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Renovation Work during the Three Weeks

Question: I took down a wall between my living room and dining room and moved it to extend the dining room. Am I allowed to continue construction during the Three Weeks? Also, am I allowed to pick out wallpaper and carpeting but not have them installed until after the three weeks?

Answer: The prohibition of purchasing and building applies during the Nine Days, not all of the Three Weeks.¹ Some Acharonim extend the prohibition to the entire Three Weeks, and we try to conform to that practice.² However, if it would cause a significant inconvenience or a loss to delay the purchase or building, then one can certainly be lenient.³

Regarding what type of building is prohibited, the gemara⁴ distinguishes between “building of happiness”, like preparing a home for a wedding, which is forbidden, and preventing a wall from falling, which is permitted. There is a machloket amongst the Rishonim about cases in between these extremes.

The Mishna Berura⁵ distinguishes between the needs of a home and beautification or extra, unnecessary improvements. Thus, one should not plan to expand his dining room or paint during the Three Weeks. However, if one started before the Three Weeks and the work dragged on, then he can finish the job if it is difficult to stop in the middle.⁶

It is certainly less of a problem to buy wallpaper than to have it installed because it is the installation that brings happiness.⁷ Installation may even require a b'racha of Shehecheyanu (there are many customs on the matter), which is forbidden (by some authorities) during the Three Weeks.⁸

Eretz Hemdah gives a participatory Zoom class - Behind the Scenes with the Vebbe Rebbe - an analytical look at the sources, methodology, and considerations behind our rulings, with Rav Daniel Mann. Contact us to join - info@eretzhemdah.org

¹ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 551:2.

² Bi'ur Halacha ad loc.

³ The Mishna Berura 551:11 and Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim III:80 say that in such cases there is room for leniency even during the Nine Days.

⁴ Megilla 5b.

⁵ 551:12.

⁶ See Piskei Teshuvot 551:8.

⁷ See Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim III:82.

⁸ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 551:17.