

## Next Year Here

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Source: Shalom

The Seder concludes with an exclamation of hope: Next year in Jerusalem! Like every Jewish teaching, this statement is best understood on multiple levels. Most obviously, it is the dream of our ancestors, living in exile, to someday return home. We honor the resilience of the generations of Jews who survived and preserved our traditions against all odds.

Yet like all great teachings, ours has been distorted and misused. How many Palestinian people have been displaced, mistreated, tortured and killed, with this idea used as a justification? We have allowed our hope for homecoming to become the rationale to exile and oppress another people. This is a tragic abuse of our teachings that contradicts the themes of justice and freedom at the center of the Passover story.

Ours is a tradition of interpretation. We are called to consider the teachings on all levels. In Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, we are taught that the outward meaning of the text is like an outfit that the Truth is wearing.

Next year in Jerusalem! What might be the deeper meaning? Here is one possibility. The etymology of the Hebrew *Yerushalayim* ירושלים is uncertain, but my favorite explanation says that it comes from the ancient Hebrew *yry*, "to found, to lay a cornerstone" and *shalem*, "wholeness, completeness, peace." So Jerusalem is literally the Foundation of Peace, the Cornerstone of Wholeness.

What is the Foundation of Peace? What is the Cornerstone of Wholeness? And how do we get there?

There is no country, no city, no external place that holds them. Wholeness is our sacred inheritance. Peace is a place in the heart. We can find it here and now—and indeed, wherever here happens to be, that is one and only place we can find it.

Jerusalem is not a faraway place. It is contained within us, an inexhaustible reservoir of love that is always available. We do not need to journey to reach it. We only need to stop running away.

Next year in Jerusalem

Next year in peace and wholeness

Next year in the present moment

Next year here