



# Yom Yerushalayim 5780

## DAVID HAMELECH REVISITS AKEIDAT YITZCHAK

**T**his year, Yom Yerushalayim 5780, is not the first year we're celebrating the establishment of our holy city in the wake of plague, still socially distant one from the other and mourning the loss of hundreds who have died in Israel, and hundreds of thousands worldwide. Over 3,000 years ago, the very first "Yom Yerushalayim" was celebrated by David HaMelech as he purchased Har HaBayit from foreign hands under similar circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

David had enjoined of his nephew-general, Yoav, to conduct a national census, only to be reprimanded by the prophet Gad for such a pretentious initiative. Though immediately regretting and admitting his sin, David was given a choice of subsequent punishments: seven years of famine,<sup>2</sup> three years of military unrest, or three days of plague. David chose the latter, recognizing that though famine and war may be overcome through human strategy, plagues/viruses are beyond man's control (and it takes months to create a vaccine)! David appreciated that he was meant to demonstrate submission and vulnerability, cognizant of Hashem's power and simultaneously, compassion.

The plague killed 70,000 people as the destructive angel approached Yerushalayim with the intention of causing more casualties. At that point, Hashem commanded the angel to wait by the threshing floor of Aravna the Jebusite, directly north of David's palace in Ir David. When David saw the angel, he pleaded before Hashem on behalf of the people: "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done iniquitously; but these sheep, what have they done?"

Let Your hand, I pray You, be against me, and against my father's house" (Shmuel Bet 24:17).

Gad immediately commanded David to build an altar on Aravna's threshing floor. David understood his act of sacrifice was necessary to end the plague, but it was insufficient. He insisted on purchasing the land and sacrificial supplies to demonstrate his commitment. His investment paid off as Hashem answered him through revelation,<sup>3</sup> confirming "This is the house of Hashem, and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel" (ibid. 22:1).

Although this story explains the selection of the location for the Beit HaMikdash, it is written with numerous parallels to another story of sacrifice; one that took place at the very same location in the hills of Moriah – the story of *Akeidat Yitzchak*. In both stories:

1. Someone builds an altar and sacrifices a burnt-offering.
2. It is G-d who chooses the site of the altar: He sends Avraham to the land of Moriah, and David to Aravna's threshing floor.
3. Avraham and David rise early in the morning.
4. An angel of G-d is involved in preventing the expected continuation. In *Akeidat Yitzchak*, it is the angel himself who stops Avraham: "And the **angel** of the Lord... "Avraham, Avraham... **Lay not your hand...**" (Bereishit 22:11-12). For David HaMelech, it is G-d who stops the angel, using similar wording: "**And when the angel stretched out his hand...**" "It is enough; **now stay your hand**" (Shmuel II 22:16).

5. Other literary parallels: Bereishit 22:13 and Divrei HaYamim I 21:16; Bereishit 22:4 and Shmuel II 24:13; and Bereishit 22:7 and Shmuel II 24:22.

As we read David's story of personal sacrifice to save the people of Israel, we are reminded of the paradigmatic sacrifice of Avraham – sacrificing his son for the G-d of Israel. In both stories, Hashem commanded the sacrifice in the same place – *Har HaBayit*, Yerushalayim. As Avraham Avinu proclaimed: "And Avraham called the name of that place "Hashem shall see," as it is said to this day: 'In the mount where Hashem is seen' (Bereishit 22:14).

Avraham recognized that Yerushalayim was Divinely selected as a place where Hashem awaits our sacrifices and submissions for eternity, our commitment to follow His word with humility. Avraham also recognized that if we are willing to come to Yerushalayim with a mindset of devotion to G-d and to *Am Yisrael*, we will merit Divine revelation there as well. David revisits Avraham's story of sacrifice, underscoring the Divine message of Yerushalayim – if we properly express our religious and national devotion, we will merit revelation and salvation.

<sup>1</sup> See Shmuel II, 24.

<sup>2</sup> In Divrei HaYamim I 21:10-12, three years of famine.

<sup>3</sup> Based on account in Divrei HaYamim I 21:26-30.

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