

Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein 5778 Parashat Tzav / פרשת צו

The Boundaries of Yerushalayim

Perhaps the most festive of all sacrifices, the Korbon Todah (Thanksgiving sacrifice) plays a unique role in the laws of the sacrifices. Generally, it is sin that triggers an obligatory sacrifice, while sacrifices not brought in the context of repentance are voluntary. The exception is the *Todah* in which the Torah mandates that we express our gratitude to Hashem through the sacrifice. More particularly, the obligation to bring such a sacrifice falls on four groups of people: 1)The sea farer, 2)The traverser of the desert, 3)One who recovers from a serious illness and 4)One who is freed from prison.

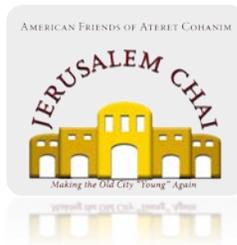
Rav Kook¹ noted that a common denominator of these people is that they push the limits on various boundaries that are part of creation. The sea farer leaves the natural land habitat of human beings and enters the foreign realm of the ocean. The desert traveler leaves the boundaries established by human civilization and attempts to survive and succeed in the barren wilderness. Frequently, people become ill through not living within the natural healthy limits that God set for the working of the human body. One who was imprisoned violated the legal boundaries of the area within which they were living.

Crossing boundaries is a dangerous enterprise that is filled with risks and at times folly. Therefore, when these people return to living within the boundaries established by God, they need to thank Him for their survival during their time that was “out of bounds.”

Appreciating boundaries is crucial to a proper understanding of Yerushalayim’s significance. The Rishonim refer to one of the forms of the city’s sanctity as “the sanctity of separations” (*kedushat mechitzot*).² The Gemara itself teaches that the walls of the city are integral for aspects of

¹ *Ein Ayah* Volume 2, pg. 252. Summary is available <http://ravkooktorah.org/TZAV59.htm>

² See, for example, Shavu’ot 16, Tosfot d”h de-chulei.



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the halachik holiness of the city.³ Respecting these boundaries underscores the uniqueness of the city.

This interconnection of walls, boundaries and Yerushalayim's sanctity is reminiscent of Moshe's response to Korach's desire to offer the *Ketoret*. According to the *midrash*, Moshe said:⁴

God established boundaries in His world. Can you mix day and night? So too, God separated Jews from the nations of the world.

Similarly, God distinguished Yerushalayim from other geographic locations. It is axiomatic that for reasons that transcend human logic, God created a limited location for the highest concentration of his *Shechinah* and that is Yerushalayim.

³ Bava Metzi'a 53b.

⁴ Bamidbar Rabbah 18:7