



5784 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Nasso / פרשת נשא

Sinai and Moriah: a Mysterious Connection

If we haven't already gotten the message of these weekly *divrei Torah*, Jerusalem is pretty much the center of everything in Judaism. Which is why many commentators wonder why the *Torah* was given on *Har Sinai* instead of *Har HaMoriyah* (aka, the temple mount). While there are many beautiful answers provided to this question, the *Midrash (Bereishis Rabba, Vayechi 99:1)* offers a very simple answer. *Sinai* was the only mountain on which there was no idol worship performed to this point. Hence, it was the appropriate place for *Hashem* to "descend" into this world and give us the *Torah*. Despite this unique quality of *Sinai*, the *Midrash* clarifies that the permanent resting place for *Hashem's* presence in this world will be the Temple mount in Jerusalem.

This answer seems almost technical. On a fundamental level, Jerusalem would be a perfect place for the *Torah* to be given. It is only because of the tragic presence of idol worship on the holy mountain that it could not be so. The *Midrash* emphasizes this by deliberately interjecting with its important clarification that Jerusalem is *Hashem's* principal dwelling place. It is therefore not surprising that Jerusalem would become the center of *Torah* scholarship, leadership, and authority once *David HaMelekh* established his capital there. *Yeshayahu HaNavi (perek 2)* proclaims *כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה' מירושלים*, that *Tzion* will be the ultimate source of *Torah* and God's word for the rest of the world. This is why the seat of the *Sanhedrin* was on the *Har HaBayit* itself.

Jerusalem could almost be described as the natural continuation of *Matan Torah*, and therefore becomes the center for *Hashem's* communication through *Torah* and *Nevuah*. Remarkably, the *Midrash (Tehillim 36)* implies that when the time comes to build the third temple, God will bind together *Har Sinai* with *Har HaMoriyah* in Jerusalem and erect the temple on top of them. Clearly there is some deep metaphysical connection between these two mountains that allowed them to become the chief conduits of *Torah* in this world. Why? What makes Jerusalem the natural successor to *Sinai*?

To attempt an answer for this question, we will unfortunately need two weeks. This week, we will briefly (and inadequately) discuss the nature of *Torah* study and why it is so important. As Rav Chayim Volozhiner explains throughout the fourth gateway of *Nefesh HaChayim*, the *Torah* stems from the highest supernal realms and serves as the conduit through which all of physical existence manifests itself. The oft-quoted *Zohar* explains that God "peered" into the *Torah* and created the world. *Torah* is the metaphysical blueprint for the universe; everything in the physical realm is a corporal parallel to sublime spiritual realities of the supernal *Torah*.



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Many sections of the *Torah*, both written and oral, focus on seemingly mundane details of the physical realm. The *Torah* describes different species of animal, obsesses over shades of blood and skin lesions, and extensively describes cases of animal damage and civil dispute. Through the intense study of *Torah*, the endless wisdom of the *Ribbono Shel Olam* can be found within these mundane subjects. *Torah* reveals the hidden secret of creation; every aspect of this physical universe is in truth a reflection of God's endless light. To the true *Torah* scholar, the illusion that the physical world is devoid of His divine presence is lifted. *Ein od milvado*, everything in this physical universe is an expression of *Hashem's* wisdom and *ratzon*.

Jerusalem is in *makom* what the *Torah* is in *machshava*. *Be'ezrat Hashem* we will continue next week with an explanation of Jerusalem's unique cosmic role in dispelling the aforementioned illusion.

