



5784 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Miketz / פרשת מקץ

Shlomo's Journey: Givon to Jerusalem

This week's *haftorah* opens with *Shlomo HaMelekh* awakening from his famous dream in which *Hashem* promises him unparalleled divine wisdom (*Melachim* 1, chapter 3). *Shlomo* had traveled to *Givon* to sacrifice one thousand elevation offerings on the communal altar situated there. After lying down to sleep, God speaks to him in a dream and grants him anything he desires. Instead of requesting wealth, long life, or military dominance, he asks only that *Hashem* grant him a *leiv shomeah*, a discerning heart, that understands justice so that he can lead *Klal Yisrael*.

Because *Shlomo* selflessly asks for the ability to properly judge and guide God's chosen nation, *Hashem* grants him unparalleled wisdom, as well as wealth and honor. Upon awakening from this epic divine promise, *Shlomo* travels to Jerusalem where he offers up elevation and peace offerings, *vaya'al olot vayas shelamim*, and makes a festive feast for all his servants.

Shlomo's behavior seems quite strange. He deliberately traveled to *Givon* to offer up a great quantity of *korbanot*. And yet, after receiving this special promise of wisdom from *Hashem*, he returns to Jerusalem and offers more *korbanot*. Why not simply stay in *Givon* and offer the *korbanot* there? Additionally, why does *Shlomo* suddenly sacrifice *shelamim*, peace offerings, instead of just *olot*, elevation offerings?

To answer these questions, we first must understand the distinction between various forms of *mizbachot* (altars). The *Neviim* describe three different kinds of altars: the *bamah ketana* (an individual's altar), the *bamah gedolah* (communal altar outside of Jerusalem), and the *mizbeach* on *Har HaBayit* in the *Beit HaMikdash*. *Hazal* explain that it was permissible to bring personal sacrifices on a *bamah* as long as the *Beit HaMikdash* was not yet built. Even though there was a communal *bamah gedolah* in the city of *Givon* in *Shlomo's* youth, this *mizbeach* did not generate a prohibition to bring sacrifices on personal altars. Only once *Hashem's* chosen resting place in Jerusalem was established did it become permanently prohibited to offer sacrifices outside of Jerusalem on a *bamah*. In fact, the *Navi* tells us that *Shlomo* brought up sacrifices outside of both *Givon* and Jerusalem before he built the temple, contrasting this behavior with his pious father who only brought *korbanot* on communal alters in these locations (*Melachim* 1, 3:3).

The offering of *korbanot* on a private *bamah* represents a self-centered desire to connect to *Hashem* and bring about personal salvation. While this can be a holy expression of desire for spiritual transcendence, it can easily become a selfish endeavor that ignores the grander purpose of *Klal Yisrael*. While a communal *bamah* such as the altar at *Givon* represents a higher level of communal awareness and concern, its establishment doesn't make personal *bamot* an impossibility. *Givon* doesn't consolidate the Jewish people into a unified nation sufficiently to make personal *bamot* prohibited (in fact, see *Megillah* 9b where *Rebbe*



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Shimon explains that not all communal *korbanot* can be offered in *Givon*). However, Jerusalem's power to bind together all of *Klal Yisrael* is so overwhelming that it simply becomes impossible to bring personal *korbanot* outside of the city once the *Beit HaMikdash* is built. In Jerusalem, the spiritual aspirations of the individual seamlessly intertwine with national destiny. The *yachid* recognizes himself as an indispensable part of the eternal nation, while also seeing the meaningless of his personal desires if they are not calibrated with the needs of *Klal Yisrael*.

Shlomo's journey from private *bamot* to the *bamah* in *Givon* reflects his growth as the *melekh* of *Yisrael*, as his personal goals began merging with his desire for the glory of *Klal Yisrael*. However, he still is sacrificing *olot*, a *korban* that is solely offered up to *Hashem* and not shared with any others (unlike the *shelamim* which provides sanctified portions to other Jews as well). *Hashem* conducts a test: if given the chance to ask for anything, what will *Shlomo* care about? His personal legacy, wealth, and glory? *Shlomo's* response proves beyond doubt that his personal aspirations were simply a means to unlock the greatness of *Klal Yisrael* and *Hashem's* name in this world. This request finds favor in *Hashem's* eyes; since this *melekh's* personal greatness will simply be a tool to bring glory to *Klal Yisrael*, *Hashem* grants *Shlomo* all of the blessings that he didn't even care to ask for.

The last stage of *Shlomo's* sacrificial journey must end in Jerusalem. In the city of his father *David*, personal ambition melts into the cosmic plan of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. Suddenly, the *korban shelamim* makes a prominent appearance, and a feast for *all* of *Shlomo's* servants is prepared. The entirety of *Am Yisrael* become part of *Shlomo's* transcendent spiritual journey.



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