



**Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein 5778 Parashat Shmini / פרשת שמני /
Parashat Tazria-Metzora / פרשת תזריע-מצרע (Israel)**

Positive Perspectives on Israel and Yerushalayim

This week's parsha discusses the dedication of the Mishkan, and the Midrash draws many parallels to King Shlomo's dedication of the first Beit HaMikdash. One common denominator between them is that as great as both events were, they were tarnished by sins of great people. Regarding the Mishkan, we read of the tragic sin and death of Nadav and Avihu, and the midrash notes that Shlomo himself greatly erred during the celebratory ceremonies of the Beit HaMikdash with his marriage to an Egyptian princess.

The midrash relates the following episode:¹

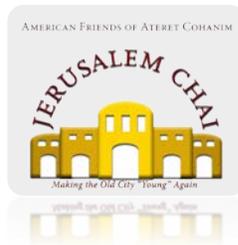
R. Yudan said: during the seven years that Shlomo built the Beit HaMikdash he did not drink wine. Once he built it and he married the daughter of Paroah that night he drank wine and two excessive rejoicings took place that night: one rejoicing for the building of the Beit HaMikdash and one for the daughter of Paroah... at that moment, God considered destroying Yerushalayim as the verse says: "For this city has aroused My anger and My wrath since the day they built it until this day, to remove it from before My face."²

When considering this midrash in light of this season of the year, there are several lessons to be learnt.

First, is the astounding fact that Yerushalayim was almost destroyed due to Jewish sin at the very moment that it was finally complete. The midrash seems to be underscoring that (re)building holiness in our land and our city is a complicated endeavor and often contains a mixture of merits and sins. However, while this grave sin certainly colored the dedication ceremonies and mitigated against pure spiritual bliss, it nonetheless does not remove the ultimate significance of the Beit HaMikdash's dedication. Ultimately, of the two rejoicings on that night, the building of the Beit HaMikdash is

¹ Vayikra Rabbah 12:5.

² Yirmiyahu 32:31. Translation is from Chabad.org.



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certainly the more significant in the consciousness of the Jewish people, notwithstanding the simultaneous sin.

This is a model for our perspective towards the State of Israel. Yes, there were and many flaws with the State and its leaders. Yes, we need to acknowledge this unfortunate fact and not get carried away in our euphoria of having a State. Yet, the dominant association with Yom Ha'atzma'ut and the State of Israel should be positive and one of gratitude to Hashem for allowing us to live in this time period.

A second lesson emerges from an implicit point in the midrash. While God clearly decides against his initial thought to destroy Yerushalayim, the midrash is silent as to His thought process. However, the continuation of the proof-text that the midrash quotes contains a hint to God's analysis:³

And now, therefore, so said the Lord God of Israel concerning this city which you say, "It has been given into the hand[s] of the king of Babylon by the sword and by famine and by pestilence"; Behold I will gather them from all the lands where I have driven them with My anger and with My wrath and with great fury, and I will restore them to this place and I will cause them to dwell safely. And they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

Despite Jewish sin, God made a promise to the Jewish people that they would never be forsaken and that they will retain an eternal connection to the Land of Israel and Yerushalayim. Nothing can break that bond.

³ Yirmiyahu 32:36-38.