

July 19, 2010 Rabbi Danny Allen

In just a couple of hours Jerusalem will be filled with the readings of Lamentations. You have your choice of our congregations, dozens of readings at the Teyelet overlooking the Old City, the Windmill just off King David Street. You can hear Eichah with any accent- Moroccan, Yemenite, Traditional Ashkenaz and American from the many many NFTY, USY and Ramah groups that are here. It is actually quite a social evening after the readings as folks run into each other as they discover who is visiting or friends who live here who they forgot to call.

As we exited the Knesset earlier this afternoon I was struck by the fact that as free Jews, we could come and address our Jewish cousins inside the seat of a sovereign Jewish state on matters of Klal Yisrael. On the even of recalling destruction, despite all the controversies, complaints and difficult conditions both for Israel and for our issues in Israel, we, all of us, can participate in Jewish life in a way not seen for 2,000 years.

On the wall of my parents apartment in Jerusalem there has hung a telegram for many years. It is dated 29 November 1947 and is from Harry Shapiro, the President of the American Zionist Organization. It reads, in part, We have won the vote and now the hard work begins.

Well, we think we might have won the day. As the afternoon ended the odds were quite good that there is be what I call hafsak aish, a cease fire - on the conversion bill for a few months. The last obstacle is an evening meeting between the Prime Minister and Avigdor Lieberman to hammer out their differences so that the coalition can remain in tact. The noises today have been mutually concilliatory. Nothing is definite until the final moments, both tonight and until the Knesset adjourns on Wednesday.

Once the picture is fixed the hard work indeed will begin. How to engage all those we have met and lobbied for the long run? What is our ARZA/IMPJ/Reform Movement strategy writ large? What is the necessary division of labor including ongoing internal communications? How do we maintain the coalition with Masorti/Conservative Movement and the Federations. We do not all share all the same views and each internal body has it's own internal organizational/movement issues.

Time after time today members of Knesset, Ministers of the Government, and their aids repeated that it is ironic that the "Reformim" are religious while many of "us" really know so little about our Judaism. When the Minister of Defense made a similar statement we offered him to learn with us, in our kehilot, or even to provide him a teacher.

Our hard work will be twofold; engaging with our own folks in America to help Israel in it's current struggles while increasing support of all kinds, including financial, to help our Israeli movement. If most of the MK's do not understand the importance of our concerns, all the more so the general public.

Usually folks who fast wish each other Tzom Kal, and easy fast. This Tisha B'av may your fast or your observance be meaningful knowing that you have the privledge of being a leader of not only ARZA and our movement but of Klal Yisrael. We are a people of memory but even more so we are a people of deeds. Many great ones lie ahead of all of us.