

PARSHAT RE'AY

To our surprise, the city of Jerusalem (by that name) is never mentioned in Chumash. However, the underlying concept of that eternal city does emerge as a major theme in Parshat Re'ay.

In the following shiur, we uncover the 'foundations of the city of Jerusalem' in our study of the Torah's repeated use of the phrase: "ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem" [lit. the site that God will choose], and its thematic significance within the laws of Sefer Devarim.

INTRODUCTION

When we speak of Jerusalem, we usually relate to either one of its two aspects:

- a) its geographic **location**
- b) its **function** as the national center of the Jewish Nation.

Even though Chumash never informs us in regard to its precise location, its function as a 'national center' for the Jewish Nation unfolds as a primary theme in Sefer Devarim.

To understand how and why, we must begin our shiur by returning to our analysis of the **CHUKIM & MISHPATIM** section of the main speech of Sefer Devarim.

Recall from our introductory shiur how Sefer Devarim includes a lengthy speech delivered by Moshe Rabeinu to Bnei Yisrael (chaps. 5-26) where he reviews the laws that Bnei Yisrael must keep when they enter the land. That speech divides neatly into two distinct sections:

- I - "ha'**MITZVA**" (6:4 - 11:31)
- II - "ha'**CHUKIM** v'ha'**MISHPATIM** (12:1 - 26:19)

The **MITZVAH** section, we explained, focused on the proper attitude towards God - such as the mitzvah of "ahavat Hashem" (see 6:5,10:12,11:22), while the **CHUKIM & MISHPATIM** section focused on the actual mitzvot that Bnei Yisrael must keep when setting up their nation in the Land - laws that will help transform them into a "goy kadosh" [a holy nation]. (See Shmot 19:5-6 & Devarim 5:1-2 & 26:16-19.)

These 'practical laws' begin in Parshat Re'ay (see 12:1) and continue all the way until the laws of "bikurim" in Parshat Ki-tavo (see 26:1-15). As this section is the Torah's largest corpus of laws, not only is its content important, but even more so, its manner of presentation, and especially its **first** topic.

We begin our shiur by showing how (and why) the concept of "**ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem**" emerges as it opening topic.

HA'MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM

Let's read the opening psukim of the **CHUKIM & MISHPATIM** section, noting the progression of topic:

[introductory pasuk]

"**THESE** are the 'chukim & mishpatim' which you must observe in the **LAND WHICH HASHEM IS GIVING YOU...** :

[first law - to rid the land of idol worship]

* You must totally destroy all the sites where the nations worshiped their idols... on the high hills and mountains... you must **ERADICATE THEIR NAMES** from this place.

[second law - where to worship your God]

* **DO NOT WORSHIP YOUR GOD IN THIS MANNER** (in multiple places of worship/ read carefully!).
 * Rather, at the **SITE WHICH GOD WILL CHOOSE** - **HA'MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM** - amongst all your tribes, - **LASUM ET SHMO SHAM**; -
 "I'shichno ti'**DRSHU** u'ba'ta shama"

[misc. laws re: this 'place' to worship God]

* **THERE** you must bring all of your offerings and tithes etc. Eat and rejoice there in front of your Lord...

* ... After you cross the Jordan and enter the Land and find rest from your enemies and enjoy security, then - **HA'MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM L'SHAKEYN SHMO SHAM** - bring **THERE** everything I command...

* Be careful not to offer your sacrifices anywhere that you want, rather at **HA'MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM**, only **THERE** may you bring your offerings...

(see 12:1-14)

As you review these psukim, note how the opening commandment [to destroy all places of idol worship] serves as a 'pre-requisite' for the primary commandment that follows - i.e. to establish a central '**SITE IN WHICH GOD'S NAME WILL DWELL**'.

Note as well how the Hebrew word "**shem**" [name/reputation] also ties both of these topics together. First Am Yisrael must eradicate the '**names of the other gods**' from the land; afterward they must establish instead a place for '**His Name**' to dwell.

In relation to the framework of the main speech, this opening commandment is quite appropriate, for Bnei Yisrael are about to enter and conquer the Promised Land in order to establish God's special nation. This first obligation - to transform Eretz Canaan from a place of idol worship into a land in which God's Name (i.e. His reputation) becomes known - is accomplished by first ridding the land from 'the names of **OTHER** gods' (12:2-3), and then by establishing a national religious center - which Sefer Devarim refers to as "**ha'MAKOM asher yivchar Hashem l'shakein SHMO sham**".

A RECURRING THEME

As you continue your study of Parshat Re'ay, note how often the phrase - **HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM** is repeated. Not only several times in the opening "parshia" (i.e. chapter 12), but also some **twenty** times throughout the entire **CHUKIM & MISHPATIM** section of the main speech (chapters 12-26)! As illustrated in the following table, not only is it the **FIRST** topic of this section, it also develops as a recurring theme.

The table below summarizes each mention of the phrase "ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem" together with its related topic:

PEREK/pasuk	TOPIC
12:5,11,14,18,21,26	The place to bring all "korbanot"
14:23,24,25	The place to eat "maaser sheni" [tithes]
15:20	The place to eat the 'first-born' animal
16:2,6,7,11,15,16	The site for "aliya l'regel" on the holidays
17:8,10	The seat of the Supreme Court
18:6	The service of the Leviim
26:2	The place to bring one's "bikurim" [first fruits]

A NATIONAL CENTER

A quick glance at this table immediately shows that the purpose of this site is not only to offer 'korbanot'; rather it emerges as a National & Religious Center. These various mitzvot (as summarized in the above table) facilitate the establishment of this center. Note as well how often every person must visit this site!

First and foremost, every individual is obligated to make a pilgrimage to the site on the three agricultural holidays ("aliyah l'regel" / see chapter 16), and whenever he offers a "korban" (be it "n'dava" [voluntary] or "chovah" [obligatory]).

The farmer must bring there not only his first fruits ("bikurim"), but also 10% of his harvest to eat and share at this site ("maaser sheni"). Likewise, the shepherd must bring not only the first born animals ("bchor"), but also 10% of his entire flock ("maaser b'heyama")! Furthermore, the Supreme Court for all judicial and halachik judgment is to be located at this site.

Should the people of Israel follow these numerous laws concerning **HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM** - this site would greatly facilitate the development of Am Yisrael as God's special nation. The establishment of this center, and the obligation of every individual to frequent this site, ensures the unity of the

people and of the religion.

[Without such a center, within several generations it would be more likely that we would find twelve different religions rather than twelve tribes.]

This site would also become a center justice, judgment, Torah education, and culture - enhancing the spirituality not only of the nation, but also of each individual who would come to visit.

MAASER SHENI

To support this point, let's take a closer look at the mitzvah of "maaser sheni", as described in chapter 14:

"You shall set aside every year a tenth of the yield of your field. And you should eat this tithe in the presence of your Lord "baMakom asher yivchar Hashem l'shakeyn shmo sham"... **IN ORDER THAT YOU LEARN TO FEAR GOD** forever..." (14:22)

In other words, each farmer must separate a ten percent tithe of his produce, and then take that produce [or its value] and eat it in Jerusalem - and the purpose of this mitzvah is - 'in order that you learn to fear God'!

But why should simply 'eating food' at this site cause one to fear God? To understand why, we must conjecture as to how this site was to develop.

Even though it is not explicitly stated, it is implicit that the Bet HaMikdash [Temple] was to become the focal point of this national center - for the simple reason that Devarim commands us to bring all of our "korbanot" there. [These are obviously the same korbanot as described in Sefer Vayikra.]

However, "maaser sheni" itself is produce, and not an animal offering (i.e. it doesn't require a mizbayach). Nevertheless; the Torah demands that we eat this "maser" at this site. This implies that there must be an additional area surrounding the Mikdash where this "maser" can be eaten. According to the Halacha, this additional area is defined by the walls of the **CITY** that surrounds the Bet HaMikdash - and carries the same halachic status as the area within the camp of Israel in the desert, where "kodshim kalim" could be eaten/ i.e. the meat of the "korban shlamim".

But when one eats this "maser" within the walls of this city, other people will be there as well. Let's review who else should be in this special city on a daily basis. First of all, the Torah designates 'civil servants' who are to officiate and administer the Bet HaMikdash - i.e. the "kohanim" and "leviim" - whose entire lives are dedicated to the service of God. There will also be the judges and scholars of the supreme court system, populating this 'holy city' surrounding the Temple, infusing it with an atmosphere of "kedusha" (sanctity).

Therefore, the experience of eating "maaser sheni" in this 'holy' city, mingling there with the kohanim, leviim, and Torah scholars, while sharing one's food together with family and the needy (see 14:25-27), would create an environment that enhances one's "yirat shamayim" - the fear of God.

Note how Chizkuni's interpretation of the pasuk re: "maser sheni" reflects this same idea:

"...when you will go up [to this site] to eat your maser sheni, you will see the priests officiating and the levites singing... and the Sanhedrin sitting in judgment and teaching laws..., and thus learn [from them] how to fear your God." (14:23, see also Seforno)

A PROOF FROM HAKHEL

This obligation to frequent **HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM** culminates every seven years with the "Hakhel" ceremony, where the entire nation - including the women and children - gather to hear the Torah at this very same site. Here, once again, we find "yirat Hashem" - the fear of God - as the primary purpose:

"... every seventh year... when all Israel gathers before Hashem "baMakom asher yivchar", you shall read this Torah (Sefer Dvarim) in the presence of all Israel. Gather ("hakhel") the people, men, women and children and the strangers, that they may hear and so learn **TO FEAR THE LORD** and to observe...

Their children too ... shall hear and learn **TO FEAR GOD** as long as they live on the Land..." (see Devarim 31:10-13)

Not only do we find once again the site "hamakom asher yivchar Hashem", we also find the purpose of this gathering to instill the fear of God in those who gather. As you review the above psukim, note as well the similarities to Ma'amad Har Sinai. This beautifully supports Ramban's interpretation that the underlying purpose of the Mikdash was to perpetuate the Sinai experience (see Ramban on Shmot 25:1 /and TSC shiur on Parshat Terumah).

To conclude our discussion of the 'function' of this site ["hamakom asher yivchar..."], we return to Torah's special use of the word "makom" in a very similar context in Sefer Breishit.

THE SITE / THE TEMPLE / AND JERUSALEM

Review the story of Yaakov's dream at the beginning of Parshat Va'yetze (i.e. Breishit 28:10-22), noting not only the word ha'makom (five times) but also its theme. At the conclusion of this episode, Yaakov vows that upon his return to this site ["ha'makom"], he will establish a Bet Elokim - a House for God. Here, we already find a thematic connection between the word "ha'makom" and the Mikdash.

Similarly, in the story of the "akeyda" (see Breishit chapter 22) the Torah uses the word "**makom**" to describe that site. [See 22:2,3,4,9,14.] Recall as well how Avraham Avinu names this "makom" - "Hashem yireh" (see 22:14), a site that Chazal later identify as the very same mountain where the Bet HaMikdash was built in Yerushalayim. In fact, in Divrei ha'yamim we are informed that Shlomo ha'melech built the Bet ha'Mikdash on Har ha'Moriah, the site of the "akeyda" (see II D.H. 3:1-3).

Even though it is not clear where Yaakov's dream took place, the Torah's use of the word "makom" in both stories, and their common theme certainly support Chazal's conclusion that both events happened at the same site (see Rashi 28:11), which later became the Bet ha'Mikdash in Yerushalayim.

HOLY GROUND OR HOLY PURPOSE

Our analysis thus far demonstrates how the Torah puts more emphasis on the 'function', than the location, of this site. In fact, the Torah appears to be rather evasive in regard to where this site is actually to be located (see below).

However, this very point may be very fundamental towards our understanding of Jerusalem. The site is special because of its function - to serve as a national center, to promote the reputation of God's Name ["shem Hashem"] among all mankind.

This emphasis is important, for man is very vulnerable towards focusing on the holiness of a site rather than the holiness of its purpose. [Sort of like dovening TO the "kotel" instead dovening AT the "kotel", or saying tehillim TO "kivrei tzadikim" instead of AT "kivrei tzadikim".]

For this reason, most all of the later prophets rebuke the people of Israel for misunderstanding the Temple in this manner. Take for example Yirmiyahu chapter 7 (in case you are not familiar, read 7:1-28, see also the first chapter of Yeshayahu). This rebuke does not imply that there is no value to holy sites. Precisely the opposite, the physical location is important for it provides a vehicle to promote its purpose. Yet, one must always be careful not to allow the holiness of the site to override the holiness of its purpose.

[For a nice perspective on the balance between these two ideas, see Tehillim 51. Note how first David ha'melech first explains how "korbanot" or futile, for God seeks man's proper behavior; nonetheless, that chapter concludes with David's prayer that Jerusalem be built, and that God should accept our offerings. As this is a rather 'touchy topic', I'd rather you base your conclusions of David ha'Melech's explanation, rather than my own.]

JERUSALEM / SEEK AND FIND

As we have shown, Sefer Devarim never specifies the precise geographic location of where this site is to be, i.e. where the permanent Bet HaMikdash is to be constructed. Instead, the site is

consistently referred to as "the one which God will choose" ("HaMakom asher yivchar Hashem").

However, in Parshat Reay we do find a very obscure hint regarding how we are to find this site: "Ishichno ti'drshu, u'bata shama" - (see 12:5)

God will only show us the site if **WE** look for it. This 'hide and seek' type relationship is reflective of every Divine encounter. To find God, man must **SEARCH** for Him. According to these psukim in Parshat Re'ay, this principle applies to the nation in same manner as it applies to the individual. [As we say in the daily Ashrei: "karov Hashem l'chol kor'av" - God is close to those who call out to Him.]

When Am Yisrael as a nation, begins a serious search for God, then God will show them the proper location to build the Mikdash.

The generation of Yehoshua, despite their military conquests, did not succeed in establishing the permanent Mikdash (after conquering the Land). Instead, they erected the temporary Mishkan in Shilo. There it remained, quite neglected, during the entire time period of the Judges. After the city of Shilo was destroyed by the Philistim (during the time of Eli / see Shmuel chapters 4-6), both the Mishkan and the "aron" wandered from site to site. It was only during the time period of David ha'melech that Bnei Yisrael actively aspired to build the Mikdash.

For example, when David became king over all of Israel (see II Shmuel 5:1-9), his first act was to conquer the city of Jerusalem. His next project was to gather the nation in order to bring the "aron" (the holy ark) to his new capital city (see II Shmuel chapter 6). Note how Divrei ha'yamim describes how David explained his plan (and the reason) to the nation:

"David said to the entire congregation of Israel: If you approve, and this is from God (the events of David's rise to power), let us go forward and invite all our brethren in the land of Israel, together with the **KOHANIM** and **LEVIIM** and gather together, **IN ORDER TO BRING BACK** to us God's **HOLY ARK** - 'ki lo **DRASH'NU'HU** b'yemei Shaul' - for during the time of Shaul **WE DID NOT SEEK IT**" (I Divrei Hayamim 13:2-3)

[Note the use of the shresh "d.r.sh." here and in Devarim 12:5]

David Ha'melech notes how the "aron" had been neglected during the generation of Shaul at the national level. In contrast to Shaul, David ha'melech considered bringing the "aron" to Yerushalayim as his highest national priority.

After the "aron" finally arrived in Jerusalem, the next step in David's master plan was to build a permanent house for the "aron", i.e. the Bet Ha'Mikdash in Yerushalayim:

"When the King was settled in his palace and God has granted him safety from his enemies [he'niach lo m'kol oyvav m'saviv], the King said to Natan the prophet: Here I am dwelling in a **HOUSE** of cedar wood, while the 'aron' is dwelling only in a **TENT!**" (see II Shmuel 7:1-2)

[Note again the textual parallel to Devarim 12:10-11]

Even though God informed David that Am Yisrael would have to wait another generation before the Temple could be built (in the next generation by his son Shlomo, see II Shmuel chapter 7), its precise site was already designated in David's own lifetime (see I Divrei Ha'yamim 22:1). In fact, David ha'melech himself prepared all the necessary building materials (see the remainder of that chapter).

If you read the above sources carefully, you'll see that the underlying reason for God's decision to delay its construction for one more generation stemmed from the need to wait until its 'function' - to make a Name for God - could be properly fulfilled.

JERUSALEM TODAY

As we have seen in our study, according to the guidelines of Sefer Devarim - 'Jerusalem' is destined to become more than just the city that houses the Temple. Ideally, Jerusalem should become the National Cultural and Religious Center of the Jewish people, whose purpose will be to 'make a Name' for God. This aspiration is found in the prophecies of most all of the later prophets. For example:

"For Jerusalem will be called the city of Truth ("ir ha'emet"), and the mountain of the Lord of Hosts -"har ha'Kodesh" (see Zecharya 8:3).

"For out of Zion will come forth Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (see Isaiah 2:3).

Today, be it for halachic, technical, or political reasons, we are not yet able to rebuild the Bet HaMikdash. Until the proper time comes, this aspiration remains our national dream and an everlasting prayer. Nonetheless, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem as our National Center - a city of Truth, Justice, and Sanctity - is not only permitted, it is our duty. In our own generation, God has opened for us a window of opportunity. The achievement of this goal remains our national responsibility.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. THE CHAGIM IN RE'AY

Even though the chagim have already been presented in Parshiot Mishpatim, Emor, and Pinchas, they are repeated again in Devarim chap 16. Read this chapter carefully.

1. What laws are added which we did not already learn from the earlier sources?
2. What would you say is the primary topic of this perek? (which key phrase repeats itself many times?)
3. Attempt to explain this perek as an expansion of Shmot 23:14-17!
4. How does all this relate to the above shiur?
5. Why aren't Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur mentioned in this parshia?

B. "LO TA'ASUN KEYN L'HASHEM ELOKEICHEM" (12:4)

In the above shiur, we explained that this pasuk implies that we are commanded not to worship God in multiple places of worship. This is "psbat" of the pasuk based on 12:2 and 12:5. For just as they worshiped their gods on the high places and under mighty trees etc. (12:2) you should not, rather - only in the place which God chooses ("ha'makom..."). That is, at **ONE** place and not at many places.

Note the two explanations given by Rashi. The first follows this reading according to "psbat". The second is a Midrash Halacha. Do these two pirushim contradict each other, or can they both be correct? Use your answer to explain the nature of Midrashei Halacha.

C. MIKRA BIKURIM - THE FINALE

Note the final mitzvot of the chukim & mishpatim are Mikra Bikurim and vidduy maaser (perek 26), again focusing on **HA'MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM** - (note 27:1 also).

1. Does this parsha belong in Parshat Ki-tavo, or do you think that it would be more fitting to Parshat Reay? Relate to the parsha of maaser sheni (14:22-29)! Why do think it was chosen to conclude the main speech? Relate your answer to the purpose of this speech, and the content of "mikra bikurim" and to Breishit perek 15.

D. Even though Sefer Breishit does not mention Jerusalem by name, it does mention the city of 'Shalem' (see 14:18) in relation to Malki Tzedek (note the significance of his name) and Mount Moriah (see 22:2,14), the site of the Akeyda', as Hashem YIREH. Together YIREH -SHALEM, may allude to the final name of this city - YERU-SHALAYIM.