



## פָּרָשָׁת יִתְּרוּ / 5786 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Yitro

### **Hashem Is Truly Everywhere...So Why Yerushalayim?**

In this week's *haftarah*, we read of *Yishayahu HaNavi*'s stunning vision in the *Beit HaMikdash*. He perceives Hashem's Presence and heavenly angels filling the entire Temple. He hears the lofty *Seraphim* call out to each other with a phrase that is quite familiar to us from our daily prayers: "קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ הָ' צֹבָא-וֹת מֶלֶא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדִי" – Holy, holy, holy is Hashem, Master of Legions, the whole world is filled with His glory."

This sublime verse is the angelic parallel to our *Shema Yisrael*. As we explicitly state in our own *Birchot Keriat Shema*, the *Seraphim* recite this verse to accept upon themselves the yolk of Divine Will, just as we are *mekabel ol Malchut Shamayim* when we recite *Shema* and dedicate ourselves to Hashem.

But there is a very basic question that arises from this verse. The *Melachim* declare that Hashem's glory fills the entire world. This doesn't seem to be much of a surprise for the average Jew today. As we know from our favorite Kindergarten song, "Hashem is here, Hashem is there, Hashem is truly everywhere!"

But if Hashem's glory truly is everywhere, then how can we possibly explain the abundant number of *pesukim* in the Torah that describe Hashem's Presence resting in particular places? Hashem Himself "descended" to deliver the Plague of the Firstborns, He "came down" onto *Har Sinai*, and He rested His Presence on the *Mishkan* the Jews built. The whole premise of the *Beit HaMikdash*'s construction is to serve as a "home" for Hashem's Presence in this world.

This question becomes even more vexing when we consider our relationship with *Yerushalayim*. Every Jew knows that the *Kotel HaMa'aravi* is a prime place for *tefillah*. When asked why, most Jews would respond that it is bordering *Har HaBayit*, where Hashem's Presence rests. When we say that *Yerushalayim* is holier than other places, what do we even mean?

While the answer to this extremely confusing question is beyond the scope of this *Dvar Torah* (indeed, beyond the understanding of anyone other than Hashem Himself), let us draw from a fundamental comment of the *Mabit* in his *Beit Hashem*. The *Mabit* notes that when we describe holy places in this world, we are really describing the ability to perceive Hashem's Presence in those places. It is true that Hashem's Presence fills the cosmos. But mortal human beings – with their impure foibles and smallness – cannot palpably experience this reality. We are blinded by sin, desire, and confusion.

The angelic *Seraphim*, on the other hand, are unhindered by mortal limitations. Their elevated perception of reality allows them to see deeper beyond the illusions of this world. They declare that – מֶלֶא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדִי – that indeed Hashem's Presence is everywhere.

It is only in certain select places where the mortal curtain lifts – where the truth of Hashem's Oneness begins to penetrate into the darkness of this world. *Yerushalayim* is the ultimate place in which *Klal Yisrael* can more deeply understand – even feel – the Oneness of Hashem.



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Is it a coincidence that *Yeshayahu's* vision occurs in the *Beit HaMikdash*, in the center of *Yerushalayim*? Of course not: it is only in *Yerushalayim* that mortal man is ironically capable of hearing the heavenly call of **מלְאָהָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָה**. In the *Beit HaMikdash*, where the illusions of this mortal world begin to fade, the reality of *Hashem's* all encompassing control and Presence begins to come into focus.