

Foxes on Mount Zion bring biblical book of Lamentations to life

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An rare sighting of a fox running across Mount Zion conjured up images described in the Book of Lamentations Tuesday morning. Jewish tradition teaches that the appearance of foxes on the Temple Mount is proof that the Third Temple shall be built.

“I only saw one fox but I assume that there are more in the area,” said Joshua Wander, a resident of the Mount of Olives, who spotted the animal running through the cemetery.

“It is definitely unusual to see them,” he added. “That’s why I filmed it. It’s something that I rarely see. Maybe it’s a sign.”

The image of foxes on the Temple Mount was described in the Book of Lamentations, which some Biblical scholars believe was written by the Prophet Jeremiah.

Because of Mount Tzion, which lies desolate; Jackals prowl over it. Lamentations 5:18

The Hebrew word used in this verse (שוּפְלִים) is most accurately translated as ‘foxes.’ This verse appears in the fifth and final chapter of Lamentations which culminates in the prophecy that Jerusalem will return to its former days of glory.

For truly, You have rejected us, Bitterly raged against us. Take us back, Hashem, to Yourself, And let us come back; Renew our days as of old! Lamentations 5:22

The Talmud describes foxes on the Temple Mount as a sign that Jerusalem will be rebuilt. This precise scenario was discussed in the Talmud (Makkot 24b), relating that Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria, Rabbi Joshua, and Rabbi Akiva went up to Jerusalem.

When they reached the Temple Mount, they saw a fox emerging from the place of the Holy of Holies. The others started weeping but Rabbi Akiva laughed. Rabbi Akiva asked the rabbis why they cried and they explained that to see a wild animal in such a holy place, a place that was forbidden to unfit men, was distressing. Rabbi Akiva noted that this was precisely the reason he laughed. He explained that the fox was the manifestation of the prophecy of Uriah as related by the Prophet Micah described the total destruction of Jerusalem.

*Assuredly, because of you Tzion shall be plowed as a field,
And Yerushalayim shall become heaps of ruins, And the Har Habayit
A shrine in the woods. Micah 3:12*

The fact that this dire prophecy had come to pass was proof that the prophecy of Zechariah would also come to be. The Prophet Zechariah described the return of Jerusalem to its days of glory.

Thus said the lord of Hosts: There shall yet be old men and women in the squares of Yerushalayim, each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the squares of the city shall be crowded with boys and girls playing in the squares. Zechariah 4-5

The last time foxes were sighted in the area was in 2019.

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