

5778 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Vayishlach / פרשת וישלח

Activism, Hashem and Yerushalayim

This week's haftorah continues the major theme of the parsha and discusses the ongoing relationship between Yaakov and Esav throughout history. While Ovadya begins with Esav having the upper hand over Yaakov, at the end of history the tide will turn and the Jewish people will rise up and Esav will finally be judged for all that he has done:¹

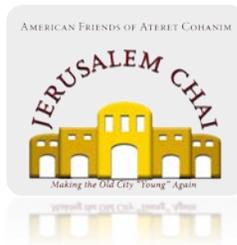
For saviors shall march up on Mount Zion to wreak judgment on Mount Esau; and dominion shall be Hashem's.

The judgement and meting out of punishment for Esav will occur in Yerushalayim.

What will lead to this ultimate rise of the Jewish people and fall of Esav? Perhaps a hint to one of the key elements is embedded in the grammar of the above verse. The subject of the beginning of the verse are the human saviors who will judge Esav. However, the verse does not conclude with the dominion of these Jewish leaders and judges, but rather with the dominion of God.

It seems that this verse will only become actualized when there is a combination of two factors. First, the Jewish people rise up and play an active role in their own history. They need to ascend the mountain themselves and fearlessly fight the evils of the world. However, this alone would certainly not lead to the desired messianic results. The activist stance of the Jewish people will only succeed if they always remember the end of the verse – that real dominion belongs to Hashem. As Jews we are the representatives for Hashem on this world and whatever success or leadership role we have needs to be attributed to that fact and that fact alone.

¹ Ovadya 1:21.



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Perhaps this is the reason that the location of the judgement is emphasized. Zion is the city that represents the balance that the Jewish saviors need to embody. On the one hand, Yerushalayim is the seat of the Davidic dynasty that functioned as regular kings. They fought wars, made laws, taxed the people and were admired, feared and revered in the way of monarchs. However, simultaneously, Yerushalyim is the city of Hashem which houses the Beit HaMikdash. The divine presence hovering over the city reminds the king that despite all of his own flurry of activities it is not him that truly leads but rather Hashem.

May we and our leaders have this perspective, and may we see the fulfillment of Ovadya's prophecy.