

The Seventy Names of Jerusalem

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In the Torah portion of VaYechi, we read how Yaakov gave blessings to all of his sons.¹ The blessing of Binyamin was “Benjamin is like a wolf who will prey; in the morning he will devour plunder, and in the evening, he will divide the spoils.”² Onkelos explains this blessing to refer to the Bait HaMikdash (Holy Temple) which stood (mostly³) in the portion of Binyamin. He renders the verse as follows: “The *Shechina* (Divine presence) will rest in the section of Binyamin. The *Mikdash* will be built in his inheritance. The Kohanim will offer sacrifices there in the morning while in the evening they will divide their portions of the other holy foods.”

Why Binyamin?

The Midrash⁴ gives four reasons why Binyamin merited to have the *Bait HaMikdash* built in his section:

- Binyamin, being the youngest of the brothers, was humble and did not believe that he deserved to have the *Bait HaMikdash* built in his section while the other brothers all thought they deserved it. In the merit of his humility, it was built in his section. (This is similar to Mount Sinai being chosen for the giving of the Torah.) An example of this is a father who had many sons. When he came to visit them, they all hoped to host him. But the youngest stood apart and was downcast as he didn’t believe he would merit to host his father. The father saw his sadness and said, “I will stay with you.”
- Binyamin was the only one of the tribes born in Israel whereas all the other brothers were born in Padan Aram when Yaakov was in the house of Lavan.
- Binyamin was the only brother who did not participate (at all) in the sale of Joseph. (Although Reuven saved Joseph from being killed by having him thrown into the pit, he could have prevented his being sold had he kept watch over the pit.⁵ Joseph, too, was

¹ Gen. 49: 1 - 27

² Ibid, 27

³ See Yoma 12a that parts of the Bait HaMikdash were in the portion of Yehudah while most of it was in the portion of Binyamin. The city of Jerusalem straddled the border of the tribes of Yehudah and Binyamin. See Joshua, 15:8, 18:16 and 28

⁴ Sifri on Deut. 33:12. See also Berieshit Rabbah, 99:1. See the pirush of Rabbi David Pardo on the Sifri as to how these interpretations are alluded to in the blessings of Moshe to the tribe of Binyamin.

⁵ Yefeh To’ar

considered somewhat responsible for his own sale since he spoke slanderously about his brothers to his father which led to the hatred they had for him.⁶) Since the brothers did not have mercy on Joseph when he pleaded with them, their portions of land would not be conducive to elicit G-d's mercy when people would pray in the *Bait HaMikdash*. In addition, the commentaries explain⁷ that it would be inappropriate for the *Shechina* to rest in the portion of a tribe that was involved in kidnapping and thievery in any way.

- Since Binyamin was (by far) the youngest of the brothers, he ended up taking care of his father more than the other brothers. Specifically, according to the Midrash, Yaakov would eat with Binyamin and lean on him when he walked. So, G-d said, "The place where this tzadik (Yaakov) rested his hands, that's where I will rest my *Shechina*."

The rest of this article will discuss the 70 names of the holy city of Jerusalem.

Seventy Names

According to the Midrash,⁸ Jerusalem has seventy names. Here are 66 of them: (For some reason, the Midrash does not give the entire list.)⁹ 1) Jerusalem 2) *Shalem* (This was the original name of the city).¹⁰ 3) *Yirah* (This was the name given by Avraham after the binding of Isaac)¹¹ 4) *Yevus* (The settlers who lived there before the Jewish people were the *Yevusi*)¹² 5) *Gilad* 6) *Levanon* (This can be translated as "Whitening." I.e., that the Bait HaMikdash, in Jerusalem, whitens and cleanses the Jewish people of their sins)¹³ 7) Zion (*Tziyon* means a sign. G-d is making the city of Jerusalem into a sign to show that He and the Jewish people are a pair.)¹⁴ 8) *Marom* /High Place (Jerusalem is considered the highest place in the world)¹⁵ 9) *Yam/Sea* (Just like the sea accepts all of the waters of the world, so too Jerusalem will accept all its children.)¹⁶ 10) *Kisei Hashem*/Chair of G-d¹⁷ 11) *Ir Yisrael*/The City of Israel 12) *Yefei Nof*/Beautiful Horizon¹⁸ 13) *Har Tzion*/Mount Zion 14) *Yarketei*

⁶ See Chidushei HaRadal

⁷ Yefeh To'ar on Bereishit Rabbah

⁸ Midrash Zuta on Shir HaShirim, 1:1

⁹ It is possible that the Midrash doesn't list some names as it considers them self-evident. An example of this may be "*Har Elokim*/Mountain of G-d" (Tehillim, 68:16). It is also possible that names with negative connotations are left out. An example of this might be "*Saf Ra'al*/A Cup of Poison" (Zechariah, 12:2).

¹⁰ See Gen. 14:18.

¹¹ See *ibid*, 24:14 Avraham was praying that G-d should see the poverty of the people (when they pray to Him in the Bait HaMikdash) and have mercy on them.

¹² See Shmuel II 5:6

¹³ See Deut. 3:25

¹⁴ See Shmuel II 5:7 and in many places

¹⁵ See Isaiah 33:5

¹⁶ See Jeremiah 3:17 where the word "*venikvu*" (and they will gather) is used about the Bait HaMikdash. The same word is used in Gen. 1:9 regarding the sea.

¹⁷ See Jeremiah 3:17

¹⁸ See Psalms 48:3

Tzafon/Bottom of the North (This alludes to the fact that all the treasures of the North will be gathered there.)¹⁹ 15) *Kiryat Melech Rav*/City of the Great King (This is the city of the King of Kings)²⁰ 16) *Mesos Kol Ha'aretz*/Rejoicing of the entire earth²¹ 17) *Be'ulah*/Settled or Owned (This means that no one owns the city, and the Jews in it, besides G-d.) 18) *Cheftzi Bah*/My Desire is there²² 19) *Even Ma'amasah*/Stone of Burden (This means that anyone who tries to attack it will be struck down)²³ 20) *Efrata* (Perhaps this alludes to the fact that Jerusalem is (partially) in the portion of Binyamin whose mother, Rachel, was buried in Efrat²⁴) 21) *Sede Ya'ar*/Field in the Wild (This alludes to the fact that Jerusalem is in the portion of Binyamin who is compared to beasts of the field i.e., a wolf)²⁵ 22) *Menucha*/Rest (This alludes to the fact that the final resting place of the *Shechina*/Divine Presence is in Jerusalem. As opposed to the Mishkan/Tabernacle which was situated in Shiloh and other places)²⁶ 23) *Ariel*/Lion of G-d (This alludes to the Mizbe'ach/Altar, situated in Jerusalem on which there was a fire shaped like a lion)²⁷ 24) *Har Mo'ed*/Mountain of Assembly (this alludes to the pilgrimage festivals when all the Jews would gather in Jerusalem)²⁸ 25) *Yafeh*/Beautiful 26) *Betulah*/Virgin 27) *Kallah*/Bride 28) *Eishet Ne'urim*/Wife of my Youth²⁹ 29) *Rabati Am*/With a Multitude of People³⁰ 30) *Rabati BaGoyim*/Great among the Nations³¹ 31) *Sarati BaMedinot*/Prince among the Countries³² 32) *Ir Shechubra La*/City that Connects (This means that all of the tribes would converge there for the three pilgrimage festivals. It also alludes to the fact that the earthly Jerusalem is connected to its parallel – the celestial Jerusalem)³³ 33) *Bait Tefilah*/House of Prayer³⁴ 34) *Migdal Eder*/Tower of the Herd (This means that Jerusalem was a protective place for the Jewish people who are compared to a flock of sheep)³⁵ 35) *Metzuda*/Stronghold³⁶ 36) *Yedidut*/Beloved 37) *Derusha*/Sought Out (This means that G-d will seek the welfare of the city)³⁷ 38) *Ir Lo*

¹⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁰ See *ibid*

²¹ See *ibid*

²² See Isaiah 62:4

²³ Zechariah 12:3

²⁴ See Tehillim 132:6, Gen. 48:7 and Megilat Rut, 4:11. Efrat can also be translated as “Fruitful” or as “An Important Place.”

²⁵ See Tehillim, *ibid* and Gen. 49:27

²⁶ See Deut. 12:9

²⁷ See Isaiah 29:1

²⁸ See *ibid* 14:13

²⁹ See *ibid* 54:6

³⁰ See Eicha 1:1

³¹ *Ibid*

³² See *ibid*

³³ See Tehillim, 122:3

³⁴ See Isaiah, 56:7

³⁵ See Micha 4:8

³⁶ See Shmuel II 5:6

³⁷ See Isaiah 62:12

Ne'ezava/Unforsaken City (This means that G-d will never forsake the city)³⁸ 39) *Gilah*/Joy³⁹ 40) *Eden* 41) *Gan Hashem*/Garden of G-d 42) *Har Marom*/The Most High Mountain 43) *Hashem Kedoshim*/The Holy G-d (i.e., It is the resting place of the Almighty 44) *Akarah* (This can mean “barren.” But, in the context, I think it means “the main one”)⁴⁰ 45) *Moriah* (This can mean “teaching” and can allude to the fact that Jerusalem was the seat of the Sanhedrin. It also can allude to the Ketoret, regularly burned in the Bait HaMikdash, which contained myrrh)⁴¹ 46) *Har Gavoha*/Tall Mountain (as mentioned above, Mount Moriah is considered the highest place on earth)⁴² 47) *Ir HaYonah*/City of the Dove 48) *Kiryat Ne'emana*/Trusted City⁴³ 49) *Ir HaTzedek*/City of Righteousness⁴⁴ 50) *Gei Chizayon*/Valley of the Vision (this alludes to the fact that most of the prophecies were about the city of Jerusalem)⁴⁵ 51) *Daltot Ha'amim*/Door of the Nations 52) *Bamot Nachala*/Inheritance of High Places 53) *Har HaKodesh*/Holy Mountain⁴⁶ 54) *Har Chamad*/Desired Mountain (This means that G-d desired to rest His presence on Mount Moriah)⁴⁷ 55) *Giv'at HaLevona*/Valley of Frankincense (This alludes to the frankincense which was used in the *ketoret*/incense offering in the Bait HaMikdash)⁴⁸ 56) *Ir David*/City of David (Jerusalem was conquered by King David and his general Yoav)⁴⁹ 57) *Ir HaNegev*/City of the South (Jerusalem is in the south of Israel) 58) *Har Marom Yisrael*/Top Mountain of the Jewish People 59) *Shem Chadash asher Pi Hashem Yikavenu*/A New Name that G-d will Designate (Jerusalem will receive new names when Moshaich comes. Those names will be *Cheftzi Bah*, *Derusha* and *Ir Lo Ne'ezava* – see above)⁵⁰ 60) *Meromim*/Heights 61) *Gan Eden Hashem*/G-d's Garden of Eden 62) *Yerusha*/Inheritance (This may allude to the fact that, according to some opinions, the city of Jerusalem was not divided among the tribes and was rather the inheritance of all of Israel) 63) *Kelilat Yofi*/Perfect Beauty⁵¹ 64) *Bashan* (in context, this can be understood to mean “(G-d) came there”)⁵² 65) *Chadrach* (This alludes to the fact that Jerusalem will be the city of Moshiach who will be sharp (*chad*) to the enemies of the Jews

³⁸ See *ibid*, 62:12.

³⁹ See *ibid*, 65:18

⁴⁰ See *ibid* 54:1

⁴¹ See Gen. 22:2

⁴² See Ezekiel 40:2

⁴³ See Isaiah 1:21 and 26

⁴⁴ See *ibid*

⁴⁵ See *ibid* 22:1

⁴⁶ See *ibid* 27:13

⁴⁷ See Tehillim 68:17

⁴⁸ See Song of Songs 4:6

⁴⁹ See Shmuel II, 5:7

⁵⁰ Isaiah 62:2

⁵¹ See Lamentations 2:15

⁵² See Tehillim 65:16

and soft (*rach*) to the Jewish people)⁵³ 66) *Ramah*/High Place (an allusion to the highest place in the world, see above)⁵⁴

The Midrash also says that the Jewish people have 70 names as does the Torah as does G-d Almighty Himself. It would be interesting to see if these names parallel each other.

May we soon experience all of the positive prophecies of Jerusalem with the coming of Moshiach now!

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom!

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⁵³ See Zechariah 9:1. See Rashi on the verse.

⁵⁴ See Jeremiah 31:15