



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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In the work of *chinuch*, of educating and raising the next generation, so much of what we teach comes down to understanding the appropriate way to act in different settings. Often the honest answer to a child's question about such-and-such situation is simply that it is not *matim*: it is not appropriate, it is not the right thing for this moment.

The FIFA World Cup is on many people's minds right now. If a child asks you why not go play a soccer game on Shabbat, the answer is because there is a fitting way to honor Shabbat, and every time and place has its appropriate way. This is true throughout our lives. A mature adult needs to know what is proper to wear at a wedding, a bar or bat mitzvah, or a *shiva* house. What to wear to see the Prime Minister, or the President.

Beyond protocol, in the end, it's about helping to create an atmosphere, a feeling, whether it is one of relaxation, happiness, respect, or somberness.

Hashem in the Torah, and Chazal following in His ways, also gave us tools to build that atmosphere. On Sukkot we are told *v'hayita ach sameach* that we should be filled with joy; on Pesach we are to sit down at the Seder and feel as though we ourselves are walking out of Egypt. We do certain actions, eat certain foods, and dress certain ways, to encourage those feelings and thoughts. Both the Torah and our sages understood the importance of placing our minds, hearts, and our longings where they need to be to show our values.

We are now in the midst of one of those periods. Chazal designated the three weeks

between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av as days to mourn and to feel what we are missing without the Beit HaMikdash. It was during these weeks that our enemies broke into Yerushalayim, and on Tisha B'Av that they burned the Beit HaMikdash, both the first and the second, nearly two thousand years ago. The very fact that we still sit here today with guidelines from our rabbis, not to take a haircut, not to buy or wear new clothing, not to have weddings and live concerts, tells us there is an atmosphere that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and our sages, want us to hold on to.

One of the magical parts of the Three Weeks is that since the prohibition is about music with instruments, we turn to a cappella, and a cappella lets us sing songs of real meaning, songs about the *churban*, about our yearning for the Beit HaMikdash and for *Moshiach*, that lift us and turn our hearts in the right direction, removing a focus on instrumental skills. That's something I find so beautiful.

What I am not so impressed with, however, is when sometimes I walk into a store with a religious radio station playing in the background, and the a cappella I hear has been produced, through technology, into music almost indistinguishable from the real thing. I ask myself honestly whether that is keeping me in the emotional space of the Three Weeks or pulling me out of it. For my part, I try to listen only to the kind of a cappella that genuinely prepares me for Tisha B'Av.

What I have found over the last four years is that my Three Weeks have become far more

emotional. Some of that surely comes from the years we have lived through, from Covid, from the war, from the soldiers and dear friends we have lost, from the impossibility of standing on Tisha B'Av and not feeling it. But much of it comes from something specific. Every year our team prepares a new Tisha B'Av video, and the work of making it, the filming and then the sitting with Nina Broder, our director of social media, and the rest of the team, watching each piece take shape from raw footage, draws me into the day of Tisha B'Av so powerfully.

This week I stood in my office with four of my incredible staff members watching one of those pieces, and I looked up to see four women beside me, with tears running down their faces. Let me be honest, I also had a tear of my own. I suddenly understood what a gift this work is. We have put well over a hundred hours into it, and I know its impact. People stop me in shuls in Israel, Los Angeles, Florida, New York, all over the world, to tell me that our video transformed their Tisha B'Av.

So I want to encourage each of you to find ways to make these Three Weeks your own. Go to the City of David, to the Kotel tunnels, to Machon HaMikdash, to any of the places and people working to show *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* how deeply we long for the Beit HaMikdash. Wishing you all an easy and meaningful fast. I hope our new video inspires you and brings a powerful sense of connection to Tisha B'Av. Transform these weeks into something that carries you to Tisha B'Av with a full heart, one that truly asks *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* to rebuild. If we can reach that place together,



then *Be'ezrat Hashem* we will have the Beit HaMikdash back among us very, very soon.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

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(Video will be available on our Youtube channel erev Tisha B'Av)

<https://www.youtube.com/@theouisrael>

