

Yom Yerushalayim 5780

BS"D Yom Yerushalayim 5780

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Golden Memories

I would like to relate to you, dear reader, three episodes of uplifting, spiritual ecstasy which I believe I will not experience again until the Mashiach appears.

The first occurred 72 years ago in 1948 in the Brownsville area of Brooklyn N.Y. The other in 1967 in Netanya, and the third in Yerushalayim in 1968.

Prior to the establishment of the State, when the underground forces of the Etzel (Irgun Tzva'ie Le'umi) and Lechi (Lochamai Chayrut Yisrael) were battling it out with the brutish-British in a successful war to drive them out of Eretz YIsrael, my parents were very involved in supplying the Etzel with necessary equipment and arms, after the United States had put an arms embargo on the Medina of all military equipment. It involved raising money, lots of money in the millions, purchasing the equipment and then clandestinely delivering it to its destination. During those years, my brother Meir and I were members in the Etzel's youth group called Betar. My specialty, even at such a young age, was to collect money. After school I would spend many hours in the subway system. The train would stop for 12 seconds at the stations and I would make a little speech to the effect that the Jews are fighting for their lives in Palestine: please help. With my little pushka (collection box) I succeeded in raising respectable sums of money.

My big worry was the police, because it was illegal for a child under 14 years of age to solicit funds, and if caught they would confiscate my day's efforts. I felt no danger riding the subways; it was a good time in American society.

One night the members of Betar went to the then Jewish neighborhood of Brownsville with three trucks to raise money. We had large "Jewish" flags and the idea was that every four boys would hold a flag and the loudspeaker would ask for donations.

The Jews were ecstatic in their rush to throw money into the flags. Usually when one gives tzedakah he takes money from his wallet and then considers how much to give. What I saw was not real. People began taking money and not even looking what they were giving, they just threw it on to the flags. My flag was quickly filled, and we threw the money into the back of the truck, and again positioned ourselves with a fresh waiting flag.

There was a sense of common bond with the Jews fighting ten thousand kilometers away and everyone felt that he was part of the effort to create a Jewish medina in Eretz Yisrael after such a long and horrific galut.

The second ecstatic incident occurred in 1967 on Wednesday of the Six Day War, the 28th of Iyar. At 10:30 that morning the radio announced that Tzahal had liberated the Temple Mount and the Jewish nation was sovereign over Yerushalayim for the first time in over 2000 years. I cannot even attempt to describe the euphoria of the people in Kiryat Sanz, Netanya where we lived at the time. It was a total Chassidic Chareidi neighborhood that suddenly turned to loving the Medina, and the soldiers. We felt the Mashiach was coming any second.

That night I organized about 100 young men of the Kirya to walk to the center of town and celebrate with everyone.

It was pitch black since we were still at war. When we arrived

at the blackened city square, I made a short speech and then the dancing began, around and around in sheer ecstasy. In the darkness of the night the towns people who had never seen Chassidim dancing in the city square joined with us. You took the hand of the person next to you in the darkness, without thinking that it might have been a total stranger, man or woman.

But no one paid attention because we were all ecstatic in the realization that we had now just closed a 2000-year circle that took the Jews to the four corners of the earth, and back to the Temple Mount.

From time to time I meet an individual who participated in that dance. We are all a bit older now, but those meetings bring to mind that incredible night in the city square of Netanya.

The third ecstatic moment, which unfortunately did not last long, was in 1968. That year our submarine the INS (Israel Naval Ship) DAKAR with 60 sailors on board was reported missing. The nation was in a depression. People walked with their heads bowed in the hope that the sailors would be found.

The following day I was on Jaffa Road and a message began spreading from one to another – “the Dakar has been found!”

Traffic came to a halt and hundreds of people took to the middle of the street and began in wide horas dancing in ecstatic circles the whole length of Jaffa Road.

I joined in one of the circles and took the hand of the person next to me, or perhaps he or she took my hand. At that moment we were all filled with gratitude to HaShem for bringing the sailors home. You didn't know and didn't care whose hand you were holding; our minds were somewhere else.

The circles went around again and again for more than a half hour. However, sadly, later in the day it was announced that

it was a false rumor, and indeed 31 years later in 1999 the Dakar was found in deep water off the coast of Greece.

In 1998 I was invited by the Yeshiva of Flatbush to be the honoree at its annual dinner. I was a graduate of the elementary school, class of 1952.

The following day I spoke to the high school faculty and students about life in Medinat Yisrael. I told them many interesting things, and at the end I proposed an entrance exam to the young men and women who were ripe and deserving to enter the holy land.

I told them about the ecstatic dances in Netanya to celebrate the liberation of Yerushalayim and the circles in Yerushalayim at the news that the Dakar had been found. Then I said, "close your eyes, if you can see yourself swirling in sincere joy over Yerushalayim or when you hear that your brother Jew was saved from death, then you belong with us; but if your soul remains unmoved, then you have a serious religious or even a psychiatric problem.

On this Yom Yerushalayim day 5780 (2020), there is still so much history to be played out for the Jewish people. It is a pity to stand by the wayside and view the miraculous episodes as a spectator when you could be a participant in creating the beautiful tapestry called Am Yisrael enveloped in Medinat Yisrael and caressed by Eretz Yisrael.

So Be careful, Be healthy, and above all Be HERE.

Chag Yerushalayim Samayach

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5780/2020 Nachman Kahana