

During his travels, Rebbe Nochum of Chernobyl once stayed at the home of simple, unlearned people. At midnight, Rebbe Nochum awoke, since he was accustomed to say Tikun Chatzos. His host heard him crying and was concerned--perhaps something was amiss? He asked Rebbe Nochum what the problem was and if he could help him. Rebbe Nochum responded; "There was once a Beis HaMikdash and it was destroyed. Ever since then we have been suffering the troubles of exile. I am crying for that. Don't you also want Mashiach to come and the Beis HaMikdash to be rebuilt so that we can return to Jerusalem?" The simple man was unsure how to answer. He told Rebbe Nochum that he first wanted to discuss the idea with his wife. His wife answered, "How can we leave our farm? If we go to Jerusalem, who will tend to our sheep and cattle?" The simple man relayed his wife's decision to Rebbe Nochum. "But it is possible that robbers will come and steal your sheep and cattle," Rebbe Nochum explained to his simple host. "Wouldn't it be wiser to pray for Mashiach to come so we can be freed from all these problems?" After another consultation with his wife, the simple man said, "My wife said to let Mashiach come and take all of the robbers to Jerusalem; we want to stay here."

It is hard for us to imagine what we're missing. The Galus is very long and we have lost contact with what good truly is. But we have to believe that until the Beis HaMikdash is rebuilt, we are missing a major, central factor of our lives. Otherwise we will be like this simple couple who weren't interested in the Geulah. Every Thursday night the Chasam Sofer would say Tikun Chatzos together with the students of his yeshivah. The chazzan was usually the tzaddik, Reb Yosef Sofer, Zt'l (author of *Minchas Shabbos*), who led Tikun Chatzos, verse by verse, with great emotion and with a torrent of tears. One evening, someone else led Tikun Chatzos, but he said it without emotion, and without tears. The Chasam Sofer said that he suspected that this person may be a follower of the false messiah, Shabsai Tzvi (may his name be erased). "Otherwise," he explained, "How could he say Tikun Chatzos without crying immensely and without raising a havoc?"

In our times, unfortunately, we have fallen to the level that many good people have trouble crying and mourning properly when they remember the churban. When someone does cry, people imagine that he is a great tzaddik. Actually, everyone should cry immensely and mourn bitterly when they remember the churban.

Rabbi Shmuel Aurbach, Shlita, wrote, "Chazal established several customs and laws to practice during the Three Weeks in memory of our mourning. However it is obvious that the purpose is to arouse us to remember in our hearts the greatness and beauty that was once ours, and is now lost, and to daven and to hope, with tefillos and teshuvah, that we will once again merit this greatness. How terrible it is to, chas v'shalom, practice the customs of mourning, without any feelings of bereavement in our hearts. It is very severe, only I do not think it is right to write how severe..." Rabbi Yakov Emdin, Z'tl, (*Siddur Beis Yakov*, Tisha b'Av 6-16) says about not mourning properly, "In my eyes, it is the cause for all the terrible destructions and holocausts which occur in all places of our exile. We are chased, and afflicted, and it has not ended yet... and it is because the grief has left our hearts, and we feel comfortable in our lands."

One of the reasons it is hard for people to mourn properly is that we do not know what we are missing. It is similar to that which the Navi tells us (Ezra 3) about the celebrations when the second Beis HaMikdash was built. The youngsters rejoiced and celebrated, but the elders, who

still remembered the greatness of the first Beis HaMikdash cried bitterly, because they recognized how lacking the second Beis HaMikdash was in comparison to the first. Their cries, the Navi tells us, outdid the sounds of the celebrators. Similarly, in our times, we have, Baruch Hashem, wonderful holy kehillas, yeshivos, and kollelim, and everything else that you need to live a respectable and comfortable Jewish life, so we think that everything is fine, and we forget all that we are missing.

Therefore, it is important to develop our imaginations, to arouse ourselves to cry and to mourn properly over the exile and over the destruction. It is actually not very difficult, when we consider all the troubles Yidden suffer in exile, all because of the churban. There are so many tragedies, Hashem should protect us, and they are the result of our exile.

We will also mourn when we remember all the spiritual levels that we are so distant from, because of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. The Vilna Gaon said that he could not imagine how a simple person appeared during the times of the second Beis HaMikdash (and certainly the simple people of the first Beis HaMikdash were even greater). When we read stories of great tzaddikim, and we read about the great levels of Torah and yiras shamayim these people achieved, we often feel that we are not at all able to achieve their greatness. We are distant from all this only because of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. When Hashem will build the third Beis HaMikdash, speedily in our days, we, too, will be able to achieve all those great levels, and even higher levels. When we recognize our present lowly level, in comparison to where we could be and where we should be, we know that we have a reason to mourn.

Rabbi Yohonoson Aibshitz, Z'tl, in his sefer *Yaaras D'vash*, writes, "It is obvious that you should cry unabatedly for the rebuilding of Yerushalayem, and the return of the kingdom of David, when saying the brochah of V'liyurashalyim Ircha, and the brochah of Es Tzemech David in the Shemone Esrei (and at other times). If we don't have Yerushalayim, and the kingdom of David--why do we need life? Surely the heart of anyone with a Jewish soul will break when he remembers Yerushalayem, and the ending of the kingdom of David."

But as we mourn, we must be careful not to lose hope. The Beis HaMikdash will soon be built, and all our troubles will end. In the merit of our mourning, the redemption will come much faster.

The Chofetz Chaim said, "When Rabbi Yosef Ber Solevetick, Zt'l, the Beis Halevi, was called to be the Rav of Brisk, he first refused. But when they told him that thirty thousand Jews were waiting for him to accept the position, he couldn't say 'no' any longer. Similarly, HaKodosh Baruch Hu and Moshiach will not be able to refrain when the generation will request and await his arrival. If we ask for him, he will come."

May we merit seeing this happen, speedily in our days, amen.