



5782 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Pekudei / פרשת פְקוּדֵי

The Unifying Heart of the People

This week's haftorah focuses on Shlomo's prayer upon completing the construction of the Beit HaMikdash. He begins with a statement that "God dwells in the heavy cloud,"¹ referring to the "cloud" of the Divine Presence that had just filled the Beit Mikdash. He soon turns to the people and describes that God had never before chosen a permanent king or a permanent home. Now, however, for the first time, God has chosen both:

From the time I brought My people out of the land of Egypt, I never chose a city from among all the tribes of Israel to build a House where My name might abide; nor did I choose anyone to be the leader of my people Israel. But then I chose Yerushalayim for My name to abide there, and I chose David to rule My people Israel.²

A simple understanding of these verses suggests that the focus of the text is God. He had not yet chosen a permanent home or a permanent person and then dynasty to represent Him in this world. Interestingly, though, Malbim³ explains that Shlomo was also describing a process that took place amongst the Jewish people.

From the time that the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel with Yehoshua, they were a tribal nation. Each tribe lived in its own area. Marriage between the tribes was rare or maybe even forbidden. The tribes often even fought their own wars against the neighboring nations or even fought between themselves.

Now however, a new chapter in Jewish history was about to unfold. The Jewish people were to become a unified nation, with a national leader who lived in a capital city. Shlomo was explaining the process through which God would unify this diverse group of tribes.

¹ Melachim 1, 8:12. Translations adapted from sefaria.org.

² Divrei HaYamim 2 6:5-6. This particular verse only appears in Divrei HaYamim's retelling of the story.

³ Malbim to Melachim 1, 8:16.



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First, God chose Yerushalayim. The city has a special property that it unifies the Jewish people and makes them all into a “single body.” In a beautiful analogy, Malbim explains that Yerushalyim is like the heart of the body of the Jewish people, “which sends the spirit of life to the entire body through the flow of blood which reaches the farthest reaches of the body and then returns to the heart.” Just like our blood, all Jews begin and eventually return to the heart – Yerushalayim.

Once the Jewish people are unified through their connection to “Yerushalayim the heart” they are then ready to receive the leadership of Dovid and his dynasty. Through their teaching of Torah and personal example leaders will be able to elevate the nation to greater and greater heights. But this can only happen after the people are all connected to their foundation – the city of Yerushalayim.