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A SPECTACULAR 'VIEW OF JERUSALEM' / 'MAP'

CIRCA 1787

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OIL ON CANVAS

SIGNED RAMON RAMIREZ (ACTIVE; MEXICO 18TH CENTURY) LOWER RIGHT: 'RAMON RÉZ. (RAMIREZ) F. ANO DE 1787

MEXICO

18TH CENTURY

SIZE: 198CM HIGH, 243CM WIDE - 76 INS HIGH, 95¾ INS WIDE

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LITERATURE

PROF. RUBIN, REHAV; IMAGE AND REALITY: JERUSALEM IN MAPS AND VIEWS, THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY MAGNES PRESS, JERUSALEM, 1999 (PP. 110 - 122)

THE 1787 PAINTED MAP OF JERUSALEM CLOSELY FOLLOWS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MAP (FIG. 1) BY CHRISTIAN VAN ADRICHOM (1533 - 1585), A CATHOLIC PRIEST AND ERUDITE BIBLICAL SCHOLAR AND THEOLOGICAL WRITER. BORN IN DELFT, HE WAS ACTIVE DURING MOST OF HIS LIFE IN KÖLN. IN 1584, HE PUBLISHED JERUSALEM'S MAP ACCOMPANIED BY A BOOKLET TITLED 'IERUSALEM... ET SUBURBANORUM... BREVIS DESCRIPTIO, COLONIAE AGRIPPINAE' (KÖLN, 1584).

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN LATIN, THE BOOK AND MAP WERE LATER TRANSLATED INTO VARIOUS LANGUAGES IN NUMEROUS EDITIONS, PRIMARILY AS CHAPTERS IN A BROADER PUBLICATION ABOUT THE HOLY LAND DIVIDED INTO THE TRIBES TITLED 'THEATRUM TERRAE SANCTAE' (KÖLN, 1590).

THIS MAP IS ONE OF THE MOST TYPICAL IMAGINARY REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CITY, AND MAPS IN THIS GENRE WERE CREATED WITH MINIMAL CONNECTION TO ACTUAL GEOGRAPHY. THEY DEPICTED JERUSALEM SOLELY BASED ON THE DESCRIPTIONS FOUND IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, JOSEPHUS FLAVIUS, AND NUMEROUS OTHER HISTORICAL SOURCES. NOTABLY, ADRICHOM'S MAP IS ORIENTED TO THE EAST, AND IN THE PAINTED VERSION UNDER DISCUSSION, THERE IS A CONFUSION OF DIRECTIONS, WITH SOUTH (MERIDIES) POSITIONED AT THE TOP.

THE MAP DEPICTS JERUSALEM ENCIRCLED BY MOUNTAINS, WITH THE KIDRON VALLEY SITUATED ON THE UPPER PORTION OF THE REPRESENTATION. THE CITY ITSELF IS RECTANGULAR AND IS ENCLOSED BY WALLS. IT IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR DISTINCT SECTIONS: THE SOUTHERN-MOST STRIP IS DESIGNATED AS 'MOUNT ZION, THE CITY OF DAVID, THE UPPER CITY'; THE CENTRAL STRIP, WHICH CONSTITUTES THE MAIN PART OF THE CITY, IS LARGER THAN THE OTHER SECTIONS; AND THE TEMPLE IS VISIBLE IN ITS UPPER REGION. WITHIN THE NORTHERN (LEFT) QUADRANT OF THE CITY, TWO ADDITIONAL STRIPS ARE SEPARATED BY INNER WALLS, REFERRED TO AS 'THE SECOND CITY' AND 'BEZETHA' WHICH COLLECTIVELY CONSTITUTE 'THE NEW CITY'.

THE CONCEPTUAL BASIS FOR THIS RECTANGULAR DEPICTION OF JERUSALEM AND ITS DIVISION STEMS FROM A MISINTERPRETATION OF THE CITY'S DESCRIPTION PROVIDED BY JOSEPHUS FLAVIUS. IN THIS ACCOUNT, JERUSALEM WAS SURROUNDED BY THREE WALLS AND COMPRISED OF THE 'LOWER CITY', THE 'UPPER CITY', AND THE 'NEW CITY', ADRICHOM ADOPTED THIS GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CITY FROM ADAM REISSNER'S BOOK TITLED 'IERUSALEM, DIE ALTE HAUBSTATT DER JUDEN...' ('JERUSALEM, THE OLD CAPITAL CITY OF THE JEWS...'), PUBLISHED IN FRANKFURT AM MAIN IN 1563. ADRICHOM EXPANDED UPON REISSNER'S MAP, (FIG. 2) BY INCORPORATING NUMEROUS ADDITIONAL DETAILS AND SCENES DEPICTING VARIOUS SITES AND EVENTS, EMPLOYING AN ABSOLUTE AND ANACHRONISTIC APPROACH THAT SPANS OVER 1,000 YEARS. THE ENTIRE AREA OF THE MAP, ENCOMPASSING BOTH THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR OF THE WALLS, COMPRISES OVER 270 NUMBERED CAPTIONS. EACH CAPTION CORRESPONDS TO AN ITEM MENTIONED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AND OTHER HISTORICAL AND TRADITIONAL SOURCES, WHICH ARE COMPREHENSIVELY EXPLAINED IN THE ACCOMPANYING TEXT AND, IN THE PAINTED VERSION, THE INDEX LOCATED ALONG THE LOWER MARGINS OF THE ARTWORK. THE MAP PRESENTS A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF HISTORICAL LANDMARKS, INCLUDING THE PALACES OF KING DAVID AND KING SOLOMON, DATING BACK TO THE 10TH CENTURY BC, ALONGSIDE THOSE OF THE MACCABEES, HEROD THE GREAT, AND PILATE, SPANNING FROM THE 1ST CENTURY BC TO THE 1ST CENTURY AD. THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNS AND COSTUMES ARE PREDOMINANTLY INSPIRED BY THE 16TH CENTURY EUROPEAN STYLE.

WITHIN THE CITY WALLS, THE MAP DEPICTS THE ANOINTING OF KING SOLOMON, THE SITE OF PAGAN SACRIFICES TO THE MOLOCH, AND EVEN KING SOLOMON'S ZOO. THE TEMPLE COURT SHOWCASES THE HIGH PRIEST STANDING BEFORE THE ALTAR, WITH THE MENORAH (CANDELABRUM) ON HIS LEFT AND THE TABLE OF THE 'SHOWBREAD' (BREAD OF PRESENCE OR SHEWBREAD) ON HIS RIGHT. THE HOLY OF THE HOLIES, CONTAINING THE ARK, IS SITUATED IN FRONT OF

HIM

A SERIES OF MINIATURE REPRESENTATIONS CAPTURES PIVOTAL SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF JESUS, SPANNING FROM HIS TRIUMPHANT ENTRY INTO THE CITY ON PALM SUNDAY TO THE LAST SUPPER, HIS JUDGMENT, HIS JOURNEY ALONG THE VIA DOLOROSA, AND THE CRUCIFIXION ON MOUNT CALVARY. THE ASCENSION IS DEPICTED IN THE UPPER CENTRE, ATOP MOUNT OLIVES.

THROUGHOUT THE MAP, THE VARIOUS ARMIES THAT BESIEGED JERUSALEM AT DIFFERENT HISTORICAL PERIODS ARE DEPICTED AS TENT CAMPS ADORNED WITH FLAGS, ENCIRCLING THE CITY. NUMEROUS EDITIONS, DERIVATIONS, AND COPIES WERE CREATED AFTER ADRICHOM'S MAP, AND THE PAINTING IN QUESTION IS ONE OF THE LATTER AND MOST INTRIGUING VERSIONS, PRIMARILY DUE TO ITS SUBSTANTIAL SIZE AND THE FACT THAT IT WAS EXECUTED WITH OIL ON CANVAS, LIKELY IN MEXICO. IN THE EARLY 17TH CENTURY, THE DESCRIPTION OF JERUSALEM BY ADRICHOM IN HIS BOOKLET WAS TRANSLATED INTO CASTILIAN (SPANISH), TITLED 'A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CITY OF JERUSALEM...' AND INCLUDED THE MAP. THIS TRANSLATION LIKELY SERVED AS THE SOURCE FOR THIS PAINTING, WHICH MAY EXHIBIT STYLISTIC SIMILARITIES TO NOVO-HISPANIC OIL PAINTINGS AND URBAN DEPICTIONS. TWO ADDITIONAL LARGE 'OIL ON CANVAS' PAINTINGS DEPICTING THE CITY OF JERUSALEM ARE ON DISPLAY: ONE IN A MUSEUM IN MEXICO (ZACATECAS) AND THE OTHER AT THE ENTRANCE HALL OF MUSEO SEFARDI IN TOLEDO (ORIGINALLY THE SYNAGOGUE OF SAMUEL HALEM).

IT IS NOTEWORTHY TO CITE ADRICHOM'S OPENING SENTENCES IN HIS PREFACE TO THE AFOREMENTIONED BOOKLET [A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF IERUSALEM AND THE SUBURBS THEREOF AS IF FLORISHED IN THE TIME OF CHRIST], TRANSLATED INTO 'OLD ENGLISH': 'IERUSALEM THE ELECT CITTIE OF GOD, HOLY AND MOST GLORIOUS, BUILT UPON THE HOLY MOUNTAINS, EXCELLING ALL THE CITTIES OF THE WORLD... WAS SITUATED IN THE MIDEST OF THE WHOLE WORLDE, AND OF IUDEA, AS IT WERE IN THE VERY CENTRE AND HEART OF THE EARTH...'

WE EXTEND OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE TO ARIEL TISHBY, CURATOR OF THE NORMAN BIER SECTION FOR MAPS OF THE HOLY LAND, DEPARTMENT OF PRINTS AND DRAWINGS AT THE ISRAEL MUSEUM, FOR HIS INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE AND GUIDANCE IN CATALOGUING THIS EXTRAORDINARY WORK.

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RELATED LITERATURE:

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