The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן תקע"ט סעיף א'-ג'

Overview

Siman 579 Seif 1:

The procedure for *davening* on each one of the final 7 fasts is as follows. We take the *aron* to the city square and everyone gathers there dressed in sackcloth. Ash is placed on the *aron*, and the *sefer* Torah in order to increase crying and subdue their hearts. A member of the community takes ash and places it on the heads of the *nasi* and *av bais din* in the place where their *tefillin* rests so that they should be humiliated and thereby repent. Each person then places ash on his own head. Someone who is elderly and wise stands while everyone else sits. If there is no elderly, wise person they stand a wise person. If there is not even a wise person they choose someone of stature. He should give words of rebuke (that will inspire them to repent), **"My brothers, it is not sackcloth and fasting that is significant, rather it is the repentance and good deeds as we know that when it came to the people of Ninveh, it does not state that Hashem observed their sackcloth and fasting, rather it says that Hashem saw their ways. Moreover, the Prophets say, קרעו לבבכם ואל בגדיכם. He should also add to these concepts in accordance with his will until he subdues their hearts and they repent fully. After these words of rebuke they *daven*. They should choose a *shaliach tzibbur* who is fit to *daven* during these fasts and if the one who offered rebuke is capable of *davening* he should do so but if not they should choose someone else. Who is fit to *daven* on these days? Someone accustomed to *davening*, accustomed to read Tanach, has young children but nothing to feed them and work to perform in a field. He should not have children, members of his household, relatives or associates who are sinners; rather his house should be free of transgressions. He may not have had a bad reputation when he was younger. He should be humble, liked by people, can carry a tune and possess a sweet voice. If someone elderly possesses all of these traits that is beautiful but if he is not elderly but possesses the other traits he should *daven*.**

- They remove the *sefer* Torah together with the *aron*. (M.B. 1)
- If they cannot go out to the street there is reason for them to *daven* somewhere other than the *shul*. (M.B. 2)
- The reason they do not place the ash personally is to have others humiliate them. (M.B. 5)
- Some explain "men of stature" as referring to one to whom others will listen and will soften their hearts. Others explain that חכם refers to one who was appointed a leader in the community and a person of stature is one who is a Torah scholar or someone fit to be appointed leader in the community. (M.B. 7)
- When *davening* on *erev* Rosh Chodesh in those places where words of rebuke are issued it should be done before *davening* so that they could then *daven* with a broken heart. (M.B. 8)

Halacha Highlight

Placing ashes on the *sefer torah*

Shulchan Aruch Siman 579 Seif 1

ועל גבי ספר תורה

And on the *sefer torah*

Shulchan Aruch (סע' א') presents a description of the procedure for *davening* on the last set of 7 fasts that are observed when it does not rain. He explains that the *aron kodesh* is removed from the *bais haknesses* and placed in the town square. The people gather together wearing sackcloth as a means of expressing that they are considered in the eyes of Hashem like animals that are covered with sackcloth (מ"ב סק"ג). After the arrival of the *tzibbur,* ash, as opposed to dirt, is taken and placed on the *aron kodesh* as well as the *sefer torah* that was taken together with the *aron kodesh* (מ"ב סק"א). Interestingly, the Gemara only mentions placing ash on the *aron kodesh* and it is Rambam who adds that it is also placed on the *sefer torah*. Kesef Mishnah (פ"ד מהל' תענית ה"א) writes that he does not know the source for Rambam's addition that ash is also placed on the *sefer torah*. Ben Yehoyada (תענית ט"ז. ד"ה א"ר זירא) suggests that Rambam's intent is that it should be placed on the *aron kodesh* where the *sefer torah* stands so that some of the ash will fall onto the *sefer torah*.

Sefer Yafeh L'Leiv (ח"ב סק"א) points to the Targum on the *pasuk* in Megillas Esther (פ"ד פסו' א') which writes, "At that time they removed the *aron* to the gates of Shushan and they took with it the *sefer torah* wrapped in its cloth and rubbed ash on it." Here is an explicit source for Rambam's ruling that ash is also placed on the *sefer torah*. Sefas Emes (לגמ' תענית ט"ו. ד"ה ונותנין) points to the Yerushlami (תענית פ"ב ה"א) that interprets the *pasuk* (Yoel 2:16) יצא חתן מחדרו וכלה מחופתה as follows: יצא חתן מחדרו – this refers to the *aron kodesh* and וכלה מחופתה— this refers to the *sefer torah*, thereby indicating that what is done to the *aron kodesh* is also done to the *sefer torah*.

Siman 579 Seif 2:

The order of *davening* as well as the six *berachos* that are added and the blasts that are sounded are explained well in the Tur.

Siman 579 Seif 3:

On these seven fasts, after *davening* the people go out to the cemetery and cry and supplicate there as if to say, "You will die as they did if you do not repent from your ways" (Accordingly, if there are no Jewish graves they should visit gentile graves).

- Magen Avrohom notes that according to the rationale that the deceased should *daven* on behalf of those suffering they should not visit the graves of gentiles besides the concern for the idols that are commonly there. (M.B. 14)