

5 Weeks, 17 States and Over 6000 Miles The Summer '09 Road Trip

*by HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok
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Talk about having time to be silent and contemplate the wonders of the Creator. Nothing can compare to traveling across this great continent and seeing the wonders of creation that G-d's Hand has made.

Beginning here at home in L.A., we travelled east through Flagstaff Arizona, Albuquerque New Mexico, Amarillo Texas, Springfield Missouri, Springfield Illinois, Chicago, Fort Wayne Indiana, Cleveland Ohio, Oseta New York, and the Big Apple (including the western holy land, Brooklyn & Queens). I spoke in Queens and the recording of that talk is online on KosherTorah.com. It is entitled "Bonding With G-d in All the Right Places."



When we hit the eastern ocean (the Atlantic), we turned around and headed west again through Youngstown Ohio, Des Moines Iowa, Rapid City South Dakota, Mt Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Monument (the highlight of our trip), Sturgis (yes we actually made it to "bike week" although a few days early), Cody Wyoming, Yellowstone National Park and Old Faithful, Jackson Hole Wyoming, Idaho Falls Idaho, Ogden Utah (very cool place) and finally down to Las Vegas (far enough away from the strip). From there it was a hop across the desert to home.

This continent is surely amazing. I will miss it when I'm gone and judging from present circumstances, who knows how soon that may be.



I am not one to enjoy big cities and urban areas. I prefer the great outdoors, the order of nature that G-d has created and originally intended for us to live in. I greatly enjoy going back to our collective roots to bond with nature and to appreciate all the splendor that G-d has made. I had family in tow and unfortunately they are not as capable as am I to literally bushwhack off trail and to live off the land for days or weeks at a time. So, rather than go camping, we spent the nights in hotels. Oh well, I guess the process of education must continue for us all.

Nevertheless, “have lap-top and kosher food will travel.” We saw so many great sights. Nature is truly amazing. It is a shame that we so often stay cooped up in our urban environments thinking ourselves kadosh (holy). We rarely ever allow ourselves to be reminded that urban living is considered by Heaven to be a rebellion and is highly unnatural for the human species in general and especially for Jews.



Remember, G-d's promise to Israel was to inherit the Land. We were originally meant to be an agricultural society bonded to the land. We have forgotten this ultimate Jewish reality, which is **THE PEOPLE ARE THE LAND AND THE LAND IS THE PEOPLE**. Israel the land and Israel the people can never be separated without both suffering immensely. Two thousand years of past history has proven this to be true.

While out in the Black Hills of South Dakota, after spending a nice hour at Mt. Rushmore, we drove south to the Crazy Horse Memorial. This locale houses one of the best Native American museums in the world. While it's nice to look at things from the past, I prefer to read books about Native American spiritual beliefs and practices. With all the archeological evidence found across this continent clearly indicating an ancient Israelite presence here thousands of years ago, I wonder if indeed there may be lost Israelite blood among some of the Natives here. The Cherokee presently in Oklahoma believe themselves to have such a past. I wonder who else might share such a heritage.

The Native Americans have suffered from the invading Europeans in an uncannily familiar way. The Native Americans suffered under the Europeans who invaded and stole their land in the same way we Jews suffered when the Europeans (Romans) invaded and stole our land. The Europeans considered the Native Americans savages and sought to culturally destroy them, the European (Romans) did exactly the same thing to us. It kind of makes me wonder; do our peoples share a common ancestry to have deserved such a common fate? We may never know for sure, but conjecture is one thing, archeology is quite another. There is evidence that cannot be disputed. It really needs to be explored.



The motto of the Crazy Horse Memorial is words that the man himself is quoted to have said. I thought they were pretty profound and worthy to share here. Crazy Horse said, “My land is where my people are buried.” I thought this to be a rather profound statement as applicable to Jews as it is to Native Americans. Where do we Jews point and say these words? Our dead lie buried in Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, and everywhere in our land from the farthest northern borders to the southern-most deserts.

Crazy Horse was a profoundly spiritual man, a mystic in his own rights, and judging from my understanding of Native American spiritual beliefs and practices, we might refer to him in Torah language as a true Ben Noah, a Righteous Gentile (without knowing his true ancestry). His role model was a profound one, not only for his people, but for ours as well.

Crazy Horse was a man willing to fight and die for his land. How many of us can say this today about our land of Israel? All too many want to live in the shtetl and make believe they are back in Europe

two hundred years ago. Others want to make believe that Israel today is supposed to be an extension of New York or Los Angeles, cosmopolitan, flashy and “techy.” My how far have we fallen, how far we have drifted from the natural order as ordained by our Creator.

My family and I were inspired by Crazy Horse and his message. The message of the Crazy Horse Memorial is, “Never Forget Your Dreams.” This is another poignant message not only for Native Americans but for us Jews as well. The monument that is being built to honor his memory is a great thing. How come we have no such monuments in Israel? Don’t quote to me Halakha about carving images. I never said we had to carve a human image, but other types of monuments to express our bond with our Land and our love of it. What about this? Woe to us how we have fallen!

Yes, I truly love to drive across the great expanses of open space. Driving the open highways does not require any hard work, nor is it in any way stressful. It is very relaxing and calming, with many long hours of just being alone with one’s thoughts to think, contemplate, watch the scenery and contemplate the wondrous beauty of G-d’s creation.



Long-distance highway driving outside of urban areas can be a most profound hitbodedut experience. This is why I love to take to the open road. Even with my family in tow, for the most part it is private time with just me and my Creator. Although I am living in a land not my own, and thus cannot bond with the spirit of the land itself, I can still bond with the Creator of this land. Road trips of this nature are tremendous avenues for such a bonding.

I plan to write more about this Road Trip in future essays, but for now, while there is still time left in the summer. Maybe you can decide to take a road trip, even if only for a day or so. Get out of the cities and return to nature. Remember this all you spiritually minded folks, the Torah says that the name of G-d used to create the universe was Elohim. Elohim in Gematria is numerically equal to the Hebrew word for “nature” (HaTeva). Thus one who returns to nature is returning to Elohim (G-d). There is no greater Teshuva (repentance=return) than to return to one’s Source.