

Yom Yerushalayim

- By: Rabbi Jonathan Schwartz

Behar Bechukosai 5767
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As you all know, parking in NYC is often a difficult task. They tell a story of a certain fellow who was driving around trying to secure a parking space. After driving and driving, the man was ready to give up. In a final act of desperation, he began to pray. "Dear God," he began, "I know I'm not the best of Jews. I don't go to Shul often, need to be more involved in Jewish activities and a bit more charitable with my finances. I'll tell you what - open a parking space for me and I'll become a model Jew - from observing the shabbos to supporting the synagogue - I'll even double my, no triple my annual contributions to the local federation." As if on cue, a limo pulls away from the curb opening 3 spaces directly in front of the man. He quickly reconnects with his Master: "Dear God, -- forget about it" the situation cleared up on its own. Thanks for listening and I'll catch you next time.

Funny as the story is, it echoes much of the uneasiness I feel and the conflict in the celebration here today, of the 40th anniversary of Mota Gur's famous radio transmission and the irreplaceable declaration "Har HaBayit BaYadeinu."

There it was - the answer to our daily Tefilla: V'Sechezeina Eineinu BaShuvcha LaTzion - the hope and the dream, the aspiration of Jews worldwide to return and see the glory of Hashem return to his central headquarters in Yerushalayim - and on a single day Chaf Chet - Koach Iyar it was achieved. "Har HaBayit BaYadeinu" - How does one NOT celebrate with Kufa Kabobs and falafel or even with some extra dessert (as the Mirror Yeshiva does Ad HaYom) with Berachos to Hashem SheAsa Nissim BaZman HaZeh.

And yet, 40 years later what DO we have? Har HaBayit - indeed all of Yerushalayim is subjected to being a pawn in a tenuous chess game between Bnei Esav of Europe and Bnei Yishmael. Ignorance of the significance of Yerushalayim is rampant through the scandal-ridden Memshala and even the general populace of the state. Yerushalayim itself is home to many Hafganot and battles among her citizenry about fundamental spiritual matters like Shemirat Shabbat and Toavot Arayot that have led secular Israelis in a recent Maariv poll to consider their Chareidi brethren a greater threat to Israel than her Arab enemies. V'Al Eileh Ani Bochiya.

Which brings me to Hillside (Yerushalaim Harim Saviv Lah) on this, the Shabbos surrounding Yom Yerushalayim wondering how - and even if - to celebrate in face of the concerns facing Yerushalayim in the year 5767. What to do?

Thank God the history continues to guide us. My conflict is not new. For within the first 20 minutes of the Nissim of Koach Iyar, Rav Shlomo Goren, then Chief Rabbi of the IDF approached the Kotel. To quote his own diaries :

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×?×?×?× ×? ×?×[·]×?×©×?×?× • ". In the same moment of Joyand celebration, Rav Goiren too,
recited the blessing of Tisha Bâ??Av and Mourning. How do we make it fit?

40 years is the time of Binahâ??of understanding and this morning, the 40th year celebration of that miracle, I believe we can understand and act: You see, in the same way that Yerushalayim today evokes a dual emotion, it represents a dual significance to us. As my great teacher Rav Hershel Schachter Shlita has noted on a number of occasions , Yerushalayim is both the Makom Hamikdash â?? the spiritual epicenter of Judaism while at the same time it is the political capital of the Jewish people.

You see, Yerushalayim is the worldâ??s Torah center â?? Kee Miâ??Tzion Teze Torah. Nowhere else in the world can one find such strong spirit. It is the makom HaMikdash whose spiritual resevior overflows throughout the city. Indeed even today Bâ??Churbana, there are more qualitative Talmidei Chachamim on a single block in Yerushalayim than throughout the entire United States. The early studies of the birthright tour also seem to demonstrate the strong impact Jerusalem stills has on our lives. 45% less likely to intermarry than peers. Jeff Siedel, Rav Meir shuster, Rav Machlis, Rav Noach Weinberg can all attest to the powerful spiritual impact Yerushalayim plays on our lives. (CSCI). Kee Mi Tzion TeiTze Torah and it is Bâ??Yadeinu.

At same time, yerushalayim is the Kiryat Melech Rav. Our capital cityâ??home to the government. Shama VaTishmach Tzion lâ??maan mishpateicha Hashem. The Nes of 1967 provided, if I mayâ??a place for the Jew to be on the map. A significant show of our nation in our capital . Sham Atzmiach keren lâ??Dovid â?? Arachtee Ner lâ??mishicheeâ??a place for all Jews to run. A City Shel Zahav, an image and symbol, a place ofr us to gather.

We need both aspects and need to appreciate both aspects of Yerushalayim in order to fully benefit from a Yerushalayim HaBinuyah. The Author of the Heichal Yitzchak (R. Y.E. Spector) notes that the word Yerushalayim appears in Tanach 656 times but only three times is it spelled Maleh. This is due to the fact that Yerushalayim will never be complete without full actualization and full appreciation of both aspects of Yerushalayim. A capital without spirit is like a head without a Neshama. A spiritual center without a capital is like a soul without a body. The former situation is lifeless like a corpse. The latter, beingless and haunting like a ghost .

Har HaBayit Bâ??Yadeinu â?? sadly WE have underappreciated the dual magnificence of Yerushalayim in our time. OUR leaders in history have spoken about Cracow, about Warsaw and yes, even Lakewood, NJ as Yerushalayims of their own. And in our dayâ??less than 40 years from the day that blessed utterance was made â?? OUR governmental leaders have tried to even cheat the truth of history from Har HaBayit Bâ??Yadeinu to HaKotel Bâ??Yadeinu.

It is no shock that the arab world has responded in kind. Martin Gilbert reports on a speech of Arafatâ??s to a summer camp in 1994 extolling the virtues of the Caananite king salaam â?? a figment of his diabolical and demonic imagination â?? in his attempt to discredit our rights to our holy city.

No. We cannot allow this to happen. This morningâ??s celebration can help stem that tide. If we

ourselves are not as yet ready to be oleh Es Yerushalayim physically, let our celebration be a start to a reconnection to the true history and sovereignty of our place in Yerushalayim. Tzion He Doreish Ein Lah ?? Says the Talmud MeKlal D??Bayei Drisha. We have an obligation to be Shoeil B??Shalom Yerushalayim. Let??s make our knowledge ??and that of our kids ?? of the geography and topography of Yerushalayim as common place as their knowledge of Hillside. L??Maan Achi V??Reiai Adabrana Shalom Bach. L??Maan Beis Hashem Elokeinu avaksha Tov Lach.