

Never Forsaken: The Kedushah of Yerushalayim's Chosenness

Last week, we presented Rav Soloveitchik's masterful approach to *Kedushat HaMikdash*. There are two distinct layers of *kedushah*. One relates to the sacrificial service and the ability to bring *korbanot* in the *Mikdash*. The other relates to the *bechirah* of the *Mikdash* as the exclusive home of the *Shechinah*.

This second dimension of *kedushah* reveals something essential about our relationship with the *Ribbono Shel Olam*: its permanence and exclusivity. *Chazal* often describe the experience of *Har Sinai* as a wedding. *Hashem*, the Divine *Chattan*, brought us under His canopy and married us. The Torah, which *Chazal* compare to a *ketubah*, is akin to a wedding contract. It contains a passionate love letter from the *Chattan* to His *Kallah*, serving as a window into His divine logic. And it also delineates the obligations and expectations demanded by this sacred bond.

Yet even at that glorious moment, a gnawing doubt remained. In *halacha*, a husband is not limited to one wife. He can still choose another. *Moshe Rabbeinu* is deeply concerned about this – especially in the aftermath of the *Cheit HaEgel*. Bravely and audaciously, he requests that a clause be added to the contract: “Another thing I request from You, that Your Divine Presence should not rest on any other nations of the world” (*Rashi* to *Shemos* 33:16).

Astoundingly, in our moment of deepest failure, *Hashem* grants this request. A cosmic plan is put into motion, in which the mystical process of *hashra'at haShechinah* will be reserved for *Klal Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael*.

This is why the *bechirah* of *Yerushalayim* was so essential. Before it was chosen, it was still possible to build a *bayit laHashem* in any part of the world. *Korbanot* could be brought in several places, in distinct houses of worship that were far from the Jewish homeland. But once *Dovid* sanctified *Yerushalayim*, it became the exclusive dwelling place of the *Shechinah*. Never again would a *bayit laHashem* be established anywhere else (see *Tosafot* to *Megillah* 10a s.v. ומאי טעמא). Now, the intimate connection facilitated by *korbanot* can only be fostered in *Yerushalayim*. The *Shechinah* found a permanent dwelling place, a choice that would never be reversed (see *Rambam*, *Beit HaBechirah* 1:3, and 6:16).

As a *makom*, *Yerushalayim's kedushah* represents the undying loyalty of *Hashem* to His people and His people to Him. No matter how much this relationship is damaged, no matter how much pain and suffering occurs, the *Shechinah* will never abandon *Klal Yisrael* or her eternal home. Even when the *Beit HaMikdash* lies in ruins, the *bechirah* of *Har HaMoriyah* endures.

In the Weeks of Consolation following *Tisha b'Av*, it is difficult to find comfort when the consequences of destruction still weigh so heavily. But *Yerushalayim* can still be comforted even in her destruction. Because in these weeks, *Hashem* reminds her that He will never forget her, never abandon her to those who do not belong in the Presence of the *Shechinah*. As we read in *Yeshayahu* (49:14-17) “And *Zion* said, “*Hashem* has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me”...I will not forget you. Behold! I have engraved you on My palms, your walls are always before Me.”

Yerushalayim's chosen-ness is *Hashem's* eternal declaration that He will never divorce His people.

With fervent prayers that the *bechirah* of *Yerushalayim* and *Klal Yisrael* be revealed in its full glory in the eyes of the entire world, speedily in our days.