



BADERECH

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It Will Not Help Them!

Menachem Ussishkin z'l, Secretary of the First Zionist Congress, was the head of the Jewish National Fund and one of the great builders of the Land. He dedicated his life to encouraging *aliyah*, and strengthening agricultural settlement and made a great impact in the renewal of Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael. Having just returned from an overseas trip,

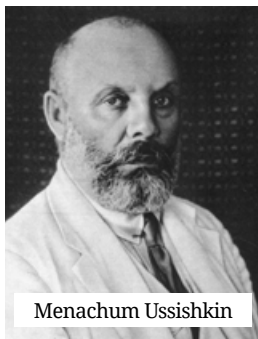
on Erev Rosh Hashanah 5690 (1929 / תרפ"ט), just a bit more than a month after the murderous Arab pogroms in Tzfat, Yerushalayim and Chevron, Ussishkin went to daven at the Kotel and recorded an account of his experience:

"Jewish Jerusalem was still wrapped in mourner's black and the impact of the frightful occurrences had not yet subsided. Somber and depressed, I entered the Old City. On the entire route to the Kotel, I met virtually no Jews; only police and Arabs filled the narrow streets.

Soon, I found myself before the Kotel... That wall, a reminder of our great and glorious past... and only two Jews were standing there, the *shammash* and myself. The entire plaza in front of the Kotel was filled with British policemen; above, near the mosque on the site of the Temple, Arabs stood looking down on the Jewish

ruins; and I stood silently in my distress...

I do not remember how long I stood there with these depressing thoughts. Dusk fell and darkness began to engulf the Kotel plaza, lanterns began to glimmer nearby, yet here it was forbidden to light them. I detected the sound of approaching footsteps. Out of a darkened side street stepped an elderly Jew of stately appearance, attired in traditional *yom tov* garb, who was accompanied by two men..."



Menachem Ussishkin

Ussishkin recognized "the elderly Jew". It was the revered leader of the *Yishuv haYashan*, Rav Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld, zt'l, the righteous "Guardian of Jerusalem". As founder of the Eida haChareidis, Rav Zonnenfeld represented unwavering traditionalism and uncompromising dedication

to *kedusha*. Ussishkin was awe-struck in the presence of the *tzadik*:

"I did not move or approach him, for I did not want to disturb his awesome reverence. He approached the Kotel with bowed head and began to kiss its stones with holy fervor. A deep sigh escaped his lips. He raised his head, gave the stones a final embrace, and turned to leave. Then he noticed me and approached.

"How happy I am," said the Rav, "that I have found here a brother who shares our anguish and pain. In recent years I have not visited the Kotel on Erev Rosh Hashanah, for I find walking this distance difficult. But after such events, I felt compelled to come and see this remnant of our past glory."

With the dark shadow of a painful summer hanging over them, the elderly *tzadik* of the Old City and the dedicated builder of the Land shared a few heavy, silent moments together in the desolate shadow of *בית מקדשנו*, 'the remnant of our destroyed holy Temple'. Suddenly, Rav Sonnenfeld looked up, and with his eyes shining with hope, exclaimed, "*Es vet zei nisht helfen!*" It will not help them (the Arabs) — let us not be dejected! *גם זה יעבור*, 'this too shall pass.' We will soon return to this holy place, not with bowed heads and through the broken, narrow alleyways, but with pride, in a rebuilt Yerushalayim!"

On this Shabbos Nachamu, may all of us, brothers and sisters who have "shared anguish and pain" be blessed to share joyous occasions, see and experience revealed good, with the restoration of Jewish pride and well-being, בגאולה השלימה והאמיתית, with the arrival of the complete and true Redemption.

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