

A Midrash for Today

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The Midrash says — "When the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed the Holy One Blessed be He cried and said: "My sons, where are you? My priests where are you? Those who love Me, where are you?" Then the Holy One Blessed be He said to Yirmiyahu: "I am today like a man who had an only son, and made for him a marriage canopy, and the son died at the chupah. Go summon Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov and Moshe from their graves for they know how to cry." Immediately, Yirmiyahu went to the Cave of the Machpelah and said to the patriarchs of the world: "Arise! For the time has arrived that you are summoned before the Holy One Blessed be He." They said to him: "Why?" He said to them: "I don't know." The Midrash concludes that Yirmiyahu did not say the truth because he was afraid that they would say to him: "b'yamecha haysa l'baneino zos?" — In your days this happened to our children?"

Yirmiyahu is frightened of the judgment of history. What will be said about one who was present at the destruction of the Holy Temple and could not prevent it? Yirmiyahu found no comfort in the fact that for forty years he had sounded the alarm, had admonished the people to mend their ways, chastised them, and all to no avail. Yirmiyahu became an object of scorn, despised even by his own family, imprisoned, beaten, and cast into a dark, dank, terrifying pit. Yet he could not give a truthful answer to the Avos.

He felt that in the presence of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, and in the face of the awesome tragedy, his excuses would sound hollow and empty. He felt that he would have no answer to the question: "In your days this happened to our children?"

History is cruel, gives no quarter and no reprieve. There is little comfort in thinking that judgment is delayed until some later date when history may be kinder and more benevolent. Maybe by then our grandchildren will find some way to absolve us of some of the guilt. Maybe they will understand. Maybe they have forgotten.

But that is not to be. No such breather, and this is indeed the essence of the Midrash. The judgment of history brooks no delay, and is not postponed for some undefined time in the future, and it is not our grandchildren who will make the assessment of our action or inaction — but rather the judgment of history is instant, it is now, not later, it is immediate and the jury are the Avos and for that matter, all who preceded us. All of Israel, from Avrohom until today, make the painful determination of our conduct. They stand poised, watching us carefully, tense and wondering will we rise to the challenge. Will we, the generation that G-d graced with His greatest gift to the Jewish people — the land of Israel and then the Holy City of Yerushalayim — which he entrusted to our care — will we protect her or, G-d forbid, fail? Will we remain silent in the face of the unthinkable, a Jewish government that will divide the city with our sworn enemies. Is Yerushalayim to become again what it was from 1949 to 1967, divided, torn asunder, with an

ugly, ominous wall in its center like a dagger in our hearts, topped with jagged, depressing barbed wire, traversing her width. Will our political leaders who proclaimed at every opportunity the solemn promise: "Jerusalem will remain forever united under Israeli sovereignty," to standing ovations from Jews whose eyes filled with tears and lumps in their throats, now renege and betray Yerushalayim. Is Yerushalayim to become what Berlin once was? Is Berlin to be united and Jerusalem divided?

Will we, who have repeated so often the holy oath taken by the first exiles at the rivers of Babylon: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning. Let my tongue cleave to my palate if I fail to remember you, if I fail to raise Jerusalem above my foremost joy." What verdict would those exiles who were beaten but not broken, vanquished but not defeated, pass on us should we falter or waver in our commitment to Yerushalayim?

Would they not point the accusing finger at us and say: "In your days this happened to our children?"

What will we proclaim at the conclusion of the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, and at the end of the Seder? "Next year in Divided Jerusalem, next year in half of Jerusalem," and then burst out in song and dance, or more probably burst out in tears and weeping because we failed Jerusalem, because we failed ourselves, because we betrayed Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov and all of Jewish history?

Think about the pain that will come at every wedding before the groom breaks the glass — will we be able to sing mournfully: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," or will our tongues cleave to our palates because we forgot her and did not remember her?

"For from half of Zion shall go forth Torah and the word of G-d from a divided Yerushalayim," doesn't sound too good. We will have to consign to the dustbin Yosselle Rosenblatt's and Yaakov Shwekey's "Rachem Na" and all the other great songs of Yerushalayim.

But we will have permission to visit at the Western Wall, and if not we will always have the "Wailing Wall" we built to cut the city in half. Even King Solomon knew that there was only one real mother.

The resounding cry that must emerge from every Jewish heart is: "For Zion's sake I will not remain silent, and for Yerushalayim's sake I will not rest."

We will do battle against anyone who dares lift a hand against Yerushalayim. We will tell the government of the State of Israel: "Cease, desist. You have no mandate from the Jews of history since Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov to relinquish any part of Eretz Yisroel and Yerushalayim. The holy city is not yours. You will stand condemned before all of history.

The gentile world laughs at you. The Moslems gloat and mock your pitiful cowardly gestures. Have you no pride? Have you no courage? Have you no integrity?

The tragic march of folly must be stopped now. You make a mockery of the noble oath taken at the Rivers of Babylon. You profane your own political promises. With your talk of concessions

you already do immeasurable harm to Yerushalayim because of raised expectations. You create a negative dynamic that can only weaken us.

We all know the facts, that there is no partner for peace, that no one will recognize Israel as a Jewish state, that terrorism will not cease, that the enemy's solemn commitments of over 14 years have not been honored — and will not. All the meetings and conferences are an exercise in futility. The profound tragedy is that the battle over Yerushalayim is between Jew and fellow Jew.

Any change in the status of the Holy City that will result from Israel's concessions to her enemies will be a grievous chillul Hashem (a desecration of G-d's name) before an indifferent and often hostile world. Any change in the status of Yerushalayim is null and void.

We will cry out for Jerusalem's sake.

We will take to the streets worldwide on her behalf.

We will pray — so that there will be no need to cry for Jerusalem.

We believe with perfect faith that on the 28th of Iyar 5727, G-d gave Yerushalayim to His people Israel. No one dare to attempt to undo what Hashem has wrought.

Yerushalayim is ours and only ours unto eternity.

We do not intend to be asked the question: "In your days this happened to our children?"

L'Shana HaBaah BiYerushalayim Habnuyah. Next year in Yerushalayim rebuilt.