

5778 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Re'eh / פרשת ראה

An Eternal Aspiration

In our parsha, the Torah employs unusual language when describing our relationship with the future site of the Beit HaMikdash:¹

But only to the place which the Lord your God shall choose from all your tribes, to set His Name there; you shall inquire after His dwelling (Le-Shichno Tidrishu) and come there.

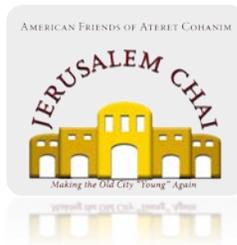
Not only are we obligated to *come* to the Beit HaMikdash, there must be a sense of *tidrishu* - active seeking and anticipation – when involved with matters pertaining to it. How does this *derisha* manifest itself?

The midrash explains that this obligation of “*derisha*” begins even before the Beit HaMikdash is built.² The site of the Beit HaMikdash is not explicitly identified in the Torah, leaving the onus on the Jewish people to find it. This quest to locate the holiest place on earth requires *derisha* – yearning and active anticipation.

Similarly, this *derisha* cannot dissipate with the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. Chazal instituted many halachot to make us remember the Beit HaMikdash which are intended to be a form of *derisha*. For example, the Mishna teaches that according to Torah law, the Lulav must only be taken on the first day of Sukkot, with the exception of inside the Beit HaMikdash where the obligation continues in full force for the entirety of the holiday. Once the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed, Chazal decided that for the sake of remembering the manner in which Sukkot was celebrated in the Beit HaMikdash, all Jews all over the world should take the four species for all seven days.

¹ Devarim 12:5. Translation from Chabad.org.

² Sifre, piska 62.



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The Gemara explains the motivation for this enactment:³

And from where do we derive that one performs actions in commemoration of the Beit HaMikdash? As the verse states: "For I will restore health to you, and I will heal you of your wounds, said the Lord; because they have called you an outcast: She is Zion, there is none who care for her."⁴ This verse teaches by inference that Yerushalayim requires caring through acts of commemoration.

The same yearning that the Jewish had for the Beit HaMikdash at the beginning of history must accompany them for the entirety of history's duration, whether the Beit HaMikdash is standing or not.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein noted⁵ that this post-destruction *derishah* plays an important legal role. Generally, the *halakha* states that "land cannot be stolen," meaning, if a person steals land from the rightful owner gains no legal rights to the property. Tosfot,⁶ however, cite a Yerushalmi that identifies an exception to this rule: if the owner gives up hope of ever returning to the field. Then the ownership legally transfers to the robber despite his nefarious mode of acquisition.

This background provides us with a deeper understanding of the necessity of being *doreish* Yerushalayim in the post-destruction era. Foreign invaders entered Yerushalayim and gained control. However, due to the rules of land ownership, this does legally change the Jewish people's ownership over the site - unless they give up hope of ever returning. The active yearning expressed in the rabbinic enactments about the Beit HaMikdash are a key element in ensuring that this level of despondency and pessimism never sets in. We will rebuild Zion and the Beit HaMikdash – it is just a matter of time. Therefore, Yerushalayim remains forever ours.

³ Rosh HaShanah 30b. Translation from sefaria.org.il.

⁴ Yirmiyahu 30:17.

⁵ <https://www.etzion.org.il/he/%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%AA-%D7%A6%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9F-%D7%95%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9D>

⁶ Tosfot Bava Batra, 44b d"h "Davka."