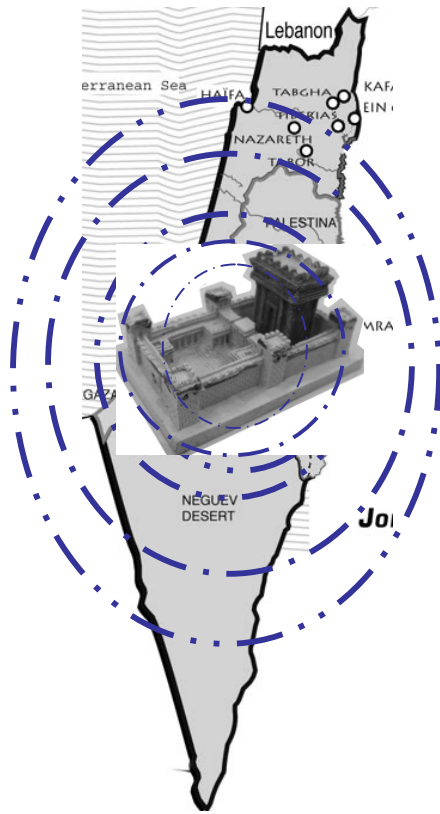


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The Temple Mount Effect

*Analyzing the "Bais HaBechira" concept
relating to the study of the Holy Temple
during the "Three Weeks"*



Dedicated by Saratoga Chabad
in memory of **Morris Aronson**
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The Holy Mount Effect

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As we study during the Three Weeks toward Rebuilding the Temple, let us examine the origins of this historic site and its broader implications, now the epicenter of the global Jerusalem controversy.

Jacob's Dream

When our Father Jacob beheld the heavenly vision of the ladder reaching upward, G-d promises him: "The land on which you lie I will give your children." Upon awakening, Jacob declares: "How awesome is this place, certainly the House of G-d, the Gateway to Heaven."

The Talmud asks¹ "Do we inherit only four cubits where Jacob lay?" The Talmud answers: 'All of Israel was folded beneath Jacob.'²

Even as a dream, what does "folding all the land" under Jacob symbolize? Doesn't the Talmud say³ that a dream is not far-fetched as "an elephant through the eye of a needle"? And why is "folding all land beneath Jacob" necessary, after he was clearly promised "the land to the East, West, North and South belongs to you and your children?"

I. What's In a Name?

Rambam chooses to call the Temple '*Bais Habechira*- the Chosen House' while the Talmud uses the more familiar "*Bais Hamikdash*: "*Asarah Nisim BeVais Hamikdash*" (Avos 5), and our Prayers say: "*Sheyibone Bais Hamikdash*" - "*Shir..Leviim Omrim Bvais Hamikdash*."

How does the fact that this place was chosen from other places express its special significance? Why is this relevant now, thousands of years after the choice was already made?

The Rebbe⁴ asks: Rambam himself also uses the familiar titles "*Hilchos Kli Hamikdash*" and "*Hilchos Biyas Mikdash*," so why does he find it necessary to entitle his first Halacha "*Bais Habechira*?"

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¹ Chulin 91b, quoted in Rashi Vayetze

² One of my classmates in Montreal asked the Rebbe about this Midrash: "How can this be? What happened to all the residents, and to our Patriarch Isaac, who lived in that area?" The Rebbe responded that obviously this was, after all, only a dream!"

³ Brachos 55b

⁴ In *Chidushim U'Biurim* (Insights) on *Hilchos Beis HaBchirah*.

⁵ At first glance, a name may seem a only superficial label to distinguish between one individual and another.

Judaism, however, attaches great importance to names. Tanya *Shaar Hayichud Ve'emunah* (1) teaches that G-d created the world with the holy letters of the Aleph Bais, each endowed with a specific Divine power. For example, the word "*Even*" meaning 'stone' in Hebrew is composed of the 3 letters "*Aleph, Bais* and *Nun* - they are the inner essence and characteristic that gives the stone its existence. This is why, in the beginning.

2. Why Delay the Choice?

Let us also examine why the Temple's location was not determined right after the Binding of Isaac. Why wait a thousand years for G-d to instruct King David to locate it? Indeed, Rambam introduces "*Hilchos Bais HaBechira*" with the location's historic background:

"It was common knowledge that Adam was created from the earth of this special place; here Noah built an altar for offerings after the flood; this is Mount Moriah where Abraham prepared to offer Isaac."

Parsha⁷ Re'eh mentions the enigmatic "*Hamakom Asher Yivochar Hashem* - The place that G-d will choose" **fifteen** times! If this location was an '*open secret*,' why was a special prophecy necessary to 'discover' this location over a thousand years later?

Commentaries try to explain the mystery of the Temple's location:

The Ostravtza Gaon offers a mathematical *Gematria*: the numeric value of "*Yivochar*" (spelling each letter fully with pronunciation) equals 1,130; the numeric value of 'Shilo,' 'Nov,' 'Givon' and 'Yerushalayim' - the four Temple sites since the Jews entered Israel under Joshua.

The *Toldos Yitzchak* gives a practical explanation. Had the Temple's exact location been public, the value of this prime real estate would rise astronomically, forcing king David to pay the owner Aravna the Jebusite an exorbitant amount to buy the land for the Temple.

The *Kli Yakar* explains that if Jerusalem's status would be finalized earlier, Shiloh, Nov and Givon would not have been respected, knowing that G-d's final resting place would eventually be elsewhere.

3. Israel's Candidacy for Holiness

Let us try a new approach to address the above issues.

The delay to select the Temple's exact site until after the Jews settled all of Israel gave every location throughout the land the opportunity to be chosen as the holiest place on earth!

Eventually, Mt. Moriah was chosen to the exclusion of all others, but the original opportunity conferred a *Kedusha* status on each part of Israel by the mere fact that it was under consideration for the Temple.

4. The "Breira" Principle

Let us apply the Talmudic principle whether '*Breira*' is retroactive or not. Does the final selection determine that it was originally intended to be so, or is the final selection valid only henceforth.

Here are two "*Breira*" examples:

Adam is praised for properly naming the animals. A child's naming by the parents is a prophetic sense, as a Hebrew name reflects the person's soul and essence.

Recognizing the importance of a proper Hebrew name, the question is obvious: Why does Rambam call the Temple "*Bais Habechirah*" rather than "*Bais Hamikdash*"?

A. When sons divide their father's inheritance, is it considered retroactive, i.e. the very parcel of land each gets was his originally, or since it could have been divided differently, it is only an exchange of properties, thus requiring the brothers to re-exchange their parcels of land in Jubilee, when all land in Israel acquired by sale or exchange must be returned to its original owner.

B. A convert who inherited Chametz on Pesach or idolatrous items from his non-Jewish father, may select Kosher items when dividing the inheritance with his non-Jewish siblings. But that is only if "*Yesh Breira*," his share of the inheritance was his from the beginning. But if the division is not retroactive, only a later exchange, then the Jewish son cannot derive benefit from exchanging forbidden items.

In Torah issues the Halacha is *Ain Breira*: choice is **not** retroactive.

Let us now apply this principle to the final choosing of Mt. Moriah for the Bais Hamikdash over all other locations.

Originally, each part of Israel was considered a possible candidate to host the Temple. Now, even after G-d chose Mt. Moriah, a Kedusha residual remains all over Israel, for 'holiness never dissipates.'

The name "*Bais Habechira*" indicates that the Temple's holiness extends beyond the Temple's walls to include all of the land of Israel.

We find a similar concept of "*Zikah*" in the Levirate *Yibum* law: When a brother dies without children, his widow marries one of his brothers to "rebuild the House." But even if the brother never actually marries the widow, he is still considered 'attached' or 'engaged' to her (therefore forbidden to marry her mother or sister etc). The 'engaged' status results from the mere possibility that they **could** have married.

A similar example is discussed in Likutei Sichos (Vol. 12 page 135, quoting Tanya Chapter 34) regarding personal funds remaining after a one has donated part to *Tezedaka*: "Not only the money actually given as *ma'aser* is elevated, but the remaining money is also elevated."

5. "As If Buried Under the Altar"

This also explains the Talmudic (Yoma 22) comment on Avos 5. "It opens with miracles in the Temple, and concludes with miracles of Jerusalem," and "Jerusalem's holiness will spread throughout Israel."

This also explains Avos D'Rabi Noson: "Anyone buried in Israel is as if buried under the *Altar*, for all Israel is appropriate for the *Altar*."

This seems strange, for it is **forbidden** to bury a body on the Temple Mount? But utilizing the concept of residual *kedusha*, each part of Israel had the potential to be sanctified for the Altar.

The land "folded beneath" in Jacob's dream thus symbolizes the potential *holiness throughout all the Land* of Israel.