



HOLY SITES IN ISRAEL

SHOSHANA JUDELMAN



Mikveh Am Yisrael

The other day I had an unexpected opening in my schedule, so I drove to a tzaddik's *kever* hoping to tap into the holiness of the place for some much-needed inspiration.

And the *kever* was beautiful and meaningful, but what really moved me were the holy women I was standing amongst: the girl in jeans reading the whole book of Tehillim; the lady in sweatpants swaying next to me in silent prayer, tears pouring down her face; the expectant mother gesturing with her hands while she silently spoke to Hashem; the old woman who pushed her walker as close as possible and then fell upon the *kever* with broken-hearted pleas- I couldn't understand the language that she was speaking, but I could understand her tears.

Chassidus teaches that every concept in Torah is embodied in three dimensions: space, time, and people.

Eretz Yisrael is the holiest of lands and is filled with places to tap into that sanctity.

Shabbos is the holiest of times and every week we are given the opportunity to recharge through its exalted energy.

And Am Yisrael are the holiest of people.

But we often forget or don't connect to that incredible force of strength.

When we open our hearts to the reality

of Am Yisrael as a source of inspiration, the places become secondary to the people. And every gathering has the potential to change the world.

At a shiva house last week, the courage and pride of the bereaved father speaking words in tribute to his fallen son empowered everyone in the room. His determination and sense of purpose galvanizes us to invest our own actions with greater intention.

At a concert, the emotion behind our collective singing turned each song into a tefillah that soared upwards to shake the Heavens with our shared pain and enormous hope.

Every video and picture shared in groups and online captures these holy moments, acts of courage, love and chessed: the fathers and sons returning home to the hugs of their families; the chayalim on base dancing, singing or just finding ways to look for the good in each other; the notes left by chayalim thanking the owners/proprietors of whatever apartment or public space they have lived in for the past 3 months, and the (seemingly) endless BBQ's.

And on the homefront: the army of cooks and bakers trying to fill in meals for families whose husband/father is serving; the efforts on behalf of evacuated families; the Tehillim groups and the hundreds of stories of people competing to pay for meals and groceries for chayalim.

A story is told that when the Rebbe of Kossov was dancing with his Chassidim, he would dip his head down into the circle. When the Chassidim asked why, he responded that he

was immersing in a mikvah. The pasuk says, "Mikveh Yisrael Hashem," (Yirmiyahu 17:13) and can be interpreted various ways, including that Am Yisrael are, themselves, like a mikvah. Being surrounded by holy Jewish souls can transform a person spiritually.

May we be blessed to open our eyes and see that the inspiration for moving forward is you.

Us.

Am Yisrael.

Shoshana teaches Chassidus for the Shirat David Community in Efrat as well as in Jerusalem for Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya. She is a guide in Poland with JRoots and co-leads inspirational trips to Ukraine and around Eretz Yisroel. Shoshana has also been a guide at Yad Vashem since 2014.

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Thank you!

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