why their yearn was never cut out of their hearts.*”

David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, stated: “*Jerusalem is the national capital. It is the historic Jewish capitol, the capitol of the Hebrew spirit, the eternal capitol of Israel. More than anything Jerusalem should be an example to the entire country and the entire nation, an example for all Jewish households in Israel and the Diaspora. Jerusalem itself should be a factor of brotherhood, of cohesion and mutual respect.*”

### **The Earliest Songs of Zion**

The Biblical Book of Psalms contains the earliest songs of Zion. The kinot or dirges were later written to commemorate the destruction of our

First and Second Temples. The cries of the exiles on the rivers of Babylon resonate through the ages as a sacred trust to our generations. Tens of thousands of Jews have kept the faith and memory of Jerusalem by reciting these words:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, we wept,  
When we remembered Zion...  
How shall we sing the Lord’ song in a strange land?  
If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget  
her cunning...  
If I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy.  
*Psalm 137: 1, 3-6*

The eternal oath to Jerusalem since Biblical times appears in the Book of Psalms:

### **A SONG OF ASCENTS OF DAVID**

#### **Psalm 122**

- <sup>1</sup> I was happy with those who said to me,  
“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”
- <sup>2</sup> Our feet are standing  
in your gates, Jerusalem.
- <sup>3</sup> Jerusalem is built like a city  
that is closely compacted together.
- <sup>4</sup> That is where the tribes go up —  
the tribes of the Lord —  
to praise the name of the Lord  
according to the statute given to Israel.
- <sup>5</sup> There stand the thrones for judgment,  
the thrones of the house of David.
- <sup>6</sup> Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
“May those who love you be secure.
- <sup>7</sup> May there be peace within your walls  
and security within your citadels.”
- <sup>8</sup> For the sake of my family and friends,  
I will say, “Peace be within you.”
- <sup>9</sup> For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,  
I will seek your prosperity.

#### **Psalms 48**

Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise,  
in the city of our God, his holy mountain.  
Beautiful in its loftiness,  
the joy of the whole earth,  
like the heights of Mount Zion,  
the city of the Great King.  
God is in her citadels;  
he has shown himself to be her fortress.

In fact, the words that appear in Psalms were later used and taken up by the myriad poets and writers who wrote about Jerusalem (Almog, 2003, 2004).

Every bridegroom under the bridal canopy recites: «*If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*».

The Laments of Jeremiah the prophet, written after the destruction of the First Temple, are the earliest dirges of Zion.

How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people!  
How she is become a widow!  
She, that was great among the nations, and princess  
among the provinces,  
How is she become tributary!

*Lamentations 1.1*

The impact of Psalms was not limited to Jewish authors. In the 1970s the tune resurfaced, popularized in a version sung by the Country and Western singer Don Maclean on his album, "American Pie."

Jerusalem, Jerusalem all roads lead to you.  
Jerusalem, Jerusalem your light is shining through.  
And you will show, show the way, to all who see  
it shine,  
That we can live, in peace, in Jerusalem this time.

The walls will keep you in, the walls will keep you out.  
The gates are calling those, who know what it's about.

### The Poets of Medieval Spain

The poets of Medieval Spain, their hearts aching for Zion lamented their bitter fate in songs that voiced a vision of redemption. This longing for Jerusalem found its supreme voice in a group of poems by R. Judah Halevi (1075–1141) known as Zionides.

My heart is in the East and I am in the far off West.  
How can I find an appetite for food? How can I enjoy it.  
How can I fulfil my vows and pledges, While  
Zion lies in the fetters of Edom and I am in Arab  
chains.

It would be easy for me to leave behind all the good  
things of Spain;  
It would be precious to see the dust of the ruined  
Shrine.

*Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse,  
edited by T. Carmi, p. 347*

R. Judah Halevi also stated: "It would seem to me to be easy to leave all the good of Spain, as the dust and destruction of the sanctuary has become precious to my eyes". Who is willing to leave "all the good"? This statement does not make sense, it is not rational, but we have already said that Jerusalem's power of attraction is based in the heart, not the head.

In another poem, «I am a harp for your songs...» R. Judah Halevi says:

Zion, will you not ask if peace be with your captives  
Who seek your welfare, who are the remnant  
of your flocks?

From west and east, north and south, from every side,  
Accept the greetings of those near and far,

and the blessings of this captive of desire,  
who sheds his tears like the dew of Hermon  
and longs to have them fall upon your hills.  
I am like a jackal when I weep for your affliction;  
but when I dream of your exiles' return, I am a harp  
for your songs...

### Ramban (Nachmanides)

Other seekers and pilgrims made their way to Jerusalem. Among them was the Medieval biblical commentator R. Moshe Ben Nahman "Nachmanides." In a personal letter written to his family in 1267, he conveyed his impressions of the city and his deep sorrow regarding the destruction of Jerusalem: *I am writing you this letter from the holy city of Jerusalem. What can I tell you about the country? Great is the misery and great the ruins... To sum it all up, all that is holy is broken and destroyed more than the rest, and Jerusalem is worse than the rest of the country, and Judea worse and the Galil, and yet with all that devastation — it is still very good. People regularly come to Jerusalem from Damascus and from Aleppo and from all parts of the country to see the Temple and weep over it.*

Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz was a rabbi, kabbalist, and poet, perhaps best known for his song "Lecha Dodi", which is sung at the welcoming of the Sabbath and has become the most famous piyyut of all time. Sung by all the communities of Israel, it has been set to more than 2,000 tunes. One of its verses mentions Jerusalem.

Royal sanctuary, God's city and shrine,  
Rise from the ruins of the despair.  
Long hast thou dwelt in the vale of woe;  
God's loving pity shall crown thy prayer.

*Siddur David de Sola Pool*

The influence of Spanish Golden Age poets was far reaching. Many of the writers were skilled cantors and sacred singers. They performed their songs themselves, like modern pop-rock vocalists.

As far away as Yemen generations were inspired to poetic release of their pent up religious emotions. Among the greatest of Yemenite poets was 17<sup>th</sup> century R. Shalem Shabazi, a mystic figure legend credits with having "jumped to Jerusalem." He wrote:

Beautiful Jerusalem, joy of your cities,  
Faithful City to your kings and ministers,  
Ever will I recall the loveliness of your colors.  
To dwell in your courts has my heart yearned.  
Would I could kiss your stones and bless your dust.  
Since your sons dispersion,  
My soul has known naught but unrest.

One of the threads that reappears in the many writings of Jerusalem across the ages is the authors' fusion of national and personal feelings when discussing Jerusalem.

### **Tikvateinu by Naftali Imber (1856–1909)**

The personal and national memory of Jerusalem constituted inspiration, even in the most difficult periods of the nation's history. The ability of Holocaust survivors to call for the return to Jerusalem resonates the calls made by Alkabetz in Lecho Dodi, to rise up from the ashes of destruction.

Naftali Imber published his poem *Tikvateinu* in 1877, while living in what is today called the Ukraine. When he immigrated to Israel, fleeing the Pogroms in Russia, the poem was published in his first volume of poetry in 1882. The first stanza and refrain in this poem became the song of the Zionist movement that was spreading in Central and Eastern Europe, calling for a return of Jews to their ancestral homeland. The song was called *HaTikvah* (The Hope).

On April 23, 1945, a BBC reporter transmitted a report from the liberated German concentration camp, Bergen-Belsen. An impromptu Sabbath prayer service was held for the survivors, amid rotting corpses and thousands teetering on the verge of death. The survivors, who knew they were being recorded for a BBC broadcast, stopped their prayers and began to sing *HaTikvah*.

#### **Our Hope (Tikvateinu)**

As long as in the heart, within,  
A Jewish soul still yearns,  
And onward, towards the ends of the east,  
An eye still looks toward Zion;

As long as in the heart, within,  
A Jewish soul still yearns,  
And onward, towards the ends of the east,  
An eye still looks toward Zion;

Our hope is not yet lost,  
The ancient hope,  
To return to the land of our fathers,  
The city where David encamped.

As long as tears from our eyes  
Flow like benevolent rain,  
And throngs of our countrymen  
Still pay homage at the graves of [our] fathers;

As long as the waters of the Jordan  
In fullness swell its banks,  
And to the Sea of Galilee  
With tumultuous noise fall;  
As long as on the barren highways  
The humbled city gates mark,  
And among the ruins of Jerusalem  
A daughter of Zion still cries;

As long as pure tears  
Flow from the eye of a daughter of my nation,  
And to mourn for Zion at the watch of night  
She still rises in the middle of the nights;

As long as drops of blood in our veins  
Flow back and forth,  
And upon the graves of our fathers  
Dewdrops still fall;

As long as the feeling of love of nation  
Throbs in the heart of the Jew,  
We can still hope even today  
That a wrathful God may still have mercy on us;

Hear, O my brothers in the lands of exile,  
The voice of one of our visionaries,  
(Who declares) That only with the very last Jew —  
Only there is the end of our hope!

Go, my people, return in peace to your land  
The balm in Gilead, your healer in Jerusalem,  
Your healer is God, the wisdom of His heart,  
Go my people in peace, healing is imminent.

**Shmuel Yosef Agnon** was a Nobel Prize laureate writer and was one of the central figures of modern Hebrew fiction. He was born in Galicia (today's Ukraine), later immigrated to Israel, where he lived until his death. His works deal with the conflict between the traditional Jewish life and language and the modern world. In his stories and books, Agnon mentioned Jerusalem 2,600 times, and considered Jerusalem to be his spiritual homeland. He said, "Since the day I returned to Eretz Yisrael, I left two times. Once to print my book, published by Zalman Shoken, and once I traveled to Sweden and Norway" [to accept the Nobel Prize].

In 1901, before he immigrated to Israel, he wrote the following poem in *HaMitzpeh*, a Krakow-based Hebrew weekly:

Jerusalem  
Faithful love until death  
I swear to you, I will lift my arms up to the sky  
Everything I have in the Diaspora,  
I will give as ransom for you, Jerusalem  
My life, my spirit, and my soul  
I will give for you, holy city,  
I will always remember you in times of happiness  
On holidays, Sabbath, and Rosh Hodesh.

Jerusalem also featured in Samuel Agnon's speech at the Nobel Banquet at the City Hall in Stockholm, on December 10, 1966: "...so I will now tell you who am I, whom you have agreed to have at your table.

*As a result of the historic catastrophe in which Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem, and Israel was exiled from its land, I was born in one of the cities of the Exile. But always I regarded myself as one, who was born in Jerusalem.*

*In a dream, in a vision of the night, I saw myself standing with my brother-Levites, in the Holy Temple, singing with them the songs of David, King of Israel,*

*melodies — such as no ear has heard since the day our city was destroyed and its people went into exile...*

*...I returned to Jerusalem, and it is by virtue of Jerusalem that I have written all that God has put into my heart and into my pen...*

### **Jerusalem of Gold and Naomi Shemar**

The Six Day War reclaimed the Temple Mount and Wailing Wall. The last physical vestiges of ancient Jewish sovereignty in the Holy Land returned to Jewish hands and inspired a burst of creativity (Eliram, 2006, 2001, 2000, 1995).

Jerusalem of Gold, of brass and light  
For all your songs I am your harp.

Religious and secular Jews, with many different opinions, yet all are strongly connected to this city, the city that — in the words of King David — connects everyone together. One song, “Hakotel”, gives expression to the meaning of the Wailing Wall for contemporary Israelis. The song, “Hakotel” expresses the dedication of the people of Israel to their country. The song is unique in its connection between modernity and the performers, who were not religious people, and its source of inspiration, Rabbi Kook.

The Wailing Wall is moss and sadness.  
The Wailing Wall is lead and blood.  
Some people have a heart of stone.  
Some stones have a human heart.

*Lyrics: Yossi Gamzu, music: Dov Seltzer*

While such a song echoes popular feelings, it nonetheless draws upon deep traditions. Soon after the war, R. Zvi Yehudah HaCohen Kook, head of the Merchaz HaRav Yeshivah, delivered the following address: *From the ends of the earth, from the four corners of the globe, from all the countries of the Diaspora flow the prayers of the heart: To a central point in the land, towards this city, this house. These*

*stones, the remnants of the Temple Mount are for us holy, because they are silent. Fore, the Holy Spirit has never departed from the Western Wall, and the spirit of the living God of Israel whose name is called from there, has always hovered above them. These stones are our hearts.*

### **Prisoners of Zion**

Just as we saw the effects of Psalms and biblical sources on Jerusalem on Jewish writers in the Middle Ages and thereafter, we can also see these descriptions and terms used to describe Jerusalem in modern times, such as the term “Prisoners of Zion.” This term has been used to describe Jews in Russia who were prevented from leaving the Iron Curtain. Anatoly Sharansky, who became a minister in the Israeli government, was a prisoner of Zion for 9 years.

He spent most of this time in isolation, due to his proclaimed desires and actions to immigrate to Israel. The term Prisoner of Zion originates from the poetry of Rabbi Yehuda Halevy who says he is a “prisoner of my passion to Zion.”

The call to the Jewish nation in the Diaspora, to come from all corners of the world, and unite in the land of Israel, and the harp is the harp of David, that still plays the music of this dream to return together in our land.

### **Conclusion**

*«Everyone has a city and its name is Jerusalem»  
Natan Yonatan*

The first thing that Professor Uman, Winner of the Noble prize for economics in 2005, did when he learned of his honor, was go to the Wailing Wall. The Israeli press published the following headline: The road to the Nobel Prize goes through the Wailing Wall. This is Jerusalem and there are its sons. Even in their moments of individual glory, they carry with them their ancestors, and the story of their lives is the story of the land of Israel.

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