

DAVID KRAEMER: I just don't buy David Nelson's explanation. It seems to me that the expression, "Next year in Jerusalem," is a prayer for the arrival of the Messianic age, and the Jerusalem of this prayer is the *real* Jerusalem, but one ruled over by an anointed king of Israel. The problem with this prayer, I would argue, is twofold: first, many of us do not believe that the Messiah will come and, second, many of us do not feel that the Messiah *needs* to come. The first problem is both ideological and practical. We have difficulty believing the Messiah will come because he/she has not come, even in the darkest moments of our history, when we needed her/him most. We also have difficulty believing because, in our experience, those who believe most fervently are fanatics, and they act—tragically—on their fanaticism. I want no association with their kind. The second problem is that many of us live in freedom and comfort as Jews; what do we need the Messiah for? Where we now live is "Jerusalem," perhaps even better. We live according to our consciences, without coercion, free to observe or not, respected by our neighbors and protected from our enemies. "Next year in Jerusalem"? For a visit—sure. But we can wait for the Messiah.

DR. DAVID KRAEMER is a Senior CLAL Associate.

NATAN MARGALIT: For me, "Next year in Jerusalem" remains a real prayer for a real place. One of the most important things about Judaism is that we hold onto real spaces, real physical things and actions, and resist too much "virtualizing." When the early Christians said that the mitzvot were symbols, that we circumcise our hearts and not our flesh, they "virtualized" too much and created a new religion. Enjoying all the freedom and comfort of America is wonderful, but it is not the same as living in our own land. Knowing the intimate, detailed love of particular places, the smells and sights and sounds of a corner of the world that I have worked to nurture and that has nourished me, provides a fulfillment which I don't think one can achieve on New York's Upper West Side. If fanatics have done it wrong, I won't let that rob

me of my messianic hopes. If I am not there yet, I can still work towards living rooted, humbly, in real place and real time, in a truly rebuilt Jerusalem.

RABBI NATAN MARGALIT is a Steinhardt Fellow at CLAL.

LAWRENCE TROSTER: While it is true that the Jerusalem of the Seder is a virtual place of perfection and harmony, we cannot deny that there is today a real city called Jerusalem. It is a place to which we can go. We can even hold a Seder there.

Those of us who have had that experience, who know the special feeling of a Seder in Jerusalem, know that the real Jerusalem is not the perfect, peaceful, shining city of redemption. We know we live in an unredeemed world where the real Jerusalem is a modern city of roads, buildings and typical urban problems. But today, as we sing at our Seder, we hold both images in our minds. We maintain a kind of suspension of disbelief, where the heavenly city *meets* the earthly one. We see the real Jerusalem while praying for its redemptive rebuilding.

RABBI LAWRENCE TROSTER is a Steinhardt Fellow at CLAL.

BENAY LAPPE: To understand the Haggadah's Jerusalem deeply, we must push its virtual quality even further. This Jerusalem is a place of *complete* freedom—not just freedom from external oppression, but also freedom from the inner psychic chains that bind us all, each in our own way.

The "place" of complete peace and closeness to God will never be a physical place, nor will it come as the result of an external event like the arrival of a messiah. This "place" is really a spiritual and psychological *state*, a state of inner peace, towards which we can all strive. Today, when we live, as David Kraemer points out, with remarkable freedom from physical oppression, this is the level on which we should understand the seder's movement from slavery to freedom.

RABBI BENAY LAPPE is the Spielberg Fellow at CLAL.

*Sh'ma mina**

L'shanah ha-ba'ah bi-yerushalayim

Next year in Jerusalem!

FROM THE HAGGADAH FOR PASSOVER

What is the real meaning of this line sung at the very end of the Seder? In our day it cannot mean that we really hope to observe Pesach in Jerusalem next year, for if it did, the constant annual repetition would begin to sound somewhat disingenuous in an era of relatively quick and affordable flights to Israel. Rather, I think the Jerusalem mentioned at the end of our Seder is a "virtual" place, a sacred space that we imagine to have all the characteristics of every space that ever has been, or could be, sacred: It is a place of complete peace and serenity, a place of community solidarity, and a place of closeness to God. The text is a fitting conclusion to an evening celebrating redemption. It expresses our sense that the redemption from Egypt was not complete, but that it is an ongoing process—one which we hope will be complete by next year at this time, regardless of our geographical location. As such, the text teaches us that sacred space has little if anything to do with geography and maps, and everything to do with a kind of perfected world that we can only imagine.

RABBI DAVID NELSON

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