



Matot-Masei 5769

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

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Leaving an "Amah by Amah" as a Remembrance of the Destruction of the Temple, and is Hanging a Picture of Yamit Sufficient?

Shut She'eilat Shlomo 2:163

Question: We are building a house and want to know what is the law regarding not plastering or painting "an amah by amah" (half-meter by half-meter) in the house, as a remembrance that the main house - our Temple – is still not built, based on the verse "If I forget You, Jerusalem, may my right hand loss its cunning" (see Tehillim 137:5). In which place and at what height should the amah by amah be left, and should it not be painted at all so that one can see the concrete blocks or can the whitewash or color just not be added or removed?

Insofar as I am a former resident of Yamit (a town in the Sinai Desert which was destroyed when the Sinai was returned to Egypt), it is possible to hang a picture of Yamit inside the "amah by amah" as a remembrance of the destruction?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch says (Orach Chaim 460:1): "When the Temple was destroyed, the Sages of that generation established that we should never build a plastered and molded building like a building of the kings; rather one should plaster his house with clay and with plaster and leave an un-plastered spot of an amah by amah facing the door" (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 460:1). The halachic authorities are surprised why people do not follow this practice, and they defend people's action in various ways. For example, in the past, their houses were extremely beautiful and there was therefore a need for the amah by amah, but in our times, the houses are simple and there is no need. And there are those who are lenient when building a house in order to sell it (Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:11), but there are those who reject this idea (Shut Mishneh Halachot 5:71). The Mishnah Berurah however rejects all of these explanations and rules that we are obligated to fulfill the law (Mishnah Berurah ibid. #2). There is no requirement however to remove the plaster or the clay down to the concrete blocks, and it is sufficient to remove the plaster, the paint or the wallpaper. It is possible to leave the clay, since it is somewhat white and gray and certainly not similar to plaster or paint, and it is a recognizable remembrance of the destruction. The essence is that the amah by amah is recognizable.

The remnant should be across from the door, at the height that when a person enters he will

see it (ibid. #3). It is not sufficient, however, to hang a picture of destruction. While there are those who are lenient regarding painting a black square, and the Mishnah Berurah even rules that we should not protest against one who does this (Sha'ar Ha-Tzion #8), there are those who prohibit it because they hold that it is like a picture and one should not hang a picture, which is a beautiful object. This even applies if one writes "a remembrance of the destruction" within it (Chayei Adam 137:1) or if the picture's contents are sad (Mishnah Berurah ibid.). And the Levush (chapter 560) similarly wrote that one does not fulfill his obligation with an image of the Western Wall. One therefore certainly does not fulfill his obligation with a picture of Yamit. While the destruction of Yamit is truly a tragedy, one should not compare it to the destruction of the Temple, the source of all of our distress and persecutions. In contrast, the destruction of Yamit is only a minor and passing eclipse in the midst of the rising sun of Zion in all its strength, and this broken piece of Yamit will also be healed speedily.



Text Message Responsa

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah," "Olam Ha-Katan" and "Be-Ahavah U-Be-Eumnah." Here's a sample:

Q: If I am set up on a date and it does not work out, is it Lashon Ha-Ra for me to tell the person who set us up what bothered me in order to find a more suitable match in the future?

A: No. It is also a kindness to the person who suggested it in order for him or her to know.

Q: Should I recite Shehechyanu on new eyeglasses?

A: If you are happy.

Q: My husband's parents are pressuring us about something and threatening to cut relations. What should we do?

A: A man therefore leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife.

Q: Is a shirt with "Hashem is the King" holy?

A: Yes. It requires two coverings in the bathroom.

Q: I am a Religious-Zionist. Is it permissible for me to belittle Ultra-Orthodox Rabbis?

A: G-d forbidden. You should certainly honor them but follow your Rabbis.

Q: Is it permissible for me to give out food samples at a store when people may not recite a blessing because of "Do not put a stumbling block before the blind"?

A: It is permissible, since maybe they will recite a blessing and it is for a livelihood.

Q: My uncle married a non-Jew and they are having a circumcision by a doctor for their son. Is it permissible to attend? If I do not attend they will be insulted.

A: Do not go. It gives legitimacy. They do not have a monopoly on being insulted – we are also insulted by his action.

Q: Is it permissible to listen to songs with Torah verses while I daven?

A: No. One must daven with a trembling of holiness.

Q: Do I have to give ma'aser from money from babysitting?

A: Yes, from all income.

Q: I have gone out with a young man a few times but it is always on my initiative. Should I continue?

A: Yes. While it is a shortcoming on his part that he does not take the initiative, a person is judged by the majority of his actions. It is worthwhile to talk to him about it.

Q: Is there value in visiting "Kivrei Tzadikim"(the graves of the righteous)?

A: Yes, but Torah learning and acts of kindness are preferable.

Q: How can we hide our heads in the sand and say that everything is fine in the State and army?!

A: You are correct, everything is not fine, but everything is also not bad. We rejoice and strengthen that which is good and are hurt over that which is not good and try to fix it.

Stories of Rabbenu — Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Humility

Our Rabbi emphasized that humility is the most important of all traits (Avodah Zarah 20b), and it is related to Moshe Rabbenu (Bemidbar 12:3) and cleaving to the Land of Israel, as it says: "And the humble will inherit the Land" (Tehillim 37:11).

Out of his great humility, our Rabbi hid his greatness from most people, even from the yeshiva students who did not participate in his classes. His external appearance was not exceptional and his talks lacked the polish of an orator. Only one who was close to him was able to recognize the greatness of his character traits and Torah learning.

The municipality of Jerusalem decided to honor Rabbi Aryeh Levin with the title "Cherished Citizen of Jerusalem," but he refused on account of his great humility. He said that he was not worthy. They next turned to our Rabbi to honor him with this title, but he also refused on account of his great humility. They next turned to Rabbi Shalom Natan Ra'anan Kook, son-in-law of Rav Kook and our Rabbi's brother-in-law, and to everyone's great surprised he accepted. His close relatives were so surprised because of his great humility and they asked him: "Why did you decide to accept this honor when our Rabbi and Reb Aryeh declined?" The great Rav humbly responded: "If I would have refused, they would have placed me on the same level as our Rabbis, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah and Reb Aryeh, and they would think that I am as humble as them. I know that I have not reached that level. I therefore acted this way, so they would not be mistaken. (Ha-Rav Yitzchak Dadon, "Nishkafa Kemo Shachar" p. 135)

A student asked our Rabbi a halachic question relating to a custom of Jerusalem. Our Rabbi turned to Reb Shimon, the yeshiva's secretary and said to him: It seems to me that Jerusalem's custom is such-and-such. Is that not so? (Ha-Rav Aharon Gelik)

One of our Rabbi's students wanted to know the parameters of the mitzvah of serving Torah scholars. When he brought our Rabbi a cup of tea, he asked: Is this considered serving a Torah scholar? Our Rabbi responded to him: A doubtful Torah scholar (referring to himself), [therefore] a doubtful serving.

Similarly, a student once saw a tiny piece of dust on our Rabbi's hat and he pointed it out to our Rabbi, since it is known that it is not proper for a Torah scholar to have a stain on his

clothing (Shabbat 114a). Our Rabbi responded: A doubtful Torah scholar, a doubtful speck, a doubtful (obligation to wear a) hat...



Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Crossing legs during davening

Q: Is there an issue crossing one's legs during davening?

A: It is forbidden according to the Zohar but we do not make rulings based on the Zohar. The issue is that one needs to sit in "cherdat kodesh" - a trembling of holiness and it is certainly preferable not to sit with crossed legs. If a person must sit that way, it must be with the condition that it is modest, not prominent and not as if one is sitting on a sofa or in a cafe.

*From Rav Aviner's Commentary on Birkat Ha-Mazon,
entitled Shir Ha-Ma'a lot*

And build Jerusalem, the Holy City, speedily in our days

"Speedily in our days." And yet we know that redemption comes "slowly, slowly"? The expression "speedily" points to the powerful inner desire to build Jerusalem. Even if ages and epochs pass until the building of the Temple, there is a huge difference between a person who lives with anticipation for its building and a person who is apathetic. The essence of this burning thirst is the worship of Hashem. Our Sages say that we do not know when the Messiah will come, and one must await his arrival every day, as it is written: "Though he tarries, await him." They ask: Perhaps we anticipate his coming, but Hashem has no plan in this area? The verse therefore says: "And therefore Hashem will wait to be gracious to you and therefore He will be exalted to have mercy on you" (Yeshayahu 30:18). Rashi explains: "Hashem will wait, He Himself waits and desires for the Messiah to come." If so, our Sages ask: If we are waiting and He is waiting, what delays his coming? - The attribute of justice delays it (because we are not yet worthy of it). This is the concept of reward and punishment. But since the attribute of justice delays it, then for what purpose are we waiting? To receive a reward, as it says: Praiseworthy are those who wait for him (ibid.). Praiseworthy are those who await the coming of the Messiah, praiseworthy are those who await the building of Jerusalem (Sanhedrin 97b).

The truth is, however, that the Redemption did not arrive slowly but with considerable speed. Relating to the verse, "And you shall speedily perish completely from off the Land" after sinning, our Sages did an accounting that "speedily" was 850 years (Sanhedrin 38a and Rashi to Devarim 4:25). Since the beginning of the return to Zion, just over one hundred years ago, we have already traversed an extremely long path. Wonder of wonders! This is called speedily! Were our mouths as full of song as the sea we still could not sufficiently thank Hashem.



Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

Everything by Mutual Agreement

We are surprised: how did the great man Rabbi Akiva disappeared from his house for 12 years to go learn in yeshiva and leave his wife alone? The answer is simple: she wanted him to do so. Furthermore: she sent him there. She married him based on this condition. The proof: when he returned after 12 years, she said that if he asked her opinion, she would be happy if he went for another 12 years (Ketubot 62b-63a). We thus see that everything was based on mutual agreement.

In those days, the yeshivot were very far away, and the average student disappeared for six years, the weak ones for three years and the strong ones - like Rabbi Akiva – for 12 years. And everything was decided upon by mutual agreement.

It once happened that one student was deep in learning and forgot to go home at the agreed upon time. His wife waited and waited and cried. He then fell from the roof of the yeshiva and died. A tragic ending which puts things into perspective: one should devote their soul to learning Torah, but only through mutual agreement. And one should commit himself to Torah at the expense of many other important things, but only through mutual agreement. You are not the only decision maker, you need to decide together.

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim P.O.B. 1076 Jerusalem 91009 Tel.02-6284101 Fax.02-6261528

www.ateret.org.il To subscribe, send e-mail to: mororly@bezeqint.net

