

“A Superbowl Moment”

Every year, on one Sunday in February, the world sits mesmerized by a sports game. As you might have guessed, it is called the Superbowl. Two teams play a football game in front of billions of people around the world. From the stadium where it is being played, to cities across the globe, to people in the own comfort of their homes, people sit for several hours and anticipate the next Superbowl champions. Thirty seconds of advertising on television costs more than half a million dollars. Yet, comes Sunday night, and the game is over. The champions are announced and life reverts to normal. Monday morning is just another day at work. Billions of people can experience a Superbowl moment, yet allow it to fizzle away as fast as it came.

Now, let us contrast this phenomenon with something else.

A number of years ago, I hopped into a taxi cab in Israel. Taking a seat next to the driver, a few minutes after we pulled away from the curb, he looked at me and said, “Have you ever been to New York?” “Yes, I have,” I replied. “What about England?” “I have been there as well,” I continued to respond. Unsure where he was heading with this conversation, I sat there waiting for my next question. “Do you remember the 1967 war?” “Sure I do. Jerusalem was recaptured and the Kotel Ha’Maaravi was returned to Jewish hands.” “Do you remember,” continued the cabbie, “that iconic picture of three soldiers wearing their helmets and looking up at the Kotel?” “Sure I do.” “Well,” said the cabbie, “I was one of them. I was there at the moment of recapturing Yerushalayim and when they snapped that picture. Afterwards, Israel Bonds flew me around the world and I traveled to New York and England. It was there that I spoke about my time spent in the army and the great experiences I had.” Hearing that my cabbie was not just any typical taxi driver, I said, “That is very nice. It is an honor to be in such a cab. Allow me to ask you, though, where now do you live?” Thinking that my question would just be a way of carrying the conversation along, I was surprised when I heard his reply.

“For generations,” said the cabbie, “my family lived in Chaifa and was irreligious. But after that experience of being in Yerushalayim, I told myself, ‘How can I have gone through such a momentous event in Yerushalayim and not move there?’ And so, I picked myself up, moved to Yerushalayim and became more committed to Torah and mitzvot. I now have children and grandchildren who are Torah observant and following the Jewish tradition.”

We can have two kinds of moments in the world. We can have the Superbowl moment which is over Sunday night, or we can have the inspirational moment that lasts for eternity. The Shabbos Project is a Superbowl moment. It is a Shabbos of inspiration, of transformation and of groundbreaking growth for world Jewry. Yet it is up to each and every one of us to make it a life-lasting moment. The Shabbos Project offers us the tremendous opportunity to capture the moment and make something last for eternity. It is up to us to ensure that the next day is not like the day after the Superbowl, but rather, like the day after that cabbie stood by the Kotel. And we most certainly can all together achieve this goal.

(Rabbi Raphael Butler; TorahAnytime)