

## Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חיזוק (ברכות לב:) - שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כחו (רש"י)

A *Sichah* from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita*, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez • *Parashas Vayikra 5780*

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### The Purpose of World Calamities Is to Arouse Klal Yisrael

Chazal say (*Yevamos* 63a), “The world is struck with calamity solely for Klal Yisrael.” That is, when there are world tragedies the purpose is to bring Klal Yisrael to repentance. The Gemara cites a *pasuk* (*Tzefaniah* 3: 6,7) “I cut down nations; their towers have become desolate, I have destroyed their streets... I said, ‘Surely you will fear Me, you will accept *mussar*.’” That is, we must gain *yiras Shamayim* from this, take *mussar* and repent. This is the purpose of calamities that strike the world, the nations.

The tragedy of this virus began quite a while ago in a distant country. At that time, it was publicized that the plague broke out in that country — calamity struck, and it was for Klal Yisrael, so that we’d wake up and do *teshuvah* for all matters that required repentance.

In the end, it came here to Eretz Yisrael. Apparently, we did not do what we should have done. Who? I don’t know. Not everyone; it could be that there are those that are innocent. But in the *tzibbur* as a whole, some people that should have woken up did not, and therefore it reached Eretz Yisrael. Pay attention and accept the *mussar*!

There’s another *pasuk* (*Yeshayahu* 42:25): “And it blazed upon them all around and they didn’t know; and it burned in them and they did not take it to heart.” Sometimes this happens: there are blazes and fires, and the person acts as if he does not know and it does not have an effect on him at all. And then it burns in him — the fire’s already burning in him! And he still doesn’t take it to heart. **That’s the extent of the *yetzer hara*’s nature. Even if the fire burns in him, he doesn’t think he has to do *teshuvah*; he thinks it’s just a coincidence.**

### Every Person Is Obligated to Examine His Deeds

The present situation must cause every single one of us to wake up. Everyone must search and examine his deeds — *Mah zos asah Elokim lanu*, “What is this that HaKadosh Baruch Hu has brought upon us?”

Chazal said (*Berachos* 5a), “If a person sees afflictions coming upon him, he should search his deeds. If he searched and didn’t find [a reason], he should attribute it

to *bittul Torah*.” You would think, if there is *bittul Torah*, why is it considered that he searched and did not find?

The *mefarshim* explained (*Nefesh HaChaim Shaar* 4, chap. 29) that in every sin and punishment, one is obligated to find the *middah k’neged middah*, and if one doesn’t find it, it means there is *bittul Torah*. *Bittul Torah* is the reason for all kinds of difficulties, and it’s possible that there is a tiny amount of *bittul Torah*, and that’s why all these difficulties and *yissurim* occurred.

### Bittul Torah Due to Bittul Torah

In this case, we don’t know what the *middah k’neged middah* is, but we see that there is a lot of *bittul Torah*, due to the precautions we must take. There are a lot of rules and directives how to be careful and we must keep to these rules. We should not have more than ten in a room, we should spread out, and this is something that even *cheders* and *yeshiva ketanahs* should implement. This causes a lot of *bittul Torah*, and if there is *bittul Torah*, it’s a sign that there was *bittul Torah* previously. As a result, Heaven sent us *bittul Torah*, *middah k’neged middah*.

This is the meaning of “he should attribute it to *bittul Torah*,” because *bittul Torah* is something very delicate. Even a tiny amount of *bittul Torah* is extremely grave.

Therefore, the solution is to increase more Torah learning, each person according to his ability, as much as he can. Indeed, the Rosh writes in *Bava Basra daf* 8, that even someone who works for a living, if he learns as much as he can, he is on the level of “*Rabbanan*.” On the other hand, if someone learns a lot, but wastes a little bit of time, he is not called “*Rabbanan*.” Every person can check himself if he can increase more Torah learning, and he should increase according to his ability. That’s regarding *bittul Torah*.

On the other hand, there are other difficulties aside from the resultant *bittul Torah*. Chazal already said (*Shabbos* 55a), “There is no death without sin (עוון), and no *yissurim* without sin (חטא).” Regarding death, sin is mentioned, which denotes unintentional sin. Even Adam HaRishon died for the sin he committed unintentionally — indeed, the *sefarim* explain that he made a mistake (see *Michtav Me’Eliyahu* vol. 2, p. 146). But there are no *yissurim* without intentional sin. For a sin committed inadvertently, there are no *yissurim*, so if there are

difficulties and *yissurim*, it's a sign that there is some intentional sin, and one must investigate his deeds and rectify them.

### **Adherence to Health Guidelines, Bitachon, and Tefillah**

Practically speaking, everyone must adhere to the guidelines, for example, regarding davening with a minyan must be according to the guidelines. If there are too many people in one place, this is *mazik*, harmful: he is harmed himself and he harms others! *Minyanim* must follow the rules and have only ten people in each minyan. Everyone has to go according to the rules and follow the precautions. Also regarding where to learn, one must follow the guidelines. If too many people learn in the same room, it is dangerous and harmful.

*B'ezras Hashem*, if we follow the guidelines, that should be enough, because there is *middas harachamim*, and the *yeshuah* will come soon. We must do what we can, and we must have *bitachon* that there will be *middas harachamim*. We must not become anxious and fearful; we must believe that everything is in Hashem's hands, and whatever the Merciful One does is for the good. We just must follow the guidelines, not to become harmed and not to harm others, and that way, there will be *siyatta d'Shemaya* that everything will be good and all the difficulties will pass.

*L'maaseh*, we must beg for *rachamim*. *Middas harachamim* exists and we must ask for mercy and daven for the *yeshuah*. **The Maharsha in Kiddushin daf 29 writes that *tefillah* is not a miracle! Bringing about a**

***yeshuah* through davening is not a miracle, it is *derech hateva*. If one davens, there is a *yeshuah*.**

### **Help Maintain a Calm Atmosphere at Home**

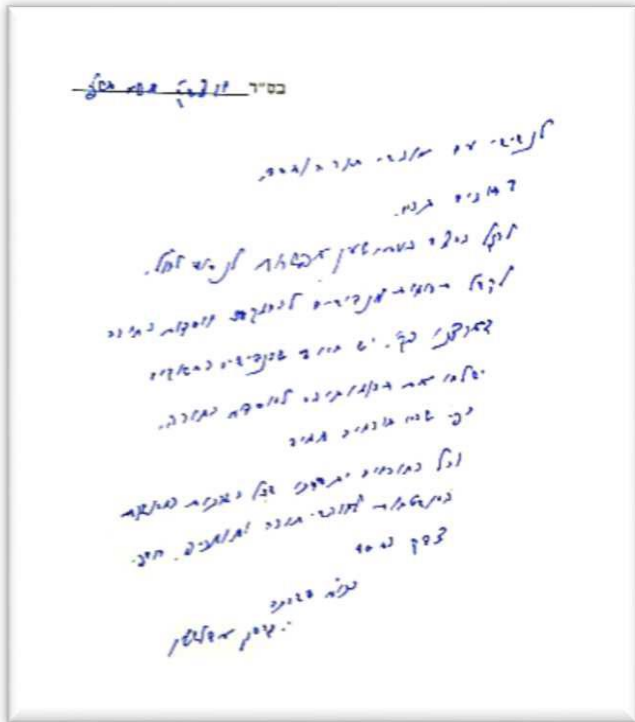
It's all necessary to help at home, the children are home and it's a necessity to help maintain a calm atmosphere at home. Even those who are learning must help — this is not *bittul Torah*; it is a necessity! This is one of the household needs, and this is Torah that includes *chesed* (see *Sukkah* 49). It's important to be involved in Torah as much as possible, but it must be together with *chesed*. Don't say *Ein li elah Torah*, "I only have Torah" (see *Yevamos* 109), because the Torah obligates us to do other things as well, there must be a pleasant atmosphere at home, both your children and your wife must feel good. The Torah obligates this.

*B'ezras Hashem*, we will actually fulfill whatever we just spoke about, and then, together with *tefillah* and *bitachon*, *b'ezras Hashem*, the *yeshuah* will be very soon.

So, as we mentioned, we must adhere to all the health guidelines, which have already been publicized. We must obey them and not treat them lightly. If we make light of them, not only will this harm others, it will also harm ourselves, and it's not simple. This is the awakening of *chizuk* with *bitachon* that with Hashem's help the *yeshuah* will come!



## Letters from Rabbeinu *shlit"l* In Response to the Plague



Bs"l 19 Adar 5780

At a time when we need Heavenly mercy to protect our nation's health, it is surely fitting to strengthen ourselves in Torah learning, to be careful not to speak *lashon hara* or *rechilus*, to strengthen ourselves in the *middah* of humility, and to judge others favorably.

Chazal have already said (*Yoma* 28b): "Since the days of our forefathers, yeshivos have always existed." And they also said (*Shabbos* 119b): "The world only exists for the Torah learning of the young children." This is the greatest protection against the destroyer, to prevent it from entering Klal Yisrael's homes.

In any case, *chamira sakanta me'issura*, "danger is more severe than an actual prohibition," and we all must exert much effort regarding matters that require caution, such as to split up the groups of *lomdei Torah* and to leave space between one group and the next. Additionally, we must make sure that study rooms and *batei medrash* are properly ventilated, and we must appoint supervisors to uphold necessary standards of hygiene. And anyone who has even the slightest doubt that he or any of his family members may be sick, or even if according to the health guidelines, he must be quarantined, he must distance himself from the *beis medrash* and let him not be guilty later on. This all falls into the category of "*tenai kodem l'maaseh*" — these conditions must be met before trying to fulfill mitzvos. The *roshei yeshivos* and principals of *cheders* must implement these guidelines.

Of course, we must awaken ourselves to *yiras Shamayim* and *teshuvah*, as Chazal said (*Yevamos* 63a), "The world is struck with calamity solely for Klal Yisrael." We must strengthen our *emunah*, and instead trust in HaKadosh Baruch Hu Who watches over His creations, and remember that the virus cannot harm anyone if it hasn't been decreed first Above. May the *zechus* of the Torah and all the *chizukim* stand by us to protect us and bring a *yeshuah*.

Chaim Kanievsky

Y. Gershon Edelstein

Bs"l Motzaei Shabbos Kodesh Tisa 5780

Due to the present situation, that as a result of the danger it is not possible to learn Torah in a large group in one place, we need great Heavenly mercy.

Therefore, it is fitting to mightily strengthen ourselves to avoid *bittul Torah*. Every single person should make efforts in every opportunity to learn Torah, him and his family members, young and old alike. As is known, the Torah learning of young children has great *zechuyos* to nullify harsh decrees.

Additionally, it is fitting to be extremely careful about not speaking *lashon hara*, and only to judge people favorably.

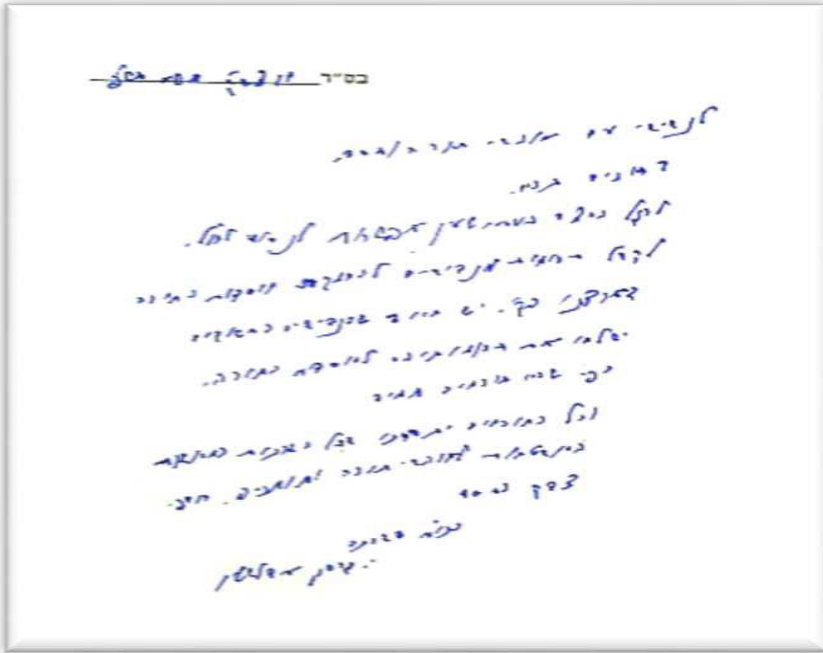
So too, daven and beg for mercy that the danger pass quickly.

Y. Gershon Edelstein

Due to the present situation when it is impossible to travel and fundraise for Torah institutions in Eretz Yisrael, the philanthropists have an obligation to send their usual donations to the Torah institutions.

May all the donors be blessed with the multiple *berachos* promised to those who love Torah and support it, who pursue *tzedakah* and *chesed*.

With blessing,  
Y. Gershon Edelstein



**From Rav Gershon Edelstein's Address Two Months Ago When the Plague Started**

Chazal say (*Yevamos* 63a), "The world is struck with calamity solely for Klal Yisrael." That is, when there are world tragedies the purpose is to bring Klal Yisrael to repentance. The Gemara cites a *pasuk* (*Tzefaniah* 3: 6,7) "I cut down nations; their towers have become desolate, I have destroyed their streets... I said, 'Surely you will fear Me, you will accept *mussar*.'" That is, we must gain *yiras Shamayim* from this, for world tragedies are from Hashem. We are *maaminin bnei maaminim*, and if there are Heavenly calamities, we see that there is *hashgachah pratis*, and there is most probably a sin that preempted this tragedy. As a result of the tragedy, we also gain *yiras Shamayim* and we fear sin and understand that we must do *teshuvah*.

**In the past, the calamities were floods, earthquakes, and volcanos, but nowadays, I heard that there's a different kind of tragedy: a plague has broken out in a very distant country, a horrific plague and they don't know how to stop it. Tens of millions of people are in danger. When a world tragedy occurs, its purpose is to cause Klal Yisrael to strengthen their mitzvah observance and learn a *mussar* lesson.**

And what do the words "for Klal Yisrael" mean? If Heaven demands *chizuk*, from whom are they demanding it? Maran the Brisker Rav *zt"l* said that they don't demand improvements from *tinokos shenishbu*, as those who are not connected to Torah and *mitzvos* are like babies who were taken captive and nothing is expected of them. When they [sin], it is unintentional (*shogeig*) or because they were forced (*oness*). Demands cannot be made of them — the demands are made of *bnei Torah*! We are *maaminim bnei maaminim*, and we are expected to take *chizuk* from these episodes and do *teshuvah*, as the *pasuk* states (*Eichah* 3:40): "Let us search out and examine our ways, and let us return to Hashem." We should take heed to strengthen ourselves in all areas.

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The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va'ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein's home.