Days of light

Shlomit Bar-Levav

All Things Israeli

A few days ago, on my way to a lecture, I was approaching my car when I realized I couldn't see it; it's not that the car wasn't there; it was just covered in snow. So there and then I opened the trunk, after a short struggle, took out the shovel and started shoveling; only not being an expert, to say the least, I somehow managed to shovel everything but what actually needed to be shoveled. I guess God was looking out for me because a neighbor that was passing by had a snow plow and came to my rescue, not before laughing a little bit at my expense, I don't mind though. Laughing is good for your health, so I felt like a doctor.

A little before the snow, which now seems so long ago, I went to a seminar with all the "Shlichim" (emissaries) from North America, and after that visited friends that live in New Jersey, and got to eat my first traditional (and kosher) Thanksgiving dinner. Yummy!!

The seminar was a great experience. It was informative and productive. Hearing the different experience each Shaliach and Shlicha has had in his or her community was interesting and we got to learn a lot about the way we are perceived in the communities, which was fascinating.

But the most exciting moment was seeing the Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, Natan Sharansky. I still remember the day of his release on February 11, 1986, after being an "Asir Tziyon" (a "Prisoner of Zion"); he spent nearly a decade in a Soviet prison on trumped-up charges of treason and espionage because of his Zionist activity. Before that he was a "Refusenik" (Soviet Jew who was denied permission to emigrate from the former Soviet Union and other countries of the Eastern bloc). In 1986 there was only one channel on Israeli TV and in every home in Israel people were watching that exciting event. Upon his release he was told to walk straight towards his freedom; but Sharansky instead walked in a zigzag in a final act of defiance.

As I write this, we are celebrating Chanukah; Chanukah is a symbol of freedom, of the prevail of light over darkness; it is a time when miracles happen, when the Maccabees liberated the people of Israel from the horrible decrees of the ruler of the Seleucid empire, Antiochus, forbidding Jewish religious practice.

It is also when the UN General Assembly voted on November 29, 1947 (Kislev 16) in favor of a resolution that adopted the plan for the partition plan, enabling the establishment of the state of Israel.

Shlomit with Natan Sharansky

Let us hope that at this time of year, this time of lights (whether it's Chanukah light or the Christmas lights) that this will be a time of miracles, which will hasten the return of captive Gilad Shalit, and all the other captive and missing soldiers, home from the evil power of darkness to light, so that soon we will all be able to watch them walk straight, or in zigzag, into freedom!