The Times, They are A ‘changing

I. New Rules

“You shall not do this to The Lord, your God. For only at the place that the Lord, your God, will choose from among all your tribes to place your name there, shall you seek His presence and come there. And there you shall bring your elevation-offerings, and feast-offerings... You shall not do like everything that we do here today, every man what is proper in his own eyes.

For you have not yet come to the Menuchah, resting place, and to the Nachala, heritage, that the Lord, your God gives to you... And it shall be the place that the Lord, your God will choose to rest His name there, there shall you bring all that I command you...
And you shall rejoice before the Lord, your God; you and your sons and your daughters and your servants and your maidservants and the Levite who is in your gates, for he has no share and inheritance with you. Beware for yourself lest you bring up your offerings in any place that you will see...
You may not eat, in your cities, the tithes of your grain, and your wine and your oil; the firstborn of your cattle and your flocks...
Rather you shall eat them before the Lord, your God, in the place the Lord, your God, will choose; you, your son your daughter, your slave, your maidservant, and the Levite who is your cities; and you shall rejoice before the Lord, your God, in your every undertaking."\textsuperscript{1}

II. The Timeline

First Period: Once the Mishkan was constructed, bamot, localized altars, were prohibited.

Second Period: When the nation arrived at Gilgal, bamot were [again] permitted.

Third Period: When the nation arrived at Shilo, bamot were [again] prohibited.

Fourth Period: When the nation arrived at Nov and Givon, bamot were [again] permitted.

Fifth Period: When the nation arrived at Jerusalem, the localized altars were [again] prohibited and were never allowed again.

A Caveat:

\textsuperscript{1} Devarim 12:4-19
III. Centrality: Why the Fuss?

1. An Educative Experience

2. Limits on Location

3. Overarching Societal Lessens

Perhaps, however, the most straightforward rationale for the centralization of ritual worship in Jewish thought is suggested by a number of other authorities, including Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch. According to these scholars, the Torah strives to achieve two interconnected goals through the selection of a single site for worship: Uniformity of religious practice and unity of the nation.

By obligating the nation to converge on one central location for the performance of ritual worship, the Torah “underscore[s] the conviction that God can only be sought by devotion to all the traditional laws handed down by God to the nation.”

A people spread throughout its land can easily splinter into cultist sects, with each family or group performing rites and rituals created “exclusively through the medium of one’s own mind and opinion.” Left unfettered, these groups will develop increasingly different practices and beliefs; to the point where the worship of one sect will become unrecognizable to the next. The Torah’s demand for centralization of worship is meant to insure that the “Judaism” practiced by
the people will remain recognizable as Judaism; true to its roots, consistent with the demands and values of God’s law, and uniform in practice.

The "pernicious subjectivity"² that shapes the performance of localized ritual, however, can also cause deeper problems to emerge. Not only do individuals engaged in localized worship separate from each other in the area of religion, but their overall sense of connectedness steadily dissipates, as well. Each group begins to believe that it holds a “lock on the truth;” and the disparagement of others becomes increasingly acceptable. Step by step, the nation’s social fabric begins to fray. The text of Tanach testifies to the societal damage caused when the demand for centralization is ignored, by repeatedly characterizing the period of national division following the death of King Shlomo as a time when: “The Bamot were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the Bamot³

How different is the vision of centralized worship described by Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, within which the Torah “becomes the center point elevated above the nation and its individuals, drawing everything and everybody up to it, uniting everything and everybody in equal obligation to dutifulness

IV. The Ultimate Choice: Yerushalayim

[Text in Hebrew]

A United Vision with Historically Proven Precedence

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² Ibid
³ Melachim 1 22:44; Melachim 2 12:4,14:4,15: 4,35