

Talmud Text: Why We Face East

Talmud Berachot 30a

Our Rabbis taught: A blind man or one who cannot tell the cardinal points should direct his heart towards his Father in Heaven, as it says,

And they pray unto the Lord.

If one is standing outside Palestine, he should turn mentally towards Eretz Israel, as it says, "And pray unto Thee towards their land."

If he stands in Eretz Israel, he should turn mentally towards Jerusalem, as it says, "And they pray unto the Lord toward the city which Thou hast chosen."

If he is standing in Jerusalem, he should turn mentally towards the Sanctuary, as it says, "If they pray toward this house."

If he is standing in the Sanctuary, he should turn mentally towards the Holy of Holies, as it says, "If they pray toward this place."

If he was standing in the Holy of Holies, he should turn mentally towards the mercy seat.

If he was standing behind the mercy seat, he should imagine himself to be in front

of the mercy seat. Consequently, if he is in the east, he should turn his face to the west; if in the west, he should turn his face to the east; if in the south, he should turn his face to the north; if in the north, he should turn his face to the south.

In this way all Israel will be turning their hearts towards one place.

The Torah Service

Ki mitzion tetze Torah ud'var Adonai miyerushalayim.

For out of Zion shall go forth Torah, and the word of Adonai from **Jerusalem**.

Baruch sh'natan Torah L'amo Yisrael bik'dushato.

Praised be the One who in holiness has given the Torah to the people Israel.

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheyn-a Adonai Echad.

Hear, O Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!

When the Torah is taken from the ark we chant these passages from Isaiah:

Echad Eloheynu, Gadol Adoneynu, kadosh sh'mo.

Our God is One; our God is great; holy is God's name.

Gad'lu Adonai iti un'rom'mah sh'mo yachdav.

O magnify Adonai with me, and together let us exalt God's name.

Excerpts from the Grace after Meals

For this good earth that you have entrusted to our mothers and fathers, and to us; for our deliverance from bondage; for the covenant You have sealed into our hearts; for Your life-giving love and grace; for Torah, our way of life, and for the food that sustains us day by day, we give You thanks. For all this we thank You. Let Your praise ever be on the lips of all who live, as it is written: 'When you have eaten and are satisfied, give praise to your God who has given you this good earth.' We praise You, O God, for the earth, and for its sustenance. Amen

Eternal God, source of our being, show compassion for Israel Your people, **Jerusalem** Your city, and Zion, the ancient dwelling-place of Your glory. Guide and sustain us in all our habitations, and be a help to us in all our troubles. May we ever be able to help ourselves and one another, even as we rely on Your open and generous bounty. Let **Jerusalem**, the holy city, be renewed in our time. We praise You, O God; in compassion You rebuild **Jerusalem**. Amen.

From On the Doorposts of Your House, CCAR, 1994, pp. 10-14

Selections from Psalms

Jerusalem in Sources.doc

Jerusalem which is built as a city that fosters togetherness . . .

Inquire after the peace of Jerusalem; May those who love you enjoy serenity.

Psalm 122

Those who trust in God are as Mount Zion which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

Jerusalem, mountains surround it as God is round about the people, from now and forever.

Psalm 125

When God restored the exiles to Zion, it seemed like a dream. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with joyful song. Then they said among the nations: God has done great things for them. Yes, God is doing great things for us, and we are joyful. Restore our fortunes, O God, as streams revive the desert.

Then those who have sown in tears shall reap in joy. Those who go forth weeping, carrying bags of seeds, shall come home with shouts of joy, bearing their sheaves.

Psalm 126, Note: This is also the Introductory psalm to Birkat Ha-Mazon, Grace after Meals, when recited on Sabbaths and Festivals.

From On the Doorposts of Your House,
p.9.

May God bless you out of Zion! And may
you see the goodness of Jerusalem all the
days of your life.

Psalms 128 and 134

Eretz Yisrael in the Talmud

When the Temple was destroyed, many
Jews became ascetics, binding themselves
neither to eat meat nor to drink wine. R.
Joshua got into conversation with them
and said: "My sons, why do you not eat
meat?" They replied: "Shall we eat flesh,
which used to be brought daily as an
offering on the altar now that this altar is
in abeyance? Shall we drink wine which
used to be poured as a libation on the
altar, but now no longer?" He said to
them: "If that is so, we should not eat figs
or grapes either, because there is no
longer an offering of first fruits. We
should not drink water, because there is
no longer a ceremony of the pouring of
the water." To this they could find no
answer; so he said to them: "Not to
mourn at all is impossible because the
blow has fallen. To mourn overmuch is
also impossible." The sages, therefore,
have ordained thus: A man may stucco his
house, but he should leave a little bare in
memory of **Jerusalem**. A man may
prepare a full-course banquet, but he

should leave out an item or two in
memory of Jerusalem. For so it is said: "If
I forget thee, Oh **Jerusalem**, let my right
hand forget its cunning, let my tongue
cleave to the roof of my mouth if I
remember thee not, if I prefer **Jerusalem**
above my chief joy. (Psalm 137:5-6)

Baba Batra 6Ob

Shimon came to ask R. Hanina for a letter
of recommendation to help him earn a
livelihood
outside the Land. R. Hanina refused,
saying: "When I die they will say to me
'one glorious plant we had in Eretz Yisrael
and yet you allowed it to leave the
country.'"

Yerushalmi Moed Katan 83,1

"One that gives a soul unto the people
that are upon it and a spirit to them that
walk therein"
(Isaiah 42:5); They said in the name of
R. Yochanan: Whoever walks four cubits
in Eretz Yisrael may be assured of life in
the world to come.

Ketubot 111a

Even those who live in the East, even
India, in the isles of the sea who need rain
in the summer do not pray for it except
when it is needed in Eretz Yisrael. For if
you say they should pray for rain at the
season when they need it/ even if that
means in summer/ it will cause them to

regard themselves as living in their own homeland. Let them, however, regard themselves as guests (when in the Diaspora), their hearts directed toward Eretz Yisrael. Their prayer for rain will be in accordance with the seasons in Eretz Yisrael.

From the Yom Kippur Neilah Service

May there be acceptance of the prayers and supplications of the entire House of Israel before their Father in heaven. And say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven and life for us and for all Israel, and say Amen.

God who makes peace in the high Heavens may God make peace for us and for all Israel, and say Amen. Next year in Jerusalem!

At the end of the Passover Seder, we recite the words "Next Year in Jerusalem."

From the Wedding Ceremony

May the barren [land] rejoice and be glad, when its children are gathered back to it in joy. Blessed are You, O God, who makes Zion rejoice in her children.

May You grant great joy to these dearly beloved, just as You granted joy to the work of Your hands long ago in the

Garden of Eden. Blessed are You, O God, who grants joy to the bridegroom and bride.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who created happiness and joy, bridegroom and bride, rejoicing and song, delight and cheer, love and harmony, peace and fellowship.

Soon, Adonai our God, may there be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, the sound of gladness, the sound of joy, the sound of the bridegroom, the sound of the bride, the sound of bridegrooms rejoicing at their weddings, and young people at their feasts of song. Blessed are You, O God, who grants joy to the bridegroom with the bride.