



Around the Shabbat Table

Shabbat Kedoshim Yom HaZikaron / Yom HaAtzma'ut 5765 May 2005

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Shalom!

Introduction

This period between the holidays of Pesach and Shavuot has been traditionally been considered a period of semi-mourning, interrupted only on *Lag Ba'omer*, a “sort of” holiday that occurs on and is named for the thirty-third day of this 49 day period.

Modern events have added three additional holidays during this time period – *Yom HaShoah*, *Yom HaAtzma'ut*, and *Yom Yerushalayim*. They commemorate not Biblical days, but modern times. *Yom HaShoah*, officially called the Day of Holocaust and Heroism, occurs on the 26th day of Nissan. *Yom HaAtzma'ut*, Israel's Independence Day, comes exactly one week later on the 3rd of Iyar, and *Yom Yerushalayim*, celebrating the reunification of that city during the June 1967 war, occurs three weeks later on the 28th of Iyar.

There is one other day – well-known and observed virtually universally in Israel but rarely in the diaspora - *Yom HaZikaron*, Israel's Memorial Day. We here in the United States also have a Memorial Day – it comes every year on the last Monday in May, and is generally observed by either going to the beach or by taking advantage of “Memorial Day Sales” at your local retail store.

Yom HaZikaron in Israel is quite different. For one thing, it is not part of a “three-day-holiday weekend.” It is observed always on the day just preceding *Yom HaAtzma'ut* – Independence Day. It is marked by three separate sirens which sound throughout the country. The first siren sounds at sundown on the eve of the day. The second is heard during the morning on the actual day, and the last, just before sundown, marks not only the end of *Yom HaZikaron* but the beginning of *Yom HaAtzma'ut*. When the sirens – which are not only sounded “live” but are also broadcast on the radio so they can be heard by everyone in the country – the Jewish population of Israel comes to a standstill. Cars pull to the side of the road, their occupants stand silently for the duration of the sound. Pedestrians stop where they are and stand quietly. Everything just...stops. If you ever experience this, as I have, you will remember it forever.



Questions for your Family's Discussion

1. Why do you think Israel observes its Memorial Day so differently than we do?
2. Do you think Jews in the diaspora should observe Israel's Memorial Day? Why or why not?
3. Maimonides writes, "On besieging a city in order to seize it, we must not surround it on all four sides but only on three sides, thus leaving a path of escape for whomever wishes to flee to save his life." What is Maimonides trying to convey about Jewish behavior in wartime?

A Text to Wrestle With

Nathan Alterman moved to Israel from Poland as a teenager, becoming one of Israel's best known poets.

Read the poem, *The Silver Platter*, by Natan Alterman then discuss it with your family. What does it mean to you?

...And the land will grow still
Crimson skies dimming, misting
Slowly paling again
Over smoking frontiers

As the nation stands up
Torn at heart but existing
To receive its first wonder
In two thousand years

As the moment draws near
It will rise, darkness facing
Stand straight in the moonlight
In terror and joy

...When across from it step out
Towards it slowly pacing
In plain sight of all
A young girl and a boy

Dressed in battle gear, dirty

Shoes heavy with grime
On the path they will climb up
While their lips remain sealed

To change garb, to wipe brow
They have not yet found time
Still bone weary from days
And from nights in the field

Full of endless fatigue
And all drained of emotion
Yet the dew of their youth
Is still seen on their head

Thus like statues they stand
Stiff and still with no motion
And no sign that will show
If they live or are dead

Then a nation in tears
And amazed at this matter
Will ask: who are you?
And the two will then say

With soft voice: We--
Are the silver platter
On which the Jews' state
Was presented today

Then they fall back in darkness
As the dazed nation looks
And the rest can be found
In the history books.



Towards an Action Agenda

There is a concept in the Israeli army called “*tohar haneshek*” – purity of arms. Go to the link - [*Tohar HaNeshek*](#) and read at least the introductory paragraph which appears in italics at the beginning of the article.

Often there are articles in our newspapers or reports on television that describe encounters between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians. When you see such an article, you are encouraged to

go to one or more of the following sites for more information, and if you see discrepancies, to write or e-mail your local news source:

- United Jewish Communities: Israel/World Jewry link
http://www.ujc.org/worldjewry_home.html
- Jewish Agency for Israel: Jewish Solidarity Update
<http://www.jafi.org.il/daily/involve.asp>
- The American Israel Public Affairs Committee
<http://www.aipac.org>
- HASBARA
<http://www.hasbara.us>

The following sites monitor media coverage of the region with an eye toward pointing out biased, anti-Israel reporting:

- CAMERA: Media Report
<http://www.camera.org>
- HonestReporting.com
<http://www.honestreporting.com>
- Israel Hasbara Committee
<http://www.infoisrael.net>



Shabbat Shalom and Best Wishes for a Happy Yom HaAtzma'ut!

Please join together in learning with other families by sharing your family's discussions and ideas by posting them on our web site. Simply press the "reply" button on your e mail program and respond with your thoughts and ideas.

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