



# The Greatest Loss

Many of us are familiar with the well-known prophecy that the Torah and the word of G-d will come from the holy city of Yerushalayim. This is of course a remarkable vision unique to the spiritual and physical capital of Judaism. In discussing the prophecy, Rav Kook asks us to pay attention not only to what it includes but also to what it lacks.

Specifically, if we compare the prophecy to what we have come to expect from other religions, we see there is no call to action that requires us to defend Yerushalayim or to enforce its holiness upon others.

The dream we foresaw for Yerushalayim was that all peoples of faith would naturally recognize the city's sanctity and respect it as such. There would always be a global thirst for the holiness and the messages to emerge from the city. For generations, this prophecy would hold true and the hope was that the city would remain a place of peace attracting and welcoming others into its gates. And indeed, over hundreds of years, Yerushalayim welcomed peoples of many faiths and backgrounds.

However, while the prophecy certainly intended a vision of peace and

harmony among the peoples who visited Yerushalayim, we know that just the opposite ensued. Under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian army arrived in the city with the goal of conquering it and removing it from Jewish control. They had little interest in learning the word of Torah or G-d but were intent only on destruction and murder.

This is one of the main tragedies we mark on the fast of the 10th of Tevet, because it was the point when this remarkable prophecy was proven false.

Why though? What did the Jewish people do to deserve their prophecy of peace becoming one of hatred and persecution?

As with so many times in Jewish history, the answer lies in what we as a people did with the gifts G-d bestowed upon us. A city slated to be one of justice, morality, charity and respect, had strayed so far from those ideals.

And once the city had abandoned its identity as a city of justice, it was no longer a place where the pain of the impoverished was prioritized. Crime and evil prevailed.

This painful transformation is the basis for the 10th of Tevet. The day it became clear the original prophecy had not come true and proof that the Jewish people had lost their way. The very essence of Jewish existence, predicated upon ethics and morality, was no longer what defined us.

It would take many more years for us to have the chance to regain our identity and rebuild.

So while we have been blessed to rebuild and in many ways restore this critical aspect of our national identity, history demands that we remind ourselves of how we strayed in the past. For while our history is defined by so many tragedies and destructions, the greatest loss we have ever been forced to endure is the loss of the correct spiritual path.

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