

Why Do Jews Face Jerusalem When They Pray?

No matter where in the world a Jew finds himself, his heart and prayers are directed toward Jerusalem. The reason for this spans over two thousand years of Jewish history, throughout which the children of Israel have longed to return to their ancestral Land.

The Psalms caution, "If I forget Jerusalem, then let my right hand forget its own strength." (Psalms 137:5) For a Jew, forgetting Jerusalem is tantamount to forgetting his identity completely. In contrast, by remembering Jerusalem, a Jew identifies with his very essence and inner-self.

Unlike other exiled nations, the Jews' desire to return never ceased or waned in intensity. Rather, this desire steadily increases! As the ingathering of the exiles takes place before our very eyes, Jews face east not only to dream of Jerusalem's past glory, but to hasten its rebuilding in modern Israel.

Why Jerusalem?

When Jews pray facing east, they are doing much more than turning to the Promised Land's capital. Like a spiritual homing device that zeroes in on its target, the soul of the Jew is programmed to seek its source—the root of its holiness. To do so, Jews first face Israel. As they reach Israel spiritually, they narrow their focus on Jerusalem. Finally, they hone in on the Western Wall, site of the Holy Temple and the Holy of Holies within. This focus is one of progressive holiness that narrows in and targets the highest level of closeness to the Divine Presence. As the place where the soul unites with its Creator, the life force of all humanity, Jerusalem naturally remains the focal point for all Jewish prayer.

In King Solomon's times, all nations of the world came to the Holy Temple to bring offerings and connect with the Creator. The unique sanctity of Jerusalem was well known throughout the lands, not only among the Jewish nation. According to tradition, the first stone created on earth was the famous foundation stone that can be found even today on the Temple Mount. This holy stone, sitting on the holiest place on the earth, is the first physical link between the Creator and our world. It connects the spirit of man to its Source. It is literally the foundation upon which this world was built.

Why Does the World Face East?

Today, the entire world continues to face east, just as it has throughout history. Indeed, Israel remains at the forefront and in the headlines, a popular topic in the media. The eyes of the nations continue to look toward Jerusalem. Why does the world face east, toward a tiny piece of land that a tiny nation calls home?

While Jews physically and spiritually face their land, on some level the nations of the world understand the secret of Jerusalem. They face east toward the holiest place on earth, the foundation stone that bonds the human spirit to its Source. In this way, the nations of the world also connect to their past, present, and future. By facing east, the world beckons its destiny.

For the original article, visit .