



## Tzion and Yerushalayim: A Warning from *Eretz Yisrael*

Chanania was a great scholar, among the greatest of his generation. But even after he left for Babylon, Chanania continued to set the Jewish calendar, deciding whether to add a leap month and determining the first day of the month.

The sages sent Chanania the following warning: “If you insist on setting the calendar outside of Israel, then go build your own altar and publicly declare that you and your community in Babylon have left the Jewish people and no longer belong to the G-d of Israel.” The Talmud (Berachot 63b) explains that the Sages’ response was based on the verse, “For Torah will go forth out of Tzion, and G-d’s word from Yerushalayim” (Isaiah 2:3). The source of Torah - including determining the Jewish calendar - is Yerushalayim and the Land of Israel.

Why is it so important that Yerushalayim be the center of Torah instruction?

### Tzion and Yerushalayim

We must first understand what the difference is between Tzion and Yerushalayim in this verse.

Rav Kook (*Ein Ayah* vol. II on *Berachot* 63b) explains that while Tzion and Yerushalayim refer to the same locale, they indicate different aspects of the Holy City. Tzion literally means ‘marked’ or ‘distinctive.’ It refers to those inner qualities that distinguish the Jewish people, “a nation who dwells alone” (Bamidbar 23:9), with their own unique spiritual traits and aspirations. The name Yerushalayim indicates the city’s function as a spiritual center for the entire world, influencing the nations of the world. Yerushalayim is the means by which Israel’s spirit of holiness

penetrates and uplifts the inner life of distant peoples.

In short, Tzion looks inward, emphasizing the city’s internal significance for the Jewish people, while Yerushalayim looks outward, stressing the city’s universal role as a spiritual focal point for the world.

It is axiomatic that the spirit of Torah and its ideals can only flourish when the Jewish people observe the Torah’s *mitzvot*. For this reason, the verse first stipulates that “Torah will go forth out of Tzion.” First the Jewish people must follow Torah and its *mitzvot*; only then can G-d’s word disseminate from Yerushalayim to the rest of the world. The two parts of the verse thus correspond to the dual aspects of Yerushalayim. First there must be Torah in, focusing inward. Then “the word of G-d” - the universal prophetic message - can spread to the rest of the world, emanating from Yerushalayim, the international quality of the holy city.

### The Sun and the Moon

What does all of this have to do with setting the calendar? According to Rav Kook, there are two aspects to setting the Jewish calendar. The first is to determine the hour of the new moon, and the second is to calculate whether it is necessary to intercalate an extra month so that the lunar cycle will remain in sync with the solar year and the seasons.

In rabbinical literature, the sun is often a metaphor for the nations of the world, while the moon represents the Jewish people. Thus the two calculations of the calendar correspond to the two aspects of Tzion-Yerushalayim. We need to determine the time of the new moon in order to observe the special lunar calendar of Israel — this is the internal Torah of Tzion. And we need to declare a leap year to maintain the



proper balance between the lunar year of Israel and the solar year of the nations — this corresponds to the universal message emanating from Yerushalayim.

### The Torah of an Entire Nation

But why must the Jewish calendar be set in the Land of Israel? The restriction on setting the calendar in *Eretz Yisrael* reflects a fundamental axiom of Torah. For the Torah to influence and enlighten the world, it must be established as a complete Torah, a Torah that governs all spheres of life. By setting the calendar outside of Israel, Chanania disconnected the Torah from the myriad aspects of life as a nation living in its own Land. He reduced the Torah to a personal religion that only relates to the ethical refinement of the individual and one’s private connection to G-d. Such an approach impoverishes the multifaceted richness of Torah. As the Sages warned him, this was akin to setting up a private altar to serve G-d - an irreparable break from the true goal of Torah and the people of Israel.

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