

# ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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## Jerusalem

The Place God Chose



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# Jerusalem!

The very name evokes an emotional response. Teddy Kollek, mayor of Jerusalem for nearly three decades, once said, “Everybody has two cities, his own and Jerusalem.” No one is indifferent to Jerusalem—one loves her, hates her, or is fascinated by her. No matter where I travel, I meet people who ask what it is like to live in Jerusalem. They are drawn to a place so often talked about in the Scriptures and in their newspaper. Jerusalem is found 881 times in the Bible. Even people who have never walked her streets call Jerusalem the Holy City, situated in the midst of the Holy Land! Truly, there is no other place like Jerusalem and it is a privilege to live here.

My father brought many tourists to Israel and the highlight of every trip was Jerusalem. As the bus would climb up to the city, my father would lead the group in singing a song about Zion. My husband is a licensed tour guide and he often recounts the impressions of tourists to Jerusalem and to the Western Wall. Jewish people are drawn to the Western Wall, the retaining wall of the Temple mount. They often weep as they pray in this holy place. Similarly, Christians are amazed as they feel the presence of God here. One of my Bible college classmates was recently in Israel for a tour. He wrote on his Facebook page that he wept at the Western Wall. This is not unusual.

I believe Jerusalem brings forth these responses because God chose this spot on the globe as His special habitation. This is written in many Scripture passages.

*“For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place”*  
(Ps. 132:13).

The prophet Joel says, *“So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy...”* (Joel 3:17).

*“For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually”* (2 Chron. 7:16).

Jerusalem is God’s city, His holy mountain! He chose it for His earthly dwelling place. All those who love Him are drawn to His home. Those who conspire against Him, also conspire against this place.

God said He would put His name here forever. In this age of computers and satellite imagery, we have learned that God put a part of His signature in the hills around Jerusalem. The Hebrew letter shin (ש) is an abbreviation for the name El Shaddai. Looking from above the letter shin appears—formed by the Kidron, the Hinnom and the Tyropoeon valleys. God has literally fulfilled His word!

## Jerusalem, the City of the Great King

*“Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King”* (Ps. 48:1–2).

Geoffrey Wigoder says, “The supreme king in Jewish tradition is God, who is called King of Kings and Lord King of the World. When a Jew takes on the commandments at the time of Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah, this is called ‘taking on the yoke of the kingdom of heaven.’ On Rosh HaShanah, the Amidah for the additional service includes a section of ten verses from the Bible about the Kingship of God.”

The phrase “city of the great king,” is also found in Matthew. Yeshua (Jesus) emphasized its holiness when forbidding oaths saying, *“But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King”* (Matt. 5:34–35).

Who is the psalmist referring to when referencing the “Great King?” Some might say King David, but I believe he is referring to God Himself.

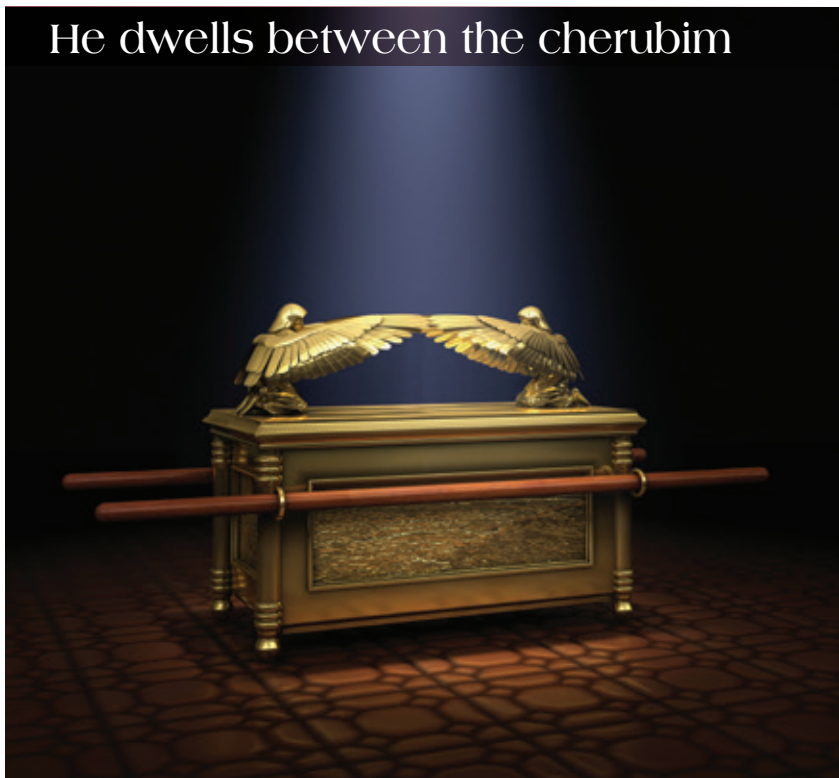
# God Is King

*“Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth”* (Ps. 47:1–2). The psalmist is emphatic—God is a great King over all the earth. The word translated “peoples” in verse one can also mean nations. This idea is emphasized in the next verse when it says God is the Great King over all the earth. The Jewish psalmist is writing here about the preeminence of God. He is not just the King of the Jewish people, but is the King of all the earth—all the peoples.

The word LORD is the tetragrammaton (yud-he-vav-he/YHVH). This is the personal name of God. Whenever you see the word LORD in all capital letters, it is this particular name. The Jewish people say it is the ineffable name of God and in reverence do not pronounce it but rather substitute LORD (Adonai) or “the name” (HaShem). Christians have attempted to pronounce it and two such attempts are Yahweh and Jehovah. I am pretty sure that neither pronunciation is correct and prefer to use the initials or LORD. This personal name of God appears 6,519 times in the *Tanakh* (Gen.–Mal.)!

The prophet, Isaiah, also affirms the Kingship of the LORD with a promise—He will save us; *“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King; He will save us”* (Isa. 33:22).

## He dwells between the cherubim





Many other Scriptures show the idea that God is King and that He reigns. He sits on a throne (Ps. 103:19, Ezek. 1:26–28); a heavenly host surrounds Him and serves Him (1 Kings 22:19). He appoints rulers on the earth (Dan. 2:37); He overcomes natural disasters (Ps. 29:10, 93:1–4). His reign is described with words like power and glory (Ps. 145:11–13). He acts with justice, holiness and righteousness.

*“The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved! The LORD is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name—He is holy. The King’s strength also loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool—He is holy...Exalt the LORD our God and worship at His holy hill; For the LORD our God is holy”* (Ps. 99:1–5, 9).

In the passage from Psalm 99, we have allusions to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

We read *“He dwells between the cherubim”* which were located in the Holy of Holies as part of the Ark of the Covenant. This phrase is found in five other places (1 Sam. 4:4, 2 Sam. 6:2, 2 Kings 19:15, 1 Chron. 13:6, Isa. 37:16). We are told to worship at His holy hill—a reference to the Temple Mount. In Jewish thought the Temple Mount is holy in part because it is seen as the place from which God’s holiness emanates. In the Art Scroll Jewish commentary on the Psalms we read, *“The Psalmist proves that the Tabernacle and the Temple are actually the sources whence holiness emanates throughout the world...The place where our God’s holy presence dwells is awesome and holy as Leviticus 19:30 teaches.”* Maybe this is why so many are moved to tears at the Western Wall. I have heard it said jokingly that heaven is a local call from Jerusalem. In the *Midrash* (ancient Jewish commentary) it says, *“If one prays in Jerusalem it is as if one were praying before the Throne of Glory, for the very gate of heaven is located there, as it is said [Gen. 28:17]: ‘that is the gateway to heaven.’”*

A Jewish person’s day is punctuated with many blessings which begin with the phrase, *“Blessed are you O Lord our God, King of the universe who has commanded us to ...”* At *Rosh HaShanah* (the Jewish New Year/the biblical Feast of Trumpets), there is a major theme of the Kingship of God. Simon Jacobson says, *“On Rosh HaShanah we accept upon ourselves G-d as the one and only absolute authority who rules over every aspect of our lives and we submit to His judgment which we believe will be merciful because our King is also our Father.”*

Part of the Kingship (*Malchiyot*—a section of the central *Rosh HaShanah* prayer) reads like this, *“And thou, O Lord, shalt reign, thou alone, over all thy works on Mount Zion [location of Temple], the dwelling-place of thy glory, and in Jerusalem, thy holy city; as it is written in thy holy words, The Lord shall reign forever, thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord.”*

## Messianic Expectation

Both Jewish and Christian biblical scholars see many of these kingship Scriptures in light of the Messianic age to come. According to I. H. Marshall in his article in the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia*, *“The center of Jewish theological interest, however, lay not so much in the idea that God was now king, as in the*

expectation of His future activity, in setting up His rule visibly and powerfully among men. Within the gospels there is ample proof of the mood of expectation which filled the people quite apart from any stimulus to their enthusiasm supplied by Jesus [Yeshua] Himself."

The expectation is seen today in the daily prayers, in the *Rosh HaShanah* service, and in the *Kaddish*, the prayer for mourners in Judaism. The first two sentences of the *Kaddish* are, "Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen."

As Christians we are eagerly waiting for the day when Yeshua will come for the second time and usher in the Messianic Age. Our Jewish friends are waiting for the first coming of Messiah and the ushering in of the Messianic Age. Many have communicated to me that when Messiah comes we shall have to ask if this is the first visit or the second. Even though we have significant differences, we can agree that when the Messiah comes we will all rejoice with the hosts of heaven.

## The dwelling-place of His glory



In both Christian and Jewish thought there is a concept of an earthly natural Jerusalem and a heavenly Jerusalem. My mother has a beautiful painting which depicts the concept of a heavenly Jerusalem coming down from above over a natural Jerusalem.

In the book of Revelation, there is a description of the New Jerusalem: *“Then, I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’*

*“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Now the*



wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (Rev. 21:2-4, 10-12, 13)

Jerusalem, the holy city, the royal city of God, will be significant forever.

## Royalty

There are a number of royal families in the world today though in this era many of them are mostly symbolic with the power vested in prime ministers, presidents and parliaments. Still, when you visit their kingdom, you will find amazing royal dwelling places. Tourists visit their palaces in throngs. If you should happen to see one of the royal family members, it is a lifetime memory. When a member of royalty marries, the world watches the pomp and circumstance that surround such nuptials. Their palaces are well-protected, often with high walls and even moats around them. Specialized troops ensure their safety. People are drawn to these symbols of power, grandeur and authority. Some are drawn for good reasons and historically others desired to overthrow these kingdoms.

As believers when we think of the LORD our King and the fact that He chose Jerusalem as His habitation, perhaps we can begin to understand the incredible drawing power of the city of Jerusalem, the city of the Great King. Some come because of a desire to get closer to God. They bring prayers written on little of pieces of paper and put them in the cracks of the Western Wall. They seek the face of God in this place.

When King Solomon dedicated the Temple to God he prayed many wonderful blessings. One of them is especially significant to me. *"Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name's sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name"* (1 Kings 8:41-43).

The first time my husband visited the Western Wall in 1979 he was almost overcome by the presence of God. God said He put His name there and today He still meets with His people in this holy place. When you are in Jerusalem make sure you pray at the Western Wall and claim the promises in King Solomon's prayer.

Others come to Jerusalem with a different heart. They are opponents of the LORD. Historically many have sought to destroy this city that God claims. Others have tried to divide it. There is a war over Jerusalem which is experienced in the natural realm. According to Wikipedia, "During its long history, Jerusalem has been attacked 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times, besieged 23 times and destroyed twice."



God said He put His name there

...and today He still  
meets with His people in  
this holy place.



Those who are spiritually sensitive feel a spiritual warfare over the city of Jerusalem. There are those in both the natural and spiritual realms who would like to unseat our LORD, our King. They have no desire to walk in His kingdom ways. They want to depose Him.

In this day and age, when God has gathered the Jewish people from the four corners of the earth, they are the ones standing guard over His holy city. Time and again, the LORD has granted them favor in battle. Still, in the halls of power around the world, including the United Nations, there are many attempts to come against Israel and so derail the stated plans of the God of Israel.

## Reunited Jerusalem

Christians everywhere pray for the peace of Jerusalem after they read the Scripture: *“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May they prosper who love you”* (Ps. 122:6). Read on! The psalm concludes, *“For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, ‘Peace be within you.’ Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good”* (Ps. 122:8–9). The Hebrew Bible is written without any vowels. Since Hebrew is a consonantal language, with each word having a root of three (or four) consonants, some words in the Bible could be translated in alternate ways. Translators rely largely on the context to determine which meaning is the right one. In this passage a key word is peace. The root is shin-lamed-mem (שלם). This could be translated *shalom* (peace) or it could be *shilem* (wholeness or completeness). Since 1967 the city of Jerusalem has been whole, united. This year we are celebrating 50 years of an undivided Jerusalem under the sovereignty of Israel.

During the 1948 war for independence, the Jordanians occupied Jerusalem. It had never been part of their territory and their occupation was only recognized by two countries. During the 19 years of Jordanian occupation, pilgrimage to holy sites was greatly restricted (to both Jews and Christians), Jewish sites were desecrated and an ugly no-man’s land scarred the landscape between east and west Jerusalem. In 1967 Israel was once more confronted with war on several fronts including in Jerusalem. Miraculously in just six days, the war ended and Israel had won. The territory seized by Jordan came once again under Israel’s sovereign control as her paratroopers were the first to reach the Western Wall.

General Uzi Narkiss led the battle that liberated the Old City in 1967. Later he recounted, “Silently, I bowed my head. In the narrow space were paratroopers, begrimed, fatigued, overburdened with weapons. And they wept...These were tears of joy, of love, of passion, of an undreamed first reunion with the ancient



The dream of all the generations  
has been fulfilled before our eyes.



monument to devotion and to prayer. They clung to the stones, kissed them—these rough, battle-weary paratroopers, their lips framing the *Shema*.” The *Shema* is the prayer which begins, “*Hear O Israel, the LORD, your God is one*” (Deut. 6:4).

After Jerusalem was liberated, Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren addressed the soldiers saying, “The dream of all the generations has been fulfilled before our eyes. The city of God, the Temple site, the Temple Mount, and the Western Wall—symbol of the Jewish People’s Messianic Redemption—has been delivered this day by you, heroes of the Israel Defense Forces.”

The world continues to pressure Israel to divide the land and Jerusalem. Prime Minister Netanyahu responds, “Israel could not under any circumstances negotiate over any aspect of Jerusalem, any more than Americans would negotiate over Washington, Englishmen over London, or Frenchmen over Paris. Israel is prepared to offer the Arabs full and equal rights in Jerusalem—but no rights over Jerusalem.”

I will stand with the Great King and  
proclaim that this is His city where He  
placed His name. Please join with us  
as we pray for the wholeness and the  
peace of Jerusalem.



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## Pray for the peace of Jerusalem



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Scripture is taken from the New American Standard version, unless otherwise noted.



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