

City Of The Beloved

November 28, 2019 Category: Religion

Download as PDF

One might say that Jerusalem is the eternal city of the Jewish people in the same way that New York City is an eternal city of the Frisians. {1} The Dutch founded the port at the mouth of the Hudson River, christening it New Amsterdam; and controlled it for half a century. That was three and a half centuries ago.

By contrast, Jerusalem was (allegedly) the capital of a unified kingdom three millennia ago; and it remained under a Hebrew regime for seven decades: from just prior to 1000 B.C. to 931 B.C. Thereafter Jerusalem was not even part of the kingdom that came to be called “Israel”, which was a NON-Judaic kingdom in the land of “Shomrom” (later Romanized as “Samaria”) in northern Canaan. The capital of that kingdom was initially Tirzah. Its capital was then moved to the CITY OF Samaria (the ancient Canaanite city after which the region was named) under pagan King Omri. It remained the Kingdom of Israel’s capital under king Ahab.

The city of Samaria was located in what is now the “West Bank” of Palestine (to wit: not in the modern nation-state of Israel). The subsequent capital of the northern kingdom was Ramoth, which was east of the Jordan River (in “Gilead”). An alternate capital of the Kingdom of Israel seems to have been at “Yizri-El” (that is: in the valley typically rendered “Jezreel”). Notably, that capital employed the moniker for the pre-Jewish Canaanite deity, “El”.

[u]Ru-sh[a]lim[a] meant “City of Shalim” in Ugaritic—the earliest attested Semitic language. It was located on the highlands overlooking the Kidron Valley, north of the Valley of Hinnom. (The hill around which it was centered was later dubbed “Mount Moriah” in Judaic lore, as a commemoration to Abraham.) That city was founded by the Amorites in the early 2nd millennium B.C. They likely derived the moniker from the Sumerian: “Yeru-Shalim” [“Foundation of Shalim”]. Interestingly, when rendered in Classical Hebrew, “Yir’eh Shalem” is translated as “Shalem Sees”; itself derived from the Biblical Aramaic “Dwelling place of Shalem”.

Dwelling place of whom? “Shalim” / “Shalem” was the name for a pre-Judaic Canaanite deity. As it turns out, he was one of the sons of “El”...a lexeme that would serve as the name in Aramaic used by the Hebrews for their godhead. (It would then become the Syriac moniker. Later, that was adopted by the Mohammedans for their godhead, which would eventually be rendered “Allah” in Classical Arabic.)

It has been alternately conjectured that the name for the city might have referred to “S[h]alem”, the city associated the fabled Melchizedek. {2} However, this does not make sense given the moniker’s antecedent forms: “Foundation of X”, “Dwelling place of X”, and “X Sees” (all of which indicate that X was not itself a place). It is evident, then, that X was the pre-Judaic deity of the Canaanites.

In any case, what we now call “Jerusalem” was originally an Amorite city. The Amorites of the 2nd millennium B.C. would have spoken Ugaritic (a Semitic language that antedated Classical Hebrew by more than a millennium). Unsurprisingly, the authors of the Hebrew Bible (which, we should bear in mind, was initially composed in Babylon in Aramaic) were reticent to acknowledge that the moniker of their most sacred city was a derivative of a Semitic language that preceded their own liturgical language by well over a thousand years. The original language of their texts, Babylonian Aramaic, was a descendent of Samaritan...which was a descendent of Old Aramaic...which was a descendent of Ugaritic, all of which used a variation of the Phoenician alphabet. It was on the basis of Aramaic that the new liturgical language—first Mishnaic Hebrew, then the familiar block-letters of Classical Hebrew—would be established. That linguistic transition occurred long after the Exilic Period.

Prior to 1000 B.C., the city-in-question was alternately dubbed “Yabusu” after its residents, the Jebusites: a Hurrian-Amorite tribe who worshipped the mother-goddess, “Hebat”. Consequently, in Judaic scripture, the city-in-question was originally referred to as “Jebus” (as in Judges 19:10) or as “the Jebusite city” (as in Judges 1:21 and Joshua 15:8). The Jebusites were held in contradistinction to the Philistines, who worshipped “Dagon” as well as “Baal”...and the goddess, “Ashtart” (ref. the Book of Samuel). {3}

Pursuant to adopting the godhead of the Shasu (“Yahweh”), the Jebusite faction asserted a novel identity: what might be referred to as the proto-Hebrews—as they were Yah-weh-ists. (For attestation, see Exodus 20:2-5 and Deuteronomy 5:6-7.) They would later be referred to as the “Yehudim” (people of Judah; i.e. Judah-ites). Only later would they be fashioned as the denizens of Beth Israel (that is: House of the seed of Jacob). Hence the oft-used label: “Israelites”. (For more on this matter, see my previous essay: The Land Of Purple.)

Prior to the emergence of this new tribe as a distinct henotheistic (later, monotheistic) people, the city-in-question had been rendered “Uru-shlem” in Old Aramaic (the language used by the Akkadians in the region). That would later be rendered “Urishlem” in Syriac. Again, this etymology is based on the pre-Judaic deity, Shalim; not on the deity that the Hebrews later came to worship above all the other gods, Y-H-W-H (which—to reiterate—had originally been the godhead of the Shasu).

At the time of the Babylonian Exile, Jerusalem was reputed to be the seat of the Kingdom of Judah, which was ruled by Yah-koniah. Yah-koniah’s appointed successor, Zedekiah, was permitted by Nebuchadnezzar II to remain a vassal; yet after he defied Babylon, he was promptly dethroned (in 587 or 586 B.C.) Though the remaining Hebrew residents were allowed to remain in the area, many of them opted to emigrate to Egypt. (Only the elites were sent to Babylon.) Here’s the kicker: In the account of the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar II given in Assyrian sources (the Babylonian Chronicles), the city is referred to as the city of “Iaahudu” [city of Judah]. There is no mention of a “Yerushalem”. This makes sense; given that when the Persians overtook the city soon thereafter, they referred to it as “Yehud Medinata” [Aramaic for “City of Judah”]. {9}

The city’s name was eventually rendered “Yerushalem” by Babylonian scribes during the Exilic period, using a variant of the (Samaritan-based) Aramaic alphabet...before being rendered “Yir’eh Shalem”, using the Mishnaic script adopted for writing Hebrew scripture during Late Antiquity. (Judaic scripture would alternately be refashioned in Classical Hebrew.) And as we will see: When rendered in Mishnaic Hebrew by the “geonim”, the name of the city was spelled with a slight modification: the yod-inclusive “Yerushalayim”.

Who, exactly, were the proto-Hebrews? The first Yah-weh-ists seem to have been a southern Canaanite tribe—likely an offshoot of the Amorites hailing from Edom—who espoused the henotheism of the aforementioned Shasu. (Monolatry is putting one deity above all others; whereas monotheism is claiming only one deity exists.) There is a possible reference to this from the 14th century B.C. on a “cartouche” of

pharaoh Amenhotep III at the Soleb temple in Nubia (which mentions the Shasu). It is more explicitly referenced in inscriptions at the Egyptian “Karnak” temple complex from the 13th century B.C. Those inscriptions commemorated the triumph of the pharaoh, Seti–father of Ramses the Great–over a “people of Y-H-W” (i.e. the Shasu) in the region of Edom (the southern-most end of Canaan, alternately known as “Midian”). {2} It is clear, then, that the worship of Yahweh as a supreme deity predated Judaism.

Also at Karnak is an enumeration of the conquests of Pharaoh Shoshenq (later rendered “Shishak” in Classical Hebrew) throughout Canaan. (This particular inscription is found on the Bubastite Portal gate; and is dated c. 925 B.C.) Of the numerous cities mentioned in the commemoration of victories, not one of them is a “Yerushalem”. This would have been rather peculiar had “Yerushalem” been the name of an important city for the conquered people (Hebrews) within the relevant region (Canaan) at the time. It is especially telling, as King Solomon’s heir, Rehoboam, is explicitly designated in the inscription. (!) Note that the same event would later be referenced in the Hebrew Bible (in First Kings 14:25-26 and in Second Chronicles 12:1-12). It seems that—at the time—the city-in-question was not seen as an auspicious place by the tribes in question.

This makes sense, as the first “temenos” [holy place] of the nascent Abrahamic Faith (and thus of the proto-Hebrews) was Shiloh, NOT the place that would become the “Ir D-w-D” [“city of the beloved”; i.e. the city of David]. High priests [“kohen gadol”] such as Aaron (brother of Moses) and his descendant, Eli (mentor of Samuel; as well as the last “judge” of Beth Israel) would have operated out of Shiloh, not out of the city that came to be known as “Yerushalem”. {2}

Even after Shiloh, Hebron was the tribal center (replete with tabernacle)... prior to the hilltop stronghold that came to be known as the City of David.

Meanwhile, Samaritans (who—in a twist of irony—referred to themselves as “Israelites” at the time) deemed Mount Gerizim to be the original Abrahamic “temenos”.

In the Torah, when reference was made to the city-in-question, the moniker “Yerushalem” is never used. Throughout much of the Hebrew Bible, the city is referred to as the city of David. This moniker (“Ir D-w-D”) is used in various key places:

- **Second Book of Samuel** (5:7-9 and 6:10-16)
- **First Book of Kings** (2:10, 3:1, 8:1, 9:24, 14:31, and 15:8)
- **Second Book of Kings** (8:24, 9:28, 12:21, 14:20, 15:7/38, and 16:20)
- **First Chronicles** (11:5-7, 13:13, and 15:1/29)
- **Second Chronicles** (5:2, 8:11, 12:16, 14:1, 16:14, 21:20, 24:16/25, 25:28, 27:9, 32:5/30, and 33:14)
- **Nehemiah** (3:15 and 12:37)
- **Isaiah** (22:9)

Even First Maccabees uses “Ir D-w-D” as the preferred moniker (1:33, 2:31, 7:32, and 14:36), which is notable considering the Hasmonean regime was explicitly Judaic.

When the city is first alluded to by a variant of the ancient cognate (“Yarushalem”), it is in the Book of Joshua (the opening verse of chapter 10); and it is referred to as a HOSTILE city. Why? Because it wasn’t Jewish. The city was ruled by an Amorite king: Adonai-zedek—a peculiar title for a pagan ruler, as it meant “lord of righteousness” using explicitly Hebraic nomenclature. It is for this reason that we are told in the Book of Judges (1:8) that the city was razed by the invading Israelites (i.e. the Judah-ites). {4} Notably, even when the city is finally referred to by the familiar moniker (in the 10th chapter of Joshua), it is only mentioned in passing—as one of the five AMORITE sovereignties (Yerushalem, Hebron, Yarmuth, La[c]hish, and Eglon.)

So we see that there are vestiges of the new Faith’s pagan origins. It is rarely acknowledged that the fabled Abrahamic figure “M-L-K-i-zedek” [“Melchizedek”] and the aforementioned pagan kind, “Adonai-zedek”, as well as the arch-angel “Zedek-i-El” (all of whom were associated with the city-in-question) were based on the name of a Canaanite deity: “Sydyk”. Calcified onomastics—especially when liturgically significant—often elide their etymological origins, as doing so would concede that a given moniker was little more than an accident of history: appropriated from exogenous traditions. Such an admission would undermine the credence of sacrosanct dogmas. (“THEIR lore is bunkum; but OUR lore is ineluctable...even though it is just a *recycling of* said bunkum.”) Any dubious foundations are elided by simply pretending that one’s own lore is sui generis.

The city is referenced using the familiar moniker (“Yarushalem”) in various other places in the Nevi’im—as with First Kings 9:15-19 (an account of King Solomon’s municipal projects) as well as Second Kings 15 (an account of king Uzziah / Azariah of Judah) and 16 (an account of the pagan king of Judah, Ahaz).

And so we see: Even as the city of David has been considered sacred by the Jewish people since Classical Antiquity (after Judaic lore was formalized in Babylon), the city qua city was not defined BY Judaism—either demographically OR culturally / politically. At the time that the fabled Hebrew king, David, is said to have ascended to the throne, the city was ethnically Jebusite, though under the control of the Philistines. (Hence the name for the city at the time: “Jebus”.) Philistine was—in turn—an Assyrian [alt. Babylonian] vassal State. Judges 1:21 notes that, even by the time of the Exile, Jebusites and Benjam[in]ites CONTINUED to be a prominent segment of the city. The Book of Joshua echoed this fact (15:63). It was hardly exclusively Hebrew.

Then, starting in 539 B.C. (at the end of the Exilic Period), the city became a Persian [Achaemenid] vassalage...then a Macedonian vassalage...then a Seleucid / Ptolemaic / Parthian vassalage...and then—after a brief stint under the Hasmoneans—a Roman vassalage...then a Byzantine vassalage.

So the one notable interruption in this non-Jewish sequence of rule was the 47-year period when the (Maccabean) Hasmonean kingdom enjoyed a modicum of sovereignty (from 110 B.C. to 63 B.C.) {5}

For the entire time, the only other exceptions to pagan rule were isolated Jewish suzerains (vassals to Assyria / Babylonia) such as Asa and his son, Jehoshaphat (late 10th / early 9th century), Hezekiah (late 8th / early 7th century B.C.), Josiah (7th century B.C.), and Nehemiah (5th century B.C.) That’s about it. Even they were obliged to accede to the sovereignty of their pagan overlords.

As we saw in the previous essay (on the Land of Purple), Beth Israel (the Jewish people, who primarily resided in the kingdom of Judah in the south) were pitted against the KINGDOM OF Israel (the pagan kingdom in the north). It comes as no surprise, then, that the first people to attack—and set fire to—the city of David were the Judah-ites (ref. Judges 1:8). (!) Who were THEY? Well, the Hebrews, who practiced a heno-theistic religion that was essentially Judah-ism.

And what of the demographics of this fabled city? At the time that the Hebrews were exiled by the Babylonians (under Nebuchadnezzar II) in 605 B.C., they hardly accounted for a plurality of the city's population. {8} (The same goes for the city during the "Second Temple" period; i.e. Classical Antiquity.) The Exilic period came to an end during the rule of the (Zoroastrian) Persian "shah-an-shah" [king of kings] Cyrus, in the 6th century B.C. This transition is recounted in Second Chronicles and the Book of Ezra. It might be noted that the Persians were not oppressive...lest they would not have permitted the Jewish community to erect a small temple (the so-called "second temple") in the city c. 516 B.C. {10}

After taking control of the city c. 332 B.C., Alexander the Great allowed the temple to persist, as he did not see it as a significant enough presence to deem it a threat to his sovereignty.

Since the Iron Age, the land west of the Jordan River (known alternately as "Canaan" or "Palestine") was populated by a salmagundi of different peoples—of which the Hebrews were but one. Note, for example, the Greek inhabitants of "Paralia" on the coast. Even during Hasmonean rule (starting c. 167 B.C.), the majority of the city's residents were Gentiles (i.e. pagans).

It comes as no surprise, then, that Aramaic and—later—Koine Greek were the *lingua franca* of the Levantine region. This continued to be the case even when it was under the Hasmonean and Herodian regimes. Indeed, the official language of the (Jewish) Hasmonean regime was Aramaic, not Classical Hebrew. This explains why the Masoretic texts—written in the Dark Ages—were derived from Aramaic antecedents. Masoretic Hebrew shows palpable signs of its Aramaic roots—as with the "K-Re" and "K-T-B" (typically rendered "Qere" and "Ket[h]iv"), meaning "that which is recited and that which is written" in Aramaic.

The Jewish people of Classical Antiquity through Late Antiquity (such as Jesus of Nazareth) would have primarily spoken Aramaic. Only the "kohanim" (Judaic priesthood) would have written and read Mishnaic / Classical Hebrew, as it had been established strictly as a liturgical language following the Mishnaic Period. (Again: It was adapted from the "Biblical" Aramaic used by the Babylonian scribes to compose the earliest Judaic scripture.)

The Maccabees' *lingua franca* would have been Aramaic. It makes sense, then, that in the 1st century, the Jewish historian, Yosef ben Matityahu of Judea (a.k.a. "Josephus") composed his histories in Aramaic. The other *lingua franca* in the region was Koine Greek—which accounted for the need to compose the "Septuagint".

What of culture? During Classical Antiquity, some combination of Hellenic (Greco-Roman) and Achaemenid (Persian) culture held sway throughout the city-in-question...even after it was conquered by the Romans. This is evidenced by the massive Greco-Persian citadel (known as the "Akra") which existed at the site of what was also known as the "Temple Mount". Alongside the Akra was the Judaic "second temple", which was originally just a small structure. That temple was erected, so the story goes, by Zerub-Bab-El at the culmination of the Exilic Period c. 516 B.C. {24} The second temple would last until the Seleucid takeover of the city; and would not be rebuilt until the Herodian period—at which point it became the more prominent structure that we often hear about today. (For more on Herod's Temple, see the Appendix.)

Following Hadrian's siege of the city (and destruction of the second temple) c. 70 A.D., the city would thereafter be referred to as "**Aelia Capitolina**". (Note, for example, a travelogue by a Christian pilgrim from Burdigala [Bordeaux] c. 333.) This moniker was a tribute to the Roman god, Jupiter Capitolinus; as well as a reference to the presiding Emperor. Thereafter, the city intermittently changed hands between the (Roman) Byzantines and (Persian) Sassanians. During this period, the area was referred to as "Syria Palaestina" [which encompassed "Palaestina Prima" and "Palaestina Secunda"]. {3} By that point, though, the only municipality in Canaan that was primarily Jewish was HEBRON.

We might note that the significance of Hebron goes back to the beginnings of Judaic lore. It was, after all, a place near Hebron where Abraham was said to have been buried (per Genesis 25:9-10): a cave in Ma[c]hpelah (near Mamre in Canaan), located in a field that the patriarch had purchased from the Hittite, Ephron ben Zohar. Hebron was also the first capital of the Judaic Kingdom of Judah (prior to the city of David). (We might also recall that David is said to have lived for a while at Ziklag, located in the Negev.)

When the Persians (Sassanians) re-took control of the city c. 613 A.D., they were—as they had been in Antiquity—very permissive of Jewish activity. During the periods that the Persians—intermittently—had control over the Levantine region, Jewish suzerains were sometimes permitted to govern. {12}

Starting in the 638 A.D., the city became part of the Rashidun—followed by Umayyad, then Abbasid, then Fatimid, then Seljuk—Empires. During the Crusades, the city changed hands between the (Christian) Europeans and (Muslim) Seljuks / Ayyubids. The city then fell within the Mamluk dominion (shortly after the Christians were permanently ousted from the region). During the Crusades, there had—intermittently—been the Christian "Kingdom of Jerusalem". The capital of that mini-kingdom was often not even in Jerusalem, but in Acre (Old Semitic: "Akko"; Greek: "Ake"; Arabic: "Akka"). When it was temporarily part of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (during the 12th and 13th centuries), Jerusalem was nominally Roman Catholic, as it was an outpost of the Holy Roman Empire.

After the Mamluks, the (Timurid) Il-khanate enjoyed dominion over the city. And all THAT was followed by the Ottoman Empire, which lasted until the British Mandate of the early 20th century (pursuant to the conclusion of the First World War).

To recapitulate: Between the day of King David's ascension to the throne (in the city known as "Jebus" at the time) and the establishment of the modern nation-State of Israel in June of 1948, Jerusalem had been an officially "Jewish" city for roughly 4% of the time—the most recent interlude being well over two millennia ago. Ergo the most accurate description of this particular city—since its founding by the Amorites in the 2nd millennium B.C.—is ***an international, multi-ethnic, multi-Faith municipality***.

Even as the (Maccabean) Hasmoneans enjoyed brief control over the city for about a century (fashioning it as a Judaic center c. 140 B.C.), we mustn't forget that many different ethnic groups have staked their claim on that particular location—from the Jebusites to the Ottoman Turks. Usually, it was taken by force—as when it was sacked by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., by the Romans in 70 and 135, by Mohammedan Arabs c. 637, by Frankish Crusaders in 1099, and—yes—eventually by Zionist forces in 1948 (who engaged in a campaign of ethnic cleansing on par with that of the First Crusade).

Pursuant to the First World War (and the consequent dissolution of the Ottoman Empire), the bumbling “British Mandate” was no more legitimate than any other act by a feckless colonialist power. (In other words: It was no more legitimate than ANY decision made by a hegemonic interloper, which cared little for the land’s indigenous population—dwelling, as they did, in region on which it had laid its claim.) When “blood and soil” is the rationalization, crimes against humanity are a moot point. “Lebensraum” for the exalted in-group is the sine qua non.

At the onset of the 16th century, less than a thousand Jews lived in Jerusalem. That was in the advent of the banishment of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. After being expelled from Andalusia, Jews who headed to the Levant opted to—instead—settle in the Galilean town of Safed (even as the Mamluks welcomed them in Jerusalem as well). And in 1800, there were at most 2 thousand Jews in the city. Pursuant to the Messianic fervor of the 19th century, things began to change. By 1900, there were about 33 thousand Jews living in the city of David. From there, the numbers would continue to increase—especially during the 30’s and into the 40’s (as those who sought refuge from the horrors in Europe had nowhere else to go).

Another point worth noting: Even during the brief periods of Judaic suzerainty, many of those who considered themselves Jewish were not ETHNICALLY Jewish (i.e. Hebrew); they were simply converts to the Faith. Note, for example, Jewish queen Helena of Adiabene, an Assyrian vassal who was responsible for the most notable efflorescence of Judaism in the city of David prior to the razing of the second temple in 70 A.D. She was Persian. (She converted from either Zoroastrianism or Ashur-ism.) At the time of the Mohammedan take-over of the city in 637 A.D., the Byzantine patriarch of the city (Sophronius of Damascus) was a fellow Arab.

Alas. Obfuscation of the above history has become de rigueur in Revisionist Zionist circles. For instance, it is rarely mentioned—for obvious reasons—that the first holy site for the proto-Hebrews was Shiloh, which was in the land of Ephraim (northern Canaan). Their “temenos” was only moved to “[u]Ru-s[h]alim[a]” (at that point still an Amorite city) around the time David would have been anointed king (just prior to 1000 B.C., so the story goes). Even then, another auspicious location (known as “Gibeon”) was used as a sacred site...until, that is, David’s son, Solomon, opted to commission his fabled temple: the House to “Yahweh” (alt. “Bet[h]-El”; a.k.a. “Beit Ha-Mikdash”) in the 10th century B.C. The basis for doing so was pre-Judaic theology...which had been inherited from the constituents’ Canaanite forebears (the Shasu).
{13}

Solomon’s heir, Rehoboam, went on to rule the SOUTHERN kingdom (that of Judah; i.e. not the kingdom of Israel). The original capital of THAT kingdom was initially Hebron...which was located in what is now the “West Bank” of Palestine (i.e. not within the modern nation-state of Israel). The capital then became Hebron (which was also in what we now call the West Bank). The capital of the southern kingdom (the Judaic “Kingdom of Judah”) would only later be moved to the city of David (probably during the reign of the storied reformer, Josiah c. 640 – 609 B.C.) That was THREE CENTURIES after Solomon.

Even the ostensibly Judaic kingdom in the south was not consistently Jewish; it was intermittently pagan. Indeed, during that period, most of the kings of the “Kingdom of Israel” did NOT recognize Yah-weh as the godhead. They were not even monotheists; they were avowed pagans. More to the point, almost all of them swore allegiance to the Assyrians.

During this era, we hear the city-in-question denounced by Hosea (10:15), Amos (5:5), and Jeremiah (9:10-11, 26:18, and 48:13). THEY all referred to it simply as the place of “Bet[h]-El” [the “House of El”], which was described as the venue for the king’s court. {14} Meanwhile, Second Kings 10:29 and Second Chronicles 13:8 tell us that King Jeroboam of the northern kingdom (based in “Shomron” at the time) erected idols at two locations: Dan and the “House of El”. Nothing about a “Yerushalem”. Indeed, the

familiar moniker isn't used in any of the other passages where the city is mentioned (e.g. First Chronicles 3:5 as well as Second Chronicles 25:1 and 32:9). It seems that reference to the "House of El" originally corresponded to the Jebusite city located on (what would later be dubbed) Mount Moriah. And THAT would later be refashioned as "Ir David".

But that's not all. The city was also referred to as "**Har [t]Siyon**" [Mount Zion]—as we find in First Chronicles (11:5), Isaiah (60:14), and Psalm 48:2. (This is not to be confused with the western hill that is NOW referred to as "Mount Zion".) Interestingly, that hill was NOT the hill on which Solomon's temple had been built (Mount Moriah). Rather, it was the location of the aforementioned Jebusite fortress...which eventually came to be called "Metsudat Zion" (Fortress of Zion). {15} Second Samuel (5:7), Second Chronicles (5:2), and First Kings (8:1-2) illustrate that the moniker, "Mount Zion" corresponded with what would alternately be referred to as the city of David...which ONLY LATER came to be referred to as "Yerushalem" by the Jewish people. THAT was in the post-Exilic (i.e. "Second Temple") Period. Hence the use of the familiar moniker in, say, Psalms 122 and 147. {16} Interestingly, elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the city-in-question is equated with "Zion"—as in Micah 4:2, Zechariah 9:9, and the opening line of Psalm 137 ("By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.") Here, it is announced where the Psalms were composed. And the aspirations are articulated in terms of dreams of Zion.

In the Book of Isaiah, the city-in-question is simply referred to as "Zion" and "the mountain of the Lord", as well as the place of "the House of the god of Jacob" (2:2-3). In 10:32, the "mount of the daughter of Zion" is equated with the (original) hill of Zion. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, "[mount] Zion" is used to refer to the place where the Abrahamic Deity dwells—as in, say, Isaiah 8:18. But—as mentioned earlier—that "temenos" was located at various places at different points in time. Tellingly, when the city IS mentioned explicitly by Isaiah (5:14 and 29:4), it is CONDEMNED. Why? Because it was a pagan city.

So what became of the moniker, "House of El"? This labeling scheme had a very long history. Even at the culmination of the Exilic Period, we find the same nomenclature. Ezra 2:28 and Nehemiah 7:32 tell us that the Jews who opted to return to Canaan from Babylon went not to a "Yerushalem", but to what was referred to as the "House of El". Such a reference would have been rather odd had the city (wherein the seat of the king was located, as well as the primary temple of the Hebrew deity) been known to the Jews all along as "Yerushalem".

So it makes sense that "Yerushalem" is not mentioned in the Torah. Instead, we repeatedly hear of a "House of El"—starting with Genesis (12:8 and 13:3). Later, we hear about this auspicious place in Judges (20:18/26), where it is mentioned as the place the Hebrews went to seek god's council (again referred to as "House of El").

In First Kings (e.g. chapt. 15), the city is referenced simply as the city from which Judah was ruled. In Second Kings, the place the prophet Elijah visited at the end of his life was referred to as—you guessed it—the "House of El". Still no mention of a "Yerushalem".

In the Book of Ezekiel, the eponymous prophet envisioned the establishment of a new city, which would serve as the capital of the coming Messianic Kingdom. He referred to this as "**YHWH-Shammah**" [place where Yahweh dwells]. {17} This was often construed as a prognostication of the future establishment of a "New Jerusalem" (in medieval parlance). THAT would be accomplished by someone, somewhere, at some point. {15} By who, where, and when? Unsurprisingly, this depended on who one asked.

As it came to pass, this exalted meme (“the place where Yahweh dwells”) was used as part of a Messianic narrative. Was it referring to a worldly place or to an otherworldly place? Both Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch posited the new temple to be not on Earth, but in heaven.

Note that also in Ezekiel (chapter 48), just as in Jeremiah (chapters 32 and 52), the city is simply referred to as “the city”. Meanwhile, the Book of Esther mentions the city simply as the place from which the patriarch, Kish had been seized by Nebuchadnezzar (2:6). Still no use of the familiar moniker.

Only later would the city-in-question be referred to as “Yerushalem” by the Jewish people. As mentioned, the familiar moniker—adopted from antecedent Semitic nomenclature—finally appears in the Book of Joshua (10:1). Most notably, though, it appears in the Book of Lamentations (BoL)—a tract that mourns the Babylonian Exile. (That book is retro-actively attributed to the prophet, Jeremiah.) It should be noted, though, that the BoL was composed at a point in time AFTER the Exilic Period. The book is clearly comprised of material from different authors, cobbled together over a period of time. (A tell-tale sign of the BoL’s disparate sources is that, throughout the book, sometimes the city is referred to in the feminine, other times in the masculine.) Also worth noting: The BoL regurgitates many of the motifs found in the Sumerian “Lamentation for Ur”—which was about the fall of the city of Ur to the Elamites c. 2000 B.C.

Interestingly, the city-in-question is simply referred to as “the city” in the opening verse of the BoL. Thereafter, the city is alternately referred to as “[daughter] Zion” and “Yerushalem”...thus indicating that the later was an ALTERNATE (i.e. optional) way to label the city. This is in keeping with the Book of Isaiah, in which the monikers “Zion” and the city of David are equated—as in 33:20, 40:9, 62:1, and 66:8. Such interchangeability is telling.

But wait; “Zion” was typically employed as an abstraction, right? Precisely. Such phrasing indicates that the moniker, “Yerushalem”—when it WAS eventually used—was often a way of referring to an IDEAL—namely: the “world-to-come” (that is: the Messianic Age; a.k.a. the Kingdom of God). Lo and behold: that is exactly the way the moniker is used in Jeremiah 30:17 and 33:16; as well as in Zechariah 8:3-6, 12:2-3, and 14:8-11. Here, Jerusalem is an idea as much as it is a place.

In Psalm 147:2, we are told that god builds up “Yerushalem” where he shall gather together the outcasts of “Israel” (the diaspora, including the Exilarchs in Babylon). Again: This is more a paean to some utopian vision than it is a prognostication concerning literal historical events vis a vis specific locations.

Isaiah (65:17-25) enjoins: “Behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered... But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create for Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people, no more shall be heard the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.” Here, Jerusalem is clearly a metaphor—an ideal to be realized, a symbol of hope.

Consequently, it should come as no surprise that “[daughter] Zion” and “Yerushalem” are used interchangeably in various other places throughout the Nevi’im—as with Zechariah chapters 8 and 9, Micah chapter 4, and Jeremiah chapter 3. The Song of Songs employs the locution “daughters of Yerushalem” throughout (1:5, 2:7, 3:5/10, 5:8/16, 8:4, etc.) All of these passages speak of the glorious days to come. Clearly, the commentary is more symbolic than documentary in nature. It makes sense, then, that modern Zionists sometimes refer to the city as—well—“[t]Siyon” (alt. “Zion”). {15}

The city-as-symbol continued play a role in Judaic eschatology—as in the Book of Jeremiah: “At that [future] time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and [once they believe] all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord” (3:17).

Was such an onomastic metamorphosis odd? No. A case-study in the transformation of a city’s identity (according to changing ethnic affiliation) is the Roman “Cariathiarim” in Gibeon (the West Bank). That moniker was based on the Hebrew “Kiryat[h]-Ye’arim” [City of Woods]...which had been changed from its original Canaanite name, “Kiryat[h]-Baal” [City of Baal]. Here’s the giveaway: There was a TRANSITIONAL name. During an intervening period (in the late Iron Age and even into Classical Antiquity), the city was referred to as “Baal-Judah” by the rulers of Judah—as attested in the Book of Joshua (9:17, 15:60, and 18:14), the Second Book of Samuel (6:2), and First Chronicles (2:50-53 and 13:6). (For more on the overlap—and even conflation—of the Canaanite godhead with the newfangled Abrahamic godhead, see footnote 15 in my essay on “The Land Of Purple”.)

Note that it was not uncommon for auspicious places in Hebrew lore to have been named after Canaanite deities. In addition to S[h]alem, the city of Beit Shemesh [House of the Sun] was named after a Canaanite goddess. (Shemesh was the daughter of El via Asherah.) Refer to the Book of Joshua (15:10 and 21:16) and the First Book of Samuel (6:12-21).

In terms of semiotics, the symbolism of the city continued to undergo a metamorphosis. Fast-forward to the 1st century A.D., and new idioms took on significance. A Jewish carpenter from the Galilee would proclaim that god’s kingdom “is not of this world” (ref. the Gospel of John; 18:36). Meanwhile, Luke tells us that the “kingdom of god” is within each of us (17:20-21). It seems the focus shifted from worldly places to theological abstractions.

Later still, the vehement anti-Roman propagandist, John of Patmos composed his phantasmagoric “Book of Revelation” c. 100. In his lurid eschatological musings (involving a Last Battle and resurrection of all mankind), John favored the colorful imagery of an earthly “New Jerusalem” presided over by the Messiah (i.e. the Messianic figure that everyone seemed to be speculating about). The Book of Revelation is rife with symbolism. (At was, after all, a propagandistic tract.) In 11:8, the author decries the city of David, which—we are notified—is SPIRITUALLY to be considered Sodom and/or Egypt (places that represent heathenism).

John of Patmos was concerned with the geo-politics of the time, and so was focused primarily on WORLDLY affairs—envisioning the Abrahamic peoples triumphing over pagan Rome—even as he articulated himself in overwrought prose. For reasons we can only speculate about, this deliberately enigmatic author opted to speak in nebulous terms—proffering a raft of fantastical imagery for his audience.

In the opening verses of chapter 21, he stated that the “New Jerusalem” would come out of Heaven. He even compared this vision to a well-adorned bride being sent down from Heaven. Here, we hear echoes of the “Daughter of Zion” idiom.

The Book of Revelation even designates “Mount Zion” as ground zero in its fantastical eschatological prognostications (14:1 and 17:14). In other words, even by c. 100 A.D., the salient nomenclature was “Zion”—based on the onomastics of the Hebrew Bible. John of Patmos writes: “I saw the holy city... And in the city I saw no temple, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb [i.e. the Christ]” (21:2/22).

Elsewhere in the Book of Revelation, the message from god entreats the audience: “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” The passage then explains: “He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending from heaven from god, with the glory of god. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” (21:9-11). An illuminated city coming down from heaven? Clearly, symbolism is being used.

Again, we see that Jerusalem was more a symbol than anything else, which explains why the locution “daughters of Jerusalem” was used in the Gospels (Luke 23:28) to refer to those who were chosen. In this semiotic schema, “Jerusalem” was synonymous with “Zion”. Therefore it makes perfect sense that the DAUGHTER OF ZION / Jerusalem was equated with Jewish people: “Beth Israel”.

Considering all this, the question arises: Was the “New Jerusalem” a heavenly phenomenon or a worldly one? The heuristic here often blurs the two. For a lot of this commentary seems to be more a use of poignant symbolism than it is a literal chronicle of history—as is typically the case with grandiose eschatological perorations. Tellingly, in the synoptic Gospels, the “Kingdom of God” is alternately referred to as the “Kingdom of Heaven”—thereby associating “theos” with a celestial “basileia” in Koine Greek (“Ha-Shem” with “mamlakah” / “malku[t]” in Classical Hebrew). This means that the pending “Kingdom Come” is, indeed, NOT of this world. (Such ideation may be held in contradistinction to the earthly Judaic kingdom envisioned by, say, the Pharisees.)

The metaphorical nature of this kingdom is clear throughout the New Testament. In the Synoptic Gospels, the Kingdom of Heaven / God is even compared to things like the seed of a plant and leaven. Indeed, the entire discourse is suffused with metaphor. Thus we given “Jerusalem” as an icon. In this sense, it is more the expression of an ideal than the designation of a specific location. In other words: Jerusalem—as with the term “Zion”—was used rhetorically.

This leitmotif is born out in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. In 4:26, he contrasts “the Jerusalem above” and “the present Jerusalem”, a heuristic that proffers a dichotomy: between an ideal and a literal city.

Talk about a heavenly city seems to have been an integral part of the idiom. In the letter to the Hebrews (12:22-23) it is stated that “You have come...

- to Mount Zion
- to the city of the living God
- to the heavenly Jerusalem
- to an innumerable company of angels
- to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven
- to god, the Judge of all
- to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

This sequence of descriptions points to the same thing: a divinely-ordained destination that is clearly not a physical place. It’s all symbolic.

Yet the problem is not just a matter of misconstruing the metaphorical as literal. (Indeed, it is not uncommon for people to mistakenly take what is allegorical as historical.) What happens here is more interesting. Jerusalem, in being treated symbolically, became a (sanctified) abstraction that took on a life of its own. The abstraction was then MAPPED BACK ONTO the thing that inspired it. Thus “Jerusalem” qua symbol was reified as “Jerusalem” as an actual city... which was then applied to CONCEPTIONS OF the actual city, Jerusalem.

And so it went: A protracted, meandering process of reification came to RE-DEFINE the physical city that served as the basis for what had become a (malleable) abstraction. A hyper-romanticized treatment of the

city—and its legacy—followed accordingly.

Starting in Late Antiquity, the city-in-question served as a synecdoche for the Judeo-Christian creed...in roughly the same way that Athens was rendered a synecdoche for Greek philosophy. In fact, “Jerusalem” was often presented in contradistinction to “Athens” for HEURISTIC purposes. Thus the Christian apologist, Tertullian asked rhetorically: “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?!” To clarify what he meant by these terms, he posed another rhetorical question: “What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?” He scornfully associated the former with Platonism, Aristotelian thought, Stoicism, and—well—ALL dialectic composition (that is: anything that served to sully the Christian Faith). He juxtaposed this with the latter, which he associated with divine Providence.

In insisting that Jerusalem must trump Athens, Tertullian declaimed: “We want no further inquiry after having read the Gospel!” By extolling Jerusalem while holding Athens in contempt, he illustrated the mandate to use Faith over Reason. He was clearly NOT chronicling historical exigencies. He was articulating alternative IDEALS, not pontificating about the geopolitics of actual cities—as if favoring one physical location over another.

This semiotic convention served what would become a compelling narrative. After all, cities rise and fall, but symbols endure. In assaying these idiomatic expressions, we should take care not to confuse metonymy for geography. For to treat synecdoches as literal referents is a hermeneutic mistake; one that sets the stage for a smorgasbord of exegetical shenanigans.

In this case, to construe “Jerusalem” as some geo-political charter is to misread a nomenclature in which corporeal things (in this case: a city) serve as proxies for ideals (in this case: a kind of Shangri-La). Such a misreading is unsurprising. Per this heuristic, it is supposed that the legacies of the two things ALIGN...which opens the door for conflation. We might note, though, that such an ideation (a “kingdom” as panacea) has analogues in cultures around the world—from Asgard to Shambhala.

Those who contend that iconic cities like Athens (associated with philosophy and democracy; i.e. REASON) and Jerusalem (associated with religious tradition and moral law; i.e. FAITH) are to be seen as the basis for modern “Western” society confuse a semiotic convention for historical fact. This was not a historical analysis, it was a METAPHOR.

Even the Christian theologian, Clement of Alexandria—who, at the end of the 2nd century, was born in Athens and finished his career in Jerusalem—invoked the idiom as a way of conveying the universality of the Christian Faith: “By the Logos, the whole world is now become Athens!” Clearly, he did not mean this in a geo-political sense; he was simply noting that the thought surrounding the Abrahamic deity had become Hellenized (which was something he celebrated).

And so it went with “Yerushalem”. The semiotically-loaded moniker was often used as a euphemism for the Jewish community (as in Psalm 116:18). Hence the use of the locution “O, Jerusalem!” in some of the verses attributed to Jeremiah, where he is addressing his audience. This made perfect sense at the time. For, as we’ve seen, “daughter of Jerusalem” was an alternate name for Beth Israel.

To review: Throughout the Middle Ages into the modern age—from the demise of the Roman Empire to the demise of the Ottoman Empire—Jerusalem was an icon of geo-political dominion—a kind of trophy. In other words: It was more a symbol than anything else.

OTHER CONCEPTUALIZATIONS:

So what of the notion of a “New Jerusalem” (qua eschatological locution) after JoN’s fabled ministry? As it turns out, this idiom became all the rage during Late Antiquity.

In the 2nd century, the Christian cynosure, Montanus, proclaimed Pepuza and Tymion (in Phrygia) as the site of this “New Jerusalem” (alt. “Zion”). In the 5th century, Roman Catholic proselyte, Augustine of Hippo famously posited the “New Jerusalem” as a HEAVENLY city, the “**Civitate Dei**” [“City of God”], which—according to his eschatological musings—was pitted against the dominion of the dastardly pagans. This had spiritual significance as well—hence the adage, “the kingdom of god is within you” found in the Gospel of Matthew.

The trope persisted into the modern age. Tolstoy echoed Kant’s idiom (that the “divine law” is within each of us), asserting that the “kingdom of god” is within each of us. The “New Jerusalem” was not on a tract of land to be seized; it was an ideal to be realized.

It should come as little surprise, then, that Christian Puritans who arrived in what they saw as the New World claimed various places throughout the Americas to be the anointed place. Others continued the convention of associating the “temenos” with a specific location:

- English Puritan, Oliver Cromwell, designated London as the new Zion.
- Dutch prophet, Jan Matthias of Haarlem designated Münster, Germany as the “New Jerusalem” (effectively making Westphalia the new Zion.)
- In concocting his cult of the “Supreme Being”, Maximilien Robespierre claimed it was Paris.
- Solomonic Christians and Rastafarians placed it in Ethiopia.
- And to this day, Mormons claim it shall be in Jackson County, Missouri.

In every one of these cases, we encounter the conceit of a “chosen people” with an eye on a certain worldly location which is reserved EXCLUSIVELY FOR THEM.

In 1890, the founder of the “Social Gospel” movement declared of the American frontier: “Here upon these plains, the problems of history are to be solved. Here—if anywhere—is to rise that city of God, the New Jerusalem, whose glories are to fill the Earth.” For him, the chosen people were WASPs who were settling the lands ever-farther westward.

Prophets who claimed to be leading the way to a “New Jerusalem” had begun with Y’hez’qel of Anathoth (a.k.a. “Ezekiel”). In Christendom, it had continued on through Montanus of Phrygia (in Mysia) to John Calvin (in Geneva). Irrespective of time and place, the idiom had an undeniable poignancy for many people.

In the so-called “New World”, Puritan fanatic, John Winthrop (of “city upon a hill” fame) dubbed his settlement in New England “the place where the Lord will create a New Heaven and a New Earth”...echoing Augustine of Hippo’s “City of God” motif. The “Promised Land” would thenceforth be the land of promise: the Americas. It’s not for nothing that Winthrop christened his base of operations in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, “Salem”: the Biblical name for the “temenos” that preceded the City of David. And what of the indigenous population? As heathens, they had no claim upon the land. (Impelled by delusions of Providentialism, Winthrop can be said to have been the father of American Exceptionalism.) When the “New Jerusalem” is at stake, there is unlimited license to effect “lebensraum” for the Chosen.

Behold an eschatology in which the in-group is exalted while the out-group is denigrated. The designated location invariably ended up being whatever place on which they had their sights set. It’s not so much that they staked their claim on the place because it was the temenos; it was fashioned as the temenos because that is where they wanted to stake their claim. (After all, one glorifies one’s tribe by, well, STAKING

ONE’S CLAIM.) It is no coincidence, then, that these proclamations are shot through with self-serving Providentialism.

A pattern here is easy to note. The envisioned “Promised Land” was more a land that OFFERED promise than a land that HAD BEEN promised (to the Hebrews or to anyone else). That is to say: It was a place that was seen as, well, promising. For any group that fashioned itself as specially-selected for a divinely-ordained mission, these iterations of Zion-redux ended up being wherever votaries happened to fancy their worldly telos. (How quickly a farcical etiology translates to farcical eschatology!)

This is, of course, standard when it comes to Holy Writ, as verbiage is super-saturated with possible connotations. What with so much (often chimerical) subtext, verses are ripe for exegetical shenanigans. Indeed, unscrupulous exegetes engage in endless bouts of hermeneutic chicanery to get things to mean what they want them to mean. (Importing the desired interpretation INTO the source-material is known as “eisegesis”: a kind of exegesis-in-reverse.) In assaying any sacred text, we must always be wary of those with a vested interest in certain foregone conclusions. Why bother? Hermeneutic chicanery comes in very handy when it comes to justifying an agenda; for an exalted legacy can be parlayed into an exalted destiny. A confabulated heritage is be put in the service of entitlements (e.g. “Jerusalem” as the eternal capital of Beth Israel).

As discussed in the previous essay (on the Land of Purple), the Promised Land was not so much a particular place as it was an IDEAL. This poignant idiom withstood the test of time, and continued into the modern age. In his final speech (Memphis, 1968), Martin Luther King Jr. averred: “[God] has allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over and seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you.

But I want you to know tonight that we as a People will get to the Promised Land.” For those smitten with the Abrahamic tradition, “Zion” was a vision that held bounteous promise rather than a title-deed to a piece of real estate. It provided believers with something to look forward to. (Such is the nature of eschatons.) The idiom goes back to Genesis 32:1-2, where Judea is initially referred to as the “Land of Promise”.

Symbolically, Jerusalem (alt. “Zion”) was a panacea more than it was a physical location—in the Levant or anywhere else. But, of course, an ACTUAL location needed to be anointed so as to assert a presence. After all, that’s how the positing of a temenos works. But that was a matter of couching geo-political designs in theological terms.

We might note that the theme of a celestial “promised land” is not unique to Abrahamic theology. We find a similar motif in Buddhism—as with “Pure Land”, which was derived from the ancient notion of the “buddhakshetra” (“Buddha-Field”). Every Grand Narrative needs a “once upon a time” AND a “happily ever after”—something to which one may harken back and something to which one can look forward. Such thinking stands to reason, as legacy and destiny are often symbiotic. This is especially so when it comes to grandiose proclamations of divine Providence.

The diversion of attention from the material world (“dunya”) to the hereafter (“akhira”) would be put into overdrive in Islamic theology. For Muslims, the promised land is NOT of this world; it was ONLY in heaven. (Again: for further discussion of the variegated treatment of a “Promised Land” in Abrahamic lore, see my previous essay on “The Land Of Purple”.)

The yearning for a “New Jerusalem” seemed to reflect an inclination to MOVE ON—that is: to forge a new path into uncharted territory—both metaphorical and geographical—based upon what had (purportedly) been prophesied by forebears. In an important sense, then, this theological panacea was not a specific (worldly) place to be settled; it was an ideal to be realized. This is why it made sense to his (Jewish) followers when Jesus of Nazareth—who considered himself a Jew carrying on the Abrahamic tradition—specified that “my kingdom is not of this world”. {24}

The New Testament bears this out. For the early Christians, a non-geographic sense of the “New Jerusalem” (alt. “Zion”) was in keeping with the idea that the “kingdom of god” was a frame of mind, not a specific place—as when we are told that the kingdom of god is “at hand” in the Gospel of Matthew (3:2). And so it went in Christian eschatology: Kingdom Come is not a physical location, it is something that is PREACHED—as in Matthew 4:17/23 and 10:7; Luke 4:43 and 10:9; as well as Luke’s “Acts of the Apostles” (8:12, 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, and 28:23/31).

So if not the city-in-question, then was there a location with which the Jewish people were primarily affiliated? No. Luke’s Book Of Acts reminds us that Jews were not affiliated with any specific PLACE—as when it states that at the time of the Pentecost, there were some “devout Jews from every nation under heaven” residing in Jerusalem (2:5). In other words, the majority of “Beth Israel” did not hail from Palestine. Of course, the Maccabees and Essenes—followed by the Sadducees and Pharisees—associated themselves with Judea (which was at various points Assyrian, Persian, Seleucid, Ptolemaic, and Roman); but—pace the Hasmoneans—the main centers of Hellenistic Judaism were Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in Syria...along with the Talmudic academies of Mesopotamia.

During Late Antiquity, the majority of the world’s Jews were not in Palestine; they were predominantly located in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Egypt, the Maghreb, and Andalusia. Over time, the remainder of the diaspora came to be scattered across the Mediterranean basin—as “Sephardim”. Thus the third book of the “Oracula Sibyllina” (from the 2nd century B.C.) said of Beth Israel: “Every land is full of thee and every sea.” Pace the Samaritans, the oldest continuous Judaic community in the world, the Romaniote Jews, trace their origins to Greece.

Tellingly, Jewish scholars founded the famed “Geniza” library—the primary repository for Judaic texts—at Fustat (Cairo) in Egypt, not in the city of David. This was not because the rabbinic sages were somehow prevented from founding it in Palestine—as both Egypt and Palestine were typically under the same rulers (the Fatimids, then the Mamluks), or under Muslim rulers that were comparably hospitable—as with the Seljuks / Ayyubids in the Levant. Meanwhile, the great Talmudic academies (spec. Pumbedita and Sura) were in Babylonia, not in the city of David. Again, this was not because the Muslim rulers were preventing such schools from being established in one location and not another.

As already mentioned, the city of David came to be referred to as “**Aelia Capitolina**” by the Romans during the pre-Christian era of the empire. During the Middle Ages, the Judaic moniker for the city was eventually Romanized to “**Hiero-solyma**” [alt. “Hiero-solymitanum” / “Hiero-solymitanus” / “Hiero-solymitanae”] by the magisterium of the Christianized empire. This moniker became especially salient when the city became one of the focal points of the Crusades.

The etymology seems to have come directly from the Koine Greek, “[h]Ierousalem”, which was an exaltation of the (pre-Jewish) Canaanite deity. The key element in this nomenclature was the Greek lexeme for “sacred” / “holy” (“[h]Ierous”) combined with the ancient city-name “S[h]alem” (not—as has been contended by Revisionist Zionist historiographers—with the Hebrew term for “peace”: “shalom”). Thus: Sacred / Holy S[h]alem. (The etymological relation between the place named “Salem” and the god named “Shalim” is up for debate. The morphologic similarity may or may not be a coincidence. Either way, that “S[h]alim” was the Ugaritic name for a Canaanite deity is something

Revisionist Zionists would much prefer we forget.) Thus the real etymology is elided by changing the moniker from “Yir’eh Shalem” [Shalem Sees] to “Yerushalayim”.

It entered the medieval European lexicon largely through the Franks, who undertook the Crusades and became fixated on the city in a way that no European ever had before. The familiar moniker was thus inaugurated—as used in the Frankish “Chanson de Jérusalem” c. 1100.

Places are often re-branded in order to assert cultural ownership. (Even DEITIES are often re-branded.) Such re-branding was illustrated when the earliest Mohammedans re-named the city-in-question, “**Madinat Bayt al-Maqdis[h]**” [“City of the Holy House”] upon seizing it in the 7th century. Where might THAT moniker have come from? “m’K-D-Sh” was based on the Judaic term for Solomon’s Temple (rendered “Beit ha-Mikdash”), as “K-D-Sh” was the Semitic tri-root for “holy”.

Palestinian Arabs later referred to the location as “**Al-Quds**” [that which is holy]. When the Caliph Umar seized the city a few years after MoM’s death, not once did he refer to it as “Yerushalem” (or the Hebraic variants thereof). To the Muslims of the Middle Ages, the city came to be known as the venue for “Al-Aqsa” (the farthest sanctuary, later assumed to have been located on the Temple Mount). Even with regards to the fabled “Night Journey” in the Koran, whereupon MoM was whisked away to the site on his magical steed, it was STILL not called “Yerushalem”. To the present day, the location is simply referred to as “Al-Aqsa”.

Meanwhile, the Persians referred to it in Pahlavi as “Kang Diz Huxt”.

To review: The familiar (Anglo-Saxon / Latin / Hebrew) monikers for the city of David end up being roughly-hewn cognates of the following:

- **Yeru-Shalim**: “Foundation of Shalim” in Sumerian
- **[u]Ru-sh[a]lim[a]**: “City of Shalim” in Ugaritic
- **Uru-shlem**: Old Aramaic (derived from the Ugaritic)
- **Yerushalem** [alt. “Yarushalem”]: “Dwelling place of Shalem” in Biblical Aramaic
- **Yir’eh Shalem**: “Shalem Sees” [alt. “He will see Shalem”] in Classical Hebrew (adapted from the Biblical Aramaic)
- **Urishlem**: Syriac (derived from the Old Aramaic, possibly via Samaritan)
- **[h]Ierousalem**: “holy S[h]alem” in Koine Greek
- **Yerushalayim**: Mishnaic Hebrew (a modification of the Classical Hebrew)
- **Hiero-solyma**: Vulgar Latin (a hybridization of the Greek and Mishnaic Hebrew)
- **Jérusalem**: Frankish

Recall that the moniker used when the city was associated with the Jebusites in the 2nd millennium B.C.: “**Yabusu**” (rendered “Jebus” in Classical Hebrew). In fact, when the Babylonian scribes FIRST referred to the city-in-question in their composition of the Torah, they simply referred to it as “the Jebusite city”. This tells us how the Jews thought of the city even during the Exilic Period. (!) The appellation used when the city was first affiliated with the Abrahamic tradition was “Ir David” (city of David).

We might also recall the appellations used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible: “**Har [t]Siyon**” (mount Zion) and “**Bet[h]-El**” (House of El). And let’s not forget Ezekiel’s positing of the nebulous “**YHWH-Shammah**” (place where Yahweh dwells): an explicit repudiation of the antecedent moniker used in Biblical Aramaic (place where Shalim dwells). Branding is a powerful tool when it comes to managing perceptions.

When it comes to the city-in-question, the pivotal hermeneutic transition occurred at some point in Classical Antiquity, whereupon the Biblical Aramaic (the language in which the Babylonian scribes would

have initially composed Judaic scripture) was rendered in Classical Hebrew (established as the liturgical language of Judaism). As mentioned, the first time the city is referred to—in Judaic scripture—using the familiar moniker (“Yerushalem”) is AFTER the Torah—in the Book of Joshua (chapt. 10), and then in Second Samuel, as well as First and Second Kings...followed by supplementary material in First and Second Chronicles. {18} In other words: The Jews did not start designating the city in this manner until after the cognate had already been in use for many centuries...by various other peoples.

Thereafter, the familiar moniker was used in the Books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Ezra / Nehemiah. It also occurs in the poetic literature: Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, the Psalms, and the BoL—all of which were not compiled until the Hasmonean period.

Bottom line: The prevailing moniker was an inheritance from antecedent cultures...going back to the Sumerians. In the advent of the Exilic Period, there came a point when the Jews stopped designating the location simply as “the city of David” and “House of El”, and adopted the pre-existing moniker. They did so by adapting the extant Aramaic phonemes to their new liturgical language. It is likely that this was done as a way for them—as practitioners of a distinct new Faith—to stake their claim on the city. This would have been seen as an important thing to do since it was the place associated with the rule of David and Solomon (according to their own lore)...even as it had mostly been ruled by pagans ever since.

As we have seen, during Late Antiquity, the writers of the Mishna decided to further modify the moniker by inserting a yod between the lamedh and the mem. Why did they do this? A good guess: semiotic elision. They wanted to nullify the part that referred to the Canaanite deity, “Shalim” (by rendering that part of the word “-shalayim”). Tellingly, this onomastic modification would later be reflected in the Vulgar Latin version of the moniker. {19} Note, though, that the modification does not exist in the Koine Greek version that preceded it (demonstrating it to be a later development).

Koine Greek was used from the 3rd century B.C. (as attested by the earliest Septuagint) into the 3rd century A.D., when it fell into disuse. But the Romans did not start using Vulgar Latin for scripture until the end of the 4th century—when the Empire officially became a Christian theocracy (and thereby became especially invested in Abrahamic lore). Lo and behold: It was precisely during this intervening period (the 2nd century thru the 4th century A.D.) that the major Mishnaic texts were composed (e.g. the writings of Judah the Prince and Rabbi Meir). It would make sense that the Rabbinic sages would insert the yod pursuant to the devastating failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt, when—in an effort to assert a gilded legacy—they sought to sever the city’s ties with its pagan past; and identify it as an exclusively Abrahamic city. (If the Jews could not lay claim to the city in fact, they could at least take ownership of the prevailing nomenclature.) By simply inserting the yod, the moniker was given a semiotic re-set. This was a way of staking their claim on the city SYMBOLICALLY even as it could not be a Jewish city geo-politically. The moniker’s etymological origins in the pagan “Shalim” were thereby occluded by a subtle onomastic tweak. This semiotic elision remains firmly in place—as a version of the yod-inclusive moniker (“Yerushalayim”) is used to the present day.

During the Middle Ages, some of those who composed the Midrash re-jiggered the etymology yet again—retroactively interpreting the moniker as “City of Peace”. This philological hornswoggle was done by exploiting the fact that “shalom” is phonetically similar to “shalem”. (That the city has been the most hotly-contested—and thus the LEAST peaceful—city on the planet since the Iron Age is an irony that seems to be lost on those who countenance this confabulated etymology.) We know this is baloney, as treating the “shalem” as a variant of “shalom” does not explain why Mishnaic scribes found the need to insert the yod. Nor does it explain why Talmudic sages sometimes interpreted the extant phonology as a reference to the city of Melchizedek—which was named “S[h]alem”. {2} Clearly, the inclusion of the yod was an innovation intended to obfuscate the fact that the city was originally named after a pre-Judaic Canaanite deity.

As can be seen in the adumbration above, there occurred an onomastic metamorphosis that was based more on phonology than on semiotics. Such a metamorphosis is commonplace—especially when it comes to the etymology of city names.

And so it went with the Christians of medieval Europe: Staking their claim on this auspicious Palestinian city for Christendom was largely about making a religious statement—and asserting imperial power—rather than about, say, restoring a place to its rightful Hebrew heirs (which was certainly not something they believed they were doing, nor would have wanted to do). After all, Roman Catholics notoriously harbored virulent antipathies toward the Jews; and so were hardly concerned with revivifying Judaic legacies. The Christians’ nomenclature-of-choice was for the Crusaders, not for Beth Israel.

That denizens of the Holy Roman Empire opted for their own (Romanized) version of the moniker makes sense—especially once we consider the eschatology of the “New Jerusalem” discussed above. The religiously-charged onomastics gave prodigious narrative ballast to the Providentialism that they so assiduously touted. Moreover, THIS moniker could be held in contradistinction to the favored moniker of the despised Mohammedans: “Al-Quds”.

To recapitulate: During the Middle Ages, the Jewish presence in Jerusalem was somewhat limited. There are several tell-tale signs that this was the case. In the 13th century, the Andalusian Kabbalist, Moses ben Nahman of Girona / Catalonia (a.k.a. “Nachmanides”; “Ramban”) sought to establish a Jewish presence in the city (spending three years in Palestine, though—tellingly—he resided primarily in Acre, not in Jerusalem).

This means that there was not ALREADY a prominent Jewish presence there. Then, in the late 15th century (pursuant to the Jews being expelled from the Iberian peninsula), the Italian rabbi, Obadiah ben Abraham of Bertinoro [Emilia-Romagna] was celebrated for his efforts to bolster Judaic activity in the city.

Again, if it was already understood to be a Judaic city, this would not have been considered such a big deal. {20}

It is telling that these Renaissance figures earned their fame for their endeavor to jump-start a Jewish presence in Jerusalem. In other words: These men became renown simply for evangelizing there; which tells us that the city was in no way thought of as (already) Jewish. Otherwise, mere proselytization there would not have warranted such notoriety.

What WOULD have been noteworthy in the medieval world would have been, say, a Sufi “wali” promulgating Islam in London (never happened)...or, say, a Trappist monk promulgating Christianity in Medina (never happened)...or, as was actually the case, rabbis trying to augment the (limited) Jewish presence in Jerusalem. The key difference, of course, was that the city of David was part of Judaic lore; so the motives for doing so were relatively straight-forward.

Barring the legends of David and his heir, Solomon, during its earliest centuries, the City of David was not the center of Judaic activity. In its earliest centuries, the Abrahamic deity was worshipped variously at

S[h]alem, Gibeon, She[c]hem, Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, Ramah, and Dan (a.k.a. “Shfela”). {2} Thereafter, the Jewish kingdom (that of Judah) had its capital at Hebron before being re-located to “Ir D-w-D” [City of the Beloved] (a.k.a. the city of David).

In Late Antiquity, the city of David was typically not the center of Judaic activity. For instance: In the late 1st century, the Pharisees (who were still in descent standing with the Roman authorities) opted to set up shop on the coast, in Yavneh. And in the late 2nd century, even as the “tanna”, Judah ha-Nasi spent his career in Judea, his famed student (“Abba” Arikha bar Aybo; a.k.a. the “Rav”) opted to practice not in the city of David, but in the Babylonian academy at Sura.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the city of David was STILL not the center of Judaic activity. (As mentioned, the primary Talmudic academies were in Babylonia.) Indeed, the vast majority of the geonim were located in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Maghreb, and Andalusia. During the Renaissance, Jerusalem was STILL not a center for Judaic activity. The most well-known rabbi to go to Palestine was Joseph Saragossi, who—in the late 15th century—opted to establish a yeshiva at Safed in Galilee. The only figure to attempt to establish a small community in Jerusalem was the Italian rabbi, Obadiah ben Abraham of Bertinoro (Romagna) c. 1500. Yet he ultimately opted for Hebron instead. (His focus seemed to primarily be the Jews in Alexandria.) And when Joseph Nasi sought to establish a small community in Palestine in the 1560’s, he opted for Tiberias and Safed (both in Galilee). During the Middle Ages, the majority of Palestinian Jews could be found in places like Haifa, Ramla (alt. “Ramleh”), Caesarea Palaestina [Maritima], and Ashkelon. {9}

When Kabbalists of the era sought to teach in Palestine, they opted for places other than Jerusalem. In the mid-16th century, Isaac ben Solomon Luria (said to have been born in Jerusalem, though that may be apocryphal) opted for Safed. Then, in 1599, Abraham ben Mordecai Azulai—who hailed from Fez, Morocco—opted for Hebron. When he had to temporarily leave Hebron, he opted for Gaza City. He was never inclined to step foot in Jerusalem. This was not because the option was unavailable to him. The Ottomans did not forbid Jews from residing in—and observing in—the City of David.

As recently as the early 18th century, the most renown rabbi in Palestine (Hayyim Abraham Israel ben Benjamin Ze’evi) operated out of Hebron, not Jerusalem. It was not until the Zionist movement began in the late 19th century that the City of David became an axis mundi for Beth Israel. Subsequently, a tiny subset of world Jewry started to assert a god-given right to the city. That Revisionist Zionists now proclaim Jerusalem to be OUR city—and ONLY OURS—is nothing short of preposterous.

The identities of cities around the world have undergone onomastic metamorphoses. In each case, we find a meandering process whereby a given urban center comes to be associated with different ethnicities over time. Sometimes this involves a continuum of epochs that pertain to a distinct lineage; but it often involves momentous transitions: pivotal points in time whereby the city comes to be associated with an entirely different legacy. How this goes depends on who’s doing the labeling (read: who’s controlling the narrative). As it turns out, most of the world’s great cities have undergone numerous name-changes. (China’s capital, “Bei-jing”, has undergone at least FIFTEEN such name changes.)

As we have seen, over the course of the Middle Ages, the city of David came to be referred to in emphatically Biblical terms. Hence: **“Hiero-solyma”** (and the aforementioned Latin variants) by those in Christendom. To reiterate: This was an appellation coined in the midst of the religious turmoil of the epoch, employed throughout the Occident for primarily ideological purposes. This nomenclature was espoused because, in the midst of the fervor of the Crusades, the (Roman Catholic) Franks sought to emphasize the (farcical) Judeo-Christian heritage of the fabled city, thereby legitimizing THEIR claim (rather than the heretical Saracens’ claim) upon it. That claim was more about religious symbolism than it was about anything else. For it was necessary to rationalize their god-given claim on what was purported to be the City Of God.

The Roman Catholics’ nomenclature reflected this thinking...just as the Mohammedans’ choice of moniker, **“Al-Quds”** [the holy place] served THEIR claim upon the city. Meanwhile, throughout the Early Modern period, the Ottomans referred to the city as **“Kud[us]-i Sherif”**, another case of re-branding for political purposes. Such onomastic ramification is typical.

And so it went: In the modern age, **“Yerushalayim”** became the preferred moniker for virtually anyone living in the Occident. It was for primarily ideological reasons that the Judeo-Christian folklore surrounding the storied Palestinian city eventually took on a life of its own. The contrived legacy became completely disconnected from historical reality. Ironically, this farcical heritage would be a boon for the fascistic incarnation of Zionism that emerged in the 20th century.

Today, we simply assume—erroneously—that the city has always been **“Jerusalem”** (the Anglicized version of the Semitic moniker). According to this thinking, such a portrayal is perfectly in keeping with the tales found in the Hebrew Bible...which was written during and after the Exilic Period...primarily by Babylonian scribes. As a consequence of this misapprehension, those enraptured by a fantastical Judeo-Christian historiography are inclined to suppose that the city is somehow inherently Judaic...or at least inherently Biblical.

The flights of fancy involved here are demonstrated by the Judaic pilgrimage of the modern era. Insofar as the former venue of Solomon’s storied temple is considered consecrated Abrahamic ground, delusive thinking is afoot; as the rationale for Jews’ exclusive claim upon the site are based largely on farce. The **“Kotel”** (a.k.a. the **“Wailing Wall”**), which is purported to be the **“western wall”** of what was once the second temple, is—it turns out—the remains of a rampart that was erected by the Romans under Herod. (For more on Herodian construction projects, see the Appendix.)

The Romans razed the temple of this era in 70 A.D. In the opening passage of Book VII of **“Ioudaikou Polemou”** (written about five years later), the Jewish chronicler, Josephus relays that the entire structure was demolished: **“It was so thoroughly laid level with the ground—by those who [even] dug up the foundation—that there was nothing left to indicate to anyone who went there that it had ever existed.”** Obviously, what is now a large wall could not be part of something that no longer existed.

It is ironic that devout Jews now bow before a structure that was built by those who oppressed and persecuted their forebears.

It should come as no surprise, then, that this wall was not rendered a place of prayer for Jews until almost 1700. (!) It became a slightly more common site to pray in the advent of (secular) Zionism in the 1890's. It was not until fifty years after THAT (in the 1940's) that the wall became an iconic structure—and thus a significant (sacred) location for Jewish propitiation. The myth that this wall was part of Solomon's temple is part of more recent (Revisionist Zionist) propaganda. (Note that Jews are not alone in their delusion. Muslims fashion the location to be the launching-point for their prophet's glorious ascent into heaven on a winged horse, during the fabled "Night Journey".)

We might note that the early Zionists did not consider Jerusalem a place that was to be annexed—let alone a trophy to be won. They were primarily concerned with setting up humble kibbutzim in the Galilean countryside and peaceably settling in coastal towns. That was the original vision of the (secular) socialist movement—who's participants merely sought a safe haven for the oppressed Jews of Europe (a measure that was warranted at the time).

In the advent of the Zionist movement of the 19th century, the Jewish population in the city increased appreciably. By 1900, there were roughly 30 thousand Jews in the city. (To put this in perspective: During the Nakba of 1948, over 30 thousand Palestinian Arabs were forced out of their homes in west Jerusalem alone.)

Different groups perceive the world through different prisms; as they are inclined to project their own (current) interests onto a re-rendering of history tailored to suit their needs. Ideologues are quick to subscribe to a bespoke narrative that legitimizes all their claims. Consequently, they view past events through a certain lens (i.e. one that validates their beliefs). By doing so, past events—portrayed in a "just so" manner—can be put in the service of present agendas.

Take, for instance, the famed Yeshua ben Eliezer ben Sira[ch], author of the "Book of All-Virtuous Wisdom [of Sirach]" and the "Alphabet of Sirach" from the 2nd century B.C. He is often (misleadingly) referred to as "Ben Sira of Jerusalem"; yet Ben Sira was actually a resident of Alexandria, in Ptolemaic Egypt. So why the modified appellation? This is an example of self-serving historical revisionism.

There are several cases of this when it comes to archeology. Note the strategic re-naming of the vaults built by the Judean vassal-king, Herod (or possibly by Roman Emperor Hadrian): "Solomon's stables"...which long post-dated Solomon. Also note the so-called "Millo" structure: an Amorite / Jebusite structure...which long pre-dated the Israelites. Revisionist Zionist historiographers insist that THAT is Solomonic as well. (They do so by invoking Second Samuel 5:9, as well as select passages in Kings and Chronicles.) This is a lie.

Indeed, there is more archeological evidence for the Herodian pools and the administrative courtyard "Gabbatha" (alt. "Lithostrotos") than there is for anything that might have been Solomon's temple. (For more examples of fraudulent explanations for architecture, see the Appendix.)

Revisionist Zionism employs a rigged historiography in order to make it seem as though (what used to be known as) the city of David has always been a Judaic city; and that said city—now referred to as "Yerushalayim" within Beth Israel—has always been the center of activity for the world's Jewish people. It hasn't. {2} The point of doing so is to re-purpose myth (in this case: the site of the throne of a fabled Hebrew king) as historical reality (in this case: the eternal city of the Jewish people). {22} This is a semiotic swindle that becomes apparent once the relevant history is understood. It is demeaning to anyone—including the world's Jewish people—to suppose that they cannot come to terms with ACTUAL history; and that they can only subsist on self-ingratiating illusions.

Was the city of David REALLY the site of the fabled “Moriah” hill, where Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son to prove his fealty to Yah-weh? Probably not. (If anything, the man in that tale would have lived near Hebron...assuming, that is, the tale was based on a historical figure.) Either way, it doesn’t matter. Is the Temple Mount REALLY the place to which Mohammed of Mecca was taken on his “Night Journey” (whisked away to the farthest “masjid”, on a flying horse)? It doesn’t matter. For it’s all just legend; and legend is not something on which to base responsible geo-political (or any) decisions...especially when many of those involved don’t subscribe to those legends.

The Dutch no longer lay claim to the city at the mouth of the Hudson River. Granted, this is primarily because the location does not play a key role in Netherlandish folklore. {23} Yet EVEN IF IT DID, the Dutch would probably not be vying to seize it from its American inhabitants. As with New York City, Jerusalem has a long tradition of ethnic diversity—and cannot be said to have ever belonged to only one people. The next time someone refers to Jerusalem as “the eternal city of the Jews”, simply respond by noting that—by the same logic—the Big Apple might be considered the eternal city of the Frisians.

FOOTNOTES:

{1 This would be preposterous EVEN IF the Dutch had designated the location as some sort of Netherlandish holy site. Such an eventuality, though, would be entirely beside the point. Over the course of human history, there have been countless peoples around the world who have considered various locations to be sacred (for a myriad of reasons). None of these instances—every one of which is an accident of history—has any more/less legitimacy than any of the others. (Indeed, a “temenos” can theoretically be ANYWHERE; and declared to be ANYTHING by ANYONE for any number of reasons.) Such an exigency can hardly be used as justification for waging a geo-political campaign (of oppression) against an indigenous people. In every conceivable case, autochthony is indeterminate, as it is invariably predicated on a delimited timeframe (typically determined by a tribe-centric narrative). Some might point to the Dutch basis for the names of certain parts of New York City—as with Harlem, Brooklyn, and Flushing (three of the most ethnically-mixed places in the world). The etymology of such onomastics is a moot point. With regards to New York City, were we to extend our purview beyond the 17th century, we would find that the famed metropolis is located on the Lenape homeland. To consider ANY city to be the eternal city of ANYTHING is not only spurious; it is OSTENTATIOUSLY spurious. (One might say that ascribing eternity to a social construct is an ornery way to be nonsensical.) As the Lenape vis a vis Manhattan—like the Jebusites vis a vis Jerusalem—are no longer around to assert ownership, the best we can now do is ensure cosmopolitanism prevails in every instance where irreconcilable legacies collide. This means repudiating any and all claims of “blood and soil” (irrespective of who is making them), ALL of which are prima facie insidious. Ethnocentricity is categorically—not conditionally—iniquitous.}

{2 The prophet, Samu-El, who mentored King David, did his apprenticeship for Eli, the high priest of the Abrahamic deity. The location: “Shilo[a]h”. That temonos was not a temple; it was a TENT: “mishkan”—that is: a tabernacle originally erected by the Judah-ite, Beza-l-El ben Uri-El ben Hur at Beth-El (Luz), as described throughout Exodus (chapters 25-27, 35-40; note esp. 33:7-10). The mythical “M-L-K-i zedek” [“king of righteousness”; typically rendered “Melchizedek”] was the first Abrahamic priest—according to Judaic legend. (Note: This lexeme also occurs in the moniker, “Adon-i-Zedek” and in phrases like “mishpat Zedek”, “moreh Zedek”, and “bene Zedek”.) Per Genesis 14:18, Melchizedek was the priest of “El-Elyon”. It was he who blessed Abraham, thereby anointing him as the eponymous patriarch of a distinctly Hebrew Faith. He hailed from S[H]ALEM, NOT from the place that would later be dubbed the “city of David”. Initially, Yah-weh-ists (read: the first Hebrews) had no singular “temenos”—a fact made clear in passages like Second Kings 16:4 and 17:10. (Indications that the City of David would eventually come to be considered the “temenos” crop up in chapter 12 of Deuteronomy.) So WHERE DID the proto-Hebrews worship their godhead? As mentioned, one of the earliest sacred

places was, indeed, “Shilo[a]h”. As with Solomon’s fabled temple, this was not a place of worship, but (seen as) the literal dwelling place of the Abrahamic deity. (Interestingly, the Torah’s description of the so-called “first temple” corresponds to the standard design of pagan temples in the region—as with the one at Ain Dara, also seen as the literal dwelling place for the godhead.) Tellingly, there was an ACTUAL temple at Tel Arad (in the Judean countryside) dating from the 8th or 7th century B.C... which appears to have been dedicated alternately to the godhead of the Shasu (“Yah-weh” / “El Elyon”) and to the Canaanite goddess, “Asherah”. In addition to “Shilo[a]h”, there were several auspicious locations throughout Canaan where worship of the earliest incarnation of the Abrahamic deity (variously considered Yah-weh and Baal) was done: Gibeon, She[c]hem, Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, Ramah, Dan [alt. “Shfela”], etc. The Hebrew iteration of Yahweh was likely based on the godhead of the Shasu. This fact is attested in inscriptions from the 13th century B.C. at “Karnak” in Egypt—commemorating the triumph of Seti (father of Ramses the Great) over the “people of Y-H-W”. By the 8th century B.C., the Edomites were STILL referring to their godhead as “Y-H-W-H” (viz. Yahweh of Teman). It’s worth noting that Zedek / [t]Zadok also refers to a prophet under Solomon’s reign who had purportedly descended from the Nubian, Pa-Nehas[i] ben El[e]azar ben Aaron (a.k.a. “Phine[h]as”). This figure was originally a JEBUSITE priest (and possibly even a Samaritan “kohen”). The Jebusites worshipped the precursor to the Abrahamic godhead, which means that THAT was likely the form of Abrahamic monotheism at the time (i.e. when Solomon appointed Phine[h]as); and would subsequently serve as the basis for the godhead of the Torah. Links to even EARLIER Canaanite theism are indicated by the fact that Aaron’s grandson (Phine[h]as) was still contending with those—like the Midianites—who worshipped Baal (ref. the Heresy of Peor).}

{3 “Philistines” is a moniker for the nefarious “other tribe” (rendered “allophuloi” in ancient Greek). The Hebrew “Plishtim” is the plural of “P-L-Sh-T”, which was based on the antecedent Assyrian name “Palastu” / “Pilstu”, a variant of the name used by the Ancient Egyptians: “Peleset”. It is for this reason that the Romans referred to the region “Palestinae”. I explore this etymology in the previous essay: “The Land Of Purple”.}

{4 A noted Amorite ruler of the city from the late Bronze Age was Abdi-Hebat (from the 14th century B.C.), as mentioned in the Amarna letters.}

{5 Prior to 110 B.C., pace Simeon’s rule from 142 to 135 B.C., the (Maccabean) Hasmoneans were vassals of the Seleucids—an arrangement that began c. 164. Hasmonean ascendance to sovereignty followed in the wake of the Maccabean Revolt of the 160’s B.C. Before that uprising, there were likely more Samaritans and (pagan) Gentiles living in Canaan than there were mainline Yehudim. (The Samaritan temple was not in Jerusalem; it was on Mount Gerizim...until, that is, the Hasmoneans destroyed it.) The Maccabees referred to the land as “Judea”. (Referring to it as “Israel” would not have made sense; as they considered THEMSELVES “Israel”. For Israel was the name of a people, not of a place.) From 63 to 40 B.C., the Hasmoneans were vassals of the Roman Republic; then, for the next three years, of the Parthian Empire. Thereafter, the Herodian rulers (who thought of the region as “Judea”, not as “Israel”) were vassals of the Roman Empire (who referred to the region as “Palestina[e]”). During this epoch, Jews remained in the minority; and any Jewish leader in the city was a suzerain, not a sovereign. Moreover, Judaic cynosures in the Levant were not even necessarily ethnically Jewish (as with Helena of Adiabene). It should be noted that if we were to take Herodian rule as precedent TODAY, we would be forced to propose that Hauran, Peraia, and Batanaia (in present-day Jordan) as well as Itur[a]ia (in present-day Lebanon) be annexed by the modern nation-state of Israel...in addition to the entirety of the West Bank. (The most voracious Revisionist Zionists ACTUALLY DO envision a retrogression to ancient regimes. It’s no accident that Sheldon Adelson’s fundraising apparatus is dubbed the “Maccabee Task Force”, signaling a resurrection of the Hasmonean order.) Moreover, we would be forced to use the Pharisees as a precedent for Judaism—replete with Sanhedrin and regular animal sacrifices. (See footnote 6 below.) It is unclear, though, whether today’s Revisionist Zionists seek to use the Second Temple period as precedent...or aim to harken back even further, and resurrect the regime of the unified kingdom from the

10th century B.C. It's hard to figure which proposal would be more ridiculous. See footnote 7 below.}

{6 Sure enough, the modern nation-State of Israel refers to its parliament as the “Knesset”, a reference to the “Anshei Knesset Ha-Gedolah” [People of the Great Assembly], which allegedly existed during the Second Temple period. According to Judaic lore, the assembly was founded by Ezra in the 530's B.C. (in the advent of the Exilic Period's conclusion). The claim that this political body was intended in any way to be secular (to wit: to be a means for effecting genuine democracy) is derisory. Even the president of the modern nation-State is referred to as “Nasi”, the ancient term for the “rosh” [head] of the Sanhedrin. (The “rosh” of Israel's “hemshala” [government] is referred to in English as the “Prime Minister”.) Jewish citizens are afforded a panoply of entitlements unavailable to anyone else in “Israel”. It is no secret that Arabs are subalterns. To pretend that there is nothing theocratic (or ethno-centric) about such a government, then, is risible.}

{7 For the Revisionist Zionists who indulge in the more fanciful historiographies, we are exhorted to harken back to the last Judaic sovereign regime: the (Hasmonean) kingdom of the Maccabees—as Sheldon Adelson does with his rather on-the-nose “Maccabee Task Force”. Such thinking reminds us that etiological myths are the bread and butter of present-day ethno-nationalist ideologies. (Judeo-fascist organizations focused on hegemony in Jerusalem include “El-Ad” and “Ateret Kohanim” [“Crown of Priests”].) Calling for the establishment of a “Qahal” (Jewish theocracy) requires one to indulge in the cockamamie notion of resurrecting a regime from over two millennia ago. Presumably, said regime is to be somehow transposed into the modern era. We are then supposed to pretend that doing so is the most reasonable—and equitable—thing to do; and that—in any case—it would be fulfilling the wishes of the Creator of the Universe.}

{8 Nebuchadnezzar II has become the stuff of legend. Naturally, this fabled Babylonian king is vilified in the Book of Daniel—a fantastical tract that was not composed until the 2nd century B.C. (i.e. four centuries after the fact). The book is almost entirely apocryphal-based, as it is, on Aramaic lore that predates Hebrew lore by almost a thousand years. (The eponym is merely an adaptation the Canaanite hero, Dan-El of Ugarit, tales of whom date back to the 2nd millennium B.C.) There is also a Samaritan version of this book—which is just as disconnected from history. Other Judaic (read: dogmatic) accounts of the Babylonians' siege of the city are found in the Book of Jeremiah (also from the 2nd century B.C.) and the second Book of Kings (derived from Deuteronomic sources).}

{9 The Babylonian Exile lasted about 48 years (until c. 538 B.C.) It was during that time that the earliest Judaic texts were composed. (Judaic lore is ABOUT events prior to that, of course; but the lore ITSELF was codified during the Exilic Period. Analogously, Jain lore is ABOUT events going back trillions of years; that doesn't make Jainism itself trillions of years old. At the conclusion of the Exile, when the Persians allowed the Hebrew residents of Babylon to return to the City of Judah, most of them opted to remain in Babylon. This would have been a peculiar decision had they'd felt themselves to have been held captive. In fact, later (in the 3rd century A.D.), Talmudists opted to set up academies in Mesopotamia—as with the storied “yeshivot” [Talmudic academies] at Pumbedita (present-day Fallujah), Sura, and Nehardea. The fact that the Persians (at that point, the Parthians; later, the Sassanians) allowed these Jewish institutions to be built and operated AT ALL belies any claims of persecution. (See footnote 10 below.) By the 1st century B.C., prominent rabbis were STILL hailing from Babylon—most notably: Hillel the Elder. Those who WERE in Palestine were typically not located in Jerusalem. (A possible exception was the fabled Akiba ben Yosef, who originally hailed from Lod.) The famed “Council of Jamnia” was held in Yavneh [alt. “Jabneh”], on the Mediterranean coast. Tellingly, even the so-called “Jerusalem Talmud” (from the 4th century) was actually composed in Galilee, not in the city of David. (!) And it was composed in ARAMAIC. (The Babylonian Talmud was composed at the Talmudic academies in Babylonia over the following two centuries.) Throughout Late Antiquity (i.e. the Mishnaic period), the most prominent Jewish figures in Palestine operated out of Usha rather than Jerusalem: Shimon bar Yochai, Judah ben Ilai, Jose ben Halafta (a.k.a. “Rabbi Yossi”), Rabbi Meir, etc. In fact, when the Sanhedrin was re-established in the

2nd century A.D., it was done in Usha, not in the city of David. Meanwhile, major figures like Shammai, Yohanan ben Zakkai, and [y]Ishmael ben Elisha “Ba’al Ha-Baraita” resided in the Galilee, not in the city of David. The renown “amora”, Hoshaiiah Rabbah, established his schools in Galilee c. 200—first at Sepphoris, then at Caesarea (which is also where Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef had taught). Even the chief compiler [“tanna”] of the Mishnah, Yehudah ha-Nasi (a.k.a. “Judah the Prince”) did all his work while in Usha and in Bet[h] She’arayim (both in the Galilee), not in the city of David. (See footnote 11 below.) Throughout Late Antiquity, most of the other rabbinic sages remained in Babylonia—as with “amora-im” like Rav Huna (at Sura) as well as “Rava” and “Abaye” (at Pumbedita).}

{10 Cyrus the Great not only allowed any Babylonian Jews interested in migrating to Palestine to do so, he granted them permission to build the “second temple” in Jerusalem—a gesture of striking magnanimity that a regime seeking to persecute them would certainly never have even considered. Nevertheless, the rabbinic sages overwhelmingly chose to operate in other locations—as the present Endnote makes clear. The Romans, who took control over the Levant in the 1st century B.C., were—of course—a different story. While the Herodian period was relatively accommodating to Palestinian Jews (see Appendix), the Roman persecution intensified after the decisive tamp-down c. 70; and even more-so after the quashing of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 132-135 A.D.)}

{11 Prior to THAT, the centers of Judaic activity in Canaan for the fabled “tanna-im” had been Lod [alt. Lydda] and Jabneh. Note that the latter city was rendered “Jamnia” in Greek. The city was called “Jamnia” by the Romans and “Ibelin” by medieval Europeans. It is now known as “Yavne” in Hebrew and “Yibna” in Arabic.}

{12 By the end of the 4th century, the Romans had become what can only be described as tyrannical Christian theocrats. Consequently the Sassanians and Jews tended to ally themselves against them, per the “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” protocol. Note, for example, the slaughtering of over 10,000 Christians in the city by Persian general Shahrbaraz and Jewish general Benjamin of Tiberias IN CONCERT c. 614.}

{13 The timeline of this celebrated historiography is highly dubious. Modern scholarship places the temple’s likely construction—IF, that is, it even existed—at some point in the late 9th to late 7th century B.C. Though Judaic lore would lead us to believe otherwise, Solomon’s projects were not exclusively Mosaic. We should bear in mind that Solomon also erected shrines to Molek (a.k.a. “Moloch”, a deity worshipped by the Ammonites, likely adapted from the Phoenician version of Ba’al at Tyre: Melqart) and to [c]Hemosh (godhead of the Moabites), as recounted in First Kings 11:7. This would seem to indicate that he accommodated pagan (esp. Assyrian) idolatry in his theological repertoire.}

{14 When referring to the House of God (qua temple), this has also been rendered “Beit-i-El” (Genesis 12:8) and “Bet [ha] Elohim”. There have been attempts by Judaic apologists to find a conjectured town called “Bethel” in order to explain such references to a “House of El”. Such attempts have been unsuccessful. The problem with this tac is that “Bet[h]-El” is described as the place where the king had his court...which would pose problems for a Jerusalem-centric portrayal. For, as we have seen, the Judaic center was often NOT in the City of David. And even if it HAD been, why wouldn’t the location be designated by the city’s putative name? Bottom line: Until Late Antiquity (the Talmudic era), the salient descriptor for the Judaic temenos was “House of El”.}

{15 This was an alternate way of referring to the city of David as “Zion”. This is illustrated by the fact that “New Jerusalem” has alternately been referred to as the “new Zion”. Originally, “Zion” simply referred to a hill within that city (ref. Micah 4:8 and Isaiah 10:32), likely the location of the fabled Jebusite fortress referenced in Judges 19:10. The moniker was eventually rendered a synecdoche for the entire city—as we find in, say, Isaiah 62:1-12. And so it went: Through much of Classical Antiquity, the city of David was alternately referred to as “Metsudat Zion” [Fortress of Zion].}

{16 Recall that the Psalms were adapted over the course of many centuries—culminating in the Masoretic texts of the Dark Ages. Many were revampings of antecedent lore—as with Psalm 29, which was a Judaized version of a hymn to Baal.}

{17 Ezekiel envisioned a new temple to be erected, and was very specific about its design (ref. chapt. 40-48). Isaiah 54:11-14 elaborated upon this; and buoyed the vision with augmented Messianic fervor—thereby inaugurating Judaic apocalypticism. The Christian fanatic, John of Patmos got even more carried away with sensational apocalyptic prognostications (as with Revelation 21:18-23); and—revealingly—referred to the city simply as “the city”. The fact that such vague descriptors (“place where Yahweh is” [YHWH-Shammah] and “the city”) were used is very telling. It means that nobody thought of the city as “Yerushalem” until much later.}

{18 There is debate about the single appearance of the city’s familiar moniker in the First Book of Samuel (17:54). However, it is used throughout the Second Book of Samuel.}

{19 The Roman Catholic Church took its queue from the prevailing Judaica of the time—thus including the “y” in their moniker-of-choice: “Hiero-solyma” (Romanized with the key morpheme, “hiero-”).}

{20 An explanation for why one of these scenarios ended up happening (this singular rabbi proselytizing in Jerusalem) while the others did not does not speak to its legitimacy. It merely illustrates why a Jewish proselyte in the city was so noteworthy: the city was not a Jewish city, so the occurrence was novel enough to mention. Think of it this way: It is highly unlikely that a Muslim who’s métier was “dawa” (promotion of the Sunnah) would have made the front-page news by doing so in Mecca. Such a proselyte would have been no more noteworthy than an itinerant preacher touting the Roman Catholic catechism in Vatican City. (See footnote 21 below.)}

{21 As it turns out, up until the 19th century, the vast majority of Jews in Palestine were Sephardim and Misra[c]him. The former spoke Ladino, as they hailed from Andalusia and the Maghreb. The latter spoke Arabic. It was only in the late 18th century that Jews from Eastern Europe started migrating—in tiny amounts—to Palestine. These “Ashkenazim” predominantly hailed from the Pale of Settlement, and were (primarily) descendants of the [k]Hazers; not of Semitic peoples (a matter I explore in a forthcoming essay.) They founded small, agrarian settlements (the bucolic socialist communes known as “kibbutzim”) in the area; and did so at the pleasure of the Ottomans. These were, effectively, the first Zionists. While residents were generally observant, such humble communes were primarily secular in nature. We might bear in mind that the “Zionist” movement began as a secular / socialist movement, that did not claim any right to displace the indigenous peoples.}

{22 The trick is to accuse anyone who dares debunk the faux historiography of being “anti-Semitic”, an epithet that has nothing to do with the matter at hand. Such perfidious casuistry is—unfortunately—not uncommon.}

{23 The same analogy could be drawn with the Dutch vis a vis Jakarta in Indonesia. Jakarta—as “Batavia”—was Dutch for 323 years (1619 to 1942), after which it was Japanese for three years. That was less than three generations ago. This means that, in terms of sovereignty, up until the Second World War,

the capital of Indonesia had been officially Dutch for over double the CUMULATIVE time that Jerusalem had been officially Jewish. Granted, Jakarta was never considered a Netherlandish holy site; but EVEN IF it had been, the point would remain. For if Netherlandish lore HAD—for whatever reason—posited sacred ground in Java, this would change nothing about how the rest of the world is obligated to view the place that was originally called “Sunda Kelapa”. (And while we’re at it, me might notify the Spanish that the Arabs will be retaking Cordoba.) Bottom line: Jerusalem is no more inherently Jewish than Jakarta is inherently Dutch. }

{24 “Bab-El” is Aramaic for “gates of god”. Jesus of Nazareth is even said to have referred to himself as “bab-El” in the Gospel of John (10:9), meaning that he was the doorway through which the saved would enter. Again, the phrasing in scripture is suffused with metaphor, and often found across cultures. Jesus is said to have proclaimed, “I am the way, the truth, and the life”...the same declaration Siddhartha Gautama of Lumpini (a.k.a. the “Buddha”) had made five centuries earlier. }

APPENDIX:

When Herod, the Idumean (Edomite) suzerain of Judea, rose to power (primarily due to his friendship with famed Roman general, Marc Anthony), he wasted no time ingratiating himself with both Palestine’s Pharisees and the Emperor in Rome: Octavian (a.k.a. “Caesar Augustus”). Herod had nothing but contempt for the (Maccabean) Hasmoneans. Even as Herod supplanted the Hasmoneans, he obliquely identified with Beth Israel. (One of his wives was of Hasmonean lineage, whom he soon executed; another was of Sadducee / Boethusian lineage, whom he soon banished; and yet another was a Samaritan.)

Herod is known for having placed a golden eagle over the entrance to the temple in Jericho: clearly not something a unreconstructed Jew would have done. It’s also telling that when the Parthians attacked Jerusalem, the city’s Jews sided with the Parthians over the Herodian regime, whom they held in abeyance.

That Herod eventually minted coins depicting himself alongside the menorah was likely a ploy to ingratiate himself with the city’s Kohanim (Jewish High Priests) than it was a sincere profession of personal Faith. (For a similar use of religious affiliation as propaganda, see Constantine vis a vis Christianity.) In the end, Herod’s fealty was an awkward hybrid of Roman paganism and Judaism. In other words: As the Palestinian vassal to the Roman Imperium, Herod was playing both sides.

In the late 1st century B.C., Herod—anointed King of Judea—erected the “Antonia citadel” (named for his Roman patron, Mark Antony), which would serve as barracks for the city’s Roman garrison. The facility was located at the eastern edge of the old city, in the gully between Bezetha and the north side of the Temple Mount, next to the Struthion cistern (a.k.a. Sparrow Pool). Some revisionists contend that the primary function of this structure was to “protect” the Second Temple; which makes no sense, as it housed the very soldiers who would raze said temple c. 70. (The same goes for the Roman fort atop Masada.)

What is now referred to as the “Second Temple” was not—by that time—the same temple as the Jewish temple purportedly erected by Vassal-King Zerub-Bab-El of Judah c. 516 B.C., who served at the pleasure of the Persian governor, “Shin-azzar” (alt. “Sheshbazzar”). THAT would have been the second temple...if, that is, we are to suppose that there was a previous temple erected by Solomon in the 10th century B.C. (That would have been some sort of “hekhal” where the Canaanite godhead, Baal, was worshipped for much of the 7th century.) The fabled “First Temple” was destroyed by the Babylonians c. 587 B.C. The “Second Temple” was erected c. 516 (at the behest of Persian king, Darius); but THAT was destroyed by the Seleucids in the 2nd century B.C. (whereupon it was replaced by a temple to Zeus). So the temple built at the behest of Herod (a.k.a. “Herod’s temple”) was actually the THIRD temple.

It is unclear what, exactly, was at the site during the Hasmonean era. There is reference made to a tabernacle of some sort located on the Temple Mount, replete with Ha-Dvir. It should be noted, though, that the Hasmoneans were Hellenized Jews, so had a creed that was not identical to whatever may have existed prior to the Exilic Period...and was certainly different from the Judaism of the Pharisees and Sadducees that existed during Herod’s reign. (The standard ruse is to impute ethnic continuity where none existed.)

It is also unclear what may have occurred between c. 63 (when the Romans usurped Hasmonean rule) and c. 37 (when Herod took over); but it is likely that no major Judaic structure was permitted at the location. What we do know is that Herod commissioned a new temple in a gambit to secure support from the city’s Jewish community. “Herod’s Temple” was constructed primarily between 19 and 11 B.C. This was in keeping with his overall enhancement projects—not only in Jerusalem (amphitheaters, aqueducts, etc.), but from Caesarea Maritima on the coast to Jericho in the Jordan Valley and up to Damascus in Syria.

Expansions like the Huldah Gates, Robinson’s Arch, and Wilson’s Arch were not added until the tenures of Valerius Gratus, Pontius Pilate, Agrippa, and Tiberius Julius Alexander (that is, up until the razing of Herod’s Temple c. 70). Further enhancements would be made to surrounding structures through the end of the 1st century A.D. by Agrippa II. This was in keeping with his overall enhancement projects—from Berytus to Caesarea Maritima.

It’s worth bearing in mind that, during the Herodian period, the Romans were in charge of the city; and allowed Jews to engage in religious observance...so long as it didn’t disrupt civic life. (Undermining Roman authority was considered an act of sedition; as JoN would soon learn.) The Antonia citadel was not made for the benefit of anyone but the Roman rulers; yet its existence was retroactively incorporated into Jewish hagiography during the Mishnaic period.

Such revisionism was common practice. It was easy to concoct a potpourri of “just so stories” around long-lost architecture; so it comes as no surprise that that’s what people did. Useful tid-bits could be culled from the accounts of, say, Josephus, and then integrated into whatever apocrypha served each expositor’s purpose. To appreciate the context within which Josephus would have given his accounts, the region was percolating with Jewish Messianic prophecies. Josephus was smitten with these tall tales even as he had pledged fealty to the Roman Imperium; which would have influenced the lens through which he recounted most events.

Postscript:

Looking back at the 2nd millennium B.C., we find “[u]Ru-shalim” (as it appears in the Egyptian hieratic “Execration” texts of the 19th century B.C.) We then find the Canaanite moniker, “Uru-Shlem”

[“foundation of the deity, Shalim”] in the Amarna letters of the 14th century B.C...which was a cognate of the Sumerian / Akkadian moniker that had likely already been in use for centuries. In neither case can the name be correlated with the (manufactured) legacy with which the Judaic tradition came to be affiliated.

In other words: The Semitic etymology of this moniker had nothing to do with Judaism. Its use long antedated Abrahamic lore—which, in any case, designates as its point of departure a Bet[h]-El and various other (rather obscure) locations. Yahweh had about as much to do with the City of David as Jupiter had to do with Rome.

Rome, by the way, was initially the Etruscan city of “Sabinium” / “Latium”. Jupiter was simply the Latin reification of the Greek god, Zeus...who was, it might be noted, unconcerned with the Italic peninsula. That; and, well, he didn’t actually exist.