



July 2023 / Jewish Year 5783

## Jenin: A Rotten Spring

### ***Allotment for Issachar - Joshua 19:17-23***

***The fourth lot came out for Issachar according to its clans. Their territory included: Jezreel, Kesulloth, Shunem, Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, Remeth, Ein Gannim, En Haddah and Beth Pazzez. The boundary touched Tabor, Shahazumah and Beth Shemesh, and ended at the Jordan. There were sixteen towns and their villages. These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Issachar, according to its clans.***

In April 2002 a fierce battle for Jenin during the Second Intifada revealed how the media became a tool in the hands of terrorists. When the cameras stopped rolling, bodies would jump off stretchers. Donkeys would explode. The world blamed Israel and the Palestinian Propaganda Machine fooled many. Others were just scared stiff to report the truth, which remains the case today.

Twenty-one years later, Jenin is again a battleground. Sadly, the biblical city of 'Ein-Ganim' has become a symbol of violent national resistance for Palestinians. Interestingly, when the Arab Revolt broke out in 1936 against the British Mandatory Rule, Jenin was, even then, a centre of rebellion; a British official was assassinated in his Jenin office, in 1938.

By this juncture of summer 2023, analysts are even comparing the city's terror network to the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. For others, recent battles are evoking the war with Lebanon, especially since the turning point in Palestinian capability and tactics on 19 June. But there is one critical difference: Jenin is situated right in the heartland of the Jewish State, just south-west of the Sea of Galilee, around 5.5 miles, or less than 9 kilometres, from the nearest Jewish community. Of course, the Jews of Gaza (some 9,000 people) were forced by their own army, to leave their homes, in 2005. The big idea was that this would somehow bring peace. Making any territory judenrein for the sake of peace is surely questionable, not least in the ancient Jewish Homeland. While Jenin is not totally ruled by a terrorist organisation, as is the case in Gaza, according to IDF data, of the 290 terror attacks emanating from the West Bank since June 2022, 106 (or 36.5 percent) came from Jenin.

On 3 July, 2023, Israel launched a large scale operation in Jenin, the biggest in over twenty years. It need not have been, but such is the critical nature of the security situation now, that Israeli Opposition leaders have given the Government their backing. The Government appeared to change its approach following yet another deadly shooting attack in Samaria. Four innocent people lost their lives on 20 June, near the Jewish community of Eli, not far from Shiloh. One day after what was supposed to be a relatively straightforward, pinpoint IDF operation in Jenin, two Palestinian gunmen opened fire on civilians at a petrol station.

While this was proportionately the worst attack since the shooting outside a Jerusalem synagogue in January, there have been a string of deadly shootings and car rammings throughout the country, during the first half of this year. Jewish communities in Samaria, especially on the now hazardous road near Palestinian-controlled Huwara, have come under increased attack. The gentle and God-fearing, British-Israeli Dee girls, (mother and two daughters) were murdered as they tried to take an alternative route. Just weeks later, we witnessed the harrowing photograph of a young mother burying her husband Meir, on what would have been his thirty-second birthday, her baby strapped to her back. The location of the murder, on 30 May, was Hermesh, just west of Jenin



Photo credit: bereaved widow Tal Tamari (Roi Hadi)

Jenin military operations are complicated and very dangerous for IDF soldiers. A sweet friend described to me how she went in to Jenin on foot, as a young female, army medic, in pitch darkness. She did not know when the enemy might strike. When she got stuck in the mud, because it was winter, she could not cry out for help, as any sound could alert the enemy. Thankfully, she managed to extract herself. She described how the wanted terrorist was respectfully transported out of Jenin, alive, well and unscathed, at great risk to hers and others' young, Jewish lives. The state has no choice but to conscript its young people. It is sobering to note, as we pray, that 18-21 years old is very young to be facing the sort of warfare which has no regard for precious life, be that adult, child or animal, in the cause of jihad.

Ironically, Jewish ethics are such that, if a terrorist is caught injured but alive, doctors must do their utmost to save that life. A story was told by Avi Abelow, at his recent 'Pulse' Conference in Jerusalem. While he and his wife were hosting lone soldiers for Shabbat dinners, they were surprised to meet a Palestinian from Gaza. Along with his three brothers, he was not only eager to serve in the Israel Defence Forces, but also to convert to Judaism. Abelow was quick to point out that this was not necessary, and that their service was enough, but the stark contrast of life and death cultures was so very apparent to these young men.

Professor Kobi Michael, of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), (and visiting professor at the International Centre for Policing and Security at the University of South Wales, UK) [explains](#) that 19 June marked the first time that Palestinian fighters used 'significant' explosive devices. Both he and Ilan Pomeranc, writing in The Jerusalem Post, refer to the [growing Iranian influence](#) over, and support to, their Palestinian proxies. In fact, the photo of the Hamas leader meeting the Iranian President on 20 June, this year, evokes the images of the Mufti of Jerusalem (the main instigator of the 1936-39 Arab Revolt) in conversation with Hitler, in 1941. "Ein chadash tachat ha shemesh," said the writer of Ecclesiastes. "There is nothing new under the sun."

Speaking on 3 July about the counter-terrorism operation, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said:

"The IDF began an extensive operation last night against terrorism in Jenin. In recent months, Jenin has become a city of refuge for terrorism – we are putting a stop to that.



**(Photo credits: Hitler hosts Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini in 1941 in Germany. (Heinrich Hoffmann Collection/Wikipedia)**



**Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi meets Palestinian group Hamas' top leader, Ismail Haniyeh, in Tehran, Iran June 20, 2023. Iran's Presidency/West Asia News Agency/Reuters)**

“Our forces entered the nest of terrorists in Jenin: They are targeting terrorists. They are arresting fugitives. They are destroying command centers and seizing considerable weaponry. They are doing something else – they are destroying laboratories, of an almost industrial scale, for producing explosives, bombs and devices for killing and murdering Israeli citizens. They are doing all of this in one of the most crowded places on earth and – as of now – they are doing so with minimal injury to civilians, and without any injury to non-combatants, and this is the directive – to take care of the security of our forces and also to avoid injury to innocents.

“I can already say that we are changing the equation about terrorism. We did this two years ago in Operation Guardians of the Walls against Hamas; we set it back a decade. We did this a few weeks ago in Operation Shield and Arrow in which we targeted senior Islamic Jihad leaders and we are doing so today in Jenin with a combination of equipment, surprise, taking forceful measures and changing the rules. This will also add to the deterrent capability of the State of Israel, both in defending against additional terrorist attacks and in changing the equation in the area.”

The biblical name for Jenin, Ein Ganim, means ‘spring of gardens’, probably referring to the many springs located nearby. The present-day Arabic name is believed to preserve the city’s ancient name. Ein Ganim was a Levitical city allotted to the Tribe of Issachar. Two interesting points here: The Bible names only 6 Levitical cities as ‘cities of refuge’, but the esteemed rabbi and philosopher, Maimonides, extended this idea to all forty-eight of the Levitical cities, including Ein Ganim. Biblically, ‘cities of refuge’ were those to which murderers could flee, if the crime was unintended (manslaughter today). “A city of refuge for terrorism,” is how the Prime Minister has described Jenin today. That’s intentional murder.

May God reverse the rot in the spring, and bring back His life and light, even in the midst of the darkness.

By Ruth Richmond