

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



Rabbi Avi Berman Executive Director, OU Israel

Parshat Emor focuses mainly on two topics: the Halachot of Kohanim and the Chagim, both of which are very Beit HaMikdash focused. There is a constant yearning that each of us should have for the Beit HaMikdash. I am sure that it exists in each of us, and that at some times it is stronger and at other times its less strong. As a Jew that davens 3 times a day, this theme is prevalent. We say: Vel'Yerushalayim Ircha B'rachamim Tashuv," "Et Tzemach David Avdecha Meheira Tazmiach," "V'hashev Et HaAvodah L'dvir Beytecha" and other verses signifying our longing for Mashiach and the Beit HaMikdash.

During our prayers, we are constantly expressing how badly we want Hashem to bring His complete Shechina back to Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh. Our goals while praying should be twofold. First, to impact our feelings and emotions. Second, to show Hashem how much of a desire we have for the Beit HaMikdash which will hopefully be rebuilt very, very soon.

For over a year, I have heard the same line from hundreds of my friends around the world - a line that brought me great happiness along with great sadness. "Avi you have no idea how much we miss Israel. Is there anything you can do to help us get in?" In some cases, these sentences came from wonderful Jews that for no special event or occasion felt a strong desire to be here. In many other cases, it came from Jews who wanted to come to Israel for various Smachot, special occasions, to visit relatives, and unfortunately also for the funerals or Yahrzeits of loved ones.

Up until 13 months ago, traveling back and forth from around the world to Israel was something taken for granted. It was extremely common, and I knew people who visited Israel and Yerushalayim as much as 10 or even 20 times a year. When our borders were closed due to the pandemic, the privilege and ability to come was suddenly closed. Especially for those of us born after the establishment of the State of Israel, it was previously unfathomable to imagine a Jewish State that was not open to all our Jewish brethren.

I saw from so many friends that the inability to come to Israel triggered within them the immediate and intense yearning to be in Yerushalayim. While it was beautiful to see this remarkable yearning, it was also painful hearing the frustration of so many

An advertisement for Efrat. On the left is a photograph of a young girl with dark hair, wearing a yellow shirt, looking towards the camera. To the right of the photo is a blue banner with white and yellow text. The text reads: "Save a Life - Gain yours", "1 of 79,039", "EFRAT" in large yellow letters, and "www.efrat.org.il 02-5454500" at the bottom.

of our brothers and sisters who were unable to come.

These conversations got me thinking about my own personal yearning for the Beit HaMikdash. While I try to have intense Kavana when davening three times a day, this scenario caused me to reflect with a new perspective. It caused me to think of what it must have been like for the Jews just one year after the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash.

Unfortunately, it has been almost 2,000 years since the Beit Hamikdash stood proudly in Yerushalayim. However, the fact that we are still yearning, davening, missing and even crying for the lack of the Beit Hamikdash can give us tremendous hope that it will be built very soon and that this upcoming Shavuot we will once again gather there, as commanded to us in this week's Parsha.

My dear friend Roy Spiewak, former treasurer of the OU, is one of the first non-Israelis I know to be able to compile all the documents required by the State of Israel and make it here to visit his children who made Aliyah this past year. Seeing the smile on Roy's face when he came to visit me last week gave me a glimpse of how big our smiles will be when we are Zoche to see the Beit HaMikdash very soon B'ezrat Hashem.



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