

1. Classes on the book of Zecharyah, verse by verse

<https://www.yutorah.org/search/?teacher=81072&collection=2649>

2. The Official Emblem of the State of Israel



3. Rabbi Shimshon Nadel, The Menorah as the Symbol of the Jewish State

<https://mizrachi.org/hamizrachi/the-menorah-as-the-symbol-of-the-jewish-state/>

The official symbol of the State of Israel is a *menorah* flanked on each side by an olive branch. This familiar image was designed by Gabriel and Maxim Shamir, two brothers from Latvia who studied graphics and design in Berlin prior to making *Aliyah*, and were responsible for creating a number of emblems, medals, stamps, and currency for the young State. Their *menorah* was adopted as the official emblem by the Provisional Council of the State of Israel on February 10, 1949.

It's easy to understand why the developing nation adopted the emblem. The *menorah* has been a central Jewish symbol since antiquity. In addition to its role in the *Mishkan*, the *Beit HaMikdash*, and the Chanukah story, images of the *menorah* have been found in synagogues, cemeteries, mosaics, and seals throughout Jewish history. The decision to surround it with olive branches is based on the prophet Zechariah's vision of a *menorah* flanked by olive branches (Zechariah 4:3).

#### Visions

4. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (11<sup>th</sup> century Spain), commentary to Zechariah 1:1

The power of refined souls which receive Divine inspiration as prophecy is not uniform. When there was honour in Israel, before they were exiled, there was no need to interpret prophecy, as in, 'Behold, a son is born to the house of David, and his name is Yoshiyahu.' It was clear on its own. After the exile, they are visions and they require interpretation, like the visions of Daniel, which Daniel could not have understood without a *malach* to interpret them.

5. Don Isaac Abarbanel (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century Spain/Portugal/Italy), commentary to Zechariah 1:8

Chaggai, Zechariah and Malachi were contemporaries, and Chaggai and Malachi spoke clearly... and Zechariah himself had quite pure, clear words aside from his visions... This shows that the opacity of Zechariah's visions was not a function of a deficiency in his prophecy and grasp, but rather was due to the opacity of the subject and the difficulty of the words themselves. We see in all of the visions on the subject [of the remote future], whether from the start of Yechezkel or Nevuchadnezzar's dreams of the statue or Daniel's prophecies... there was great opacity in their words... Do not be seduced by Rambam's statement that prophetic parables are general messages, parts of the parable having no meaning and only beautifying the parable. It is not so; no element of Divine prophecy is meaningless.

#### 6. Ibn Ezra to Zechariah 1:1

Those which he did not explain remain sealed and hidden from the eyes of those with insight. Were we to find an ancient text which told of wars that occurred in those days, we would feel our way like blind people along a wall, saying, 'This is why that prophecy took place.' Now we have no support at all.

#### 1:7-17      A Vision of Hope and Divine Mercy

##### 7. Zechariah 1:7-17 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

On the twenty fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shevat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah son of Berechyah, son of Iddo the prophet, saying: I saw in the night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle bushes that were in the glen; and behind him were there red horses, sorrel, and white.

Then I said: O my lord, what are these?

And the angel that talked with me said to me: I will show you what these are.

And the man that stood among the myrtle bushes answered and said: These are they whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro in the earth.

And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle bushes, and said: We have walked to and fro in the earth, and, behold, all the earth sits still, and is at rest.

Then the angel of the Lord answered and said: O Lord of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Yehuda, against which You have had indignation these seventy years?

And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words, words of comfort.

So the angel that spoke with me said to me, Proclaim, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts; I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great zeal. And I am very much displeased with the nations that are at ease: for I was a little angry, but they helped to advance the affliction. Therefore thus says the Lord; I have returned to Jerusalem with mercies: My house shall be rebuilt in it, says the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem. Proclaim further, saying: Thus says the Lord of hosts; My cities shall again overflow with prosperity; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

#### 8. Talmud, Sanhedrin 93a

'I saw in the night' – Gd wished to convert the world to night. 'And there was a man riding' – This is Gd... 'Riding a red horse' – Gd wished to turn the world to blood. Then Gd looked at Chananiah, Mishael and Azaryah and was appeased, as it is written, 'And he stood among the myrtles in the glen' – The myrtles are the righteous... And the glen is Babylon... Immediately they were filled with rage, [then] they became coloured, and the red became white.

#### 9. Abarbanel to Zechariah 1:8

Because those kings who inherited his empire did not resemble Alexander's might and power... Therefore, it described Alexander as a man astride a horse but it called the other kings horses, not wanting to describe them as men, like him. Perhaps the appearances ascribed to them – red, coloured and white – emerged from their customary garb, or hint at their traits and involvement, of which we know nothing; we lack a chronicle of their times, as noted by Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra.

#### 2:5-9      Who Brings Redemption?

##### 10. Zechariah 2:5-9 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

I lifted up my eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.

Then I said: Where are you going?

And he said to me: To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth of it, and what is the length of it.

And behold, the angel that talked with me went out, and another angel went out to meet him, and he said to him: Run, speak to this young man, saying: Jerusalem shall be inhabited like unwallied towns because of the multitude of men and cattle that shall be in it: for I, says the Lord, will be to her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in her midst.

11. Talmud, Bava Batra 75b

Gd wished to have Jerusalem fit a certain dimension... The *malachim* said before Gd, 'Master of the Universe! You created many cities for the nations in Your world, without assigning them length and width. Will You limit Jerusalem, which contains Your Name and Your Temple and righteous people?'

12. Abarbanel to Zechariah 2:6

The prophet saw in this vision the future rising of the nations upon Israel to conquer it. Thus he saw that man attempting to measure Jerusalem's length and width, as it were, to divide it among the attacking empires.

13. Talmud, Bava Kama 60b

Gd declared, "It is My responsibility to pay for the fire I kindled. I ignited Zion, as it is written, 'And He set fire to Zion, and it consumed her foundations,' and I will build her in fire, as it is written, 'And I will be a wall of fire around her, and a source of honour in her midst.'"

14. Jerusalem Talmud, Maaser Sheni 5:2

Rabbi Acha said: This teaches that the Temple will be built before the throne of the house of David.

15. Rabbi Moses Maimonides, Sefer haMitzvot Aseh 20

The twentieth commandment is to build a house of worship, which will house the bringing of offerings and the burning of the eternal fire, and to which people will go and ascend for holidays and gather annually.

16. Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tukaczinski, Ir haKodesh v'haMikdash 5:1:4

Logically, the Temple will be built by human beings. Certainly, if the construction will precede the appearance of Davidic kings then it will be built by human beings. But even should we merit, speedily in our days, the appearance of a reigning king before construction of the Temple, it would still be logical for the Temple to be built by human hands, for the mitzvah of 'And build a house for Me' is fulfilled only if the Jews build it. Granted that Rashi and Tosafot wrote that in the future it will be built by Heaven... still, the initial action and construction will be via human beings, as Moshe initiated the erection of the Mishkan when he stepped forward to put it up, and then it was erected as though on its own. The Tiferet Yisrael said further that Rashi and Tosafot meant that Gd would help, in a miraculous manner...

3:8-4:14 The Menorah and the Olive Trees

17. Zechariah 3:8-4:7 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Hear now, Yehoshua the high priest, you, and your fellows who sit before you: for they are men of great sings: behold, I will bring my servant Tzemach. For behold the stone that I have laid before Yehoshua; upon one stone are seven facets: behold, I will engrave its inscription, says the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. On that day, says the Lord of hosts, each of you shall invite his neighbour to come under his vine and under his fig tree. And the angel that talked with me came back, and woke me, as a man that is woken from his sleep, and he said to me: What do you see?

And I said: I have looked, and behold a candelabra all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and seven lamps to it, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which were upon the top of it: and there are two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side of it. So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying: What are these, my lord?

Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me: Don't you know what these are? And I said: No, my lord. Then he answered and spoke to me, saying: This is the word of the Lord to Zerubabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubabel become a plain! And he shall produce the headstone from it, amid shoutings of: Grace, grace to it!

18. Zechariah 4:8-14 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying The hands of Zerubabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and you shalt know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. For who has despised the day of small

things? for those seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plumbline in the hand of Zerubabel; the eyes of the Lord, they rove to and fro through the whole earth.

Then I answered, and said to him: What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side of it? And I answered again, and said to him: What are these two olive branches which are beside the two golden spouts that empty the golden oil out of themselves?

And he answered me and said: Don't you know what these are? And I said: No, my lord.

Then he said: These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

#### 19. Ibn Ezra to 4:14

Zerubabel is the 'son of the olive', meaning the oil, for he is the anointed one who will sit on the throne of Israel, as it is written, 'And reigning upon his throne,' and Yehoshua is anointed as the kohen gadol. It says (6:13), 'There will be counsel of peace between the two of them,' and there will be no jealousy between them.

#### 20. Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 15:3

'This month is for you [plural]' – As in, 'These are the two sons of the olive, who stand upon the Master of the world.' Rabbi Levi explained: Gd sought something with which to rescue Israel, and He did not find anything until He found the merit of Moshe and Aharon, which stood on their behalf – this is 'These are the sons of the olive.'