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TISHA B'AV MOURNING AND BUILDING

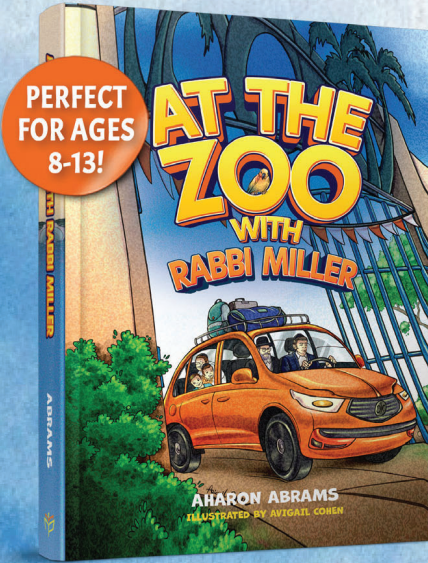
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TISHA B'AV

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

MOURNING AND BUILDING

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Part I. Looking Back

Mourning Thoughtfully

The *Churban Beis Hamikdash*, although it took place thousands of years ago, is of such significance that the entire Am Yisroel together observes it every year in a national day of mourning. And the truth is, it's not only Tisha B'Av; on numerous occasions throughout the year we remind ourselves of our mourning. It's on the mind of every loyal Jew every day. It's in our daily *tefillos* too.

Now, if this subject is so important, then it's not enough to merely go along with the impression that we gained as children and to continue living with those same childish impressions. When we approach the mitzvah to mourn, it's important to prepare at least somewhat beforehand so that when

Tisha B'Av comes, we won't walk into this important day on the Jewish calendar empty-handed. And we won't walk out empty-handed either.

Now, the truth is that even if you're just sitting on the floor and saying the *kinnos* along with everyone else, it's valuable. Even if you don't understand the meaning of the words, just the fact that you're joining in the national mourning, that already is something. Of course, it's good to take a peek at the translation, if you have it. You can get a translation of the *kinnos* and of *Eicha* and study it beforehand. But even if you didn't, you're sitting on the ground and you're saying words of mourning that our people have said for thousands of years, that's already something.

Mourn and Gain

But the best thing is to think; to take advantage of Tisha B'Av. We have to listen to the advice of a great man, Shlomo HaMelech, in Koheles (ch. 3): לְכֹל זְמַן – *There's a time for everything*. It means that for every kind of perfection of character, there's a *zman*, a time. There are so many different times during the year and each one is an opportunity to accomplish a different kind of perfection. It's up to you, however, to know that when the time comes, you have to make use of it.

Tisha B'Av, you have to know, is a time to sit down on the ground and weep. Not to look at the clock and see how many hours it is until supper time – no. You have to weep on Tisha B'Av; mourning in its proper time is a *shleimus*, a perfection of character. And the more mourning, the more perfection. Like it says in Yeshaya (61:3): לְאֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן לָתֵת לָהֶם פָּאֵר תַּחַת אֲפֵר – The more *eifer*, the more you put ashes on you, the more *pe'er* you're going to get, the more perfection of character.

Loss of Shechinah

And so we should analyze, at least superficially, the elements that we can discern in the matter of the *Churban Beis Hamikdash*. When Shlomo built the Beis Hamikdash, the Shechinah came in and filled the entire *heichal*. אָז אָמַר – *When Shlomo saw that he said, הַשֵּׁם אָמַר לְשֹׁכֵן בְּעֶרְפֶּל* – Hashem said He's going to dwell in a thick cloud, and everybody saw the Shechinah (Melochim I, 1:12). That's what Hashem promised us: וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ – *They shall make for Me a Mikdash*, which means a holy place, an especial place for Me, וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם – *and I shall dwell in their midst*. In a nutshell, that's what the Beis Hamikdash meant: We felt that Hashem lives with us. That feeling, that awareness, was something that transformed the lives of the Am Yisroel.

Just a visit to Yerushalayim transformed a person; the Torah says that's the reason for bringing *maaser sheini* to Yerushalayim. You know, *maaser sheini* means that you separate one tenth of your produce and you bring it to Yerushalayim to eat. And it takes some time before you consume all that food,

a tenth of your produce! Sometimes you have to spend weeks in Yerushalayim before you can eat it up. And what's it for? The Torah says it's for the purpose of *לְמַעַן תִּלְמַד לְרֹאֵה אֶת הַשָּׁם* – so that you became more and more aware of Hashem's Presence every minute you are there (Devarim 14:23).

All day long, you were in the shadow of Hashem's Home. That was the greatness of having a Beis Hamikdash. The knowledge that the Shechina lives with us!

Loss of Strength

Now, the *Binyan Shlomo* was the pride of our nation. It was perfect in everything. The *kohanim gedolim* were anointed with the *shemen hamishchah*. They had the two *luchos habris*; the stone tablets were there inside. Everything graced the first Beis Hamikdash and nobody ever dreamed that the hand of a gentile could ever touch it: *לֹא הָאֵמִינוּ כֹּל יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי יָבֵא צָר וְאֹיֵב בְּשַׁעֲרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם* – nobody ever dreamed this could happen (Eicha 4:12). The House where Hashem lives be trespassed?! *נִוְרָא אֱלֹקִים מִמִּקְדָּשֶׁיךָ* – You, Elokim, are Fearsome when You come from Your Sanctuary (Tehillim 68:12). Constantly you find such expressions in Tanach. From the Mikdash the power of Hashem came forth to defend His people. It was unthinkable that it could be destroyed.

But finally that dreaded day came when the nation saw the Beis Hamikdash set to the torch. The House of Hashem; the house where our Hashem lived with us, is burning! It was a great day of mourning never to be forgotten. And that's why to this day when we mourn, it's mostly for the *Churban haBayis*.

Loss of Enlightenment

However, it wasn't only the Beis Hamikdash, Hashem's immediate Presence, that fell. The Mikdash was the Torah center from which the Toras Hashem flowed out to all the corners of Eretz Yisroel. The *lishkas hagazis* in the Beis Hamikdash was the center of the Torah nation and that went lost along with the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. The loss of the Sanhedrin in the *lishkas hagazis* is a tremendous, irreparable loss.

We have to mourn for the loss of *nevuah* too. Ahh, the prophets, the *nevi'im*! What a great gift that was; when the Shechina was *shoreh b'Yisroel* and the *nevi'im* spoke words of truth. The Word of Hashem enlightened the eyes of the people. When the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, *nevuah* ceased and we lost that great opportunity. We don't have the great teachers, the pathfinders, the guides, that we had in the days of old. That's something to weep over.

Loss of Happiness

What about the loss of our national happiness? We have to picture how our forefathers went up to Yerushalayim three times a year in masses. Every town had a little army of men and their families who set out to Yerushalayim

three times a year. They would march on the roads with the cattle and sheep that they intended to bring as offerings.

They put on their Yom Tov garments, and they took along musical instruments and they sang and played music on the road. And soon they heard from another road the same sounds of festivity and they were joined by a band from the next town as the roads merged. As they continued, the army swelled and became a huge multitude and soon the roads were clogged. You could barely move. But they were all singing and dancing on the road.

They were oblivious to the time. They didn't realize that the minutes were passing by. To them it seemed that time was standing still. They weren't in Yerushalayim yet but they were already enjoying the Presence of the Shechinah. Like Dovid describes in *Shir Hama'alos* (122:2): עֲמֻדוֹת הָיָו רְגַלֵינוּ – Suddenly we discovered that our feet were standing within your gates, Yerushalayim. And the *memunah* in charge of the group said, “Halt. We're already here.” They were standing in the streets and Yerushalayim was mobbed. There were millions in the city. We know this from the secular historians. The city was jammed with Jews, and it was all in a festive mood.

Loss of Joy

Now that happiness of ancient Yerushalayim is a subject worth studying. Oh, there were so many happy occasions when the nation gathered there. וְאָכַלְתָּ שָׂם וְשִׂמְחִיתָ לִפְנֵי הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ – You will eat there and rejoice before Hashem (Devarim 27:7). They ate meat of *korbanos* which they roasted and they drank wine and they danced with *simcha* until the spirit of Hashem came upon them and many became prophets.

The nation was happy! What was the mark of the days of old? They were times of joy. מִי שֶׁלֹא רָאָה שְׂמֵחוֹת בֵּית הַשְּׂוֹאֵבָה, לֹא רָאָה שְׂמֵחָה מִיָּמָיו (Sukkah 50a). No matter what joy the world attempts to accomplish in its festivities, it doesn't approach the *simchah* that our forefathers enjoyed when they gathered together with Hashem in Yerushalayim.

And so, when we look back on the happy times of the days of old, we mourn for that joy that we do not experience today. You should think about that while you're sitting on the floor on Tisha B'Av. We look back with regret and we mourn the *simcha* that departed from our people. We mourn for that song of joy which now became silent.

Loss of Pride

Now included in that happiness we possessed, was our pride in Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Because the primary happiness of our nation is that we are the nation chosen by the King of the Universe. And therefore another element of our weeping is the honor of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, עַל כְּבוֹד שְׁמֵךְ הַמְּדוּוּלָּל, how His

great Name was profaned when the gentiles marched into the Sanctuary and destroyed it.

They ridiculed us. “Where is your G-d?” they laughed. They put a torch to the Mikdash and slew the Sages, and the Name of Hashem was profaned in the world. The pride of the Am Yisroel, our pride in Hashem, went lost to a very big extent.

After the Mikdash was destroyed, the false religions, the imitating religions, arose – Islam and Christianity – and they belittled our people. They mocked us and they said that we are living in darkness and error and that they have the truth; and they blamed us for persisting in our refusal to accept their new truths. And because we were in *golus* now, so we had to be silent. For generations, all over Europe, instead of living in the shadow of the Mikdash we lived in the shadow of the cathedral, and we were considered subhumans, outcasts of society.

So Many Losses

The gentiles made it their business that we should live in the very worst of social conditions. Pope after Pope issued decrees that the Jews should not be allowed to lift their heads. “Don't kill them,” the Pope said, “but don't let them lift up their heads.” It was considered a kindness when they didn't extinguish our lives. And by the way; they didn't always follow the Pope's advice to leave us alive.

And in the Muslim world as well, they spat upon the Jew. In Yerushalayim just a generation ago there was an old *rav* who walked in the street. He was from a distinguished rabbinical family, the Bardaki family, and an Arab was passing with a little donkey carrying some merchandise. The Arab stopped the old *rav* and he put everything on the back of the old *rav*, even the little donkey. The Arab was riding on Rabbi Bardaki with all the packs from the donkey on him and he sat on the rabbi's shoulders. The rabbi had to keep quiet. He couldn't do anything against the Arab. And he took the Arab to his house and he humbly deposited him at his doorstep and he went home. He thanked Hashem that he remained alive. In Yerushalayim *Ir Hakodesh!*

And so when we weep on Tisha B'Av we think about these things—there is so much to think about—and we look back on our glorious history and see what we once possessed and what went lost afterwards. And we hope for the time when once again we'll be *zocheh* to what went lost from us.

Part II. Looking Forward

Building with Billions

Now, we have to understand the purpose in looking back at the *Churban Beis Hamikdash*. Is it merely to express *aveilus* for all those great eras and great possessions which we once had?

Yes, certainly! But it's also a way of looking forward. I'll explain that.

Suppose it's possible for you to go tomorrow to Eretz Yisroel and rebuild the Beis Hamikdash. Let's say you have billions and billions of dollars and you could buy off the Arabs; they would obligingly remove themselves and give you the opportunity to rebuild the Beis Hamikdash. Imagine that because of you, the Israeli government would resign and the Gedolei Yisroel would take over. Rav Moshe Feinstein and the Lubavitcher Rebbe and the Satmar Rav also; all the *roshei yeshivah*. You'd bring them in and they'd all sit together to make decisions about building the Beis Hamikdash.

Now, some things they couldn't do because you need Eliyahu Hanavi to answer some questions, but very many practices could be restored immediately. *שְׁמַעְתִּי שְׁמַקְרִיבִים אִף עַל פִּי שְׂאֵן מִקְרָשׁ* – The Mishnah (Eduyos 8:6) says you can bring *korbanos* even today. I'm not giving any *piskei halachos*, but superficially, we can say that many things could be done before Moshiach comes.

Sincere Weeping

Now imagine a man who has the power to organize all of that. But instead of doing anything, as soon as Tisha B'Av is over, he goes back to his ordinary life. On Tisha B'Av he sat on the ground all day long weeping for the lost Beis Hamikdash; the tears were flowing. And then on Motzei Tisha B'Av he gets up from the floor and wipes the dust off his pants and he goes home. He goes back to his job and back to normal living.

Can we say that this man was weeping sincerely? Did he even know what he was weeping about? It can't be! A person cannot be considered a sincere *aveil* for the *Churban Beis Hamikdash* unless he makes use of the opportunities he has; unless the mourning spurs him to look forward and to rebuild.

And actually, that's what happened at the time of the *Churban*. Our forefathers weren't *yotzei* with just mourning. They didn't throw up their hands and say, "We give up." You know what they were doing? As soon as the *churban* took place, they began building immediately; that was their reaction to the destruction.

Rebuilding in Yavneh

While they were burning the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai was sitting in Yavneh and making *takanos* for the future of the Jewish nation. The Sages were establishing Yavneh at the time as if it was a substitute for the Beis Hamikdash. They blew *shofar* in Yavneh on Shabbos like they did in the Beis Hamikdash, and the people were summoned to be *oleh regel* to Yavneh three times a year instead of to the Mikdash. It was an innovation, something new.

Now, you might think, how could Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai do that? He should sit and mourn! He should have been heartbroken!

The answer is that certainly he mourned, absolutely. But in the midst of his mourning he was a very active builder. He was very old, by the way, and old people usually are the ones to give up in despair. But not Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai. He understood what mourning means; you appreciate what went lost so intensely that you're doing whatever you can to replace it.

And so, with his eyes to the future, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai was as busy as could be preparing for the future. He brought in a young *nasi*, Rabban Gamliel, and he appointed him to take over the job. And he told the older *Chachomim*, "You obey him. He's the boss." He was building and he encouraged all the *Chachomim* who were his disciples to build along with him.

The Mishnah Mikdash

While the Beis Hamikdash, the center of Torah life, was burning, they sat down to rebuild the spiritual Beis Hamikdash. They began now to review all the *Mishnayos* and to argue about every letter, every detail. Many *halachos* were clarified in Yavneh. They built up the *Torah sheba'al peh* at that time so that it should be a solid building for generations.

And then when Rabbeinu Hakadosh came along after the *churban* of Beitar – the Rambam says Beitar was even a bigger *churban* than the Mikdash. So Rebbi didn't say, "What can we do? We're so sad" and that's all. Of course he asked Hakadosh Baruch Hu that He should restore the glory of old. But he wasn't *yotzei* with that. Rebbi called together all the *Chachomim* and for years and years they sat and counted every *ois* until finally the Mishnah was sealed by Rebbi.

The *churban* that took place didn't stop them from building a new Beis Hamikdash, and the new Beis Hamikdash was the *Torah sheba'al peh*, the Mishnah. And the Jewish nation now lives in that Beis Hamikdash. We are housed in the Mishnah.

Beis HaTalmud

And then along came the *Chachmei hadoros*, Rabbi Yochanan and all the other *Chachmei Eretz Yisrael*, the *Amora'im*. And then in Bavel came Rav and

Shmuel and then Rav Huna and Rav Yehudah and then Rabbah and Rav Yosef. There were many others.

And then came Abaye and Rava, and these were the builders of the Talmud Bavli. They were building up the Beis Hamikdash even more. They put stone on stone. They made doorways. They made roofs. They made chambers. Each *mesichta* is a huge *lishkah* in the Beis Hamikdash. And finally came Rav Ashi and his great assemblage of *Chachamim*, and they made a *Chanukas Habayis* and they concluded the Talmud Bavli.

The Talmud Bavli, you have to know, is our sanctuary. The Jewish nation lives in that Beis Hamikdash even more securely than the generations of old lived in the physical Beis Hamikdash. To this day, the Jewish nation lives in the Talmud; we *rejoice* in the Talmud. We pass in and out of those doorways. We breathe the air of the Talmud. We live with the aspirations and the ideals of the Talmud. We look at the world through the eyes of the Talmud. And therefore Rav Ashi and all those who came before him were building in the midst of their mourning.

And so we see now what the subject of Tisha B'Av really is. What is the function of mourning? Building! If we really mourn for the past, if we regret what we lost, then it means that we are full of interest, full of desire and ambition to build everything that went lost. We want to rebuild the Torah nation.

A Torah Nation

That's what makes us a nation after all; like Rabbeinu Saadya Gaon says אֵין הַתּוֹרָה אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבִיל הַתּוֹרָה – *our nation is only a nation by the Torah*. That's what gives us our right to exist; that's the common thing that would make us be called a nation.

We don't have any common thing that would make us be called a nation. Not the land or the language, not the Beis Hamikdash. "Our nation is only a nation because of Torah!" If a Jew does not accept Torah, then he's not a Jew. And if a black man accepts the Torah and he's *megayer k'halachah* so we say to him *achinu atah*. He can't become a *melech Yisroel*—affirmative action won't go that far—but otherwise he's our brother, a fellow Torah Jew. And those people, the Israelis, who want to make a new nation in Eretz Yisroel and speak Hebrew and eat *treif* and forget about the Torah, they're not our brothers. We are a Torah-nation and that's the only reason we have a right to exist.

And that's the pivot of our mourning. We want everything back because we want to best rebuild the Torah nation. That's what we're mourning most of all, that we were a nation that lived most loyally, most proudly, according to the Torah.

Geulah for Torah

Now, some people when they hear this, they are confused. Is that really what we're talking about when we mourn for the Beis Hamikdash and look forward to *Yemos Hamoshiach*? For the Torah?

So we open up a Rambam. The Rambam (Hil. Melochim 12:4, Hilchos Teshuva 9:2) asks, what is it that the *tzaddikim* and the *chassidim* look forward to when they await the days of Moshiach? Is it that they want to come back to Eretz Yisroel and eat the beautiful fruits of the land and enjoy that happiness? No, says the Rambam. That's not the happiness we're yearning for. It's not the physical joy which we once experienced that we want to re-experience.

Listen to what the Rambam says: We are looking forward to be free from the *shibud malchuyos* so we can achieve perfection of the mind and character. We want to be free to study Torah and its wisdom in order to acquire Olam Haba.

Difficulties of Exile

Today we're subject to the nations. They make us work for them. If you pay taxes it means that one day out of five you're working for the government. Our lives are given away for programs that help loafers and criminals. College professors get big grants of money from the government to go and study the Aleutian Indians; big grants to study rocks from the moon. Rocks! Tremendous grants of money from the government they get and we're paying for it. So we're giving away our lives for *shibud malchuyos*.

Besides, the *shibud malchuyos* is a very bad influence. We're so busy struggling against the immorality we see all around us, the *sheker* of evolution in the colleges and the wildness of the youth. Every form of degradation we see in *golus*. That's also *shibud malchuyos*.

And so we mourn for what we once had—the purity of Eretz Yisroel in the days of old—and we look forward to the time when Moshiach will redeem us from all this and we will finally be at leisure among only *kesheirim*.

Limitations of Geulah

Now, what will we do with our spare time? You think you'll sit in the mountains at a kosher hotel and eat three kosher meals a day? No, we're not asking for that. The Rambam says we're mourning because we're looking forward to leisure time when we'll be able to sit in the *shtiebel* or in the *yeshivah* all day long.

“That's all?!” you're thinking. “To sit in the *yeshivah*?” It's disappointing. Maybe you're too ashamed to admit it but that's what you're thinking. Oh, it's a disappointment? It means we're not mourning for the Beis Hamikdash; we don't really mean it. Because once the Beis Hamikdash comes we'll have to sit in the *beis hamedrash* all day long. There's nothing else to do. You don't have

to work. You go out and work a little bit but the fields will give a great deal; וַיִּתְּנָה הָאֲרֶזְי יְבוּלָהּ – *the land will yield its fruits* (Vayikra 26:4). You'll have easy *parnassa* and you'll have a lot of time with nothing to do.

What will you do? You'll travel to Switzerland? No; you can't leave the land when Moshiach comes. *Eretz ha'amim* is *metamei*. It's like *tumas meis*. You have to remain in Eretz Yisroel.

Abolishing Cars

You'll watch television? There won't be television. Movies? No movies. In Eretz Yisroel not a single movie; nothing. No pizza parlors. Nothing to do. Even to drive around in your car, I don't know if you'll have that. There will be very strict laws because cars are dangerous. You know, according to the Torah, when you find a man dead in Eretz Yisroel, you make the biggest fuss with an *eglah arufah*. And you have to send from the Sanhedrin a committee to investigate. It's a whole fuss if one man is found dead! So of course they wouldn't allow cars to speed back and forth.

So in Eretz Yisroel everybody will be busy sitting in the *beis hamedrash* learning Torah. Everybody will troop out from the houses to the *yeshivos* every day. Come back at night and eat supper and go back to the *batei medrashim*. That's what will be in Moshiach's time. Every day, packed *batei medrashim*.

That's what we really are weeping for, for the Torah nation that went lost. We're looking forward to that great opportunity when we'll be able to sing again. אָז יִמְלֵא שְׂחוֹק פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵינוּ רִנָּה. Then the Jewish nation will sing. When the Beis Hamikdash is rebuilt we'll sing songs of Torah, *shleimus* and perfection of character, with a crescendo that we could never reach in *golus*. It will be the highest and most beautiful song ever heard in history.

Part III. Looking Home

Mourning and Marriage

Now, when we talk about mourning for and rebuilding the Torah nation, so naturally we think on a national scale. After all, it seems that's what went lost; the entire nation was displaced from its land and כָּל מְחֻמְרֵיהָ, all of the delights of living our own independent national life. But we shouldn't lose sight of one of the most important delights that went lost – the original Torah home. When we sit down and mourn, we shouldn't lose sight of how we can participate in that rebuilding in our own private lives. We should spend time thinking—while you're sitting on the ground—about the opportunity we have to build a Beis Hamikdash in our own homes.

Now, I know that when you hear that, you think it's just an exaggeration, something I'm saying just to interest you in the subject but if you listen well you'll see it's not an exaggeration at all.

You have to know that at the time of the *Churban* there were some who began to say that there's no use getting married anymore. They wanted to make a prohibition on having children (Bava Basra 60b). "Look how many people we lost to the Romans already – it's no use having children any more. Let's just die out gradually." That's how the weaker people mourned, by giving up. They sat on the floor and cried, and they stopped looking forward. Even to rebuild their own little homes, they didn't want to do.

Oh no! That's a big mistake; that's not how we mourn. Of course we look back and we're sad but we should never stop looking ahead. And included in that is the *Beis Hamikdash* that we can still build today – that's the Torah family, the Torah home.

Pure Boys

The Gemara in *Mesichta Pesachim* (87a) is discussing a *possuk* in *Tehillim* (144:12): אֲשֶׁר בָּנִינוּ בְּנִטְעֵים – *Our sons are like plants*, מְגֻדְלִים בְּנִעוּרֵיהֶם – *they are raised up from their youth*. That means our children are brought up in the Jewish home like plants. They're watered carefully; they're tended to and they grow into beautiful trees. And our daughters, the same. בְּנוֹתֵינוּ כְּזוּיֹת – *Our daughters are like corner pillars*; they are the cornerstones, the supports, of our homes.

Now he goes on and explains further. "Our sons are like plants; what does that mean? אֵלֹו בְּחֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹא טָעְמוּ טַעַם חֵטָא – These are the Jewish youth that never tasted sin." You know in the olden days every Jewish boy was bashful; he couldn't even talk to a girl. The truth is that to a great extent that's how it used to be even fifty years ago. Our youth were brought up like pure saplings and they were watered with *bayshanus*, with *yiras cheit*. They were innocent boys and they married young. They never knew what *cheit* was. And it wasn't just a few. That was the Jewish nation in the days of old.

Now, we have to understand that he's talking about *yeshivos* of today as well. Of course they're not like they used to be, but today our *yeshivah* boys are our pride. We are very proud of them. They are bashful boys, modest. They are far from *aveiros*. Some learn more, some learn less, but still they have been trained in the way of *Yisroel Saba* and they go with *tznius* and *yiras Hashem*.

Pure Girls

And our girls? בְּנוֹתֵינוּ כְּזוּיֹת – *Our daughters are like cornerstones*, אֵלֹו בְּתוֹלוֹת, יִשְׂרָאֵל – that's the Jewish girls who maintain their *tznius*; they're perfectly modest. Our daughters, *baruch Hashem*, are *Bais Yaakov* girls, *Bais Rochel* girls, *Bais Rivka* girls, beautiful girls. They're covered up. They're well dressed.

They know that their job is to get married and be loyal wives and loyal mothers and they'll be busy in their homes. That's our pride.

Now, that *possuk* in Tehillim concludes with the following three words: **מְחֻטְבוֹת תְּבִנִית הַיְכָל** – *They're being shaped with the shape of a palace.* And listen to what the Gemara there says about that: **אֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ** – *With these sons and daughters together,* **מַעֲלָה עָלֵיהֶן הַכְּתוּב בְּאֵלּוּ נִבְנָה הַיְכָל בְּיַמֵּיהֶן** – *it's considered as if the heichal, the Beis Hamikdash, was rebuilt in their days.* By having sons and daughters and raising them properly it is actually a form of rebuilding the Beis Hamikdash.

An Actual Sanctuary

Now, let's not get lost in *meshalim*, in forms of speech and metaphors. It's actually the *binyan Beis Hamikdash*. Here's a woman with ten children, all *frum*. She gave her life to raise those children. She was cooking all her life. She nursed them. She washed diapers for them. She cleaned the house for them. She saw to it that her husband went to learn and didn't sit in the house in the evening wasting his time. She encouraged her sons to go to learn. The little boys had to know the Chumash. When they came home, she said, "Take out the Gemara and learn." Her daughters dressed with *tznius*. She made sure they helped in the house.

The father too. He's out in the office working long hours so he could pay the *schar limud* but he's watching over the children too. They keep every *kutzo shel yud* of the *halachos*. No *muktzeh*, no *lashon hara*. Everything is done with *kashrus*, with *tznius*.

And so our Sages want us to know that people who are raising such sons and daughters are not just building the Mikdash *al pi mashal*. They're actually, factually, building the *heichal*. It's considered as if the Beis Hamikdash, the *heichal*, was rebuilt in their days. **אֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ** – *With these sons and daughters together,* **מַעֲלָה עָלֵיהֶן הַכְּתוּב בְּאֵלּוּ נִבְנָה הַיְכָל בְּיַמֵּיהֶן** – *it's considered as if the Beis Hamikdash, was rebuilt in their days.* And so when people get married with the intention of raising big families, big *frum* families, they are the ones most entitled to weep for the *Churban* because they're the ones who mean business.

Holy Jewish Homes

That's why the Gemara (Brachos 6b) says, **כָּל הַמְשֻׁמָּח חֲתָן וְכֻלָּה בְּאֵלּוּ בְּנֵה אֶתָּה** **מְחַרְבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם**. If you come to a wedding, a kosher Jewish wedding—men here, women there—and you add joy to the groom and bride so it's as if you are rebuilding one of the ruined houses of Yerushalayim. A *chasunah*? What's that have to do with it?

Because it's not only the Beis Hamikdash itself and being chased from our land that we are mourning; besides for the *Churban Beis Hamikdash*, there was also a *churban* of the Jewish dwellings, the Jewish homes. **וְהָשֵׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל**

לְנֵיהֶם – That’s what we *daven* for; we want to see once again the return to the *nivei hem*, the authentic Jewish home.

What the Jewish home was in the ancient times, we have no idea how holy they were. I’m always repeating what was said about seventy years ago or more by Rav Yerucham z”l, the *mashgiach* of Mir Yeshivah in Poland. “*Mir kennen nisht farshtein*,” he said, we’re not able to understand the greatness of our great-grandmothers.

Now Rav Yeruchem lived in a time where there were many *frum* Jews yet. Not everybody, but there were many *frum* Jews and there’s no question there were still many beautiful holy homes of *tzaddikim*. But the homes of the great-grandmothers were something different altogether. Not we don’t *equal* the greatness of their grandmothers; he said, “We don’t even *understand* them.”

And surely the further you go back; once upon a time the Jewish home was *kodesh kodashim*. It was the pride of our people. They lived on such a different degree; Hakadosh Baruch Hu and His Torah were the foundation, the pivot of everything that took place in the home. Ah! And so, when we mourn the loss of the *churvos Yerushalayim* it doesn’t mean only the *Churban Beis Hamikdash*; we mourn the loss of all those holy dwellings of our ancestors.

Rebuilding with Pomp

And one of the purposes of our mourning is so that we can understand what we lost and try to rebuild as much as possible. We mourn but then we get up on Motzei Tisha B’av and we keep building.

And so, let’s say you’re going to a *chasuna* next week, right after Tisha B’Av. You have to know what you’re doing there. When you come to a *chasunah*, what’s the function of being *mesameach chosson v’kallah*? What’s the purpose? The function is to let them know how important this occasion is.

Suppose they were getting married and nobody came to the wedding. The *mesader kiddushin* came and he brought with him two *eidim*. A few more Jews were there to make a *minyan*. It’s a good *chasunah*; it’s *kosher v’yashar*. But it’s a lost opportunity. The *chosson* and *kallah* have to see it’s a major event. We have to see that it’s a major event. The truth is if we had the ability we should do it in a stadium and all the seats should be full. Hundreds of thousands of people should be present. Only that we can’t do that. People are busy. And the little children can’t be left in the house alone and the father has to go out to the *beis medrash*. But we pack in as many as you can to impress on ourselves that there’s a very important occasion taking place now.

Because when you’re *mesameach chosson v’kallah* you’re telling them. “Listen you young people. You know what you’re doing now? You’re going to do something of the utmost importance in the Eyes of Hashem. You’re building a little *Beis Hamikdash* where the *Shechinah* is going to dwell.”

Rebuilding with Happiness

And therefore when you come and you make a big noise – the band of course is important; the orchestra is playing and you're dancing and everyone is coming over to the *chosson*, “*Mazel tov! Mazel tov!*” And the *chosson* is thinking, “Oh look, my old friend from *mesivta* came by. And my second cousin from Detroit is also here dancing. It must be an important occasion if he comes such a big distance for my wedding.”

Yes, my friend, this is a very important occasion and that's why we're here being *mesameach chosson v'kallah*; that's why we're dancing so much. If you write out a nice check and give it to them, it's also a *simchah*. The bigger the check the bigger the happiness. But even if you have no money to give them, you have to act wild, excited; you dance up a storm and show how important that occasion is. We're building now one of the ancient Jewish homes of Yerushalayim. You're rebuilding now! You're participating, encouraging, supporting the rebuilding of Yerushalayim.

Your Mikdash at Home

How tremendous is the accomplishment of a home where a *chosson* and a *kallah* live together and begin to build a Torah home. They'll live loyally together, a *frum* Jewish home with idealism, *avodas Hashem*, *gemilus chassadim*, good manners, *shemiras halashon*, *middos tovos*, *tzedakah*, every form of *avodas Hashem*, and together they're raising up fine children, sons and daughters and many of them.

Now, nobody is an angel, nobody is perfect, but whatever you can do is worth doing. Every attempt to build a house with *frum* boys and girls where you'll serve Hakadosh Baruch Hu together will be rewarded as if you rebuilt the Beis Hamikdash.

And it's not merely a form of speech; don't say, “But it's not the real thing”, because what good is a Beis Hamikdash with *korbanos* and *kohanim* and everything else if the Jew is sitting in his house and he's *mechallel* the Torah in his house? The purpose of the Mikdash is so that the holiness, the inspiration, the Torah attitudes, should flow from the Beis Hamikdash to the homes. And so whether or not there's a Mikdash in Yerushalayim, your home is where it matters most.

It's All Coming Back

And even though you're married a long time already, an old *chosson* and *kallah* who got married fifty years ago, try from now to start climbing the ladder upwards; try to build your house with the glory that once dwelled in the Jewish homes. It's never too late. Even old people, if they decide from now on they're going to try to live with the utmost *derech erez*, utmost politeness – of course you have to add the *l'sheim Shamayim*; you want to build a house

of *kedushah* where the Shechinah will dwell among you – they can start rebuilding their homes in the spirit of the *churvos Yerushalayim*, the *kedushah* of the Jewish family.

And the time will come that עתיד הקב"ה להחזירו לנו – Hakadosh Baruch Hu will bring back His Shechinah to Tzion and we'll see again all of the original glory that went lost. And we look forward to the day when it'll be rebuilt in the most literal sense. And on that great day everything that went lost at the *Churban* – the Beis Hamikdash and all of the holy institutions that came along with it, the awareness of Hashem's Presence among us, the pride we had, and the holy Jewish homes – all of that will be returned to us forever and ever.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

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Let's Get Practical

Mourning and Building

In various lectures, Rav Miller recommended sitting on the floor briefly every night in mourning over the Churban. This week I will *bli neder* sit on the floor every night and review the ideas I learned in this booklet. 1. The great losses we suffer in Golus. 2. True mourning is marked by a desire to restore what was lost. Thus we must seek to erect a palace of Torah. 3. Jewish Homes are also sanctuaries and places of Hashem's Presence.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

559 – Rebuilding the Ruins of Jerusalem | **603** – Rebuilding the Sanctuary of The Jewish Home | **971** – Mourning for Days of Old | **E-118** – A Time To Remember | **E-147** – The Wedding Simcha

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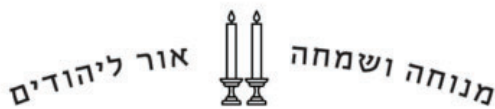


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The Power of Kiddush Hashem

On Shabbos, we're in the King's house, so to speak, and this calls for completely different behavior than during the week.

Once on Shabbos I (Rav Pincus) visited one of my *rebbeim*, R' Yosef Liss, *zt"l*. I was standing and talking to him next to a fence around a yard. I fiddled around with the gate as we spoke, unconsciously pushing it open and closed. Suddenly he asked me, "What are you doing?" "Nothing," I answered, not quite getting the point. He asked again, "What are you doing? You're doing something!" Again I answered, "Nothing." After the third time he asked what I was doing, I suddenly noticed my hands opening and closing the gate... Then he said to me, "You know, something like that would never happen to me. My hands would not move on Shabbos without my knowledge of exactly what they're doing. Do you know why? Because I had a grandfather who was a *Kotzker chassid*. He was a great man. I remember that every *erev Shabbos* at noontime, his hands started trembling, and they wouldn't stop until Shabbos was over. When we visited him on Shabbos, he would look at our hands the whole time. 'Where are your hands, where are your hands...?' He trained us in the important behavior that on Shabbos a person should always be conscious of what his hands are doing!"

One who has learned *hilchos Shabbos* well, especially the laws of *muktzeh*, knows that on Shabbos it is almost impossible to lift a hand or foot without the "permission" of our Great King. If a person picked up his hand and is not aware of what he is doing, he is likely to desecrate Shabbos. Why does our every move matter? Because we are in the presence of the King!

Being careful about what we do on Shabbos actually affords us a tremendous opportunity to sanctify Hashem's Name. Rambam states that one way to fulfill the mitzvah of *Kiddush Hashem* is by doing a mitzvah or refraining from a sin for the sole reason that Hashem said so. If a person does a mitzvah *l'shem Shamayim*, not because of any personal considerations, he has actually fulfilled two mitzvos: the immediate mitzvah he has done plus the great mitzvah of *Kiddush Hashem*.

Let's say on Shabbos morning the husband is in shul davening, and the children are playing in the yard. The wife is in the kitchen, and some sauce suddenly spills on the floor. She quickly looks around for something to wipe up the spill and spots a roll of paper towels—but on Shabbos it's forbidden to tear a piece off the roll! But no one is watching her...If she would start searching for an old towel to soak up the spill, by the time she'd get back the sauce would have spread all over the kitchen...but she knows and remembers that Hashem is watching. And Hashem says, "*Remember the Shabbos Day to sanctify it.*" So she stays away from the paper towels. This woman, besides keeping the mitzvah of Shabbos, has fulfilled another tremendously important mitzvah: *Kiddush Hashem!*

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QUESTION

How important is it to cry in the kinos in Tisha B'Av? Is it very important or let's say I'm more of an internal person and it's very hard for me to cry?

ANSWER

It's very easy to weep on Tisha B'Av **שנפלו בתורב על עם ה' ישראל על עם ה' שנפלו בתורב**. The Germans came to town after town and took the people. The people in the small towns, they were generally *shomrei Shabbos* in the small towns. They all ate kosher in the small towns. They weren't *tzaddikim* already and their children didn't go to yeshivos but in general they were moderately observant people.

The small town where I lived for a while, I knew the people personally. Quiet people. Kosher people. They didn't have any great *hislahavus* but they kept everything. And then one day the Nazis came and marched all the men outside on a field outside the town and they shot them all down. My brother-in-law, a Telzer yeshivah *bachur*, a nice boy, they shot him down for nothing. In cold blood they killed him. Now can you do anything else than weep at that?

Then they took, a few weeks later, all the women; quiet women, decent women. Many didn't have *sheitlim* at all; no, they wore their own hair most of them but still they were quiet women. They kept kosher. So they took these quiet people out in the field, the quiet women and the girls. My sister-in-law, a beautiful and fine *frum* girl, went with them. And they shot them all dead in cold blood.

My *chaveirim*; Rav Feivel Pilvishker, *zichrono levrachah*, from Pilvishkov, a *tzaddik*, a *yungerman*. He was learning all the time. He even thought in learning all the time. He was always thinking in *divrei mussar* in his spare time. They found his dead body on the field. He was murdered outside of the town. Other *tzaddikim* too. Aharon Birzher, my *chavrusa*. He was the son-in-law of the Kodoner Rav and he was murdered together with the Kodoner Jews. My rebbi, Rav Avraham Grodzinski, was burned up in a fire. The hospital was set on fire. They burned him up. Rav Elchonon Wasserman *zichrono levrachah* was in Slabodka. They marched him out with all the Slabodka boys and they shot him in the Ninth Fort. They shot him dead.

Is there anything to do except weep? Certainly we weep. We weep and weep. And Tisha B'Av is not enough. We have to weep more frequently for that. All of them deserve that we should remember them with tears. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu surely will remember them! **כי רורש דמים אותם וקר** - *The One Who remembers the blood of the innocent, צעקת ענקים, לא שכח* - *He won't forget their outcry.* He won't forget it. He'll take His revenge.

And we should know *sof kol sof* the end will be that we will be the ones who are going to conquer. And the *tzaddikim* in the Next World are going to rejoice that their nation is the nation that survives. *Sof kol sof* of the happiness of the World to Come and the happiness even in this world will be ours. When Moshiach comes all the nations will admit that their religions were false, that they were wicked lies, and they'll all bow down and **כירי וקרעו כל יושבי תבל כי לך תכרע כל ברך תשבע כל לשון**.

August 1997

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