



5784 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Beha'alotcha / פרשת בהעלתך

Sinai and Moriah: the Curtain Lifts

Last week, we discussed the metaphysical connection between *Har Sinai* and *Har Moriah*. The mountain on which the Torah was given will eventually be combined with the mountain on which the *Beit HaMikdash* will be built.

We explained why *limmud HaTorah* is so essential to revealing the reality of *Ein Od Milvado*; *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*'s wisdom and *ratzon* are found in every technical and physical detail of creation. Why is Jerusalem the perfect place for *limmud HaTorah* to occur?

Let us begin to answer with another question. The *Mishna* in *Keilim* delineates ten different levels of sanctity found in physical places in this world. The first, and lowest, level of *kedusha* is *Eretz Yisrael*, which is more sanctified than all other lands. The list continues to ascend in levels of holiness: Jerusalem, *Har HaBayit*, the courtyard of the *Beit HaMikdash*...until the pinnacle of sanctity, the Holy of Holies.

Looking at this *Mishna* with the beautiful rudimentary *Emunah* of a third grader, we are left scratching our heads. "I thought *Hashem* is everywhere?!" If God's presence permeates all of the cosmos, how can it be that there are certain places with more sanctity than others? But this question implies an approach to sanctity that is perhaps incorrect. *Kedusha* doesn't mean that *Hashem* is more present; it means that His Presence is more palpable.

The illusion of the physical world's independence from spirituality is thick, coarse, and difficult to penetrate. While we pay lip service to the idea that *Hashem* can be found anywhere, it is far harder to feel the presence of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and live lives infused with Divinity. Jerusalem is the primary place on Earth in which this illusion can be dispelled. It is the place where heaven and earth first met during creation, where the physical body of *Adam* was imbued with his divine soul. The *Nefesh HaChayim* explains (2:17) that the principal dwelling place for *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is Jerusalem because it has less *malbushim*, less interposing layers of "clothing", that hide His divine presence. The sanctity of Jerusalem stems from this cosmic "lifting of the curtain", the revelation of God's presence infused into creation. Without these *malbushim*, *kedusha* is inevitable.

(Additionally, sanctity is generated by dedicating something to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Much like a woman is *mekudeshet* when she designates herself for her husband, and a *korban* becomes *mekudash* when vowed to the Temple, the ten places mentioned in the *Mishna* are more sanctified because they more clearly belong to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. They are dedicated to Him because He is more clearly their Master. Much like with regard to *hilchot yichud*, *halacha* recognizes increased trust in spousal integrity when one's spouse is in the area, the Holy Land and Holy City are more "loyal" to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* due to His greater revelation. This is also why *Eretz Yisrael* is so "sensitive" to sin; the more the reality of *Ein Od Milvado* is felt, the more



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abhorrent and sickening the betrayal of sin becomes. The Land metaphorically vomits out sin, “will you conquer the Queen with Me in the house?!”)

This is why Jerusalem is Torah’s natural environment. Torah expresses the *ratzon* of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* in all physical things, and Jerusalem reveals this *ratzon* in the physical cosmos. To access the *Ribbono Shel Olam*’s supernal wisdom, one needs to bridge the highest realms with this physical universe, to reveal the spiritual soul of the mundane. *Eretz Yisrael*, and Jerusalem in particular, are the ultimate places for this cosmic process to unfold.

Next week, we will *be’ezrat Hashem* discuss how this idea connects with Jerusalem’s ability to unite *Klal Yisrael*.

