



## BUBBY KNEW

I dreaded having to make the phone call. It was February 2004 and we had just decided to make aliyah. We lived in Maryland and my grandmother lived in New York, and we made the effort for her to see our children quite regularly.

A survivor of Auschwitz, she was in the golden years of her life enjoying her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Now I was about to tell her that we were moving her great-grandchildren thousands of miles away.

I picked up the phone and put it down a few times before I finally dialed. After some small talk I said, “Bubby, I have some news for you. With G-d’s help we are making aliyah this summer. We are moving to Israel.”

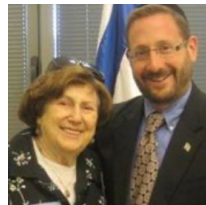
There was a pause on the other side of the line and I braced myself for my grandmother to be very legitimately upset. But she broke the silence with these words: ברוך אתה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהוֹדֵינוּ וְקִבְּלֵנוּ וְהִגִּיעֵנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַיּוֹם.

After a moment of speechlessness, I asked, “Bubby, where did that come from?”

She explained: “It is going to be very painful to have you so far away and not to see your children growing up. But when we were on the boat coming to America from DP camp in Germany after the War, I asked myself the entire way, ‘Why are we going in this direction to another foreign country to the Jewish people, when we could be going in the other direction, where a new Jewish State is being established in our Biblical and ancestral homeland?’”

She continued that she appreciates how America welcomed the Jewish people, but concluded, “to see my grandchildren and great-children settling in Israel, I have nothing but thanks to G-d.”

Ten years later, my Bubby came to Israel and visited me in my Knesset office, close to 70 years after her liberation from Auschwitz. She sat down, looked around and said, “This doesn’t make any sense. A Jewish State? Israel? The Jewish capital? Yerushalayim? A Jewish parliament? The Knesset? My grandson as a member of the Knesset? This just doesn’t make any sense.”



70 years earlier, she had arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau in a cattle car along with her parents, some of her siblings, and many nieces and nephews. That night, Shavuot 1944, all but she and one of her sisters were exterminated in the gas chambers. And here she was in my Knesset office, 70 years later. My Bubby was right. It doesn’t make any sense. And yet here we are – with Yerushalayim and all of Israel available for all Jews – to visit or to move to whenever they choose to do so. G-d is “hard at work” making the impossible come true in the Holy Land.

There is no reason for any controversy about the magnitude of what happened on Yom HaAtzmaut. Rav Ovadia Yosef records (Yabia Omer, Orach Chayim 6:41) that three great Charedi rabbis – Rabbi Chatzkel Sarna, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman

Auerbach – all signed a letter in 1949 which said: “the first buds of the beginning of the redemption through the establishment of the State of Israel.” They understood the magnitude of what was happening. My grandmother, and all Holocaust survivors understood the magnitude of what happened on the 5th of Iyar 5708. Everyone who lived during the era of the Holocaust and the ensuing years recognized the miraculous significance of what it means to have a State of Israel. This adds deeper meaning to the transition from Yom HaShoah to Yom HaZikaron to Yom HaAtzmaut.

My Bubby, Ethel Kleinman, passed away last year at the age of 95. She lived to see great-great-grandchildren and



radiated with joy when she saw her great-grandson, my son, in uniform as a commander in an IDF combat unit.

In my grandmother’s memory, please take a step back to truly internalize and rejoice over the remarkable times in which we live with the establishment of the State of Israel and follow my Bubby’s example to channel that happiness into heartfelt thanks to G-d.

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