On Tisha B’Av, we’re asked to cry about a bygone era and yearn for an abstract Jewish future – difficult actions and feelings to compel in a generation of people for whom the Kotel, the outermost wall of the Beit HaMikdash, has always been the backdrop to some of their best family photos.

Our lives are so rich, both physically and spiritually. We are so content with our families, our homes, our businesses, our pleasures and our prosperity as to make the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash more than 2,000 years ago somewhat remote and of limited concern.

Few people truly mourn for the Beit HaMikdash. Even fewer truly feel the absence of the Shechina, the Divine Presence.

Because we have never experienced what we lost, it is hard for us to imagine what would be added to the world when the Beit HaMikdash is rebuilt on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

According to the Midrash (Tanchuma, Tzav 14):

G-d said to Yechezkel: “The study of the Temple structure is considered as being of equal merit to its building. So tell the people to study the Temple structure, and as a reward, I will consider their study as though they were actually building the Temple.”

When the Jewish people were in the Babylonian Exile, the Prophet Yechezkel was instructed to teach the people details of the Temple’s construction. The Radak (Yechezkel 43:11), says the people were told to construct a three-dimensional model of the Temple. By doing this, it brought into reality the idea that the Jews would eventually return to their Land and rebuild the Temple.

Here are five ideas/activities for learning about the Beit HaMikdash that once was and will, B’Ezrat Hashem, be built again soon:
1 Learn about the *korbanot* (offerings) which were brought to the Beit HaMikdash.

2 Learn about the various *keilim* (vessels) of the Beit HaMikdash, e.g. Menorah, Holy Ark, clothes of the Kohen, etc.

3 Learn about special *mitzvot* that applied during the times of the Beit HaMikdash, such as going up to Jerusalem three times annually, or other *mitzvot* such as *Bikkurim, Maaser* and *Hakhel*.

4 Learn about aspects of the service in the Beit HaMikdash which still apply today, such as *Birkat Kohanim* (the Priestly Blessing) and washing one’s hands before eating bread.

5 Construct your own 3D model of the Beit HaMikdash or complete a puzzle featuring the Beit HaMikdash.

And of course, add your own ideas too. If we understand that we are lacking a closeness to G-d, and that our whole lives could be on a much higher spiritual plane – and consequently give us much deeper pleasure and enjoyment than we have in our lives today – that may inspire us to yearn for a more fulfilling existence.

And in terms of crying for the loss of the Beit HaMikdash, for a higher spiritual reality we cannot really conceive, perhaps we can take a lesson from the Israeli paratrooper who was one of the first to touch the Kotel upon its liberation in 1967. When asked why he was crying, he replied: “I’m crying because I don't know what I’m crying for.”