



5785 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Beshalach / פרשת בשלח

Machon I'Shivtecha: the Lower and Heavenly Jerusalems Align

As *Bnei Yisrael* sing in praise of the great miracles of *Yam Suf*, they prophetically describe their future entrance to *Eretz Yisrael*. The Exodus story doesn't end with *Klal Yisrael's* freedom from Egyptian bondage; it continues with *kabalat haTorah* and entry to *Eretz Yisrael*, culminating with the building of the *Beit HaMikdash* in Jerusalem. This is why the Jewish people made several prophetic references to *Yerushalayim* and the holy temple. "With Your loving kindness You led the people You redeemed; You led with Your might to Your holy abode. (*Shemot* 15:13)" As the commentators explain, the holy abode described in this verse refers to Jerusalem and/or the *Beit HaMikdash* (see *Ibn Ezra* and *Ramban* *ibid*).

Later in in the *shira* (15:17), the temple mount and *mikdash* are referenced again: "תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נהלתך מכוון לשבתך פעלת יקוק מקדש אדני כוננו ידך, You shall bring them and plant them on the mount of Your heritage, **directed** toward Your dwelling place, which You made, *Hashem*; the sanctuary, O Lord, Your hands founded." The formulation of מכוון, directed or aligned with, is initially strange. Isn't the principle dwelling place of the Divine presence found on *Har HaMoriyah* and in the *Beit HaMikdash* itself? Why does the verse indicate that the mountain is *directed* toward the מקום שבתך?

In response to this strange formulation, *Rashi* explains that the "lower sanctuary" is situated directly under the Divine throne above. Throughout the writings of *Chazal*, many references are made to a "higher sanctuary" that parallels the physical Jerusalem built below (for some examples, see *Tanchuma, Vayakhel* 7, *Shir HaShirim Rabba* 4). The sanctity of *Yerushalayim* in the physical world below is a product of this spiritual mirroring process. It is only by directing herself towards the Divine throne that Jerusalem becomes the holy sanctuary for God's presence in this world.

Jerusalem's sanctity is inherently intertwined with the concept of imitating *Hashem's* conduct, directing her conduct according to *Hashem's* heavenly ways. This reality is perfectly captured in the double-meaning of the cryptic words that appear earlier in the *shirah*: זה א-לי ואנוהו as the *Gemara Shabbat* interprets (133b), א-לי, this is my God, ואנוהו and I will imitate him. Just as he is compassionate and merciful, so too I will be compassionate and merciful. It is not a coincidence that *Targum Onkelos* translates the word ואנוהו as ואבני לה, and I will build him a Sanctuary (interpreting ואנוהו as a reference to נוה, an abode).

Yirmiyahu and many of the prophets constantly decry the absurdity of bringing sacrifices in Jerusalem while abusing the downtrodden of society. The entire premise of Jerusalem's divine connection is dependent on mirroring God's attributes of mercy, kindness, and compassion. Without these essential foundations, not only do *korbanot* become hypocritical; in a certain sense the *Beit HaMikdash's* sanctity itself is inherently undermined, making the *korbanot* pointless! Jerusalem is only transformed into a heavenly abode when it mirrors the supernal *Yerushalayim* that "hovers" above it.



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The *Gemara Sanhedrin* (96b) describes that *Nevuzradan*, the Babylonian general that destroyed Jerusalem, prided himself in his victory. A Divine voice echoed forth, saying “קִימַחַא טְחִינָא טְחִינַת.” You only ground up flour that was already ground. The physical destruction of Jerusalem was not significant. The sins of the Jewish people had already “ground it up”, expelling its sanctity and making the physical structure of the temple an empty shell.

To fully rebuild the physical Jerusalem, the Jewish people must draw down the heavenly Jerusalem into our world. Only through beautifying our Divine reflection, ואנוהו, will we merit to build *HaKadosh Baruch Hu's* Divine abode, נוה. May we witness the day in which *Klal Yisrael* again cries out ואנוהו זא א-לי ואנוהו, as they witness the Divine Presence again taking up residence in the rebuilt Jerusalem, speedily in our days.

