



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת חיים

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

פרשת מטות תשס"ח • Parshas Mattos 5768

THE CHURBAN — 5768

Religious Jews the world over faithfully adhere to the restrictions incumbent upon us during this period of mourning over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. For some, however, these observances are not accompanied by a true inner sense of grief and loss. Perhaps we have lost, to a certain extent, a true appreciation of the scope of this tragedy, as well as its relevance to our generation, which exists thousands of years after the actual destruction.

THE MOST TERRIBLE TRAGEDY OF ALL TIME

Similarly, we might be asking ourselves the following: True, the *Churban* was a terrible tragedy. The central hub of the Jews' spiritual life was destroyed; thousands were killed, many more led into exile; and Hashem's Presence no longer dwelled in our midst. Yet, considering some of the other trials and tribulations that have befallen the Jewish people throughout history, it seems difficult to understand why we devote so much attention to this particular event. Just within the past century, six million Jews were slaughtered by the accursed Germans, and the Jewish life of the entire continent was almost entirely uprooted. Yet, there is no three-week mourning period to commemorate that recent and horrific occurrence. What is it about the *Churban* Beis HaMikdash that causes it to occupy such a central role in Jewish life?

A closer look at the nature of the *Churban* can help us gain a greater appreciation of its significance. This deeper understanding can allow us to recapture a genuine feeling of sorrow over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, as well as a greater yearning for its rebuilding.

MORE ASHAMED THAN EVER

A keen observation of the Beis Halevi helps us more fully grasp the magnitude of the *Churban*:

Part of the *Selichos* service (recited during the period surrounding the *Yamim Nora'im*) is the *Viduy* (confession). In this particular section, we state the following: "*Ashamnu mikol am, boshnu mikol dor*; We bear guilt more than any nation, we are ashamed more than any generation." The Beis Halevi wonders: True, we may have sinned. But how can we be so sure that our sins are worse than any previous generation?

The Yerushalmi (*Yoma 5:1*) states: "Any generation during which the Beis HaMikdash is not rebuilt, is considered as if the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed in its days." The Beis Halevi explains that this statement is to be taken literally. Hashem is all-powerful; as far as He is concerned, rebuilding the Beis HaMikdash is a completely effortless task. For all intents and purposes, the Beis HaMikdash can be considered completed and ready on a constant basis. If it is not rebuilt, it can only mean one thing: had it actually been rebuilt, *it would have immediately been destroyed* as a result of the sins of the people of that time. A generation that does not witness the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash apparently possesses the same magnitude of failings which produced the original *Churban*.

Sadly, the picture gets much bleaker. The Mishnah in Sotah (9:12) states:

רַבֵּן שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר מְשׁוּם רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, מִיּוֹם שֶׁחָרַב בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, אֵין יוֹם שְׂאֵין בוֹ קְלָלָהּ.

"Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says in the name of R' Yehoshua: 'From the day that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, every single day is fraught with misfortune.'"

לד"ר מרן הגה"צ ר' אביגדור ב"ר ישראל הכהן זצוק"ל

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of *חיים בן יעקב ע"ה*, a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his Neshamah.

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The Gemara (*Sotah 49a*) adds that not only does each day come with its own type of calamity, but the gravity of these travails increases *with each passing day*.

The actual destruction of the Beis HaMikdash structure, and the accompanying casualties of that day's events, were tragic in their own right. Yet we see from *Chazal* that the extent of the *churban* was not limited to those specific occurrences. The scope of the *churban* was much more far-reaching; it plunged the Jewish people, and the world, into a dire state of decline.

The Beis Halevi concludes by saying that a generation which has not witnessed the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash is a generation that has suffered a *churban* — the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, which is just one part of a general visitation of utter calamity. As the days and generations go on, the magnitude of our travails becomes greater and greater. Hence, the latter day *churbanos* are much more severe than the earlier ones. Since each *churban* is an outgrowth of the sins of the generation, and later generations suffer a more intense *churban*, one can conclude that the severity of the later generations' sins is greater than that of the generations preceding them. For this reason we proclaim, "We have sinned more than any nation; we are ashamed more than any generation."

THE PRESENT

The 'harsher *churbanos*' appear to manifest themselves more potently at certain times than at others. One apparently obvious example would be the events of the Holocaust mentioned above, which seem to have been (at least in part) a materialization of that period's *Churban*. In contrast, the conditions under which we live today seem relatively ideal, at least on the surface. Thankfully, the Jewish people are by and large free, safe, and comfortable, especially in the U.S.A.

However, R' Chatzkel Levenstein (*Ohr Yechezkel on Middos*) explains that the *Churban* is not limited

merely to the material situation. The Jewish people's spiritual state of affairs is likewise a casualty of the *Churban*.

From this standpoint, we can perceive the *Churban* which perpetuates into our days. The signs of its existence are clear: the millions of Jewish souls that have disappeared and continue to disappear into the depths of the great melting pot. The fact that only a small percentage of all Jewish people are aware of and faithful to Hashem and His Torah, is testimony to the extreme severity of this *Churban*.

And that, unfortunately, should be a true source of pain to any concerned Jew.

(In the near future, we will *b'ezras Hashem* discuss ways of attempting to reverse the *Churban* and bring about the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash, speedily in our days.)

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