



**RABBI LEO DEE**

EDUCATOR



**GUEST DVAR TORAH**

# The Fastest Emotional Transition on Earth

About a year after my wife, Lucy, and daughters, Maia and Rina, were murdered, I began dating again. That sentence still feels improbable even as I write it. Grief does not come with a timetable. But eventually there comes a moment when you realize that staying still is also a choice, and not always the right one.

So, I sat one evening in a restaurant with a thoughtful woman who, like many of those who generously agreed to meet me that year, seemed less interested in my personality than in comparing traumas.

She told me she was still struggling deeply with the effects of a divorce that had taken place ten years earlier. She was in therapy, she explained, and had been for a long time.

“What kind of therapy?” I asked.

“Eastern therapy,” she said. “They teach you to live only in the present. There is no past

and no future.”

It sounded peaceful. It sounded wise. It also sounded impossible.

I told her that I had stopped my own therapy after ten sessions. It wasn't that it had no value, but its focus on repeatedly revisiting the details of my loss had caused me additional trauma as I approached each weekly session. Only months later did I begin to understand why. I heard a shiur by Rabbi YY Jacobson in which he quoted the Lubavitcher Rebbe saying something that sounded almost paradoxical: “There is no present - only the past and the future.”

Think about it for a moment. If I describe what is happening now, that “now” is already in the past. If I describe what is about to happen, that belongs to the future. The present, in truth, is almost non-existent—a thin line, a precipice between memory and possibility.

As I told my date that evening, the present is simply the moment in which we choose whether to live in the past or the future. I suggested that if pain exists only in the present, then it has nowhere to go. You can sit and meditate for three hours and numb it temporarily, but eventually it returns. It stays where you are.

But if you understand that the “Now” is a bridge between what has already happened and what can still be built, then pain can be

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placed where it belongs - in the past. Once it is there, you are free to choose your future. That, I told her, was the choice I intended to make (and incidentally why I quit therapy). It turned out to be our last date.

As Yom Ha'atzmaut approaches, I revisit that conversation because the Jewish calendar seems to carry this same insight.

On the evening of Yom Ha'atzmaut, we move directly out of Yom HaZikaron. We turn away from the graves of our loved ones to celebrate our national day.

One moment we are remembering those who gave their lives so that we could live here. Moments later, we watch our children sing Hatikvah, our national anthem about hope.

It is one of the most dramatic transitions in the Jewish year. And perhaps one of the most profound. Because the movement from Yom HaZikaron to Yom Ha'atzmaut is not a contradiction. It is a decision. We remember the past with gratitude and reverence. But we refuse to live inside it.

There is, however, one extraordinary moment in between. When the siren ends and the flag rises from half-mast to full-mast, something subtle but powerful happens. That is the instant in which a nation chooses. Not to forget its past, but not to remain there either. That is the moment we step into the future.

And that, perhaps, is the real meaning of Yom Ha'atzmaut.

Its joy is not limited to barbecues or ceremonies. Its joy lives in every ordinary miracle we see around us every day: fields being planted, roads being paved, businesses opening, families growing, our children chatting in a language that once existed only in prayer.

We are living inside a national decision to choose the future.

The Jewish people is not a nation that forgot its past. No nation remembers its past more carefully than we do. But we are also not trapped by it.

We carry memories as we build our tomorrow.

Perhaps that is why Yom Ha'atzmaut begins where Yom HaZikaron ends. Because independence is not simply a political achievement. It is a spiritual choice. It is the decision to stand at the boundary between what was and what can be, and to move forward.

Yom Ha'atzmaut Sameach. ■

**Rabbi Leo Dee** is an educator living in Efrat. His book "The Seven Facets of Healing" is dedicated in memory of his wife Lucy who, together with his daughters Maia and Rina, was murdered by terrorists in April 2023. It is available from Amazon.com at: <https://www.amazon.com/Seven-Facets-Healing-Leo-Dee/dp/9659329105> and in Israel from <https://bookpod.co.il/product/the-seven-facets-of-healing/>

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