



**RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER**

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SPECIAL PIRKEI AVOT SERIES

# Profound Longing for the Beit Hamikdash

Rav Kook on  
Pirkei Avot 6:10

“The Holy One, Blessed is He, acquired for Himself five acquisitions in His World... The *Beit Hamikdash* is one acquisition...”  
(*Avot* 6:10)

Pirkei Avot, in its penultimate teaching, lists five items that the Holy One “acquired for Himself.” The meaning of “acquire” in this context connotes the idea that these items comprise the essence of creation, leading to the revelation of God’s glory in the world. The concept of “acquisition” indicates the importance of these items to God, just as a person acquires something that is meaningful to him. “Acquisition” has an additional connotation as well. When a person acquires something, he develops a great attachment to it. (See Rav Lau on *Pikei Avot*, vol. 3, p.1070)

Regarding this unique bond of Hashem with the Beit HaMikdash, the Mishnah quotes as a proof-text a verse from *Tehillim*: “He brought them to His holy boundary, this mountain that His right hand acquired” (*Tehillim* 78:54).

Without a doubt, Rav Kook’s exquisite vision of the Almighty bringing his people to the holy borders of Israel in the twentieth century was seen as a profoundly significant step towards bringing the ultimate redemption. Rav Kook’s intense longing for the rebuilding of the Beit

Hamikdash is evident in his writings and can be gleaned from numerous anecdotes that have been lovingly passed down about his life.

In this vein, Rav Kook’s eminent student, Rav Moshe Zvi Neriyah, shared the following touching anecdote. When Rav Kook arrived in Jerusalem for the first time in his life he went to visit his father-in-law, the famed Rav Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim known as the *Aderet*. The Temple Mount could be seen through a window in his home. Rav Kook peered through the window, and he was thoroughly shaken by the site; his heart shattered by sorrow and pain, seeing the sacred space bereft of the holy Beit Hamikdash. Rav Kook took leave of his father-in-law and stepped outside with a friend who was accompanying him and said: “I am amazed that the *Aderet*, such a sensitive man, can bear to see the Temple Mount in ruins every day.” (Celebration of the Soul, Neriyah, p. 259)

Already as a young man Rav Kook expressed a deep yearning for the Beit Hamikdash by observing the custom of *Tikkun Chazot*, rising at midnight and mourning the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. Rav Kook’s childhood friend Avrahan Sho’ar described how they would recite *Tikkun Chazot* together during the Three Weeks: “Every night at midnight,

Avraham Yitzchak would close the Talmud. We would descend from the *bimah*, where we learned at night, and stand near the large furnace, remove our shoes, and sit on the floor to recite *Tikkun Chatzot* - two small boys weeping over the destruction.

“After completing *Tikkun Chatzot*, we recited Psalms in a sorrowful voice. He selected the chapters that recount Israel’s misfortunes, lament the destruction, and speak of consolation for Zion and Israel. For me, he translated the most appropriate verses into Yiddish. He possessed an uncommon love for Eretz Yisrael and a longing for the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash and the coming of the Mashiach.

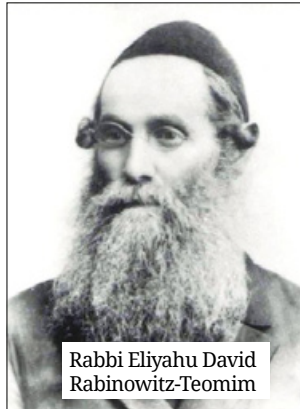
“I once asked him in my childish naivete, ‘Why do you weep so intensely during the reciting of *Tikkun Chatzot*? I also love Eretz Yisrael and my soul, too, yearns to immigrate to the precious Land.’ His answer, spoken with natural innocence, started me into silence. ‘You are not Kohen, I am Kohen!’ (Ibid., p.251)

### THE CHAFETZ CHAIM AND RAV KOOK’S SHARED YEARNING

The Chafetz Chaim and Rav Kook were both *kohanim*. Both of them felt the profound honor and weight of their unique lineage and their intimate connection to the priesthood and the *avodah* in the Beit Hamikdash. The Chafetz Chaim later in life actually assembled *kohanim* who were Torah scholars to intensively study the laws of the Beit Hamikdash in the Mishnaic order of *Kodashim*. When Rav Kook was a young man supported by his father-in-law in Ponevez, the Chafetz Chaim

met with him and invited him to join this special cadre of *kohanim* with the intent of being prepared to engage in the *avodat Hamikdash* which would hopefully be soon rebuilt.

The Chafetz Chaim later requested Rav Kook to curtail his studies in this area in order



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to enter the rabbinate and put to use his enormous talents to be a leader of *Klal Yisrael*. Rav Kook followed the saintly sage’s advice and assumed his first position in the rabbinate in Zoiemel. However, the sacrificial laws remained a central focus of Rav Kook’s studies, as he writes in the essay printed at the beginning of his responsum collection, *Mishpat Kohen*. Not only did he study the sacrificial

laws in depth, he also encouraged his best students to follow suit. (Ibid., pp. 264-265)

### AN AMAZING APPROBATION FOR THE CHAFETZ CHAIM

The Chafetz Chaim authored a volume in which he compiled the sacrificial laws in a structured order of the sacrifices entitled *Likutei Halachot*. He sent a copy of the manuscript to the Aderet, Rav Eliyahu David Rabinovitz-Teomim (1843-1905) asking that he write a *haskama* (a letter of approbation) which he would publish with the book. The Aderet was ill of health at the time he received this request from the saintly Chafetz Chaim so he turned to his eminent son-in-law, Rav Kook, and asked him to write the text on his behalf. Rav Kook wrote the approbation and the Aderet signed his name to it. The content of the letter speaks of the importance of mastering the laws concerning the service in the Beit Hamikdash and the importance of the Chafetz Chaim’s work at this auspicious time.

The Aderet made one edit in the *haskama*. He stated that he could not take credit for an insight which was suggested by Rav Kook himself. He therefore added to the *haskama* that the following idea came directly from Rav Kook:

The Talmud (Menachot 110a) says that the *Talmidei Chachamim* who engage in the study of the Temple service, it is as if the Temple was built in their day. Rav Kook asked, why does the Talmud emphasize that the learning of *Talmidei Chachamim* has a special impact? Is the same not true for any Jew who studies the topic of the Temple service? Rav Kook answered that the Talmud emphasizes *talmidei chachamim* because of their unique role as decisors of Jewish law. They study the law not merely theoretically but with practical implications in mind. It is for this reason that their study of the laws of the Temple have singular importance. In their efforts to determine the implementation of the law, they represent the exalted Jew's faith who sincerely anticipates the Temple's restoration.

This is a lesson as to how every Jew must anticipate the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash - with a palpable sense of earnest longing and deep yearning. (*Sichot Ha'Reiyah*, Neriya, pp. 123-124) (This *haskama* is the first that appears in the sefer, *Haskamot HaReiyah*, Jerusalem 2017). ■



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