

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
Sh'muel *ben* Yehoshua *a"h*
a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his *neshamah*

Tisha B'Av and Shabbos: Contradictory, or Compatible?

PARSHAS DEVARIM 5777

(The following is based in large part on a dissertation of the Nesivos Shalom, contained in the Bamidbar volume, p. 207.)

What happens when the ninth of Av – usually observed as a day of fasting and intense mourning for the *Churban* (Destruction [of Yerushalayim and the Beis Hamikdash]) – occurs on Shabbos? This is actually more than just a question of pragmatics; as we shall see, the issue is actually most revealing of the overall nature of mourning for the *Churban*.

The Positions

So, what does indeed happen when the two entities of Shabbos and Tisha B'Av coincide? The issue, of course, is that fasting and mourning – the hallmarks of Tisha B'Av – are forbidden notions on Shabbos. What, then, becomes of Tisha B'Av? The Gemara records a landmark debate that centers around this very question:

רבי... בקטש לעקור... תשעה באב שחל להיות בשבת... אמר רבי הואיל ונדחה ונדחה, ולא רבי...
– “Rebbi sought to abolish Tisha B'Av when it falls out on Shabbos... Rebbi said: Since it is postponed (by Shabbos), let it be suspended entirely. The Sages did not agree” (*Megillah 5b*).

In practice, the *halachah*, of course, follows the opinion of the Sages (*cf. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 552:10*). And so, when Tisha B'Av does fall out on Shabbos – and this fast is not observed on the actual date of the ninth of Av – it is postponed until after Shabbos and observed on the 10th. It is worthwhile, however, to gain an understanding of Rebbi's approach. At first glance, it almost seems that, in his opinion, when this occurs there is simply no Tisha B'Av that year; we don't observe the fast or the mourning on the ninth itself (as it is Shabbos), and Rebbi stated regarding the next day: “*Ho'il v'nidcheh, yidacheh* – Since it has been postponed, let it be suspended entirely.”

But as the Nesivos Shalom proceeds to demonstrate, the matter may not be so simple after all. We may view the issue quite differently with a clearer understanding of the whole notion of *aveilus* (mourning) for the *Churban*. That this exercise is so paramount in the life of a Jew should be most apparent to all, as indicated by the familiar verse: אִם-אֶשְׁכַּחךָ: רִוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכַּח – “If I forget you, Yerushalayim, my right hand should forget (its ability); my tongue should cleave to my palate if I do not remember you, if I do not elevate Yerushalayim to the forefront of my rejoicing” (*Tehillim 137:5,6*). The issue that warrants further examination, however, is what exactly such *aveilus* entails.

Looking Back and Ahead

The Nesivos Shalom explains that *aveilus* for the *Churban* consists primarily of two components. The first relates simply to the overwhelming loss Klal Yisrael suffered as a result. We look back upon the spiritual grandeur that was manifest at the time the Beis Hamikdash stood and the myriad opportunities it presented for attaining closeness with Hashem. Thus, we mourn how all of this has been lost to us and how we are faced with profound decline instead of spiritual elevation.

But then there is another component, one characterized more by a focus on the future. That is, as we consider our status as exiles, we yearn for the day when the Beis Hamikdash will be restored, and we will once again attain supreme closeness with Hashem. This, in fact, is a recurring theme in our daily prayers, as reflected by such supplications as “*V’li Yerushalayim ircha b’rachamim tashuv* – And to Yerushalayim, Your city, may You return with mercy.” And, of course, there is the daily prayer that appears in the Mishnah (*Avos 5:20*):

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁתְּבַנֶּה עִירְךָ בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ.

“May it be Your will, Hashem our G-d, to rebuild the Beis Hamikdash speedily in our days.”

Both of these sentiments – sorrow for the past, and yearning for the future restoration – are, of course, essential components of the endeavor of *aveilus* for the *Churban*. The question that arises, however, is: which is paramount? The Nesivos Shalom understands that this is the central question upon which hinges the disagreement between Rebbi and the Sages regarding Tisha B’Av that falls out on Shabbos.

Rebbi was of the opinion that while both are important, it is the yearning for the restoration that is the primary aspect of *aveilus* for the *Churban*. Furthermore, the form of *aveilus* that is proscribed on Shabbos is only the sorrowful recollections of what was lost; but the hope and pining for the future *does not conflict* with the Shabbos atmosphere. On the contrary; Shabbos is likewise a day of yearning for closeness with Hashem, as indicated by the Shabbos hymn: צְמָאָה נַפְשִׁי לְאֱלֹהִים לְקַל חַי לִבִּי וּבִשְׂרֵי יָרֵנְנוּ אֱלֹהֵי חַי – “My soul thirsts for G-d, for the Living G-d; my heart and flesh sing to the Living G-d.” This is why Rebbi held that in the incidence of a Shabbos Tisha B’Av, no fasting is observed on the following day. It is not that he feels that on such a year the whole observance of Tisha B’Av is simply “deleted”; rather, its primary component is indeed fulfilled -- through yearning and craving for the Beis Hamikdash – even on Shabbos. Thus, as the main aspect of the *aveilus* was addressed, Rebbi saw no need to institute a special fast on the morrow just for the (comparatively) minor aspect of feeling sorrow for the *Churban*.

For their part, the Sages held that the aspect of sorrow for the past cannot be dispensed with; for this likewise contains an element of futuristic yearnings. After all, the purpose of recalling the lost grandeur of the Beis Hamikdash is not simply to wallow in misery; such an exercise would only be counterproductive in terms of service of Hashem. Rather, maintaining a focus on the possibilities of closeness with Hashem that the Beis Hamikdash provided will itself spark a deep longing for its restoration. As such, they felt that even in such a year when Tisha B’Av falls on Shabbos, the component of “looking back” should not be neglected; hence, the fast and intense mourning practices were instituted for the following day. This was done with the full knowledge that these are inherently essential and constructive facets of *aveilus*, in accordance with Chazal’s teaching: כָּל הַמְתַּאֲבֵל עַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם זֹכֶה וְרוֹאֶה בְּשִׂמְחָתָהּ – “Whoever mourns for Yerushalayim will merit (in the future) to behold its rejoicing” (*Ta’anis 30b*).

Mishnas Chayim is brought to you by **Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah**, a network of Torah scholars dedicated to bringing the merits of Mishnah study to the greater Jewish public. Encompassing Mishnah, Gemara, and variety of other services, **Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah** primarily assists mourners interested in acquiring the merit of Torah study for their loved ones.

Contact us at 732-364-7029 or at www.ChevrahLomdeiMishnah.org.