

THE WORLD UNITED

This is the week when the world will be achieving -- hopefully, ⁱⁿ safety -- one of the great triumphs of the human race: the landing of man on the moon. Only time will tell whether this herculean marshalling of technological resources was an act of supreme wisdom, or one of the greatest follies of modern times, spending 24 billion dollars and 10 percent of the national budget on a project that did not deserve it. But no matter what time will show, right now one great paradox stands revealed: on the one hand, the ability of thousands upon thousands of individuals to cooperate in order to send one spaceship to the moon; and, on the other hand, the anomaly of disunity -- for not one but two spaceships are approaching the moon, those of the United States and of Russia.

It is a symbol of the fragmentation of the human community that the two superpowers had to undertake separate efforts: Russia, in an obvious and clumsy effort to distract from the American achievement sends Luna 15 to the moon, and the American Congress has nothing better to do than to pass a special act requiring that the United States flag be planted on the lunar surface. How much more promising it would have been had all nations been able to cooperate in pooling their technical resources in achieving this great triumph!

But, my dear friends, lest we despair too quickly because of this discord in the family of nations, there remains one consoling thought: the great powers are not always riven by rivalry and torn by dissent. There are times when, after all, all the great nations of the world can come to one common opinion. It is good to know that within the last few weeks the United Nations Security Council, representing the combined opinion of mankind, finally achieved unanimity: it was united against Jerusalem; all nations were agreed that Israel ought to get out of the Holy City. Russia and Hungary, the United States and Yemen -- powers of proven peaceful intentions, lovers of Jerusalem all, with vital interests in the Holy City -- all are agreed that Jerusalem should go to the Arabs, and Israel must make no attempt to unify it. How comforting that the world, unable to work together scientifically, can at least achieve unity with regard to the Middle East. How proud we Jews ought to be that it is we who have occasioned this show of concord.

If I may now cross the border back from serious sarcasm to sardonic cynicism, this event of a world united at least gives us a new insight, a new peshat, in a verse in Psalm 122: ירושלים
הבנויה, "Jerusalem that is built like
a city that is compact all together." The Sages taught us that
this means that rebuilt Jerusalem will be such that ירושלים
הבנויה, that people will become friends on her account. Here-
before we thought that the meaning of this tradition was that all

Jews would be unified in love of Jerusalem. Now the United Nations has given us a new interpretation: not only Jews, but the "Goyim," are united on Jerusalem: that Israel must get out of it.

So let us not ask why we fast on אָסרָה when Jerusalem is ours once again.

We fast, first of all, because the heart of Jerusalem, the Holy Temple, is still in ruins.

Second, we fast because of the spiritual hurban, the re-religious cataclysm, the distance from God and Torah that afflicts the hearts of Jews throughout the world, a disaster from which we still have not begun to emerge.

We fast, third, because of Jews who are enslaved behind the Iron Curtain.

Fourth, we fast because of Jews who are free, living in the Free World, who act like slaves -- to their passions, to their ignorance, to the iron hand of conformity and assimilation.

But now we may add a fifth reason: we grieve this אָסרָה because of this act of unconscionable injustice of the entire world community against the people about whom it was said אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, the People of Israel which destiny has decreed must always march on the path of history in loneliness and in solitude.

I would, on this account, add a sixth reason for אָסרָה this year. In Psalm 137 -- אָסרָה בְּיַם סוּף, the Psalm which speaks of the exiles who refused to entertain their tormentors

by singing the songs of Zion on foreign soil -- we ask of God:

זָכוֹר ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְעֵדוֹם בְּיָמֵינוּ

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"Remember O Lord against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem, when they said, destroy it, destroy it, until you have exposed its very foundations." But what we ask of God we must first demand of ourselves. We must remember the sin of Edom against Jerusalem. Edom has always been symbol of the Western world, descendants of Rome, the Christian civilization. And they have sinned against Jerusalem.

One can understand the Arabs' enmity against Israel and its attitude to Jerusalem. They are, after all, passionate and irrational, hysterical because of blind nationalism and the sting of defeat. The Arabs are naturally misled by their own innate penchant for extravagant rhetoric and hyperbole. But Russia? Great Britain? France? The United States? What drives them to such antagonism against Israel on the matter of Jerusalem? There is a difference between a crime of passion and crime in cold blood. And Edom has sinned against Jerusalem in cold blood.

We Jews, therefore, this year, in our magnanimity and Jewish charity, must fast -- for God to forgive the sins of Edom against Jerusalem.

On the day that we mourn the destruction of the Temple and the Holy City, we ask forgiveness for Edom --

- forgiveness for remaining silent when the monuments of the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives were used to

built latrines for Jordanian troops, but objecting vociferously when Israel wants to build a park around Jerusalem;

- forgiveness for raising no protest when all synagogues were destroyed in the Holy City from 1948 to 1967, but becoming irate when Israel blows up the house in which was born the leader of the terrorists who has made it his mission to kill aimlessly;
- forgiveness for failing to take note of the fact that for twenty years no Jews were permitted access to the Western Wall; but becoming exercised about Israel's rule over Jerusalem, when it permits all religions access to their shrines;
- forgiveness for accepting it as a matter of everyday fact that urban renewal in the major cities of their countries requires displacement of slum populations and granting government the right of eminent domain; but reacting with moral indignation and censure when Israel attempts the same in Jerusalem;
- and, above all else, forgiveness for Edom for making it a principle of its foreign policy since World War II to advocate the unification of Berlin -- and oppose the unification of Jerusalem; for risking world war so that unity shall come to that city which is the ארץ אבות הטומאה, the very source of moral contamination and a reproach to humankind, but resisting the reconciliation of the ארץ הקודש, the eternal city of holiness and sanctity.

זכור ה' ערבי ארצות אלה יום ירושלים האומרים ערבי,
 Remember O God -- זכור ה' ירושלים

and we fast so that you may forgive as well.

The flight of man to the moon is a historic occasion.

There is no doubt about that. Perhaps the fact that our generation is so acutely aware of the historicity of events and so keenly self-conscious, makes this epic seem even more portentous than it is. But we must not allow the moon to eclipse the earth, and the issues of space to obscure the issues of great moment here amongst men.

While, as humans, we Jews join all mankind in prayers for the safety of the astronauts, we have our own private grief and

our hurts that we cannot forget. After one thousand eight hundred ninety nine years we deserve some respite. Two years ago we thought we had it. But it has not yet come.

A world religious leader has proposed that when man lands on the moon tomorrow, there be placed on the lunar surface a plaque containing the following verses from Psalm 8:

When I behold Thy heavens, the work of
Thy fingers
The moon and the stars which Thou hast
established
What is man that Thou art mindful of him,
And the son of man that Thou thinkest of
him
Yet Thou hast made him but little lower
than the angels
And hast crowned him with glory and honor.
Thou hast made him to have dominion over
the works of Thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet...
O Lord, our Lord,
How glorious is Thy Name in all the earth!

Those words are remarkably appropriate for the event.

Certainly we Jews concur in such sentiments.

However, we strongly recommend to the leaders of all the nations not only the end of Psalm 8, but also verses from the end of Psalm 9. They read, in part:

Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in
Zion;
Declare among the peoples His doings.
For He Who avenges blood that was innocent-
ly shed, remembered them;
He has not forgotten the cry of those who
are humbled
Be gracious unto me, O Lord,
Behold my affliction and embarrassment at
the hands of them that hate me,

Thou that lifts me up from the gates
of death;

That I may tell of all Thy praise in
the gates of the daughter of Zion,
Jerusalem,

That I may rejoice in Thy salvation.
The nations are fallen into the pit
that they made;

In the trap that they planted for others
is their own foot tripped...

Arise, O Lord, let not man prevail;
Let the nations be judged in Thy sight.