



RABBANIT MIRIAM LEVINGER



Torah Tidbits is honored to share a dvar Torah from an eminent female leader of the modern State of Israel. Rabbanit Levinger played a critical role in resettling the city of Chevron for the Jewish people. The Rabbanit shares with us beautiful thoughts which relate to the unique love and passion the Jewish woman has for the Holy Land.

An Everlasting Love

The story of “Bnot Tzelafchad” in this week’s Parsha, brings me back every year to the story of the group of women myself included settling in the deserted building of Beit Hadassah. This ordeal happened some years after my husband, Harav Moshe Levinger z”l and a group of friends began the modern day story of re-settling Hebron in 1968.

After making Seder Pesach in an Arab hotel, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan moved us to the Hebron military compound. Kiryat Arba was built and we moved there in 1971. In 1978, the Arabs appealed to the Supreme Court and as a result all expansion was frozen. My husband called a meeting in our

house to brainstorm. Baruch Nachshon, our Chabad artist, declared during this meeting that we deserved the setback. Our original plan was to settle in Hebron proper, in the field of the Machpelah. He warned us that the government decision to build the suburb of Kiryat Arba would result in no Hebron. He emphasized the importance of Jews living in the holy site of Hebron and the surrounding area.

The women in our meeting agreed with Nachshon and took the initiative. By the next day, we had organized a group of women willing to move to Hebron with their children. Our hope was that the army would be hesitant to remove us by force. I presented our plan to my husband. His reaction was simple, “I believe in the women” and went immediately to organize those men who would help.

That week, it was decided we would move into Beit Hadassah. Beit Hadassah was built originally by the former Jewish community as an infirmary for Jews and Arabs. The British evicted the Jews from Hebron after the Hebron Pogrom of 1921 where 60 Jews were murdered. In 1931, families returned to the Beit Hadassah area until 1936 when the entire Jewish community was evicted. The Israeli army conquered Hebron in 1967 and Beit Hadassah served as their temporary

headquarters. When the army moved out, the building was vandalized by Arabs who stole all that could be taken, including doors and windows.

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A truck was organized to come to Kiryat Arba at three o'clock in the morning to transport us to Beit Hadassah. Yeshiva students from Mir Yeshiva joined to help. We parked in the street behind Beit Hadassah, we all climbed into the courtyard by ladder and entered the building. We gave cookies and oranges to the children and put them to sleep on mattresses on the floor. That was the beginning.

Our conditions were terrible. No running water or electricity. We had only chemical toilets and lots of dirt, dust, and mold. I reminded myself of the original chalutzim in 1900 and realized that we were much better off than them. We slept on mattresses on the floor and the women from Kiryat Arba helped with basic needs, including food and laundry. The army realized after

many days that we were not planning on leaving, regardless of our conditions.

Benjamin ben Eliezer, head officer of Yehuda and Shomron, came and surrounded Beit Hadassah with barbed wire. He warned us that if anyone left, they would not be allowed back in. Supplies were delivered twice a week. Soldiers were placed on the second floor to guard us. They had bathrooms, electricity, and running water. We took electricity from them for a small fridge. We had kerosene lamps, water in jerrycans, and baby bathtubs for washing dishes. Our days were spent preparing meals and occupying the children.

During this time, Rabbi Liebman shared with us lessons from the Torah which provided us with much strength. One lesson I will never forget is when he compared us to the Bnot Tzelofchad. During the period of time when the Jews were in the desert, the men spoke of returning to Egypt. These women demanded to inherit their father's property in the Land of Israel which was, in a way, still very theoretical. The women were the ones who held onto their faith while the men were discouraged. G-d himself says to Moshe, "what they say is right. Give them their



inheritance.” It was a singular honor to have G-d declare that the women were right.

There were elements in the army, police, and kneset members who campaigned against us. I was secure in the knowledge that the Jews settled Israel 4000 years ago in obedience to G-d’s command. Moshe Dayan was very frank about giving the Cave of the Patriarchs to the Arabs. Whoever heard of a nation willing to give the graves of their forefathers to a different People? The Arabs claim that Yitzchak and Yaacov are Arab prophets and not forefathers of the Jewish people.



We Jews can not dispute that which is written very clearly in the Torah. My husband led the way in understanding Rabbi Kook, the Vilna Gaon, and all the rabbinical scholars who spoke at length of Eretz Yisrael as the Jewish inheritance from G-d. It is all written in black and white. Jerusalem is number one and Hebron is a gateway and key to all of Eretz Yisrael.

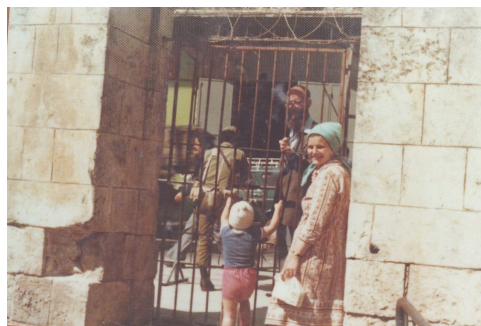
■ מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

Born in 1937 in the USA, Rebbetzin Miriam Beinhorn Levinger immigrated

to Israel in 1956. After graduating from college Miriam attended Shaare Zedek Nursing School. In 1959, she married Rabbi Moshe Levinger, a student of the Mercaz Harav Yeshiva and one of the prominent students of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook. Rabbi Levinger served as the Rabbi of Kibbutz Lavi and later the Rabbi of Moshav Nahalim.

In 1968, just after the Six Day War, Rabbi Moshe and Miriam brought their little children along with other participants to settle in the Park Hotel in Hebron. In doing so, Rabbi Levinger created the beginning of resettling the City of our Forefathers.

After three years of residence under military government and another 8 years in Kiryat Arba, which was developing in the meantime, a group of women and children led by Rabbi Levinger devoted their lives to settle in the abandoned Hadassah



building in Hebron. This opened the way for Jewish settlement in Hebron. Since then, other neighborhoods in Hebron have been established, relying on the resolve and spirit of Rabbi and Rabbanit Levinger, who have dedicated their lives to expanding settlement in Hebron and throughout Israel.