

# Darkei HaChizuk

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

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## Quarantine — Due to *Lashon Hara*

The coronavirus hasn't passed — it's actually getting worse. The numbers are rising and more people have the virus than before. Everything is in *Shamayim's* hands, and we must take a deeper look and figure out which sin caused the illness. If there was no sin, it wouldn't be here. There is surely some sin that requires rectification, and we must be aware of what it is.

We've already mentioned that aside from the physical challenges this virus brings, there are spiritual difficulties as well: it's not possible for a big *tzibbur* to be together, so we are lacking "*b'rov am hadras melech*" (*Mishlei* 14:28) in our *tefillos*. In our *yeshivos* too, the entire yeshiva body cannot be together. There are deficiencies both in *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*.

It's clear that there's a sin, and we must do *teshuvah*. We must know what the sin is, what does *Shamayim* want us to do *teshuvah* for. After all, "whatever the Merciful One does is for the good" — and an illness is also for the good; it directs us to do *teshuvah*. Doing *teshuvah* is a genuine benefit for man, for by repenting, he will merit eternal life — *Olam HaBa* and *Gan Eden*. *Teshuvah* benefits him in this world, as well — once he repents, he will be able to be *oseik* in Torah more and daven with a large group of people, *b'rov am*.

It is incumbent upon us to take a deeper look: what is the sin, and what category does it fall under: *bein adam laMakom*, or *bein adam la'chaveiro*? There were decrees in the time of the *Tosfos Yom Tov*. The *Tosfos Yom Tov* looked for a reason for these decrees and it was revealed to him, probably from *Shamayim*, that the sin was because they spoke during davening, treating *tefillah* with disregard. This sin was the reason for the decrees. Once people know the reason for the decree, they can do *teshuvah* and make a *tikkun*, rectification, for it. But we do not know which sin brought about the present illness.

I heard people are saying that since the illness causes isolation — that people can't be together and sometimes have to be quarantined — [it is connected to] the *pasuk* in the Torah that states, "He shall dwell isolated," (*Vayikra* 13:46). This is referring to a *metzora*, whose sin is *lashon hara* (see *Arachin* 16). If so, it seems that the sin we need to rectify is *lashon hara*.

## The Churban: Due to *Lashon Hara* and Bad *Middos*

Now it really might be the reason. *Lashon hara* and bad *middos* were the sins that caused the Churban Beis HaMikdash, as it states in the Gemara (*Yoma* 9b): "Why was the Second Beis HaMikdash destroyed? Because there was *sinas chinam*, unwarranted hatred. The First Beis HaMikdash, which was destroyed due to the three cardinal sins, only remained in ruins for seventy years. Then the Second Beis

HaMikdash was built. But this Beis HaMikdash was destroyed due to *sinas chinam*, and it is still in ruins to this day.

The Gemara tells us the reason for this: "The first ones who were exiled, their end was revealed, but the later ones — whose sin wasn't revealed — their end wasn't revealed." This means that during the First Beis HaMikdash, their sin was revealed; they transgressed the three cardinal sins, sins committed actively. Since they knew what the sin was, they knew what to do *teshuvah* for, and they repented. In that merit, the end of their galus was revealed, and they merited the Second Beis HaMikdash. But during the Second Beis HaMikdash, their sin was not revealed — *sinas chinam* is a sin of the heart, an unnoticeable sin. Everyone thinks he is right and doesn't even feel he committed a sin, so he doesn't do *teshuvah*. As a result, the Churban is still a reality today.

If so, the sin that caused Churban Beis Sheni is a sin *bein adam lachaveiro*. Of course, the Tannaim and Amoraim didn't sin, they didn't have a *yetzer hara* of *sinas chinam*, and they are not guilty of causing the Churban, but the sin was present among most of the *tzibbur*. And most of the *tzibbur* didn't even notice the sin of *sinas chinam*. It wasn't necessarily *sinas chinam*, it could have been any bad *middos*, which are also a cause of *lashon hara*.

I think I once saw from the Beis HaLevi (see *Beis HaLevi, Parashas Bo, v'hataam*) that the *sinas chinam* was a result of *bittul Torah*. If they had been involved in Torah as much as they should have been, *b'shleimus*, then their Torah would have been an antidote to their *yetzer hara*. And even though Chazal said (*Yoma, ibid.*) that they were involved in Torah and mitzvos, they apparently weren't as engrossed in Torah as they should have been *b'shleimus*. After all, Torah is an antidote, so if someone is engrossed in Torah with all his abilities *b'shleimus*, his Torah is an antidote and there is no *sinas chinam*. There is no doubt that the Tannaim and Amoraim acted *b'shleimus* and this sin did not apply to them, but most of the *tzibbur* was lacking in *shleimus*.

It's *pashut* that the continued state of Churban is because the sin is continuing, as Chazal say (*Yerushalmi Yoma* 1:1), "Every generation in which the Beis HaMikdash is not rebuilt, it is as if they caused its destruction." That is, if the sin would have stopped, the Beis HaMikdash would have been rebuilt already — for there's no reason for the Churban to continue. If the Beis HaMikdash is still destroyed, it's a sign that the sin still exists. That's why it is considered that the generation destroyed the Beis HaMikdash, for they are perpetuating the sin of *sinas chinam*.

*Sinas chinam* involves more than wanton hatred, it includes all kinds of related things, like jealousy, unwillingness to give in or be happy with others' successes, *lashon hara*, and any

behavior that stems from bad *middos*, which a person doesn't even feel is a sin.

Therefore, it seems that now, as well, when the coronavirus is continuing and the numbers are rising, it is from Heaven, and it is for our benefit — to arouse us to do *teshuvah*. Each person should rectify what is necessary, and the main thing is the heart; there should be good *middos* in the heart! Of course, it is dependent on Torah. If someone is completely absorbed in Torah, his Torah is an antidote and he won't have bad *middos*. When he is *oseik baTorah*, involved in Torah learning, his *middos* improve. So the solution is to be *oseik* in Torah more.

But we also have to be involved in rectifying our *middos*, by learning *mussar*. *Mussar sefarim* explain all the various *middos*: arrogance, modesty, anger. *Mussar sefarim* also address all the bad *middos* and give advice on how to get rid of them.

### **Tikkun HaMiddos: Make It a Habit**

For example, consider the *middah* of anger. There's a simple solution to get rid of anger. There's a story about someone who often lost his temper on Fridays, when the stress levels are high. The stress would make him get angry and shout at his family members, and he wanted to stop. He asked for help, and was told that whenever he loses his temper, he should keep quiet — or at least make sure not to shout! He used to shout whenever he was angry, and the suggestion he received was to try to keep in his anger, and not to actively express it by screaming.

He tried this. The first week, he worked very hard controlling himself, and he actually did not scream. It was very difficult for him, however, and he was concerned that he would not be able to continue. He had no idea how he'd manage exerting such efforts to control himself every Friday.

*L'maaseh*, the next Friday was easier, because *hergel na'aseh teva*, "habit becomes nature" — this is actually human nature. If a person intentionally acts in a certain way in order not to get angry, since he is keeping quiet and not shouting for a while, his anger isn't activated. Every time he controlled himself, it became easier, until he eventually stopped losing his temper at all! Controlling himself did not pose any difficulty at all for him, because by controlling himself, he changed his very nature! There are solutions for rectifying all bad *middos*.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 7:3) writes that one must do *teshuvah* for bad *middos*. From his words, it seems that even if someone is born with bad *middos* — and that's not his fault — in any case, there is a mitzvah of *V'halachta b'derachav*, "And you shall go in His ways" (*Devarim* 28:9). This means one should have good *middos*, so he must work on it using emotional intelligence; he must change and rectify his *middos*.

There really are people like this, people whose nature does not include good *middos*, but they used their intellect to regulate themselves in good *middos* until it becomes second nature. These people simply cannot lose their temper anymore, they cannot shout.

*Ahavas habriyos* is something simple that everyone can attain. The Torah says (*Vayikra* 19:8), "Love your fellow as

yourself." **It's not a question that even someone who wasn't born like this still must fulfill this mitzvah, because if the Torah commanded it, it's a sign that every single person is capable of fulfilling it.** There are *eitzos* how one can change his nature to attain *ahavas habriyos* — something that is imperative though, is a distinct understanding of the *kochos hanefesh* to cultivate *ahavas habriyos*. Even if someone has *ahavas habriyos*, he can always increase it — and this is also in the category of "Love your fellow as yourself," to increase as much *ahavas habriyos* as possible. It's worthwhile to daven for it, as *tefillah* also helps; it gives a person *siyatta d'Shemaya* to receive *ahavas habriyos*.

### **Hisorerus and Tefillah for Tikkun HaMiddos**

Certainly, the fact that we see the coronavirus continuing and the numbers of patients rising is from *Shamayim* to arouse us to do *teshuvah*. As we mentioned, the *teshuvah* should be for the sin that led to the continued Churban Beis HaMikdash. We must improve our *middos*, they should be *middos tovos*, and we should also daven for this.

Indeed, there are *tefillos*. In *Shemoneh Esrei* we ask, "Return us to Your Torah," "Return to Your city Yerushalayim with mercy, and dwell within it, and rebuild it an everlasting building" — a *tefillah* for the Beis HaMikdash [that it should be built through *teshuvah* and rectifying our *middos*]. We daven to do *teshuvah*, daven for forgiveness, for the Beis HaMikdash, for Mashiach, for the imminent blossoming of David Your Servant, because *tefillah* can surely help.

If the *tefillos* of the entire *tzibbur* would be *b'shleimus*, Mashiach would come. Actually, there are individual *tzaddikim* like the Chazon Ish and the Brisker Rav and the rest of the *gedolei Yisrael* whose *tefillah* was surely *b'shleimus*, but this is not the entire *tzibbur*. We need *tefillas hatzibbur*. If everyone would daven properly to do *teshuvah*, it would have an influence and there would be a resurgence of *teshuvah*; and prayers for good *middos* would bring about good *middos*.

We've already mentioned what Chazal say "If a person sees afflictions coming upon him, he should search (יִפְשֵׁף) his deeds." In another place, they said (*Eiruvin* 13a) "he should feel (יִרְשַׁם) his deeds." The *Mesillas Yesharim*, chap. 3, explains what these two terms mean: *יִפְשֵׁף* is simply to check: what are my good deeds, and what are my bad deeds. *יִרְשַׁם* 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*. The *Nefesh HaChaim* (1:6) explains the *pasuk* (*Koheles* 7:20), "For there is no righteous man on this land who does good and does not sin" as follows: It's not that he does *aveiros* — he's actually performing good deeds, but within his good deeds, there is some deficiency; the *shleimus* of his act is not intact.

Chazal (*Yevamos* 62b) tell us that Rabbi Akiva had 24,000 *talmidim*, and they all died between Pesach and Shavuos. What was their sin? The Gemara explains that it was because they did not treat each other with *kavod*. The Midrash says (*Bereishis Rabbah* 61:3) that they didn't *fargin* each other, and they were punished with *misah bidei Shamayim*. This requires an explanation — when else have we ever seen *misah bidei Shamayim* for such subtleties? Even their Rebbi, Rabbi Akiva, did not give them *mussar* or say anything to them,

because it wasn't even noticeable. It wasn't active behavior in speech or actions, it was passive; there was a minute amount of lack of *kavod* and *tzarus ayin* hidden in their hearts — and they were still punished. This begs an explanation.

The explanation is that Chazal say (*Yevamos* 121b) on the *pasuk*, וסביביו נשערה מאד, “And around Him it storms furiously” — HaKadosh Baruch Hu is exactly with those around him, i.e. the tzaddikim, like a hairsbreadth (שערה). If a person is a complete tzaddik, every little thing is considered a serious sin due to his righteousness. *Shamayim* judges him according to a hairsbreadth for his own benefit, so that he'll come to the next world complete and clean of any blemish. Rabbi Akiva's *talmidim* were on such high levels, so for them, a tiny deficiency in *shleimus haleiv* was considered a grave sin, and they were punished with *misah bidei Shamayim*.

### Hashem Despises Arrogance

Another obligation of the heart and *middos* is not to be a baal *gaavah*, arrogant. It says in *Mishlei* (16:5), “All arrogant people are an abomination to Hashem.” The *Mesillas Yesharim* devotes two chapters (22 – 23) to explain what *gaavah* is and what *anavah*, humility, is. It says that any *ma'alah* a person has, like talents or understanding, Torah, or *middos tovos* and good deeds, if he feels important because of them, it is a sin and it's *gaavah*.

In the *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar HaKniah*) it states that a person must be happy about his good qualities, but not to consider himself important because of them. There's a fine line between happiness and haughtiness — one can be happy that he merited such virtues, but he may not be haughty about them and feel important. He really is not important, all his good qualities are a Heavenly gift, which he received with kindness and mercy. All his abilities, including the ability to think, to understand, whatever *maalah* he has is all from *Shamayim*, he didn't do anything to attain it. Even if we'd say that he did create it, where did he get the ability to do so? Hashem gave him the *kochos*, just as He gives *kochos* to those who want to fix their *middos*. Everything is a Heavenly gift, with *chesed* and *rachamim*.

If so, he's a real pauper who accepts charity from Heaven, and he has to thank Hashem for this, he must rejoice in it, but he may not feel important, because it's not true. If someone feels *chashivus*, it's not *emes*! All his virtues are solely from Heaven.

This is called humility, to recognize the truth. Humility does not mean to belittle yourself or not recognize your strengths. Moshe Rabbeinu was *anav mikol adam*, “the humblest of all men,” and he himself wrote these words in the Torah (*Bamidbar* 12:3), and remained humble! Even though he knew he was humble, there was no reason to be haughty. Humbleness is knowing the truth, that whatever a person has is a *chesed* and *rachamim* from Hashem, and it's not his own power, it's all from Hashem. If so, what *chashivus* does he have, and what should he be haughty about?

A person who thinks he's important is haughty. The *pasuk* “All arrogant people are an abomination to Hashem” refers to him. Even a drop of *gaavah* is an abomination, as it says (*Avos* 4:4): “Be very, very humble.” The Rambam explains (on his commentary to the Mishnah and in *Hilchos Dei'os*

chap. 2) that the Tanna emphasized this, saying “very, very” because one must completely distance himself from arrogance, going to the opposite end. This is the obligation of *anavah*: Be “very, very” humble! It's not a mistake — it's not that a person is deceiving himself, it's the truth.

*Adaraba*, if a person is aware of his *maalos*, it's a reason to be even more humble. Yaakov Avinu said (*Bereishis* 32:11), “I have become small from all the kindness and all the truth.” When a person receives kindnesses and benefits from *Shamayim*, it obligates him to act better. He feels that he isn't doing all that he should, because he received kindnesses, so he has to increase his humility and increase his good deeds and *emunah*. If he doesn't, he is an ingrate. Therefore, the “kindness and truth” are a reason to feel “small”! This could cause him a sin — if he is required to do more and doesn't fulfill his obligations.

### Emunah Prevents Bad Middos

It's all dependent on *emunah*. We've already said (*Makkos* 24a), “Chavakuk came and condensed them into one, as it says: ‘And a tzaddik will live by his faith.’” That is, *emunah* is the foundation, and afterward, one can add more levels, but first there must be a strengthening of *emunah*, to believe with complete faith that everything is in Heaven's hands; never to forget this.

When a person lives with *emunah*, he has a good, happy life. He has no claims or *kpeidahs* against anyone else, because even if someone causes him pain, he understands that this pain was decreed upon him from *Shamayim*. If it hadn't been, no one in the world would be able to cause him pain. If he did receive pain, it's a sign that it's a Heavenly decree and that there's a purpose for it. So why would he be upset at the messenger? *Shamayim* sent him the pain to arouse him, so what would be more proper to think about? The messenger or himself — why did he deserve this pain from *Shamayim*?

Really, one should pity the messenger, as the Maggid of Paltzk (a *talmid* of the Gra) wrote in his *sefer Kesser Torah*: “If someone would steal your money, you should cry bitterly over the thief, over the fact that he lost his soul, his *cheilek Eloka me'maal*, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu Who loves you is pained over him, *kivyachol*, and His great Name was profaned. You should cry more over this than over your lost money. You should not be surprised at all about your lost money as you place your complete trust in the Blessed One.”

That is, if a large sum of money is stolen from someone, and he is upset about it, he should really be more upset that a Jew robbed. The poor robber succumbed to sin, but my deficiency was decreed from *Shamayim*, and it was decided already on Rosh Hashanah who would be poor and who would be rich. The thief, however, is a *baal bechirah*, and he has a sin. We must pity a Yid who fell to the level of robbery, and who has this nature of robbery. He is pitiful; he will be in Gehinnom, and he may also suffer in this world: “fruits in this world” for bad *middos*. Since he is so unfortunate, you must pity him.

This is life with *emunah* — he does not care about the stolen money he lost, or about the pain caused him, because these are all from *Shamayim*. If it was so decreed, it's obviously for his benefit, as “Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good.” The only thing he has to feel bad about is the other

Jew who stole from him or caused him pain, as they are unfortunates who committed a sin.

Having *emunah* can change one's life. If someone has a jealous nature — someone who is jealous when he sees his friend has more than him — well, if he had *emunah*, he would understand why he doesn't have it. It's because that's what *Shamayim* wants for him. Why does his friend have it? Because that's what *Shamayim* wants for him. So anger or jealousy have absolutely no place. Does he question Heavenly decisions? What's left for him to do is to think about why *Shamayim* made this decision.

### The Advantages of Judging Favorably

Another *middah tovah* Chazal mention in *Pirkei Avos* (1:6), "And judge everyone favorably." If you see a person performing an improper action, you must judge him favorably. Perhaps he made a mistake, perhaps he has another reason for his actions.

We've already mentioned the story in the Gemara (*Shabbos* 127b) about the man who was a hired worker for three years. When he was ready to return home on Erev Yom Kippur, he asked his employer to pay him. His employer said he didn't have anything to pay him with. The worker knew that his employer had vast wealth and possessions, but the latter claimed he had nothing. And he believed his employer. He found excuses for whatever his employer claimed he could not give him. He judged him favorably that he had dedicated all his possessions to the Beis HaMikdash, and the like. And so he returned home penniless.

After Yom Tov, his employer arrived at his home to bring him his salary. He asked the worker: When I said I didn't have, what did you think? How did you think I was telling the truth? The worker responded: I thought such and such, and he detailed all the reasons he had come up with to judge him favorably. The employer told him that's exactly what had happened. Then he blessed him: Just as you judged me

favorably, may Heaven judge you favorably. Any time you do something that may be a sin, may they judge you favorably — perhaps it was a mistake, etc., *middah k'neged middah*.

Judging favorably is a wonderful thing! It's so worthwhile! One who judges favorably benefits by being judged favorably in Heaven! Heaven will find a *limud zechus* that perhaps he made a mistake, or was an *oness*, or didn't have *yishuv hadaas*, or any other *limud zechus* proving that the sin wasn't really a sin. This is *middah k'neged middah* since he judges everyone favorably. Judging favorably is not an inborn trait, but we see that it is possible.

In the *Iggeres HaRamban* it says, "View every person as greater than you... if he sins, he has sinned mistakenly, while you sin intentionally." That is, consider it as if every single person is greater than you, and even if he sins it may have been a mistake, and all his bad deeds were done by mistake because he did not receive a proper education and he does not understand, and does not feel it is a sin. You on the other hand, sin intentionally because you know better than him, and you are smarter than him, and you have sins that you are not careful with, so that makes you an intentional sinner and your sin is greater. This should be our train of thought.

A person who thinks like this treats everyone respectfully and is not *makpid* on anyone. He sees all others as unintentional sinners, and if so, there's no reason to be *makpid* on him, to belittle him, or not to respect him, because it's not his fault. I, on the other hand, am worse than him because I received a proper education, I understand better than him, and I know all my sins. This is how we should think. And when people think or learn *mussar sefarim*, it arouses them to many things like this, which give a person great amounts of *zechuyos* in his heart, and his heart becomes a complete, good heart. *Yehi ratzon* that we all merit attaining *shleimus* in whatever is necessary!

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