



5780 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Terumah / פרשת תרומה

From The Particularistic Mishkan to the Universal Yerushalayim

From the description in this week's parsha one receives the impression that the Mishkan is a solely Jewish affair. God commands Moshe to have the Jewish people donate materials to the Mishkan, it is the Jews who build it and the Jews who worship in it. Nowhere is there any mention of the centrality of this traveling temple for the world as a whole.

However, this total particularism of the Jewish central place of worship seems to be a feature of the Mishkan alone. When the Jewish people progress and mature, and discover Yerushalayim to be their eternal capital, the Beit HaMikdash that is built there has overt universal significance. This is clear even in Shlomo's prayer at the dedication of the new Beit HaMikdash. After focusing on internal Jewish needs (including wars with aggressive non-Jewish enemies), Shlomo then beseeches of God:¹

And also to the stranger, who (is) not of Your people Israel, but will come from a far country for the sake of Your Name. For they shall hear of Your great Name, and of Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm, and he will come and pray toward this house. You shall hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calls You for, that all peoples of the earth may know Your Name, to fear You, as (do) Your people Israel, and that they may know that Your Name is called upon this house that I have built.

Clearly, the Beit HaMikdash has universal significance.

This universal recognition is not only true regarding the Beit HaMikdash but about Yerushalayim as a whole. Famously, Yeshayahu describes a reality in which all people of the world come to both the Beit HaMikdash and Yerushalayim to learn God's ways:²

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 Yaakov, 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 Yerushalayim.

¹ Melachim I 8:41-43. Translations are adapted from Chabad.org.

² Yeshayahu 2:3.



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Once again, this is a far cry from the Torah's lofty but limited description of the Mishkan in this week's parsha.

It seems that when the Jewish people are wandering in the desert, themselves unsettled and far from their homeland, the most we can aspire to is the internal ordering of the Jewish community. Without a country or a capital it is difficult to become a spiritual world power. However, once the Jewish people are in their natural state of being settled in the Land of Israel with Yerushalayim as their capital, they then have the confidence and spiritual fortitude to turn outwards and bring people to Yerushalayim to appreciate the Torah's guidance. It is only from Yerushalayim that the Jewish people can truly turn out to the world.³

³ This idea is similar to what Rav Kook writes (Orot Yisrael 8:5) that it is specifically through delving deeply into particular love for the Jewish people that one can then spread aspects of those feelings to all of humanity.