



5783 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Devarim / פרשת דברים

The City of Loyalty

This week's haftorah consists of Yeshayahu's haunting prophecy regarding the corruption and future punishment of the Jewish people. While most of the perek relates to the Jewish people directly, at a certain point Yeshayahu transitions to addressing the city of Yerushalayim:

How has she become a harlot, a faithful city (*kiryah ne'emanah*); full of justice, in which righteousness would lodge, but now murderers.¹

On a basic level, Yeshayahu is castigating the inhabitants of Yerushalayim who transformed a city that was characterized by righteousness and faith in God to a city of disloyalty and murderers.

Kabbalistic literature, though, argues that Yerushalayim can never truly be transformed from a *Kiryah Ne'emanah*. Even when its inhabitants are disloyal, the city is constantly sending messages of loyalty of God. Rav Tzadok HaKohen quotes the Zohar that as the eternal location of the Beit HaMikdash and the Divine Presence, the city of Yerushalayim inspires a palpable sense of fear of God which leads to the cultivation of a deep-seated sense of faith. This is the true meaning of *Kiryah Ne'emanah* – that the city inspires its inhabitants to have faith in God and be loyal to Him.²

Rav Tzadok explains that this capacity extends eternally, even when the Jewish people are exiled from their city. The Talmud teaches that even when it is destroyed and desolate, Yerushalayim retains its sanctity. While the original context of this statement is about the halakhic status of Yerushalayim, Rav Tzadok asserts that the same is true regarding the existential impact of the city. Yerushalayim is the ideal setting to cultivate faith in God, no matter who is sovereign in the city.

¹ Yeshayahu 1:21. Translation based on Chabad.org.

² Pri Tzadik, Metzora, siman 3.



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If this is true when the city is desolate from a Jewish perspective, it is all the more true today. We have merited to return to Yerushalayim and to transform it into a thriving and *Jewish* city. This alone should define the city as a *Kiryah Ne'emanah* and help strengthen our faith.

Simultaneously, though, we must realize that the full reversal of Yerushalayim back into a true *Kiryah Ne'emanah* can only occur when the Beit HaMikdash is rebuilt. Then, God's presence will be indisputably present in the city and all that come to the city will be able to develop a strong faith in the Almighty. May we merit to celebrate in a fully redeemed city this coming Tisha B'Av.