



# BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

במדבר - BAMIDBAR

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Candle lighting: 8:18 pm  Havdallah: 9:27 pm (50 minutes after שקיעה )

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**דבר תורה** RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

## Yerushalayim: A Home and a Gateway

Today, on the 28th of Iyar, we mark 59 years since the reunification of Yerushalayim. Fifty nine years since the unforgettable cry, “Har Habayit b’yadeinu!” Fifty nine years since those unbelievable six days when Am Yisrael saw open miracles, far beyond the normal rules of nature. It came after weeks of fear and uncertainty, when many genuinely feared for the survival of the young state of Israel.

Yerushalayim has countless names throughout Chazal and Tanach, but one of the most powerful appears in Parshat Vayetze. Yaakov Avinu falls asleep on Har Hamoriah and dreams of the ladder with angles going up and down. He wakes up trembling and says:

“This is none other than the House of Hashem, and this is the Gate of Heaven.”

However, it is a strange description. Is it a bayit or a shaar? A house and a gate are two totally different things. A bayit is a destination. A shaar is just the entrance.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein explains a fundamental idea that changes the way we look at all of Avodat Hashem. Yerushalayim and really every genuine spiritual experience is both a bayit and a shaar- an entrance and a destination.

Every minute of Torah learning, every real tefillah, every mitzvah is a bayit. Torah is not just “preparation for life.” Torah is life itself.

Standing before Hashem in tefillah is itself a purpose and a fulfillment. A mitzvah is not

just a means to something else. It is precious and eternal on its own.

But at the exact same time, Torah, tefillah, and mitzvot are also a shaar- a gateway.

The Beit Medrash is supposed to shape who we are outside the Beit Medrash. Torah learning is supposed to lead us toward greater Kiddush Hashem in the workplace, in business, and in every interaction we have with the world around us. Real tefillah should leave a person more inspired, more sensitive, and more elevated. Every mitzvah is supposed to refine us and help us become bigger people.

And maybe there is an even deeper point.

A Jew should never feel, “I made it.” There is no finish line in the service of Hashem. Growth in Torah, morality, and closeness to Hashem is endless.

Every act of kindness is not only something beautiful now; it is preparing us to become even greater baalei chessed in the future. Every Torah learnt should create a hunger for more Torah. Every sincere tefillah should deepen our desire for an even stronger connection with the Hashem.

Perhaps that is one of the deepest messages of Yom Yerushalayim.

Yerushalayim is absolutely a destination. There is nothing like walking through its streets, davening at the Kotel, learning Torah in its air, and feeling the kedushah that fills the city. In that sense, Yerushalayim is a bayit, a spiritual destination in its own right.

But Yerushalayim is also a shaar. The inspiration we feel there is not supposed to remain between the stones of the city. We are meant to carry it home with us. The kedushah of Yerushalayim is supposed to push us toward more Torah, more tefillah, more chessed, and more Kiddush Hashem wherever we are.

There is a famous scene in many wedding videos. After hours of footage showing the reception, chuppah and dancing, the final scene shows the bride and the groom leaving the hall and waving goodbye. The screen fades to black, and instead of saying “The End,” it says: “The Beginning.”

Because a wedding is not the end. It is the beginning of building something beautiful and eternal.

That is Yerushalayim too.

Every encounter with the city is uplifting and unforgettable. But the real challenge begins afterward, when we leave Yerushalayim carrying its light inside us and allowing it to become the beginning of greater Torah, deeper tefillah, and bigger lives of kindness wherever we may be.



**מדרש** RABBI SHMAYA HENDEL, MAGGID SHIUR

## Between הר סיני (Mount Sinai) and מדבר סיני (the Wilderness of Sinai)

Chazal and the Poskim point out an interesting rule: Parashat Bamidbar is always read before Shavuot. As the Aruch Shulchan writes: **ולעולם קורין פרשת במדבר** במדבר סיני קודם עצרת

There are very few fixed directives of this kind in the yearly Torah reading cycle, and apparently there is an essential connection between Parashat Bamidbar and Matan Torah.

Perhaps the first hint appears in the transition between the end of Sefer Vayikra and the beginning of Sefer Bamidbar. Vayikra concludes with the words: **וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּהָרְ סִינִי** while Bamidbar opens: **וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַּר סִינִי**

It is striking that the Torah refers to the exact same location, Sinai, yet changes the description. Once it is **"הר סיני"** (Mount Sinai), and once it is **"מדבר סיני"**

What is the difference between a הר and a מדבר?

A הר represents elevation and transcendence. הר סיני is the moment of revelation itself, the singular encounter of Matan Torah. A מדבר, however, is open and ownerless. It belongs to no one. It represents the way Torah continues to exist within the

life of the nation and within human reality.

It is therefore no coincidence that the Midrash emphasizes that the Torah was given specifically in the מדבר:

**"מה המדבר מופקר לכל בני אדם, אף דברי תורה מופקין לכל מי שירצה ללמוד."**

Just as the מדבר is open to all people, so too the words of Torah are available to anyone who wishes to learn.

Perhaps this also reflects the transition from Sefer Vayikra to Sefer Bamidbar. Vayikra focuses heavily on korbanot and mitzvot that for nearly two thousand years have not been part of Jewish daily life. Bamidbar, by contrast, focuses on the life of the people themselves: families, journeys, leadership, crises, and the challenge of building a nation

**סביב למשכן יחנו.**

For generations without a Beit HaMikdash, what held Am Yisrael together was not only practical halachic observance, but Torah in its broader

sense: our stories, memory, language, history, and shared destiny. Torah became the thread connecting Jews across different lands and cultures.

Perhaps this is why Shavuot, more than other Yamim Tovim, has in recent years become meaningful even for Jews who do not define themselves as religiously observant. Ironically, the night that would seem to belong most naturally to the עולם התורה, the traditional world of Torah study and the Beit Midrash, Tikkun Leil Shavuot, has become a moment of broad Jewish participation. People come to listen, question, discuss, and connect.

Maybe this is because Torah is not only a system of obligation. It is also the shared inheritance of the Jewish people.

And this is the message of **מדבר סיני**. The Torah was given in a place open to every Jew.

**"כל הרוצה ליטול יבוא ויטול"**

The Torah does not belong to one sector alone. It belongs to the entire Jewish people.



**מחשבה** RABBI AMI YUNGER, COO, MIZRACHI CANADA

## From Physical Freedom to Spiritual Freedom

Based on Kima Kima by Rav Chaim Drukman

There are few moments in modern Jewish history as unforgettable as the voice over the radio in 1967 declaring, **"Har HaBayit beyadeinu."** In those words, centuries of tefillah, longing, and hope suddenly became part of lived Jewish history. Yom Yerushalayim is the day Am Yisrael returned to Yerushalayim, and the meaning of that day begins with that simple fact.

But after recognizing what happened, we can ask what it means. Why did the return to Yerushalayim unfold specifically between Pesach and Shavuot, in the weeks that begin with Jewish freedom and move toward Matan Torah?

The timing teaches us how to understand the meaning of Yerushalayim itself. Pesach is **zman cheiruteinu**, the time of our freedom, because on Pesach Am Yisrael left Mitzrayim and became a free people after generations of slavery. Yet Yetziat Mitzrayim was never meant to stand on its own as the final goal of Jewish history. Freedom from Pharaoh was necessary, but it was the first stage in a larger process whose purpose was Matan Torah.

The Torah could not be given in Mitzrayim, because a nation still enslaved to Pharaoh could not stand at Har Sinai and receive the word of Hashem. First, Am Yisrael had to leave the control of another nation and recover its freedom. Only then could it begin the journey toward Torah.

This is the meaning of Sefirat HaOmer. We count from Pesach to Shavuot because freedom is not complete when the chains are broken. Freedom must lead somewhere, and for Am Yisrael it must become a life of Torah, kedushah, and responsibility.

The Sefer HaChinuch explains that we count these days because Torah is the purpose of Am Yisrael, and we were redeemed from Mitzrayim in order to receive the Torah at Sinai. The counting expresses longing, because a person waiting for something precious naturally counts the days until it arrives.

At first glance, though, the counting seems backwards. If we are waiting for Shavuot, we should seemingly count how many days remain until Matan Torah, yet instead we count how many days have passed. We say one day of the Omer, two days of the Omer, and so on.

The answer is that the beginning also matters. Pesach is not merely a point to move away from, because Yetziat Mitzrayim made Matan Torah possible. We count from Pesach because the freedom of Pesach has its own meaning, even as it moves toward the greater purpose of Shavuot.

The same structure appears in the relationship between Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. Yom HaAtzmaut marks the restoration of Jewish independence after generations of exile and foreign rule, when Am Yisrael returned to national freedom in Eretz Yisrael. That freedom is precious, because without independence the Jewish people cannot fully express its national identity.

But like Pesach, independence is the beginning, not the endpoint.

Yom Yerushalayim reveals what that independence is meant to become, because it is not only the celebration of a military victory or the reunification of a city. It is the return to the place where Jewish freedom receives its spiritual direction.

Chazal teach in Pirkei Avot:

**"Al tikra charut ela cheirut, she'ein lecha ben chorin ela mi she'osek betalmud Torah."** "Do not read it as engraved, but as freedom, for no one is truly free except one who is engaged in Torah." **Avot 6:2**

Real freedom is not simply the absence of outside control. Real freedom is the ability to live according to one's deepest identity, and for Am Yisrael, that identity is Torah.

That is why Yerushalayim matters so deeply. The Navi Yeshayahu describes Yerushalayim as the place from which Torah goes out to the world:

**"Ki mitziyon teitzei Torah, u'dvar Hashem miYerushalayim."** "For from Zion shall Torah go forth, and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim." **Yeshayahu 2:3**

Yerushalayim gives Jewish freedom its destination. It teaches that sovereignty is not only about security, borders, or national dignity. Those things are essential, but they are the foundation upon which a larger purpose must be built: that Am Yisrael should live its full identity in its land, with Torah at the center of its national life.

We are still not at the complete geulah. We still await the Beit Hamikdash, the full return of the Shechinah, and the complete revelation of Hashem's name in the world. But Yom Yerushalayim gives us the direction.

Yom Yerushalayim teaches that the purpose of freedom is not only independence from foreign rule, but the return of Am Yisrael to its mission, its Torah, and its spiritual center.



## Saying *Nachem* on Tisha B'Av After the Liberation of Jerusalem

**Question:** Every year on Tisha B'Av, I recite the *Nachem* prayer during Mincha, as is customary. But honestly, I feel uncomfortable saying it. We describe Jerusalem as:

"the city that is mournful, ruined, despised, and desolate..."

How can those words possibly describe the Jerusalem of today — a vibrant, flourishing city filled with life, beautiful homes and gardens, and the greatest center of Torah learning in the world? How can we honestly call it "desolate" or "ruined"? Perhaps the time has come to change the text, or even stop saying this prayer altogether?

**Answer:** This is an excellent and deeply meaningful question. Indeed, there is a serious concern about saying something untrue in general, especially while standing before Hashem in prayer.

For this reason, many rabbis and halachic authorities have grappled with the question of *Nachem* in modern times — especially since 1967, when Yerushalayim and the Old City returned to Jewish control. Yet despite the

tremendous changes, the overwhelming majority of leading poskim ruled that the traditional text should remain unchanged. This was the position of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik as recorded in *Nefesh HaRav*, as well as Rabbi Ovadia Yosef in *Yechaveh Da'at* (1:43), along with many other prominent rabbinic authorities.

They offer several explanations:

**1. Jerusalem Is Still Missing Its Heart** The most straightforward answer is that as long as the Beit HaMikdash has not been rebuilt, Jerusalem is still considered, in a profound sense, incomplete and destroyed. Yes, we have witnessed astonishing and even miraculous progress since 1967. But the essence is still missing: the Mikdash itself.

Additionally, there are still elements of spiritual deficiency and foreign influences present in the city. In that sense, Jerusalem can still be described as "mourning" and "desolate" on a deeper spiritual level.

**2. We Do Not Change the Text of Tefillah** **Lightly** Rabbi Ovadia Yosef further emphasizes a broader principle: the wording

of our prayers is not something to alter casually. The *נוסח התפילה* was established by the *אנשי* *כנסת הגדולה* with divine inspiration. Who today can claim the authority or wisdom to rewrite these sacred texts?

In his powerful words: "Who in our generations has the audacity to amend and alter the wording of the prayers established by our holy Sages, through whom the spirit of Hashem spoke? Within every word and every letter of the prayers and blessings they instituted are hidden profound and wondrous secrets."

**Conclusion** Baruch Hashem, we have merited to witness open miracles. Jerusalem is thriving, the Old City is in Jewish hands, and Torah flourishes there in unprecedented ways. Yet at the same time, Tisha B'Av reminds us that our redemption is not yet complete — physically or spiritually.

Even amid the joy and rebuilding, we continue to mourn what is still lacking and yearn for the ultimate redemption: the coming of Mashiach and the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash במהרה בימינו.



## The heart of the nation

This week we celebrated Yom Yerushalayim, the day on which the Jewish people mark the liberation of the Holy City and our return to the heart of the nation. It is no coincidence that this day always falls close to Parashat Bamidbar, which describes the arrangement of the tribes of Israel around the Mishkan in the wilderness. The Torah teaches us that holiness stands at the center of the camp, and Yerushalayim unites all the tribes of Israel around that center of k'dusha.

The Six-Day War can be understood through the words of King David in Tehillim: "כִּי רָגַע בְּאַפּוֹ חַיִּים בְּרָצוֹנוֹ, בְּעֶרְבַּ לַיִן בְּכִי וּלְבָקֶר רִנָּה." "For His anger lasts but a moment; life comes through His favor. In the evening one lies down weeping, but by morning there is song." (ו' תהילים ל')

The Malbim explains that fear and suffering last only for a moment, while the true will of Hashem is life and salvation. Even suffering itself is meant to bring a person and a nation toward greater renewal and redemption.

So it was on the eve of the Six-Day War. Great fear gripped the Land of Israel and Jews throughout the world. Arab armies surrounded the country, threats to destroy Israel were spoken openly, and many feared another catastrophe. Yet from within the fear came tremendous strength and determination. The people of Israel did not collapse; they united. For the first time in the history of the State, a national unity government was formed, and the nation stood together as one.

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Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neria zt"l explained why Jerusalem was not liberated during Israel's War of Independence. Yerushalayim, he taught, had to be redeemed through the strength of the entire nation, not by one underground movement or faction. Only after the establishment of a unified IDF, belonging to all of Israel, were we privileged to return to Yerushalayim.

During the war itself, the hand of Hashem was seen openly. Operation "Moked," in which the Israeli Air Force destroyed the Arab air forces, succeeded through a chain of extraordinary events: the Egyptian anti-aircraft system was shut down during the exact hours of the attack because of an unexpected visit by Egypt's defense minister; an Egyptian aerial patrol that could have detected the strike was delayed after a late-night air force celebration; and a Jordanian warning about the attack was misunderstood because Egypt had changed its military code that very morning. Together, these events led to a victory that changed history.

The victory of the Six-Day War taught that when the Jewish people are united and connected to Yerushalayim, Hashem accompanies them openly. "יְרוּשָׁלַיִם הַבְּנוּיָה כְּעִיר שְׁחֵבְרָה לָהּ יִחְדּוּ." (תהילים קכ"ב, ג')

Only when all the tribes of Israel are joined together can we truly merit Yerushalayim. May we merit to witness the continued rebuilding of Yerushalayim, the return of the Shechinah to Zion, and the complete unity of the Jewish people speedily in our days.



# SHAVUOT IN TORONTO

WITH OUR MAGGIDEI SHIUR



**RABBI YEHUDA MANN**

12:00 AM | Or Chaim  
1:00 AM | Clanton Park  
Shavuot Day | Clanton Park Tikkun Yom  
Shabbat Morning | Yizkor Drasha OCM  
Shabbat | 7:30 PM | Bnei Torah



**RABBI EZER DIENNA**

12:30 AM | Mishkan Avraham  
2:00 AM | Shaarei Tefillah  
4:00 AM | The Shavuos Guys  
Shabbat Day | Mishkan Avraham



**RABBI ORI EZRA**

Shavuot Eve | Before Maariv | Or Chaim  
12:45 AM | Or Chaim  
Shabbat | Seudah Shlishit | Or Chaim



**RABBI AMI YUNGER**

1:15 AM | BAYT  
3:00 AM | Bnei Akiva



**RABBI SHMAYA HENDEL**

11:00 AM | PCL | Ayin L'Tzion Zichron Yisroel  
2:50 AM | Ayin L'Tzion Zichron Yisroel



**RABBI CHAIM SINGER**

12:00 AM | Aish Thornhill Community Shul



**AVIYA EZRA**

Shavuot Day | 5:00PM | Pakes Home



**RABBI SHAANAN SCHERER**

2:15 AM | BAYT

Wishing you a Chag Sameach