

The following was presented by Rav Pesach Krohn in his typical derech: very beautiful, very meaningful, and very real. A number of years ago, Rav Mordechai Gifter זצ"ל went to Eretz Yisroel and of course visited the Kotel and קבר רחל. Rav Yirachmiel Chasid, from the Mirrer Yeshiva, asked him, "At which place were you more moved, קבר רחל or the Kotel?" Rav Gifter thought for a moment and replied, "The Kotel." Rav Chasid was surprised and said, "Rosh Yeshiva, I hope you don't mind my asking, but I've asked this question to many people, and they all say they were more moved at Kever Rochel. Why were you more moved at the Kotel?"

Rav Gifter explained, "Yungerman, you're a young fellow. You can relate to a mother. You saw your mother cry when she bentched licht that you should be an ehrlich Yid. You saw how your mother got up early and stayed up late for your sake and your siblings. So you can relate to Mama Rochel.

"But the only ones who can truly relate to the חורבן הבית are the ones who saw its grandeur, who have seen תורה בתפארתה. A person who has seen the majesty of what כלל ישראל is all about can only then understand and grasp its destruction. I was in Telshe. I saw the majesty of Torah. I saw the splendor and greatness of the ראשי ישיבה. I saw what אלול was. I saw what עשרת ימי תשובה was. I saw the grandeur of the majesty of Torah in Telshe itself. And then I saw its destruction. I saw the majesty and splendor of Torah and what Yiddishkeit can all be about. I can picture what being עולה רגל was like when the בית המקדש was standing. Therefore, when I daven at the Kotel, I could picture what כלל ישראל was like with the בית המקדש, and I can feel the pain of its destruction."

Today here in America, where none of us has been able to witness the majesty and splendor Rav Gifter was talking about, we must try to understand as best as we can what the destruction of the בית המקדש was all about. It's a tremendous undertaking to take the time to think about and ponder what the בית המקדש really was. And we've all seen various representations and presentations of these areas, some of them more primitive, some of them more sophisticated. They don't do any justice whatsoever. We have no concept of what went on. We can learn about it, we can talk about it, but for someone to truly take this and absorb it and make it part of his מדה, his reality and his mind, takes a very special person.

We all have to try to do that. To relate to the חורבן, we really have to know what we are missing. The truth is, if a person is awake on יום כיפור and reads through the עבודה of what was in מסכת יומא, not as learning, which is very important to understand the concepts and the hashkafos of what the learning is all about, but the actual experience of it, then we might get a little inkling, and get a little feel, and get a little sad about what we lost.

