



5780 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Sukkot / סוכות

## Save Us For the Sake of Yerushalayim

On Hoshana Rabbah we encircle the Bimah seven times, each time reciting another one of the “Hoshana” prayers. The central theme of the day is praying for rain for the upcoming year, but a wide variety of themes are mentioned. These include the greatness of God who has the power to control the rain and praise for the Jewish people who are (hopefully) deserving of the rain.

Within this long liturgy it is fascinating to note the order of the Hoshanot prayers. The first Hoshana is entitled “*Lema'an Amitach*,” and asks God to save us due to His attributes. The third Hoshana is “*Om Ani Chomah*” and focuses on the above-mentioned theme of the Jewish people’s loyalty to God. However, situated right in between these two Hoshanot is “*Even Shetiyah*” which is dedicated to descriptions of the Beit HaMikdash and Yerushalayim. We ask God to save us for the sake of the Beit HaMikdash and city of Yerushalayim.

On one level, the fact that a Hoshana prayer is dedicated to the Beit HaMikdash and Yerushalayim is simply because this service originated in the Beit HaMikdash and our observance of it is a custom that is modeled upon the original.<sup>1</sup> However, the location of this Hoshana-prayer is surprising. Are Yerushalayim and the Beit HaMikdash really so central that they appear immediately after God himself and even before any direct mention of the Jewish people or its agricultural needs? What is the logic in this placement?

Perhaps our liturgy is an affirmation of the rabbinic tradition that all physical and spiritually bounty passes through the city of Yerushalayim.<sup>2</sup> On the last day of Sukkot when we transition from thanking God for the past harvest to praying for the coming year’s rainfall, we highlight the significance of Yerushalayim as the passageway that connects heaven and earth. Only with this pathway established can we then can we transition to speaking about the Jewish people and their needs.

<sup>1</sup> Midrash Tehillim perek 17.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Sha'arei Orah, sha'ar HaRishon, HaSefirah HaAsirit.



## 5780 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Sukkot / סוכות

This theme is even alluded to in the prayer itself. Among other things, the Hoshana paragraph refers to Yerushalayim as “the joy of the entire world.” The midrash<sup>3</sup> comments on this verse with a story about a businessman who brought his wares to Yerushalayim and was initially unsuccessful at selling his merchandise. He then rhetorically asked “is this the city that is the joy of the world?” and then immediately sold his wares for a profit. This connection between a person’s livelihood and Yerushalayim indicates that in truth, all of our livelihood and material bounty flows through the channels of our capital city.

This Hoshana Rabbah, let us pray for a year of material and spiritual bounty for ourselves and all of the Jewish people. And let us remember, that our connection to Yerushalayim strengthens and opens the pathways for us to receive the divine blessings.

---

<sup>3</sup> Midrash Tanchuma parshat Pekudei.