



5786 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Yitro / פרשת יתרו

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: "קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' צבאות מלא כל הארץ כבודו – 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 *מלא כל הארץ כבודו* – 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 מלא כל הארץ כבודו. 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.