



The Journey Home

הגיע הזמן להתעורר
לעזוב הכל להתגבר
לשוב הביתה לא לחפש מקום אחר

It's time to wake up,
To leave everything and
strengthen ourselves,
To return home, not look
for another place
(Ishay Ribon)

For most of us, our lives have been home-focused over the last year. We have spent far less time in public places than before the pandemic and barely left our homes.

Yet there is one home the pandemic has detached us from – our national home, Israel. Since March 2020, members of our community have not been able to jump on a plane and go to Israel, as we have become so used to. Parents and grandparents have been separated from their children and grandchildren in Israel. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, Director of *Semicha* at RIETS, captured what many of us felt this past Yom HaAtzmaut: “When the doors close, we should be inside, not outside.”

To address this separation from our home in Israel, we began seriously planning the RZA-Mizrachi Journey Home Mission, to bring our community back to Israel as soon as possible. Because being away from home is painful, we want to take the first chance to go back, as soon as the doors open. So much has inspired us about Israel in the last year, from the signing of



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the Abraham Accords to Israel's world-leading vaccination campaign. Traveling home to Israel is our way of showing that even if the whole world has changed, our connection to Israel remains as strong as ever.

The Gemara in Ketubot (75a)

expounds on the *pasuk* from Tehillim בַּהּ יוֹלָד אִישׁ וְאִישׁ יוֹלָד בָּהּ, “But of Zion it can be said, ‘Man after man was born in her.’” noting the repetition of the word אִישׁ. The Gemara explains, אחד הנוולד בה ואחד המצפה לראותה, “One who longs to see Yerushalayim is equal to one who was born there.” Many Jews have indeed merited to be born in Yerushalayim. They will dance through its streets on Yom Yerushalayim, celebrating the reunification of the Holy City 54 years ago. But even those of us born and living elsewhere are obligated to be among those who are מצפים לראותה, who long to see it, to wait, yearn and prepare, so that we are ready, at the first opportunity, to make the journey home.

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