



Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Tetzaveh / פרשת תצוה / 5779

## The Joy of the Entire World

Our parsha opens with the command to Aharon to light the menorah in the mishkan. The Midrash associates this mitzvah with the verse in Yirmiyahu that compares the Jewish people to an olive tree that enlightens the world with great light:<sup>1</sup> “A leafy olive-tree fair with goodly fruit, has the Lord called your name; to the sound of a great tumult, He has kindled fire upon it, and they have broken its branches.”

In one of its interpretations, the midrash highlights the relevance of this metaphor for the city of Yerushalayim:<sup>2</sup>

“The fairest of branches, the joy of the entire earth- Mount Zion”<sup>3</sup>: The verse says about Tzur “Tzur – you said that you were the epitome of beauty,”<sup>4</sup> you said it but others do not agree. But regarding Yerushalayim, everyone speaks its praise... therefore the verse states “A leafy olive-tree fair with goodly fruit,” just as olive oil enlightens, so too the Beit HaMikdash enlightens the entire world... therefore our ancestors were called “A leafy olive-tree fair with goodly fruit,” since they enlighten the entire world with their faith. That is why the Torah [commanded the Jewish people to light the menorah.]”

Tzur and other great cities have their lovers but also those who are oblivious to their charm, but only Yerushalayim is beloved by all. This is connected to the mitzvah of lighting the menorah which brings light to the entire world.

While this midrash is inspirational and beautiful, it does always seem to be our lived reality. Unfortunately, many of the nations of the world do not appreciate the beauty, charm or rightness that emanates from our Yerushalayim. Instead, when they look in the direction of contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> Yirmiyahu 11:16.

<sup>2</sup> Shemot Rabbah 36:1.

<sup>3</sup> Tehillim 48:3.

<sup>4</sup> Yechezkel 27:3.



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Yerushalayim they see moral compromise and ugliness as opposed to the admiration described in the midrash.

Perhaps this is the reason that the midrash associates the world's appreciation of Yerushalayim with the light of the menorah. We live in a world that has light and darkness mixed together and it is often difficult to see the truth due to the strong presence of darkness. However, the light of the menorah is intended to dispel the darkness. Once this happens, then people will be able to see reality for what is actually is without being tricked by the darkness of the world.<sup>5</sup> At that point, the true and objective beauty of Yerushalayim will be apparent to all and Yerushalayim will be the "joy of the entire earth."

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that the midrash seems to associate the spreading of the menorah's light with the spreading of Torah and Jewish faith to the nations of the world.