I ❤ ISRAEL: Embracing Jerusalem’s Chaos

Generally, we don’t come to Israel in January. My wife, Coty, and I usually arrive in July and enjoy the summer. This time, however, we came in winter to spend a few days with two of our children who live in Jerusalem. The cold is more noticeable, though nothing compared to New York, and there is also far more rain than in July.

It’s normal that when one returns to Jerusalem after a few months, the city feels different. New buildings appear, new services emerge, neighborhoods expand, and structures rise. This urban renewal is known in Israel as Pinui u’Binui (“demolition and reconstruction”): older buildings are torn down and replaced with modern ones, featuring new elevators, parking, green spaces, community areas, and safer residences. Each apartment includes a reinforced “shelter room,” built for emergencies. Traditional neighborhoods such as Katamon, Arnona, Talpiot, and Baka, where we are staying now, are being transformed almost beyond recognition.

JERUSALEM UNDER CONSTRUCTION

But new residential construction is not the main reason Jerusalem feels so unmanageable in January 2026. This time, the situation is far more severe. Jerusalem is simply impossible. Traffic is unbearable. A drive that should take ten or fifteen minutes, for example, from Baka to the train station, took me more than forty-five. Estimating arrival times has become meaningless. Road closures are everywhere, detours appear without warning, and streets seem to close overnight.

Even walking has become difficult. Central areas such as King George and Ben Yehuda are barely recognizable. On King George,

walking is almost impossible: barriers line the streets, roads are split in half, and traffic lanes have been reduced. Where there were once four, now there is only one. Nothing flows naturally. There is no place in the city where movement, by car or on foot, feels smooth or continuous.

The question is inevitable: what is happening to Jerusalem?

JERUSALEM LIGHT RAIL

The main culprit behind the current balagan (= chaos) in the city is the construction of three new lines of Jerusalem's light rail, the Rakevet Hakala. What began years ago as a single line, the Red Line, which today carries more than 170,000 passengers daily, is now expanding into a full urban rail network, including underground sections, crossing Jerusalem from north to south and from east to west.

At present, two new lines are under construction. The Green Line will include about 35 stations and span roughly 20 kilometers. The more ambitious Blue Line will stretch approximately 30 kilometers, with around 50 stations, connecting Ramot in the north with Gilo in the south. In addition, a Purple Line is also planned. Once completed, the system will be four times larger than the original one: more lines, more stations, and far more connections.

This is a massive infrastructure project, designed to allow millions of people to move across the city without relying on private cars. It explains the heavy, prolonged, and noisy construction that today makes Jerusalem feel "blocked."

But Jerusalem is not blocked. Jerusalem is in the midst of a historic transformation.

JERUSALEM HOLY BALAGAN

What is Jerusalem preparing for? First, Yerushalayim is on track to become Israel's most populous city, with more than

one million residents. But there is something deeper as well. Jerusalem is preparing for the Geula: the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash, the coming of the Mashiach, and the return of millions of Jews from the Diaspora to Israel.

Thanks to this new infrastructure, once the Holy Temple is restored and the Jewish people are fully returned to their land, Yerushalayim will be ready to welcome comfortably and efficiently millions of families, at least three times a year, who will come on pilgrimage for Pesach, Shabuot, and Sukkot, just as in biblical times.

Seen from this perspective, the construction chaos, the unbearable traffic, and the endless street closures are no longer merely inconveniences. They become a powerful source of inspiration.

To watch Jerusalem rebuilding itself, preparing to serve once again as the spiritual capital of the Jewish people, and of the world, is the greatest national aspiration, one that for nearly two thousand years seemed unreachable and unimaginable. Until very recently, the Jerusalem that,

Barukh Hashem, we have today was a utopian, impossible dream.

I love the balagan of Yerushalayim. I happily and proudly embrace it, with tears of joy. Jerusalem is being rebuilt before our eyes. And it will be ready very soon, waiting for all of us to come.

Shabbat Shalom, from Yerushalayim.