



**5785 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Bamidbar / פרשת במדבר /
Shavuot / שבועות**

From Sinai to Zion: The Living Continuity of Revelation

In ancient times, the most authoritative body of Jewish law was the *Sanhedrin*, a council of holy sages that convened in the *Lishkat HaGazit*, a special chamber on the *Har HaBayit*. From this sacred space, they issued decisive halachic rulings and clarified matters of dispute for the entire nation.

At first glance, their location might seem like a practical choice. Since the Temple Mount served as the spiritual center and gathering point for Jews across *Eretz Yisrael*, it would make logistical sense for the *Sanhedrin* to be based there. But the significance of the *Lishkat HaGazit* goes far deeper.

When the *Sanhedrin* was forced to leave the *Har HaBayit* forty years prior to the destruction of the Temple, they lost their authority to implement capital punishment (see *Rambam, Hilchot Sanhedrin* 14:12-13). This loss of jurisdiction reflects something far more fundamental. Severed from the *Mikdash*, the *Sanhedrin's* stature and spiritual potency were diminished.

But why? The same brilliant scholars remained. Why should the physical location of their deliberations affect their authority?

To answer this question, we need to delve more deeply into *Matan Torah* and the spiritual function of the *Mikdash*.

We often speak of the Torah being given in its entirety to *Moshe Rabbeinu* at *Har Sinai*. But in reality, the process of *Matan Torah* was far more extended and complex. For instance, *Moshe* could not have written about the rebellion of *Korach* or the zealotry of *Pinchas* while still at *Sinai*—they had not yet occurred. The entire *Sefer Devarim* was delivered only at the end of *Moshe's* life.

In truth, *Matan Torah* was not a one-time event. It spanned the entire forty years of desert wandering. At *Sinai*, *Moshe* recorded *Bereishit* and most of *Shemot* up to the construction of the *Mishkan*. The rest of the Torah was written gradually, as events unfolded, and completed just before *Moshe's* death (see the *Gemara Gittin* 60a with *Rashi*; *Ramban's* introduction to *Bereishit*).

Though only part of the written Torah was received at *Sinai*, all of it is infused with the *Sinai* experience. The *Ramban* explains (*Shemot* 25:2) that the command to build the *Mishkan* followed immediately after the revelation at *Sinai* because God desired His Presence to remain palpably within the Jewish camp. What began at *Sinai* was meant to continue.

Just as *Moshe Rabbeinu* ascended *Har Sinai* to receive the word of God, he later entered the *Mishkan* to hear the Divine voice emanating from between the *Keruvim* atop the *Aron HaKodesh*.



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The experience of *Matan Torah* didn't end; it became mobile. The people encamped around the *Mishkan* just as they had encircled the mountain, learning Torah as *Moshe* transmitted the ongoing word of God from the *Ohel Moed*.

But the revelation didn't stop in the desert. As the *Ramban* notes, this "portable" *Har Sinai* experience culminates in Jerusalem. The *Beit HaMikdash* becomes the fixed conduit through which Divine wisdom flows into this world. The spatial structure of the camp in the desert - *Machaneh Yisrael*, *Machaneh Leviya*, and *Machaneh Shechina* - was mirrored in Jerusalem: the city, the Temple Mount, and the Temple itself.

In *Sefer HaKuzari* (3:39-41), *Rebbe Yehudah HaLevi* explains that when the *Sanhedrin* sat in their sacred chamber within the *Mikdash*, they merited elevated levels of Divine inspiration. In this holy setting, their halachic intuition was not only razor sharp: it was guided by Divine Providence and infused with a spirit of holiness and purity. The *Sanhedrin* in the *Mikdash* didn't merely apply Torah law; they extended the experience of *Matan Torah* itself. מירושלים - תצא תורה ודבר ה' - only through *Tzion* can Torah emerge in splendor and majesty.

As we approach the day when the Divine voice first echoed from *Har Sinai*, let us pray for the ultimate continuation of that revelation: the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash* and the return of the *Sanhedrin* to their rightful place, where the Torah can once again emerge in glorious splendor, speedily in our days.

