



**5785 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schrier Parashat Devarim / פרשת דברים**  
**Shabbat Chazon / 5785 שבת חזון**

***Frum or Erlich? Rediscovering What Jerusalem is Truly About***

In this week's *haftorah*, *Yeshayahu HaNavi* delivers a stinging rebuke to the Jewish people. As *Yerushalayim* rebels against *Hashem*, the *navi* warns of the looming destruction that faces her. He even compares the Jewish people to *Sodom* and *Amorah*.

Tucked within these frightening verses is a stunning rejection of our *korbanot* and *tefillah*:

**Of what use are your many sacrifices to Me?** says *Hashem*. I am sated with the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle; and the blood of bulls and sheep and hegoats I do not want. When you come to appear before Me, who requested this of you, to trample My courts?... Your New Moons and your appointed seasons **My soul hates**, they are a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing [them].

With visceral revulsion, *Hashem* rejects our *avodah* and demands *teshuvah*. How can you offer sacrifices when you do not act with righteousness and justice? When you abandon the orphan and the widow, even the most elaborate *korban* becomes an abomination.

At first glance, this harsh reaction seems shockingly disproportionate. The Torah includes hundreds of *mitzvot*, and no human being can flawlessly uphold them all. We're not angels. Of course our interpersonal behavior will sometimes fall short. But why should that invalidate the other *mitzvot* that we perform? Just because someone struggles with anger doesn't mean his *Shabbat* observance is worthless. Why are *korbanot* so uniquely vulnerable to corruption?

To answer this question, we must first understand what makes *korbanos* so important in the first place. The *Maharal* (*Nesiv Avodah* 1) explains that the whole purpose of a *korban* is to symbolically hand oneself over to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. The animal, its slaughter, and the monetary loss this process entails, represent the individual's full surrender to *Hashem*. The *korban* represents a simple and sincere submission to the Divine will.

But this symbolic gesture means nothing when not accompanied with a genuine dedication to *Hashem* and His children. When this internal surrender is absent, the outward gesture is not just empty, but disgraceful. It reduces *korbanot* to a grotesque display of piety, like a lavish "barbecue for God" that has no substance behind it.

Without an authentic surrender to *Hashem* to accompany it, the *korban* becomes a twisted expression of misplaced values and overly crude service of *Hashem*. Even a Sodomite can offer up sacrifices in a despicable



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display of “spiritual righteousness” – but his morally vacuous existence reveals that his *korban* is nothing more than a selfish exhibit of vanity.

As *Yeshayahu* tells us, the only thing that can redeem Jerusalem from such moral and religious rot is a return to righteous justice. When we shift our focus from ourselves to those who are alone, vulnerable, and downtrodden, our worship becomes real again. It is rooted in the will of God, not our own ego.

The Alter of Slobodka once sharply noted about those who exclusively focus on technical *mitzvah* observance without a spirit of decency, “A *galach* (priest) is *frum*. A *Yid* must be *erlich*.”

*Yerushalayim* is the city of *erlichkeit* – of honest, upright, and authentic service of *Hashem*. To restore her glory, we must reconnect with the simple righteousness captured by that word. With so much pain and suffering still engulfing the Jewish people, and with Jerusalem’s redemption far from completion, we need to take an honest look in the mirror and ask: is our Divine service and *chessed* truly dedicated to *Hashem* and His children, or is it deep down, still about ourselves.

