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Parashat Bereshit / פרשת בראשית Mevorchim Chodesh Cheshvan-CandleLighting in Jerusalem 5:34 PM, October 9, 2015 Tishrei 26, 5776

Jerusalem Divrei Torah

The centrality of Jerusalem to the Jewish People is indisputable and is the core of our mission. Our Divrei Torah by [Rabbi Yosef Bronstein](#) focus on Jerusalem and its connection to the weekly Torah portion. For a pdf to discuss at the Shabbat table, please [click here](#). To sponsor a Dvar Torah please [click here](#)

Yerushalayim as the Goal of Creation

On the third day of creation, Hashem created dry land by taking the water that filled the globe and limiting it to the bodies of water. But what contained the water in the demarcated oceans, lakes and rivers if the quantity of the water would allow it to cover the whole world? The midrash comments that this is an example of "hichzik mu'at et ha-merubeh" - where a measured location miraculously contained more than the dimensions of the location should normally allow.

The midrash continues that an identical phenomenon will occur in the end of times:

And in the Future to Come, too, this phenomenon will occur, as it is stated (Yirmiyahu 3:17): "At that time people will call Yerushalayim 'The Throne of Hashem' and all the nations will be gathered to her in the Name of Hashem - to Yerushalayim."^[1]

Yirmiyahu prophecies that in future times all of the nations will gather together in Yerushalayim for the sake of Hashem. The spatially small Yerushalayim will be able to encompass the masses that will stream into it from around the world, similar to the oceans containing more water than is physically possible. This connection is underscored by the word-choice in both places. The word Yirmiyahu uses for "gathering" – "ve-nikvu" – is the same root of Hashem's command to the primordial water – "yikavu ha-mayim."

The linking of the six days of creation to the eschatological Yerushalayim highlights the significance of the latter. Perhaps, the midrash's association points to the fact that the very purpose of the creation of dry land and human civilization which is built on it, is to arrive at the point in history when all of the nations will recognize Hashem in Yerushalayim.

As the Ramban notes in his commentary to the Torah,^[2] Hashem's purpose in creating the world is:

For the ultimate objective of all the commandments is that we should believe in our God and acknowledge to Him that He created us. And that is in fact the ultimate objective of the Creation itself...

The world was created for mankind to recognize, thank and praise its creator. Therefore, the Ramban attributes a crucial role to communal prayer in a shul setting:

And the purpose of raising one's voice in the prayers, and the purpose of the

Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

With profound grief we mourn
Ha-Rav Nechemia Lavi HY"D
Ra"m in our Yeshiva, Ateret Yerushalayim
who was murdered in the heart of the
Old City of Yerushalayim
while attempting to stop a terrorist attack

In the Name of Ha-Rav Nechemia Lavi:
This Time We Will Also Overcome

During the joy of the holiday of Sukkot, tragedy has struck: Thursday night, young parents, Ha-Rav Eitam and Na'ama Henkin, were murdered before their children's eyes. Good and righteous people. And on Motzaei Shabbat, good people were again murdered as they walked innocently in the Old City. One of them is Ha-Rav Nechemia Lavi, Ra"m in our Yeshiva, Ateret Yerushalayim. A man with a gentle soul, a sweet and good man, who never wronged another person – whether Jew or Arab.

The Midrash relates that before his death, King Darius requested: Do not mourn me until a person comes and speaks ill of me. And no one came. Likewise, we can say with confidence, that although there will be much pain over his death, no one will come and speak ill of Rav Nechemia. Rav Nechemia was an exalted person, girded with Midot Tovot (sterling character traits). He was completely kind. A person who never spoke ill of others. He was a person who delved into the depths of Torah, who learned Torah day and night, out of a love of Hashem and a love of toiling in Torah learning.

To our great distress, we must acknowledge that these difficult events, these tragedies, are not surprising. Since the appearance of Islam, Muslims have persecuted us, hated us, forced us to convert to Islam, expelled us and murdered us. Although they have done so less than Christians, this is of no comfort. We all remember how the Mufti of Yerushalayim, Haj Amin al-Husseini worked hand-in-hand with Hitler and cooperated with him, on condition that in the Arab countries, Arabs could freely murder Jews.

Nothing has changed, except for one thing: With the kindness of Hashem, we now have an army, a courageous army, a capable army, a devoted army. An agent of Hashem. Not a

synagogues and the merit of communal prayer is this: that people should have a place where they can gather and acknowledge to God that He created them and caused them to be, and where they can publicize this and declare before Him, "We are Your creations!"

People gathering together to pray and recognize their creator is one of the highest fulfillments of the world's purpose.

While in our current fallen reality a shul is the ideal location for this mass proclamation, the ultimate place for it is Yerushalayim. In the end of times all of the nations will gather in Yerushalayim, Hashem's terrestrial capital, and proclaim His kingship. This will complete the story of creation by being the fulfillment of Hashem's initial goal.

May we soon witness all the nations proclaiming their allegiance to the one true God in Yerushalayim instead of the opposite which we currently endure.

[1] Bereishit Rabbah 5:7 (translation from Artscroll Series).

[2] Ramban Shemot 13:16 (translation from Artscroll Series).

[click here for a pdf copy](#)

Children from Ateret Cohanim Communities join in a communal shiva in memory of Rabbi Lavi HY"D and Aaron Banito Bennet HY"D outside Beit Wittenberg



conquering army – but as his name indicates: The Israel Defense Force.

It is true that since the beginning of the return to Zion and the establishment of the State of Israel, we have endured many tragedies. But we must view things in proportion: The light is inestimably greater than the darkness. Obviously, the pain of every Jew who is murdered rends the heart, and all the more so if that person is your close friend, someone who has been close to your soul for so many years.

At the same time, this does not erase our joy for all of the goodness we have received. After all, terror does not have any actual power. It cannot determine political events. It is purely psychological warfare whose goal is to break the spirit, and weaken the citizens' trust in the State, its leaders and its army.

We declare here in our name and in the name of Ha-Rav Nechemia Lavi, who has arisen on high, that we go hand-in-hand with our Nation, with our State and with our army. We have experienced much greater hardships and we have overcome them, and with the help of Hashem, this time we will also overcome.

The Murder of a Hero

In trying to save a life, Rabbi Nechemia Lavi paid with his life.

By Sara Yoheved Rigler



Rabbi Nechemia Lavi, 41, was celebrating the Third Meal of Shabbat with his wife and seven children in their sukkah adjacent to their Jerusalem Old City apartment. Rabbi Lavi related a teaching of the Vilna Gaon that there are two mitzvot that a man can fulfill with his whole body: Living in the Land of Israel and sitting in a sukkah. (Women,

who are commanded to immerse in a mikvah, have three whole-body mitzvot.) He remarked to his family that they are, at that moment, fulfilling both these mitzvot. Suddenly they heard a woman screaming. Rabbi Lavi, an officer in the I.D.F. Reserves, grabbed his gun and ran downstairs to save her. As Israel's Chief Rabbi would say at Nechemia Lavi's funeral, he thus was fulfilling a third mitzvah with his whole body.

The Arab terrorist, who had already murdered 22-year-old Aaron Banito Bennet and seriously wounded his young wife Adelle, killed Rabbi Lavi by repeatedly stabbing him in the chest and neck. Then he took the rabbi's gun and shot the Bennets' toddler in the leg. Adelle, with a knife in her shoulder, managed to run to an Israeli police outpost fifty meters away before losing consciousness. The police neutralized the terrorist.

Nechemia Lavi was a lover of Jerusalem's walled Old City. Although he grew up in Beit El, a town 33 kilometers outside Jerusalem, Nechemia moved to the Old City 23 years ago, as a yeshiva student at Ateret Cohanim. He became an educator. He taught young men at the yeshiva and children at the Moriah Talmud Torah in the Jewish Quarter.

He was also a lover of the Land of Israel. He took a tour guide course and became a certified guide, not because he was seeking another vocation, but just because he wanted to learn everything about the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Lavi had zeal to serve. As a soldier in the I.D.F. and then the Reserves, he was regularly called up for reserve duty. Disappointed that after turning 40 he would no longer be called up, he took an officers' training course so that he could continue to serve in the Reserves.

In the Muslim Quarter



Some twenty years ago, Nehemia and his wife Netta moved into Beit Witenberg on HaGai Street in the Muslim Quarter. This large complex had been purchased by Rabbi Moshe Witenberg, a wealthy Eastern European Jew, in the 1880s. Rabbi Witenberg built a magnificent Chabad synagogue there, rented out twenty apartments, and used much of the building for his charitable institutions. Rabbi Witenberg died childless in 1899, after insuring with the Turkish authorities that the property would be consecrated as a charitable foundation and remain in Jewish hands. In 1920, Arab rioters attacked the Witenberg complex, burned down the synagogue, including its many Torah scrolls and priceless Chabad manuscripts, and looted and destroyed the apartments.

Although the original residents were afraid to return to Beit Witenberg after it was reconstructed, Jewish immigrants from Hungary moved in. They stayed there until driven out by the Arab riots of 1929, in which 133 Jews in the so-called "Muslim Quarter" were murdered. (An official census conducted by the British Mandate government in 1922 had found that the majority of residents of the "Muslim Quarter" were Jews.) In the wake of the Arab riots of 1929 and 1936, the "Muslim Quarter," including its many Jewish-owned properties, became Judenrein.

After Israeli forces liberated the Old City from Jordanian rule in the Six Day War of 1967, Jews slowly returned to the Jewish Quarter. Reclaiming Jewish properties in the Muslim Quarter, however, was much harder. It took many years of legal action, much money, and the dedicated efforts of Ateret Cohanim to return scores of properties to Jewish hands. Finally, in 1987, a mezuzah was once again affixed to the entrance of the Witenberg complex.

Despite the danger of living in the Muslim Quarter, Nehemia Lavi and his family moved into Beit Witenberg on Hagai Street twenty years ago. His apartment there was both a home and a statement that Jews would not be intimidated by Arab violence from reclaiming their ancestral homeland or even this one, small, holy part of it.

The Number 18 Bus

Nehemia Lavi understood that courage, like fear, is contagious. The act that best reveals his bravery took place in 1996. At 6:30 in the morning of February 25, Jerusalem's #18 bus was filled with people on their way to work. A suicide bomber boarded the bus and blew himself up, killing 26 people. Exactly one week later, at the same hour on the same #18 bus route, another suicide bomber blew up the bus, killing 19 people. Exactly one week after that, at the same hour, knowing how scared the driver and passengers would be, 22-year-old Nehemia Lavi, carrying a large Israeli flag, got on the #18 bus at the beginning of its route. With encouraging words and the blue-and-white flag of the Jewish nation, Nehemia instilled courage into the driver and passengers. He rode the bus until its last stop and then back the whole route in the other direction. It was a statement: We Jews will not submit to fear.

Nehemia Lavi understood that courage, like fear, is contagious.

Courage, like fear, is contagious. At Nehemia Lavi's funeral this past Sunday, they announced that after the conclusion of the Simchat Torah holiday, "**Second Hakafot,**" dancing with the Torah as on Simchat Torah, but with the rousing accompaniment of a band, would take place on Hagai Street in the Muslim Quarter, at the very place where Nehemia Lavi and Aaron Banito Bennet had been murdered. The square has been renamed, "Nehemia

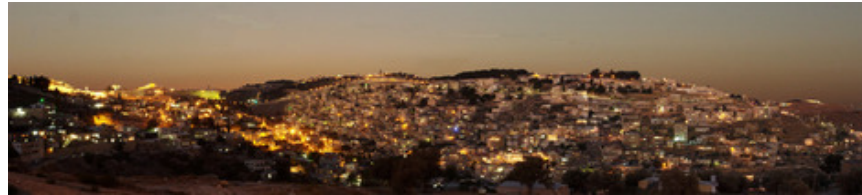


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View of Jerusalem from the Yemenite Village

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and Aaron Square.”

Hundreds of Jews poured to the site. As the band played, Am Yisrael Chai (“The Jewish Nation Lives”), on the cobblestones recently cleansed of Jewish blood, hundreds of Jews danced with Torah scrolls in their hands and courage in their hearts. It was a statement: We Jews will not submit to fear.

Our brother Nehemia, this is the courage you taught all of us by your brave example.

The tragedy in the Old City has traumatized many of our children and their parents. However, they are committed and determined to continue to live and learn in the areas so called East Jerusalem which we refer to as the Old Yeshuv. Help them as they go through this difficult time in their lives.

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**Established in 1978,
This year is our "double chai" year**



**American Friends of Ateret Cohanim / Jerusalem Chai
Our Mission**

The Old City is home to nearly 35,000 people..
The Jewish population of the Old City numbers 5000 of which 4000 reside in the Jewish Quarter. The additional 1000 are living and learning in the area of the Old Jewish Quarter (Referred to as the Moslem and Christian Quarters in East Jerusalem)

For nearly four decades, the efforts of American Friends of Ateret Cohanim/Jerusalem Chai have been instrumental in meeting the social, recreational, and educational needs of the families and Yeshiva students who have returned to areas that were once predominantly Jewish, including the Old City, Maaleh HaZeitim, The Yemenite Village (Shiloach) and Kidmat Zion



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