

# Yom Hazikaron LeJalalei Tzahal

## The second that changes your life...

To live in Israel, I think, is one of the most beautiful experiences I have had in life. Strolling through the streets, studying at the University of Haifa and Machon Schechter, attending different religious services of various religious movements, and feeling from day to day the "Ta'am" of each chag of the calendar is something that etched in my heart and my memory.

However, beyond the unique moments in Israel, I think that living there was a unique life experience, which I not only remember, but feel that has marked me a "Yehudi" (Jew), leaving me with a taste of pride in belonging to, and being a part of, this ancient nation.

I remember experiencing Yom Hazikaron in Israel: Shabbat had just ended; Sunday began calmly with its daily activities. But we all knew that something would change. It was eight o'clock when suddenly, with the sound of the siren, the country was paralyzed, including those in the street who became silent, still and remembering.

Yom Hazikaron Le Chayalei Tzahal had begun – the day of remembrance for fallen soldiers in the various wars of the State of Israel.

Once the siren was ended, various acts of remembrance were carried out throughout the country. I had the privilege of being in the city of Kfar Saba, in the centre of the country, just 40 minutes away from Tel Aviv.

Approximately 10,000 people met on the major esplanade of the Shopping mall. All in absolute silence, listening to the speeches, and singing the Hatikva with an inexplicable respect. Then tears, memories and longings could be seen on the faces of the crowd. Remembering, a whole country was completely paralyzed by the pain of having lost so many souls in return for the existence of our Medina (state) as well as the continuity of Judaism.

With many questions and only few answers, the ceremony ended and everyone returned home in a state of grief, anger, indignation and sadness. However, they share a conviction that it is ALWAYS worth it, and that those who gave their lives for the Jewish cause, and for the country, did it for all of us.

The next morning, very early, I went to Jerusalem to attend the central act of Yom Hazikaron Le Chayalei Tzahal, which took place at eleven o'clock at Har Hertzl. There, and throughout the country, we were engaging with another act of remembrance.

Again, the siren that gives you goose bumps, sounded, and tears ran down faces in the crowd. Chayalim (soldiers) were crying, mothers embraced photos, brothers had faraway looks of their faces, and people, many people, gathered to pay tribute to OUR FALLEN.

"EL MALE RACHAMIM LE CHAYALEI TZAHAL" was followed by "Kaddish", a trumpet, and then the order for the Chayalim to fire three shots into the sky

as a symbol of remembrance.

And then everyone returned to their regular day, but with a somber atmosphere. The radio played only remembrance music; TV stations played only shows with testimonies from bereaved families and soldiers, along with the informative analysis of the various wars and episodes that casued so many of our soldiers to lose their lives..

The day continued, but at night something incredible happened in almost a split second. In the same place where only 24 hours earlier we had gathered to somberly remember the dead, there was now a fireworks show with music and rikudim (dancing), as the country and the state celebrated its anniversary of independence. The celebration was immense – national figures gave emotional speeches, an orchestra played live, singers on stage gave powerful performances, and a wave of celebration filled the air that it was impossible not to be infected by.

All was joy and celebration. Everyone was happy and excited about a new year for the Jewish state.

However, there was a single second that I will never forget; it was just as a children's symphony orchestra played the Hatikva, and the audience, filled with more people then I could possible count, were there celebrating together, and singing in unison the anthem. We had sung the anthem yesterday too, but this time not for the pain and sadness of loss, but for the joy, happiness and excitement of having our own state.

We were all excited, singing and shouting AM ISRAEL CHAI VEKAYAM. The State of Israel lives and exists, and will continue defending its ideals, its country and its traditions for a long time.

After the extravagant show, everyone went home to prepare for the next day, where in true Argentinean style, families and friends gathered outside for a Mangal or Al HaEsh or Barbeque.

A second was enough to change everything. As Jews, we remember and respect, and then continue with our lives in the knowledge that by moving forward we grow day by day as a state, a nation and the people that we are.

Yom Hazikaron Le Chayalei Tzahal and Yom Ha'atzma'ut are two days that I can never forget, and it took only a second to reaffirm my conviction that every Jew's purpose is to transmit and remember, teach and not miss, and experience these important days so that we will be able to enjoy our tradition and stories in the future.

AM ISRAEL - ANI ZOCHER !  
YOM HA'ATZMA'UT SAMEACH !

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