

Normally, when I write my monthly column for the bulletin, I sit at my computer in my study surrounded by nothing but my books – the written collection of the story of our people. This month, I am writing to you from Jerusalem, surrounded by the story of our people itself. Right now I am sitting on the Jerusalem *tayelet*, a beautiful lookout point in the south of the city, where almost the whole city can be seen in one breathtaking glance.

While I sit here, I am looking at thousands of years in one glance; I can see the neighborhood where King David settled 3,000 years ago, the apartment buildings in Jerusalem's modern downtown and everything in between. When I look at Jerusalem from here it seems a bit like a cross section of the earth itself, with layer upon layer, fault lines revealing what lies beneath. This morning, in my own way, I peeled back the layers one by one, to get to the heart of Jerusalem – an eternal place; our eternal place.

My journey began at 5am, at the *tayelet*, where I was embarking on a nearly two-hour run throughout Jerusalem (for those of you who do not know, I am in training for the NYC Marathon in November).

The sun rose in the east, and it was like the first day of creation all over again; out of the darkness came the light – blue, purple, orange, yellow and white streaks – bursting over the mountains of Jordan and Judean hills, illuminating the Old City, the Mount of Olives and Western Jerusalem.

From there, I ran a winding path through “modern” Jerusalem, past Arab houses built over the last several hundred years, interspersed with newer apartments and two family houses. As I ran, all of my senses absorbed Jerusalem's multi-religion and multi-cultural foundation. I could hear the muezzin calling Muslim worshippers to prayer and church bells ringing out the time as they have for centuries. I could smell the challas stacked in crates in front of every store and kiosk throughout the city and the rosemary bushes and sage that grow out of every nook and cranny. I could almost taste those breads dipped in the olive oil that would be made from the olive trees stretching above my head. And there are the Jerusalem stone sidewalks, both sturdy and worn slick from the millions of pilgrims of three faiths that come every year, as well as the hard arid soil crunching under my feet as I ran along.

Eventually, I made my way to the neighborhood of Mishkanot Shean'nanim, originally built in 1860 to house Jews in the first ever neighborhood outside of the old city walls. Today, it houses guests of the State of Israel and artists, poets and writers. It is so close you can almost touch the Old City. It is one of the most picturesque neighborhoods I have ever seen.

I ran down the slope of the neighborhood and then up the other side of the Hinom Valley (where our tradition gets the term *gehenna* – or Hell; it's that steep!), running along the walls of the ancient city. As I ran from the Zion Gate, past the Jaffa Gate to the New Gate, my shoulder brushed the ancient stones which have protected this city, and when the wall had been broken, the stones were piled up anew to protect the treasure within – like Judaism itself.

From the New Gate, I doubled back across the valley, passing the Reform seminary, HUC-JIR which was once the only building in this area. No one else would accept land so close to the Old City when it was in Jordanian hands, but Reform Jews were happy and proud to have it. Now that the neighborhood is completely safe it is surrounded by high-class hotels and an exclusive housing development.

Departing the area of HUC-JIR, I headed further west into the modern part of Jerusalem. This part of my journey, I must admit, was a bit depressing. Running along the edge of Independence Park, I passed the US Consulate. Thanks to September 11<sup>th</sup>, this consulate no longer looks like a friendly outpost, but a fortress. Today, I doubt if I could even get into the building where I once went to submit my absentee ballot. Any time I pass this compound it saddens me; this place should say US Embassy out front, not US Consulate – Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, not Tel Aviv.

Leaving where the US flag flies behind, I made my way into Rehavia, the neighborhood of scholars, artists and politicians dating back to before there was even a State of Israel. As I ran, I passed by the official residences of the Prime Minister and President of Israel. Once, these modest residences blended in with the neighborhood and they belonged to the people. Today, you cannot even walk down the street as barricades and military police block the way.

As I reached the western edges of the city, I ran along Gan Sacher (Sacher Park). Doing so, my faith in the mission of the State of Israel was restored. Sitting on the ridge at the top of the park sits the Israel Museum – the most modern and scientific art and history museum in the Middle East. Then I passed underneath the Knesset, the only truly democratic house of government in the Middle East. And finally, I passed under the beautiful Supreme Court of Israel, the only one not controlled by dictators and tyrants for thousands of miles.

My run finished up as I returned to my hotel through Emek Refaim – the Valley of Ghosts. I could almost feel all of those ghosts as I made my way; from King David to David Ben Gurion, there are a lot of our ghosts around here. I ended up back here at the *tayelet*, where I began. The City is now beginning to awaken and people are preparing for Shabbat; running to get *challot*, wine and candles and buying goodies for their families in the markets, a ritual as old as time around here.

I cannot believe this wonderful morning I've had, even though I have spent years of my life here – this was new. For the last two hours, I have been on a wonderful journey, emotional and inspiring, filled with wonder and joy, history and the present. Imagine how much you could see if you were here. Next year, our congregation is taking a trip and I invite you all to come along. Make your own journey through time and space.