

Kibbutz Be'eri and Mr. Berl

Kibbutz Be'eri was the scene of one of the Hamas slaughterfests on October 7, 2023. Over 100 residents including babies were butchered and burned, and dozens taken hostage – the entire kibbutz only number 1000 souls. It is located about 6 kilometers (3.5 miles) from the Gaza border.

Like most of the kibbutzim in Israel, it was founded by Labor Zionists (the party of Golda Meir and David Ben Gurion), most were members of the HaNoar HaOved VeHaLomed movement (Youth Workers & Education Movement). These folks were the mainstay, the core, of Zionism, and created membership chapters throughout the world. But they were not political Zionists (like Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann), waiting for a state to be created by the international community of nations. The Labor Zionists wanted a Jewish state that included a strong working class, either working the fields of the kibbutz or involved in industry in the cities. And so they came to the Land in the late 1800s and early 1900s to work and live the dream.

In the spirit of those who lean to the left wing, Kibbutz Be'eri members were active in the pro-peace movement even raising money to help Gazans in financial need, employing them on the kibbutz, and participating in volunteer programs which included driving Gazans with cancer to oncology centers in Israel for treatment.

The kibbutz is named after Berl Katzenelson, a leading thinker and author in the Labor Zionist movement. When he wrote, he used the name Be'eri as his Hebrew name. Be'eri in the Tanakh is the father of the prophet Hosea.

The old school Labor Zionists were 100% committed to the founding of the State of Israel, and to Jewish values, even if not observant of the mitzvot (commandments). For example, Berl Katzenelson is credited with the wording and inspiration for the Yizkor prayer for soldiers and those killed during wars in Israel – he had written something similar for those killed at Tel Chai in 1919. When a Labor Zionist youth group organized a summer trip on Tisha B'Av, Katzenelson objected, writing, "I will not forget, I will not be able to forget Tisha B'Av, the day of destruction, the most terrible day of all days, the day of our destiny. I see the neglect of Tisha B'Av in our society in general as a sign of a boat without a thoughtful rudder of a central idea. We say we are to educate the youth to lead a pioneering life (chalutzim), for a life of fulfillment...how will we achieve this?"

What would Berl think of those Jews today who regularly condemn Israel and/or are siding with the Palestinian Hamas terrorists? He wrote this one hundred years ago: "Is there another People on Earth so emotionally twisted that they consider everything their nation does despicable and hateful, while every murder, rape, robbery committed by their enemies fill their hearts with admiration and awe?"

May the murdered of Kibbutz Be'eri be remembered for a blessing. Am Yisrael Chai.

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