



# The Partnership of Kedusha

**W**e end off our reading of Megillat Eicha with Yirmiyahu's words הָשִׁיבֵנו ה' אֱלֹהֵי וְנָשׁוּבָה, "G-d, return to us and we will return to You." How does this *pasuk* fit with another well-known verse, וְנָשׁוּבָה אֵלֵינוּ, in which G-d says first we must return to Him, and only then will He return to us?

The Gemara (Ta'anit 5a) teaches us that there are two Yerushalayims, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם שָׁמַיְתָא וְיְרוּשָׁלַיִם אֶרֶץ, the Yerushalayim in Heaven and the Yerushalayim here on Earth. What does that mean? What is the relationship between the two Yerushalayims, and how are we to understand this unusual statement by *Chazal*? Is there any message we can glean, especially in our times, when we mourn and yearn for our Holy City?

We find very different descriptions of the *Beit HaMikdash* in the writings of our *Rishonim*. Ramban writes (introduction to *Parashat Teruma*) that the *Mishkan* (the earliest structure we can call a *mikdash*) was supposed to be a continuation of the *Har Sinai* experience. In his words:

סוד המִשְׁכָּן הוא שְׁיֵהֵא הַכְּבוֹד אֲשֶׁר שָׁכַן עַל הַר סִינַי שׁוֹכֵן עִלָּיו בְּנִסְתָּר.

*The secret of the Mishkan is to continue the Har Sinai experience in a hidden way.*

What we experienced at *Har Sinai* was not supposed to be a one-time event, but a continuous state of Divine Presence residing amongst us.<sup>1</sup> Rambam (*Hilchot Beit HaBechira* 1:1) on the other hand, has a very different description of the *Mikdash*:

מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה לַעֲשׂוֹת בַּיַּת לַה' מוֹכֵן לְהֵיוֹת מְקַרְיָבִים בּוֹ הַקְּרִבְנוֹת, וְחֹגְגֵינוּ אֵלָיו שֶׁלֶשׁ פְּעָמִים בְּשָׁנָה שְׁנָאֲמַר וְעָשׂוֹ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ.

The *Mikdash* is a place for Jews to bring their sacrifices and to gather together to celebrate their holidays. The Rambam mentions nothing about *Har Sinai*, just about our involvement in service of G-d. What is at the root of these different descriptions?



Maybe these two opinions can be linked to another debate between them in a totally different context. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Shekalim 9b) tells us that one who speaks *lashon haKodesh* is destined to enter into *olam haba*. Why is our ancient Biblical language called *lashon haKodesh*, the "Holy Language"? What makes it holy? Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:8) suggests it is because there are no inappropriate, unacceptable words in the vocabulary. All is described in euphemism, including מֵי רַגְלַיִם, "water of the legs," and the various private organs of men and women. We use this language in a refined way, and thus it is called "holy." Ramban (Ki Tisa) says the *kedusha* flows from Above. G-d created the world with *lashon haKodesh* (Rashi, Bereishit 2:23), and all prophecy is transmitted in this language.

Taking a step back, we can see that Ramban views all *kedusha* as coming from Above. The *Mikdash* is a place where He resides, continuing the Sinai experience when He descended upon the mountain. Ramban believes that sanctity starts with us. We gather to bring *korbanot*, we gather on our Festivals to bask in His presence. We speak in a refined manner, thus imbuing the language with sanctity. The two Yerushalayims, the one above and the one below, unite into a religious rendezvous between man and G-d. The only disagreement is

where they meet. Does G-d come down to us, or do we go up to Him?

We can, of course, learn and grow from both of these views. To once again bask in the glory of the *Shechina*, to once again gather in our beloved *Mikdash*, we need to both uplift ourselves as well as allow His *Shechina* to permeate all facets of our life. Simultaneously, we need to uplift ourselves, שׁוֹבֵוּ אֵלַי וְאֶשְׁוֹבָה אֵלֵיכֶם, as well as to allow sanctification to seep into our lives, הָשִׁיבֵנו ה' אֱלֹהֵי וְנָשׁוּבָה.

*Yehi Ratzon* that we all merit to experience Tisha B'Av as a *yom tov*, a day of feasting and dancing with all the Jewish people in the *Beit HaMikdash*.

<sup>1</sup> This is why, Ramban explains, we do not need to apply the rule of *בְּתוֹרָה וּמֵאַחַר בְּתוֹרָה* for *Parashat Terumah*. The *Mishkan* was not purely an antidote for the *chet ha'egel*, found later in *Parashat Ki Tisa*, but rather a natural progression from *Har Sinai*, found directly beforehand in *Parashat Mishpatim*.

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