

AN AMERICAN IN YERUSHALAYIM ◀

BY DOV FUCHS

Dov Fuchs, a kollel student and Rebbi in Yerushalayim, shares the joys and challenges of his young family as it adjusts to a culture that is different from the one they grew up with.

WELCOME HOME

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PMO

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu (R) greets Jonathan Pollard upon his arrival at Ben Gurion airport, Wednesday morning.

It's a good thing that Jonathan Pollard's arrival in Israel was kept under wraps. Had it been public knowledge, half the country would have been there to greet him. I would have loved to witness his momentous arrival and thank Hashem for freeing the man I'd prayed for, for so long. (My mind conjured up a comical scene of "*machmirim*" insisting on reciting the blessing of "*baruch Matir Assurim*" while holding him at least three *tefachim* off the ground!)

To many, he is a hero who saved countless Yidden from harm by revealing sinister plans that had been withheld from the State of Israel. He forfeited his own freedom for the sake of Eretz Yisrael and its people. We will probably never know the far-reaching effects of his disclosures, but we surely have a massive debt of gratitude, nonetheless.

Besides what he did for the people of Israel, in my eyes, he is much more than a hero. He is a Jew who suffered for his people but, even more, he is a Jew who suffered for being a Jew. The terrible injustice that he endured, the decades of pain, isolation and derision, were all a result of his *Yiddishkeit*. The annals of history have exposed numerous individuals with similar crimes, even with malicious intent, and yet the punishments meted them were nowhere near as harsh. Jonathan Pollard's despic-

able treatment was a direct result of who he was and who he was working for.

To suffer for being a Yid is a priceless privilege in itself. Harav Avigdor Miller, *zt"l*, would extol the merits and virtues of one who bears the burden of being a Jew.

I don't think anyone has the capacity to comprehend what 30 years behind bars entails. Besides the actual sentence, the heart-break and humiliation are simply unfathomable. What kept him alive physically and mentally, year after arduous year? I surmise that there were a few things that kept him going. His unwavering *emunah* in the *Ribbono shel Olam*, as well as his concern for the safety of Eretz Yisrael and her residents, fortified him with tremendous inner-strength.

His wife, may she have a *refuah sheleimah*, was a bastion of devotion and loyalty who played a central role in his endurance. And the *tefillos* offered on his behalf, "*ki b'rabim hayu imadi*," gave him courage. I have no doubt that the merit of Eretz Yisrael, the land and her people, stood by him just as he stood by them.

Had I merited to see his arrival, as he bent down to kiss Eretz Yisrael's soil, I think I might have heard her voice echoing my own: Welcome home. ■