



# WHAT DIRECTION DO YOU FACE?

**A** few years ago, a group of archeologists in Israel made a startling discovery. They found a small amphitheater, just under Wilson's Arch, built by the Romans in the generation following the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. This archeological discovery was particularly significant as it provided insight into Roman culture following their siege on our Holy Temple.

I was invited to visit this newly discovered amphitheater this past Chanukah just as it was opened to the public. The theatre is located underneath the men's prayer section of the Kotel and walking through the excavations underground feels like walking back in time to Jerusalem immediately after the destruction of the Temple. The archeologist who described the findings to me and my

family noted that the chairs of the amphitheater faced away from the Beit HaMikdash. For centuries the top of the Temple Mount was seen as the central point of the city to which everyone faced, but after the destruction, the Romans not only destroyed the building they also tried to shift the fundamental direction of our focus, away from the Temple Mount.

But while they succeeded in knocking down the Temple's walls, they never succeeded in removing it from our hearts.

One of my illustrious predecessors, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, once distinguished between two halakhic responses to the absence of the Temple. The first are the series of laws implemented *zecher le-churban*, to remember the destruction. Especially

at times of great joy, we take active measures to heighten our cognition that without the Temple, we are not complete. When we build our houses, we leave a part unfinished and when we dance at our weddings, we remember Jerusalem. But there are another series of laws not to remember the destruction but *zecher le-Mikdash*, to remember our Holy Temple. Throughout Sukkot, we make a blessing on the lulav and esrog and on Hoshanah Rabbah we take the aravot to remember the way the holiday was observed in the Temple. These laws are not about mourning a past, but creating a longing for a future.

Taken together, they ensured that the Jewish people remained conscious of the fact that throughout their travels at all different time periods and places

in the world, our center of gravity and central focus was and always will be towards Jerusalem.

## These stones are not the remnants of Israel but the stones on which the future of Israel is being built.

And today we are blessed to have a State of Israel and once again see Jerusalem being built under Jewish sovereignty.

As I was standing under the Kotel at the excavation site of the amphitheater where the Romans thought that they can succeed in turning our focus away from Jerusalem, I was reminded how far we have come as a people. To the Romans, when they left the last retaining wall of the Temple Mount standing, they thought that these stones represented the remainders of an Israel that will soon be forgotten. But we have shown that these stones are not the remnants of Israel but the stones on which the future of Israel is being built.

*אבן מסאו הבונים הייתה בראש פינה.*

*The stones that were once rejects, are now*

*the cornerstones of our people.*

### Tehillim 118:22

May we continue our work to move history forward and bring the final redemption, so that we can realize together the continuation of this chapter:

זה היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה בו.

*This is the day that the Lord has made, let us exult and rejoice on it.*

### Tehillim 118:24

CORE TORAH VALUES					
	LIFE	COMPASSION	CORE	TORAH	VALUES
<b>CORE TORAH VALUES</b>	<b>TORAT EMET</b>	<b>TORAT CHAIM</b>	<b>TORAT ADAM</b>	<b>TORAT CHESED</b>	<b>TORAT ZION</b>
<b>TRUTH</b>	<b>לִיְמָדָה</b> LIFE	<b>אֶתְחַיֵּם</b> INFINITE HUMAN WORTH	<b>אֶתְהַדֵּחַ</b> INFINITE HUMAN WORTH	<b>אֶתְנְחַדֵּחַ</b> COMPASSION	<b>צִוְּן</b> REDEMPTION
We believe in truth, and humanity's ability to discover it.  The pursuit of truth has always been the driving force behind advances in human understanding, from Socrates' wanderings through the streets of Athens to the innovations of the Industrial Revolution. People of faith, who believe in a divine author of Creation, believe that the act of discovery is sacred, whether in the realm of philosophy, physics, economics or the study of the human mind.  The Jewish people in particular affirm that beginning with the Revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, God entrusted eternal teachings and values to us that we must cherish and study diligently above all else, for they represent the terms of the special covenant that God made with us. All people, regardless of their faith background, should value the accumulation of knowledge because it is the way to truth and a prerequisite to human growth.	We believe in bringing values to life.  Jewish thought asserts that truth is made available to human beings not simply so they can marvel at it but also so that they can use it. Students studying literature, computer science, law, psychology or anything else are expected to take what they learn and implement it within their own lives as well as apply it to the real world around them.  When people see a problem that needs addressing, their responsibility is to draw upon the truths they uncovered during their studies in finding a solution. They must live truth in the real world, not simply study it in the classroom.	We believe in the infinite worth of each and every human being.  Judaic tradition first introduced to the world the radical proposition that each individual is created in the divine image and accordingly possesses incalculable worth and value.  The unique talents and skills each individual possesses are a reflection of this divine image, and it is therefore a sacred task to hone and develop them. The vast expansive human diversity that results from this process is not a challenge but a blessing. Each of us has our own path to greatness.	We believe in the responsibility to reach out to others in compassion.  Even as we recognize the opportunities of human diversity, Jewish tradition emphasizes the importance of common obligations. In particular, every human being is given the same responsibility to use his or her unique gifts in the service of others; to care for their fellow human beings; to reach out to them in thoughtfulness, kindness and sensitivity; and to form a connected community.	We believe that humanity's purpose is to transform our world for the better and move history forward.  In Jewish thought, the concept of redemption represents the conviction that while we live in an imperfect world, we have a responsibility to strive toward its perfection. Regardless of a person's personal convictions about whether social perfection is attainable or even definable, it is the act of working toward it that gives our lives meaning and purpose. This common striving is an endeavor that brings all of humanity together.  The Jewish people's task to build up the land of Israel into an inspiring model society represents this effort in microcosm. But it is part of a larger project that includes all of humankind. If the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice, then redemption represents our responsibility to work together in the service of God to move history forward.	



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