

Singer-Jordan Edition Devarim

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The *Gemora* says that any generation in which the Temple has not been rebuilt, it is as if it was destroyed in that generation (*Yerushalmi, Yoma 5a*). Of course, a statement like this raises all kinds of questions and inspires different kinds of answers because it just doesn't seem fair.

For starters, it is a lot harder to build something that doesn't exist than it is to destroy something that does. It takes a wrecking ball two days to bring down what took a year to build. Relationships too. It can take months, even years to cultivate a good relationship, but one quick slip of the tongue can destroy it. Besides, while the Temple stood, people saw what had to be preserved. While it doesn't, well, as the expression goes, "Out of sight, out of mind."

I remember once, while ascending the long stairway leaving the *Kosel* (Western Wall), looking back to get one more glimpse of the holiest spot in the universe before leaving. At that point, I was high enough to also see the Temple Mount and, of course, the mosque squatting there. But this time, before turning around to continue my ascent and journey home as in the past, something made me stop.

As I thought about it, it all of a sudden occurred to me how I, and so many others, had become so accustomed to seeing an Arab place of worship where the Jewish one belonged, that I related more to a retaining wall than I did to the *Makom HaMikdosh*, the place of the Temple. It was as if I had lost all connection to the Temple Mount and made the *Kosel HaMa'arvi* the new *Makom HaMikdosh*, and wondered how many others had done the same.

Surprised by my realization, I continued to stand there but instead imagined the Jewish Temple functioning where it belonged. Every time I return to the *Kosel*, I make a point of the reminding myself that the *Kosel*, as wonderful and holy as it is, is not the *Bais HaMikdosh*. When I *daven* there, especially *Mussaf* on *Rosh Chodesh*, I have intention for the sacrifice being offered where it should be and, as a *Levi*, helping with the *avodah*.

We don't need to ask *eichab*—how—about how we haven't yet built the Temple. Thousands of years have passed since the destruction of the Second Temple, and many exiles have been endured. If we didn't have *Tisha B'Av*, and the two weeks

leading upon to it, only those fortunate few who learn about the Temple service would remember it. Look how easy it has become to live a Temple-less life as a Torah Jew.

But we do read *Eichab* about how we got to the point of *losing* the Temple. It was right there. You could go there, and even if you didn't actually enter the Temple grounds you could see its structure from the distance. You could talk to people who had been there, and you could hear all about the miracles that were daily occurrences. So, how could we have slid so badly as to not realize that we were destroying the Temple with our actions?

As mentioned, there are several explanations of the *Gemora's* harsh incrimination, some more of a stretch than others. But this idea provides an important insight, not just into the *Gemora's* statement but into life itself. It says:

On that night [of the *Seder* in Egypt], the holy light of the Temple was revealed [to the Jewish people] and they became unified with it, and [it was if] they ate the *Pesach* there. . . (*Drushei Olam HaTobu, Cbelek 2, Drush 5, Anaf 2, Siman 7*)

It's a long, somewhat *kabbalistic* discussion but, the truth is, even Physics is coming around, thanks to discoveries like entanglement. It's taken physicists this long to reach this point because, until recently, they have only related to a physical world in which time and place were limited, concrete realities.

The spiritual world doesn't work that way. It is not physically bound or limited in any way. The spiritual realm defies space and time, at least the conventional versions of both that we are used to. Time travel is impossible in the physical world, but not in the spiritual one. It is not possible to be in two different places in the physical world, but it is spiritually. Overlapping realities of two things in the physical world often means the annihilation of one of them, but not necessarily in the spiritual world.

So while we may be *physically* unable to rebuild the Temple at this time, it is not *spiritually* impossible to access its light. This is what the *Gemora* alludes to when it says:

Those who study about the Temple, it is as if the Temple was built in their days.
(*Menachos 111a*)

Because, by engaging in the spiritual reality of the Temple, we draw down the light of the Temple, and that is the first step in the rebuilding process. Once the Temple is spiritually rebuilt, it becomes easier to rebuild it physically. Otherwise, there is destruction instead, *God forbid*:

It is because people do not inquire after and demand [that] the Temple [be rebuilt] that all communities fall. (*Midrash Shocher Tov, Shmuel 31*)

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