



5782 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Shemot / פרשת שמות

Trusting God in Yerushalayim

In this week's parsha, Moshe heroically protects his Jewish brother by killing the cruel Egyptian overlord. To protect his standing in Egypt and his life, Moshe tries to hide his actions. However, already the next day, Moshe realizes that the story is out. The Torah describes Moshe's emotional reaction: "Moshe was frightened and thought: Then the matter is known!"¹ Soon, his fears are actualized. Pharaoh hears of Moshe's adventures, puts out an order to kill Moshe and the latter is forced to flee.

Our commentators debate the validity of Moshe's reaction. Was he correct to be afraid? Should such fears be counteracted and neutralized by a sense of trust (bittachon) in God? After all, does the verse not state: "Behold the God who gives me triumph! I will have bittachon and not be afraid!"² Could Moshe, at least in this young stage of his life, not have reached the heights of trust in God?

After the analyses are done, two basic camps emerge amongst the commentators.³ Some explain that even as bittachon militates against debilitating and paralyzing fears, one is still allowed to feel nervous or scared about an imminent danger. Another group, though, argues that Moshe's reaction was less than ideal as a person should have so much trust in God that he should not experience fear of danger.

There is a consensus, though, that bittachon in God can calm a person down and neutralize undue fear and anxiety. God is our safe-haven, our unmoving and unwavering rock, a source of stability and goodness in troubling times. Like a child who fears a scary place less when a parent is present, God's presence in our lives helps us overcome fears.

¹ Shemot 2:14. Translations adapted from sefaria.org.

² Yeshayahu 12:2.

³ See, Likkutei Sichot 36, Shemot #2 for a summary and analysis.



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With this in mind, it is fascinating to note that bittachon in God is often intertwined with references to Yerushalayim. Dovid in Tehillim states:

A song of ascents. Those who trust in God are like Mount Zion that cannot be moved, enduring forever. Jerusalem, hills enfold it, and God enfolds His people now and forever.⁴

Zion is unswerving and firm, just as God and the people who trust in Him. God protects Yerushalayim just as the hills surround the city. In these verses, Yerushalayim is a symbol of commitment, steadfastness and of God's protection.

Similarly, we find our bittachon in God as being associated with God's presence in Zion:

Those who know Your name trust You, for You do not abandon those who turn to You, God. Sing a hymn to the God – He who dwells in Zion - declare His deeds among the peoples.⁵

We are to confidently sing to God who dwells in Yerushalayim.

Our world is constantly shifting. Stability seems to be an antiquated concept. In this unnerving environment we should look to Yerushalayim as a symbol of constancy and long-term strength. And, ultimately, put our trust in the God of Zion.

⁴ Tehillim 125:1-2.

⁵ Tehillim 9:11-12.