

The Multifaceted Relationship between Jerusalem and the Land of Israel

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שיר מְזֻמֹּר לְבְנֵי קִרְחַח. גְּדוֹל ה' וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד
בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַר קְדוֹשׁוֹ. יָפֵה נוֹף מְשׁוֹשׁ כָּל
הָאָרֶץ הַר צִיּוֹן יִרְכָּתִי צְפוֹן קִרְיַת מֶלֶךְ רַב.
אֱלֹהִים בְּאַרְמֹנוֹתֶיהָ נוֹדַע לְמִשְׁנָב.

*A song, a psalm of the sons of Korach:
Great is the Lord, and highly praised, in
the city of our God, the mountain of His
holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy
of the whole world – Mount Zion, the
sides of the north, the estate of the great
King. God is known in her palaces as a
fortress.*

Tehillim 48:1-4

In these opening verses of the chapter of Tehillim recited on Mondays, the psalmist speaks of Jerusalem as an independent location — both in terms of esthetics, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole world,” and in terms of the Divine Presence dwelling there — “Great is the Lord, and highly praised, in the city of our God, the mountain of His holiness.” However, there is also another perspective on the holy city — one that views Jerusalem as an



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integral part of Eretz Yisrael, drawing from the holiness of the land and radiating its own holiness outward. I would like to focus on this aspect of Jerusalem, as part of Eretz Yisrael, rather than as a separate, secluded jewel.

The relationship between Eretz Yisrael and Jerusalem are mutual: on the one hand, the holiness of Jerusalem is the pinnacle of the holiness of the land; on the other hand, the holiness of Eretz Yisrael is not just the framework for the holiness of Jerusalem, but its very foundation.

In *Hilkhos Terumos* (1:5), the Rambam writes that Eretz Yisrael attained its holiness for all future generations only through the conquest and settlement at the time

of Ezra:

כל שהחזיקו עולי מצרים ונתקדש קדושה ראשונה כיון שגלו בטלו קדושתן שקדושה ראשונה לפי שהיתה מפני הכיבוש בלבד קדשה לשעתה ולא קדשה לעתיד לבוא כיון שעלו בני הגולה והחזיקו במקצת הארץ קדושה קדושה שנייה העומדת לעולם לשעתה ולעתיד לבוא.

All of the lands that [the Jews] who ascended from Egypt took possession of were sanctified in the first consecration [of the land]. When they were exiled, that sanctity was nullified. [The rationale is that] the initial consecration came about because of the conquest. [Hence,] its consecration was effective for the time [it was under their rule], but not for all time. When, by contrast, the descendants of the exiles ascended [from Babylon] and took possession of a portion of the land, they consecrated



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it a second time. [This consecration] is perpetuated forever, for that time and for all time.

Translation from R. Eliyahu Touger, Chabad.org

In contrast, in *Hilkhos Beit Ha-bechira* (6:14), the Rambam writes that Jerusalem was consecrated for all generations already in the building of the First Temple. He goes on to explain (6:16) the difference between the two categories of holiness:

ולמה אני אומר במקדש וירושלים קדושה ראשונה קדשה לעתיד לבוא ובקדושת שאר א"י לענין שביעית ומעשרות וכיוצא בהן לא קדשה לעתיד לבוא לפי שקדושת המקדש וירושלים מפני השכינה ושכינה אינה בטלה ... אבל חיוב הארץ בשביעית ובמעשרות אינו אלא מפני שהוא כבוש רבים וכיון שנלקחה הארץ מידיהם בטל הכבוש ונפטרה מן התורה ממעשרות ומשביעית שהרי אינה מן ארץ ישראל וכיון שעלה עזרא וקדשה לא קדשה בכיבוש אלא בחזקה שהחזיקו בה ולפיכך כל מקום שהחזיקו בה עולי בבל ונתקדש בקדושת עזרא השנייה הוא מקודש היום ואף על פי שנלקח הארץ ממנו וחייב בשביעית ובמעשרות על הדרך שביארנו בהלכות תרומה.

Why do I say that the original consecration sanctified the Temple and Jerusalem for eternity, while in regard to the consecration of the remainder of Eretz Yisrael, in the context of the Sabbatical year, tithes, and other similar [agricultural] laws, [the original consecration] did not sanctify it for eternity? Because the sanctity of the Temple and Jerusalem stems from the Shekhina (divine presence), and the Shekhina can never be nullified... In contrast, the [original] obligation to keep

the laws of the Sabbatical year and tithes on the Land stemmed from the fact that it was conquered by the [Jewish people, as a] community. Therefore, when the land was taken from their hands [by the Babylonians,] their [original] conquest was nullified. Thus, according to Torah law, the land was freed from the obligations of the Sabbatical year and of tithes because it was no longer Eretz Yisrael. When Ezra returned [to Eretz Yisrael] and consecrated it, it was not sanctified by means of through conquest, but rather through chazakah (possession). Therefore, every place which was repossessed by the [exiles returning from] Babylon and consecrated when Ezra consecrated [the land] the second time, is sacred today. Thus, as explained in Hilkhos Teruma, it is necessary to keep the laws of the Sabbatical years and the tithes [on this land] even though it was taken from [the Jewish people in later years].

The Ra'avad (6:14) disagrees:

סברת עצמו היא זו ולא ידעתי מאין לו ובכמה מקומות במשנה אם אין מקדש ירקב ... אלמא למ"ד קדושה ראשונה לא קדשה לעתיד לבא לא חלק בין מקדש לירושלים לשאר א"י.

This is the Rambam's own conclusion; I do not know how he arrives at it. For in several places in the Mishna we find, "If there is no Temple, it [the produce set aside as ma'aser sheni] rots [because it cannot be brought to the Temple]" ... According to the view that the first sanctification was not meant to be forever, there is no distinction between the Temple and Jerusalem, and the rest

of the Land of Israel.

The Ra'avad seems to suggest that the two levels of holiness — the holiness of Eretz Yisrael and the holiness of Jerusalem — exist in parallel; there is no separating them. However, Ra'avad seems to be disagreeing with the Rambam for a different reason. According to the Rambam's explanation, there was a certain period in history, between the destruction of the First Temple and the construction of the Second Temple, when Jerusalem held its consecrated status, and consecrated foods could be eaten there, while the rest of Eretz Yisrael did not have its ritual status of holiness. Ra'avad's argument against the Rambam is that Jerusalem cannot be regarded as an extra-territorial unit: the sanctity of Jerusalem is drawn from the holiness of the land; it cannot be severed from the rest of Eretz Yisrael.

Ra'avad does, however, agree that the holiness of Jerusalem not only is based on the holiness of Eretz Yisrael, but also influences it. Thus, for example, many of the Rishonim maintain that according to Ra'avad's view, the sanctified status of Eretz Yisrael was lost in the wake of the destruction of the Temple — the symbol of the destruction of Jerusalem. The relationship between the sanctity of the land and the sanctity of Jerusalem is thus two-directional, with the two levels or aspects of holiness resting upon and being nourished by one another.

The mutual relationship



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between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael exists not only on the ritual, religious level, but also in the political realm. In chapter 122 of Tehillim, King David describes Jerusalem as a dual capital: on one hand:

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד שְׂמֵחָתִי בְּאֵמָרִים לִי בַּיִת
ה' גִּלְדֵּה.

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the House of God"

Here we see Jerusalem as a religious capital. On the other hand:

כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשְׁבוּ כְּסֵאוֹת לְמִשְׁפַּט כְּסֵאוֹת לְבַיִת
דָּוִד.

There are set thrones of justice, the thrones of the House of David.

Here we see Jerusalem as a political capital.

Here, again, the national status of Jerusalem is both inspired by and an inspiration to the rest of Eretz Yisrael. On the one hand, Jewish sovereignty in the land is the foundation and necessary precondition for sovereignty over Jerusalem; on the other hand,

sovereignty over Jerusalem is the key to and symbol of sovereignty over the land. There is no monarch without a capital, and there can be no capital without a country. Throughout nearly two thousand years of exile we lifted our eyes to Jerusalem as "the joy of the whole world," but also as the symbol of Jewish sovereignty over Eretz Yisrael as a whole.

Specifically in our times it is important to emphasize the mutual relationship between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael, since the connection between the two values seems to be in danger of being severed — from both ends. On the one hand there are groups who glorify Jerusalem as an independent, stand-alone jewel with God's house at its center. They emphasize the values associated with Jerusalem alone, forgetting or neglecting the significance of Eretz Yisrael as a whole and the values associated with it.

On the other hand, there is a sense that among other groups the recognition of Jerusalem's significance and its unique contribution is

being eroded. The awareness of the importance of the connection between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael, which swept through the entire nation in 1967, has suffered a setback. We, in the *beit midrash*, must be sure to maintain our excitement and maintain our feeling of the two-directional current running between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael. We must also radiate this feeling outwards, and do our part to intensify and strengthen this awareness, which burned with such clarity when we returned to Jerusalem, rather than allowing it to subside.

Even if we lack influence on the political level, it is important that we, as students in the *beit midrash*, uphold this view on the ideological level. On this day, as we commemorate and celebrate Jerusalem, let us also strengthen our awareness of the important bond between Jerusalem, the holy city, and Jerusalem the capital, and between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael as a whole.

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