

Message for Yom Ha'atzamaut

"While the temple blazed, the victors plundered everything that fell in their way and slaughtered wholesale all who were caught. No pity was shown for age, no reverence for rank; children and greybeards, laity and priests, alike were massacred; every class was pursued and encompassed in the grasp of war, whether suppliants for mercy or offering resistance. The roar of the flames streaming far and wide mingled with the groans of the falling victims; and, owing to the height of the hill and the mass of the burning pile, one would have thought that the whole city was ablaze. And then the din -- nothing more deafening or appalling could be conceived than that. There were the war-cries of the Roman legions sweeping onward in a mass, the howls of the rebels encircled by fire and sword, the rush of the people who, cut off above, fled panic stricken only to fall into the arms of the foe, and their shrieks as they met their fate. With the cries on the hill were blended those of the multitude in the city below; and now many who were emaciated and tongue tied from starvation, when they beheld the sanctuary on fire, gathered strength once more for lamentations and wailing. Transjordan and the surrounding mountains contributed their echoes, deepening the din. But yet more awful than the uproar were the sufferings. You would indeed have thought that the temple hill was boiling over from its base, being everywhere one mass of flame, but yet that the stream of blood was more copious than the flames and the slain more numerous than the slayers. For the ground was nowhere visible through the corpses; but the soldiers had to clamber over heaps of bodies in pursuit of the fugitives." The temple site was now nearly empty of rebels and the Roman troops set up their standards within the court opposite the eastern gate and sacrificed to them, and with rousing acclamations hailed Titus as imperator ('commander in chief'). Some of the temple priests were still taking refuge on the sanctuary wall, although at least two of them had chosen to end their lives spectacularly by plunging into the flames. On the fifth day those who were left were too hungry to hold out any longer. They surrendered themselves to the Romans, only to be put to death by Titus on the basis that "it is fitting for priests to perish along with their temple".

It was thus that, according to Josephus and other ancient sources, in the summer of 70 C.E. the Romans defeated the Jewish revolt in Jerusalem. As we have seen, the temple was destroyed and the city was razed to the ground, with, Josephus calculated, over one million deaths. Those who survived those terrible times might have been forgiven for thinking that, terrible as the destruction was, Jewish life in the land and in particular in Jerusalem would nevertheless soon recover and that, as before during the time of the Babylonian exile, the temple would shortly be rebuilt. However, as the Messiah had prophesied only some three decades before, the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was in fact the beginning of a prolonged period of Jewish exile from the city. For "As Yeshua came out of the Temple, one of the talmidim said to him, "Look, Rabbi! What huge stones! What magnificent buildings!" "You see all these great buildings?" Yeshua said to him, "They will be totally destroyed!- not a single stone will be left standing!" As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple, Kefa, Ya'akov, Yochanan and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these

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things happen? And what sign will show when all these things are about to be accomplished?" (Mr 13:1-4). "When you see Yerushalayim surrounded by armies, then you are to understand that she is about to be destroyed" Yeshua replied. "Those in Y'hudah must escape to the hills, those inside the city must get out, and those in the country must not enter it. For these are the days of vengeance, when everything that has been written in the Tanakh will come true. What a terrible time it will be for pregnant women and nursing mothers! For there will be great distress in the Land and judgment on the people. Some will fall by the edge of the sword, others will be carried into all the countries of the Goyim, and Yerushalayim will be trampled down by the Goyim until the age of the Goyim has run its course." (Lu 21:20-24).

But when exactly would the age of the Goyim run its course? When would the trampling down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles be completed? When would a Jewish flag rise once again over the old city of Jerusalem to mark the restoration of Jewish hegemony? Century after century passed and it seemed with every passing year that the dream of being reunited with the city of Jerusalem got further and further away for our Jewish people. For thousands of years Passovers came, and Passovers went, without our people being able to act on their cherished hope that next year would see them in Jerusalem, while countless billions of apparently futile prayers were sent up to the Lord who had exiled them expressing the hope that one day our people would be permitted to return to the land in general, and Jerusalem in particular. In 1948 prayers for the former found their fruition in the miraculous founding of the state of Israel, but the fact that Jerusalem remained in Arab hands after the war of independence meant that it was Tel Aviv and not Jerusalem which became the capital of the restored Jewish state. During the period of Jordanian rule Jews were forbidden access to the old city, and a wall of division separated the modern western side of the city from the ancient Jewish capital toward the East. But as the restoration of the Jewish state in 1948 indicated, the time to favour Zion had at last come and there could be no denying the tidal wave of prophetic fulfilment which had been unleashed. The events of 1967 would finally see the curtain close on 2000 years of Jewish exile from the ancient city of our fathers. When Israel's Arab neighbours provoked war with the Jewish state in June of that year the prophetic clock thus took one huge leap forward. The Israeli assault on the Mount of Olives was launched at 8.30 on the morning of June 7. Colonel Gur hurried to the Intercontinental Hotel at the southern end of the Mount of Olives. From there he looked down over the whole of the Temple Mount. After a few moments contemplation, looking at a scene no Israeli had been allowed to contemplate for 19 years, he gave the orders for an assault to be launched through St Stephen's gate, the only entrance to the city on the eastern side of the city wall. Then he spoke through his radio link to his commanders: "we are going up to the old city, to the Temple Mount, to the Wailing Wall," he said. Visions of ghostly Roman armies assaulting the Temple some two thousand year before must have plagued the minds of Israeli soldiers as Colonel Gur adjured them: "For thousands of years the Jewish people has prayed for this moment" he said. "Israel is awaiting our victory. Good luck!" The attack went well. In fact, there was remarkably little resistance. It was only a few hours before the first Israeli troops

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reached the Wall and, in spite of the danger that still surrounded them they began to pray. They were quickly joined by dozens more. Moshe Amirav, among the first of the paratroopers to reach the Wall described the scene: "We ran there, a group of panting soldiers, lost on the plaza of the Temple Mount, searching for a giant stone wall. We did not stop to look at the Mosque of Omar even though this was the first time we had seen it close up. Forward! Forward! Hurriedly, we pushed our way through the Magreb Gate and suddenly we stopped, thunderstruck. There it was before our eyes! Gray and massive, silent and restrained. The Western Wall! Slowly, slowly I began to approach the Wall in fear and trembling like a pious cantor going to the lectern to lead the prayers. I approached it as the messenger of my father and my grandfather, of my great-grandfather and of all the generations in all the exiles who had never merited seeing it - and so they had sent me to represent them. Somebody recited the festive blessing: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe who has kept us alive, and maintained us and brought us to this time." But I could not answer "Amen." I put my hand on the stones and the tears that started to flow were not my tears. They were the tears of all Israel, tears of hope and prayer, tears of Chasidic tunes, tears of Jewish dances, tears which scorched and burned the heavy gray stone."

The excitement in Israel, particularly in Jerusalem, that the whole city was under Israeli control was intense. There was a constant stream of people to the Western Wall on the afternoon of June 7, "Some to pray, others just to stare", the Jerusalem Post reported. "Many put petitions for the health of their dear ones in the spaces between the giant stones" that had been placed for the glory of God. That afternoon many Israeli leaders also made their way to the Western Wall. One of the first to do so was the senior chaplain to the Israeli forces, Rabbi Shlomo Goren. He came, the Jerusalem Post reported, "at an eager run". He was carrying a Sefer Torah, and recited the prayer thanking God for allowing him to live to see that moment. Goren stayed at the Wall for several hours, reciting psalms of praise for the victory and prayers for the souls of those who had been killed in securing it. Shortly after Rabbi Goren reached the Wall, the Defence Minister, Moshe Dayan, arrived, together with Generals Narkiss and Rabin. "I felt truly shaken and stood there murmuring a prayer for peace," Rabin later recalled. "Motta Gur's paratroopers were struggling to reach the wall and touch it. We stood among a tangle of 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." "We have united Jerusalem, the divided capital of Israel," Dayan declared. "We have returned to the holiest of holy places, never to depart from it again. To Arab neighbours we extend, also at this hour - and with added emphasis at this hour - our hand in peace. And to Christian and Muslim fellow citizens, we solemnly promise full religious freedom and rights. We did not come to Jerusalem for the sake of other people's holy places, and not to interfere with the adherents of other faiths, but in order to safeguard its entirety, and to live there together with others, in unity."

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Dayan, Rabin and Narkiss were followed at the Wall by many other leading figures, chief amongst whom was Levy Eshkol, the Prime Minister, and thus "the first leader of a Jewish government to visit the site of the Temple since its loss 1897 years ago", commented the Jerusalem Post. Meanwhile, up on the Temple Mount Colonel Mordechai Gur addressed his men. "Paratroopers, conquerors of Jerusalem!" he began. "When the Temple Mount was conquered by the Greeks it was liberated by the Maccabbees. The "Kanaim" and Bar Kochva fought against those that destroyed the Second Temple. For 2,000 years the Temple Mount was off limits to the Jews. Until you, the paratroopers, came and returned it to the bosom of its people. The Western Wall, towards which every Jewish heart beats, is again in our hands. Many Jews risked their lives, over our very long history, to come to Jerusalem and to reside in it. An infinite number of wistful poems have expressed the profound desire for Jerusalem that beats in every Jewish heart. During the War of Liberation incredible efforts were made to reclaim the heart of the people - the Old City and the Western Wall. To you has fallen the great privilege to complete the circle, to give back to the people its eternal capital and its sacred centre. Many paratroopers, our finest and most veteran comrades, fell in this terrible battle. It was a rapid and ferocious battle. In it you functioned as one body that crushed anything that stood in your way without concern for your own injuries. You did not gripe, you did not complain, you did not report, you just advanced and conquered. Jerusalem is yours – forever."

The news that Israeli forces had recovered the ancient city of Jerusalem, including the Western Wall and the Temple Mount, impacted hugely upon Jews everywhere across the world. Instinctively all knew that some kind of spiritual divide had been crossed. With the restoration of Jewish sovereignty over the undivided city of Jerusalem all felt that at last the days of the Roman exile were coming to an end, and that an old, terrible chapter of Jewish history had just been closed. This had been a chapter which told of Jewish servitude to the Gentile nations; yes, a chapter in which the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem had been constantly trodden under by the feet of Gentiles had now closed. With the events of June 1967 it was clear that a fresh page in Jewish history, a page full of hope and promise, had begun. Indeed it had, but perhaps not in the way that most Jews in 1967 envisaged, for the successful outcome of the Six-Day war did not in itself bring about the coming of the Messiah and the construction of the long prayed for millennial Temple. Moreover, if Jews at that time expected the world simply to accept the fact that God had returned Jerusalem to our Jewish people then they were to be much mistaken. On the contrary, just as Jews instinctively knew that a page had turned in Jewish history so too, it is clear in retrospect, there was a sea-change in Gentile opinion towards Israel. Of course Arab and Muslim nations had always been antagonistic toward the Jewish state, but with the Israeli victories of 1967 they were to be joined in that antagonism by Western liberal opinion too. In the succeeding years Israel's conquest of Jerusalem was to be denounced by governments across the globe and by the United Nations, to the extent that Zachariah's prophecy that Jerusalem would become a cup of reeling for all nations can be considered to have been fulfilled. The status of Jerusalem and of the other territorial gains paid for in Israeli blood during the Six Day War, remains to

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this day a political hot potato like no other, and is commonly regarded as the single most significant blockage to peace in the Middle East, and therefore of the world. Calls for its re-division eerily echo another of Zachariah's prophecies which also speaks of the nations of the world gathering against Jerusalem to enforce its will and re-impose Gentile hegemony.

Although the liberation of Jerusalem in 1967 did not bring about the millennial kingdom in quite the way that many Jews perhaps had hoped, it is nevertheless true to say that it lit sparks of revival among our people which, in time, will lead to the realisation of that hope. Like a thunderclap in the heavens, the liberation of Jerusalem in June 1967 released a spirit of revival and renewal among our people such has not been seen since the first century. Natan Sharansky later spoke of the huge sense of Jewish pride which the news of the liberation of Jerusalem had brought to the oppressed, assimilated Jews of Russia. David Samuels of Tabley magazine interviewed Sharansky in 2016. "Growing up as a child in Donetsk," Samuels asked, "what did you know about other Jewish communities in the world?" "I didn't know anything about Jewish communities," Sharansky replied. "I knew nothing about Judaism, I knew nothing about Jewish history, nothing about Jewish religion. I knew very well that I am a Jew because that's what was written in the ID of your parents, and there was a lot of anti-Semitism and discrimination, that's all." "When did you first start to discover that Jews were a people with a history, and were living in other places besides Donetsk?" "I first realized that I have a history, people, and a country in 1967, after Six Day War. For the Soviet Union, the victory of Israel in that war was a big humiliation, and suddenly Jews discovered that all the people around you, friends and enemies, Jews and non-Jews, connect this country Israel with you. And so you want to understand what this connection means. That's when in the underground, from the books that were brought to us by American Jews, we started reading about ourselves and about our history. And we find out that we have such an exciting history, beginning from Exodus from Egypt until these days. There were Jews coming from all over the world. They would say, "oh your father is from Odessa. My grandfather is from Odessa, we are family, we want to help you." And you discover there is the State of Israel, which also wants to help you. So that's how you discover your identity, and that's what gives you the strength to start fighting for your dignity and your freedom." In the United States in particular the events of the Six Day War prompted another similar kind of spiritual awakening as thousands of young Jews began to enquire as to the possibility that Yeshua, who had for millennia been framed as the blonde-haired Christian Christ, and an enemy of the Jewish people, might in fact be our Jewish Messiah. Echoes of the Biblical story of Yosef who threw off his Egyptian garb and showed the scars of his circumcision to his disbelieving brothers... so these young Jews too saw through the caked-on layers of Christian theology that had hidden the real sabra identity of the Jew from Galilee. Indeed, just as Yosef's brothers, their eyes opened, embraced their long lost brother, so these young Jews were emboldened to embrace Yeshua as their long awaited Messiah. Moreover, ever since 1967 what these young Jews sensed in their spirits academics, both Jewish and non-Jewish, have increasingly made plain, actively stripping away those caked on layers of Christendom which obscured Yeshua's true identity as a Jew of Jews and a rabbi of rabbis, a character and phenomenon of which all

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Jews, believing or not, can rightly be proud of as having changed the world like no other in the great pantheon of Jews like Einstein who impacted the world.

We here today share the same sense of "irrepressible surge of Jewish pride, unity and resolve" of which Natan Sharansky once spoke following the liberation of Jerusalem, and look with prayerful anticipation toward the final and complete spiritual liberation of Jerusalem as foretold by the prophet Zechariah. The restoration of Jewish sovereignty in 1948 and in particular the events of 1967 signalled that the time of the Gentiles, with everything that relates to what we may call Gentilism - a period of overwhelming political and spiritual Gentile hegemony over the Jewish people and Judaism - is coming to an end. Let all people of the book, in particular our Christian friends take note of what is written in our Scriptures and is shortly coming to pass. For as the prophet Zechariah said, "I will make Yerushalayim a cup that will stagger the surrounding peoples. Even Y'hudah will be caught up in the siege against Yerushalayim. When that day comes, I will make Yerushalayim a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who try to lift it will hurt themselves, and all the earth's nations will be massed against her." "When that day comes, I will seek to destroy all nations attacking Yerushalayim; and I will pour out on the house of David and on those living in Yerushalayim a spirit of grace and prayer; and they will look to me, whom they pierced." They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son; they will be in bitterness on his behalf like the bitterness for a firstborn son. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is my people' and they will say, 'Adonai is my God.' "Finally, everyone remaining from all the nations that came to attack Yerushalayim will go up every year to worship the king, Adonai-Tzva'ot, and to keep the festival of Sukkot. If any of the families of the earth does not go up to Yerushalayim to worship the king, Adonai-Tzva'ot, no rain will fall on them." In this coming day it will be, as the prophet Mikhah declared, that "Many Gentiles will go and say, "Come, let's go up to the mountain of Adonai, to the house of the God of Ya'akov! He will teach us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For out of Tziyon will go forth Torah, the word of Adonai from Yerushalayim."

Mishpacha, as we have heard, the last two thousand years may have seen the triumph of Gentilism over the Jewish people, but that age is coming to an end. A prophetic page is being turned even as we speak that will see, not the continued subjugation of Judaism and the Jewish people, but an ascent of Judaism and the Jewish people as the Messiah, at our head, restores both our Land and our faith. It is not to London, New York, Moscow, Paris, Beijing, the Vatican or Mecca, that the nations shall stream in future, but to Jerusalem and to the Messiah's halakhah. So to all that have ears I therefore say, get with the programme!