
*Jerusalem – the
Albatross City*

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

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God parted from him at the spot where He had spoken to him; and Jacob set up a pillar at the site where He had spoken to him, a pillar of stone, and he offered a libation on it and poured oil upon it. Jacob gave the site, where God had spoken to him, the name of Bethel. **Bereshit 35:13-15**¹ He called it so time after time since he had previously called it by that name. This is to inform us that it is truthfully and properly a House of G-d, and there the Divine Presence will ever be. – **Ramban on Bereshit 35:15**² This has now been mentioned already a third time, all in order to make sure that we understand that the site at which Yaakov had built the house of God, the monument, and the altar he called Bet El, in addition to the fact that originally the name of the whole city had been Bet El. Now the name of the town reflected what had occurred nearby repeatedly. – **Radak on Bereshit 35:15**³ The LORD said to him, “I have heard the prayer and the supplication which you have offered to Me. I consecrate this House which you have built and I set My name there forever. My eyes and My heart shall ever be there. – **Kings 1 9:3**⁴ Why is Jerusalem always in twos, one of Above/ The other Below

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וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶת־שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם

אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲתוֹ שֵׁם אֱלֹהִים

בֵּית־אֵל:

Bereshit 35:15

And I want to live in a Jerusalem of the middle / Without turning my head above and without Wounding my legs below / And why is Jerusalem in the language of paris, like hands And legs / I only want to be in one Jerusalem Because I am only one, there are no more - **Yehuda Amichai**⁵

And Rav Naḥman said to Rabbi Yitzḥak: What is which is written: “It is sacred in your midst, and I will not enter the city” (Hosea 11:9)? ... Rabbi Yoḥanan said, The Holy Blessed One said: I shall not enter Jerusalem above, until I enter Jerusalem below. And is there such a place as Jerusalem above? Yes, as it is written: “Jerusalem built up, a city unified together” (Psalms 122:3) – **Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Taanit 5a**⁶ The “city of dream” lives on, uncluttered by ex-landlords, inconvenient facts and figures, or clashing national histories. In this

Jerusalem of Gold [which is NOT what Schoffman advocates], Arabs and Jews, ultra-Orthodox non-(and anti-) Zionists, Muslims and Christians of various ethnicities, all live under

everlasting Israeli rule, accepting the pre-eminence of the normative Jewish story. The burdensome albatross of Jerusalem — a volatile, multicultural metropolis, prone to inter-communal strife and rampant municipal corruption, and unappetizing to many secular Israelis — is thus alchemically transmuted into “The Albatross” of the French poet Baudelaire, a “monarch of the clouds” that cannot walk, can only fly, so big are its wings.- **Stuart Schoffman**⁷

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