



The Trafalgar Shul

Many of us attended the rally in Trafalgar Square this past Sunday held in solidarity with Israel, as it continues fight for its right to exist and to live in peace.

Produced by two leading organizations, the Board of Deputies and the UJIA, and led by the indefatigable Chief Rabbi, who paraphrased the holy texts for the congregants much like the spiritual leadership of old.

It was as if 30,000 of us Jews came to pray together that morning in Trafalgar Square because we needed a venue larger than many synagogues could provide. We simply needed to congregate in one place, and if it had to be under the benign eye of Lord Nelson, so be it. The turf was hallowed for the moment (and maybe longer) by the presence of three thousand minyanim in prayer.

The spirituality of that gathering came from the hearts and mouths of those present. We were in effect beseeching G-d for the life against death, for the lives of our own brothers and sisters, as our prayers say "Safeguard our brothers and sisters, the children of Israel, who are in places of anguish and captivity."

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1760-1827), a Chassidic master who originated the broad religious philosophy of Chabad, would frequently quote the passage in the Zohar that states that whenever ten Jews gather together, the divine presence rests among them. Surely the divine presence rested on that gathering at which we resolved to be proud of our Jewishness and proclaimed "the Jewish people live" or Am Yisrael Chai.

This assembly was held against the backdrop of a largely corrupt and biased media who continue to derogate the motivations of the State of Israel and its entitlement to exist. They are manifestly hateful and fail to maintain honest reporting. During the assembly there was a reminder of the enemy, who continued to chant its time-worn slogans of hate from the sidelines, and a thank you is in order to the Police for providing very good security for the occasion.

In biblical times, there was a practice every seven years to gather and assemble all the Jews in Jerusalem. This was known by the Hebrew word "Hakhel" and constituted Jewish law 'to assemble the people, men women and children and the convert' to learn, listen and to fear G-d. It was practiced with all due pageantry and full ceremony marking the hearts and minds of the participants with a long-lasting impression. This practice of the Assembly, "Hakhel," was vital to the sustained integrity of the Jewish people. Through it, we continued to unite, to remember our bond with our brothers and sisters, and to come to our brothers and sisters aid whenever necessary.

The late Lubavitcher Rebbe would frequently hold large rally's and preside over them. Some were held in happy times and some were held when Israel faced danger and was fighting for its life. At the end of each rally, he would invoke the ancient promise of G-d to the security of the people of Israel and would end with a thunderous 'Continue to Be Strong.'

The rally that was held this past Sunday was the Hakhael assembly that was needed right now. Let us pray that the next Assembly will be for a happier reason.

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