



# Just Jerusalem?

Writing about Jerusalem during these Corona times is not a very good idea. If on normal days the gap between the “State of Jerusalem” and the “State of Tel Aviv” is large, these distances have now increased seven-fold.

The city with the highest number of Corona patients in Israel versus the city with almost no Corona patients. The city whose inhabitants are fighting to return to pray at the Kotel and in shuls versus the city begging to be allowed to surf in the sea and relax in theaters. These cities have never been as far apart socially and spiritually as they are today.

Jerusalem's sanctity stems from two sources, one being that it is the home of the *Shechina*. And this is why, according to the Rambam – in contrast to the Land of Israel as a whole – the sanctity of Jerusalem and the Temple did not expire even after the exile to Babylon: “Why do I say that in the Temple and in Jerusalem the initial holiness is eternal. The sanctity of the rest of Israel for *shvi'it* and *ma'asrot*, and so on is not yet eternal. Because the sanctity of the Temple and Jerusalem come from the *Shechina* and the *Shechina* is not idle.” In other words, the sanctity of Jerusalem is inherently religious. It is where G-d chose to rest His Divine Presence.

But Jerusalem has another component too, as Shlomo said in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple: “Ever since I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a

city among all the tribes of Israel for building a House where My name might abide; but I have chosen David to rule My people Israel.” The two parts of the verse seem unconnected. In the first part, G-d says He has not chosen a city to house His home since the day of the Exodus, and in the second part He says He chose David to be king. What is the connection?

The Zohar answers that when G-d wants to build His house, He first decides who will be the leader of His people and only then decides to build His house. That is, Jerusalem is not just a place for the *Shechina* to dwell. It is also where the political leadership of *Am Yisrael* must be. It is only when this leadership is functioning properly that G-d wants to build His house there. Indeed, Jerusalem is not only the site of the Temple, but it is also the location of the palaces of David and Solomon.

David's decision to relocate the capital of his kingdom from Hebron to Jerusalem was not easy. His support center was in the Judean tribe centered around Hebron. A king wants to be surrounded by his family and previous acquaintances. Going and building a new and unfamiliar city located on the border of Judea and Benjamin is both adventurous and frightening. David makes this decision mainly for one reason. He understands that if he wants to be a King of all Israel, or as the Zohar says *roeh tov*, a “good shepherd,” he can't remain a man of one sector. He must show all tribes that he does indeed

want to belong to everyone. Jerusalem is the place that marks David's decision to give up tribalism and become one State.

We should note that this Israel-wide decision is also what made Jerusalem the place of the Temple, the place where G-d would rest. One who analyzes the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer can really discern the confusion in understanding what Jerusalem really is. We start with the words “to Jerusalem Your city may You return with mercy and dwell,” a blessing for a return of the *Shechina* to Jerusalem, of building the Beit HaMikdash. Immediately after, we add: “and the throne of David, Your servant may You speedily establish therein,” a blessing to return the kingdom to Jerusalem.

There is a need to connect the concepts. One depends on the other. If we want Jerusalem's sanctity to become a value shared by all the Jewish people, it must also pass through the recognition that G-d's leadership today is also part of the new Kingdom of Israel. The route that runs from the Knesset to the Kotel, where we dance during the Yom Yerushalayim parade each year, is capable of forming the bond between the holy Jerusalem and Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom. Between the State of Jerusalem and the State of Tel Aviv.

1 Sotah 12a.

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