

Never Again Shall We Forget: “Len Nensaa!”

The Seeker

Near Jerusalem’s gate
upon the threshold
of Yad Vashem
the pilgrim lingered¹...
His spirit hungered
for the message
to ring true:
‘Never forget
Man’s inhumanity to Man!’
He whispered in Arabic,
“La tensaa!”

From where he stood
the northern hilltop
crowned with pine
blushed in morning light.
‘Givat Shaul Beit’ of Israel,
once ‘Deir Yassin’
of Palestine...

Arriving there, he faltered.
Hesitant,
knees turning to water.
Dare he face
the Truth he was after?
He knelt.
Fingertips cold.

Trembling he touched
the shattered lives
beneath his feet;
Dismembered, strewn
in heaps of ruin.
Trapped in ancient stone.
Never forget:
La tensaa..

“Lord, help me remember!”

A Prayer Answered

The hills, the trees
the wind, the walls
responded, resounded.
Drowned pleas, wails
prayers, moans,
gaining voice now pounded
at his searching soul,
compressing decades of time
to Deir Yassin
before that fateful dawn

La tensaa...

La tensaa...

Deir Yassin
under British rule
at peace with
neighboring Jews

La tensaa...

In Deir Yassin
mothers, fathers
with their young
were sound asleep.
A brutal awakening
before the sun came out
behind the monastery
to witness another
traumatic chapter
of history,
another line of Scripture
spattered with blood...

La tensaa!

The pilgrim shouted
into the wind,
“How soon we did forget!”

April 9, 1948:

April 9, 1948,
The tragic day unfolded
as the weak, the helpless
in wide-eyed terror,
groped
for the throne of God.

La tensaa!

The weak, the helpless,
slaughtered.

Bracelets, earrings, rings
torn from severed limbs.

Grandmas, grandpas
mutilated.

Modesty violated.

La tensaa!

The weak, the helpless
lined against the wall...
executed 'en masse.'

La tensaa!

Prisoners trucked
arms over heads.

Trophies paraded.
Set ablaze into night sky;
a final coup de grace.

“Why?” the pilgrim cried
to the stone quarry
buried out of sight,
its depths pregnant
with their charred remains,
echoing back:

La tensaa! La tensaa!

Accursed the killing;
Unholy the flame.

The Aftermath

Then came the Cry:
Palestinians, fly to safety!

Many fled, traveling light.
A temporary escape,
unaware of Zionist aims

In the Exodus
half a thousand
Palestinian villages
were undone...

La tensaa!

Inhumanity this time
well-rewarded!
Assassins applauded,
commanders promoted
to Prime Ministers, awarded
Nobel Prize for Peace!

La tensaa!

“Humanity,

what have we done?"

And some lived to tell:

By the lofty walls
of Jerusalem
fifty-five orphans
were found dazed.

Many saved
under parents' bodies.

"God bless you, Hindⁱⁱ,
for taking them all in!"

Len nensaa!

Len nensaa!

The Memorial

The pilgrim wept
all the way back
to Yad Vashem,
passing Israeli towns.

Townships built
of stones that retain
Palestinian remains...

"Hope lives
when people remember,
and millions in Diaspora
cry as one

over their dispossession begun
that April day..."

And in so saying he shuddered,
"Beware the Lord's justice
O Israel
for a Holocaust
redone!"

And as the pilgrim arrived
at Yad Vashem,
his resolve to remain
a guardian of Truth
grew stronger.

"I shall not rest,"
he promised,
"until I see a sign
right here at Yad Vashem
pointing visitors to the northern hilltop
crowned with pine,
where another memorial
shall stand
to commemorate
the lives
the loves
the years
the tears
lost at Deir Yassin...
lost since Deir Yassin
for all time.

May we never again forget.
Help us, O Lord, remember!

For Peace,
Shalom,
Salam!”

The hills,
the trees,
the wind,
the walls,
responded,
resounded:

“Amen!”
as hope rejoiced,

“Never again shall we forget:

Len nensaa!
Len nensaa!”

ⁱ This poem is both about the Deir Yassin massacre AND persons of conscience who, after visiting Yad Vashem, are even more capable of recognizing injustice. Such persons start out as Pilgrims, but soon evolve into Seekers and Commemorators, raising Humanity’s Consciousness.

This poem was published and distributed at the Sept. 24th 2003 unveiling of the first Deir Yassin memorial in the U.S., to commemorate the Massacre and the vision behind the founding of ‘Deir Yassin Remembered.’

ⁱⁱ Note: Hind Husseinii sheltered the abandoned orphans and founded the orphanage, ‘Dar el Tifl el Arabi,’ in Jerusalem.