



5786 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Emor / פרשת אֶמֹר

Guarding the Sacrifice, Guarding the Name

The Torah commands the *kohanim* to carefully guard the sanctity of the *korbanot* and sets detailed rules for consuming and disposing of sacrificial meat. As these laws are introduced, the Torah links improper engagement with the *korbanot* to desecration of God's name: וַיִּנָּזְרוּ מִקֹּדְשִׁי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִחַלְלוּ אֶת-שְׁמִי קֹדֶשׁ־יִי – they shall separate from that which is holy of the *Bnei Yisrael* and not defile My holy name (*Vayikra* 22:2).

Why does improper treatment of *korbanot* specifically relate to the desecration of God's name?

Rav Hirsch notes that when the Torah refers to the *Shem* of *Hashem*, it isn't merely describing "phonetic recognition" or a word that can be used to identify something. Instead, the *Shem* of *Hashem* denotes recognition of God's Presence and understanding the values and life He intends for us.

Rav Hirsch draws his analysis from the stirring words of *Yirmiyahu* (3:16-17) where the *Navi* declares that in future days, people will no longer refer to the *Aron HaKodesh* as the seat of *Hashem*, but rather the totality of *Yerushalayim* as His throne. Instead of the *Shem Hashem* being associated only with the innermost sanctum of the *Mikdash*, the surrounding city of *Yerushalayim* will become an expression of God's name.

When *Klal Yisrael* fail in their spiritual mission, *Yerushalayim's* sanctity "contracts." Recognition of *Hashem* and His will becomes "restricted" to the *Mikdash's* core, while the streets of *Yerushalayim* remain unredeemed. The Godly ideal of human life remains theoretical, confined within the *Aron HaKodesh*.

But when the values symbolized by the *Aron HaKodesh* – and the *luchot habrit* contained inside – begin to permeate the society around the *Mikdash*, the name of *Hashem* expresses itself in the entire city of *Yerushalayim*. The symbolic teaching of the *Aron* will become a living reality. Now, the title of 'ה' כִּסֵּא – the Throne of *Hashem* – can be conferred upon all of *Yerushalayim*, not just the *Beit HaMikdash* alone. Simply walking within her streets, a person will encounter the *Shem* of *Hashem* and develop a deeper sense of what it means to live a Godly life.

This is why the *Makom HaMikdash* and *Yerushalayim* are constantly associated with the name of *Hashem*.

לְשׁוֹם שְׁמוֹ שָׁם – But only to the place which *Hashem* your God shall choose... to set His Name there (*Devarim* 12:5). לְשׁוֹן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם – to establish His name there (*Devarim* 12:11). לְהִיּוֹת שְׁמִי שָׁם – so that My name will be there (*Melachim Aleph* 8:16). The sanctity of *Yerushalayim* flows from our capacity to perceive and recognize *Hashem's* Presence in the city.

This explains the meticulous protection of the *korbanot* – and the devastating consequences if they are not guarded properly. The consumption of *korbanot* uniquely express *Yerushalayim's* ability to sanctify that which is mundane. The consumption of meat within the environs of *Yerushalayim* is an expression of sanctity specifically because of our encounter with *Hashem's* name within the city. Exposure to *Hashem's* name allows us to live a Godly life in all of our endeavors. We can now live, eat, and breathe as servants of *Hashem*.



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But if we were to *r'*/ misappropriate the sacrificial meats and eat them under the wrong circumstances, we are undermining the very essence of what *Yerushalayim* means. If we wish *Yerushalayim*'s sanctity to be real and not merely theoretical, we must honor the *korbanot* and the values they embody. Only by sanctifying the ordinary can the Name of God be made manifest in our streets and in our lives.