

28 Iyar, Yom Yerushalayim, in Tanakh

By: NATAN KOPEIKA

The Six-Day War took place in the year 5727 since Creation (1967 CE). On the third day of that war, which was Wednesday, 28 Iyar (June 7), we merited to liberate the Old City of Jerusalem including the Temple Mount, and the entire West Bank known historically as *Yehudah* and *Shomron*. This date has become known as *Yom Yerushalayim*.¹ Indeed, *Megillat Ta'anit* lists 28 Iyar as one of a long list of what used to be minor fast days because of various tragedies that occurred on those days. 28 Iyar is listed as the tragic day on which the prophet Samuel passed away. It is so listed too in the *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 580. The Magen Avraham suggests that date is in error and that *Megillat Ta'anit* lists it as 29 Iyar. However, examinations of many editions of *Megillat Ta'anit* indicate that the correct date is 28 Iyar (*Eliyah Rabbah* and Rav Eliezer Waldenberg, *Tzitz Eliezer*, vol. 15, *siman* 4). The *yahrtzeit* or day of passing of the prophet Samuel is significant regarding the date of *Yom Yerushalayim*, as will be shown shortly. The Babylonian Talmud tells us in *Zevahim* 54b that King David learned from Prophet Samuel not only where to build the Temple, but the details of how to do so. I Chronicles 28, verses 11–19, describes King David giving his son Solomon a document describing “the pattern of the porch, and its

¹ Rabbi Ari Kahn has previously noted the historical significance of the 28th of Iyar. See <https://aish.com/48918497/>

Natan [Norman] Kopeika earned BS, MS, and Ph.D. degrees in electrical engineering at University of Pennsylvania. In 1971 he was granted *semikhah, Yoreh Yoreh* by a NY *beit din*. In 1987 he became a full professor at Ben-Gurion University where he chaired the Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering 1989–1993 and founded and chaired the Dept. of Electrooptical and Photonics Engineering 1995–2001. He published over 200 journal articles, numerous conference papers, and 3 books. He and Prof. Shlomo Arnon were awarded in 1999 the JJ Thomson Premium by the IEE in England for a paper they published regarding satellite optical communication. In 2000 he became a Fellow of SPIE - The International Society for Optical Engineering. He has served as a consultant for the Israel Council for Higher Education, and for several decades he served in the Tzahal Rabbinate reserves.

treasures, and its upper stories, and its inner chambers, and the House of the Ark cover... the weight of the golden candelabra, and their lamps of gold, of the weight of each candelabrum and its lamps... and for the silver candelabra... and the gold in weight... for every table... and for the incense altar, the cherubim of gold, all the offices and rooms... all was *in writing* from the hand of the Lord..."² The Jerusalem Talmud tells us that this *megillah* that Prophet Samuel gave to David was given to be studied and learned (*Megillah* 1:1). Because of this connection of the Prophet Samuel to David and the Temple, the fact that our liberation of the Temple Mount took place on the date when Samuel passed away is significant. As we will see shortly, there is an additional connection which is perhaps even more significant.

The main question to be addressed here is: What was the date David received this *megillah*? It is not spelled out, not in the text and not in the commentaries. The author knows of no discussion of this question.

As background, consider that after their redemption from Egypt and the splitting of the Reed Sea on their way to Mount Sinai, the people of Israel arrived at the Wilderness of Sien on the 15th day of the month of Iyar (Exodus 16:1), which was a Saturday (BT *Shabbat* 87b). The people complained about the lack of food. The next morning, Sunday, manna descended from the sky, a process that repeated itself for five more days, until it stopped on Shabbat, 22 Iyar. We collected manna for six days that first week and every week thereafter on the journey to the Land of Israel, but not on Shabbat. The concept of Shabbat was thus introduced before we received the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai. Indeed, our first Shabbat was on the 22nd day of Iyar. Our second Shabbat was 29 Iyar. Rabbi Kahn shows that the Biblical war with Amalek in Refidim (Exodus 17:9–17) was on Friday, 28 Iyar (*Seder Olam*, chapter 5). According to the midrash,³ a great miracle took place that day and, just as G-d made the sun stand still for Joshua and his generation, He also did so for Moses and his generation. This was probably the first miracle that occurred on the date which in our time became *Yom Yerushalayim*.

To punish Amalek for their inciteful and ideological war on us, G-d commanded King Saul through the prophet Samuel to attack and totally destroy Amalek (I Samuel 15). As we read in this chapter in the Haftorah for *Shabbat Zakhor* (read on the Shabbat before Purim for us to remember that Haman, a descendant of the Amaleki king Agag, tried to exterminate the Jews), King Saul did not carry out this mission properly. This Haftorah ends with verse 34. However, verse 35 of chapter 15 tells us “and Samuel

² Translation by Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg, Judaica Press, 1992.

³ *Yalkut Shimoni, Habakkuk* 3:564.

did not continue to see Saul *until the day of his death* for Samuel mourned for Saul....” Indeed, Samuel was immediately sent by G-d to Bethlehem to anoint David as Saul’s successor. However, in I Samuel 19 we find that Samuel, David, and Saul are together prophesying. The background is that in verse 11 Saul sent messengers to David’s house to kill him. David’s wife Michal, daughter of Saul, warns David and helps him escape through the window. David runs away to Ramah near Jerusalem, where Samuel lived, to explain to the prophet that Saul is trying to kill him (David). David and Samuel sit in Nayot Ba-Ramah (I Samuel 19:22). Our rabbis explain there is no such place. Rather, Nayot is from the Hebrew word *naveh* which means beautiful or glorious and refers to the Temple. Samuel and David sat all night in Ramah prophesying and studying about the Temple. Saul’s soldiers found them and joined them. Finally, Saul himself also joined them (chapter 19 verse 23).

How are we to understand verse 35 of chapter 15, which suggests that Samuel never saw Saul again? We see in chapter 19 verse 23 that Samuel and Saul were together that night with David. Indeed, verse 24 says that Saul too was prophesying before Samuel. They had to have seen each other. The only way to understand this verse is not that Samuel never saw Saul anymore, but that after studying and prophesying about the Temple, Samuel passed away, i.e., until the day of Samuel’s passing away he did not see Saul anymore. However, on the day of his passing, Samuel did see Saul. As explained above, Samuel passed away on 28 Iyar, which became in our time *Yom Yerushalayim*.

In other words, Samuel not only gave David the *megillah* with written and detailed instructions as to where and how to build the Holy Temple, but he did so on 28 Iyar, the date on which the Prophet Samuel passed away—the very date on which, in our time, with G-d’s help, we liberated the Temple Mount.

The grammatical syntax and style concerning the words “did not continue to see Saul *until the day of his death*” are the same as those used concerning the childlessness of David’s wife Michal, the daughter of King Saul.⁴ The Babylonian Talmud in *Sanhedrin* 21a points out, however, that she did have children. How can we understand that verse? The great Talmudic sage Rav Hisda responds there that until the day of her passing she had no children, but on the day she passed away she did have children. This is the same style as the verse concerning Samuel not seeing Saul anymore (I Samuel 15:35), but on the day that Samuel passed away he did

⁴ I.e., “and Michal the daughter of Saul had no child *until the day of her passing away*” (II Samuel 6:23).

see King Saul. In both cases the phrase “until the day of his/her passing away” must be understood literally to conform to the facts recorded in the Books of Samuel.⁵

In view of the fact that on the night of Be-Nayot Be-Ramah Samuel, David, and Saul were together, and properly understanding that the language “Samuel did not continue to see Saul until the day of his death” (I Samuel 15:35) must be taken literally, clearly that night was on the day Samuel passed away, which is 28 Iyar.

To sum up, we see the 28th of Iyar was the day of our Biblical war with Amalek in Refidim and associated miracles. It was the day Samuel the prophet gave to David a written *megillah* and with it taught him where and how to build the Holy Temple and the Temple vessels and implements. It was the day Samuel the prophet passed away. It was already a holy day in Biblical times. This day, 28 Iyar, of pre-ordained holiness, became the date of our liberation of the Temple Mount and Yehudah and Shomron. It became *Yom Yerushalayim*.

In addition to the significant date 28 Iyar, why did our first *Yom Yerushalayim* occur on a Wednesday? Is it possible that this is symbolic?

Ramban (Nachmanides), who was a Kabbalist, noticed a grammatical problem in Genesis 2:3. It should have ended “*asher bara Elokim ve-asah*” (which G-d created and did, in the past tense). Instead, the verse reads “*asher bara Elokim la‘asot*” (which G-d created to do, implying the future). Ramban believes that creation is a continuous process in the same sense as the original 7 days of creation, but with each millennium representing an analogous day of creation. For example, on the 4th day of creation G-d created the larger light, smaller light, and stars. Ramban suggests the larger light represents the First Temple, the smaller light the Second Temple, and the stars represent the synagogues after the destruction of the Second Temple. All of them were built in the 4th millennium. Ramban, regarding days of the week, explains that just as the incoming Jewish day begins at sunset of the outgoing day, so too the incoming millennium begins towards the end of the outgoing millennium. There is an overlap between millennia just as there is an overlap during *bein ha-shmashot* between an outgoing and incoming day. The large light symbolizes the First Temple built during twilight towards the end of the 3rd millennium in the year 2928 since creation, which is also part of the beginning of the 4th millen-

⁵ Although the Talmudic discussion concerning Michal’s childlessness focuses on children born in Jerusalem as opposed to Hevron, here we are concerned with how to understand the phrase “until the day of her passing away.”

nium. The smaller light represents the much less grandiose Second Temple built in the year 3408 since creation but also in the fourth millennium 70 years after the destruction of the First Temple. The stars represent the synagogues after destruction of the Second Temple in the 3830th year since creation, which is towards the end of the 4th millennium.⁶ The Second Temple had far less grandeur physically and spiritually than the First Temple, so much so that the elders who remembered the First Temple destroyed seventy years previously cried at the dedication of the Second Temple (Ezra 3:12). There was no Holy Ark, no Cherubim, no Urim Ve-Tumim, and much less presence of the holy Shechinah regarding the Second Temple (BT *Yoma* 52b). These items were hidden by King Josiah (Yoshiyahu) before the Babylonian invasion. Therefore, the Second Temple is represented by a smaller light.

According to Ramban, the animals and creeping things created on the 5th day of creation represent the middle-ages which occurred in the 5th millennium. The creation of Adam on the 6th day represents the coming of the Messiah in the 6th millennium. Midrashic sources suggest the creation of Adam on that Friday was in the late afternoon, although Ramban hoped and even predicted that the Messiah would come earlier in the 6th millennium (Ramban, Genesis 2:3).

The first *Yom Yerushalayim* when we liberated the Temple Mount occurred not only on 28 Iyar but also on Wednesday the 4th day of the week, associated with the building of both Temples in the 4th millennium. May we realize quickly the broad spiritual greatness and significance of *Yom Yerushalayim*, and may we merit that the Third Temple be built speedily in our days. **OR**

⁶ Dates are from Eliezer Shulman, *The Sequence of Events in the Old Testament*, Israel Min. of Defense, 1987, 3rd ed.