

Weekly Teaching

May 31, 2019

Jerusalem Day, Yom Yerushalayim, commemorates the reunification of Jerusalem and the establishment of Israeli control over the Old City in June 1967.

This year, the holiday begins this Saturday night after Shabbat concludes.

The Chief Rabbinate of Israel declared Jerusalem Day a minor religious holiday to thank God for victory in the Six-Day War and for answering the 2,000-year-old prayer of “Next Year in Jerusalem”.

In June of 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 as a reminder of the miraculous day.

Just as important, I also have a picture of these three men as they reunited at the Wall 45 years later.



In 1967, when Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan was first able to 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 Yitzhak 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!”

This Yom Yerushalayim, let us joyously celebrate that when we proclaim “Next Year in Jerusalem”, we can make this prophesy come true with the simple act of boarding an airplane and arriving in Jerusalem within the same day.

That’s a miracle our spiritual ancestors would have thought greater than the Parting of the Sea.

Shabbat Shalom,

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