



Canadian Rabbi Offers "Dayenu" Litany for Pope John Paul II

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In a community remembrance held at Beth Israel Beth Aaron Congregation in Cote St. Luc, Quebec, Canada, on April 7, 2005, Rabbi Leigh Lerner of Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom, Montreal, summarized the contributions of the late Pope John Paul II to Jewish-Christian relations in the form of a "dayenu" litany, modeled after the prayer in the Passover Seder ritual.

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"Had John Paul II only visited Auschwitz and not gone directly to the Jewish memorial there, Dayenu (it would have been enough for us)," said Rabbi Lerner. "Had he only gone to the Jewish memorial and not to Rome's great synagogue, Dayenu. Had he only gone to the synagogue and not condemned the sin of anti-Semitism, Dayenu. Had he only condemned anti-Semitism, but not admonished the ambassador of united Germany of "the heavy burden of guilt for the murder of the Jewish people" that for Christians "must be an enduring call to repentance" - Dayenu. Had he not called for Christian repentance but only presided over a Yom HaShoah remembrance in the Vatican, Dayenu. Had he only remembered Yom HaShoah but not recognized Israel, Dayenu. Had he only recognized Israel but not exchanged ambassadors, Dayenu. Had he only sent an ambassador but not prayed in repentance of sins against Jews, Dayenu. Had he only repented but not visited Israel, Dayenu. Had he only visited Israel but not kissed its soil, Dayenu. Had he only kissed its soil but not visited Yad VaShem, Dayenu. Had he only visited Yad VaShem but not visited the Kotel [the Western Wall], Dayenu. Had he only visited the Kotel, but not placed his prayer in the Wall, Dayenu. But he did it all. *Al achat kama vechama tova chefula umechupelet lamakom aleinu.* All the more then, doubled and redoubled are the good turns the Eternal has done for us through this man, Pope John Paul II."

Noting that the Pope is regarded as the successor of St. Peter, whose name means "rock," Rabbi Lerner continued: "Long ago, God told Moses to speak to an ordinary rock and thus to bring water from it to slake the thirst of the Israelites. In John Paul II, a rock spoke to us, and he slaked our thirst for peace and reconciliation and brought forth tears to water tender sprouts of forgiveness that he himself had planted. We shall mourn his passing. We resolve to carry forward his legacy, and we thank God for the life of Pope John Paul II."

Courtesy of Prof. Jean Duhaime, Montreal