



Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Tetzaveh / פרשת תצוה / 5778

“Remembering” Yerushalayim

This week we read of the command to remember what Amalek did to us when we left Egypt. Similarly, while it is not a formal precept, there is certainly a biblical value in remembering Yerushalayim. As Tehillim records, the Jews in exile lamented:¹

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget [its skill]. May my tongue cling to my palate, if I do not remember you, if I do not bring up Jerusalem at the beginning of my joy.

What is the definition of this command to remember?

In a recent shiur, Rabbi Dr. J.J. Schacter² suggested that there are two components of this precept. First, he noted that while at times the Torah uses the word “*zakhor*” regarding the retrieval of a past experience, the command certainly transcends this form of memory retrieval. A proof for this contention is that the Torah uses the identical word regarding Shabbat: “*Zakhor et yom ha-Shabbat*” (you should remember Shabbat), where the Torah certainly does not mean the retrieval of something once experienced in the past, as Shabbat is not an event that we experienced and need to retrieve. Rather, the precise definition of “*Zakhor*” is as Rashi there says: “Pay attention to always remember Shabbat.” In other words, Shabbat should be on one’s consciousness and one should always be thinking about it. When we transpose this definition to Amalek, it means that we always must be cognizant of the evil that exists in the world.

¹ Tehillim 137:5-6. Translation is from Chabad.org.

² Available at <https://www.yutorah.org/sidebar/lecture.cfm/895119/rabbi-dr-jacob-j-schacter/zakhor-et-asher-asah-lekha-amalek-what-is-amalek-what-is-zakhor/>.

