



Rabbi Yeshayahu Chaim Hadari zt”l A Man of Yerushalayim

Rabbi Yeshayahu Chaim Hadari zt”l, who was both my teacher and Rabbi, became one of the most influential and important spiritual figures in the life of the Old City of Yerushalayim after the Six-Day War.

His death three years ago left the Jewish Quarter in the Old City without one of its paragons of Torah scholarship.

Rav Hadari was the founder of Yeshivat Hakotel and served as Rosh Yeshiva for more than 50 years. He shaped its special educational and religious approach, to which he added his own extraordinary personal qualities to create a way of life characterized by friendship, loyalty and mutual responsibility among the yeshiva students.

The yeshiva was initially situated in rundown, abandoned buildings and moved to the almshouses overlooking the road leading to the Kotel until it was finally housed in a permanent building within the rebuilt Jewish Quarter.

Through the yeshiva, Rav Hadari also left his imprint on the revitalized life in the Old City, including its physical renewal and the development of its spiritual and religious life.

As an outstanding and well-respected educator, endowed with rare pedagogical ability, he transformed the yeshiva into a spiritual beacon. Sounds of Torah study, joy and prayer could be heard between its walls day and night, enjoyed by local residents, tourists strolling through the alleys and the masses making their way down to the Kotel.

Rav Hadari was a man of thought and deeds, and acutely aware of the huge spiritual potential inherent in the yeshiva and its strategic location. He introduced

the traditional descent to the Kotel for the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service, which became one of the yeshiva’s trademarks. Every Friday night at dusk, one could see the yeshiva students, led by Rav Hadari, dancing on their way to the Kotel to pray, while at the same time singing *ישמחו במלכותך שומרי שבת*. When they reached the Western Wall Plaza, many of the people already there joined them in the dancing and the *tefillot*.



Rav Hadari’s concern for the spiritual development of Yerushalayim, coupled with his creative way of thinking, turned the *beit midrash* into a place that welcomed all Jews who wished to study Torah close to the remnants of the *Beit HaMikdash*. This would especially occur on Shavuot eve and on the eve of

Hoshanah Rabbah, when people from the entire Jewish spectrum, from both Israel and the Diaspora, would come to learn in the *beit midrash*.

His combination of vision and pragmatism also expressed itself when he encouraged his students to purchase housing in the Jewish Quarter, many of whom did so.

He would often quote the words of the Sages: “Any generation in whose days the *Beit HaMikdash* is not rebuilt, it is as if they destroyed it.” The Sfat Emet explains that the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and the *Beit HaMikdash* is not a one-time matter, but rather a long and continuous process. Every generation lays its own foundations until the rebuilding is complete and the *Beit HaMikdash* stands before us. Therefore, if a generation failed to lay its own foundations and did not contribute its part, it is as if it destroyed the *Beit HaMikdash*. Rav Hadari zt”l, driven by a vision of a rebuilt Beit Mikdash, laid a wealth of solid foundations for the spiritual rebuilding of Yerushalayim.

This year on Yom Yerushalayim, when Yeshivat Hakotel will celebrate its anniversary and the Jewish Quarter will mark the day on which Yerushalayim was liberated and reunified, we will sorely miss the man who did so much to build and rebuild it.

Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman is Head of the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora in the World Zionist Organization and one of World Mizrahi’s representatives in the National Institutions. He is a graduate of Yeshivat Hakotel and was one of its first students.