



5783 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein
 Parashat Achrei Mot-Kedoshim / פרשת אחרי מות-קדושים

Jewish Unity and the Peace of Yerushalayim

Our parsha contains several commandments regarding proper interpersonal conduct and relationships. Notably, there is a prohibition against hating a fellow Jew, and positive commandments to love a Jew and to judge other Jews favorably.

The Pele Yoetz describes the importance of these mitzvot:¹

If we are not purified from the sin of hatred then it will be impossible for us to be redeemed as the Sages state that God says “You have caused me to destroy my house and for me to burn my sanctuary through baseless hatred, so seek out peace and you will be redeemed as the verse states ‘Seek out the peace of Yerushalayim.’”

The Talmud states that the second Beit HaMikdash was destroyed due to baseless hatred. Therefore, the antidote is love and peace.

At first glance, this seems like a classic homily about the importance of Jewish unity. A deeper look, though, reveals a new and important message. The prooftext that the Pele Yoetz brings that seeking peace brings redemption is not a verse about the Jewish people but a verse about Yerushalayim: “seek out the peace of Yerushalayim; may those who love you enjoy tranquility”² What is the meaning of this seeming deviation? Could the Pele Yoetz not have found a verse that actually relates to loving other Jews?

Clearly, the Pele Yoetz assumes that seeking out the peace of Yerushalayim the city is intertwined with loving other Jews. Let us unpack this assumption. At first glance, the command to love other Jews is difficult to fulfill. Jews are scattered all over the world and do not necessarily know each other. Even Jews living in close proximity to each other may have different personalities

¹ Cited in Yalkut Yosef, hilchot Tefila siman 128 in the footnotes.

² Tehillim 122:6.



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and lifestyles. Love is an emotion that develops from seeing something attractive in the other person which creates a feeling of connection. How can we be expected to love strangers and people who are different than ourselves?

The answer is that even though externally we are all different from each other, as Jews, we all share the same core soul. Etched into the essence of our united soul are the items that are basic to our identity. Thinking about our shared soul and the items that comprise the basic identity of a Jew and the Jewish people will help lead to feelings of love and connection with every Jew.

Perhaps this is the reason that Pele Yoetz quotes a verse about seeking the peace of Yerushalyim to prove that intra-Jewish unity is so crucial. One item that is deeply engrained in our collective soul is the city of Yerushalayim. Therefore, seeking out the peace of Yerushalayim and properly understanding the nature of the city will lead to Jewish unity and love.