

# Darkei HaChizuk

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

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

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## Affording Proper Honor to Shuls and Batei Midrash

Recently, shuls, *batei midrash*, and *yeshivos* all over the world have been closed down. In his *sichos*, HaRav Edelstein has often addressed the need to take this as a wake-up call and make improvements in the way we relate to *kavod beis knesses* and *kavod beis midrash*, honoring our shuls and *yeshivos*. *B'chasdei Hashem*, now that we have merited returning to Hashem's house, we've excerpted portions of Rabbeinu *shlita's* *sichos* on the importance of this matter. May it be Hashem's will that this compilation proves beneficial.

### Excerpts from Recent Sichos

Regarding davening in a *tzibbur*, the *pasuk* states (*Mishlei* 14:28): *B'rov am hadras melech* — "The King's glory is when many of the nation is together." 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, yatzartiv, 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.

(28 Adar)

All difficulties are *middah k'neged middah*. If there are challenges in davening, there is probably a deficiency in our davening: davening with *kavanah*, having the proper *kavod* for shuls, *k'vod hamakom*, *kedushas beis knesses*, refraining from speaking *devarim beteilim* in shuls. This is probably what needs rectifying. That's the purpose.

(18 Nissan)

During this most recent period, we experienced difficulty davening *b'tzibbur*. In some places, people were able to join together in yards or on balconies of apartment buildings and daven with a minyan, but those minyanim were very small, and it's not the same as davening with the entire *tzibbur*. So if there's a deficiency in *tefillah b'tzibbur*, it's a sign that we need a *tikkun* in davening. Our *tefillah* was not *b'shleimus* as it should have been, so *middah k'neged middah*, we didn't have it. From now on, we must do *teshuvah* for *tefillah*; our *tefillah* should be *b'shleimus*.

(25 Iyar)

### From a Sichah on II Adar 5779

There are certain things that are very important to uphold and to be careful about, for example, *mora Mikdash*, awe of the Beis HaMikdash. Nowadays, we do

not have the Beis HaMikdash, but we do have shuls and *batei midrash*, which are called a "*Mikdash me'at*." Indeed Chazal say (*Megillah* 29a): "I will be for them a '*mikdash me'at*' — these are the *batei knesses* and *batei midrash*." They are *kadosh*, and there are *halachos*

regarding one's behavior there, how one should act with honor and awe in holy places.

According to the *Yerei'im*, the halachah of *kedushas beis knesses* is *d'Oraisa*. He writes: “V'yareisa m'Elokecha, and you shall fear Hashem” — When a person enters the Mikdash, *beis knesses*, or *beis midrash*, he is commanded to treat these places with awe, fear, and honor, as it is written, ‘And you shall fear My Mikdash.’ We’ve found that shuls and *batei midrash* are called ‘Mikdash,’ as is taught in *Toras Kohanim*, ‘And I will make your holy places desolate’ — to include shuls and *batei midrash*. And it says in *Megillah*, ‘And I will be for them a *mikdash me’at* etc. — these are the *batei knesses* and *batei midrash*.’ We’ve learned **that when the Torah says: ‘And you shall fear My Mikdash,’ *batei knesses* and *batei midrash* are included in ‘fear.’**”

In the Rambam's shorter count of the *mitzvos* in the beginning of *Yad HaChazakah* (Negative Mitzvos 65), he writes: “Not to destroy the *Beis HaMikdash* or *batei knesses* or *batei midrash*... as it states, ‘You shall not do so to Hashem, your G-d.’ This means there is a Torah prohibition to break or damage anything in a shul, just like in the *Beis HaMikdash*. If someone shatters a stone from a shul building, he transgresses ‘You shall not do so to Hashem, your G-d,’ just like one who shatters a stone in the *Beis HaMikdash*. This is the matter of *mora mikdash*.”

Consequently, the way we behave in shul must follow the mold of *mora mikdash*. For example, there should be no *devarim biteilim* spoken there, or *lashon hara* — which is a great sin. Even outside of shul, it is prohibited to speak or listen to *lashon hara*, but doing so inside a *beis knesses* is even graver. (See *Chafetz Chaim*, *asin* 7.) Although there is a level of *devarim biteilim* which is not *assur* — the Gra says that every person needs to speak a little *devarim biteilim* for *yishuv hada'as* — the shul is not the place for this. **If someone must speak *devarim biteilim* or business matters, he should go out; he should not speak in shul.**

There is an entire *siman* in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 151) dealing with *Hilchos Beis HaKnesses* — it's a good idea for everyone to see what's written there, to see how to fulfill the halachah of *kedushas beis knesses*, and how to maintain the honor of a shul. This is extremely important, and the reward for this is great indeed. It's a great mitzvah, *mora mikdash*! It's like in the *Beis HaMikdash*.

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#### From a Lecture to Principals, II Adar 5779

We must educate our children to have *mora mikdash*, that we must act seriously and with *mora mikdash* in a holy place. It's possible to make an impression through

*chinuch*, but the parents and *mechanchim* must behave properly as well! If a child sees that his father doesn't act with *mora mikdash*, he learns from him and ends up behaving just like him. **Therefore, we must influence parents and *melamdim* to behave with *mora mikdash*. When children see them in shul, they are influenced.**

In general, it's important to know that children have an innate fear of *rabbeim*. Not all *rabbeim* understand this, but this is the reality. As such, a rebbi must act more elevated than other people.

We must educate our children to have *yiras Shamayim*, not to speak *devarim biteilim* in shuls. We must also teach them that davening itself is serious, they should daven from a siddur. There's less *kavanah* if one davens by heart — davening with a siddur brings the *kavanah* to another level.

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#### From *Shiurim* in Elul 5768 and Cheshvan 5769

Communities of *gedolei Torah* were murdered during *Gezeiros Tach v'Tat*. *Gedolei hador* like Rav Michel Nemrover were murdered, and the Shach composed a *kinah* and *Selichos*, and set 20 Sivan as a fast day to mourn these *kedoshim*.

During that time, the Jewish were completely involved in Torah, as is described in the *kuntres Yevein Metzulah*, which discusses the level of *esek haTorah* and *kavod haTorah* of that period. The *rabbeim* and *talmidim* alike were involved in Torah to an extraordinary degree, and even so, there were *gezeiros*.

The Tosfos Yom Tov lived in those times. He searched and found that the reason for these decrees was because they spoke in shul in the middle of *tefillas*; they interrupted their prayers with speech. He composed a special *Mi Shebeirach* for people who control themselves not to speak during davening. He blessed them with many *berachos*, so that others will gain *chizuk* to be careful in this matter as well.

I copied part of the *nusach* so I can share it with you:

מי שברך אבותינו וכו' הוא יברך את כל מי ששומר פיו ולשונו מלהפסיק בשום דיבור מברוך שאמר עד גמר התפילה, ובשעת קריאת ספר התורה שבציבור, אפילו בדברי תורה ואיזה דיבור, — May the One Who blessed our fathers... bless all those who guard their mouths and tongues from interrupting [their prayers] with any sort of speech, beginning from *Baruch SheAmar* until the end of the *tefillah*, as well as during *Kri'as HaTorah*. This is true even regarding *divrei Torah* or a quick comment, and all the more so regarding discussing mundane matters and circulating rumors.

He apparently realized that this is what needed rectification and assumed that this was the reason for the *gezeiros*. There were *baalei batim* who spoke during davening and *kri'as haTorah* — even if it was *divrei Torah*! That also required a *tikkun*.

Even when there are no *tefillos* taking place, one must be careful not to speak *devarim biteilim* in shul. And if Torah learning takes place there, the *kedushah* is even greater. There are simple people who are careful not to speak about any mundane matters in shul, even if they are not *devarim biteilim*. These people are careful only to speak words of Torah and *tefillah*, and they leave the shul if they must speak about other things.

Anyone who is careful in this matter certainly acquires great merit. And if anyone can influence others to improve in this matter, they will receive the reward of *zikui harabbim*.

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#### From a *Sichah* in Yeshivah, I Adar 5771

There are many people who are careful not to speak mundane matters in shul, regardless of whether *tefillos* are occurring. As long as they are in shul, even if davening is over, there are no mundane conversations. Simple people have been careful about this and have received *sechar*. **I know about a group of friends who decided to be careful — as a group — not to speak about mundane matters in shul. If it was not a *dvar mitzvah*, they did not discuss it in shul. They merited many *zechuyos*, and there were clear signs that Heaven was pleased with them.**

Heaven demands more from a *tzibbur* than from individuals. The community must be careful to stay away from anything that involves disrespect for a *mikdash me'at* in a holy place. The *kedushah* of a *beis midrash* is greater than the *kedushah* of a *beis knesses* (*Yoreh Deah* 246), so this is especially important in a *beis midrash*.

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#### After a Bnei Brak Shul Was Vandalized, Iyar 5779

**Q:** What should we take upon ourselves after the shul was vandalized and the *sifrei Torah* thrown on the floor, *Rachmana litzlan*?

**Rabbeinu shlita:** It's a sign that they need to strengthen *kedushas beis haknesses* and *kavod haTorah*. They need to strengthen the honor they accord *sifrei Torah* and the honor they give the shul.

**Q:** *L'maaseh*, what should we do?

**Rabbeinu shlita:** Don't speak *devarim biteilim* in shul.

**Q:** Only during davening, or also at other times? the Torah as an antidote to it" — if one learns Torah *lishmah*, it's a completely different level of *sheleimus*.

**Rabbeinu shlita:** Even when it's not davening time. There are *halachos* of *kavod beis haknesses* and *kedushas beis haknesses*. Look at the *halachos* in the *Mishnah Berurah* (*siman* 151) to see what to be careful about.

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#### A Conversation with *Gabbaim*, I Adar 5779

**Gabbaim:** There is a shul in our neighborhood. It's a *makom Torah* and a *makom tefillah* and is active 24 hours a day. We are now building a very large new building and we came to ask for a *berachah*.

**Rabbeinu shlita:** May it be with *hatzlachah*. But make sure to behave there according to halachah. There are many *halachos* regarding *kavod* and *kedushah*, how to act, how to honor and how to safeguard the *kedushah* of the *beis knesses*, for it is a holy place. The congregants' behavior must follow the halachah.

**Gabbaim:** It's a shul and a *beis midrash*. People learn there.

**Rabbeinu shlita:** The *kedushah* of a *beis midrash* is much more severe, and greater care must be taken to uphold the *halachos* and to guard the place's *kedushah*.

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#### From a *Sichah* on 28 Shevat 5775

Now that the Beis HaMikdash is destroyed, the influence of *kedushah* emanates from our shuls and *batei midrash*, as they said (*Berachos* 8a), "From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, all Hashem has in His world is the 4 *amos* of *halachah*."

The Beis HaMikdash is called "*Bayis haGadol*," "the Big House" — in *Birkas HaMazon* we say: "*v'al habayis hagadol v'hakadosh*." Shuls and *batei midrash* are called "*bayis Gadol*," as it states in *Megillah* (27a): "What is the meaning of: 'And the entire *bayis gadol* was burnt by fire'? Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi — one says: a place where Torah is learned, the other says: a place where *tefillah* occurs." That is, shuls and *batei midrash*. A *beis midrash* is a *makom Torah* and a *beis knesses* is a *makom tefillah*.

For this reason, the Beis HaMikdash is also called "*HaBayis HaGadol*," because it influenced Klal Yisrael to increase Torah and *tefillah*. Similarly, this is the influence we have today from shuls and *batei midrash*.

In the *mishnah Megillah* (28a) it states: a shul that has been destroyed is still *kadosh*, as it says, "And I shall make your Mikdash desolate" — even when they are desolate, they are still holy. This *pasuk* refers to the Beis HaMikdash, which is still holy although it is destroyed. There is special holiness attached to the *Machaneh Shechinah*, *Machaneh Levi'ah*, and *Machaneh Yisrael* in *Yerushalayim* within the city walls. Nowadays, impure

people may not enter Machaneh Levi'ah or Machaneh Shechinah, because even though they are desolate, their *kedushah* still exists.

From here we learn that shuls and *batei midrash* retain their *kedushah* even if they are destroyed, because they are a '*mikdash me'at*' (as is written in *Megillah* 29) and they have *kedushah*, similar to the Beis HaMikdash. There is a *machlokes Rishonim* as to whether the *kedushah* is *d'Oraisa* or *d'Rabbanan*. Many Rishonim agree that the *kedushah* is *d'Oraisa*. Therefore one who smashes a stone from a shul transgresses the negative commandment of "You shall not do so to Hashem, your G-d," just as one transgresses this when breaking a stone from the Beis HaMikdash.

We must be happy that we have holy places, shuls and *batei midrash*, where Torah and *tefillah* is cultivated. There is no need to travel to distant *mekomos hakedoshim*, we have our shuls and *batei midrash* — 4 *amos* of halachah. We have all the opportunities for spiritual advancement in Torah and *tefillah*. *Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu!*

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#### From a *Sichah* on 27 Tishrei 5775

At the beginning of *Shacharis*, we say, *Mah tovu ohalecha Yaakov, mishkenosecha Yisrael*, "How good are your tents, Yaakov, your dwelling places, Yisrael." Chazal expound (*Sanhedrin* 105b), "These are shuls and *batei midrash*." The explanation of "how good" is that shuls and *batei midrash* give a person a very good feeling, How good! They are a *mikdash me'at* and like the Beis HaMikdash, they contain *kedushah*. A holy place sanctifies a person and gives him a very good feeling. It's well known that *kedushah* makes a person happy, as is written (*Divrei HaYamim I* 16:27), "Joy and happiness in his place." The Ponevezer Rav related that when he'd enter the Chazon Ish's home, he would feel the *kedushah*. It is a very pleasant feeling.

The *pasuk* also mentioned "your dwelling places, Yisrael." What is the difference between an *ohel* and a *mishkan*? And why is the name Yaakov used with *ohel*, but Yisrael is used with *mishkan*? There are two levels in Klal Yisrael; we are sometimes called Yaakov, and other times, Yisrael. Yaakov denotes a lower level, while Yisrael points to a higher level. Additionally, *ohel* is a temporary housing, while *mishkan* is a permanent dwelling place.

Based on this, we can explain the *tefillah*. Whenever a *beis knesses* or *beis midrash* is in a permanent place, meaning there is much Torah and *tefillah* taking place there, then it called "*mishkan*." In this instance, Klal Yisrael are called "Yisrael," because having a place for Torah and *tefillah* influences Klal Yisrael and raises them to a higher *madreigah*, Yisrael. However, when the shuls and *batei midrash* are only temporary — like an *ohel* — when there isn't a lot of *tefillah* and Torah learning taking place, this is a lower *madreigah*, which is called "Yaakov." (See the *Ohr HaChaim* on *Parashas Balak*.)

Accordingly, when people enter a shul or *beis midrash*, they should feel something! After all, it is a *kadosh* place, a *mikdash me'at*, and we must feel like we are in a *mikdash me'at*. One generally doesn't pay attention to this idea, but it is proper to think about it and feel that "I am standing in a place with *kedushah* — and the *kedushah* has an influence on me."

Feeling the influence of *kedushah* is attainable; indeed, Rav Dessler *zt"l* said that one can feel his *neshamah yeseirah* on Shabbos. The *inyan* of a *neshamah yeseirah* is an increase in *kedushah* in one's *neshamah*. Some people actually do feel it. In shul and in the *beis midrash* as well one must and can feel the *kedushah*. It is a very pleasant feeling, *Mah tovu!* And as a result, our whole demeanor will be different, with *mora mikdash*.

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