



BUILDING A SANCTUARY IN THE HEART

How To Stop Being Like Esav

When Rivkah was pregnant with Yaakov and Esav, she was told that there were two nations inside her. Yaakov would inherit the World To Come, while Esav inherits this physical world. In other words, Esav's share is superficiality – *chitzoniyus* -- while Yaakov's share is *pnimiyus*, spirituality.

Esav only wants this world and its materialism, while Yaakov only desires the World to Come – he had no desire for this mundane world.

The fight between Yaakov and Esav didn't only take place inside Rivkah. It takes place in our own souls as well: Do we want spirituality, or do we want this world with its materialism? It is the struggle of our free will, which is a fight about what we really want in life.

The Sages tell us that Esav seemed very pious on the outside, but on the inside, he had no desire whatsoever for the next world. All he wanted was this mundane world and its physicality.

It is not only Esav who acted like this. Any person might act like he wants the next world, but if his inside doesn't want it, he is living a life of superficiality. He doesn't live for the next world and for spirituality. It could even be that he learns Torah and does

mitzvos, but if in his heart all he truly desires is this materialistic world, then he is living his life like Esav.

If we want to change at least a little, we must fight only with our inner struggles and not with our external struggles. Different things have to bother us.

When people only talk about politics and the latest news in the world, this shows that the person lives a superficial kind of life. When a person wonders if it's okay to wear this kind of clothing or not, it's not really an issue of if it's permissible. It's really an issue that has to do with one's *pnimiyus*. Such a question shows that a person is only concerned with this materialistic world.

What should we speak about all the time? We need to speak about what our purpose on this world is, what we came here for.

The world is constantly changing. The problems grow more and more. The world today is different than the world 15 years ago. The problems of this world keep growing, as the Sages said, "There is no day that is not more cursed than the day before it."

If we are to have any hope in our life on this world, we need to change what bothers us.... ■ excerpt from the *derasha* "Spirituality Vs. Materialism from Ramat Beit Shemesh in 2007]

QUESTION (1) The Rav recently responded that the concern today should not be about causing a *chilul* Hashem or not [by not keeping the *shuls* open and disobeying the government's corona restrictions], because it is the conduct of Hashem Who is making a distinction between those who sanctify His Name and those who don't. Does this also apply to America? (2) Just because it is all Hashem running the world, does that exempt people from being careful not to cause Jews to get sick, not to cause *chilul* Hashem and not to cause people to hate religious Jews? I could understand that we should have *mesirus nefesh* not to close our yeshivos and *shuls*, but what *mesirus nefesh* is there to go around without a mask and dance with hundreds of people?

ANSWER (1) The previous question [about causing *chilul* Hashem] was a question if people are acting *halachically* correct or not when they don't keep the government's restrictions, since the secular authorities don't value Torah and *mitzvos* and the *frum* lifestyle - and therefore, the question was if they are causing a *chilul* Hashem. However, the answer given to that question did not get into if they are acting *halachically* correct or not.

(2) This is a broad, and delicate, issue. We will try here to explain it briefly.

Everything in Creation is complex, made up of many different elements, a giant mixture. This is especially true in our generation, where the "Erev Rav" is dominant in Creation, meaning to say that not only are there soul-reincarnations of the "Erev Rav" which are in control of this generation, but everything in Creation is mixed up by the "Erev Rav." Un-

derstand that very well. So the issue you are asking about is no different – it is also a mixture of many different elements.

This epidemic (coronavirus) is a physical expression and outcome of the "Keser" (crown, the highest point) on the side of impurity, which counters the "Keser" on the side of holiness, which is the "crown" of Hashem's Kingship that we await every day – the royalty of Hashem which will be revealed soon through Mashiach Ben Dovid. This will be the final blow of history to the world [ending the non-spiritual reality in front of us as we know it]. This will be the greatest revelation of holiness ever, and it is being countered currently by the "Keser" on the side of evil, which is the "final-hammer blow" that the side of impurity (evil) is wielding [as evil's last attempt to obliterate holiness from the world and to prevent Mashiach and all that will be revealed with the Redemption]. It is essentially all of the 50 forces of impurity being revealed upon the world.

Thus, the root of this epidemic of coronavirus is really a decree of spiritual genocide (*shmad*) upon the Jewish people. And besides this, there are also some countries and some parts of the government which are using the epidemic as a way to declare a war of genocide (*shmad*) on religious Jewry.

This epidemic has disoriented the entire world, on so many different levels. Part of the disorientation is that it has caused an upheaval in the lifestyle of *frum* Jews. First and foremost, it has caused massive *bittul* Torah (wasting time from Torah study). The sefer Meshech Chochmah in the end of *Parshas*

Terumah says that Torah study of many people outweighs a life-threatening situation. There is a lot to say about that, but based upon his words, there are Poskim who ruled in actuality that *bittul* Torah of the community at large is a more important factor than endangering lives – even if the COVID restrictions are not a decree of genocide (*shmad*) on Jewry.

Even more so, we need to understand that each situation has to be weighed differently. Each time one goes out to yeshiva or to the *beis midrash* or to *shul*, and there is a situation where we are not sure if there really is an epidemic taking place, we cannot consider the actions of such a person to be endangering to another individual's life. From a collective view, such behavior can indeed cause death and illness to others *Rachmana Litzlan*, but that is only from a general perspective, and it is not necessarily true in every case as an individual. Therefore, when it comes to *halachah*, we cannot consider the issue in terms of how it affects the general public, but of how it is affecting individuals. And therefore, every situation, in most cases, is not in the category of endangering another's life.

But since such behavior is causing death and illness to others on a general scale, we would need the *Rabbonim* to give general guidelines for the nation, as was done in all other generations before. The Chazon Ish said that if there would be a *Beis Din HaGadol* today that prohibits people from driving a car, although it is not forbidden every time to drive a car, it would still be causing death to others on a general scale. Understand very well this idea.

Therefore, we need to reflect and understand

that on one hand, the epidemic is causing death and illness to others, sometimes on a harsher scale and sometimes on a milder scale. But on the other hand, if we are to come and close all the yeshivos and *batei midrashim* – which is what indeed happened – such a thing shakes us up very deeply. Such a thing has caused thousands to abandon Torah observance, and it has caused many people to weaken in their *ruchniyus*. And many, many Jews started to become more connected with media and internet [ever since the quarantines started]. And there have been many other losses as well to the *ruchniyus* of people. This is all besides the emotional problems, *chinuch* problems, health problems, financial problems, *shalom bayis* problems, and more, which all of this has caused. So there is a lot of thinking needed, so many factors have to be weighed, and it needs to be decided by the Sages who guide our generation.

All of it is being done by Hashem's Divine Providence over us. The entire situation now, which has created so much confusion, and so much divisiveness, with each community following those whom they turn to, has caused a great *chilul* Hashem, which made a big division now between the Torah observant community with those who were not observant of Torah and *mitzvos*. And since all of it is coming from the great mixture that is in our generation today, on one hand it has caused a separation between the Torah observant with those who are not, but at the same time it has caused those who criticize the religious community to become involved with those who are not observant of Torah, to the point that they badmouthed their own fellow Jewish

brethren to the government [committing the horrible sin of slandering another Jew to the government and essentially alienating themselves from the Jewish people in doing so].

And it seems that the same thing has happened in *chutz l'aretz*: There is a separation that has been made now, between the observant Jews and the non-observant Jews, but at the same time, there are also those within the observant community who were critical of their brethren to the point that they involved themselves with the world at large which made them become more mixed [and identified] with world outside of religious Torah Jewry.

QUESTION There is so much lack of clarity and difference of opinion about what we need to do in America (and the question probably also applies to Jews living in *Eretz Yisrael*), and according to what I understand from the words of the Rav, all of the issues today that we are facing are from the mixture of influences in our world [which are coming from the dominance of “*Erev Rav*”], which causes even Torah observant people to commit acts of *chilul* Hashem, inciting anti-semitism from the goyim, and thereby causing damage to their fellow Jewish brethren. What can we do about this? Do we need to fight this? Or should we just go inward into ourselves and not care at all about what’s going on around us, and we should just strengthen ourselves in Torah study and davening, and to focus more

on personal growth and becoming closer to Hashem?

ANSWER To our great pain, the generation today is full of a vast array of severe issues. The problems you are mentioning are just a few of them. But they are not even the main issue of today. And because we don’t have the capacity or energy to deal with every single issue taking place today in our generation, each person as an individual needs to focus on either fixing his worst personal weaknesses, or at least with the primary issue that we are facing collectively.

The primary issue which Jews are facing collectively in this generation is that we are too close to the non-Jewish lifestyle, and especially the media, which is the *Shaar HaNun d'tumah*, the worst level of impurity itself – and that includes everything else involved with media influence. The *tumah* of the media is exactly what blocks the light of Mashiach from being revealed upon the world, and it has already brought down tens of thousands of *neshamos* into spiritual oblivion. It has had a devastating effect even on the most Torah observant people, on almost everyone without exception, causing everyone to take a downhill slide in their general level *ruchniyus* – for some the fall was less, and for some the fall was more. ■ from archive of Q & A

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