

Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein 5778 Parashat Ki Teitzei / פרשת כִּי־יֵצֵא

“Going Out” From Zion

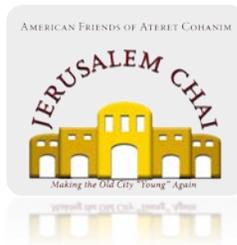
Following upon the heels of parshat Shoftim, our parsha opens with the frightening scenes of war – “When you go out to war against your enemies.” This entire section of the Torah is permeated with a sense of concessions to the reality on the ground. The Torah upholds peace as the ultimate ideal and only allows for wars in certain circumstances. The parsha itself discusses the laws of the female captive which the midrash itself sees as a concession to human weakness. Though war is part of human history and therefore the Torah needs to address teach us the laws of military engagement, it is clearly not the ideal reality.

How, then, do we reach the Torah’s ideal reality of all nations living in peace and brotherhood, bound by a unified divine vision? Perhaps a clue can be found in the following famous and stirring description of Yeshayahu:¹

And it shall be at the end of the days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be firmly established at the top of the mountains, and it shall be raised above the hills, and all the nations shall stream to it. And many peoples shall go, and they shall say, "Come, let us go up to the Lord's mount, to the house of the God of Jacob, and let Him teach us of His ways, and we will go in His paths," for out of Zion shall the Torah come forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

This passage describes a utopian vision in which all of the nations of the world recognize the divinity of the Jewish God and come to Yerushalayim to learn about Him.

¹ Yeshayahu 2:2-3. Translation is from Chabad.org.



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It is interesting that one of the key verbs in this prophecy is identical with the opening words of our parsha. Our parsha begins “*Ki Teitzei LaMilchamah*” (When you go out to war).

Yeshayahu also speaks of “going out” – “*Ki MiTzion Teitzei Torah*” (For out of Zion shall the Torah come forth). What is the meaning of this connection?

Perhaps the Torah is trying to teach us a lesson. One way to avoid the unfortunate reality of “going out” to war, is to ensure that there is another “going out.” We must work to create the reality where Torah comes forth to the world from Zion. When the nations of the world see Jewish people behaving properly and creating an ideal Torah-based society, they will naturally stream towards the source of this greatness – Yerushalayim – in search for the basis for this way of life. This lays the groundwork for Yeshayahu’s beautiful vision of peace and brotherhood. If, however, Yerushalayim and its inhabitants do not properly project the Torah’s message, we then might have to fall back to the other form of “going out” that is found in the parsha.

May we merit for Torah to issue forth from Zion to enlighten the entire world!