"The problem these days is that we feel obligated to broadcast to the world that we are perfect," said Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Jacobson when we met with him in New York.

“We don’t talk enough about our difficulties since we don’t understand that these very difficulties and the challenges they present, lead us to the truth, to an honest assessment of who we are.

We have only now begun to read the Torah all over again, starting from Bereishit. Everyone is familiar with the first passage in the Torah, but what about the last? Just before we read about Creation, the last passage in the Torah reminds us of Moshe’s breaking the tablets of the covenant when he saw the people worshiping a golden calf.

The Torah ends with a description of everything Moshe did for us and yet, his final deed mentioned is his breaking of the tablets. And it’s truly astonishing that the last words of Rashi’s monumental commentary on the Torah are: yasher koach for breaking the tablets. Congratulations on breaking them! Leonard Cohen once sang:  

*Forget your perfect offering,  
There is a crack in everything,  
That’s how the light gets in.*

There is no reason to be embarrassed by cracks since G-d is in every one of them. As the Chasidim say, there is nothing more complete than a broken heart. It’s like the earth which must be hoed and plowed, split and broken up, in order for new growth to emerge through the cracks. When something is shattered, something new
begins to emerge. We are not perfect. Even the Torah, which is the essence of perfection, ends with congratulations for breaking the tablets upon which it was written. And had they not been broken, the magnificent Oral Torah would never have come to be. Only after we are reminded of and see the importance of what is broken can we experience a new beginning once again.”

Seeing the pain and looking it in the eyes – this is what needs to be done now, even though it is much easier to repress it. The following, written by Rabbi Erez Moshe Doron, sums up the whole story:

“Usually, we seek distraction, consolation. But on Tisha B’Av we are called upon to notice the sorrow, the imperfect reality. Not to escape from it, not to do everything in our power just not to hurt, as in the pleasure-seeking culture of the West. Yes, there is bad in the world, there is bitterness. And we do not only seek consolation, temporary relief, but rather a full redemption, corrected, a perfect reality. This is the time of year in which we are called upon to fight for the world, to fight for the situation of Am Yisrael, which is supposed to be totally different. It is not for naught that in the Jewish sources it is said that when one goes up to the Heavenly Court, one is asked: ‘Were you expecting salvation?’ That is, did you really want a change? Did you believe it was possible to correct reality? Did you try to improve things? Were you hurting because of the situation?

We tend to yearn for the most only when it comes to property and money. At this time of year, we yearn for the most when it comes to joy, inner peace, spirituality, Torah and sanctity.”

The following is one of the most meaningful messages we have received via WhatsApp, and we would like to share it with you:

“This is Michal Avera-Samuel, age 42. I am the Executive Director of Fidel, the Association for the Education and Social Integration of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Until I was nine years old, I lived in a world in which the Temple was standing. Like my parents and all my teachers, I grew up with the belief that following the destruction of the First Temple, the Second Temple was still standing in Jerusalem. We believed that the city was made of gold, in the literal sense of the meaning. I heard stories of the priests practicing their duties in the Temple, my bedtime stories were about the holiness of Jerusalem and I prayed to have the merit to return to Jerusalem, the spiritual center of the world.

Belief in Jerusalem was the key component of our education in Ethiopia, for both children and adults. The absolute truth was passed down from generation to generation that we were obliged to be pure in heart and practice so that we would one day be worthy of coming to the Temple. This gave us the strength to survive the treacherous trek through the desert. We dreamed of Jerusalem as we buried our family and friends who did not survive the journey and as we gave over our possessions to the desert bandits. During Operation Moses, my family and I continued on foot, despite our hunger and thirst, happy in the knowledge that after so many generations we had the merit to stand at the gates of the Holy Temple, G-d’s chosen site.

We reached Jerusalem.

2,000 years after the event, we found out the Temple had been destroyed. To this day, I am unable to fill the huge emptiness in my life. I remember when my father saw Jews driving their cars in Jerusalem on Shabbat. I could actually ‘hear’ his desolation.

The years have passed, I have grown older and I understood that I had actually gained from the experience. I was privileged to grow up with a Temple that was standing. When I formed my personality, I had the honor of having the goal of being worthy of the Temple. My parents lived to a ripe old age and their aim in life was to be pure enough for Jerusalem. It was I, as opposed to generations of Jews since the destruction of the Temple, who merited growing up differently.

I and those who were brought up like me can honestly feel the pain of the destruction. We fully understand how the loss of the Temple affects our lives.”

Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir are popular Israeli media personalities and World Mizrachi’s shlichim to North America.