



THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG SHABBAT SHALOM

3 – 4 June, 2005

25 IYAR, 5765

Parashat Bamidbar (Numbers 1:1-4:20)

Rabbi Michael Schwartz
Cantorial Soloist Julie Howard

D'var Torah from Rabbi Michael Schwartz

Shalom Chaverim,

Monday, 6th June, is “Jerusalem Day”, the day on which we celebrate the reunification of the city during the Six Day War of 1967 and the Jewish People’s presence in Jerusalem since King David established it as our capital more than 3,000 years ago.

Our tradition considers Jerusalem more holy than any other city on earth. Its air is fragrant with wisdom, and its people, too, are wise and discerning. They host guests in their homes, and the city always can accommodate another pilgrim. All are accounted for in Jerusalem, and all are held accountable for her. The secret of the city’s name, *Yeru-shalem*, is that ‘It Will See Peace’, and the presence of God will come again to dwell there in the wholeness of *Yeru-shalayim*, the foundation of the earth. Jerusalem, together with the Jewish People, will become a Light unto the World. What was destroyed by causeless hatred will be restored by causeless love, and the city’s stones, which are its heart, will mend those whose hearts have become like stones.

The poet Yehuda Amichai expresses, like no other, the experience of an encounter with Jerusalem’s spirit:

On the broad steps leading down to the Western Wall.
A beautiful woman came up to me: You don’t remember me,
I’m Shoshana in Hebrew. Something else in other languages.
All is vanity.

Thus she spoke at twilight standing between the destroyed
And the built, between the light and the dark.
Black birds and white birds changed places
With the great rhythm of breathing.
The flash of tourists’ cameras lit my memory too:
What are you doing here between the promised and the forgotten,
Between the hoped for and the imagined?
What are you doing here lying in wait for happiness
With your lovely face a tourist advertisement from God
And your soul rent and torn like mine?

She answered me: My soul is rent and torn like yours
But it is beautiful because of that
Like fine lace.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day)!

*Rabbi Michael
24 Iyar 5765*

2nd June, 2005