

Yom Yerushalayim

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This coming Sunday we will celebrate Yom Yerushalayim, the festival of Jerusalem. 45 years ago, we merited to see the reunification of Jerusalem along with the great miracles of the Six Day War. However, Jerusalem is not only the United City but even more than that, it is the Uniting City – “The built-up Jerusalem is like a city that is united together” (Tehilim 122) – “Said Rabbi Yehushua Ben Levi: Jerusalem is a city that makes all Jews chaverim (friends)” (Jerusalem Talmud, Hagigah 2.6).

Our hectic daily lives cause us to lose our heads, just like the British archeologist whose headless body is buried on Mount Zion. It is too easy to forget how wonderful and amazing it is to have an independent Jewish State and to finally own the whole of Jerusalem.

Professor, Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie, was born 3rd June 1853. He was an archeologist who was digging in most of the important archeological sites in Egypt and later on, in Israel as well. Petrie was the first to formulate the principles of modern archeology. Sir Petrie is known to be the investigator to discover the most ancient written source, outside of the Bible, about the Children of Israel in Egypt. In 1896 he found a stone in one of the Pharaoh's graves that had written on it: “אין לו זרע” (מ - חוסל) - Israel has been destroyed. They have no more descendants.”

Very rightly so, Petrie considered this discovery as the most important one of his entire life.

In 1942 Sir Flinders Petrie's head was lost in the mail while being sent back to England. His body was buried in the Christian cemetery on Mount Zion, but his head was sent to be analyzed at the Royal Academy, when it was lost on the way, never to be found again.

Only a few geometrical monuments and mummies were left from the pharaoh's time, but we, the Jewish people, who was said about us that we have no more descendants, we are very much alive, speaking, writing and creating in our Forefathers ancient language.

It sometimes seems easy, in the chaos of our existence that our daily, petty complaints are justified. We, like the poor Petrie, we lose our heads. We tend to forget how wonderful the existence of the State of Israel is.

A friend of mine once told me of his experience while visiting Italy. When in Rome, he really felt how history was coming back to life. Very impressive monuments were built with money used from the stolen treasures of our Holy Temple. But the highlight was standing in front of the Arch of Titus. He lifted his eyes and on the picture saw our holy menorah from the Temple lifted on the shoulders of the enemies. My friend told me that he literally started to cry. For a long time he could not stop, thinking how privileged we are to be living in this day and age where our ancient nation has redeemed its land and has rebuilt its country after 2000 years; a nation that came back to life from the ashes of Auschwitz. Despite the never ending struggle this nation has managed to build a strong country in every aspect.

The whole being of our Jewish nation is engraved in the Menorah on the Arch of Titus. The victory of the Roman Empire over the Jews in 70ce was symbolized by the menorah from the Holy Temple. 2000 years later that same menorah was chosen to represent the Jewish State as a symbol of the covenant that was made once again between the people and their homeland.

The privilege of being a part of the rebuilding of the Jewish nation is sometimes forgotten because of the occasional difficult times.

One of the most basic things that unites all the Jews from all over the world is that we all have a soft spot in our heart for our holy city, Jerusalem.

The secret of Jerusalem is, in fact, its role. The city of Jerusalem is supposed to be an apolitical city. “Jerusalem was not divided among the tribes” (Yoma 12a); it is given to all the

tribes collectively.

When the Torah describes the tribes it highlights the special trait of each tribe. It is necessary to have different tribes, diversity of opinions and a multicultural society. Nonetheless, there should be one fixed point, one eternal value that will serve as a source of unity to Am Israel. This element existed in the nation in the form of Shevet Levi. This was the only tribe that had no territory, and who was designated to be “public domain” – a tribe that will provide a spiritual service to the entire Nation without any difference or favoritism.

Jerusalem is supposed to play the exact same role that Shevet Levi plays in Am Israel. The fact that Jerusalem was not given to any specific tribe grants Jerusalem a dimension of unity and completeness שלום. The unity of Jerusalem exemplifies the complex combination of the different tribes. While it is very important to have a variety of opinions, it is even more important to have an eternal, never changing value that we can all relate to, always.

Therefore said Rabbi Akiva- “ירושלים היא הנצח” the eternity is Jerusalem” (Berachot 58a).

This concept is reflected in the verses of the psalm of Jerusalem:

“שאלו שלום ירושלים, ישליו אוהביו. יהי שלום בחילך, שלום בארמנותיך”.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; those who love you will be serene. May there be peace within your wall; serenity within your palaces” (Tehilim, Ibid.). What is the difference between peace (שלום) and serenity?(שליו)

The Malbim provides a tremendous insight in his commentary on Tehilim. Peace is external security- the peace to be achieved with our enemies, while serenity is the internal unity and calmness amongst the Jews themselves.

The security and defense of Israel and Jerusalem are directly affected and influenced by our internal affairs. When there is peace among the Jews that is when Jerusalem can fulfill its role as a uniting city, then and only then. When G-d forbid there is hatred amongst the Jews, there is a severe danger to our external peace and security. This fact has been proven on several occasions miraculously in the past. Chazal state that the destruction of the first Temple lasted only 70 years because there was unity among Am Israel. As opposed to that, the destruction of the second Temple lasted 2000 years due to the internal hatred. There is a direct correlation between both.

This is the eternal profound message of Yom Yerushalayim. Breaking up our unity is extremely dangerous to Am Israel. Only by standing together, Jews in Israel and outside of Israel, without any exceptions, only then we can overcome all the challenges that we are confronting these days.

Shabbat Shalom

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