

# FEATURE STORY

## THE VIEW FROM JERUSALEM

**By Dr. David Breakstone, International Vice President, MERCAZ & Masorti Olami**

The traditional Hebrew adage "lo l'arbev simcha b'simcha" (literally, "not to mix simcha with simcha") enjoins us from muddling the joy of one event with that of another. But this year, the people of Israel appear ready to make an exception. Still in the midst of festivities marking 40 years of the reunification of Jerusalem, we have already begun gearing up to celebrate 60 years of Israel's independence. The anniversaries of these two momentous events in our history give tangible expression to the reward our generation has been privileged to collect as recompense for our ancestors' steadfast loyalty to the Land of Israel throughout centuries of Galut (exile).

Now, at the beginning of a New Year in which these two occasions overlap, it is appropriate for every member of MERCAZ Olami to take stock of what little bit more he or she might be doing to live a life a trifle truer to the sentiment expressed by our psalmist, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem...".

The following is a list of 10 concrete actions to choose from to make certain that even in lives lived by the rivers of Babylon, however soothing they may be, no joy shall take precedent over our yearning for the eternal capital of the Jewish people, now returned unto its ancient land.

- 1) Begin planning your next trip to Israel. If you've already got one scheduled, suggest to a friend or relative to plan one as well. Or get involved in organizing a trip for your synagogue or children's school.
- 2) Make one of Israel's on-line newspapers your internet homepage. (Some options: [www.ynetnews.com](http://www.ynetnews.com), [www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com), [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com), [www.ynet.co.il](http://www.ynet.co.il), [www.haaretz.co.il](http://www.haaretz.co.il).)
- 3) Read Israel: An Echo of Eternity, Abraham Joshua's ode on the meaning of a Jewish state on an ancient land in modern times. Almost 40 years old, but still inspiring.
- 4) At the end of the Yom Kippur liturgy, after a full day of fasting and against the background of the blast of the shofar, ask yourself what you really mean when uttering the words, "Next year in Jerusalem."
- 5) Connect to contemporary Israeli culture. Go out and get an Israeli DVD, CD, or novel.
- 6) Pick up a siddur and spend some quality time with the prayers for the State of Israel and the Welfare of Israel's Soldiers, considering the emotions they evoke.

7) At the next wedding you attend, after the wine goblet is broken in commemoration of the destruction of the Temple, take a pause and a deep breath before joining in with the clapping and dancing.

8) Increase your contribution to one of the institutions promoting Masorti Judaism in Israel, and inquire as to how else you might become involved in promoting its agenda. Contact your local chapter of MERCAZ (For details, [click here](#).)

9) Find an excuse to plant a tree in Israel — preferably in person, alternatively via the internet ([www.jnf.org](http://www.jnf.org) or [www.kkl.org.il](http://www.kkl.org.il)).

10) Improve your Hebrew. Commit yourself to improving your vocabulary one word at a time. Register for an ulpan. Choose a prayer you will learn to read and understand in the original.

Together, may we all enhance the meaning of the Zionist enterprise in this milestone year by allowing its great successes and religious significance to enrich our lives as individuals and as a community.