

Darkei HaChizuk

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

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

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Beg for Mercy for Sick People and Healthy People

The present situation — both here and in the entire world — is that there are many sick people *Rachmana litzlan*, elderly people and young people. There are so many sick people, in many places across the world. Even if someone is healthy, he cannot be sure that he'll continue to be healthy. Even the healthy people are uncertain.

We must think about it: *Mah zos asah Elokim lanu*, "What is this that HaKadosh Baruch Hu has brought upon us?" After all, everything is in Heaven's hands. What is the reason for this? Which sin brought this plague upon us?

First of all, it's an obligation to know and believe that everything is in *Shamayim's* hands; there are no coincidences! If someone is sick, it is not a coincidence; if someone is healthy, it's not a coincidence either. Everything is in Hashem's hands, *hashgachah pratis*. Whatever happens to the person himself, and to others — to each and every person — everything occurs due to *hashgachah pratis*.

There is a *chiyuv* to beg for mercy in our prayers, not just for himself, but for every single person — for healthy people and sick people. That the healthy people should remain healthy, and the sick people should have a complete recovery. This is a total *chiyuv*, *v'ahavta lereiacha kamocho* — *kamocho*, as yourself! **Do you want to be healthy? Are you asking for mercy for yourself? Ask for mercy for others as well! *V'ahavta lereiacha kamocho!***

This a great, grave obligation. Anyone who believes *b'emunah sheleimah* that everyone is in Hashem's hands, it obligates him to beg for mercy for every single person, for the healthy ones and for the sick ones, *Rachmana litzlan*, that they should be healthy.

Chazal have already told us (*Yevamos* 89a), "There are three signs in this nation: they are merciful, bashful, and perform good deeds." The trait of mercy is ingrained in Klal Yisrael's nature. A Jewish person who doesn't have mercy on others is acting against his nature! If so, this is literally cruelty, because his nature is to have mercy and he's not having mercy. We must have mercy and beg for mercy, in line with Klal Yisrael's nature of "*rachmanim, bayshanim, v'gomlei chasadim*."

The Obligation to Examine His Deeds

Chazal said (*Berachos* 5a), "If a person sees afflictions coming upon him, he should *search* (יפשפש) his deeds." In another place, they said (*Eiruvin* 13a) "he should *feel*

(ימשמש) his deeds." The *Mesillas Yesharim*, chap. 3, explains what these two terms mean: יפשפש is simply to check: what are my good deeds, and what are my bad deeds. ימשמש is to check whether his good deeds were performed with *shleimus*, for there are good deeds that if one "feels them out," he'll realize that they weren't performed with *shleimus*.

It's written (*Koheles* 7:20), "For there is no righteous man on this land who does good and does not sin." The *mefarshim* explain that someone can perform good deeds, but within his good deeds, there is some sin; the *shleimus* of his act is not intact, and one must "feel" his deeds to check for this.

In *Berachos* they said, "If he searched and didn't find [a reason], he should attribute it to *bittul Torah*." That is, if he couldn't find a sin that would explain why he was struck with *yissurim*, he should attribute it to *bittul Torah*. We must explain, why is this called "searching and not finding"? After all, *bittul Torah* is a sin, so if he has *bittul Torah*, he has "found" the sin of *bittul Torah*.

The *mefarshim* explained (*Nefesh HaChaim Shaar* 4, chap. 29) that in every sin, the punishment is *middah k'neged middah*. If a person receives *yissurim*, he must figure out the *middah k'neged middah* — for which *middah* was he punished. If he finds a *middah k'neged middah*, then he knows which sin he must do *teshuvah* for, and he can repent. But if he searches and doesn't find a *middah k'neged middah*, then he should attribute the suffering to *bittul Torah*. *Bittul Torah* is the reason for all kinds of difficulties, since *Talmud Torah k'neged kulam*, "Torah study is equal to everything," so too *bittul Torah* is also equal to everything.

Bittul Torah for Himself and Others

What is *bittul Torah*? Each person according to his abilities, if he can increase in *esek haTorah* — each person according to his situation and his possibilities, as much as he can, he should increase. But he can't do more than his abilities. Sometimes, there is *bittul Torah* that causes others *bittul Torah* and disturbs their learning.

Then there's also the opposite. Someone can merit the *zechus* of Torah by helping others learn, as they said (*Berachos* 17a): How do women merit? By helping their sons and husbands learn Torah. One who helps, it's as if he learns!

But if someone can help and does not, it turns out that he committed *bittul Torah* by not helping. And if so, he is

actually guilty of *bittul Torah*, and he has the sin of *bittul Torah*.

We've already mentioned that the present situation has caused a lot of *bittul Torah*, for it's impossible for the *tzibbur* to be together. And if there's *bittul Torah*, it's a sign that there was *bittul Torah* previously, and that's why Heaven brought down more *bittul Torah*, *middah k'neged middah*. If the punishment is *bittul Torah*, it's a sign that the sin of *bittul Torah* is present.

Nullifying Heaven's Honor and the King's Glory

There's another thing we see: davening in a *tzibbur* — *b'rov am hadras melech* — “The King's glory is when many of the nation is together” (*Mishlei* 14:28). Now there is no “*b'rov am*,” there's no King's glory and no Heaven's honor. This too, is a sign of *middah k'neged middah* that we aren't able to act with *kevod Shamayim*. **In *batei knesses* and *batei midrash* it is forbidden to speak *devarim beteilim*, and we must treat the place with the honor fitting for holy places. If we don't act according to the obligation of honoring sacred places, then the place is not holy, and it cannot serve as a *beis knesses* for a large group of people. And there is no “*b'rov am hadras Melech*.”**

This is similar to what is written in *Sukkah* (28-29) that if rain falls on the holiday, and it's not possible to sit in the *sukkah*, it's like a servant who came to pour a cup for his *rav*, and the *rav* spills a pitcher in his face and tells him: Your service is not wanted, *Rachmana litzlan*.

Chazal said (*Avos* 6:11): Whatever Hashem created in His world, He only created for His honor, as it says, “Whatever is called in My name and My honor, *barasiv, yatzeitiv, af asisiv* — ‘I created it, formed it, and even made it.’” That is, all the worlds, *Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah*, were all created to bring honor to *Shamayim*.

And now we are lacking *kevod Shamayim*, and if we lack *kevod Shamayim* and *hadras Melech*, it's a sign that there is *middah k'neged middah*. **If the ability to increase *kevod Shamayim* has been taken from us, it's a sign that we are already lacking in the *mitzvah* of *kevod Shamayim* and we didn't fulfill it as we should have.**

Middas HaDin Affects *Tzaddikim* As Well

We see that *middas hadin* hits *tzaddikim* as well, true *tzaddikim*, as they said (*Bava Kama* 60a), “Since permission was given to the destroyer, *chas v'shalom*, it does not distinguish between a *tzaddik* and a *rasha*.” There is *middas hadin* in *tzaddikim*, *Rachmana litzlan*.

Pain Is for Man's Good; So That He Will Repent

There is something else that not everyone is aware of the gravity of the sin: *bein adam lachaveiro*. For example, causing someone pain, or continuing to be angry at someone who caused me pain, *ona'as devarim*, or holding on to anger at someone who hurt me with *ona'as devarim*, all *bein adam lachaveiro*.

The truth is, if someone was harmed by someone else, *Rachmana litzlan*, well, everything is in Hashem's hands, and *Shamayim* decreed that he should suffer pain. It would be appropriate for him to think about why he deserved this pain — could it be *yissurim shel ahavah*? It doesn't make sense that he is such a great *tzaddik* and on such a high level that *Shamayim* is giving him *yissurim shel ahavah*. And in any case, if it is *yissurim shel ahavah*, he certainly shouldn't be upset at the one who caused him pain, because it is *yissurim shel ahavah* which increase his reward in *Olam Haba*.

But it makes sense that it is not *yissurim shel ahavah*, but rather, because he has sinned. The suffering is because of the sin, and if the other person would not have caused him pain, someone else would have caused him pain, for the sin is what caused the pain. What's the purpose of the sin causing him pain? So that he should do *teshuvah*. This is atonement, but the atonement only occurs with *teshuvah*. He must understand and recognize that his suffering came as the result of a sin, and he must repent. He must search his deeds and “feel” his deeds.

It turns out that the person who caused me pain did me favor, because this way I will do *teshuvah* and will gain atonement. If every single person makes an accounting from the day of his *bar mitzvah*, he will surely find some sins that he must repent for.

Overlooking Wrongs Committed Against You

Chazal told us about something very wonderful and important (*Rosh Hashanah* 17a): Whoever is *maavir al middosav*, overlooks wrongs and personal slights, all his sins (*pesha'im*) are overlooked.” If someone is flexible and forgiving, and lets things slide, even if he has sins, Heaven overlooks them, *middah k'neged middah*.

The *mefarshim* explain that there are three levels of sin: *chet, avon, and pesha*. *Chet* is an unintentional sin, *avon* is an intentional sin, and *pesha* is a sin committed out of rebelliousness, worse than an intentional sin. If someone is *maavir al middosav*, he is forgiven even for these *pesha'im*! *Middah k'neged middah*.

In *Shaarei Teshuvah* (1:28), Rabbeinu Yonah writes that this is a nice ray of hope, that a person can earn merits by being *maavir al middosav*, and not being inflexible.

Of course, there is no reason to be *makpid*, upset with others who harmed him, because the pain is from Heaven since he doesn't have *zechuyos*, and it's for atonement and to arouse him to repent. If so, it is for his benefit. Not only that, he also merits that all his *pesha'im* (sins due to rebelliousness) are forgiven; yes, even his *pesha'im*.

If so, **when we want to know what the solution is, the *tikkun* we can do so that all the difficulties will pass and the plague will finish, first and foremost, people must be *maavir al middosav*, not to be upset with any one, and in**

this way, one can be zocheh that all his peshah'im will be forgiven.

In addition, it is worthwhile not only not to be *makpid* with others, but even if someone else is upset with me, and even if his *kpeidah* is not justified, it's worthwhile to appease him! Just as is mentioned in the Gemara (*Yoma* 87a) about Rav who went to appease someone who was upset at him to save him from sin, because when someone is upset at his fellow, it is a sin. We have to do him a favor and save him from the sin of being *makpid*. Even if his *kpeidah* is not justified, it's important to calm him down and appease him so that he shouldn't be upset. This is a *chesed* to save people from sin.

These are the *zechuyos*: to be *maavir al middosav*, not to be upset at any person; *adaraba*, to perform favors and help others as much as possible.

Women and Supporters of Torah Are Zocheh in the Merit of Torah

Torah learning is another way to earn *zechuyos*: learning personally, and also helping others learn. This too is a *zechus*, as is mentioned in the Gemara: "How do women gain the merit [of Torah learning]?" In the merit of Torah, for helping their husband and children learn Torah. Anyone who causes others to learn has the merit of Torah, of Yissachar-Zevulun. When Yissachar learns Torah and Zevulun supports him, Zevulun also has the same *zechus* as Yissachar.

Of course, anyone who can be a Yissachar is obligated to be a Yissachar, and he should not say, I'll be a Zevulun and not Yissachar if he can. But if someone cannot be Yissachar, he doesn't have a choice, and when he helps others learn, it's as if he himself is involved in Torah.

The first *mishnah* in *Zevachim* discusses "Shimon the brother of Azaryah," and Rashi explains: Since Azaryah was involved in business and provided his brother Shimon with his needs while he was learning Torah, the two made a condition that Azaryah would have a portion of Shimon's reward for learning, etc. Therefore, Shimon is called by his name, since his learning was due to Azaryah. That is, since Azaryah was Shimon's "Zevulun" and helped him learn, Azaryah's name is mentioned in the *mishnah*, and he is Shimon's *yichus* and honor — Shimon's name is attached to Azaryah's. Furthermore, Shimon is honored by mentioning that he is Azaryah's brother, because Azaryah helps him learn.

And as we mentioned, this is also true regarding *bein adam lachaveiro* — to do *chesed* and help others, each person according to his abilities, as much as he is able to help.

And *ahavas chesed* is also necessary, as is written (*Michah* 6:8): "He has told you man, what is good and what Hashem demands of you: perform justice and lovingkindness." That is, it is not enough to do *chesed*, but one must also exhibit *ahavas chesed*, perform *chesed* out of love, as is written (*Vayikra* 19:18): "*V'ahavta lereiacha kamocho.*" *Chesed*

without love is not *shleimus*. If someone performs *chesed* unwillingly, it could even be a sin, as he is pained about the *chesed* he's doing and he's not interested in acting this way; it's against his will. One must act with *ahavas chesed*.

And this is another merit, *ahavas chesed*. In *Shaarei Teshuvah*, Rabbeinu Yonah writes that this is one of the most grave, most important behaviors required of man, performing *chesed* with love. The wording "what is good" and "what Hashem demands of you" is used in regard to *ahavas chesed*. "What is good" means that this is for man's own benefit, but "what Hashem demands of you" means that this behavior is a demand: Perform justice and lovingkindness. It is demanded from man to act with *ahavas chesed*, since a Jew has a loving nature, *ahavas chesed* and *ahavas habriyos*, and a person has to follow his nature. However, sometimes a person has reasons for going against this nature, but he was born with an innate love of doing *chesed*.

Adhering to Health Guidelines and Learning Mussar

All these matters — being *maavir al middosav*, and *ahavas chesed*, and all these good things — if we fulfill them, we will *b'ezras Hashem* merit a *yeshuah* very soon.

But we must remember that there are guidelines the doctors have issued; we must adhere to all the health guidelines and not make light of them. It is a grave obligation to adhere to all the guidelines according to the doctors' instructions; do not make light of them or belittle them. This is a very grave obligation.

B'ezras Hashem may we all merit, in the *zechus* of the good deeds we perform and the *chizuk* we gain through them. However, one cannot become strengthened merely by thought; we also need *chizuk* from *sifrei mussar*. The *Mishnah Berurah* (*siman* 1) cites the *kadmonim* that the antidote to the *yetzer hara* is *Toras hayirah*, *mussar sefarim* that bring one to increase *yiras Shamayim*. *Yiras Hashem* is a mitzvah, as is written (*Devarim* 10:20): Fear Hashem your G-d." And it says in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:15 and more) that it is a mitzvah to increase *yiras Shamayim* — more fear and more fear — every single person, and this occurs through setting a daily learning session in *sifrei hayirah* and *mussar*.

It is true and tried, as I've already said that older people with families told me that after setting aside time to learn *mussar* daily, their house became a joyful place, a happy house with happy lives. If one learns *mussar sefarim* every day — and that means interesting *mussar*, because boring *mussar* has no effect. It's important that the *mussar* should be interesting, and then if one learns it, he begins leading his life according to the *mussar sefarim*, and the house is joyful, and he has a happy life. *Ashrecha baOlam Hazeih. Yehi ratzon* that we all merit to strengthen ourselves in whatever needs strengthening and may we merit the *yeshuah* speedily!



Rabbeinu shlit"א's Daas Torah: How to Conduct Ourselves in These Times

בס"ד אדר ג'ש"ה

לאמתי ואנשי ביהמ"ד, רבנים וזוהרנים גבתי.
הימצב נשגב גבתי דאמען ארבעת אלף אלף שנים. דעוויילן,
אדעמאל גבתי ארבעת אלף אלף שנים. רבתי, בייקוין יאר צוין.
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To my dear brothers and friends, may you be blessed.
The present situation requires us to search and investigate our deeds, in our speech and our thoughts, that they should all be fitting, following the will of Hashem Yisbarach.
Talmud Torah, Torah learning, is equal to all other mitzvot, each person should make efforts according to his ability, and there should not chas v'shalom be a sin of bittul Torah.
Take care in matters *bein adam lachaveiro*. Do not cause anyone even the tiniest amount of bad feelings. And if someone has a *kpeidah* against another person, he must remove that sadness from his heart, because all pain is from *Shamayim*, and whatever the Merciful One does is for the good. So too, if someone is *makpid* on me, I must appease him, even if the *kpeidah* is not justified.
And we must strengthen ourselves in *bitachon*, and maintain an upbeat mood, and promote a pleasant atmosphere among family members.
Adhere to the health guidelines, and *chas v'shalom* do not make light of them.
Yehi ratzon that we merit a *yeshuah* speedily,

Y. Gershon Edelstein

**Dedicated by
the Kroll Family, Los Angeles
להצלחת בניהם ובנותיהם
בתורה וביראת שמים**

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