

Darkei HaChizuk

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

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Mourning Over the Churban — Arouses Us to Do *Teshuvah*

It says in *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim*, right at the beginning (1:3), “It is proper that every *yarei Shamayim* should be pained and concerned over the Churban Beis HaMikdash.” That is, it should be like this the entire year, not only on Tishah b’Av and Bein HaMitzarim — the entire year! One must be pained and concerned about the fact that we don’t have a Beis HaMikdash. We say *tikkun chatzos* all year long; we daven and ask Hashem to bring back the Beis HaMikdash.

The *Mishnah Berurah*, at the end of *siman* 551, writes in the name of the Arizal that during Bein HaMetzarim, a person should mourn and cry over the Churban for about half an hour. The point is to cry because we are pained that we don’t have a Beis HaMikdash. If we are pained, it might help bring back the Beis HaMikdash and cause it to be rebuilt.

The Shelah instituted (cited in the *Mishnah Berurah siman aleph*) that it is customary to recite “*Al naharos Bavel*” at every meal, and on Shabbos and other days when *Tachanun* is not recited, he should say “*Shir Hamaalos b’shuv Hashem.*”

He adds that what’s most important is that “a person should understand what he’s saying, and these matters follow the heart’s intention.” That is, merely reciting the verses is not what’s the main thing, it’s the *kavanah*, the intention, which is to arouse us to do *teshuvah*. If a person can either say “*Al naharos Bavel*” without *kavanah*, or not say it, but instead have thoughts of *teshuvah*, it would be better to do the latter!

The days of Bein HaMetzarim is a time when our hearts open a bit, when we are pained over the Churban, and we are aroused to do *teshuvah* for the sins that caused the Churban, as the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Taanis* 5:1) that the purpose of all fasts Chazal instituted *zecher l’Churban* is to arouse us to do *teshuvah*. If the sin that caused the Churban is

still present, the Churban is still continuing. If we would have done *teshuvah* and rectified the sin, there wouldn’t be a Churban anymore and the Beis HaMikdash would have been rebuilt already.

Reading *Megillas Eichah* and all the *kinos* that we recite on Tishah b’Av are to arouse us to do *teshuvah*, and the most important thing is rectifying our *middos*, because the Churban took place due to *sinas chinam* and bad *middos*. The repentance for this would be to act with good *middos*.

Bein HaZemanim: Relaxation with Propriety

We are just starting *bein hazemanim*, from Tishah b’Av until Rosh Chodesh Elul. This is a time of *bittul Torah*, and we must know that there is no heter for *bittul Torah*. It’s just that there is a need to relax; someone who exerted himself and put in a lot of effort needs to rest. Resting has to be done as necessary, but no more than is necessary. If one relaxes just for relaxing’s sake, it is *bittul Torah*. Also, the venues of relaxation must not include *prikas ol Torah*. One must keep the mindset of “I know that there is an obligation of Talmud Torah, but right now I have to rest, otherwise, I won’t be able to continue learning.”

It’s known that in the past there were always tragedies during *bein hazemanim* of Av, *Rachmana litzlan*. Real tragedies that happened on trips, because of the deficiency in Torah learning. When we lack the *zechus* of Torah, there’s no protection.

I’ve already mentioned that the army once came to the Tzaddik of Netivot (Rav Yisrael Abuchatzzeira *zt”l*), to ask for a *berachah* prior to a very risky operation. He asked them when the operation was scheduled for, and they told him: 2:00 p.m. He told them that 2:00 p.m. is not a good time, because that’s just when the yeshivos have a *bein hasedarim* break. He told them it would be preferable to do it during *seder*, either before 2:00 or from 4:00 p.m. and on, when everyone is sitting and learning. The *zechus* of the Torah would protect the Jewish nation. But there’s no *zechus* of Torah during *bein*

hazemanim, and this is very dangerous, and as a result, *Rachmana litzlan*, there were tragedies during *bein hazemanim*.

Make a Learning Schedule for *Bein Hazemanim*

Since there is no yeshivah and everyone's home during *bein hazemanim*, it's imperative to make a proper learning schedule, to be *osek baTorah* without *bittul Torah*. Therefore, one first must decide **what to learn**, which *masechta*, which *perek*, and then also **where to learn**: in shul, at home, or in yeshivah. It's important to decide on a place where one can learn without distractions. Also, decide whether you will learn with a chavrusa or without. Setting times are also important — learn at the same time, at set times. If everything is planned out in advance, the learning will be with *hatzlachah*.

The *Maalah* of Learning Torah in Trying Times

In general, it's important to know that when one learns Torah in challenging times, it is a very great *maalah*. The Gemara at the end of *Sotah* explains the great importance of *Torah m'toch hadachak*, learning Torah in trying times.

The last *zman* was *Torah m'toch hadachak* — due to the pandemic, it was not possible to learn together in a large *tzibbur*, and people had to learn over the phone or with chavrusas who they weren't used to. The learning came along with difficulties, but they learned! One cannot even fathom the magnitude of learning *Torah m'toch hadachak* with difficulties, and it is a tremendous *zechus*.

I remember once speaking to the Chazon Ish *zt"l* about the practical side of this — that it would be very hard to learn — and he told me as follows: *Torah m'toch hadachak der Eibeshter hut dus lieb*, “The Eibeshter loves Torah that's learned under difficult conditions.” HaKadosh Baruch Hu loves it when people learn Torah in trying times; this type of Torah is *l'chatchilah*. It's not that there must be difficulties, but just if there are difficulties, know that this is *l'chatchilah*.

Chazal said (*Koheles Rabbah* 2:9) on the *pasuk*, *Af chachmasi amdah li*, “Even my wisdom remained with me” — *Torah she'lamaditi b'af, hi amdah li*, “The Torah that I learned under difficult conditions is what remained with me.” They also said (*Avos D'Rebbi Nosson* 3:6), “One in pain is better than

one hundred not in pain!” This is the advantage of learning *Torah m'toch hadachak*.

A Good Feeling in Torah Learning Gives *Chizuk*

Success in Torah depends on many things, and especially regarding young *talmidim*, it's very important that the *talmid* enjoys learning, the learning should be interesting and presented in an interesting manner. It should also be on his level, it should match his capabilities, he should feel that he can learn on his own. When he sees his capabilities, it gives him energy to continue learning more.

It's important that he should have a general good feeling. Sometimes, it could be a big *shiur* with dozens or even one hundred *talmidim*, and one *bachur* might feel that he needs the *maggid shiur* to look at him, so he can feel that the *maggid shiur* is speaking to him. I know about a certain *bachur* who needed this. His friend told the *maggid shiur*, and the *maggid shiur* did it. It didn't take long, for a few seconds during the *shiur*, the *maggid shiur* looked straight at that *bachur*, and it was very beneficial. It made the *bachur* feel good and gave him *chizuk*. When a *talmid* feels good, it gives him *chizuk*, and it's imperative that he feels good. If he has difficulties and disturbances, he won't be able to learn as he should.

Therefore, it's important to learn in a place where he is respected, he should be one of the better *bachurim* there. If someone has the option of learning either in a yeshivah where he is of the more important *bachurim*, or somewhere else, where others are more important than him and he'll be one of the weaker *talmidim*, it is better to learn where he will be part of the better crowd, because that will give him the drive to succeed in his learning.

The *Zechus* of Torah during *Bein HaZemanim*

In any case, one must know that even if *esek haTorah* during *bein hazemanim* is a little difficult, *adaraba!* It is a *zechus* of learning *Torah m'toch hadachak* and amidst difficulty — just as we learned over the last *zman* despite all the challenges. Anyone who learned despite challenges gained a tremendous *zechus* for themselves.

***Chizuk* At Least Once a Day**

There's something else that's not only relevant to *bein hazemanim*, it's important all year long.

Chazal say (*Berachos* 32b): “Four things need strengthening,” and Rashi explains that a person should strengthen himself in them constantly and with all his abilities.

Constantly means at least once a day. While the *korban tamid* was sacrificed twice a day, as was the *minchas chavitin* of the kohen gadol, and the word “*tamid*” is mentioned alongside it (*Vayikra* 6:13) — half was brought up in the morning and half in the evening — once a day is also called “*tamid*.” In *Shemos* (27:20, see Rashi there), lighting the Menorah is also termed “*tamid*” — “*l’haalos ner tamid*” — even though it only occurred once a day.

If so, *chizuk tamid*, constant *chizuk*, is at least once a day — and that is to learn *mussar*. Any interesting *mussar sefer*, even for just a few minutes, if it’s on a steady basis every single day, even during *bein hazemanim*, then it has a constant influence. Every day it has more of an effect, and every day the person will rise in *madreigah*; he’ll attain one *madreigah* after another in the duties of the heart, and his heart will change as a result!

There are duties of the heart which are obligations — the heart is obligated in them, such as *yiras Shamayim* and *middos tovos*, which are connected to the heart. *Ahavas habriyos*, *emunah*, *v’yadata hayom v’hasheivosa el levavecha*, *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, and the Rambam’s thirteen principles of faith — these are all obligations: *chovos halevavos*, duties of the heart! When a person is constantly involved in them, he rises and advances in *madreigah*, constantly adding more levels.

This is relevant for everyone, young people and even elderly people, but the young people especially need more *chizuk*. This is acquired by a daily *mussar seder* in an interesting *sefer* and an interesting *perek*. Something that’s boring will not have an influence.

We’ve already discussed this many times, but I will repeat myself again because it is very important! Be constantly involved in *chizuk* by learning *mussar*, even during *bein hazemanim*! A person who continues his *chizuk* during *bein hazemanim* will surely be happy and fortunate, and he will have *hatzlachah* and *siyatta d’Shemaya* in all matters.

Davening is also imperative. It’s important to make sure that one’s *tefillos* should be recited with *yishuv hadaas* and *kavanah*, as much as possible. This too is contingent on having a set schedule. A person should be structured; by having a schedule he will be calm, he’ll have *yishuv hadaas* all day long.

The Danger of Throwing Off the Yoke of Torah

These are all very important matters, but as we said, the most important thing is not to be *porek ol*, to throw off the yoke of Torah, during *bein hazemanim*. That’s the *ikkar*! If it’s hard, then *adaraba*, *l’fum tzaara agra*, according to the effort is the reward (*Avos* 5:23)! This is “*Torah m’toch hadachak*,” this is what Chazal spoke so extensively about at the end of *Maseches Sotah*, stressing what a great *madreigah* it is. This is what the Chazon Ish was referring to when he told me, “*Der Eibeshter hut dus lieb*” when a person is *osek baTorah* even under trying circumstances.

People must be vigilant not to act in ways that can lead them to “*prikas ol*” during *bein hazemanim* because it is very dangerous. There was one *bein hazemanim* when there was no *prikas ol* the entire time. On the last day of *bein hazemanim*, though, the *bachurim* went on a trip and were in a terrible car accident on the way. What happened? *Rachmana litzlan*! This is called *prikas ol Torah*, and it is a very dangerous matter! *Bein hazemanim* can be a time of earning tremendous *zechuyos*, or losing tremendously, *Rachmana litzlan*. It’s worthwhile to merit a lot, to make the most of *bein hazemanim*, make sure it does not include *prikas ol*. Rest, relax as is necessary — and it is necessary to rest, but without *prikas ol*.

B’ezras Hashem may we merit to gain *chizuk*, everyone needs *chizuk* — young and old alike, though it’s more important for the younger people. *B’ezras Hashem*, whoever gains *chizuk* will have *siyatta d’Shemaya* and *hatzlachah* in whatever he needs, in everything — *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*. May we all be *zocheh* to *siyatta d’Shemaya* to become stronger in whatever needs *chizuk*.

Rabbeinu's Address at the Opening Ceremony for Dirshu's *Bein HaZemanim* Program

Being *osek* in Torah during *bein hazemanim* is a great thing — the statement “It is a time to act for Hashem, they have made void Your Torah” (see Yerushalmi, end of *Berachos*) can be applied to this. Someone who strengthens himself and learns Torah during a time when others are not learning and there's an overall weakening in Torah learning, acquires a tremendous *zechus*, the *zechus* of Torah! During *bein hazemanim*, *esek haTorah* is lacking, and the *zechus* of Torah for all of Klal Yisrael is lacking. Therefore, whatever is learned during *bein hazemanim* is a great *zechus* — it's an obligation and a *zechus*. Whoever learns Torah brings merit to the masses with his Torah.

Of course, each person must learn with all his strength and abilities. Don't overexert yourself, learn according to your abilities. Rest is also important, but use your abilities as much as possible to learn and be *osek baTorah* during *bein hazemanim*. It is a tremendous *zechus*, because this is a time that we are lacking the *zechus* of Torah. Anyone who learns Torah is *mezakeh* himself and the entire *tzibbur*. May all those who learn Torah during *bein hazemanim* be *zocheh* to abundant success.

As many families vacation in various *yishuvim* during *bein hazemanim*, we were asked to publicize Rabbeinu *shlita*'s address at the Keness Chizuk for *techum Shabbos*, which took place during this past Shevat/February in Rav Dov Landau *shlita*'s home:

It happened that *bachurim* walked from Bnei Brak to Petach Tikvah on Shabbos, without making an *eiruv*. They only found out afterward that it was not inside the *techum*, and they came to the Chazon Ish to ask how they could rectify their sin — what was their *tikkun*. He told them to learn *Hilchos Shabbos*. The reason for this is probably like Chazal say (*Menachos* 110a), “All those who are involved in learning *Toras Chatas*, it is as if he sacrificed a *chatas*.” If so, when one learns *Hilchos Shabbos*, it is as if he fulfilled *Hilchos Shabbos*.

This is a very common mistake that can happen to anyone. Therefore it is very good that they want to publicize the matter, to help those who'd like to protect themselves. It's necessary to publicize the distance of *techum Shabbos* in every single place, and in every city.

(In Eretz Yisrael, one can clarify this information via the automatic answering service “Arvasam” (0722722909).

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