



THE MAGIC YERUSHALAIM

Nowadays

Yom Yerushalaim, the reunification of Jerusalem in the year 1967, brings to our minds that picture of the soldier arriving to the Kotel. This day invites and challenges us to review our bond with this peculiar city, to where we raise our hearts three times a day to direct our prayers.

In the Midrash Rabbah (Bereshit 56) we are told that the name of the City can be understood if we divide it into two parts: *Yeru - shalaim*. We are taught that within the name Yerushalaim we can find the concepts of *irá* (merciful respect towards the Creator) and *shalom* (peace).

Noah's son, Shem (according to the Midrash) named the city "shalom" (Genesis 14:18), and our patriarch Abraham named the city "irá" (Genesis 22:14). The Holy One said: "If I call the city shalom, as did Shem, I will lose the name ira, given by my beloved Abraham. And if I call it ira just as Abraham did, I lose the name shalom given by the righteous Shem".

What did the Holy One do? Abraham named it "irá", Shem named it "shalom", and the Holy One named it "Yerushalaim" (combining the two names).

What does Yerushalaim mean? It means respect for the merciful Creator and peace. It is the essence of the city: *irá* speaks of the bond between men and the Creator, *shalom* speaks of the bond between men and their neighbors and *shlemut* (completeness – which comes from the same word as shalom) speaks of the bond each man has with himself.

***Ira* (merciful respect towards the Creator)**

Countless people arrive to Yerushalaim in order to raise a prayer to the Creator. Each one, according to their faith, will be aimed at any part of the Old City or any of the various houses of worship that are situated in Jerusalem. Each person approaches it according to their tradition as their ancestors did, with their culture, depending on where they came from, and according to their language. There is much diversity in the city, which makes it more rich and interesting. Thus, we can see walking through the streets from ultra orthodox to atheists, going through the full range of human beings who are linked in some way with the Creator.

***Shalom* (peace)**

In Yerushalaim (and throughout Israel) the situation with our neighbors has yet to be resolved. Currently, the city longs for Shalom. The city challenges us to come into contact with people different from us, to listen, discuss, understand, maintain the disagreement but, above all, respect. The city has people from different cultures, immigrants from different countries who come to the ancient city in search of comfort and Shalom. It is a particular experience to board a bus or to walk down the market, to see the diversity through the clothing of its citizens and visitors, feel the aromas, taste the flavors, listen to the many languages that resonate in the streets of Yerushalaim. We will raise our prayers and we will work together to realize the prophetic visions of peace.

***Shlemut* (completeness)**

Millions of young people arrive at Yerushalaim to have the experience of walking and breathing the Earth, to experience a Shabbat in Yerushalaim, to study for a year or several months in some of the programs offered or just make an informal visit that marks us for life. The city challenges us to rediscover ourselves; it opens its doors to welcome us, or even to prepare us for when we have to return to our Diasporas, for us to be able to convey the echoes of the vibrations that the magical Yerushalaim gives us.

Yerushalaim is a magical city because tradition and modernity are combined within it, past and present, the streets and expressways, the mystical and the political and social problems of any modern country in the world. That's what makes Israel in general and Yerushalaim in particular worthy of admiration and devotion.

Yerushalaim is a magical place to reconnect with ourselves, with others, and with The Creator!

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