

# YOM YERUSHALAYIM/ JERUSALEM DAY

*by Rabbi Yehudah Prero*

Yom Yerushalayim, the day which is observed to commemorate the retaking of Jerusalem by the Israelis in 1967, will be observed this coming Sunday, May 28, the 28th day of Iyar.

If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. (Psalms 137:5)

The Talmud in Baba Basra 60b tells us that after the Second Temple was destroyed, there were many people who refrained from eating meat and from drinking wine. Rabbi Yehoshua said to them "My children, why are you not eating meat or drinking wine?" They responded to him "We should eat meat that from it sacrifices were once brought on the altar, but no longer? We should drink wine that was used for libations on the altar, but no longer?" Rabbi Yehoshua replied that if that was the case, how can one eat bread, as the "mincha" offering (from flour) is no longer being brought. How can one eat fruits, as the "bikurim" (first fruits) are no longer being brought? How can one drink water, as the "nisuch hamayim" (water pouring on the altar) no longer takes place? They had no response. Rabbi Yehoshua said to them "Not to mourn at all is impossible, as the decree has been decreed against us. To mourn more than necessary is impossible, as decrees are not made on the community unless the majority of the community can withstand it. The Talmud then continues with a list of things that we do to remember the loss of Jerusalem and the Temple, such as leaving a patch of wall in ones house unfinished, and placing ashes on the forehead of a groom. The Talmud then states - all who mourn the loss of Jerusalem will merit and see it in its happiness.

We see from the Talmud that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple are events which we are to carry with us always. We must always remember that we once had a city which was the home of the holiest place in the world. However, we lost that city, and we lost the splendor that came with it. We have to remember Jerusalem actively, even in times of great joy. At a wedding, a groom has ashes put on his forehead, the bride has jewelry removed, and a cup is broken, so we will remember the Jerusalem we used to have. In fact, we see that our forefathers did this as well. When Yosef, after not seeing his brother Binyomin for years, finally revealed his identity to his brother, the Torah (Bereishis 45:14) tells us that Yosef fell on Binyomin's shoulders and cried, and Binyomin cried on Yosef's shoulders. Why did they cry at this time of great joy and happiness? The Talmud in Megilla (16b) tells us that Yosef saw that the Temples that were to be in Jerusalem, which was in the portion of the land allotted to the tribe of Binyomin, were to be destroyed. Binyomin cried because he saw that the Mishkan which was to be in Shilo, which was in the portion of the land allotted to Yosef, was to be destroyed. Yosef and Binyomin put the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temples above the

immense joy that they were feeling at that moment, and cried.

We can not deny the fact that the victory of Israel and the reclamation of Jerusalem in 1967 was anything but miraculous. As we mentioned by Yom Ha'atzmaut (# 19) , we must remember that it was Hashem who allowed us to accomplish this. Without the hand of Hashem, we would not have a state of Israel, nor Jerusalem. Now that we have Jerusalem, and we have thanked Hashem for this great gift, everything has to be put in perspective. In this time of great joy, we cannot forget the past. We have to actively remember the Jerusalem we used to have, a Jerusalem that Jews from all over used to flock to in droves three time a year. We must do as Yosef and Binyomin did, and feel that something is truly missing. We must remember that the decree has been decreed against us. "If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill."

May we merit to see the teaching of the Talmud, that "all who mourn the loss of Jerusalem will merit and see it in its happiness," be fulfilled speedily, in our days.