YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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Yom Yerushalayim

**"I Have Set Watchmen upon Your Walls"**

**Harav Baruch Gigi**

Translated by David Strauss

The prophet cries out: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of you, says the Lord" (*Zekharya* 2:14). Similarly the lover of *Shir ha-Shirim* calls out after a very long period of searching and wandering: "You are beautiful, O my love, as Tirtza, comely as Jerusalem" (*Shir ha-Shirim* 6:4). This perspective teaches us that Zion and Jerusalem are intertwined with God’s presence. Yom HaAtzmaut, therefore, is not merely about the rescue of the Jewish people from destruction, but also about the return of God’s presence. Yom Yerushalayim, furthermore, is the day on which God revealed Himself to us in a clear and manifest manner that He wishes to return and dwell among us.

This is the essence of Jerusalem: it is not just location of the Temple, but also the royal city, the city of the House of David; and conversely, it is not just the political capital but also the religious center. When Jerusalem is built, it is a city whose various components are connected one to the other. It brings together the material and the spiritual, heaven and earth, the monarchy and sanctity, the Temple and the royal city.

This profound recognition concerning Jerusalem's centrality, and the need to seek out the *Shekhina* that rests within it, makes a dual demand upon us. On the one hand, "Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return of her with righteousness" (*Yeshayahu* 1:27). A society must be built founded on pillars of righteousness and justice, on social and moral fairness. But no less important, Jerusalem is the center of Torah study and instruction, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (*Yeshayahu* 2:3).

At a time when global culture, and most of Israeli society as well, seeks out earthly and temporal achievements, and focuses on momentary and fleeting riches and happiness, we must look up, raising our own eyes and the eyes of all those around us, to eternity, that being Jerusalem. Jerusalem, both in its essence and in the world's consciousness, is not an ordinary city, but rather a city that embraces between its rocks and clods of earth hidden, lofty secrets, Divine sublimity.

In order to make this unique light of Jerusalem shine brighter, we must employ utmost sensitivity, for Jerusalem and the Temple are not like the rest of the Land of Israel. Whereas the rest of the Land of Israel may be likened to the boards and curtains of the Tabernacle, the burden of the sons of Merari and Gershon, Jerusalem parallels the holy ark, the candelabrum and the altars, which were entrusted to the sons of Kehat, who transported them on their shoulders, with gentleness and caution befitting the sacred.

We find ourselves at this time in the *parshiyot* at the beginning of the book of *Bemidbar* that describe how the camp of Israel organized itself around God's Tabernacle, and how the entire people anticipated their imminent entry into the Land of Israel. This journey could have been simple: "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward… And when the ark rested…" (*Bemidbar* 10:35-36). This is how many good people saw the immediate aftermath of the Six Day War in 1967. Many people saw the goodness that God bestowed upon His people, but unfortunately we missed the opportunity and the call. In its place we sought worldly and mundane goals, and we became distant from God. But we will not despair; we will continue to seek the welfare of Jerusalem, the resting of the *Shekhina* within it and the restoration of the kingdom of the house of David to it.

"I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, they shall never hold their peace day nor night: You that are the Lord's remembrancers, take you no rest. And give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (*Yeshayahu* 62:6-7).