



Chagim uMoadim

from Masorti Olami & MERCAZ Olami

ב'ס"ד

Yom Yerushalayim

Our year of studies at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem normally ends around the time of Yom Yerushalayim – the annual commemoration on the 28th of Iyar of the establishment of Israeli control over the Old City of Jerusalem and East Jerusalem in the aftermath of the June 1967 Six-Day War.

Our students have spent a year living in Israel and have touched and been touched by the commingled joys, sorrows and complexities of life here. After a year of learning Talmud together we have learned to put difficult issues under the microscope and to explore them from different angles. In the Talmud there are invariably multiple answers to the thorniest of problems.

Yom Yerushalayim evokes deeply conflicting thoughts and emotions. Many of us celebrate the renewal of access to and control over Jewish holy sites after 2000 years; our divided capital city becoming one again. Jordan's rule in Jerusalem involved the systematic violation of the human rights of the Jewish population, including denial of access to the holy places, theft of privately owned properties and violence resulting in many deaths and injuries. In 1967 those violations came to an end.

Some of us mourn attempts to assert ethnocentric Jewish control over an unwilling population. It is said that the proclamation of a unified Jerusalem bears little relation to the facts on the ground; an attempt to force an artificial identity and history upon Palestinian portions of a still deeply divided city.

For myself, both of those contradictory thoughts and feelings resonate powerfully on Yom Yerushalayim. In the world of emotion it is possible both to celebrate and mourn at the same time. The Talmud (B'rachot 60a) imagines a scenario where a flood washes away a person's crops and livelihood but also brings long-term nourishment to his soil. Imagine the death of a deeply beloved parent whose passing also brings a much needed inheritance!

Dr Alex Sinclair encourages us to "love the real Israel". That means learning to listen to different perspectives, often to people whose stories we find it almost impossibly hard to hear. It often means living with deeply contradictory thoughts and feelings in our own minds and hearts. When confronted by such profound complexity the Tosephta (Sotah Ch. 7) urges each of us to "make yourself a heart of many rooms, and bring into it the words of ... those who declare unclean and the words of those who declare clean".

May the Jewish people's capacity to listen to and hold complexity only deepen.

May our holding of complexity not prevent us from acting with moral clarity!

Rabbi Joel Levy

Rosh Yeshiva of the Conservative Yeshiva in Israel & Rabbi of Kol Nefesh Synagogue in UK.



Rabbi Joel Levy studied Natural Sciences at Cambridge University, was chair of the Program at Limmud conference and is an ex-director of NOAM. He received rabbinical ordination from Rabbi David Hartman in 2000. He has been the part-time rabbi of Kol Nefesh Masorti Synagogue, Britain's first fully egalitarian traditional shul, since 2001. He teaches Talmud and Practical Halacha.

