

You shall break apart their altars... You shall obliterate their names... You shall not do this to Hashem, your G-d. (12:3,4)

A remembrance of the idols that once dotted the country should not remain in the Land. *Chazal* understood that Moshe *Rabbeinu* had no need to admonish the nation not to destroy the *Bais HaMikdash* or the *mikdash me'at*, smaller representation of the Temple, the *shuls*; rather, he was exhorting the people not to burn incense whenever they so desired. This was a Canaanite practice. Alternatively, Jews are prohibited from erasing Hashem's Name or destroying a stone from the *Mizbayach*, Altar. Last, we are enjoined to act appropriately, so that our sins not catalyze the destruction of the *Bais HaMikdash*.

The idea that a Jew would erase Hashem's Name or actively destroy a stone from the *Mizbayach* is difficult to accept. We all know Jews whose relationship with their religion of birth is, at best, tenuous. To come across a Jew who would purposely, knowingly, erase Hashem's Name or destroy a part of the *Mizbayach* is farfetched. The *Mizbayach* has a definite aura and to even think that a Jew would lift his hand to Hashem's Name is inconceivable. While we have had a few self-loathing Jews who were intentionally capable of the unthinkable – very few would consciously do so.

The *Imrei Emes*, *zl*, explains the concept of *Mechikas Hashem* in a novel manner. Every Jew has within him a *chelek Elokah mi'Maal*, the *neshamah*, soul, which is a portion from Hashem Above. In other words, we all have a Heavenly component within us. This is Hashem's Name, which is his life source. We are enjoined not to erase/debase that Heavenly component through our spiritual shortcomings. The *Baal HaTanya*, *zl*, was wont to interpret the *pasuk* in *Yeshayah* (55:7), *Veyashov el Hashem v'yirachameihu*”; He shall return to Hashem and He will accept/take pity on him,” as an exhortation for man to take pity on the *chelek Elokah miMaal*, Heavenly component within him, and not damage it.

This is a powerful adjuration. We all have a part of the Almighty within us. Why taint it? While we may not think twice about how our behavior affects us personally, what about our responsibility to Hashem? Our power source is our *neshamah*. The least that we can do is to take “pity” on it by protecting it from disgrace.