



Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein 5778 Parashat Vaetchanan / פרשת ואתחנן

The Heart of the Matter

This week we merit to read the beautiful and comforting words of Yeshayahu:¹

"Console, console My people," says your God. Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim and call to her for she has become full [from] her host, for her iniquity has been appeased, for she has taken from the hand of the Lord double for all her sins.

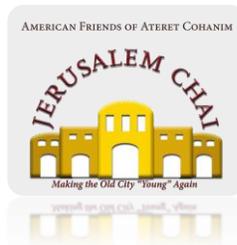
To whom is the message of the prophets addressed? From the opening sentence, God tells the prophets to console "my people" and then in the next verse they are told to speak with the "heart of Yerushalayim." It seems that the pesukim are identifying one with the other – the heard of Yerushalayim is the Jewish people.

What does it mean to be a heart of an organism? In a different context, the Lubavitcher Rebbe² explained that the heart has a synergic relationship with the rest of the body. On the one hand, it is the heart which pumps blood – the very essence of the life flow – to the farthest limbs. From this perspective, the heart is the center of the organism and its most vital organ. However, the heart itself is equally dependent on other limbs and muscles. Without a brain commanding the heart to pump or lungs bringing oxygen into the body, the heart would soon fall into disarray.

Perhaps a similar relationship exists between Yerushalayim and the Jewish people. On the one hand, the Jewish people help create the sanctity of Yerushalayim. It is only identified as "the place that God chose" after King Dovid conquers it and brings it into the Jewish state. It is the Jewish people living there that helps bring God's presence into the city. However, simultaneously, Yerushalayim helps create the character of the Jewish people. The city generates the unity that makes the Jewish people into a single and unique nation. It embodies our aspirations for the future

¹ Yeshayahu 40:1-2.

² Torat Menachem 5748:2, 497-498.



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which define our national character. The Jewish people and Yerushalyim are fully intertwined and codependent entities.

In this context, it is fascinating to note that the Zohar refers to Yerushalayim as “the heart of the world.”³ Just as the Jewish people and Yerushalayim have a synergic relationship, the same holds true for Yerushalayim and the world. God’s bounty first descends onto Yerushalayim and from there emerges towards the four corners of the world, similar to the heart pumping the blood to the body. However, part of Yerushalayim’s uniqueness is that it receives the flow of people from the ends of the earth to experience the word of God in Yerushalayim:⁴ “And many peoples shall go, and they shall say, "Come, let us go up to the Lord's mount.”

May we merit to see the correct synergic relationships between the Jewish people, Yerushalayim and the entirety of the world.

³ Zohar parshat Shelach. Cited and explained at <https://www.bmoriah.org.il/project.asp?projectID=149>.

⁴ Yeshayahu 2:2.