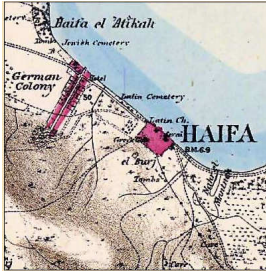


Carmel Calling Jerusalem: Some historical and intertextual explorations of Mt. Carmel and the Lawḥ-i Karmil (Tablet of Carmel) of Baha'u'llah.

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Map of Haifa – 1878

Seat of Universal House of Justice

Statue of Elijah

Shrine of the Bab

“It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it” (Isaiah 2:2)

“Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendour is revealed” (extract from the Tablet of Carmel)

As a major location of pilgrimage visitation and the site of the Baha'i World Center in Haifa, Israel, Mount Carmel is very well known to Baha'is as it is to numerous others for cultural, religious and other reasons. Mount Carmel (= Heb. 'The Orchard or Vineyard of God') is a 24 mile long mountain range. It surrounds or is adjacent to its key geographical centerpiece, the ancient city of Haifa (= Heb. Perhaps, 'The Beautiful Shore'). Haifa is today the third largest city in Israel, a multicultural Mediterranean seaside city of some magnitude (pop. perhaps 270,000).

According to the Hebrew Bible Mt. Carmel and Haifa (as well as Acre, Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee, etc) are found within the western Galilean land allocated to the various tribes of Israel, especially Asher, the eighth son of the patriarch Jacob or the second son of Jacob and Zilpah (Joshua 19:24-31). Mt. Carmel lies on the western boundary of the tribe of Asher (Josh. 19:24). Both Jacob (fl. 2nd millennium BCE) and

Moses (d. 13th cent. BCE) are said to have uttered blessings with prophetic implications upon the region of the tribe of Ashur (Gen. 49:20 and Deut 33:24).

While Haifa has existed from the early centuries of the common era (CE), the 1500 foot high limestone Mount Carmel range has been an important center of human habitation since paleolithic times; note the early, prehistoric (500,000 BCE??) human-hominid (Neanderthal, Homo-Sapien) settlements. Significant historical and religious events have taken place in the Haifa-Carmel region for more than 3,000 years. The 9th cent BCE Transjordanian prophet Elijah had a confrontation with 450 priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18:17ff) where his cave- retreat or burial place is believed to be located. In fact there are two alleged caves of Elijah on Mt. Carmel! His successor Elisha also visited Mt. Carmel (II Kings 2:25) as did many other figures significant in Jewish, Christian and Islamic history.

According to the 'On the Pythagorean Way of Life' of the Syrian born Neo-Platonic successor to Plotinus and Porphyry, Iamblichus of Chalcis (c. 240-325 CE), the Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras of Samos (c. 570- c. 497 BCE) spent some time in retreat in a sanctuary on Mount Carmel. It is interesting that the Mandaean *Drāšā D-Yaḥyā* ("Book of John") mentions Mount Carmel. Jesus of nearby Nazareth and Paul of Tarsus may well have gone to the Carmel region. Indeed, Mount Carmel is significant in the Bible where it is a symbol of beauty and fertility (see esp. Isaiah Isa. 35:2; Song 7.5 and Nahum 1:4).

Of especial interest in a Jewish context is the following passage from the homilistic midrashic work *Pesikta de Rab Kahana* (perhaps 5th cent. CE) where it is said in Piska ("section") 21:

"At the [eschatological] restoration Sinai, Tabor, and Carmel will hymn Moriah [= the Temple Mount, Jerusalem, see 2 Chron. 3:1] - Mount Zion -- in song."

The same source also has it (in the light of Isaiah 2:2) that R. Phineas (c. 360 CE) said in the name of R. Reuben (c. 300) that God would bring Sinai, Tabor and Carmel and build the [eschatological] Temple on their summits. The notion of personified

"mountains" addressing one another has Biblical (and extra-Biblical) roots and is echoed in the Tablet of Carmel. That God would build a latter-day, spiritual, non-concrete New Jerusalem on Mount Carmel is explicitly stated by Baha'u'llah in his 1871 (or 1872) *Lawḥ-i Hartik* (= Hardegg), the Tablet to the Templar leader George David Hardegg (1812-1879). This has major implications spelled out in symbolic language in the 'Tablet of Carmel' of Baha'u'llah, a fairly brief (2-3 page) wholly Arabic Tablet of great magnitude. It was written around 1891 during its author's fourth visit to Haifa

If Armageddon, the scene of the eschatological battle between the forces of "light" and those of "darkness", means 'Mountain of Megiddo' (Aramaic *har* = mountain) then it is likely that Mount Carmel is indicated since this mountain is only a few miles from the scene of the latter-day apocalyptic conflagration (see Rev. 16:16). For some the modern battle of Armageddon "took place at the head of a pass through the Carmel Ridge, which overlooks the Valley of Jezreel from the south" (New World Encyclopedia, Mt. Carmel). General Edmund Allenby (1861-1936) led the British forces which precipitated the defeat of the Ottomans in Palestine and the subsequent freedom of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The Tablet of Carmel involves Carmel (= Baha'u'llah / The Baha'i revelation) crying out to Zion (= Jerusalem / the Jewish people and others) the good news of the Baha'i revelation. Carmel, symbolic of the 'new Jerusalem', invites Zion to faith as representing the previous edifice(s) of religion, the 'old Jerusalem'. In the Hebrew Bible Zion/Jerusalem is personified as the place where God cries out : "the Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem... and the top of Carmel withers" (Amos 1:2 cf. Joel 3:16, etc). Baha'u'llah seems to reverse this Biblical pattern in the light of the 'New Jerusalem' of his revelation symbolized by Mount Carmel.

Occurring 150 times in the Bible, "Zion" is a topographical term which once designated the southeast hill of the later city of Jerusalem. Today Zion mostly designates the area of the 'Temple Mount' where the Dome of the Rock is situated. It is symbolic, among other things, of Jerusalem as the locus of the Israelite

religion/Judaism. Baha'u'llah relocated the 'New Jerusalem' to the 'Akka (Acre)-Haifa – Mt. Carmel area where he lived for over two decades.

In this paper these and related themes will be discussed. This year (2013) it is especially appropriate to consider them in the light of the *Tablet of Carmel* and such biblical prophecies as, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law" (Isa. 2:3; cf. Micah 4:2). This since the sacred building or "seat" of the now fifty year old International Baha'i 'Universal House of Justice' (1st elected London 1963 + 50 = 2013) was established and is now located on Mt. Carmel. Several thousand years ago Isaiah seems to have intimated such things in the following words: "In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it" (Isa. 2:2; see image above).