

DIVIDED CAPITAL, DIVIDED HEARTS

A Devotional Meditation on Re'eh (See)

Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17; Isaiah 54:11-55:5; 1 Kings 8:22-53; Psalm 122:6; 132:13-18;
Matthew 5:33-37; John 10:16, 17:1-26; Revelation 21:9-27

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August 12, 2023



A view over the Berlin Wall into East Berlin, August 1983, by Père Ubu, [via Flickr](#).

The Cold War world into which I was born featured four divided nations: Vietnam, Korea, China, and Germany. Today two of the four remain divided, but Vietnam and Germany have been reunited so long that it's hard to remember a time when they were split along ideological lines and claimed as prizes by the United States and the Soviet Union.

I haven't yet visited Vietnam, but I have spent some time in Germany, both during the years of division, and after reunification. The West Germany that I came to know in the 1980s was a vibrant capitalist nation, but somehow incomplete without Berlin as its capital. That old city was still the capital of Soviet-dominated East Germany, but the capital of West Germany was the sleepy little town of Bonn.

What's so famous about Bonn? Other than being the hometown of Ludwig van Beethoven, not much. One would think the capital might have been established in a more prestigious city, like Hamburg, Frankfurt, or Munich, but Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of West Germany, proposed Bonn as the capital. That's how this otherwise unknown city became what West Germans jokingly called the "Bundeshauptdorf," or federal capital village.

Most people don't think about Bonn these days. That's because German reunification in 1990 brought Berlin back to its status as the national capital. It wasn't without considerable debate, though. A narrow vote in the federal parliament decided the issue of transferring the seat of government to Berlin, but to this day many government functions remain in Bonn.

This reminds me of the current situation in God's Kingdom. He has a national capital, but so many of His people have forgotten it. That would be Jerusalem, of course. It's rather sad that it took the nations of the earth until 2017 to begin to recognize the Holy City as the true capital of God's Covenant Nation of Israel. The status of Jerusalem still remains in debate, even among people of faith who should know better.

That may be the saddest thing of all about the obstacles to Israel's complete restoration and the final redemption of Israel and the nations. The Jewish people have no doubt about the issue; they have been ceaselessly praying for the peace of Jerusalem for millennia, and to this day long to go there if they are not already living in the reborn nation of Israel. For Christians, however, it's still problematic. For almost twenty centuries,

we have looked to other cities as substitutes for God's capital, such as Rome, Constantinople, Moscow, and Salt Lake City. They are all grand cities, and holy in their own ways, but they cannot replace the one city where God has placed His Name. That's what we understand from the testimony of scripture, starting with Moses:

[You] are to seek only the place *ADONAI* your God chooses from all your tribes to put His Name to dwell—there you will come. There you are to bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes, the offering of your hand, your vow and freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. There you and your households will eat before *ADONAI* your God and rejoice in every undertaking of your hand, as *ADONAI* your God has blessed you. . . Then the place *ADONAI* your God chooses to make His Name dwell, there you are to bring all that I command you—your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes, the offering of your hand, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to *ADONAI*. Then you will rejoice before *ADONAI* your God—you and your sons and daughters, your slaves and maids, and the Levite in your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance among you. Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in any place you see. Rather do so only in the place *ADONAI* chooses in one of your tribes—there you are to offer your burnt offerings, and there you are to do all I am commanding you.

Deuteronomy 12:4-14 TLV

The Psalms also speak of Jerusalem, often invoking the name of Zion, the heart of the Holy City:

For *ADONAI* has chosen Zion, He has desired it for His dwelling:
“This is My resting place forever. Here I dwell, for I have desired it.
I will abundantly bless her food. I will satisfy her needy ones with bread.
I will clothe her *kohanim* [priests] with salvation, and her godly ones will sing aloud for joy.
There will I make a horn spring up for David, I have set up a lamp for My anointed.
His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon himself his crown will shine.”

Psalms 132:13-18 TLV

King David's son Solomon testified to the eternal status of Jerusalem in his prayer of dedication for the first Temple:

Let Your eyes be open toward this House night and day, toward the place of which You have said: “My Name shall be there;” listening to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place.

1 Kings 8:29 TLV

Solomon went on to ask the LORD to have regard for all prayers directed toward Jerusalem, especially prayers of humble repentance when God's people Israel had sinned and suffered the judgments of their rebellion against Him – even the judgment of exile and dispersal to the nations. That is why Jews to this day continue to pray toward Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, why they rejoice that their prayers have been answered in restoration to the Holy Land, and why they continue to pray with mounting expectation for the day when the Holy Temple is at last restored.

But that's not all that Solomon prayed. He even made provision for us who cannot claim to be among the native born of Israel:

Moreover concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a distant country because of Your Name—for they will hear of Your great Name, of Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm—when he comes to pray toward this House, then may you hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner asks of You. So all the peoples of the earth may know Your Name, to fear You as Your people Israel do, and know that this House that I have built is called by Your Name.

1 Kings 8:41-43 TLV

Another Son of David made the same kind of prayer many centuries later, after He gave notice to His Jewish disciples that He had other sheep not of the same fold whom He would lead and join with the native born to make one flock with one Shepherd. He would not do so by leading them to Rome, or Constantinople, or Moscow, or Salt Lake City, but to Jerusalem, the city He cautioned them not to swear by, because it is still the City of the Great King.

Why do we not look to Jerusalem today? What has changed to make it something other than the City of the Great King? Even now, He is restoring Jerusalem as His capital. He invites all His people, foreign and native born, to turn our faces toward His throne. That is what He means when He tells us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. It's only when we do so that we are made whole, for then our hearts are turned toward the place where His Name is established forever. Until we do, His Kingdom remains incomplete and divided, and our peace remains elusive.