



*"If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither."
Psalm 137*

According to Jewish tradition, these words were composed by King David, who established our capital in Jerusalem some 3,000 years ago. Jerusalem has been the center of our national and religious life ever since, home to our kings and site of our Temples.

After the destruction of the First Temple, we cried by the Rivers of Babylon to return from exile to Jerusalem. That exile proved short-lived when Cyrus permitted the rebuilding of our Temple. A couple centuries later, the Maccabees led a successful revolt against Syrian Greek rulers who sought to crush our faith. The Jewish people won their independence, a miraculous triumph celebrated every year on Hanukah.

Unfortunately, that independence was also short-lived. The Jewish state soon became a vassal of Imperial Rome. In the year 66, our people revolted against foreign occupation once again. We liberated Jerusalem and minted coins, a symbol of sovereignty.

But this time, the revolt was unsuccessful. Jerusalem was conquered. Our Second Temple was destroyed. Masada fell. Jewish slaves, carrying treasures of the Temple, were paraded in chains through the streets of Rome, a scene preserved on the Arch of Titus.

In the 7th century, the Arabs conquered Jerusalem and later built the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, the holiest site of the Jewish people.

Still, neither the loss of sovereignty nor the passage of time diminished Jerusalem's pull on our collective soul. Three times a day, we face Jerusalem in prayer. Under chuppahs and in houses of mourning, we remember her. During our 2000-year-old odyssey in which we overcame every evil under the sun, we never lost hope that *לשנה הבאה בירושלים* - Next Year in Jerusalem.

In the mid-19th century, Jews were a majority in Jerusalem, but we were not yet a sovereign nation. That day came in 1948, when the State of Israel was established. Attacked in its cradle by five Arab armies, the newborn state nonetheless liberated parts of Jerusalem. It became our capital again, seat of our government, Knesset and Supreme Court.

Yet in that same war, Jordan conquered the parts of Jerusalem in which our patriarchs prayed, kings ruled, and prophets preached. Ancient synagogues were destroyed, Jewish tombstones were desecrated and the Jewish residents were expelled. The Jewish people's hope of rebuilding our ancient capital was incomplete.

In 1967, almost exactly 1900 years after those coins were minted in Jerusalem, all of the city was finally liberated. The Temple Mount was in our hands. Jerusalem was whole again.



But rather than destroy what is holy to others, as so many others did and do, we protect the sacred sites of all. Today, Jerusalem stands out as a beacon of light in a dark and cruel Middle East.

The only thing more remarkable than this history is the attempt to deny it. Yet that is exactly what UNESCO did earlier this year. So too, when the nations of the world refuse to put their embassies in Jerusalem – making Israel the only nation in the world to be treated this way – they in effect deny both past and present.

No lie can withstand the power of millennial-old truth. Both our Temples stood on the Temple Mount. The Western Wall is not occupied Palestinian territory. Jerusalem has been, is and forever will be the capital of the Jewish State.

Let this coin be a reminder of those truths and of the indomitable spirit of the Jewish people. All those who tried to deny that truth and crush that spirit have failed. Babylon is no more. Imperial Rome is gone. But Israel lives. As the prophets foretold long ago, our children once again play in the streets of Jerusalem.

May those streets next year include the Embassy of the United States of America. May Israel's great friend and ally, a powerful and just nation, do what is right – and may the nations of the world follow America's lead and lay cornerstones of a lasting peace based on truth.

לשנה הבאה בירושלים Next Year in Jerusalem.

John,

Thanks for your support for Israel.
Merry Christmas and happy New Year
to you and your family.