

IGNITING OUR INNER FLAME

Rashi in the beginning of *Parshas Behaalosecha* brings the statement of *Chazal* that "the flame of the *Menorah* had to be lit until it would rise on its own." The *Gemara* compares the *neshamah* to a *ner*, a flame. Just as the flame of the *menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* would rise on its own, after it was lit, so must the *neshamah* "rise on its own", for the *neshamah* is compared to the flame of the *Menorah*.

In the early stage of life, a person's *neshamah* is mostly concealed and hidden. A person has the task to inspire himself and awaken the passionate desires for *ruchniyus* that he has in his *neshamah*, so that he can allow his *neshamah* to come forth. At first, one needs to push himself to uncover that passion, but eventually, after one continuously ignites his *neshamah*, by increasing his desires for growth in *ruchniyus*, his *neshamah* can "rise on its own", and it becomes natural for him to desire *ruchniyus* and continual growth.

How warm and receptive are we towards *ruchniyus*, towards seeking *emes*? The *Chofetz Chaim* would say that upstairs, there are 5 levels of how people felt towards *Yiddishkeit* in their life: A heart that is either frozen, cold, lukewarm, hot, or boiling. Those with a frozen or cold heart are completely callous and indifferent towards Torah and *mitzvos*, and this comes from the bad influence of *Amalek* and *Erev Rav* which are dominant in our generation. When a person comes out of his callous state, he can gain a lukewarm attitude about *Yiddishkeit*, which is bit better than being apathetic. When one grows further, he gains warm feelings towards Torah and *mitzvos* and his heart is "hot", and finally, one can reach the most ideal level, where his heart burns with a fiery,

passionate love for Torah, *mitzvos* and genuine *Yiddishkeit*.

In today's times, which are the *ikvesa d'meshicha* (the footsteps to *Mashiach*), the world is filled with *tum'ah*, with devious influences that are the antithesis to Torah. As long as one's heart is not burning for the truth, one will not see the reality he is found in. And if he doesn't understand what kind of *tum'ah* he is really surrounded by, it is almost indefinite that he will fall into it, in his ignorance of the situation.

As the *tum'ah* increases with the further we enter into *ikvesa d'meshicha*, the hearts of people have slowly become more indifferent: lukewarm, cold, and even frozen and stone cold, towards *ruchniyus*

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and *emes*. There is a lack of feeling for the issues that are facing our *ruchniyus* today, and especially for those who were born into homes where there was already an apathetic attitude towards the *emes*. What was once clear to our fathers and grandfathers as totally contradictory behavior to the Torah, has now become totally *l'chatchilah* for many.

What Hashem is asking from people in this generation is that their hearts should be burning with a passion for His will, for His truth, which is revealed in the Torah. This was always the task throughout all generations, but in previous times, it was a matter of which level a person reached. In our times, however, if one's heart is not burning for the *emes*, one will simply

follow the environment around him, which is engulfed by all of the *tum'ah* prevalent today.

Hashem is asking of this generation that our hearts should be warm, passionate and receptive towards the *emes*. Once we gain such a heart, we will immediately see a different reality before us, seeing how most of the world today, even the Torah observant world, is living contradictory to Hashem's will. That realization will help a person separate from the entire world. This is not a high *madreigah* to reach. It is the way to simply survive this generation. Without a burning desire for truth, one becomes captured by his senses. Something may seem permissible on a "halachic" level, but a person who is sensitive to the truth will see a different reality, and he will see that even something that's "permitted" can very well be the worst *tum'ah*. And this is all because we are living in such a difficult *galus*.

Understandably, we must deal with the final tests we are facing in *galus*, by making use of our *bechirah*, making sure to choose the *emes*, to hold strongly onto the *emes* and be ready to fight against anything that isn't true to the Torah way of life. And we must all *daven* and beg Hashem to be saved from the test. But if our hearts are passionate about the *emes*, when we really want the *emes*, one will do even more- he will separate himself entirely from the world today and feel like he is not part of the rest of the generation, because he does not want to live in the reality of *tum'ah* that "is" the world of today.

Having a passionate heart that is warm and receptive to the *emes*, a heart that is burning for truth, is absolutely necessary today for any Jew, to survive the generation today. (from *Bilvavi On The Parsha*)

Q&A – OUR WORLD COMING APART

QUESTION It seems that the world has gotten back to normal, as we can see with our own eyes. So what did the Rav mean that “the world will never go back to the way it was before”?

ANSWER Now that the level called “*Keser*” has descended onto our world, along with a corresponding level of *tumah* (the 50th level of holiness versus the 50th level of impurity to counter it,) the world will not go back to way it was before. We have already said in the past that **the corona is circle-shaped and that it has a crown-like appearance (because it represents the point of the *Keser*/crown), but behind its physical properties is the root of this disease, which is the profound level of *tumah* (impurity) of media use, especially the “smart-phone”, which is rapidly penetrating more and more into the Torah observant world, whether they are unfiltered or partially filtered. There will continue to be turbulence within the physical situation of our world, in different ways, in a cycle of progression and regression, in all kinds of forms. But if one views the world today from an inner viewpoint, he can see it all as an outcome of the *tumah* in our world today *Rachmana Litzlan*, and the results of it are inevitable: **It is all causing the world to come apart.****

QUESTION Since the *tumah* of *internet* has entered into even the *yeshivos*, how then are we supposed to view the general environment in *yeshivos* today? **ANSWER** You need to be immersed in Torah learning and *avodah* (serving Hashem). Generally you need to be aware that you should connect yourself only to individuals who are immersed in serving Hashem, and not with the general *tzibbur* of the “Torah world” as it’s called today, which is mixed with other influences, as is obvious to anyone. That mixture of outside influences which has entered the Torah world is the factor responsible for destroying today’s Torah world.

QUESTION Didn’t our *Gedolim* always say that the *yeshivos* have always been the key element that has saved *Klal Yisrael*, which certainly applies no less nowadays? **ANSWER** *Yeshivos* today can save a person minimally from the dangers that there are today, but **the key element which a person needs today is to build a rich, expansive *olam pnimi*, an inner world of his own.** There are people who don’t have such inner strength, at least for the time being, to live “alone” in their inner world, and they have a need to be connected to a *tzibbur*, and they are in a tough situation, because they need a *tzibbur* in order to be successful in *avodas Hashem*, but the *tzibbur* today is no longer safeguarded today from the *tumah* of the outside influences in the world. If one doesn’t build an inner world of his own today, there is no guarantee that being in *yeshiva* will save him from today’s influences, because we can see with our own eyes that **thousands have already left *Yiddishkeit*** [even though they were in *yeshiva*].

QUESTION Just because media use has entered into *yeshivos*, does that mean that *yeshivos* today don’t have any advantage over the outside world? **ANSWER** *Chas v’shalom, chas v’shalom.* **The outside world is far worse than anything not good in the Torah world today.** It is just that a *beis midrash* today is not protected from the *tumah* of outside influences of today [i.e. a person can be on the *internet* or connected to media while he is in the *beis midrash*]. That is why the *yeshivos* today

can no longer be called an “ark of Noach” to protect a person from the flood of the outside influences of the world. And even in Noach’s ark, there were people who sinned there.

QUESTION There have been many *bochurim* who were in *yeshiva* who unfortunately abandoned Torah and *mitzvos*. . . . Is it possible today that many *bochurim* who were in *yeshiva* went off because they saw *sheker* (falsity), hypocrisy, lack of *yiras shomayim* and lack of good *middos* and lack of *derech eretz* that they see from people in *yeshiva*? Is that what turned them off and made them feel disillusioned with *Yiddishkeit*? **ANSWER** That is one of the reasons for why they go off. But **the main reason [why kids go off] is when they have never yet developed their own *olam pnimi*, an inner world of their own,** and therefore the only “world” that they know of is the *tzibbur*, the community around them. Some of these kids see *sheker* (falsity and hypocrisy) taking place in their community, and that’s why they felt disgusted with their community, which led them to abandoning it. Other kids experienced various other difficulties with their community. Others went through overwhelming emotional trauma or physical trauma which they couldn’t deal with. Others simply are following the *taavos* (lusts and desires) of the world.

QUESTION Does that mean that *yeshivos* of today don’t have any special value to Hashem anymore, because *yeshivos* today are not places of genuine *avodas Hashem* as in the previous generations. . . .? **ANSWER** *Chas v’shalom, chas v’shalom.* It is just that the *yeshivos* today are not considered to be like a “*teivah* of Noach” to can protect a person from outside influences, due to the unwarranted and improper use of technology and media which is everywhere. In *Eretz Yisrael*, other outside influences include innocent-looking vacations to outside of the country, dining in various restaurants, etc.

QUESTION Won’t becoming a *yachid* (individual) and developing my *olam pnimi* (inner world) turn someone into a *baal gaavah* (conceited person) towards others? **ANSWER** **Developing your internal world, and feeling separate from the world today, is a necessity today, and it is not simply a nice quality to have.** That is besides all of the reasons why a person should be humble and not be conceited, as explained in the *Mesillas Yesharim*.

QUESTION Why is it always bad to use *internet*? **ANSWER** There are 2 parts to this. Firstly, there is the very connection to *internet* itself, which is a connection to a zone that contains the worst *tumah* (depravity) possible. Therefore, even if one used the *internet* for Torah learning purposes, it came about through a very impure source. Secondly, there is also the kind of material on the *internet*, and generally, there is no site that is totally clean, whether it’s obvious or subtle. **It does not even make sense at all to tell a person to “choose” which sites he may use and which sites he should not use.** Each person being told that he can use *internet* according to what he needs and how he sees fit, can be compared to placing deadly poison in front of a person and constantly convincing him that he should consume it. **A person should not even use the *internet* for *parnassah*.** Because this *heter* of using the *internet* for *parnassah* purposes has caused people to abuse their use of *internet*, more and more, and it is something that has destroyed the entire generation. And that is why a person should stop using it altogether. (*from the Bilvavi Q & A archive*).