AMIDA, FOURTEENTH BERAKHA: Jerusalem, a city and its soul

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Restore Your presence to Yerushalayim, Your city, as you have promised,
And may the Throne of David, Your servant, soon be reinstated by You.

And build [Yerushalayim], for ever; soon, in our days.
Blessed are You, HaShem, who builds Yerushalayim.

In this blessing we ask HaShem 1. To return His Presence to Yerushalayim (Jerusalem). 2. To reinstate the Throne of David. 3. To [re]build the city soon in our day, and that Yerushalayim will never again be destroyed (binyan ‘olam).

This triple request alludes to the spiritual and political aspects of Jerusalem.

“Restore Your Presence …”

First, Yerushalayim is the city of the Bet-haMiqdash, the Great Temple, where the Presence of HaShem could be felt. We Jews believe in the Omnipresence of God (= God is everywhere). However, the Rabbis affirm that in the Bet-HaMiqdash there was a “Special Manifestation of the Divine Presence”, in Hebrew: Shekhina. What is that manifestation of God’s Presence? King Solomon, the wisest of all men and the king who built the Bet-haMiqdash, confessed his impossibility to fully understand *how* the Divine Presence dwells within the walls of the Great Temple, when he said in his inaugural Tefila: “How would it be possible to conceive that You God might dwell here on earth? Behold, the heavens and the heavens of the heavens [the universe] cannot embrace [Your Presence], how much less this house [the Bet-haMiqdash] that I have built for you?! (1 Kings 8:27). However, if the reader ever visited the Western Wall (the Kotel, which was one of the outer walls of the Temple), he or she would surely have felt “overwhelmed” by an incomparable sense of closeness to HaShem. That feeling experienced in the Wall, is just a tiny echo of that Divine

Manifestation that was felt in the Bet-HaMiqdash. The "Divine Presence" is now in a state of exile (□□□□□□ □□□□). And in this Berakha, the first thing we ask HaShem is to return His Presence to Yerushalayim.

"And may the Throne of David, Your servant, soon be restored by You."

In addition to being the spiritual center of the Jewish people, Yerushalayim was (and BH today is!) also the political capital of the Jewish Nation. All national institutions functioned in Yerushalayim (an American citizen should think of Washington D.C.). The king of Israel had there his palace, his personal residence (like the White House). The Bet haDin-haGadol (=the Supreme Court of Justice) operated in Yerushalayim. And Yerushalayim was also the city of the Sanhedrin (= the Congress of the Jewish People). When in Tisha b'Ab we mourn for Jerusalem we mourn not only the destruction of the Bet-HaMiqdash but also for the eradication of all our political and governmental institutions. Therefore, in this Berakha, when we pray to HaShem for the restoration of Yerushalayim, we also ask for the restoration of the Jewish government (= the Throne of David).

"And build [Yerushalayim], for ever, soon in our day."

We conclude by asking HaShem to rebuild the city of Yerushalayim. This is a request that sounds superfluous in our days, since BH the city of Yerushalayim is rebuilt and is so beautiful… However, Yerushalayim is still incomplete. Without the Bet-haMiqdash, the Presence of HaShem is not felt in its fullness. The Bet-HaMiqdash is the soul, the spirit of Yerushalayim. That is why we continue to ask HaShem to allow us to seeing Yerushalayim fully rebuilt "soon in our days". And just think about this: if Yerushalayim is today the most beautiful city in the world, without its "full spirit", imagine how beautiful Yerushalayim will be once the Bet HaMiqdash will be restored!

"As you promised …"

I'm ending with this text, although it is mentioned at the beginning of this Berakha. The prophet Zekharia lived when the Yehudim returned to Yerushalayim from Babylon (6th century BCE). In those days, the city was completely ruined, desolated, without Bet-haMiqdash, without the Presence of HaShem. Zekharia (2:14) told the people to be patient, and

that HaShem promised to return once His People will return: □□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□ *“Rejoice and be happy, Oh daughter of Zion [Jewish people], for behold I [HaShem] will return, and My Presence will dwell among You, thus says HaShem. ”* And although it was a very slow and difficult process, the Bet HaMiqdash was finally rebuilt, despite the general disbelief, and these words of HaShem were fulfilled in the days of Zekharia. Using the text from Zekharia, we pray for these words to be fulfilled also in our days. AMEN!