

Latte and Learning – All Roads Pray to Yerushalayim

New England Spring Regional 2017

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi¹ – “My heart is in the East, and I am at the ends of the West”

What does it mean to focus on Yerushalayim and Israel, even if we are not currently there? In what practical ways can we implement this?

#1 Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer - Chapter 35

(After the story of Yaakov having his dream on Har Hamoriah):

<p>Yaakov woke up in a great fright and said, ‘This is the house of the Holy One, Blessed be He’. From here you learn that whoever prays in Yerushalayim is considered as if he has prayed in front of the Heavenly Throne, for Yerushalayim is the gateway of heaven, and the door is open for Hashem to hear our prayers, as the verse says, ‘And this is the gateway of heaven’.</p>	<p>הַשָּׁמַיִם יַעֲקֹב בַּפֶּה גָדוֹל וְאָמַר בֵּיתוֹ שֶׁל הַקִּדּוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר [בְּרֵאשִׁית כח, יז] וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמֶר מַה נִּירָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה. מִכָּאן אַתָּה לְמַד שֶׁכָּל הַמִּתְפַּלֵּל בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם כְּאִלּוּ הִתְפַּלֵּל לְפָנֵי כִסֵּא הַכְּבוֹד, שֶׁשַּׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם שָׁם הוּא וּפְתַח פְּתוּחַ לְשִׁמוּעַ תְּפִלָּה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר [שם] וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם</p>
--	--

What do you think is the benefit of praying directly in front of the Heavenly Throne, as opposed to anywhere else?

#2 Melachim 1, Chapter 8 Verses 44-50 [Can skip if short on time]

[The following prayer was said by King Shlomo during the festive inauguration of the Beis Hamikdash, immediately after it was built]:

<p>When Your people take the field against their enemy by whatever way You send them, and they pray to Hashem in the direction of the city which You have chosen, and of the House which I have built to Your name,</p>	<p>כִּי יֵצֵא עַמְּךָ לְמִלְחָמָה עַל אִיבּוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁלַחֵם וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֵל יְקֹוֹק דֶּרֶךְ הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר בְּחָרְתָּ בָּהּ וְהִבִּיתָ אֲשֶׁר בְּנִיתִי לְשִׁמְךָ: וְשָׁמַעַתָּ הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶת תְּפִלָּתָם וְאֶת תַּחֲנֻנָּתָם וְעָשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטָם: כִּי יִחַטְּאוּ לְךָ כִּי אֵין אָדָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִחַטְּאֵ וְאִנְפָּתָ בָּם וְנָתַתָּם לְפָנַי אוֹיֵב וְשָׁבוּם שְׁבִיָּהֶם אֶל אֶרֶץ הָאוֹיֵב רְחוֹקָה אוֹ קְרוֹבָה:</p>
<p>Oh, hear in heaven their prayer and supplication and uphold their cause.</p>	
<p>When they sin against You—for there is no man who does not sin—and You are angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and their captors carry them off to an enemy land, near or far;</p>	

¹ 11th-12 century Spain. He is considered one of the greatest Hebrew poets, celebrated both for his religious and secular poems, many of which appear in present-day liturgy. His greatest philosophical work was The Kuzari.

And then they take it to heart in the land to which they have been carried off, and they repent and make supplication to You in the land of their captors, saying: ‘We have sinned, we have acted perversely, we have acted wickedly,’

And they turn back to You with all their heart and soul, in the land of the enemies who have carried them off, and **they pray to You in the direction of their land which You gave to their fathers, of the city which You have chosen, and of the House which I have built to Your name—**

Oh, give heed in Your heavenly abode to their prayer and supplication, uphold their cause, and pardon Your people who have sinned against You for all the transgressions that they have committed against You. Grant them mercy in the sight of their captors that they may be merciful to them.

וְהִשִּׁיבוּ אֶל לְבָבָם בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁבּוּ שָׁם וְשָׁבוּ וְהִתְחַנְּנוּ
אֵלֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ שְׂבִייהֶם לֵאמֹר
חָטְאָנוּ וְהִעֲוִינוּ רָשָׁעֵנוּ: וְשָׁבוּ
אֵלֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבָּבָם וּבְכָל נַפְשָׁם
בְּאֶרֶץ אֲבֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר שָׁבוּ
אִתָּם וְהִתְפַּלְּלוּ אֵלֶיךָ דְרֹךְ
אֶרֶצָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה לְאֲבוֹתָם
הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר בְּחָרְתָּ וְהַבַּיִת
אֲשֶׁר בָּנִיתָ בְּנִיתִי לְשִׁמְךָ:
וְשָׁמַעְתָּ הַשָּׁמַיִם מִכּוֹן שְׁבִתְךָ
אֶת תְּפִלָּתָם וְאֶת תְּחִנָּתָם
וְעָשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטָם: וְסָלַחְתָּ
לְעַמְּךָ אֲשֶׁר חָטְאוּ לָךְ וּלְכָל
פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר פָּשְׁעוּ בְּךָ
וּנְתַתָּם לְרַחֲמִים לְפָנַי שְׂבִייהֶם
וּרְחַמּוּם:

What types of prayer are referenced here? Why is there so much emphasis placed upon prayer during the inauguration of the Beis Hamikdash?

Think of the pasuk- “כי ביתי בית תפילה יקרא לכל העמים” - My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations” (Yeshaya 56:7). This is the very definition of the Beis Hamikdash- a house of prayer.

#3 Medrash Shir Hashirim Rabba, Chapter 4

Why is the Beis Hamikdash called by the name “Talpiot”? Because **it is on a mountain (=teil in Hebrew) which all mouths (=piot in Hebrew) pray towards.** From here, our rabbis have taught that those who stand outside the land of Israel and are praying should turn their face towards the Land of Israel. If they are standing in the Land of Israel, they should turn their face towards Yerushalayim and pray. If they are standing and praying in Yerushalayim, they should turn and face towards the Beis Hamikdash. If they are standing on the Temple Mount, they should turn their face towards the Holy of Holies. Therefore, those who are in the north (of Yerushalayim) are facing southward, those in the south are facing northward, those in the east are facing westward, and those in the west are facing eastward.

תלפיות, תל שמתפללים בו כל פיות, מכאן אמרו העומדים בחוצה לארץ ומתפללין הופכין פניהם לארץ ישראל, שנאמר (מלכים א' ח') והתפללו אליך דרך ארצם, העומדין בארץ ישראל הופכין פניהם כנגד ירושלים ומתפללין, שנאמר (דברי הימים ב' ו') והתפללו אליך דרך העיר הזאת, העומדים ומתפללים בירושלים הופכין פניהן כנגד המקדש, שנאמר (מלכים א' ח') והתפלל אל הבית הזה, העומדים בהר הבית הופכים פניהם כנגד קדשי הקדשים ומתפללין, שנא' (מלכים א' ח') והתפללו אל המקום הזה, נמצאו העומדים בצפון פניהם

Therefore, **all of Israel are praying towards one place.**

However, I only know that this is true when the Beis Hamikdash is still standing. How do I know that it applies even when it is destroyed? Rabbi Avin cites the verse ‘*It is built for Talpiot*’- this is referring to **the Beis Hamikdash, which every mouth prays about.** In Keriat Shema, we say a prayer of ‘The Builder of Yerushalayim’. In Shmona Esrei, we say a prayer of ‘The Builder of Yerushalayim’. In Birkas Hamazon, we say a prayer of ‘The Builder of Yerushalayim’. This shows that **Talpiot means that Yerushalayim is the mountain which every mouth prays for.** Therefore, Hashem will rebuild it in the future and rest His Divine Presence there.

לדרום, והעומדים בדרום פניהם
לצפון, והעומדים במזרח פניהם
למערב, והעומדים במערב פניהם
למזרח, נמצאו כל ישראל מתפללין
אל מקום אחד...עד כדון בבניינו,
בחורבנו מניין, אמר רבי אבין בנוי
לתלפיות, הוא ההיכל שכל הפיות
מתפללות בו, בקריאת שמע הוא אומר
בונה ירושלים, בתפלה הוא אומר
בונה ירושלם, בברכת המזון הוא
אומר בונה ירושלים, **הוי שכל הפיות
מתפללין עליו לפני הקדוש ברוך
הוא,** עתיד הוא לבנותו ולהשרות
שכינתו בו

What is the difference between praying towards Yerushalayim and praying for the sake of Yerushalayim? How does it make you feel that your prayers are directed towards the same place and for the same purpose as those of each and every one of your fellow Jews? How does that impact your understanding of prayer in general?

Can you think of any other aspects of prayer in which we try and align our own prayers with those of the greater community?

#4 Noam Elimelech², Parshas Lech Lecha, Chapter 15 Verse 4

One who wants their prayers to be heard should concentrate their hearts as if they are praying **in the Land of Israel**, with the Beis Hamikdash built and the alter in its proper place, and behold, it is now considered as if he is currently living in the Land of Israel. Through this, a person comes to clarity and a complete connection to Hashem, to be able to pray with complete concentration, with fear and love, **as if he is standing in the Holy of Holies.**

ונמצא האדם הרוצה שתהא תפילתו
נשמעת צריך לכיין כאלו הוא מתפלל
בארץ ישראל ובית המקדש בנוי
ומזבח על מכוננו ובהיכלו והרי הוא
כאלו דר עתה בארץ ישראל ועל ידי
זה הוא בא לבהירות ודביקות גמור
להתפלל בכוונה שלימה ביראה
ובאהבה כאלו עומד בבית קדשי
קדשים

How do you think your prayer would change if you would imagine yourself standing in the Holy of Holies? In what other ways in our daily lives do we already utilize our very active imaginations?

² Written by Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (18th century, Poland), one of the great early leaders of the Chassidic movement.