

## Darkei HaChizuk

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

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395

### Our Duty During Times of Calamity

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... I said, ‘Surely you will fear Me, you will accept *mussar*.’” That is, the purpose of calamities that strike the world is “fear Me” — that Klal Yisrael should gain *yiras Shamayim*. When one sees calamities, they understand that there’s a Divine plan. Then they acquire *yiras Shamayim*; they become afraid and do *teshuvah*.

*Yiras Shamayim* is a mitzvah unto itself. It’s not just a means and a reason for performing good deeds or for staying away from sin; rather *yirah* is a mitzvah itself: “Fear Me!” This is the reason for the calamities, “Fear Me,” there should be *yiras Shamayim*. “Accept *mussar*” is something else — actively rectifying the sins, so that there should not be sin.

There’s *yiras Shamayim*, fear of Heaven, and *yiras cheit*, fear of sin. The *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap. 24) explains that *yiras Shamayim* is referring to someone who is afraid to commit *aveiros* or who performs mitzvos out of fear. But *yiras cheit* means that even when a person does a mitzvah, he is afraid that he hasn’t performed it *b’sheleimus*, or even when he is not presently sinning, he is afraid that perhaps he committed sins in the past and must repent, or he’s worried that even if he did *teshuvah*, he didn’t do it properly, or he’s worried about sinning tomorrow. He’s frightened about sinning tomorrow, and he has to increase his *yiras Shamayim* greatly so that he won’t sin. This is called *yiras cheit*.

This is the meaning of “fear Me, accept *mussar*” — we should have *yiras Shamayim* and *yiras cheit*, and we should be frightened of *dinei Shamayim*. It’s true that the Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* (10:1), as well as the *Mesillas Yesharim*, wrote that fear of punishment is a simple matter which even women and ignoramuses have, and fear of punishment is not a *madreigah* at all. *Yiras haromemus* and *yiras cheit*, on the other hand, are considered a *madreigah*. In our generation, however, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter already said that fear of punishment is considered a *madreigah*, and we must work on achieving this *madreigah*. This is “fear Me, accept *mussar*” — have *yiras Shamayim* and rectify your deeds.

Similarly, a *pasuk* discussing Krias Yam Suf states (*Shemos* 14:31), “And Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Mitzrayim, and the nation feared Hashem.” When Bnei Yisrael saw all the *makkos* and observed the Mitzrim drowning in the sea, they acquired *yiras Shamayim* as a result, they feared Hashem. Because seeing such calamity inflicted on the gentiles generates *yiras Shamayim*. “And the nation feared Hashem!”

But the reality is that there are people who think they don’t have any sins. Yes, there are people like that who think “I’m fine, everything’s always fine by me and I have no sins.” Then there are others who know they have sins, but they think “What can I do? I can’t rectify them; I don’t have the strength to do *teshuvah*.” This is all a mistake. They are mistaken — there is no such thing as someone who has no sins, and there’s no such thing as someone who cannot do *teshuvah*. Everyone has sins, and it’s possible to correct them.

#### Improvements — In Eretz Yisrael’s Merit

Now, following the great calamities we experienced, the situation here in Eretz Yisrael has improved, *baruch Hashem*. There are fewer sick people than previously, there’s also less *bittul Torah*. Previously, there had been a lot of *bittul Torah*, but now *yeshivos* and *cheders* are already in session; they’ve already begun learning in some sort of framework.

Of course, we still need to be extremely cautious and the health guidelines are a serious obligation — we must adhere to all the health guidelines and precautions **and not make light of them, *chas v’shalom*; this is *pikuach nefesh***. But in any case, the current situation in Eretz Yisrael has improved drastically compared to what was before. There are much fewer cases of the virus, *baruch Hashem*.

The reason there is an improvement here more than in Chutz LaAretz is because of *zechus Eretz Yisrael* — Eretz Yisrael gives out *zechuyos*! More *maasim tovim* are performed in Eretz Yisrael, and a person who lives in Eretz Yisrael improves, and he is a better person than those who live in Chutz LaAretz. This is the reality; this is the merit of Eretz Yisrael.

There are two Gemaras about this. The first is in *Nedarim*, *daf* 22, which cites the story of the two people from Chuzai who came to Eretz Yisrael from Bavel. On the way, one of them killed the other. Rabbi Yochanan was astonished: How could such a thing occur? How could anger and a trembling heart conclude in murder — in Eretz Yisrael? After all, in the *parashah* of the *Tochachah* it states (*Devarim* 28:65): “There, Hashem will give you a trembling heart” — that is, you will only have a trembling heart “there,”

in Chutz LaAretz, not in Eretz Yisrael. So how could such a thing occur in Eretz Yisrael? They told Rabbi Yochanan that the murder took place before the two crossed over the Yarden. However, had they been on the other side of the Yarden, the murder actually would not have occurred — because his personality would have changed once he entered Eretz Yisrael!

Another Gemara in *Makkos daf 7* discusses the case of someone who has been sentenced to death in Chutz LaAretz. That is, he committed an *aveirah* and is liable for the death sentence, and Sanhedrin in Chutz LaAretz already judged his case and decided that he is *chayav misah*. If he escapes to Eretz Yisrael before they execute the death sentence [and appears before another *beis din*], his verdict is annulled, and they must rule on his case once more.

The Gemara explains that this is “due to the merit of Eretz Yisrael.” That is, since he is presently in Eretz Yisrael, if they judge him he might emerge innocent, because he improves in Eretz Yisrael and receives more merits. It is possible that Heaven wants him to live, not to die. This is the *zechus*, merit, and the *maalah*, advantage, of Eretz Yisrael.

### Why Shomrei Torah Were Hit Hardest

There’s something else we must understand. The reality here in Eretz Yisrael is that a greater percentage of *chareidim* died from the virus than did those from the general public. In Chutz LaAretz as well, more *chareidim* died than any other sector.

The reason for this is as follows: The Chazon Ish wrote<sup>1</sup> that in our days, those who still haven’t become religious are like *tinokos shenishbu*, and their sins are considered unintentional sins. They aren’t liable because they never received a proper education, so their sins are unintentional sins. The sins of someone who is not a *chareidi* are unintentional, but when a *chareidi* sins, it is not unintentional,<sup>2</sup> because he is aware of his duty in this world. The demands on him are greater. Therefore, *middas ha-din* strikes *chareidim* more. We see this in Chutz LaAretz as well.

Now, *baruch Hashem*, many places have begun learning already, but we must be extremely cautious and adhere to all the health regulations. There are many who have been learning over the phone and are continuing with *chavrusas* and *shiurim* over the phone, and the *talmidim* listen in to the rosh yeshivah’s *shiur* on the phone. Thus, learning can continue, and it’s a great *zechus*. Many people are doing this, they’re learning and becoming stronger; they’ve already become stronger in this way.

And there are also more *zechuyos* for women. Now that the *talmidim* are at home and have to learn, women can make sure that no one disturbs them. The women provide them with the necessary tools so that no one can disturb them,<sup>3</sup> and this is the women’s *zechus* of Torah. Indeed, Chazal say (*Berachos* 17a): “How are women *zocheh*? By sending their children... and waiting for their husbands.” That’s how the women gain merit, merit of the Torah. It’s in the merit of putting in all their efforts so that their sons will be able to learn Torah without wasting any time. *B’ezeras Hashem*, may we merit continued *siyatta d’Shemaya*; may we continue to strengthen ourselves, and may we merit *hatzlachah* in all areas.

<sup>1</sup> Chazon Ish, Yoreh Deah 2:28. He quotes the Rambam, *Hilchos Mamrim* (chap. 3), “But the sons of those lost ones and their sons’ sons whose parents let them astray, and they were born into heresy, and raised them upon it, and are therefore like a baby taken into captivity by the gentiles and raised by them and according to their religion. He is an *anuss*, coerced. And even though he later found out that he was a Jew, and saw Jews and their religion, he is still an *anuss*, since he was raised on this mistake.”

<sup>2</sup> See *Bava Metzia* 33b: That which is written (*Yeshayahu* 58a), “Tell My nation their *pasha* (intentional sins), and to Beis Yaakov, their *cheit* (unintentional sins).” “Tell My nation their *pasha*” — these are the *talmidei chachamim*, whose unintentional sins become like intentional sins, and “Beis Yaakov their *cheit*” — these are the ignoramuses whose intentional sins become like unintentional sins.

<sup>3</sup> This is what Rabbeinu wrote in his letter last week, together with Maran HaRav Chaim Kanievsky *shlita*: This is an important announcement to Beis Yaakov, Jewish women, who bring up their sons all year long to Torah and mitzvos. In light of the current situation, they now have a special role to assist in *limud haTorah*, by designating a room in their homes where their husbands and sons can learn during their *sedarim*. The women’s *sechar* will grow greatly commensurate with the difficulty this entails. They will be rewarded in Olam HaBa and Olam HaZeh and will see much *nachas* from all their children, *Amen kein yehi ratzon*. And in the *zechus* of righteous women our forefathers were redeemed, and in their *zechus* we will be redeemed in the future.

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