

# Ye Are Come to Zion - Part 7

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding our spiritual destiny and purpose, and living in relatedness to God's people and purpose.*

**Duration:** 55:03

**Scripture:** Psalm 132:13, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 4:1, Hebrews 12:22

**Topics:** "Zion"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and embracing the specific purpose and calling that God has for each individual. He encourages listeners to see their lives as being part of a greater destiny and to live with a sense of purpose and focus. The speaker also highlights the constant efforts of the enemy to hinder and destroy the testimony of believers, but reminds listeners to listen to their own new nature and long for fellowship with God's people. Ultimately, the sermon encourages believers to live in alignment with God's purpose and to rely on Him in the face of opposition.

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## Transcript

I continue this afternoon to explore some of the depths and fullness of that little fragment in the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 22. Ye are coming to Zion. It is common knowledge that this document called the letter to the Hebrews marks the transition from one dispensation to another, one order, system and economy to an entirely different one.

From all that was temporal and earthly, material, of God's ways, God's means in Israel, to the spiritual counterpart of that as it relates to this dispensation and to the Church. It is common knowledge that this town, Zion, is inclusive of all that was in that economy. It came to sum up everything from the day of Israel's going forth from Egypt.

Then the vision was brought fully into view of their being brought in and planted in the mountain of his inheritance. All that was subsequent to that found its deposit and consummation in what is called Zion. All that is taken up in a spiritual way and made the heritage of the Church.

Our heritage, the heritage of faith. Ye are coming to Zion. We have been, as I have said, seeking to explore and exploit the fullnesses of that heritage.

We just take one more fragment of that this afternoon. We have, for our basic word, fragment in the 132nd Psalm. Psalm 132, verse 13.

The Lord hath chosen Zion. He hath desired it for his habitation. This is my resting place forever.

Here will I dwell for I have desired it. Of all the full statements regarding Zion in that psalm, the fragment for our present occupation is, The Lord hath chosen Zion. In the very blood of the true Israelite is the element of selection and election.

That is, of a difference and a destiny. Every true Israelite has that in his blood. It is a part of his very being, of his constitution.

The deepest thing in him, in his consciousness, in his very makeup, is that he is something different and that he has a particular destiny. It has become customary to refer to Israel as the chosen people or God's chosen people. And that is the consciousness of the Israelite, chosen by God, distinguished by God.

In the appointment of God, apart for some particular purpose. That is, in his bloody sense of destiny. These two things go together, difference and destiny, apartness and purpose.

I say it's a constituent of their very being. They can't help themselves. It just comes up.

You meet it. Sometimes it shows itself in arrogance, independence, superiority, and in many other ways. But there it is.

They just cannot help themselves. That's how they are made. They are different and they know it.

And there is something which is bound up with that difference in the nature of purpose, destiny, which is their heritage. And this sense of destiny has always been a tremendous factor in their history. A tremendous factor in their endurance, in something which has enabled them to endure.

And God only knows what they've had to endure. In suffering, in work, in vocation, it's been a potent factor. In their survival, their very survival.

When that consciousness was alive, they were in strength. When that consciousness faded, passed under some cloud of doubt and question, they lost its keenness, they were in weakness. Their strength or their weakness related to the strength or weakness of this one thing.

This sense of calling, this sense of vocation, this sense of destiny. When they were in right relationship with God, that consciousness was radiant. It was the dominant element in their life.

It was a powerful motive and principle. When their relationship with God was not right, then that consciousness faded and ceased to be a motive. They hung their hearts upon the willow, then, and ceased to sing the songs of Zion.

Zion, you see, contains this very element and principle and dynamic of destiny, of purpose, of calling. In the Psalms, this is regnant. We have read a specimen this afternoon.

This glory of Zion, this glory of Zion's calling, purpose, choosing, election, destiny, it is regnant in the Psalms. People are in state of tremendous buoyancy there, because Zion is unfathomable and dim. In the prophets, it is latent, or even absent, so that it became the chief vocation and purpose of the prophets to

recover that very thing.

And the voice of the prophet is always tuned to that one note. My servant, whom I have chosen, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. I have chosen him.

Thou art my chosen. See, that's the note of the prophets. You look again at Isaiah 43.

You find that that is the supreme note there. Thus said the Lord, thy redeemer. Thy redeemer.

And their redemption goes hand in hand with this reassurance. I have chosen them. And now that all relate in that half of the Bible to the earthly people and to the earthly Zion.

We hear coming back to us from this writer in the New Testament. Ye are come to Zion. Not that one, but to another one.

A superior transcendent Zion. The heavenly Jerusalem. The spiritual Zion.

Ye are come to Zion. And coming to Zion, amongst all the other things that it means, means coming to that very thing. Coming to the eternal counterpart of the temple.

That divine choosing. That divine electing. That divine calling.

That divine, that heavenly destiny. We find this made clear in the New Testament in two ways. Firstly, in New Birth.

If it was true that in the very birth, that is in the very blood and constitution of the Israelite, this sense of vocation and destiny was so strong, so powerful. That is true in the New Birth of the Child of God. It is there as a great factor, present.

But in birth as a general principle. We do not define it in this way. We do not give it this kind of definition in words.

But when it is put to us in this way, yes that is just what we know. That when we were born again, when we were born again, we immediately became conscious of their being after all some purpose in our being on the earth. It was then that life took on its real meaning.

Whatever we had thought and felt about life up to that time, now we become conscious of there being some meaning about life of which we were never conscious before. We just feel now, now we've begun to live. And now, life has got a meaning.

A purpose. I say that is there as a general principle in the very constitution of the New Birth. It's a test as to the reality of the New Birth.

It's a testimony to a very great fact. That somewhere behind our birth, all unknown, beyond our understanding and comprehension, there is a desire. There is a purpose.

We are no accident. There's a meaning. I say it's, if I may use this as a spiritual, it's in our blood.

My New Birth. That of course is open to your attesting. You know it's true.

It is at least, at least as potent a reality of act in the birth of the child of God, I think, as ever it was in a Jew. Your New Birth has not brought that. Not so that you can put it in the words, in the form in which I have put it, but something that you know to be true.

That life has only just begun. And purpose has only just come in. The sense of destiny has only just arisen.

If that is not true of your conversion, then you've missed something. You've missed something. Because it is, I say, a blood constituent of the new generation.

It's there as a general principle in New Birth. And that is the meaning of being born anew. But then, the New Testament goes on to show us that a life in the spirit, which after all is the enlargement, the fullness of the meaning of New Birth.

A life in the spirit becomes intelligent, concerning this matter of purpose and destiny and difference. Intelligent and specific. Intelligent, I mean, we come to know what Paul has spoken of about having been chosen in him before the foundation of the world.

What Peter meant about the church when he said, It's only another word, another English word for the same, original. Chosen, chosen, elect. We come intelligently to understand that now we are somehow chosen by God.

Before we had a being that has been introduced to us at our New Birth, we become aware of it, we begin to understand something of what that means. God has chosen us. We can understand what the Lord Jesus meant when he said, He did not choose me, but I chose you.

I chose you. This is something that God has done for which there is no accounting on any other ground than on the ground that God did it. It's God's sovereign act.

We begin to understand that it is so. And intelligently we are able to grasp more and more the teaching, especially through Paul, concerning this matter of election. Choosing.

And calling. Calling. What a favorite word of Paul's that was.

Calling. Called according to his purpose. Called according to his purpose.

Called. Purpose. Purpose.

According to his purpose. The purpose of him. And so on.

These are great words. Which are all gathered into the one word, Destiny. Destiny.

And a life in the Spirit, a life in the Spirit, argue, means a growing intelligence about that. A growing understanding of that. It is not only now the basic consciousness, but the growing understanding of what that means.

And as we grow in understanding of what it means to have been chosen, to have been called according to his purpose, life takes on a great deal more fullness of meaning and value and power. It becomes something, something of tremendous power and potency in our lives as we grow into the understanding. It's a mighty motive.

A mighty motive. It's the thing that also girds us for the race, the journey and the battle. You see this is very closely in keeping with this letter to the Hebrews.

Because it is this very sense of destiny that is being spoken of in relation to men right back from Abel onwards. The whole caravan, as we have called it, from Abel, Noah, Enoch, Noah and right on. These men had in them this sense of the hand of God having come upon them with an object for a purpose.

And it was that sense of destiny which enabled them on the one hand to leave the world behind, its affairs and its interests and its possessions, and on the other hand to go patiently on, patiently on through the years. They were men who had seen something. They had seen something.

Abraham saw my day, said the Lord Jesus. Abraham saw my day. He rejoiced to see it.

They'd seen something. Abraham had seen something that this world could never give the answer to. A city and a heavenly country.

No matter how much they possessed of this earth. They'd never answered to it. They'd seen something.

Still kept on going. Moses saw something. He, yes, he saw the God of Israel.

And he saw the pattern of the things in the heavens. But he saw more than that. He saw more than that.

What a tremendous suggestion is found in this accounting the reproach of Christ. Greater riches. That of Egypt.

The reproach of Christ. He'd seen something that could never find its answer in the types and the figures and the symbols and the whole earthly representation. He had seen something heavenly.

And so all these men had seen something. And that seeing was bound up with this sense of being called and of destiny. And it kept these men going.

Moses, it says, he endured as seeing him who is invisible. He'd seen something. And he endured.

He endured. They endured. And what was finished? The power, the thing that girded them to endure, to suffer and to die still in faith, not having obtained.

It was this something in them. It was a part of them. Not something they'd taken on.

Something that was inborn. Sense of purpose. God appointed.

Destiny. The letter to the Hebrews gathers that all up and says, seeing we encompass the doubt with so great a cloud of witness. Let us run.

Let us run as they ran. The race with patience. Let us lay aside every weight.

And they so easily beset in sin. That's doubt. That's doubt.

That's unbelief. That's the concept shown. Lay it aside.

Run with patience. Girded by this same wonderful seeing. Sensing.

Knowing. We are called. We are chosen.

We are related to some tremendous destiny. But then this becomes specific. It becomes specific.

It is not just general. Zion is something that becomes very concrete in Israel. It is, so to speak, the gathering up of all that the nation means.

And all that the land means. And all that the city means. And concentrating it, so to speak, at one point.

It's something very concrete and concentrated. So that this sense of destiny becomes not something quite general and spread over and indefinite, but something quite focused. Focused.

And here I come to Zion. This is not a repetition of something we have said more than once in the conference. This is something that is presented to faith.

And something that you and I have got to recognize as being a matter which concerns us. So that while the apostle will present the truth and tell us the facts about being chosen in Christ, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, and so on. While he would tell us all that, you say, look here.

Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. Make this something that comes into your everyday life. And it will redeem your everyday life from the ordinary.

From the monotony. From the trivial. It will lift you right up onto another level.

You know that you are, as a child of God, related to some tremendous purpose. And you've got to live on the basis of a great purpose. It becomes specific in that way.

Don't be alienated there. You see, Zion, as we have said, is a collective conception. That is, it is that which joins the Lord's people all together in one.

They found their conceptual point in Zion as a nation. It was Zion that was their cohesive strength. The thing that brought them together.

Of course, naturally and literally that was true. As they, at the given times, all went up to Zion. From all the tribes.

They came there and their national unity was celebrated or enjoyed. Though they had to live apart in many places, and during the intervening months, they seemed to be insular, really they were not. And Zion was the testimony to, and the experience of, their oneness as a people.

Now, that is a great factor about this whole matter of Zion, where we are concerned spiritually. That it is a collective, shall I use the more familiar word, a corporate thing. And while perhaps in every, and truly in every individual Jew was this sense of election and destiny, every Jew held that relatedly.

No individual Jew thought that he was the elect, and that the whole purpose of God related to him alone. He knew that what he had of that, that calling, that election and that destiny was a related matter. And he found a strength of it in the relatedness.

You see, it is the people, not the individuals as such. The individuals share it in their relationship with the whole people. God is after a people for a purpose, and for his purpose.

And you and I will have our main sense and strength of destiny and purpose in a related way. There is always a great deal of limitation and danger about individuals thinking that they are the elect, and that their

job is the job of all jobs. God-given.

Anything like that is a breach of principle. And it will certainly lead to a dead end. We have this relatedly.

That is, God's purpose is bound up with a people. His church. And that which truly represents his church.

That is, which takes the true church character, the heavenly body character. Wherever that is found in representation, collectively, there these things obtain. And it's in that relatedness that we shall come into our purpose in God.

And we shall come into this mighty sense that God is after something. He's after something. And that we are related to that.

It's relatedness, you see, that is essential to this motive, to this purpose, if we get out of a right relatedness, a right spiritual relatedness, a whole spiritual relatedness with that which really is. Chosen of God, formed of God, called of God, in fellowship with his Son, concerning the eternal purpose that is centred in his Son. If we get out of a full and right relationship with that, then life becomes limited.

We may get off the track altogether. Weakness will set in. And it will not be long, it will not be long, before we begin to ask the question whether after all we've been mistaken.

Whether all this wonderful truth about being called and chosen really relates to us. Now you see, that's exactly what happened when Israel got away from Zion. While they were in Zion, all right, no questions, all is strength, all is life, all is fullness, things are happening.

But then, through their spiritual decline, they were moved away from Zion, they were out of immediate touch with Zion, see, and became a scattered people. And big questions arose whether after all they were the elect people. Whether they really were God's people.

Whether this was not all some wonderful, beautiful illusion. They were called to a special purpose. The whole thing came into question.

They lost their vision. And where there is no vision, people go to pieces. And that is only another way of putting this, where there is a loss of a sense of destiny and calling.

Now Zion then means relatedness. Get away from true spiritual relatedness. And you expose yourself to terrible deprivations and losses.

And perhaps sooner or later to take the major question as to whether it is all true or not. When all this teaching really holds good and works. You'll find that it does hold good and it does work if you're in right relationship.

In the right position. It does. And it works gloriously and it works terribly.

It works for you. And it works against that which is against it. Now I know that so many people have this difficulty.

You speak about being called and chosen for a great purpose. What's the purpose of my life? Where do I fit into this? What is my function? And you're always making an individual and personal matter of this in a wrong way. Get focused again about this.

Get focused again. If an Israelite should have asked that question, What is my place? What is my function? What is my vocation? For what I am called? The answer would have been Zion. Zion.

On every point the answer is Zion. Do you see what I mean? It doesn't relate to you out there as so many individuals. It relates to a collective thing that God is doing.

And you will find your place and your function in a related position. You must not go and take the whole purpose of God and pull it out to you in some detached position. You have got to come right into it.

Tremendous factor in vocation. In fellowship. In strength.

In purpose. In fellowship. And the enemy spoils the work and spoils the purpose.

Brings in weakness and disintegration immediately. He gets us out of fellowship. And that's why he is so concerned to do it.

But listen to your own heart. Listen to your own new nature. That's why he is so concerned to do it.

But listen to your own heart. Listen to your own new nature. What was it that was in every Israelite in those days when things were right? They were distributed over the land from Dan to Beersheba.

From the utmost frontiers together. But this was true of them all. There was an inward gravitation towards Zion.

They longed for Zion. Their thoughts were turning to Zion. If only, if only we could get to Zion.

It's difficult to wait for the day to go up to Zion. Their inner being was all the time gravitating in that direction. Listen, dear friends, to your new nature and disposition.

Is it not a very part of you to long for the fellowship of God's people? Is that not true of us? We just must have it. Our life seems to depend upon it. The one, one great difficulty is when we can't have it.

It's so much more difficult to live an unrelated life. Listen, in our very being there is this gravitation towards fellowship and relatedness. It's a part, you see, of the Spirit's work in us.

And therefore it's a violation of our life, a violation of the Spirit, the work of the Spirit of God in us to be out of fellowship. To be unrelated. To be independent.

To be what we call freelancers. You know where that phrase comes from, I suppose? It comes from the world of journalism. Freelance literally is one who runs about all over the place, picking up little bits here and there without any specific relationship.

He's not related to any one journal. He rushes all over the place picking up everything. Like that.

His whole life is distributed and scattered. There's nothing central, nothing cohesive about it. He's just a freelance.

Well, he may make a living, but he may maintain an existence, make something good out of it in a way. But you can't have that sort of thing in Zion. You can't have that sort of thing in Zion.

Zion means that we are bound together with the people of God wherever they are, whoever they are. Yes, the people of God because they are the people of God. Not because they belong to our society and come along our line of things, but they're the people of God.

We are one with them on the basis of Christ. Mark you, if that is true, if that is true, God is able to do things. God will stand by us.

Oh, with Israel this whole matter depended so much upon the fullness of their spiritual life and their allowing that life to govern, that inner life to govern and respond. If ever anybody should have resisted the gravitation of their life, they would have found themselves in a very difficult position. Sometimes a tribe did that and disaster followed.

And in the case of the Lord's disciples after his resurrection, there was one man, at least, who tried it on and had a very miserable time. Poor Thomas. He stayed outside.

He stayed outside. When they were having a grand time inside, he stayed out. He kept himself apart.

And I can imagine that there was no more miserable man on the earth than Thomas during those days while he was staying out. It was when he came in that he found everything. The answer to all his questions and the new flow of life.

He found and worshipped my Lord and my God. So much for the value of Zion in terms of relatedness and fellowship. Remember, this will only be on a twofold basis.

On the one side, the cross will have to do a very thorough going work in us in order to get us, in ourselves, out of the way. We are really the difficulty. I must say with that.

But it is very necessary to get ourselves, our interest, our ambitions, our pensions, our likes, our preferences, all that is just ours personally, to get it all out of the way, thoroughly crucified and buried. And on the other side, the positive side, to be entirely under the Lordship of the Holy Spirit. The Lordship of the Holy Spirit, where the Holy Spirit does dictate everything and we answer to his dictation.

Now I want to pass to another point. Zion was and is the motive of revival. What is popularly termed revival is that which is related to one thing as an objective or an object.

It is related to souls being saved or converted. I think that sums up almost entirely the general conception, the meaning of the word revival. People are being saved on a large scale.

Well, we have nothing to say against that. The Lord granted it. But this whole matter of revival is so largely unrelated to spiritual conditions in the church.

It is objective. It is something which is bound up with a certain kind of activity. Objective activity with certain objective results.

Unrelated or out of relationship with internal spiritual conditions. And mark you, this matter of revival can be, and I fear often is, a blind, a blind to the real need. A visitation of God in grace by which many are saved is a sovereign act.

It is an act of sovereign grace. But acts of divine sovereignty of sovereign grace are one thing. That is the thing with which there is so much occupation and concern.

A sovereign act or visitation of God in grace for the salvation of souls. That is right, good, has been and God grant that it may be again. Man is concerned mainly with what he calls revival in these terms.

Meaning outward happenings. God and the Bible think of revival in terms of the recovery of something. It is revival.

It is a recovery of something that has been lost. Now the whole of the prophetic or prophet section of the Bible was occupied with revival in that sense. The recovery of Zion.

The recovery of Zion. Look through the prophets and see if that is not the burden. The burden of their message.

The burden of their cry. The burden of their prayer. It is all that Zion may be recovered, restored, may come again.

The recovery of the glories of Zion. Zion should come into the place that it once held. That runs right through the prophets.

So that the prophetic ministry has to do not just with the sovereign acts of God's grace externally and objectively but with the recovery of something in the people of God themselves. And that really is God's way of touching the nations. It was not until that was true of Israel that the nations were touched.

God made that state of things internally basic and contingent for the touching of the nations. And the other will follow. Yes, the other will follow.

As day follows night spontaneously when God has in his people what he wants. You will not need to have special efforts to get souls saved. They will be quietly being saved all the time.

There will be something going out that is touching, touching lives on an ever widening circle when God gets what he wants amongst his people. It must be. It is like that.

It is spontaneous. It is inevitable. So the prophets did not cry and pray that the nations in the first place should be saved.

They prayed that Israel should be saved and then they saw that the nations would be touched. You see something of that probably this evening. But there is a statement of fact that revival from the Bible's standpoint is internal before it is external.

It is recovery. It is recovery. And for that a prophetic ministry, a ministry concerning Zion is needed.

See what Zion really means. Spiritually. Stands for.

Heavenly aspect. To have that burden. That vision and that burden and a ministry.

That does not only mean a preaching ministry. It means as much a praying ministry. It means a burden on your heart.

That is a ministry sometimes. It does not get on the platform. It is a burden on your heart which finds expression.

Oh, oh that the Lord's people. I wish they were as the Lord would have them be. The full meaning of Zion.

Recovery. My last word follows on that. Zion is a means to God's larger, greater end.

Therefore that which it represents, that testimony, that full testimony to the Lord Jesus in person and word and placed in the divine appointment, that as a revelation to the heart, the hearts of God's people has to be planted. Planted in the nation. It has to be there.

The strategy of God is just this. That He plants a testimony. A testimony which is so according to His mind, answering to His thought, that He finds it perfectly safe to add to that.

That's God's way. That's what we have in the New Testament. Just what He did.

He planted a testimony in a nucleus here and a group there. And there they lived in the good of Christ. His work.

His praise. And what happened? God added. God added.

Added daily to the church. Those who were being saved. God added.

But God must have something to which He can add with a sense of confidence. God is not going to add to our institutions. God is not just going to add to and build up our particular private interest in Christianity.

God is going to add to His Son. And His Son as represented in His people. He'll add according to the measure of His Son.

Believe me, this is the key. This is the key to the growth of church. It's a remarkable thing.

It's a remarkable thing true to history that where there is something that answers to God's thought in greater fullness and Christ is there. Christ is the basis. And Christ is there in expression.

God adds to that. God adds to that. The solution to empty churches the problem of empty churches and all that is along that line.

It's going to be solved at all. That's the only true way of solving it. God adds.

When He's got that to which He can confidently add. So He must have Zion that He may build up Zion. He's not going to build up things.

He builds up Zion. And Zion is the testimony living testimony to and expression of His Son in fullness. God plants in order to add.

He plants in order that He may have a ground of argument with everything else. Remarkable. It opens another field which we had no time to explore that Zion was God's instrument of argument with everybody else.

He argued with the nations concerning Zion. He argued with all the enemies about Zion. He had there an instrument of argument.

If the questions were raised where is God and what is God doing is the answer. Is this whole thing true? Here it is. Here's the answer.

Does God indeed dwell with men these days? Here's the answer. No matter what question what attitude God argues by having some concrete thing in hand. Does it work? Does this this call it teaching if you like does it work? Well, here's the answer.

God must have something with which to argue. To argue back an answer. It's pathetically tragic that God has so little by which He can argue with other things and other realms.

He hasn't got an answer concretely or adequately. He hasn't got it. But Zion was God's ground of argument.

As we saw this morning Nations came into God's controversy over Zion. Yes. Controversy.

God had said to the prophet a controversy with the nations and it was over Zion. For your sake I have sent to Babylon and will bring down all their nobles as fugitives. I will give Egypt for thee.

See, the ground of argument is Zion. All that God could have was ground of argument and answer. Something which is in His hand.

The means of saying well, here it is, you see. Here it is. Here is the thing.

And finally Zion is death which will be the occasion of the overthrow of the whole kingdom of Satan. That is what is revealed in the Word. Zion was the occasion of the overthrow of Egypt, of Babylon, of Syria of Rome.

Rome lifted up its head against Zion. I speak in spiritual language now, Zion. And what happened to Rome? Where is that mighty iron empire? Broken.

Shattered. Scattered. In dust.

God argued on the ground of Zion, you see. With the nations, with the empires, He does. And all that lies behind them is the mighty kingdom of Satan.

And Zion will be the occasion of the entire overthrow of Satan's kingdom and Satan's system. How important then, how important it is that God should have that which corresponds to Zion. Does not this throw a lot of light upon the enemy's ceaseless, ceaseless and unwavering activity to destroy a full testament? To prevent it or destroy it? To mar a vessel that represents any greater fullness of Christ? To break it up? To scatter it? To bring reproach upon it? To bring into it that which is a cause of scandal or anything, everything? To spoil that instrument of God? To argue back to Satan? God cannot answer Satan only by some means here.

That's the, that's the whole story of the book of Job, isn't it? Satan challenges God on the throne of God and God answers him in a man. Exhausts him in a man. There's a point in that story where Satan disappears from the scene and is heard of no more.

He's out of court. God has answered him in that man. God must have a ground of argument with Satan.

I trust that you are not thinking in objective terms of Zion, saying, well, I've been, I've born there, my name is in the road, the citizens of Zion, and all this then refers to me and relates to me. Take it, dear friends, lightly.

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