

# SAYING ‘AL HA’NISSIM’ IN CHEVRON

By Aliza Karp

It’s over. I knew it would end. When was the last time two and half weeks lasted forever? Memories and a few pictures – those will last. But the experience is behind me, left to be cherished and hopefully processed into something productive.

I chose the timing of my trip to Eretz Yisroel so that I could participate in the Menora lighting on top of the hill known as Abu Sneh.

All year round, in my work with Chabad of Chevron, I record and publicize the Rebbe’s Peulos, Judaism strengthening projects, in and around Chevron. Each and every activity makes me wish I was on location to cover the story. I love the Rebbe’s work and I love Chevron. There are times when it is painful to be so close (knowing all the details) and yet so far (operating from Crown Heights). But how can I complain? I try to minimize the ‘so far’ and I thank Hashem and the Rebbe for being ‘so close.’

Of all the activities of Chabad of Chevron, the one that attracts me most is the Menora lighting on Abu Sneh.

For most of my two and a half week trip I stayed with my friend

Shaena in Yerushalayim. I know that the road from Yerushalayim to Gush Etzion experiences delays for odd and sundry reasons (e.g., high alerts with backups at checkpoints), so I wanted to get to Chevron early in the day. I was not taking the chance of jeopardizing my Abu Sneh lighting because of road problems.

I arrived in Kiryat Arba just before noon. I had arranged to use my time to tour the new Beis Chaya Mushka Chabad House currently under construction. Beis Chaya Mushka Kiryat Arba – Chevron is a joint project of Rabbis Danny Cohen, Victor Atiyah, and Yossi Nachshon of Chabad of Chevron.

The project manager and the onsite foreman showed me around and answered my questions. The concrete for the roof had just been poured. They explained to me how they made a wooden structure supported by metal. They made it sound simple, but to me it was fascinating. The shell of the building was reaching completion.

On the second floor there will be a Shul. It was nice to see a completely separate entrance and outdoor landing for the women to enter the building on the level of the third floor and go directly to the

woman’s gallery. The space where the third floor is open, overlooking the Shul below, will have a skylight above it.

In front of the building there is a large plaza. Knowing Victor’s ‘Pied Piper’ reputation for drawing a crowd to his programs for children, I could picture the plaza filled with happy Neshamale’s. In the center of the plaza there will be a stone mosaic depicting 770. The exterior of Beis Chaya Mushka is not a replica of 770, but its design strongly resembles the 770 design.

After the tour I stopped by to visit Sara and Boruch Nachshon. Beis Chaya Mushka is very close to their home. It is being built in memory of their granddaughter, Chaya Mushka Atiyah, who perished in a fire on the twentieth of Chaf Av, 5766. It seems to me that she has a lot of Zechusim, merit, because the building is coming along so beautifully.

Once at the Nachshon’s home, I used the opportunity to look at some of Boruch’s works of art. There was one I really related to. It showed a single Chassid standing on the ground. Well, not exactly on the ground, but he was grounded, as opposed to some of Boruch’s paintings where the Chassidim seem to be floating. The Chassid was facing upwards, with one arm extended and the other holding a tambourine. The colors above the Chassid were warm colors, fiery oranges and yellows. Without words this painting described to me a Chassid bridging the material and the spiritual worlds through prayer and Simcha.

I have noticed that some of Boruch’s paintings have names, so I asked if this one had a name. He said he will call it “Aliza.” “Aliza” means joy.

We sat down for some tea and Boruch started enumerating the inconsistencies, fallacies, and evils



Chevron Mivtzaim champions:  
Saadia, Menachem, and Eli



of the government in Eretz Yisroel. I had found that most people I had come in contact with on my trip did not want to talk about the dangers being initiated and reinforced by the political powers. Boruch's insightful and cutting comments were said without emotion. At intervals he would look Heavenward and he would say 'Baruch Hashem.'

The hours were passing. It was time to complete the last part of my journey to Chevron. I could use the expression 'it's a stone's throw' to describe the distance between Kiryat Arba and Chevron, but on this route 'a stone's throw' could mean something else, so I'll skip the expression and say it was a short ride. I had a T'hilim, *Tanya*, Siddur, and a Pushka in the car – the very things the Rebbe said would be a spiritual protection – and I had remembered to say T'fillas HaDerech, the prayer for travelers, when leaving Yerushalayim. My personal feeling is that Hashem is everywhere, especially in the land where "Hashem's gaze is upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." I take all precautions and I feel safe. If Hashem gives a person a Nisayon, a challenge, it could be in Crown Heights, Kfar Chabad, Chevron, or anywhere. So we pray we should be blessed with revealed good and that Hashem should redeem us through Ahava, love.

One time I had a passenger who was worried about safety. I told her to sing. She chose the song that goes with the Pasuk in Parshas VaYechi: "HaMalach HaGoel Osi..." In the Chumash, it is Yaakov saying, "May the angel who redeems me from all evil, bless the lads, and may my name be declared upon them and the names of my forefathers Avrohom and Yitzchok, and may they reproduce abundantly like fish within the land." Without giving a complete commentary, I

find this Pasuk very appropriate because it speaks about the Avos, whom are buried in Chevron, and the angel that was sent by Hashem to guard Yaakov from all perils. And one more thing, if they have a Bracha to reproduce, they will be safe... as the Pasuk says, 'within the land.'

When I arrived in Chevron, Danny and Eli Eichenblatt – a Bachur doing Shlichus in Chevron – were connecting the large electric Menora in front of M'aras HaMachpella, known as the Cave of the Patriarchs, burial place of the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish nation. That done, we took two, meter-high, freestanding Menoros and placed them at strategic corners where soldiers are stationed.

Then Danny and Eli ran to Mincha and I locked myself in the caravan office/guest room for a much needed power nap.

At 5 pm I went to the Cohen apartment, where they were lighting their Menoros. Our Rebbe has molded his Chassidim to be all encompassing in the most wonderful ways. On one hand, Chabad Chassidim light their Menoros in interior doorways in contrast to others who place their Menoros on the windowsill to publicize the miracle – and then the Chassidim put Menoros on their cars and parade around, and they light giant Menoros together with public figures.

In the Cohen home, the one large Menora lit by Danny, surrounded by the smaller Menoros lit by his sons, created a special Chanuka atmosphere. The children

were excited with their new Dreidels that lit up as they spun around. The youngest child was not yet skilled enough to spin a Dreidel, so he had a remote control. Really. All he had to do was press a button and his Dreidel dutifully began to spin.

Before it was time to start the evening's Mivtzaim, Danny's wife Batsheva served us homemade lentil soup. Being that she is a gourmet cook, she apologized for the modest fare. But I could not think of anything better in preparation for venturing to a barren hilltop on a chilly evening.

I first heard of the hilltop Abu Sneneh in the early months of 2001. That was a year of increased terror attacks throughout Eretz Yisroel. In particular, the Jewish community of Chevron was targeted with intense gunfire. Miraculously, the bullets seemed to fly between the people. Or, as the Chevronim like to say, they were walking through the bullets in the Z'chus of Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, who walked between raindrops.\*

As deaths and injuries were mounting all over Eretz Yisroel during the 2001 Intifada, Chevron was spared for many months, until the day when ten-month-old Shalhevet Pass suffered a direct hit while in the children's playground of the Avrohom Avinu neighborhood. The bullet came from the abandoned building atop the hill called Abu Sneneh. This hill is part of the Holy City of Chevron, part of the Holy Land, but after the death of Shalhevet, Abu Sneneh came to represent darkness and evil. The name Shalhevet means flame. A flame brings warmth and light.

From Abu Sneneh, Shalhevet, a pure Jewish Neshama's earthly presence, was extinguished.

An hour after the Cohen's lit their Menoros, I went with Danny and his eldest son Menachem Mendel, 'Menni,' to the meet up with the bulletproof van designated to take us to the crest of Abu Sneneh.

Our meeting place was Gross Square, the junction nearest Avrohom Avinu. Earlier we had placed a Menora on this corner. Now that it was dark we took the opportunity to have the soldiers on guard light it and say the three Brachos of the first night of Chanuka.

Jewish civilians are restricted to very specific, limited areas of Chevron. Abu Sneneh is not within the permitted boundaries. Each year Danny negotiates with the army to bring guests with him when he lights the Abu Sneneh Menora. The army insists we travel in a bulletproof vehicle with an army escort.

Once the Menora in Gross Square was alit we climbed into our van and pulled up behind the army Jeep that was positioned in front of a checkpoint/roadblock. The roadblock was moved aside and our two-vehicle convoy crossed over to the 'occupied' area of Chevron. As we began to negotiate the rough, windy roads we passed unkempt streets with homes and stores and barber shops. Men on the streets turned to watch us. Their expressions were of suspicion and hostility. My eyes saw darkness; my heartfelt it.

When I lived in Crown Heights

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\*Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel was the daughter of the second Lubavitcher Rebbe. She was the matriarch and spiritual leader of the Chabad community in Chevron from 1845 to 1888, when she was buried in the Chabad cemetery in Chevron. At the time of Menucha Rochel's departure from Russia to ascend to Eretz Yisroel, she was concerned about road conditions because it was the rainy season. Her cousin the Rebbe the

Tzemach Tzedek gave her a Bracha to travel between the drops. Her trip went smoothly and from that time she could go out in the rain and not get wet. The wagon driver who took Menucha Rochel to Chevron reported that road conditions on his return trip were very difficult due to rain, but on the way there he did not have any problems.



**Soldiers participate with Rabbi Victor Atiyah at the Chanuka party on an army base in Chevron**

in the 1970's, homeowners were putting bars on their windows and venturing out at night with extreme caution. I used to think of it as the good people being locked up behind bars while the criminals roamed the streets freely. Now, on our ride up to Abu Sneneh, we wouldn't dare stop the van and get out. We were prisoners locked in our van, with our army escort guards, traveling through the city of our forefathers, in the land that was promised to Yitzchok and Yaakov – not to Yishmoel!

We reached a clearing at the top of the hill. There I saw an army mini-fortress and a pillbox lookout and our Menora!

The Cohen's came to Chevron in Elul of 2002. Their first Chanuka in Chevron, they worked hard to get permission to erect and light a large Menora on Abu Sneneh. At that time it was erected on top of the abandoned building used by the sniper to murder Shalhevet.

That year I asked Chevron community spokesman David Wilder his reaction to seeing the

Menora. He answered:

“A terrorist sniper sited 10 month old Shalhevet Pass from the hills surrounding the Jewish community in Chevron. Those hills, also known as Abu Sneneh, are now called Givat Shalhevet. Shalhevet means flame... Chabad has always been at the forefront of enlightening people. It is fitting that Chabad should be the ones to initiate the placing of a giant Menora on Givat Shalhevet.”

I spoke to one of the soldiers who guarded the Menora that first year. He was an American who came to serve for eighteen months. His name was Shlomo. He was a redhead with a sparkling smile. He told me that one day a fancy UN car drove up to the Menora while he was on guard duty and the UN'ers told him that the Menora should be taken down because it was an insult to the Arabs. Shlomo did not hesitate to let the UN'ers know that the G-d of Israel gave this land to the children of Israel. And the children of Israel light Menoros on Chanuka.

This attitude that Jews doing Mitzvos offends the sensitivity of Arabs reminded me of the story about Boruch Nachshon being taken into custody because he offended the Arabs by bringing a bottle of wine into M'aras HaMachpella. He was making a Bris for one of his sons. It was the first Bris in the Maara after the Six Day War. Who knows how many hundreds of years it had been since Jews made a Bris in the Maara. Avrohom Avinu, who not only purchased the Maara, but is also buried there received this very Mitzva from Hashem – in Chevron! The police made their valiant, chivalrous, cunning attack mid-ceremony. The Mohel quickly finished the Bris without completing the Brachos and ran away. Boruch was arrested. The bottle of wine was taken as evidence. Luckily for Boruch, the policemen at the station did not realize the wine was incriminating evidence. They drank the wine. Later that day Boruch was released for lack of evidence. The end of the story may be a comedy, but essentially the story is a tragedy. The baby was named Avrohom.

In 2003 Chabad of Chevron erected a larger Menora on Abu Sneneh and began bringing guests to the lighting, fresh donuts to the soldiers, and individual Menoros for them to light. Each night there was singing and dancing with the Rabbis, guests and soldiers. The Abu Sneneh Menora became a yearly tradition.

On the eighth day of Chanuka in 2005 the Arabs struck back. They vandalized the Menora. For eight nights Chabad of Chevron had brought light, joy and fun to the otherwise lonely army outpost. Now this. Danny discussed the situation with the army personnel. He prevailed on them that a stronger, more permanent Menora was needed.

When we pulled up to the clearing two years later, it was the clearing that the army had made for the Menora the year before. Not only had they given their approval for a more permanent structure, they had brought in bulldozers, cleared away the abandoned building, creating the small plaza, and placed a large concrete block to serve as the base of a twenty-five foot post designed to be the center shaft of a Menora, to which branches could be attached.

The day before we came up to Abu Sneneh, Chabad of Chevron had sent a team of Menora builders to set up the branches of the Menora, place giant globes atop the branches and connect the electricity. Transparent plastic tubing with lights inside was placed to outline the shape of the Menora so it could be seen from the Jewish communities below.

The Menora was electric. No Bracha would be said.

Danny invited me to flip the switches. I would be the first one this year to shatter the darkness of Abu Sneneh with the holy light of a Chanuka Menora – a giant Menora – a concept that became a reality solely and exclusively because of my Rebbe, my teacher and my personal savior.

I ran my fingers over the white box of circuit breakers on the Menora shaft. I wanted this moment to last forever. Danny showed me the switch for the first Licht. I looked up at the glass globe and saw it light up as I pressed the switch. The same with the Shamash. I felt a glow inside that could match the illumination of the glass globes above my head. I can't imagine any Lubavitcher atop a cherry picker lighting a Menora at city hall, together with a state governor or movie star, being as happy as I was at that moment.

I turned around and saw M'aras

HaMachpella below. M'aras HaMachpella. The purchase of M'aras HaMachpeila by Avrohom, the first Jew, is the first recorded real estate transaction in the history of mankind. It is a transaction that has never been refuted. M'aras HaMachpeila is the cornerstone of the connection of Am Yisroel to Eretz Yisroel, the people of Israel to the land of Israel.

The Menora was at the front edge of the clearing, just behind a spiral fence of barbed wire edging a steep drop into darkness below until the lights of the top row of Arab buildings. At the foot of Abu Sneneh I could see the ribbon of Jewish neighborhoods in the valley underlining the hills of the greater city of Chevron across from where I was standing. But my hilltop was the highest and I had just lit the Menora to publicize the miracle of Chanuka for all of Chevron.

While I was still meditating on the hilltop, Danny and Menni were gathering soldiers and climbing the spiral stairs inside the pillbox lookout with a Menora and candles. I managed to catch up in time to hear one of the soldiers reciting all three Brachos and his fellow soldiers answering Amen.

Our stash of Sufganiot, Israeli donuts, had not yet arrived. Danny told me that the next night he would be sure to have them on time and then he would sing and dance with the soldiers. It seems Sufganiot are the key to stimulating song and dance – at least that is how it is on Chanuka.

I had wanted to do one more Chanuka Mitzva while on Abu Sneneh, so I asked which direction was Yerushalayim and took out my Siddur to say Maariv, the evening prayer. In America we face East when we Daven. In Eretz Yisroel we face Yerushalayim.

It turned out that Yerushalayim was the same direction as the

Maara. I stood off to the side of the Menora, just inside the barbed wire. Across from me were the Maara, the lights of Chevron and in the distance, out of sight, Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh with the Har HaBayis.

This was my first chance this Chanuka to say Al HaNissim, the special paragraph inserted into our prayers on Chanuka and Purim. My intention was to add another Mitzva and it seemed to me that Al HaNissim was appropriate. That was my intention, but the results were unexpected.

In front of me were the lights of the Maara and the tiny Jewish community. I noticed how they were dominated by the vast lights of the Arab occupation. As I said the words in Al HaNissim: "You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton sinners into the hand of the who occupy themselves with Your Torah," Chanuka became real. Battles of Chanuka were fought right here in the area of Chevron. Hashem made miracles in these days in their time – in Al HaNissim we ask Him to make miracles for us in these days in our times. Today, as in those days, we are the weak, we are the few, we are the pure and the righteous, we occupy ourselves with Torah. Please Hashem, only You can deliver them – the mighty, the many, the impure, the wicked, the wanton sinners – into our hands.

The Rebbe bears the responsibility to hasten Moshiach on his shoulders, but he gave us the task to bring Moshiach with our hands and feet. I was barely finished Davening when I got back into the van where the others were already seated. Tonight was the first night of a series of parties of different army bases on the different nights of Chanuka. Chabad of Chevron is



**The Menora at Gross Square with soldiers, Danny and Eli – the Abu Sneneh Menora is far above**

part of the universal Chabad network pushing the switches to turn on the era of Moshiach.

Once we crossed the security line, we left the bulletproof van and – adding Shai, Cohen child number two, to the group – we climbed into the Chabad Mitzva Mobile/Van. We passed by Gross Square and the soldiers flagged us down. Their windproof wicks had blown out and it was important to them to have their Menora lit. We relit the flames and hoped for the best as we drove towards the army base nearby. On the way we turned a lively Niggun on the loud speaker system. It really gave a feeling of holiday Simcha. As we passed each group of soldiers on guard duty they greeted us by dancing to the music and cheering us on. We didn't yet have the Sufganiot. But on the return trip we were able to give them out to all the soldiers along the way.

The base we arrived at was the same base I had been to the week before with Batsheva. One night a week Batsheva goes to two army bases and gives a Shiur, Torah class, to the girl soldiers. She also brings homemade food which the girls love. It seems many of the girls are not 'into' army food. Then

before Shabbos, Batsheva goes to these, plus a third army base to give out Shabbos candles along with a Shabbos treat.

The base we went to after Abu Sneneh was one of the bases where Batsheva gives her weekly Shiur. Soon after we arrived we were joined by Yossi Nachshon, Victor Atiyah, Menachem Porter, Eli Eichenblatt, and Moshe Langer. While they were assembling the soldiers and starting the program, I went to speak to the girls I had met the week before. They told me how they would never have come to Chevron had the army not sent them, but now they see it is a good place to be – and a necessary place for the army because terror attacks in other locations throughout Eretz Yisroel often originate in Chevron. The army presence in Chevron provides surveillance – the preventive medicine to impede terror attacks. The girls told me that since they have been in Chevron they have found the community to be friendly, but – they told me – Batsheva is different from everyone else they have met. They feel she really cares about them. They are right!

Two of the girls came with me to

the party. The others were on duty in the office.

When we arrived, Danny was speaking. This particular army battalion was the same sub-unit that he had served in fifteen years ago during his active duty in a combat unit. I could see he was speaking to them with an extra measure of familiarity and affection. And Hey! They responded! There was a lot of lively interaction.

Danny first spoke about a modern day miracle of Chanuka. He explained that the Maccabees were fighting against decrees forbidding Mitzvos, so Chanuka actually celebrates the freedom to observe Mitzvos. And the modern day miracle is that so many people who otherwise do not observe Mitzvos, keep Chanuka – the celebration of being able to observe Mitzvos!

“And when you get out of the army and travel to the Far East, and it is Chanuka, where will you go?” Danny asked. “Beit Chabad!” the soldiers answered in unison as if they had rehearsed.

Then the commander of the base said a few words. The vibes I picked up from him were serious and compassionate. He is a young man, still in his early twenties. He did not show any signs of being religious but he spoke about the unusual perspective of Chabad to accept all Jews: Ashkenazi, Sefardi, young, old, rich and poor. He welcomed and thanked the Chabadnikim who were making the party. It is important to him that his soldiers experience Judaism.

The soldier who was a rank below the commander, but senior to the other soldiers, had been helpful with both the party and the Abu Sneneh lighting. He was called forward to light one of the meter high Menoros that Yossi had brought in. The soldier was shy at first about saying the Brachos in

front of everyone, but soon he warmed up and was beaming by the time he had completed lighting the candles.

The soldiers sang HaNeiros Halalu and Maoz Tzur. They enjoyed singing together. It was beautiful.

The donuts arrived! They were still warm. Yum!

Menni and Shai gave out pocket sized versions of the Segula L'Shmira: the T'hilim, *Tanya*, Siddur and Pushka that the Rebbe said will give spiritual protection. The soldiers all took one. The Segula is just the right size to fit into one of the pockets on their uniform and despite its size, it's very readable. It makes them feel safe and they appreciate that Chabad, and the Jews in America who sponsor the Segulot, care about them.

The next night when Saadia Hershkop was handing out the Segulot at a different base, one of the soldiers said that he still had one that was given to him during the Lebanon war. He said he had the same Chabad of Chevron logo. This was amazing. According to Danny, Saadia, together with Eli, were the only ones who were giving out Chabad of Chevron Segulot at the northern border that summer.

Saadia and Eli had gone right to the border with Lebanon to take T'fillin, the Segulot, Coca Cola and encouragement to the soldiers who were camping out waiting for their orders. The boys told me about the deserted towns near the border and how the army came in and set up however best they could. The days Saadia and Eli visited the soldiers turned out to be very crucial days. The first day they went they felt a charge in the air. High morale and energy, ready to fight and win. But two days later things changed. The politicians declared a temporary cease fire. The moral died and, as

expected, the war became a disaster. But each day the boys came to do Mivtzaim, the soldiers greeted them, thanked them and lined up to put on T'fillin. One soldier for sure held onto his Segula since he received it a year and a half ago – and he brought it with him to Chevron.

When Menni and Shai were confident that all the soldiers had their Segula L'Shmira, the entertainment began. Victor is a magician. He does amazing tricks. The soldiers were intrigued. I wish I could find a word to describe Victor, but I can't. The Yiddish word '*eidel*,' approximating the meaning of the English word '*refined*,' would apply to him, but still it does not describe him. He is tall and slender with kind eyes. He has a presence that is both comforting and powerful. His magic show is very entertaining. With each magic trick that he does – he gives a D'var Torah.

Victor became interested in magic a number of years ago as a way to entertain children at rallies and to become familiar with soldiers so they would be receptive to Mivtzaim. After the tragedy that took his daughter Chaya Mushka's life, he upgraded his magic tricks. He is now invited to events around the country to give his shows. His show is fascinating and funny as he warms his audience's disposition towards Torah and Mitzvos.

It was only about 9:30 pm when we got back to the caravan. Danny decided he would try to make it to the Kirshenzaft wedding in Kfar Chabad. The Kirshenzaft's were the Rebbe's Shluchim in Gush Katif. Danny had stayed with them during the weeks before the Disengagement. He had stayed until the end. It's still important to solidarity with the Kirshenzaft's. They were robbed of their home! Before leaving Danny asked me to write a few emails for Chabad of

Chevron and gave me a tray of donuts to give to soldiers I would encounter on the way back to Yerushalayim.

Danny never made it to the wedding. He got a flat tire in Kiryat Arba. I considered it a small miracle that it did not happen when he was in the middle of 'nowhere.'

I finished the emails and wrote to my family. I was in a bit of a daze after all my experiences in one day, and was not watching the time.

It was after 11:30 when I left Chevron. I set out to drop into the Chanuka party at the home of Meir and Miriam Rhodes in Bat Ayin, roughly half way back to Yerushalayim. The problem was that I did not know how to get to the Rhodes's house once inside Bat Ayin and I doubted that at such an hour there would be many people to ask.

On the way I stopped for gas and there was a Jeep full of soldiers who were happy to take donuts. Back in the car I turned off the road to Beit Shemesh onto the road to Bat Ayin. At the corner stood a young boy – I guessed about eleven years old – signaling he needed a ride.

When he got into the car I noticed his English was better than the typical religious boy living in Bat Ayin. Although there are many families in Bat Ayin with at least one American parent I instinctively knew this one was a Wolfson. I was right. I was amazed at the timing and my good fortune to have a guide. I hesitate to call this a miracle, so let's just say it was an unlikely coincidence. As such we call it Hashgacha Pratis, Divine Providence, although we know everything is Hashgacha Pratis. The Wolfson boy told me he had been at a Chanuka party in his Yeshiva in the settlement nearby. The Wolfson's live right next door to the Rhodes.' I was able to see my young



**Farbrengen at Beis Lubavitch Bat Ayin – thanks to the Rhodes family**

charge make it home safely and get expert instructions to my destination. There were two soldiers at the Bat Ayin entrance. They both took donuts.

By the time I arrived at the party, most of the guests were leaving. I came in anyway for a few minutes to chat and eat up the leftovers. Meir makes great chicken wings. Miriam was putting things away, she does not like to leave things until the morning. There were two young men with their backs to me. They were each at a kitchen sink, washing dishes. Let me clarify, they were happily doing

dishes. The Rhodes' home is a magnet for English speaking youth attracted to the lifestyle in Yehuda and Shomron.

The ride from Bat Ayin to Yerushalayim went smoothly. At the final checkpoint there was a group of soldiers who finished the last Sufganiot from the tray.

Thursday morning began my final day after my two and a half weeks in Eretz Yisroel. Shaena came with me for an early morning Minyan in the Maara. The second Lubavitcher Rebbe stressed the teaching from the Gemara that all prayers are gathered in Chevron and

from there rise on high. This was my final opportunity this trip to offer my prayers from a front row seat. The Shmoneh Esrei is always an emotional prayer when said at the Maara. The first paragraph mentions our fathers who are buried in the Maara, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, and asks Hashem to remember their Middos, their righteous personalities. In their merit we ask to be redeemed in a loving way. With heightened awareness I struggled to stay focused on the words I was saying. Ata Gibbor – Hashem you are mighty; Mekalkail Chaim – You sustain the living; Ata Kadosh – You are Holy; Ata Chonein L'Adam Daas – You bestow knowledge; Hashiveinu Avinu – return us, Our Father; Slach Lanu – pardon us... see our afflictions... heal us... bless us... gather us... restore our judges... crush our enemies... be merciful to the righteous... return us to Yerushalayim... reinstate Dovid, Your servant... have compassion on us... look upon us with favor... return to Zion...

Near the end of the prayer I came to Al HaNissim. My consciousness was transported back to my prayer at Abu Sneneh. It had been an abstract experience. But now a day had past and I felt the inspiration and elevation become internalized, fusing into an overflow of emotion.... and tears.

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