



The Blood of Pesach and Yerushalayim

The Korbon Pesach and Brit Milah are two unique mitzvot. They are the only positive commandments for which a sin through lack of observance renders the sinner cut off from the Jewish people. They were also present in the very beginning of our national connection to HaShem. In our Haggadah we recite the verse from Yechezkel that in Mizrayim God “passed by you and saw you downtrodden with your blood, and I said to you, 'With your blood, live,' and I said to you, 'With your blood, live.’”¹ Rashi on the verse comments that the two bloods refer to the blood of milah and the blood of pesach.

The common denominator between these mitzvot is that they represent our unique relationship with God and our absolute commitment to Him. Milah is described as a “sign” – a physical procedure that inalterably changes the Jewish male body to show that he is of God’s people. Similarly, the original Korbon Pesach was the ultimate differentiator between the Jewish people and the Egyptians. In a demonstration of total commitment to God, the Jewish people took the deity of the Egyptians and sacrificed it before the Egyptians’ very eyes. Each year, the offering of the Korbon Pesach is a reaffirmation of that episode and renews the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

With this background it is no surprise that Yerushalayim is intertwined with the covenantal nature of both of these mitzvot. Yerushalayim is the setting for the Korbon Pesach as the entire nation gathers there to offer the korbon pesach and reaffirm our commitment to God. Also, interestingly, the verses which focus on milah as a covenant of blood with God are in the context of a prophecy regarding Yerushalayim.

¹ Yechezkel 16:6. Translation is from Chabad.org.



The prophet Zecharya tells us:²

Be exceedingly happy, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Yerushalayim. Behold! Your king shall come to you. He is just and victorious; humble, and riding a donkey and a foal, the offspring of [one of] she-donkeys.... You, too-with the blood of your covenant I have freed your prisoners from a pit in which there was no water. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope. Also today, I will restore to you a double promise.

Zecharya addresses the daughter of Yerushalayim and prophecises about a future triumphant return to the city with Mashi'ah at the head. The midrash teaches that the "blood of your covenant" which triggers this epic return to Zion is the blood of the milah.³

Thus, we see that the mitzvot that represent our absolute and eternal connection to Hashem and our "covenant of blood" with Him, are both intertwined with Yerushalayim. This city is part and parcel of our most basic relationship with Hashem.

² Zecharya 9:9-11.

³ Cited by Rashi Shemot 12:6.