

# In The Space Between Homes: The High Holidays Story

by Anna Bronshtein

If you grew up in Israel, you know that the High Holidays are a sensory overload.

It starts with the Rosh Hashanah family dinners—loud, passionate, and full of debates over whose side of the family to celebrate with and whose dish turned out better.

Then comes Yom Kippur, which paradoxically belongs entirely to the kids. The country's highways

freeze, cars disappear, and the streets fill with an endless sea of bicycles, scooters, and rollerblades. There are the Slichot tours in Jerusalem, magical "white nights" filled with cool autumn air and ancient melodies. You hear the Shofar everywhere you turn.

And, of course, the exhaustion! Just as parents catch their breath after summer vacation and get the kids back to school... bam.



The holiday marathon hits with weeks of more days off. But secular or religious, an undeniable magic fills the air as the whole country syncs to the exact same rhythm.

When you move abroad, everything changes. You step outside, and the street doesn't know it's a holiday. Schools are open, offices are buzzing, and neighbors carry on with a regular weekday. You're forced to pull sacred time out of a work week in a city moving at full speed.

For many Israeli families who moved in recent years, celebrating abroad carries a much quieter, heavier weight than most realize.

Leaving Israel didn't come from a lack of love, it came from a fierce survival instinct. It was a drive to find stability while our hearts remained tied to a homeland processing profound wounds and tension.

This has created a painful, invisible limbo. Mentally and emotionally, returning right now



feels impossible, the trauma back home is too raw. But legally and structurally, staying in the new countries we've moved to is an uphill battle. We are caught in the middle: facing complex immigration hurdles, visa deadlines, and bureaucratic walls in the places we are trying to put down roots. We are building homes on shifting ground, trying to give our kids permanence while living with the quiet fear that we might not be allowed to stay in the place we now call home.

Yet, life happens around the table. Celebrating the High Holidays abroad becomes a quiet act of resilience.

It starts with the great ingredient hunt, driving across a city often the size of all of Israel just to track down the right fish or a specific spice from home. The longing for family back in Israel is real, but abroad, it gets replaced by the warmth of friends who become family. Everyone brings a piece of their heritage

into the room, creating new traditions together. Even people who never set foot in a synagogue back in Israel find themselves looking for one, just to hear familiar tunes and feel belonging.

Eventually, a quiet transformation happens. You adapt and create a rhythm that is uniquely yours. You look around your table, filled with new friends, blended traditions, and kids laughing in mixed Hebrew and English, and realize you feel at home.

Celebrating the High Holidays abroad teaches us that home isn't just a legal status or a place on a map. It's the warmth, community, and portable traditions we build together, no matter how complicated the road underneath our feet may be.

**CHAG SAMEACH!**

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