



5782 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Shmini / פרשת שמִינִי /  
Shabbat Parah- שַׁבַּת פָּרָה

## The Elders of Yerushalayim

Our parsha opens with Moshe calling people to come to the Mishkan's inaugural ceremonies: "On the eighth day Moshe called Aharon and his sons, and the elders of the Jewish people."<sup>1</sup> It is understandable that Moshe called to Aharon and his sons as they were the ones to perform the service in the Mishkan. The elders, though, have no special role in the day's service and are not mentioned in the rest of the parsha. Why, then, were they singled out by Moshe?

The midrash responds to this question by highlighting the unique standing of "elders" in Jewish communal life:

Rebbi Akiva said: "the Jewish people are compared to a bird. Just as this bird cannot fly without its wings, so, too, the Jewish people cannot do anything without their elders."<sup>2</sup>

The elders are our guides and our polestars. We learn from their explicit guidance and personal examples. Therefore, it was clear to Moshe that at such a momentous occasion as the inauguration of the Mishkan that the elders would need to be present.

The midrash then continues that throughout the Torah and Jewish history we find God himself honoring the elders:

As Rebbi Shimon b. Yohai taught: not in a single instance and not in two instances but in many instances we find that God bestowed honor on the elders. By the burning bush, God tells Moshe to gather the elders... even in the future God will bestow honor on the elders as the verse states: 'Then the moon shall be ashamed, and the sun shall be abashed, for the Lord of Hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Yerushalayim, and honor will be with His elders.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vayikra 9:1. Translation adapted from sefaria.org.

<sup>2</sup> Vayikra Rabbah 11:8.

<sup>3</sup> Yeshyahu 24:23.



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In the end of time God will make Yerushalayim His eternal home. Only then will the true standing of the elders will be revealed. As the midrash continues, at that point the elders will not be known as simply the elders but as His elders – the ones who are close to God.

The lesson of this midrash is twofold. The first and primary goal of this midrash is to underscore the significance of our elders and the honor that we must show them. A second message, though, is the clarity of vision that we will have in the future Yerushalayim. In our current world, the true stature of the elders may not always be revealed to all. However, when God reveals His own glory in Yerushalayim we will see the world as it truly is. The, we will be able to appreciate the greatness of His elders and show them proper honor as well.