

Weekly Teaching

January 6, 2017

In June 1967 David Rubinger, a press photographer in Israel, had the opportunity to follow the IDF forces that were fighting to liberate the Old City of Jerusalem. Just after liberation, three IDF soldiers — Zion Karasanti, Haim Oshri, and Yitzhak Yifat — posed at the Western Wall for a photograph. I have a copy of this well-known photo hanging in my bedroom...a reminder of the miraculous day. I also have a picture of these three men when they reunited at the Wall 45 years later.



In 1967, when Israeli Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan, was first able visit the Western Wall, he proclaimed: “We have returned to all that is holy in our land. We have returned never to be parted from it again.”

Then Chief of Staff, Yitzchak Rabin, said of his coming to the Wall for the first time: “I felt truly shaken and stood there murmuring a prayer for peace. Motta Gur’s paratroopers were struggling to reach the Wall and touch it. We stood among a tangle of rugged, battle-weary men who were unable to believe their eyes or restrain their emotions. Their eyes were moist with tears, their speech incoherent. The overwhelming desire was to cling to the Wall, to hold on to that great moment as long as possible.”

General Shlomo Goren, Chaplain of the Israeli Defense Forces, standing at the Western Wall for the first time, said to the liberating troops: “This is the day we have hoped for, let us rejoice and be glad...The vision of all generations is being realized before our eyes: The city of God, the site of the Temple, the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, the symbol of the nation’s redemption, has been redeemed today by you, heroes of the Israel Defense Forces. By doing so, you have fulfilled the oath of generations, ‘If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning.’ Indeed, we have not forgotten you, Jerusalem, our holy city, our glory. In the name of the entire Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora, I hereby recite with supreme joy, Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us in life, who has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this day. This year in Jerusalem — rebuilt!”

Roseanne and I are so drawn to these pictures because of what they represent. For 2000 years of Jewish history, our lack of national self-autonomy and our inability to live in our own land is the biggest reason why we could so easily be victimized. But, then came the miracle; the rebirth of our Jewish State. Every Jew who so desires has the “Right of Return,” meaning we are always welcome to go to Israel and make it our home. For many of us American Jews, we don’t plan on making Aliyah and moving our lives to Israel. But, we know it’s an option that’s there for us and it gives us a feeling of security unknown for too much of our history.

Roseanne and I have raised our children with Zionist aspirations. Each one has been to Israel for significant amounts of time. But our oldest Simon, has spent the most time there, living in Israel for a year. While there, he enjoyed every moment of his Israeli residency. Simon loves America and enjoys the creature comforts. However, when asked he will emphatically say that he was his happiest self when he lived in Israel.

It is with this in mind that Simon, age 25, has decided to make Aliyah; to become an Israeli citizen and make a life for himself in our Jewish homeland. Simon departs on January 23. To become a citizen of Israel is the right of every Jew and you become a full citizen the day you arrive in Israel and want your citizenship. Simon becomes an official part of the modern state of Israel; the most exciting thing to happen to the Jewish people since the parting of the Red Sea. He is going to his ultimate Jewish "Home." It is perhaps the noblest act a Jew can perform today.

Roseanne and I are proud and supportive of Simon fulfilling the "dream" that was in place for 2000 years for the Jews who couldn't simply leave exile and return "home." We are supportive, although like any parents, worried about distance, security, etc. But always, the concerns are abated because we look at the pictures on our wall and realize that with his move, at any time, he can take a quick bus or train and pray at the Western Wall, or just go and enjoy a café in our holy city. He will be further proof of the Jewish miracle that we celebrate with the photos on our bedroom wall.

The Torah declares in the Book of Numbers (33:43) -- "And you shall inherit the land and settle in it." The Talmud declares in tractate Ketubot: "A person should always live in the land of Israel...for someone who lives in the Holy Land is someone who truly has their God. Our daily prayer, said morning, afternoon and night; in the Amidah: "gather us together from the four corners of the earth."

My son isn't going to Israel because of ritual reasons and he doesn't perceive his making Aliyah in religious terms. He is simply going to live in "his land" with his fellow Jews.

Pray for our son, and for all of the Israeli citizenry who need God to continue watching over them. And, in July when Roseanne and I go to visit our son, we will go with him to the Western Wall on our own pilgrimage, and stand there miraculously for us all.

Shabbat Shalom,

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