



5780 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Beresheet / פרשת בראשית

Yerushalayim: The Universal And The Particular

Despite its absence from the text of the parsha, our tradition teaches that Yerushalayim plays a major role in the story of parshat Bereisheet. First, the Talmud records that Yerushalayim was the first location to be created:¹

And the Rabbis say: The world was created from Zion, as it is stated: “A Psalm of Asaph. God, the Lord God has spoken and called the earth, from the rising of the sun to its place of setting” and it states: “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined forth.”²

In addition, Rambam records that Adam had a connection to Temple Mount:³

The Altar is [to be constructed] in a very precise location, which may never be changed...Noah built [an altar] on that location when he left the ark. It was also [the place] of the Altar on which Cain and Abel brought sacrifices. [Similarly,] Adam, the first man, offered a sacrifice there and was created at that very spot, as our Sages said: "Man was created from the place where he [would find] atonement."

Temple Mount was Adam’s creation point and location of his first sacrifice.

At first glance, these historical facts emphasize the universal nature of Yerushalayim. As the first area created, the location of the first man and the first offering in all of human history by the ancestor of the entire human race, Yerushalayim’s relevance seems to extend to all humans no matter race or creed. And, indeed, we find that Yerushalayim is to be the spiritual capital for all of humankind, as Yeshayahu teaches us:⁴ “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

¹ Yoma 54b. Translation from sefaria.org.

² Tehillim 50:1-2.

³ Mishneh Torah, hilchot Beit HaBechirah 2:1-2. Translation from Chabad.org.

⁴ Yeshayahu 2:2-3. Translation from Chabad.org.



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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."

However, this universal relevance does not diminish Yerushalayim's particular bond with the Jewish people. As Rashi opens his commentary on Chumash, the nations of the world will want to claim the Land of Israel for themselves, perhaps hinting at the universal appeal of this Land and city. God's response is forceful and direct. Yes, He created all people and all lands. Yes, Yerushalayim and the Land of Israel will play an oversized role in the history of the human race. But ultimately, for reasons that are beyond human comprehension, God gave this Land and this City to the Jewish people. Yerushalayim is open for all true spiritual seekers as it is God's abode, but He gave it to the Jewish people to be their special city.