

THE MODERN-DAY EIGEL

Parshas Devarim begins with Moshe rebuking *Klal Yisrael* for the episode that took place by “*Di Zahav*”, which *Rashi* and *Targum* explain as referring to the episode of the *eigel hazahav* (golden calf). By the *cheit haEigel*, the people grew afraid that Moshe wasn't returning to them, and in the place of Moshe, they made the calf. Moshe personified the concept of *da'as* (understanding), so the golden calf was the total opposite of this holy power of *daas* of Moshe. What exactly was the concept behind the golden calf, and how was it the opposite of Moshe, or *da'as*?

Moshe's power of *daas* gave him the power of *hanhagah*, leadership, over the Jewish people. Just as there was a Moshe Rabbeinu who led the people on a collective level, so is there a private level of “Moshe Rabbeinu” in each person's soul, which leads him as an individual. The power of *daas* in a person is what leads the entire person. *Chazal* state about *daas* that “everything is in it”. The power of *daas* leads *Klal Yisrael* as a whole, and it also leads the individual. An adult is called a *bar daas* whereas a child is not, because a child cannot be a *manhig* (leader) over himself, whereas an adult has the power to guide himself.

The opposite of the power of *daas* is represented by the “*eigel hazahav*”. Clearly, the golden calf was not just an object of idol worship. It represented a different leading force that the people wanted, in which a person is being led not by Moshe/*daas*, but the opposite of *daas*. At Har Sinai, when the Torah was revealed, we received the power of *daas* as our guiding force. When there is Torah, there

is *daas* that leads us. But when the destruction began with *eigel*, it was *eigel* that began to lead.

At Har Sinai, the people returned to the level of Adam before the sin, as the Sages state that the “impurity of the Serpent” left them when they stood at Sinai. But with the sin of the *eigel*, they fell to the level where they are being led by some outer force. That other, outer force is otherwise known as that which made the *eigel*: their money. Ever since then, the *eigel* - or money - has a certain power in our world. Money can be ruling people's lives, both on the collective level as well as on the individual level, when people let money guide their lives, as opposed to letting *daas* (Moshe/Torah) run their life. Those who have a lot of money are the ones who are running the world.

In the ideal life, the root of all *shefa* (abundance) comes from the Torah, represented by Moshe. *Chazal* state that Moshe became wealthy from the sapphire stones in the *Luchos*. Moshe's wealth came from the Torah itself, and did not come from any attitude of wishing to lead and control the people. He was totally removed from any such motivation, and his entire power to lead the people came from the power of holy *daas* which he personified.

There were also very wealthy sages throughout the generations, who merited both greatness in Torah as well as prestige, honor, and enormous wealth, such as Shlomo HaMelech and Rabbeinu HaKadosh.. The root of their wealth came from the Torah, from Moshe Rabbeinu, whose wealth and power to lead the people came solely from the Torah. But wealth becomes evil when it is used for its own

purpose, when it is used to lead and control people without being subservient to *daas*, to the Torah.

Every single individual has the choice, to decide between truth and falsity. Each person can wonder: “From where is all abundance (*shefa*) supposed to come from?” If a person understands that it is *daas* which must be the leading force in his life, and that all abundance should come from there, he is choosing truth. But if, *chas v'shalom*, one does not choose truth, and instead he follows the environment around him and the people of this generation, he will fall into the abysses of destruction. He will fall into the rule of the wealthy people who are controlling this generation, and into whatever that will entail for him. That is only natural for people living in this generation, when they let the money of the wealthy become the main influence of how they will lead their lives.

The true choice of *bechirah* which each individual has is: to choose who and what is leading his life. One should choose to follow Hashem and His Torah as the leading force in his life, and to submit himself to that inner, truthful world. Of such a person, *Chazal* say that “It is as if the *Beis HaMikdash* was built in his time.” A person should not allow himself to be dominated by anything to do with money. Whenever we make important decisions in life, the very first factor that affects our decisions should always be: Do we want to live a life of purity, *kedushah*, truth, Torah, and a desire for closeness with Hashem? May Hashem merit us the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* will be rebuilt. Amen. (from *Bilvavi On The Parsha*)

TISHA B'AV – THE DESTRUCTION IN OUR TIMES

When we want to mourn over the *Beis HaMikdash* we are missing, we can reflect about the modern-day destructions that are taking place, the destruction of *ruchniyus*, which began ever since the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed and which continues in each generation. The destruction which takes place in times, which can be clearly seen, has many facets to it. But we should understand the basis of it, and then the branches, of the depth of the destruction that exists in our times.

It is the fact that *kedushah* (holiness), the safeguarding of all parameters of *halachah*, and all holy feelings for truth and to live an inner, Torah-true life – all of these things have become covered over in our times. Even more than this, the frightening depth of *tum'ah* (defilement) has descended onto the world, and it is the depths of this reality of destruction we are in. The inner layer of all this *tumah* is the fact that all of the definitions of the Torah have become unclear to a person. Every *halachah*, and every protective measure that safeguards the *halachah*, something which has always protected the entire *Klal Yisrael* throughout the generations, has become trampled upon, as if it can be done away with.

Tumah has descended into the depths of the souls of people. The definitions of the Torah no longer awaken a person with the same intensity as in previous times. This indifference to the Torah manifests as an apathetic attitude in which anything can be trampled upon and removed. Understandably, those who throw off the yoke of Torah do so openly. But even those who aren't throwing off the yoke of Torah are slowly removing it from upon themselves, little by little.

A sensible person understands that the entire way that *Yiddishkeit* looks today is only a matter of time (if *chas v'shalom* the *Geulah* doesn't come soon) that every point of *kedushah* and everything that protects the *halachos* of the Torah will all be gone. Certainly, this doesn't mean that people will start eating *chometz* on Pesach. But the inner attitude of people has become covered over from a sensitivity to purity and holiness, to the point that the only external "guidelines" remain, without the inner fire which is needed for a life of truth and holiness.

As a result of this, there is nothing holy which remains in place, because all of that holiness is being removed, little by little. Of this, we can cry over deeply, "*My eyes, my eyes, spill with water.*" We need to understand that the entire world of *kedushah* thrives on keeping to its boundaries. When almost all of the boundaries have been broken, everything becomes open to *tumah*.

Any sensible person understands that even a decade ago, no one could have guessed that the world would look like it is today. A person could swear that it doesn't make sense that the *bnei Torah* look like this today. But this is the reality. We aren't speaking about those who don't keep Torah and mitzvos, and we are not speaking of those who keep half, or a third, or a quarter, of the Torah, which are in the category of *beinonim*, as the Chazon Ish called it. We aren't speaking about those

who are outside of the Torah camp. We are speaking about the middle, the mainstream Torah world. We aren't speaking here of any one extreme group, but of the middle.

We can give several examples from our world. Even speaking about this already brings us outward into the world, but that is the depth of our exile we are in, where we have no choice but to speak about this and become aware of the situation we are in.

We all remember how it used to be that when a person wanted to hear a *shiur*, a Torah lecture, he had a tape recorder or a CD player. The world has advanced a lot since then, but look what the world has come to today. How the world got there, is irrelevant at this point. Let us look at what it is now. The use of the media today was first used by Torah observant Jews for the purposes of *kiruv*. They started all kinds of websites, for the purposes of drawing our brethren closer. But any sensible person understands that this was not *kiruv rechokim* (drawing close those who are distant), but *richuk kerovim* (distancing those who were already close), by enabling those who would have never used Internet to start using the Internet, all in the name of using it for Torah purposes.

The following is just an example, but it is far more encompassing. Even in the most *Chareidi* places, they have a website, and they advertise their websites in the *Chareidi* papers. It doesn't matter what, it doesn't matter who – it is the same reality. It was advertised there that a person can donate to *tzedakah* organizations, through a computer stationed outside the shul, and that it's also possible to donate through their website, and that this is kosher. They are not advertising this to wealthy donors from outside Eretz Yisrael – they are advertising this in the most *Chareidi* newspapers which *bnei Torah* are looking at.

Now, if one doesn't have any sense, he will defend this and say that it was only relevant for those who have Internet for *parnassah* (livelihood) needs, and that they got a special *heter* (Rabbinic permission) for it, etc. But anyone who can say such a thing is either lacking a mind aligned with Torah, or he has a cold indifference in his heart towards all that is holy.

It is clear and simple. The path that this is leading towards is very understandable, for anyone who has eyes to see. In essence, the filthiest word that there is in the world – the Internet – is sitting in the midst of most *Chareidi* homes. True, there is a small group of *avreichim* who have some *daas* and they are not found in this. But every week, there are advertisements in the papers which almost all of them are reading, again and again and again. Everything is falling apart!

Does anyone think that the signatures which are being signed to allow Internet for *parnassah* – does anyone think that any of this contains even one proper signature? Any *Rav* in *Klal Yisrael* who examines the situation can say it clearly, that perhaps it's better than what takes place in the outside world, but everything, **all of these "hechsherim" (kosher certifications) on kosher Internet use are the absolute churban (destruction) of Klal Yisrael, an absolute churban!!**

There is no way for the world of Torah to remain, if reality continues in this way. There is no way. If they do remain, it would be a miracle. The *tzibbur* can remain like this? It cannot happen, because these things are all *tumah*. Understandably there are degrees of *tumah* for each person, each according to his own level. It all started for allowing internet for *kiruv rechokim* purposes, and then it began to extend further than that, to the point that *avreichim* are signing that they will only have “closed” [filtered] Internet - this is a “closed” *Gehinnom!* Simple!

If anyone thinks that these words are an exaggeration, he must know that all of these things have brought everyone, the entire generation, into the lowest depths of the *Sh'eol* (the abysses of defilement).

The path which we are traversing now is exactly the path that was traversed before the Holocaust. It is exactly that path. Understandably, there are differences, but the path is the same path. The end of this generation will be either one of two extremes. Either, *chas v'shalom*, there will be a return to what happened then – or, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will have compassion on everyone and take us out of the *tumah*, in His compassion, and skip over the attribute of judgment. But if not, it will be the same end. It will be the same end!

There is no other way for the reality to continue in this generation. *Chazal* said that in the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*, there was not a roof which didn't contain an idol on it. Every home had one. We must understand that this is exactly what is happening today. **It cannot be that there can be a “*hechsher*” on any Internet use, it cannot be!** Anyone who already recognized this before understands that such a thing is insensible. It is like trying to make idol worship kosher.

The intentions of those who want to make things “kosher” today are doing so with the intention of minimizing the filth of today. But what has it caused? It has caused that those who would have used these things anyway have become limited in what they could do, but slowly, it also caused even those who were sheltered to now be influenced. It is advertised in the weekly papers, week after week, everything with a kosher “*Me'ushar*” symbol, and only ‘for the purposes of *parnassah*’, and only ‘for necessity’. Each person has three Rabbonim who permitted it from him, and the like. It is impossible to have a *Klal Yisrael* when everything is built on *heterim* upon *heterim*. It is all a *churban*, a destruction!

The Jewish nation needs *parnassah*, everyone needs *parnassah*. So people need to go to work and there will be *parnassah*. It is clear to any sensible person – if someone doesn't see it, he is totally blind – that it's true, there aren't enough jobs available, and more business opportunities need to be opened up – and this is all drawing people into the outside world, in the pursuit of finding a job. Slowly a person is drawn outside, in the world out there.

Even if a person would learn Torah all day and teach about fear of G-d to his children, even then, he is still very much in

spiritual danger. But the inner inspiration has gone and weakened. The exit into the outside world has increased. One is sitting and learning and his wife works to earn livelihood, and eventually she finds herself getting further and further into the world out there, in the jobs of today, which mix the outside world and all of its influences into the Torah world.

The concept of segregating men and women from each other today, which was once a clear-cut concept, is no longer that clear. It used to be that even if a woman had to write her name somewhere, she would use her initials. Today, there's no problem with writing the full name. New rules have taken over in the last few years. Today, a woman can work in any kind of job. There is even a movement amongst *Chareidi* women to run for Knesset.

The point which we need to understand is that people are living their lives in a way that mimics the non-religious. People find several Rabbonim who can give them “*heterim*” for all kinds of things, and when they find a *heter*, they want to take it further.

If someone thinks that what we are saying here is an exaggeration, or that it's all from a negative perspective, he simply doesn't understand where he is found. Any sensible person must understand one thing. The generation is destroyed! It is already destroyed! It is not about what will happen, the generation is already destroyed, and that is where we are found. Certainly every person has the free will to close himself off in the world of Torah, but his children are still open to the world, and he must deal with whatever will present itself.

This is the modern-day destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash!* There was never as much destruction as in today's generation. The entire Torah world has been destroyed in our times, and it is the depth of the power of evil which *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has brought down into the world. No one is to be blamed for it. It is just the depth of the power of evil which Hashem has brought down into the world. Understandably, each sect will find it comfortable to blame the issues on a different sect, and place different groups on different sides, but that doesn't get us anywhere. Where are we found, practically speaking? We are found in a place where all of the proper boundaries between Jew and gentile, between the Torah world and the outside world, have been toppled. They have become completely trampled upon, almost totally!

We need to understand that just as in the generation of the *Beis HaMikdash*, everything was *hefker* (made carefree) and there was idol-worshipping in every home, in our own times as well, in our generation, **all of the homes which have filtered Internet is a form of idol worship, which is destroying the generation.** That is only the root, but the branches extend in all directions.

The *tumah* has made its way into all directions, and it is trying to uproot everything, as simple as that sounds. This is the modern-day destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* which we are found in – to anyone who opens his eyes, who can see where

we are found in, whose heart can bleed over the situation. If one wants to run away from the reality today, either he will think that the words here are only talking about certain extremes, or about certain directions where this has all gone to. No! This is the reality!!

In the generation such as ours which we are found in, to raise children properly is in the category of a miracle. It is an absolute miracle. The Chofetz Chaim said this even before the Holocaust. In our generation, it is a total miracle, to raise children properly.

We say in *Selichos* “What should the child do and not sin?” But what should a father in today’s times do, so that he shouldn’t become cooled off each day from his *yiras shomayim*, from being connected to the Torah, from a life of truth, from closeness to Hashem? He must desire, truly, to live a life of *kedushah*!!

One must recognize and know the depths of *tumah* which he is found in, in our generation, and then he can become afraid and tremble, at every moment, that he shouldn’t fall into the depths of *She’ol*, to the depths of the *shaar hanun d’tumah*, “50th Gate of Impurity”.

In all the generations, it was difficult to mourn the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, because a person doesn’t see the destruction before him and would have a hard time connecting to such a thing. But in our generation, the destruction is before our eyes, day after day, hour after hour, and the destruction can be seen as long as one doesn’t close his eyes from it.

For one who remains truly attached to the Torah and he is not pulled after the way the world is living today, he will have it all good. “Anyone who mourns Yerushalayim will merit to see it rebuilt”, and may we merit, with the help of Hashem, that whatever was described here should all go up in flames, so that the day will come when we will actually sense the coming of Mashiach. (בין המצרים_027_חורבן הדור תשע"ז)

Q&A - Kinnos

QUESTION Do I fulfill the *aveilus* of *Tisha B’av* with just saying a little bit of *Kinnos* with all my heart even if I don’t have the energy to say all of them?

ANSWER Generally, one needs to balance his emotions with the intellect, *daas*. This is the general inner work of building our *seichel* (intellect). Even before you have reached that balance, though, every person needs to say *Kinnos*, as is the *minhag* of *Klal Yisrael*. However, many people have become accustomed to saying it according to their emotional capacity, according to what their heart can handle. But this needs to be examined very carefully: It should not *chas v’shalom* be coming from laziness or from a laxity about one’s responsibility of saying *Kinnos*. Each person fulfills his obligation of *aveilus* (mourning) according to his emotional capacity and according to the defining parameters of *halachah*. (from the Bilvavi Q & A archive).

THE AVODAH OF BEIN HAZEMANIM

Creation is designed in a way that we need action and serenity. We awake and we go to sleep. Just as the body needs rest, so does our *nefesh*, our emotions and thoughts, also need rest. Our *nefesh* is constantly moving. Whether a person learns Torah all day or works all day, there is no person who doesn’t need to take a break.

The purpose of a break is so that the soul can cease from action and thereby have the strength to expand later when it needs to. However, it is clear that the amount of time needed for this “break” is relative to the individual. The length of time needed for *Bein HaZemanim* is not equal for all people. Also, the way that this break is spent, and what to do during this time, is subtle. By definition, a “break” is about having time to calm down. The purpose of *Bein HaZemanim* is for a person to take a break when he needs it, and as much as needs it. At the start of *Bein HaZemanim*, a person needs to calm himself. After that, sometimes a person will resume what he was learning before, and at other times he will become involved with learning something else, which continues his “break”.

For one kind of person, a “break” means learning a different *sugya*. For another person, a break means learning at a different pace, such as learning *bekiyus* [superficially] instead of *iyun* [in-depth], or by focusing on *halachah* as opposed to *iyun* or *bekiyus*. Others, instead of learning Gemara, can take a break by learning *mussar* and *Aggadta* – instead of exerting the mind, they exert the heart. Instead of learning in a system, one can learn in a way that is more tailored to him personally, such as by studying other areas of Torah that he has a particular interest in learning. Each person should clarify (1) What his main area of Torah is, and (2) How he can learn in a more relaxed manner.

Sometimes *Bein HaZemanim* arrives and a person may not have actually have a need such a long break. Or, a person may not need *Bein HaZemanim* at all. If that is the case, one should continue to learn, on his own level, as if he is continuing the *zman*.

Bein HaZemanim is also a time to acquire more inner achievements that one does not ordinary reach during the regular routine of the year. The idea that *Bein HaZemanim* has been turned into a time to seek a wide array of enjoyments and materialistic pleasures is simply a hedonistic lifestyle, which originates from the gentile nations. It has no place in the life of any sensible person who wishes to live life like a Torah Jew.

It is up to each individual to figure out what relaxes him. Examples may include listening to songs (which are of a pure source), observing a scenic view, going to a new place, reading something light (as long as it contains meaningful content), etc. One also needs to determine which area of Torah learning and *avodas Hashem* is more “relaxing” for him. דרשות 105 הכנה לבין הזמנים אב תשעו