



5784 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Mishpatim / פרשת משפטים

Hashem's Eternal City, Hashem's Eternal People

In one of the darkest moments in Jewish history, *Sefer Melakhim* (1:11:29-39) describes the encounter between *Ahiya HaShiloni* and *Yerov'am ben Nevat* in which *Hashem* promises to split *Bnei Yisrael* between two kingdoms. *Ahiya* tears apart a beautiful new garment into twelve pieces, giving ten of those pieces to *Yerov'am*. These portions represented the ten tribes of Israel being torn away from the hand of *Shlomo HaMelekh* and the royal Davidic line; *Yerov'am* was now granted control over them. Jerusalem would no longer be the sole capital of the Jewish people, and the sons of *Rachel* and *Leah* would be split asunder once again.

Not coincidentally, the *Navi* tells us that this tragic meeting occurred as *Yerov'am* was leaving Jerusalem; his departure from the holy capital symbolized his alienation from the city founded by *David HaMelekh*. In fact, *Yerov'am's* first mistake (and possibly the most significant sin in Jewish history, see *Rambam Hilkhos Teshuva* 5:2) upon ascending to kingship was to divert the ten tribes' attention away from Jerusalem (*Perek* 12). He feared that focus on Jerusalem as the spiritual capital would inevitably cause the entire nation to reunify under *Rehovam ben Shlomo*. To avoid this inevitable return, he created two golden calves for worship to replace Jerusalem. Just as the revelation at *Har Sinai* was marred by the creation of a golden calf, disturbing the "lion's roar" of *Anokhi Hashem*, so too Jerusalem's spiritual status as *Hashem's* chosen city was challenged with the creation of golden calves.

But even in this cataclysmic moment, as *Hashem* promises to remove the majority of *Klal Yisrael* away from Jerusalem, he reaffirms its eternal significance as His chosen city. The *Midrash* (*Yalkut Shimoni to Parshat Terumah* 364) explains that whenever *Hashem* uses the language of *לי*, such as *ויקחו לי* in this week's *parasha*, His connection to and desire for this *mitzvah* is everlasting. כל מקום שנאמר לי הרי זה קיים לעולם ועולמי. עולמים. The *mitzvah* of *Mikdash*, introduced with the phrase *ועשו לי מקדש*, is eternal. Similarly, the *Midrash* quotes *Ahiya* informing *Yerov'am* that *Rehovam* son of *Shlomo* will remain king in Jerusalem. "And his son I shall give one tribe so that David My servant may have a kingdom before Me in Jerusalem, the city **which I chose for Myself** (*אשר בחרתי לי*) to place My name there (11:36)."

When something belongs to *Hashem*, when God claims it for Himself, it definitionally will never be lost. Just as God is absolutely eternal, the *mitzvot* and sanctified places that he declares "ownership" over share in that eternity. Even as the centrality of Jerusalem is shattered, *HaKadosh Barukh Hu* deliberately emphasizes that the *bekhirah* of Jerusalem, its status as the chosen and eternal capital of God, remains untarnished.

(Perhaps on a deeper kabbalistic level, the language of the *Midrash* "לעולם ועולמי עולמים" connotes Jerusalem's eternal status in all spiritual worlds. Even beyond our mortal world (referred to as the *Olam HaAsiyah*), Jerusalem's permanence and spiritual chosen-ess transcends into the highest of spiritual realms. See *Nefesh HaHayim* 1:20.)

