

December 2017 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

My first address growing up was on 78th Street, but I've lived on so many more since then. To name a few, I've lived on East Grand Avenue, Main Street, Forest Avenue, Pebble Drive, 122nd Street, Pleasant Avenue, Broadway, and Haim Bajayo. On this list, you'll, perhaps, one name that is different from all the others. While the first eight all project hints about the physical location or natural surroundings of each address, only the ninth, only Haim Bajayo begs a history lesson. Given that Haim Bajayo was my address in Jerusalem, perhaps this should come as no surprise, because one of the things that differentiates Israelis from Americans, I believe, is the importance each places on national history. My street was named Haim Bajayo, after the last Sephardic rabbi of the Hebron community outside Jerusalem during the British Mandate period. How do I know? Because, since I lived on the street named after him, I naturally felt the obligation to learn more about who he was. Somehow, living on Pebble Drive never made me long to become a geologist, nor even watch more Flintstones. For whatever reason, I, and most people I know, are simply more drawn to make connections with people than we are to objects or adjectives.

As everybody knows, the streets of Jerusalem are filled to the brim with history. What you may not know, however, unless you've spent time walking the streets there, is that almost every one offers a most fabulous way to learn and connect with our own history.

Most streets in Jerusalem are named after people. Some are biblical (King David Street, Deborah the Prophet Street, Rachel our Mother Street, etc.) and some are from the Rabbinic Period (Hen Baba Street, Bruria Street, Hillel Street, etc.). Some honor the memories of Zionist leaders (Menachem Begin Boulevard, Herzl Boulevard, Golda Meir Boulevard, etc), and others remember some of the most influential Jewish scholars of the Golden Age in Spain (Ibn Ezra Street, Rambam Street, Ramban Street, etc.). I could go on, bringing attention to streets named after the founding pioneers of Israel, or the Holy Temple of Jerusalem, or the Six Day War, or a whole host of other historically significant personalities, but one group that is specifically relevant this week includes place names such as Colombia Street, Mexico Street, Nicaragua Street, Panama Street, and Venezuela Street. These countries are particularly important because they remind us of one of the most important days (in my opinion) in all of Jewish history: November 29, 1947, 70 years ago last week, when 33 countries (including Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela, among others) voted to approve U.N. Resolution 181, which granted official recognition of the right of the Jewish people to create a national home in our ancestral birthplace of Israel. November 29, 1947 was **not** the day Israel became a modern independent state, but it most certainly was the day when the **possibility** of satisfying our 2000 year old hope (HaTikvah) finally became real.

When the Dubin family lived in Jerusalem, our home was on Haim Bajayo Street. Practically around the corner, just 500 meters away, was Kaf-Tet b'November Street.

Why Kaf-Tet? Because, as you may know, each letter in Hebrew has a numerical value associated with it. When you put the letter Kaf, which has the value of 20, with the letter Tet, which has a value of 9, you get 29. I will never forget that date – the 29th of November – because I used to walk by it practically every day.

78th Street, East Grand Avenue, Main Street, Forest Avenue, Pebble Drive, 122nd Street, Pleasant Avenue, and Broadway are all fine streets on which to live, but none of them ever taught me or inspired me to something greater just by their mere names. While I may not endorse the legacies of every last personality after whom Jerusalem streets are named (my own Haim Bajayo included), I can't help but connect to the past and push myself to a better future just by living amidst those personalities.

Jewish tradition teaches that we stand on the shoulders of all the giants who came before us. In Jerusalem, in addition to standing on their shoulders, so too do we walk under their name tags when we go from street to street. As we continue to prepare for our JCNWJ trip to Israel this summer, I encourage those of you who are still on the fence to join us. Together, we will walk the streets, learn the history, and connect, both to our own small JCNWJ family and to the entire Jewish people.

L'Shalom,
Rabbi Dubin

p.s. For a fuller understanding of November 29, 1947, I invite you to watch the two videos linked here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrljzUK0FKg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Wg34NBDjCk&t=936s>

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