

Articles - The Jerusalem Correspondent 7th Edition - Tears for Israel

A man approaches the Heathrow airport 3 hours before his flight to Tel Aviv. He wears a black yarmulke and his tzitzit flick freely just below the bottom on his jacket. His bearded face smiles as we walks up to the security desk. The attendant, cleanly shaven, young and fit, eyes the man up and down. He is not very familiar with Judaism and Jewish people but what he does know comes to him via the nightly news reports covering Middle-East. To him, there is no seeming distinction between theologies and attitudes of middle-eastern people, rather, if the person comes from that region, he checks their belongings with extra attention to detail.



The security man cautiously smiles back to the bearded Jew. He takes his belongings and begins to open his suitcase and sift through the contents. He looks to the Jew and apologizes for wasting his time. The Jewish man smiles again and says:

"It's alright, I'm used to this sort of thing, I face it every day in Israel."

A little confused, the security attendant responds:

"You mean security checks?"

"Yes"

"What? Why?"

"For me," says the Jew, "going to supermarket, going to the movies, going into a restaurant, getting on a bus all have the same frustrations of flying internationally."

With curiosity and a hint of sympathy, the security man inquires further: "You get checked by security even walking into a restaurant?"

"Sure! Not just me either, my wife and my children and all our bags. But you know, eventually it becomes part of your life. You just deal with it like every other routine."

"Wow Sir, it really saddens me to hear that. Tell me though, is the government just being over-cautious?"

"Unfortunately not my friend. In Israel, we live continually in a state of caution. Lives are threatened every day. People die for their country before every really exploring the world. It is really very depressing."

The security attendant zips up the Jew's bag, hands it to the Jew and farewells him.

"G-d bless you sir."

This is how life has become in Israel. You walk around populated areas and you see the result of continual, relentless aggression. Wherever you go you are checked by security. Every single bus, without fail, has security personnel checking people and bags at every single stop. But life goes on.

However, from time to time, you are reminded of the unfortunate souls who have lost their lives in the injustice and the confusion of fighting for their country and fighting to continually assert Israel's right to exist.

Two weeks ago was Yom Ha Zikaron. This date doesn't usually field an entry into the defined religious calendar dates, but it certainly exists in all dimensions of Israeli life as the national day of weeping. The country flocks to Mount Herzl and pays tribute to all the soldiers who lost their lives fighting for a dream. Security checks are the final outcome. But Mount Herzl takes you inside the stories of such tragic bloodshed. Mount Herzl has been described as one of the most holy places in Israel. The very earth itself comforts the sons and daughters of Israel. The graves look out over Jerusalem and, at least in death, they can admire the holy views of their land.

As you walk into the grounds, you are struck by the sheer number of people who are coming to cry with those affected. In fact, once you walk inside, you begin to feel that almost all Israelis have either directly lost a child or know close friends who have. As you approach the thousands of graves, you can't help but stop and read the headstones. Immediately, you are struck by the age of the fallen... 17, 18, 19, 20.

You begin to stagger. Is this really possible? What has it come down to? How fruitless were my pursuits at those ages? How trivial has my life been? These are the heroes! These are the people whose souls we must pray for! I began to cry.

I walked passed one grave that beckoned me to sit beside it. The headstone read "David-Chai ... fell at 17." What a contradiction! Here was a child named in a celebration of life.

"Chai" means "life." He deserved to live, not die. Did he even have a chance? He had the same name as me. I sat and I cried. I took out my book and psalms and read to David-Chai, psalm 18, the age he never reached. The age of 18, which struck me even harder, is the numerical equivalent of "Chai". I said the words slowly. I spent time sharing my thoughts with him. I felt his pain. I felt the pain of all Israel. ENOUGH ALREADY! We need an end to this suffering confusion and aggression. I got up, turned around and walked away.



There are our brothers and sisters. Spare a thought for their souls so they and all of Israel should have an Aliya. But this time, one that takes us out of the confines of the muck we find ourselves in and lifts us to a place of peace and warmth and love.

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