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## Droshos - Surviving Spiritually Today

### ***Understanding The World Today***

The Brisker Rov zt"l said about his father Rav Chaim zt"l that his father could tell what will be in 20 years into the future; and he also said about himself that he sees what's really going on in his own times, while others are not seeing what is going on in the present moment.

This was said already close a few decades ago.

We will try to understand here what is going on today and what the inner aspect of our *avodah* is in today's times, and what Hashem wants from us in placing us into this current generation.

First we will describe the external part of the problems going on today, so that our soul can first absorb what is going on.

### ***Exile: Mixed With Gentiles***

We do not know when Moshiach will come at the end of this exile. But what we do know is that we are very far from the time of the giving of the Torah. The light of the Torah is very hidden from us, thus, the truth is very concealed in our times.

Chazal say that at Har Sinai, *sinah* (hatred) came to the world; the non-Jews hated us because they realized how different we are from them. This created a separation between us and the other nations of the world. The further and further away we are from Har Sinai, though, as the generations go on, the less separation there is between us and the gentiles.

Nowadays, Jews are very, very mixed with non-Jews. Chazal describe exile in that we nurse from non-Jews with the more we mix with them and connect with them. We are eating what they eat and drinking what they drink. This is not only true with resembling their physical pursuits. Our spirituality as well is being nursed from them.

This happens slowly; it doesn't happen so rapidly. It is a gradual descent in spirituality that takes place in steps.

In the recent years, however, massive changes have happened [to our spirituality]. The Chofetz Chaim said that these days, one year can be like a change of 100 years in its magnitude to the year before, with regards to non-Jewish influences. In the last few years, it is as if 1000 years of change have happened to us. There is almost no feeling of differentiation between Jews and non-Jews; much

confusion has entered.

There are many degrees to how much the non-Jewish influence has gotten to. There are those who have the status of *tinok shenishboh* ["captured children", who are raised not *frum*, and thus they are totally assimilated with non-Jews, but they are not at fault, because they don't know any better]. There are those who keep the Torah, but they are like *beinonim*, keeping the Torah halfway or a quarter of it. An even more subtle problem is that recently, there are Jews from the Torah world who looks like they are sheltered from non-Jewish influences, but they are really not. There is almost no concept of being sheltered anymore.

The Chazon Ish said that the *yeshivos* today are like the desert we need to run away to. That was said in his times [50 years ago]. But in today's times, there is almost no place that is safe from influences. There are all kinds of gadgets and technology everywhere, and there are people who are 'inside the Torah world' but they are very connected to the outside influences, and there is almost no concept of being sheltered from influences.

Wherever we go today, we are in the '50<sup>th</sup> gate of impurity', even in the Torah world, even in the holiest places of the world. There are a few individuals who seek Hashem and try to pursue truth and they are pained by today's situation. But there is almost no safe place even in the world of Torah.

This is the change that has happened in the last few years, and the difference between Jews and non-Jews is almost non-existent. Each year is like another 1000 years of change with regards to how much Jews are influenced.

### ***The Influences Have Entered Even the Torah World***

The first time I visited America, which was less than 10 years ago, I was appalled by what I saw. I saw Jews who consider themselves to have *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven), but they work together with non-Jews in the same office, and they live together with non-Jews. And there are *yeshivos* there in which there is university incorporated into the very system of the *yeshiva*. This is not only in the less religiously regarded *yeshivos*; it is even in the very religiously regarded *yeshivas*, that they incorporate college plans into the *yeshiva*. I thought to myself: "There is a *huge* difference between what is going on in America and what is going in Israel."

Who is upset at this, at this total destruction? That *b'nei Torah*, boys or girls - it doesn't make a difference - should be taught in *yeshiva* to learn secular studies and to go on to college and other places? Our soul should feel torn at this! People that yesterday, who would have been part of the world of Torah. are now being taught to learn secular studies and to get degrees from all kinds of places, all kinds of universities.

If anyone would have come to Israel 10 years ago and talked about such things, he would be regarded as someone disconnected from reality. But in today's generation, in these last couple of years, all of these influences have even become acceptable!

Our soul can feel torn at this - to anyone who has a little feeling for holiness. All the outside influences have entered! Not only has the outside entered the inside, but even those who used to be on the inside have gone out to the outside to go learn in those places.

Those places that people go learn\work in are full of people who are very connected to the outside world, some aren't even Jewish, and even those who are Jewish can still be from '*Erev Rav*'; either way, the entire outside world is in the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of impurity!

10 years ago it was already dangerous for one's *ruchniyus* to enter these places. Surely in our times it

is much worse. The outside world doesn't even bat an eyelash at the three cardinal sins of murder, idol worship and illicit relationships. The generation is as impure as the cities of Sodom and Ammorah - and this is not an exaggeration. The government leaders of this generation have laws in their countries that are like Sodom, and people consider it to be justice, a world in which anyone can do as he feels.

*Frum* people are being taught that they have to go out into the outside world. Seminary girls are being sent into the outside world to work in all kinds of unbecoming places; how can they be expected to avoid sin? *Their souls are being burned* totally, by the very atmosphere that is in these places!

All kinds of technology are everywhere; the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of Impurity is everywhere, even in the holiest places you can find.

Most people in Israel might not even be Jews. There are Arabs who pass for Jews, there are people from other countries involved in idol worship who have come here and claim to be Jews. It's a big doubt if most Jews in Israel are even Jews, even within the officially "Jewish" population.

All impurity has entered from the outside! And it is destroying everything!

Unless a person is totally blind to the situation, he can see how much impurity is entering inside. All influences from the outside are now able to enter; there is no way to be protected, unlike in the previous generations, where there were *gedarim* (restrictions) What used to be so simple to previous generations, in our generations is now simply the opposite of how the previous generations conducted themselves.

### ***Not Everything Is So 'Kosher'***

People here who keep Torah and mitzvos, *bnei Torah*, are being swayed every day [by the advertisements] to go to America for vacations to all kinds of places, with "*hechsherim*" ('Kosher' certification), and who knows what kind of influences a person will encounter in these trips with the people, who they will be spending time with. There can be 20 advertisements alone in the weekly paper for these kinds of trips and vacations - with "*hechsherim*" on them, of course.

Who can guard their eyes and holiness in these places?? Who can protect his purity when going on these excursions?? And no one opens his mouth to say anything. It has become acceptable and a normal part of life. At first there was opposition to these kinds of things, but they too gave in, and now it has become normal for people to go to all kinds of strange places in the world.

To give a stark example, in Yerushalayim, the first time they had mixed swimming pools, *rachmana litzlan*, there was opposition to it. But at the very same time that they brought mixed swimming to Yerushalayim, some of these places had a "*Yarchei Kallah*" event going on in the same places, where they invited *Gedolim* to speak there. The *Gedolim* didn't know there was mixed swimming in these places, so they are not at fault for going, *chas v'shalom*. But the fact that these places were even able to get *Gedolim* to come speak in these places shows how much we can get ensnared.

Look how far the impurity can reach! To have a *Yarchei Kallah* at places where there is mixed swimming?! And these days there is a "*hechsher*" that it's all "*mehadrin*" ('perfectly kosher') and "*l'chatchilah*" ('permissible').

If we would go through all the problems in the generation today, we would run out of time. It wouldn't be covered in 1 hour or 2 hours and not even more than that.

The point is that we are in a generation in which all impurity has penetrated into the inside, and those

on the inside are being taught that they need to go work in places that are not proper for them to go to, and to go out into the outside world and learn in all sorts of places where they are taught things that go against the Torah, or they are being shown that they can go to America (or in Israel) and go on all kinds of trips, places which our ancestors never dreamed that that even *b'nei Torah* would be targeted.

### ***More Examples of The Outside Influences***

The food today has become thicker, both in amount and its magnitude. Clothing today, especially women's clothing, looks like non-Jewish clothing. People are reading books that come from non-Jewish ideas. Psychology, child education, and self-improvement are all being borrowed from non-Jewish ideas.

Last week I saw an advertisement that they are seeking someone who can teach psychology in a yeshivah. Why didn't Rav Chaim Volozhiner zt"l, the founder of yeshivos, think of this? Why didn't he hire a psychologist for his yeshivah?

So much confusion and misconception! If a person doesn't exert himself truthfully in Torah and with holiness, he is apt to become very confused along with the surroundings. He can lose his whole holiness of a Jew due to all the confusion that is going on.

Woe to the eyes of people in this generation, who have laid their eyes on so much technology. They don't even know what the previous generations were like, in which their eyes were so pure and they never saw any of these things.

The evil influences are everywhere. Just like the Babylonians and Romans brought idols to the *Beis HaMikdash* when they destroyed it, so is there impurity that is destroying the generation – it is destroying **souls**. They've brought all the impurity directly into the **soul** and destroying a person from within himself.

Any soul that is raised and brought up in today's generation, even if he's brought up in a *frum* home and he goes to a *frum* yeshivah, it can all be thrown away one day if he decides; it is because he's growing up amidst the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of impurity. We can see it happening before our eyes.

### ***What Are Seminary Girls Being Taught?***

An *avreich* told me that he has daughter who is a bit different than his other children. I asked him what he is doing to change the situation. He told me that he sent her to go learn in seminary. She learned in a seminary that she has to make a job to support her husband who will learn Torah, and that she must go to work in all sorts of places, because after all, "If there is no flour, there is no Torah". (If there are worms in the flour, the Torah that comes from it will be wormy also.)

She was taught a lot of Torah and *hashkafah* (Jewish ideology) there, from well-known speakers. But she was also told there, by a "Chareidi" teacher, that "In order to hold a steady job these days so that you can support your husband to learn Torah, you should try to get a job in the [Israeli] government, where you will be able to hold a steady job all the way until you get your pension."

Anyone who can say such a thing to another Jew has a soul from 'Erev Rav'!! Nobody else would be able to say such a thing; only someone who wishes to take away the purity of a Jew's soul can say such a thing!

Chazal said that "If there no is flour, there is no Torah", but the 'flour' cannot come from impure places, or else the Torah learning be supported from it will be sustained from an improper source.

This doesn't have to be explained, "What's wrong otherwise?" If it has to be explained to a person why not, there is nothing to reckon with to the person.

Things that used to be simple to a Jew as unthinkable are no longer so simple anymore; nowadays, a person freely pursues things without stopping to think.

### ***Our Avodah In The End of Days***

We believe that Hashem runs the world with *Hashgacha Peratis* (Divine Providence) and that He will lead the world to eventually reveal His Name. But as for what we will have to go through in order to get there, who knows how much he will have to go through to be tested.

It could be that too much was said over here. In addition, there are also things going on in the generation that I don't know about; there surely is. In addition, there are other things going on that you and I haven't heard about, and it's not necessary for you to know about all those other things. But there is one thing every Jew should know. We are in a time in which we must all be aware of the dangers we are facing.

We are in a generation in which we must be aware that we are in the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of impurity. It's everywhere. It pains anyone who has even a spark of holiness, who can see that the impurity is swallowing up people.

If you become aware of all the war of impurity that is surrounding us, it doesn't mean you will succeed in overcoming it; just realize that you are in a war with impurity from all angles.

First realize what situation we are in. Everything these days has a '*hechser*' to it. Tours to the beaches and trips to outside Israel are advertised with a *hechsher*, *Sefarim* have a *haskama* (approbation) yet the author who writes it is not always *kosher*. It's not so simple when something has a *hechsher*.

How did we come to such a situation? It's all the Divine Plan of course, the *Hashgacha Peratis* of Hashem. The Ramchal writes that in the End of Days, all the forces of evil will come together. The fact that there is much evil here is all Hashem's Plan, and He wanted it that way; that's not the problem we have, because Hashem will lead us to the end and take us out of it one day. But we have an *avodah* before us. The problem is that people are unaware that all the evil is taking place.

Only someone who firmly chooses to hold onto Hashem and Torah will survive. When you're in a place of *chilul Shabbos*, you have to leave it. So too, we are in a world of impurity now. There are some *tzaddikim*, but the world in general is impurity, the 50<sup>th</sup> gate. It has entered all of our souls to a certain degree, some more and some less.

Last Shabbos I was in the Old City, in the holy city of Dovid HaMelech, and there was so much *peritzus* (immodest behavior) going on there. Arabs are there, Esav is there, and other *goyim* are there. It is like the *possuk*, "*Peritzim* (indecent people) *have come upon Your Sanctuary, and are profaning it.*" And there are also those who are not of these nations but they act like the other nations, in their *peritzus*, and they are contaminating the holiest place on earth. Every day, the holiest place on earth is being contaminated again and again with impurity.

### ***Reflecting On These Words***

It will not happen so fast to absorb these words. It needs *hisbonenus* (reflection). Think it over with *yishuv hadaas* (a settled mind).

First we need to realize what situation we are in, and this will be at least half the solution. If a person

understands the problem, at least he will have the tool to survive. It's not for sure that he will survive, but at least he will give himself a chance to survive, if he is at least aware of the problems we are facing today.

There are people who will hear this and say, "Why do you have to put down so many people? Why are you labeling people and chopping people down? Why have such a negative outlook on life?"

But this is the [painful] reality which our earlier Sages wrote about, and they wrote their words with *Ruach HaKodesh* (the holy spirit). They revealed what will happen during these times. And we are the ones that are within it and going through it.

Yirmiyahu HaNavi decried the situation of his generation in *sefer Eichah*, how he sees that the generation is destroying itself. We need to write own "*sefer Eichah*" on this generation – each person can do this. You don't have to write it on a piece of paper. You can write it with your own heart. "*Write these words on the calendar of your heart.*"

If you become clear what the situation is, it will make you cry tears over what is going on. If you're not clear what the problem is, there isn't much avodah you can do. If you realize the problems, clearly, then you can start the avodah.

### **What To Do**

The first part of our *avodah*, understandably, is that we need to daven and cry to Hashem for the redemption, speedily.

But besides for this, we also have an individual avodah, each Jew on his own, that we must become "alone" in our soul from the world. Each of us on a personal level needs to build an inner life in ourselves, to be separated from everything.

In addition, every person needs to find **2 or 3 friends** – and not more than that – **who are truthful**. And he should connect himself to them. Included in this is that he needs to already feel some degree of love for them. Find 2 or 3 friends whom you recognize as the most truthful people you know, and connect yourselves to them.

[To clarify the "alone" part], the *Mesillas Yesharim* says that a person needs to disconnect himself from everything on this world, even to permissible things, and enter inward into his soul. There is no community today that completely lives a truthful and holy life, disconnected from the world. There are only individuals who are like that, and for this reason, we need to connect to those individuals.

But in addition, we each need to find an inner place in our soul do we can detach from the world and instead connect completely with Hashem, through the depth of our soul, and with exertion in Torah, and to connect to the souls of the Jewish people in *Ahavas Yisrael*.

However, *Ahavas Yisrael* does not mean that we should go be friends with every Jew, because that will connect us to the outside world. We don't have to mix with everyone. We can't disassociate ourselves completely of course, but we definitely need to detach. There is a mixture of good and evil everywhere, because everything is like the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V'ra*, even in the world of Torah, and therefore we need to detach from almost everything.

So on one hand we need to live inwardly, "alone" in our soul, but at the same time we need to do *chessed* for others. This is the beginning of one's personal redemption.

Chazal say "*Echad hayah Avraham*" – "Avraham was one", Avraham fought alone – the whole world

was on one side, while he was on the other side. This is the avodah of today's generation - we need to live "alone" in our soul by building our inner world.

Of course, we need to love other Jews, but we still not need be connected with much of what goes in the world. There is no possibility in this generation to be connected to everything that goes on without being swept up by the rest of the generation.

Compare this to the following. If you're on a bus and it's speeding towards a ditch, and you see that the bus isn't going to be able to stop before it hits the ditch, there's only one option you have to be saved: You have to jump out of the window. You can't stay on the bus if you want be saved. The only option is to get out of the bus, and there is no way to stay in it and be saved.

The deepest advice we have to survive this generation is to live "alone" in our soul.

Again, we will emphasize again that we also need to do *chessed* with others and not become anti-social. But the *chessed* time should be much less than our "alone" time. And we need to also set aside time and deeply reflect on *Ahavas Yisrael*; we must feel in our hearts a love for other Jews, but only in our soul, and not to go out and be friends with everyone. Inwardly we need to feel love for every Jew, but outwardly, we need to lessen how much we are involved with people.

We can return to the state of a fetus in its mother. A fetus is on this world; it is not in Heaven. But although a fetus in its mother is on this world, it is in a safe place, sheltered away from the rest of the world, even though it is within it. Dovid HaMelech said that he yearned to go back to the womb, where he learned Torah from an angel, because there, everything was pure.

In our generation, if a person doesn't build his power of alone in the soul, he won't be able to survive. The Chazon Ish said that a place where Torah is learned is like the "ark of Noach" that we can seek refuge in from the spiritual "Flood" of this world. These days, a person needs to find that pure place within himself and run away to it, by building and developing it an inner place in his soul where he can retreat to and keep himself focused on in his thoughts.

Thus, **part** of our avodah is to **connect ourselves with those rare individuals who have true *Yiras Shomayim***, and another part of our avodah is to **do *chessed* with others** (and reflect during times of quiet on feeling *Ahavas Yisrael* to all Jews), but both of these are only a smaller part of our avodah. The **main** part of our avodah, however, is: **to retreat into your personal soul**, where you can run away to from the world and its influences.

There is no way today to be connected to the world without being swept away with it. If someone never uses his *daas*, and he has no sensitivity to what is going on today - by the time he realizes how much falsity is sweeping through the world, he will have already fallen so low into the falsity.

### ***In Conclusion***

These words are very far from the lifestyle that people are living. But these are the words that people will have to go through in the final steps of this exile.

We need to daven and cry to Hashem - not for our self-interest, but because of the truth - and we need to retreat into a place of solitude into our soul, as the wrath rages on around us. We need to build a place in our soul in which we are alone with Hashem. We also need to spend time on helping others, but we shouldn't feel connected in our souls with what goes on in the world.

If a person gains the ability of inner solitude, he has the power to separate himself from this generation, and this is the key to how he will be saved.

Practically speaking, these words are sensitive matters, because all of us are connected to others, and it is hard for us to build our power of “alone.” Especially those who are married, who have family, and those who need to work, who need to be involved with people. Although we are tied to our responsibilities to others, still, each person has to try as much as he can to have inner solitude, (as much he can handle personally, as well as not to neglect others in the process.)

Hashem is our *Avinu Av HaRachaman*, our Merciful Father. He is watching the generation, no matter what situation we are in. He sees what our situation is, both physically and spiritually, and He promised us that He will take us all out, and that no Jew will remain left behind in the exile. We need to have *emunah* in this, and await the coming of Moshiach - and that he should come as quickly as possible.

But “even if he tarries, even so, I still await him”, and that means that we have an *avodah* to do in the meantime, before he arrives. The *avodah* was described here.

The words here need a lot of personal reflection. We first need to set aside time and reflect about the depth of impurity we are in in this generation, and we also need to reflect on how we can acquire inner solitude, in a way that we can handle, which will not harm us personally or socially.

May we merit that the spirit of impurity be removed from this earth, and in its place, to merit the full revelation of Hashem’s Name upon this world.

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE RAV**

#### **Q1: Why do we need "quiet time"?**

**A:** Every person – no matter what his personal situation in life is – needs to have times of quiet every day, to be “alone”. The Ramchal writes to do this, and the Chofetz Chaim would do it; it doesn’t matter what a person’s situation is (unless there is absolutely no time for this). Every person must have “alone” time every day – it can be for 30 minutes a day or 1 hour a day, in which a person is simply alone.

The second part to this is, that you have to feel alone in your soul, to feel in your soul that you are disconnected from the world. We must make sure, however, that we have *Ahavas Yisrael* to others, and we must engage in *chessed* with others.

When we do *chessed*, we leave our inner solitude, and thus there are times in which we have to leave our inner solitude, but, the main part of our life should be spent in our inner solitude. This is a sensitive matter; as we said, take 1, 2 or 3 people you know whom you feel that you can reveal *Ahavas Yisrael* to. And these people whom you bond with should be the most truthful people you recognize on this world.

Everything that was said here is not the redemption itself, but it is rather some consolation that can help us get through the situation we are in.

**Q2: How can a person with responsibilities, such as a Rebbi, or a married person with children, have the ability to feel separate from others inside his soul, since he is dealing with other people the whole day?**



**A:** A person who has responsibilities has two abilities in himself. On one hand, he is involved with others, and at the same time, he can still be separate from others. For example, if a Rebbi teaches Aleph Beis to children, and the whole day he is with children. Does he feel that he is totally 'with' them? He should love them, of course, because we must have *Ahavas Yisrael*, but he should not feel that he is totally connected with them. He needs to feel that he is above them. If he feels that he is on their level as he teaches them, then he shouldn't be teaching them. So he needs to love them, while at the same time being aware that he is above them and separate them.

### **Q3: When should a person speak with friends?**

**A:** During your learning time, you shouldn't be *shmoozing* with your friends (except regarding what you are learning). Talk to your friends instead during proper times.

When you speak to friends, don't speak so much, and instead have a few words with them that create a true bond.

There are only a few people whom you can have a real, true bond with. Most people who have lots of "friends" don't even have one true bond with others; the whole relationship they with their friends is shaky and impermanent. People learn together in the same elementary school and then go off to separate high schools, and then everyone goes on to learn in different yeshivos. All of these childhood friendships eventually disappear. Is that called having a real bond with others? It's all *alma d'shikra* (a world of falsity). These friendships formed in childhood were never real; these are the kinds of friendships that are most common in our [false] world.

What is a real friendship? To have a real friendship, find a few people that are close to the depth of your soul's level, and form a real, truth connection with them. It takes a lot less of your time and it's a friendship that has quality to it.

Of course, every friendship takes time for it to become nurtured, but the point is, the part in your soul which needs friendship needs to become focused on forming a true kind of bond, and with people who are truthful.

### **Q4: What are real relationships?**

**A:** A person always has some need for friendship, because we can't handle living alone all the time. Therefore, we need to form true friendships with others, because if not, who knows what a person will seek in order to satisfy that need. Therefore, we need to make sure we have truthful friends in our life.

The Vilna Gaon said that one of the 48 kinyanim of Torah is "less speech", and he explains this to mean that a person has a need to talk with others, and therefore he should indeed have conversations with others (unlike most commentaries who explain it simply to mean that a person should avoid talking), but he should make sure to make light talk with others.

This needs to be done sensibly, but the point is, a person needs to build a truthful friendship with others. When a person doesn't seek to make a true kind of friendship, either he will end up having too much time on his hands, or his friendships will sort of develop on its own without any real quality to it, because the friendship hasn't been properly built with a firm basis. The real way to form a friendship is to develop it from the start in a truthful way, with others who match the depth of your soul.