



5781 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Vaera / פרשת ואֶרָא

## Dreaming of Yerushalayim

When Moshe relays to the Jewish people God's dramatic prophecy of the four stages of redemption, he was met with a rather unenthusiastic response: "And they did not listen to Moshe due to shortness of breath and the hard work."<sup>1</sup> The people were simply too overworked to take note of Moshe's cosmically important message.

The Shem MiShmuel<sup>2</sup> explains that the Torah is describing a deep spiritual and psychological reality. Ideally, we should have clear vision and be able to understand the true significance of God and His Torah. However, this clarity is not to be taken for granted. In Hebrew, the word for "seeing" (yud-resheh-heh) is nearly identical to the word for "fear" (yud-resheh-alef). It takes fear of heaven to be able to have proper perspective and recognize the truly important items in life.

In Egypt, the Jewish people lost some of their sense of fear of heaven. Due to their back breaking labor they began to only focus on the immediate and tangible and did not think about God enough to cultivate a sense of fear of Heaven. Therefore, when Moshe asked them to raise their sights from their sorry state and to dream about becoming God's chosen nation, their lack of "fear of heaven" impeded their ability to "perceive" the relevance and significance of the message.

The Shem MiShmuel expands this idea to the general state of a person in exile. Yerushalayim, representing the ultimate fulfillment of the four stages of redemption, is comprised of the words, "vision" and "fear [of heaven]." Yerushalayim, then, refers to a redeemed mental state when a person has proper fear of heaven and therefore has the vision to perceive the spiritual realm. When Yerushalayim is destroyed and the Jewish people are sent into exile, they become confused and distracted from the true hierarchy of values. Slowly, they lose their sense of fear of heaven and accordingly become enmeshed in the here-and-now and become unable to dream of a redeemed state.

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<sup>1</sup> Shemot 6:9.

<sup>2</sup> Shem MiShmuel, parshat Mishpatim 5673, d"h "u-vazeh."



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Perhaps, then, an antidote to this syndrome of lowering one's sights is to constantly remember the ideal state of being – Yerushalayim. Even if we begin lose our fear of heaven and become too mired within the pettiness of our daily living, when we dream about Yerushalayim – both the city and the mental state it represents – we can remind ourselves of life beyond our current reality.

Our Sages instituted that we mention Yerushalyim numerous times throughout the day in our prayers and blessings. Let us use these mentions as a way of reminding ourselves about the spiritual world beyond the confines of our daily lives. Let us raise our sights and dream of living in a rebuilt Yerushalayim and the palpable sense of divine presence that will be there.