מדרש

Midrash

ON GENESIS 22:2

Why Jerusalem's name joins two righteous men's names

Bereshit Rabbah 56:10

Jerusalem's name unites the two names given to it: Avraham's "Yireh" and Shem's "Shalem," so that neither righteous man's naming would be slighted, and God combined them into "Yerushalayim." The passage further teaches that Avraham's plea at the Akeidah (Binding of Yitzchak)—that the merit of this act be remembered for his descendants in times of transgression—became bound up with this place, and that the very name Yireh was shown to Avraham to encompass the Beit HaMikdash's (Temple's) three states: built, destroyed, and ultimately rebuilt in glory. AI SUMMARY

“Abraham called the name of that place The Lord will see, as it is said to this day: On the mount where the Lord will be seen” (Genesis 22:14). “Abraham called the name of that place The Lord will see” – Rabbi Yoḥanan said: He said before Him: ‘Master of the universe, when You said to me: “Take you your son, your only one,” I had something to argue in response: Yesterday you said: “For it is through Isaac [that descendants will be considered for you[”...” and now You say: “Take you your son ... [and offer him up]”? (Genesis 22:2). But, God forbid, I did not do so. Rather, I suppressed my mercy to fulfill Your will. May it be Your will, Lord our God, when Isaac’s descendants encounter transgressions and wicked deeds, may this binding [of Isaac] be remembered for them, and may You become filled with mercy towards them.’

Abraham called it [Jerusalem] Yireh, as it is stated: “Abraham called the name of that place The Lord will see [yireh].” Shem called it Shalem, as it is stated: “Malki Tzedek king of Shalem” (Genesis 14:18). The Holy One blessed be He said: ‘If I call it Yireh, as Abraham called it, Shem, a righteous man, will have a complaint. If I call it Shalem, Abraham, a righteous man, will have a complaint. Instead, I shall call it Yerushalayim, as both of them called it, – Yireh, Shalem – Yerushalayim.’

Rabbi Berekhya said in the name of Rabbi Ḥelbo: While it was still called Shalem, the Holy One blessed be made Himself a provisional booth [sukka] and He would pray in it, as it is stated: “His abode [sukko] was in Shalem, His dwelling place in Zion” (Psalms 76:3).

What did He say [in His prayers?] May it be My will that I will see construction of My [permanent] house [here]. Another interpretation, this teaches that the Holy One blessed be He showed him [Abraham] the [future] Temple as built, then destroyed and then built, as it is stated: “The name of that place The Lord will see [yireh]” – that refers to the Temple built, just as it says: “Three times in the year [all your males] shall appear [yeraeh]” (Deuteronomy 16:16).

“As it is said to this day: On the mount where the Lord” – that refers to the Temple destroyed, as it is stated: “On Mount Zion that is desolate” (Lamentations 5:18). “The Lord will be seen” – [that refers to the Temple] built and perfected in the

future, like the matter that is stated: “For the Lord has rebuilt Zion and is seen in His glory” (Psalms 102:17).

