

Darkei HaChizuk

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

A Sichah from Maran Rosh HaYeshivah Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita* .**Bein HaZemanim Av 5782**

A Sichah from Maran Rosh HaYeshivah HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita* In Wake of the Terrible Tragedies *Rachmana litzlan* — Bein HaZemanim Av 5782

Oy! Due to the Degradation of Torah

We are presently in middle of the *bein hazmanim* period from after Tishah b'Av until Rosh Chodesh Elul, and there have been a number of tragedies, *Rachmana litzlan*. After Tishah b'Av, during *bein hazemanim*, we experienced *meshunadike* tragedies, not normal tragedies, and it's something we can't understand. Pure souls lost their lives.

"*Mah zos asah Elokim lanu, lamah zeh.*" What has Hashem done to us; why did this happen?

Apparently, we are lacking the *zechus* of Torah during *bein hazemanim*. We are not *osek baTorah* as we are during the *zman*. During the *zman* there are regular *sedarim* in *yeshivos*, we learn *mussar* and are *osek baTorah* constantly, and there's *hasmadah*. During *bein hazemanim*, there's a little Torah, not like what we have during the *zman*, and we are lacking *zechus haTorah*.

The *mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (6:2) tells us that a *bas kol* emanates from Har Choreiv and declares: "Woe is to them, to the Creations, due to the degradation of Torah." Woe is to the people from the insult to Torah. The Torah is insulted! Because there is a lack of *kavod haTorah*, people aren't being *osek baTorah*. *Kavod haTorah* includes other things too. And a *bas kol* speaks about the degradation of Torah: "*Oy lahem labriyos.*" *Oy!*

Of course, rest and relaxation is a need, but not everyone needs it. Also, how much rest does each person need? There should not be *prikas ol*, there

should not be a feeling of "I'm exempt now, I don't have *ol Torah* now."

The tragedies are *dinei Shamayim* to teach each of us individually, and to teach the *tzibbur* what Hashem in *Shamayim* wants from us. It's not just a routine punishment, because punishments are issued in Gehinnom — these tragedies are coming to teach us something, to teach us the proper way to act during *bein hazemanim*, how we should be conducting ourselves. They are coming to teach us upright behavior according to the dictates of the Torah — *mah Hashem doresh mimchah*, what Hashem demands of you.

Tzaddikim Are Taken for the Generation's Sins

These pure souls who lost their lives — they probably didn't have sins, the reason they were taken is probably just the opposite, as Chazal say (Shabbos 33b) that "tzaddikim are taken for the generation's iniquity (*avon*)." The generation has iniquities, and "*avonos*" are sins committed intentionally. As we know, there are sins called "*shogeig*," unintentional sins, and there are "*meizid*," intentional sins. And the tzaddik is taken for the generation's sins; the tzaddik is punished for the generation's sins.

Lichorah, if there is no sin, there are no *yissurim*. So why do these *tzaddikim* have to suffer *yissurim*? They are tzaddikim; they have no sins.

Apparently, if they are receiving *yissurim*, it is a great merit for them. What is this *zechus*? Rashi (*Vayikra* 10:3) brings Chazal's statement that "when HaKadosh Baruch Hu inflicts strict justice on tzaddikim,

"*misyarei, misaleh u'miskaleis*, He becomes feared, is exalted, and is praised." "*Misyarei*" means it has an effect of *yiras Shamayim*. There are many *madreigos* in *yiras Shamayim*, and one level is when a person gains *yirah* due to a *hisorerus* when he sees tzaddikim being treated with *middas hadin*. It turns out that through their *yissurim*, the tzaddikim give the *tzibbur* an opportunity to gain *yiras Shamayim*. The words "*mis'aleh u'miskaleis*" refer to other *madreigos*, the likes of which we cannot imagine, when Hashem is raised up high and glorified through the strict justice inflicted on tzaddikim.

If so, the tzaddikim have such tremendous *zechuyos*, for they are bringing down an influence of *yiras Shamayim*, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu is raised up and praised through them. We cannot fathom the incredible levels of their Olam HaBa, eternal life with eternal pleasures. We have no idea what these pleasures are like, even the *nevi'im* didn't know what they were, as the *pasuk* states, "No eye has seen it, Hashem, aside from You." Only HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows what these pleasures are, and tzaddikim merit these pleasures in the merit of the *kevod Shamayim* engendered through them.

Kevod Shamayim is the primary purpose of Creation, as it states at the end of *Pirkei Avos*, "Whatever HaKadosh Baruch Hu created in His world He only created for His own honor. The entire Creation is for *kevod Shamayim*: the sun, the moon, and the stars, the entire Creation with all the stars. We know that there are stars that haven't been sighted until now. It's light only reached us recently, because there's a concept of "light years" — just as it takes time for our sense of hearing to detect sound, and just as we first see lightning and only later hear the thunder, the same is true with our sense of sight. When the sun shines, we don't see it immediately — we only see it eight minutes later, because of "light years." And there are stars whose light hasn't reached Earth since Creation; we've only lately seen it since it's so far away. This concept is applicable to the entire Creation, which was created solely to bring glory to Hashem, as we see what HaKadosh Baruch Hu created in His world.

And tzaddikim generate *kevod Shamayim* through their death, as Hashem is "feared, exalted, and praised."

The Zechus of Torah During Bein HaZemanim

All those who learn Torah during *bein hazemanim* are increasing *kevod Shamayim*, even more so know than during the rest of the year, because there are those who don't learn. So the people who do learn are increasing *kevod Shamayim*! This is true too throughout the year; unfortunately, not all of Klal Yisrael are *osek baTorah*. *Kevod Shamayim* can only be increased through people who are *osek baTorah*. Those who are not *osek baTorah* are unintentional sinners, or like *tinokos she'nishbu*. They are not intentional sinners.

If so, now during *bein hazemanim*, those who learn Torah — every single person who learns Torah during *bein hazemanim* — which is a little unusual because they aren't in yeshivah and don't have to follow the yeshivah's *sedarim*, so there's nothing obligating them, are increasing *kevod Shamayim*. And *l'fum za'ara agra*, the reward is commensurate with the effort! If there are more difficulties, the tzaddikim are increasing *kevod Shamayim* through their *yissurim*.

Chazal (*Yerushalmi*, end of *Brachos*) explain the *pasuk*, "It is a time to do for Hashem, nullify His Torah": If you see a nation slackening in *divrei Torah* — "slackening" means they are learning Torah, but not with the proper *sheleimus*, not as much as they can; there's a weakening — stand up and strengthen it, and then you will receive the reward of them all.

What is "the reward of them all"? Whose reward? It says in *Pirkei Avos* (5:2), "There are ten generations from Adam to Noach, to teach you Hashem's degree of patience, as all the generation angered him increasingly." All ten generations were idol worshippers, and Hashem was patient, but patience can only continue for ten generations. Since they did not repent, HaKadosh Baruch Hu brought the waters of the *mabul* upon them, and Noach and his family were the only ones saved, since they were tzaddikim. The rest of the people of that generation angered Hashem increasingly, and His degree of patience was finished.

But then there were another ten generations from Noach until Avraham, and they too, increasingly angered Hashem. But then Avraham Avinu came — there was no *mabul* — Avraham Avinu came and received "the reward of them all" because he brought the entire world to repentance, as the *pasuk* states,

“You are a prince of G-d in our midst,” and “the souls he created in Charan”: Avraham converted the men and Sarah to women. They made a revolution through their *hashpaah* of publicizing *emunah* in the world — and that saved the world! That’s why Avraham Avinu received the reward of them all.

Rav E.E. Dessler זי"ל explains what “the reward of them all” means. If all ten generations would have been *tzaddikim* they would have deserved tremendous reward, every single one of these *tzaddikim*. So Avraham Avinu received all this reward that could have been, but was not! The pleasures of Olam HaBa that no eye has ever seen; we have no idea what Olam HaBa is and how incredible it can be; we cannot fathom the “quality” of Olam HaBa’s pleasures — “no eye has seen it, Hashem, aside from You.” Even the *nevi'im* did not know what the pleasures of Olam HaBa are like. But someone who is a *mashpia* and *mezakeh es harabbim* receives all these *zechuyos*.

They said the same about someone who strengthens himself in a time of *rifyon*, slackening. “If you see a generation that is slackening from *divrei Torah*, stand up and strengthen it.” If you are *osek baTorah*, you receive the reward of them all! That is, the reward of the entire generation — had they been *osek baTorah*, they would have received tremendous reward of eternal pleasures. And this single person who strengthens himself in Torah receives all the reward that could have been distributed to the entire generation, if they had only been *osek baTorah*. The reward of them all!

This promise is applicable to the *bein hazemanim* period. Every single person who strengthens himself in Torah and *maasim tovim* — each person according to his possibilities and abilities — will receive unfathomable *zechuyos*. Tremendous *zechuyos*. It’s a shame to waste this time! We must utilize every single moment of our time, each person according to his abilities of course, to be *osek baTorah* and *maasim tovim*. Torah, *avodah*, and *gemillus chasadim* — the three pillars the world stands upon.

Rectifying Bein Adam LaChaveiro

Our *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro* are what primarily need rectification. After all, this was the sin that brought the Churban Beis Sheini upon us. The Gemara

tells us (*Yoma 9b*) that “their sin was revealed during the First Beis HaMikdash” — they knew what their sins were, they transgressed the three cardinal sins, sins which one must be killed rather than transgress. But they did teshuvah, and that’s why the Second Beis HaMikdash was rebuilt after seventy years in *galus*. But during the Second Beis HaMikdash “their sin was not revealed,” because the Churban was due to *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred, and if someone hates another person, he doesn’t feel that it’s unwarranted. The story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza is the classic example. Bar Kamtza did not understand this; he thought that his hatred was not baseless. This is the meaning of “their sin was not revealed.” Even though the Torah prohibits hating others, as it states, “Do not hate your brother in your heart,” when a person hates someone else, he doesn’t realize or feel that it’s a sin. That’s why their end was not revealed and that’s why the Churban is still continuing to this day — because the sin is still continuing.

That’s why the Chafetz Chaim composed *sefer Chafetz Chaim* and *sefer Shemiras HaLashon*. He wanted people to stop talking and listening to *lashon hara*, so he composed his *sefer Chafetz Chaim*, which is like a *Shulchan Aruch* for the laws of *lashon hara*, and *Shemiras HaLashon* which is full of *mussar*. This is all to rectify the sin that led to the Churban, to encourage strengthening *middos tovos*.

Now it’s not so easy to have good *middos*, to judge everyone favorably and give them the benefit of the doubt, or to not have a *hakpadah* on anyone. It’s really not simple.

We’ve already discussed this. After all, everything is in Heaven’s hands, so if one person causes another to suffer, these challenges and difficulties are from Hashem, because he deserves them. Why does he deserve them, and what does Heaven want from him? Apparently, he has to do teshuvah, he has to search out and examine his deeds. It turns out that the person who caused him pain actually did him a favor — he caused him to examine his deeds.

Examining Deeds and Learning Mussar

If a person is intelligent, he will have *emunah* and start thinking and examining his deeds. He’ll learn *Shaarei Teshuvah*, *Mesillas Yesharim*, *Chovos HaLevavos*,

Orchos Tzaddikim, or *Peleh Yoetz*. There are so many *mussar sefarim*. Each person has to find what's applicable to him. Every single person can find something. He should delve into the duties of his heart — how is my heart? Is my heart the way it should be based on the Torah's *halachos* or not? And what about the duties that belong in every Yid's heart; how's the heart? These obligations are not *middas chassidus*, special acts of piety, they are "duties"! They are obligations and duties that must be present in every single Yid's heart: what is a Jewish heart, what does the Torah demand of him, what does Hashem demand of you. *Chovos HaLevavos* and all the *mussar sefarim* speak about what is supposed to be in your heart, and what your *she'ifos*, aspirations, should be, and what you should be thinking about.

We have the merit of receiving guidance in all these matters from *mussar sefarim*. There is a set *mussar seder* in yeshivos. Attending *mussar seder* is not *middas chassidus*; it's a real *seder* and it gives you a wonderful life. I've already told the story of a young *bachur*, about 13-14 years old, who had no choice and his family forced him to go work. He wanted to learn, but his family didn't let him. He would come to yeshivah every evening for *mussar seder* to learn *mussar* for a half hour before Maariv. I asked him, Why *mussar*? He answered, I feel that it gives me *chiyus*, it gives me vivacity, it has a *hashpaah* on me. And the end of the story was that everything worked out. All the challenges and difficulties passed, through

concealed miracles. It seemed like it just worked out naturally, but it was really *hashgachas Hashem*, in the merit of that half hour of *mussar*! He stopped working and joined the yeshivah. He stayed in *yeshivah ketanah*, then moved on to *yeshivah gedolah*. He's already married with a family, and he is now a *mezakeh harabbim* in Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. All in the *zechus* of "coming to be purified."

Learning *mussar* is "coming to be purified." And one who comes to be purified is helped. Come to be purified, learn a little *mussar*, it doesn't say how much to learn. In yeshivos, it's a half hour of *mussar*, but even a few minutes every day is good. If someone learns every day, his learning is like "water eroding stones" and it has an influence. One drop, and another drop, and another drop — it has a *hashpaah*. I know of other stories where family members asked "What happened to you? You've become a different person." A different person is a different life, a life of happiness and good fortune, a pleasant atmosphere at home, everything changed. In what *zechus*? In the *zechus* of learning *mussar*. This golden opportunity is in our hands, we can learn *mussar*, which falls into the category of "coming to be purified, and you will be helped." May we be *zocheh, b'ezras Hashem*, that every single Jewish person merit being one of those who "comes to be purified" with an authentic, happy life. *Ashrecha baOlam HaZeh!*

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darkei.hachizuk@gmail.com

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