

אם אשכחך ירושלים תשכח ימיני
" If I shall forget you Yerushalayim, let my right arm be forgotten."

We are fast approaching the day of Tisha B'av, the day which commemorates the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, and the advent of the long, agonizing exile in which we still remain. This day, throughout the generations, has been marked with decrees, expulsions, massacres and suffering for our people. However, the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash was not just a physical destruction, but was also a devastation to our spiritual stature, and our closeness with Hashem. No longer would we have Neviim to convey to us D'var Hashem¹, nor would we have a Kohen Gadol with an Urim V'tumim. No longer can we bring Korbanos to repair that which we have done wrong, or see the divine revelations that were a daily routine².

R' Yehoshua (who witnessed the Churban) told the people of his generation, that in truth, the loss of the Bais Hamikdash should compel one into an all-encompassing state of mourning. "How can one eat meat - which can no longer be brought to the Mizbayach? How can one drink wine - which can no longer be poured for Nesachim? Bread? - was used for Menachos. Fruit? - for Bikkurim. Water? - was used for Nisuch Hamayim". The appropriate level of mourning would have required us to cease the use of all these. However, Chazal understood the great difficulty such a level of mourning would entail, and therefore only decreed a small measure of symbolism to commemorate the Churban³.

I. The first Din that Chazal mention is that one must leave a small portion of his house unpainted. More specifically, this refers to leaving an area of one Amah (approx. between 18 and 22 in.) by one Amah square, opposite the front door of his house, that should be left unfinished⁴. Some Poskim say that the Amah should be above the door - not opposite it, while others permit the placement on the left of the door⁵. Furthermore, many are Machmir to leave an Amah in every room of the house, not just by the main entrance⁶. Similarly, some say, that if one added rooms to his house one would be required to place an Amah in those rooms as well⁷.

These Dinim apply to all types of wall decorating, including wallpaper etc⁸.

The Amah should be left completely unpainted. One should not paint there pictures of the Kosel, or Psukim, such as אם אשכחך ירושלים etc⁹. Some Poskim however, permit painting the Amah with black paint, provided that it is obviously a Zecher L'churban¹⁰. Even those who forbid painting the Amah black, stipulate, that if one wrote on the black the words זכר לחורבן it is permitted¹¹.

Furthermore, one should not obstruct the visibility of the Amah with a picture frame or bookcase, since the very purpose of the Amah is to cause one to reflect on the Churban when one gazes upon it¹².

¹ב"ב יב: וע' מהר"ל נצ"י פ"ט

²כדאיתא באבות פ"ה מ"ה

³ב"ב דף ס' ע"ב

⁴לכתחילה יהא מרובע, פמ"ג או"ח ס' תק"ס מש"ז סק"א

⁵ע' פמ"ג א"א סק"ג ובמ"ב ובשע"ת שם, וע"ע בדבר יהושע ח"ב ס' ע"ג ובערוה"ש תק"ס. ובמשכנות הרועים ס' י"ח כתב דגם על

התקרה מהני אם אין לא מקו"א, ע"ש

⁶ארחות רבינו ח"ב בשם החזו"א והקה"י, וכ"כ בא"ר ובפמ"ג ובמנהגי חת"ס

⁷ע' שאילת יעב"ץ ס' קס"ט, וע"ש שמחייב אפי' בית האוצר, ולכאורה ה"ה משרד וכדומה ולהלכה צ"ב

⁸מג"א בשם השל"ה, באה"ט, ערוה"ש, וכ"פ המ"ב סק"ג. וראיתי בשם האדר"ת שהתיר מטעם דלא היה בזמן חז"ל ולא גזרו

⁹אג"מ או"ח ח"ג ס' פ"ו

¹⁰א"ר בשם האגודה, ערוה"ש ואג"מ שם, לאפוקי מדעת המג"א הפמ"ג ויוסף אומץ ס' תתצ"ב

¹¹א"ר סק"ד, דע"ת ס"א, מ"ב, שעה"צ, וכה"ח

¹²כ"מ מלבוש והחיי"א דצריך לראותו. וע' ארחות רבינו שם בשם הקה"י דמסתבר דיכול להניח דברים מטלטלים כגון ארון ספרים לפני האע"א ע"ש, אבל כמדומני שראיתי שלא נהג כן למעשה

A person is only required to leave an Amah, if he is building the house from scratch. If one purchased the house already painted, one does not need to remove a section of the paint¹³. However, this is only if the house was purchased from an Akum. If the house was purchased from a Yid, who did not leave a Zecher L'churban, the buyer must scrape off an Amah by an Amah of paint, since when the house was built it was not exempt. Some make an exception to this rule, when the Yid built the house only in prospect of selling it¹⁴.

When one rents a house (from a Yid) that does not have an "Amah by Amah", according to R' Moshe Feinstein ZT"L, he does not have to scrape off the paint. Not only this, but the landlord is also exempt from this obligation, provided the owner never planned on living there himself and only planned to rent it to others. Many other Poskim do require the tenant to scrape off paint, however, he may need to obtain permission from the owner first¹⁵. Certainly if the responsibility to paint the house is left to the tenant, the tenant is required to leave an Amah unfinished¹⁶.

The Mishne Brura and others say that although this minhag was not prevalent in their time, there is no explanation why one should be exempt¹⁷. Today B"h, this is not the case, as it has become widespread to be careful in this decree of Chazal in the correct manner. It is noteworthy, that this Din is of such great import, that one of the Acharonim assured anyone who adheres to it, that their household will have a continuation forever¹⁸.

2) The second example given in the Gemara is, that one must leave a portion of one's banquet unserved. In other words, one should prepare an entire meal with all the courses, but should not serve one part, thereby showing the lack of completion in the occasion. This applies even at a Seudas Mitzva, except on Shabbos¹⁹. The Gemara explains, that this can be even one type of dish, and does not need to be an entire course, since the purpose is simply to show deficiency in the festivities²⁰.

The Rambam²¹ adds that aside from this, one should also leave an empty place on the table, for the absent dish. In this way, attention will be drawn to the lack of the dish, and those present will reflect on the Churban. Otherwise the guests may come to assume that it was simply not served. Other Poskim mention another way to highlight the deficiency, by not covering the entire table with a tablecloth, leaving a small portion bare²². However, if it is clear that a standard dish that is expected is not served, no other form of acknowledgement is necessary²³. Of note, is that in the book "All For The Boss", the author relates how R' Y. Y. Herman ZT"L, at the wedding of his daughter, placed placards on all the tables stating: "In remembrance of the destruction of our Holy Temple, the pudding and special dessert will not be served.", thereby clearly emphasizing the Churban at his Simcha. The author further relates that he paid in full for these delicacies without serving them. (pg. 205)

Unfortunately, although R' Y. Y. Herman ZT"L fulfilled this Din B'hidur, most people nowadays do not. Some wish to attribute this to the lack of an accepted standard menu at our meals. In other words, since the purpose of not serving a portion of the meal is so that those who are present will notice, this will only be accomplished if there is an assumed standard menu. Only then will the lack of something that is expected be noticed. Therefore they say, nowadays, when this is not the case, and people serve whatever they desire, it is impossible to accomplish this. However, they conclude, that even so one should try to show the lack of completion in a way that he can²⁴.

¹³ב"י שם

¹⁴ע' אג"מ שם ובס' מגדל השן

¹⁵דבר יהושע שם ואבן ישראל ובארחות רבינו שם

¹⁶פמ"ג, שע"ת וכה"ח

¹⁷ע' חיי"א, קש"ע שע"ת ס"ק א' ומשכנות הרועים שם

¹⁸מועד לכל חי לר' חיים פלאגי' ס"י

¹⁹ט"ז ומ"ב בשם מור וקציעה

²⁰ב"ב שם

²¹הל' תענית פ"ה ה"ג

²²פרישה שכך עשה רבו

²³א"ר בשם הלבוש, וע' ט"ז שמש"ה לא הזכיר הטור דברי הרמב"ם

²⁴כה"ח סקי"ח ומקו"ח להחון"

III. Another Takana of Chazal (שם), was that a woman should not adorn herself completely. There is a Machlokes Rishonim as to precisely what this refers to. The Tur (תק"ס) writes that this is referring to refraining from using a certain type of makeup on the face. The Ran²⁵ says that it refers to the braiding of the front portion of her hair. The Rambam (שם) and the Shulchan Aruch (שם) write, that the deficiency should be in the amount of jewelry a woman wears. However, as long as she does not wear all of her jewelry, it is considered to be lacking. Even the absence of one piece would be considered Zecher L'churban.

This Din applies even on Shabbos²⁶.

The Rishonim state, that this Din applies to men as well. Men also should not wear excessively opulent clothing or dress in an otherwise ostentatious manner²⁷.

IV. A fourth example of Zecher L'churban mentioned in the Gemara, is that a Chosson should place ashes upon his head (in the area of the Tefillin) during the time of his Chuppa²⁸. At the time that the ashes are placed on his head, the Chosson recites the Passuk - אם אשכחך ירושלים תשכח ימיני - to remind him of the purpose of this ritual²⁹. Even those that do not have this minhag today, have a similar minhag that is meant to accomplish the intent of the former. This is the minhag to break a glass cup at the conclusion of the Chuppa. In addition, many have a minhag to break a plate at the T'noim as well³⁰.

In many German Kehillos there was another minhag in addition to placing ashes on the head of the Chosson. In these Kehillos the Chosson would wear a certain type of turban, which was ordinarily worn by mourners. This too was to signify the mourning for the Bais Hamikdosh³¹.

The Acharonim³² comment, that sadly, in recent times this ritual of breaking the glass at the end of the Chuppa, has transformed into a cue to begin the revelry and joyous celebration, when in fact it is meant to impart a feeling of sadness for the Churban Bayis. They emphasize that it is incumbent upon the guests to understand the true significance of this rite³³.

It is interesting to note, that the minhag in Yerushalayim today, is that all chasunos only have drums as musical accompaniment. No other instruments are permitted. This was a Takana in 1865 by many Rabbanim in Eretz Yisrael and in Europe, including the Imrei Binah, the Aruch Laner, R' Shmuel Salant, R' Shimon Sofer and R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. It was instituted following a deadly epidemic in Yerushalayim, after which it was revealed in a dream that this rule should be instituted as an additional sign of mourning for the Churban³⁴.

There are another six items that were introduced as a Zecher L'churban. We will IY"H discuss them in the coming issue.

וכל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בשמחתה, בב"א

Good Shabbos.

מאיר הלוי הלמן
פעיה"ק תובב"א

²⁵סוף תענית בשם העיטור

²⁶שעה"צ ס"ק י"ג

²⁷ספר המנהגים לר"א מלוניל - ליקוטים עמ' קע"ה

²⁸בערוה"ש אה"ע ס"ה ה' כתב שמסלקין האפר מיד, ולא ראיתי שנוהגין כן

²⁹ט"ז וע' ערוה"ש שם

³⁰ע' תוס' ברכות ל' ע"א, כל בו, ד"מ וברמ"א ומ"ב

³¹מהרי"ל מנהגים ריש הל' נישואין, וע' בשו"ת מהר"ם מינץ ס' ק"ט שהיה משתמש ג"כ לחופה. ע' בס' שרשי מנהג אשכנז עמ' 446

שהאריך בענין זה

³²שדי חמד, יב"א ח"ד אה"ע ס"ט

³³אמנם בטעמי המנהגים עמ' ת"ו הסביר הטעם לזה ע"פ סוד, ע"ש

³⁴ע' שלמת חיים ח"ד ס' כ"א ובמהד' הנדמ"ח תתפ"ט, ועלהו לא יבול ח"א עמ' ר"ד