



## Facing Jerusalem

In the town of Radin about 100 years ago, a family came to speak with the Chafetz Chaim. They were desperate. Their son was being conscripted into the Russian army and when Jewish boys were conscripted, it meant complete separation from the community, and an end to their Jewish practice and identity. One couldn't even bring a *yarmulke*, let alone observe Shabbat, keep kosher or marry a Jew.

The father begged the Chafetz Chaim to intercede, to *daven*, to make a miracle, to give them a *beracha* that they would be spared. The Chafetz Chaim, with a tear glistening in his eye, responded, "My dear friends, I'll do what I can do. As you know, this is the *gezeira*, the harsh decree of our generation. But of course I will pray."

The family fell into a dark silence.

With a voice filled with fear and pain, the son spoke up, "Rebbe... is there anything that I can do?"

The Chafetz Chaim took his hand and placed it on the boy's heart.

My dear son, do you feel your heart beating? Every morning, no matter what happens to you or wherever you may be, when you wake up, face Yerushalayim and feel your heart beating. And know that the heart of a Jew beats to the pulse of Yerushalayim.

As long as your heart is beating, it will beat to the rhythm of Yerushalayim, *Ir haKodesh*, the City of Holiness. Even without *tefillin*, a *siddur* or *yarmulke*... face Yerushalayim, and know you will never be separated from *kedusha*."

Chazal assure us, מעולם לא זזה שכינה מכותל, המערבי, "The Divine Presence never left the Western Wall." Even without Torah and *mitzvot*, *chas veshalom*, even when we live in a far away land or are far from spiritual observance and Jewish life, G-d's presence is openly manifest and accessible. On the outside it may have seemed as though the



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*Beit HaMikdash* lay in ruins, but the Divine Presence has never left the city, nor us.

We have turned toward Yerushalayim throughout our history, and in facing our Holy City expressed the depth of our identity and *Yiddishkeit*. Ever since the miraculous victory and blessing of the Six-Day War, *Klal Yisrael* have been blessed to witness amazing progress toward the fulfillment of Biblical promises and prophecies of national return as well as our own personal spiritual restoration. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explained the phrase Yerushalayim *Ir HaKodesh* as

the holy place that מעורר, awakens (from the same root as the word עיר, city), our yearning for *kedusha*. For a feeling Jew, every day is 'Yom Yerushalayim.'

Wherever a Jew may be and whatever may happen, our hopes and prayers, thoughts and dreams are bound up with the fate, status and wellbeing of our Holy City. In the near future, our collective heart, the heart of the world, will again manifest in physical form as the *Beit HaMikdash HaShlishi*, the eternal Third Holy Temple. And therefore, כל עוד בלבב פנימה – “as long as the Jewish heart beats,” wherever we are, we are always facing Yerushalayim, with great expectation and love. May we merit the גאולה השלימה והאמיתית במהרה בימינו ממש.

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