

Va'eschanan

A Time for Reflection

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Time for Reflection

Gehinnom On This World

Chazal say that as the pit was swallowing Korach and his followers, the children of Korach did *teshuvah*, and a place above *Gehinnom* (hell) was formed where they ended up and where they continue to sing *shirah* today. We see from this a concept that there can be a place formed within *Gehinnom* that is **separate** from *Gehinnom*.

We must know that the world we are found in is really a *Gehinnom*.

One who hears this the first time might not be used to such harsh terminology, but this is the true definition. It is a very precise description. This is the reality which we are in. If a Torah scholar commits sins, G-d forbid, he goes to *Gehinnom*. What does he do there? He continues to sit and learn Torah. In this world too, one can learn Torah, but that doesn't change the fact that this world is still a place of *Gehinnom*.

It is *Gehinnom* due to many reasons. Most of the world lives a life of *hefker* (anarchy) - and as the *Gemara* says, a slave prefers to be *hefker* from any servitude. The whole lifestyle today is *Gehinnom*! As soon as a person wants to "stand up" and say something truthful, he is despised. The Sages predicted that in our era, those who fear G-d will be despised, the wisdom of Torah scholars will be regarded as rotten, and the truth will be very concealed (*Sotah 49a*).

If someone doesn't realize that the reality of the world right now is *Gehinnom*, he has already fallen into *Gehinnom* - and he probably thinks that he's in *Gan Eden*....

This is the truth, this is reality. This is not an extreme opinion - it is describing reality of the world we live in. It is a world of total *hefker* - anarchy.

Separating From The World Each Day

Within this world of *hefker*, though, we can still have some time of the day where we are separate from the *Gehinnom* around us. We need to have time every day where we feel totally separate from the world. The purpose of this time is not to learn Torah; rather, the point is to be separate from the world, and from there, to be able to continue learning Torah.

The Spiritual Danger of Bein HaZemanim

We will soon be entering a time where we are more involved with the world outside. So how do we conduct ourselves? We must realize that entering the outside world doesn't enable us to survive spiritually, at all. It is almost impossible to keep Torah and *mitzvos* when you are so out there in the world. We can't say it's totally impossible, but it is almost impossible.

The world out there totally contradicts the Torah. It contradicts *halacha*, simply speaking - we are not referring to high spiritual levels. We are talking about the basics. Involvement in the outside world (and even the parts that are officially less connected with the outside world) doesn't allow a person to keep Torah and *mitzvos*; it is a total contradiction to our Shulchan Aruch.

The first difficulty we face is because we are going into a time where we are having more involvement with the world. Even if one learns many hours in

the *beis midrash* [during *Bein HaZemanim*], if his soul is connected to the outside world, this itself is a painful situation. If one doesn't feel that pain, it means that he didn't he didn't acquire what he was supposed to acquire during the *zman* (season) spent in yeshiva. The very fact that we have to be more involved with the outside world should feel painful to anyone.

Surviving Spiritually: by Disconnecting

What indeed should one do about it?

There was a place above *Gehinnom* formed for the sons of Korach. In other words, even within *Gehinnom* itself, there is a place where one can be apart from *Gehinnom*.

In practical words, there is an inner place in our soul, where one can disconnect from all that goes on in the world. This is not referring to certain actions that one must do, nor is it referring to "talking in learning" or "thinking in learning". It means to acquire a place in the soul where one disconnects, and he does not feel anything that goes on in his surroundings. This is the inner advice that can help a person survive the spiritual dangers of a time where we leave yeshiva and we enter the outside world.

Each person needs to have inner place in his soul he can go to, a private place in himself, where there is only Hashem in his world, and he feels no one else there.

One must be able to connect to this place in himself and thereby disconnect from the surroundings. In fact, all of the exertion in Torah we are involved with during our time in yeshiva is meant so that we can be able to enter this inner place in ourselves, where there is nothing except you and your Creator - where you are alone with Him.

Becoming Spiritually Sensitive To The Situation

If one doesn't feel the painful situation of reality today, he doesn't know where he is. He does not recognize the situation right now. On the other hand, if he is aware of the painful situation, he might fall into despair, realizing that he is surrounded by *Gehinnom*. And then he might give up and just get used to it, making peace with the situation....

The truth is that we cannot totally escape the *Gehinnom* we are in on this world until the day of death. The only issue is how much of a *Gehinnom* our life is and what kind of *Gehinnom* it will be; it is in our hands to lessen the degree of the *Gehinnom* in our life.

As long as a person remains oblivious to this reality that the world is *Gehinnom*, he won't feel the need to separate from it. He has learned to make peace with it and he feels like he can live with it. But this is a very callous and superficial attitude towards life.

If one sees reality as it is, he realizes that he lives in a world which is entirely *hefker*. Surely the Torah makes it mark on people, but the actual perspective which people are living life with is an attitude of *hefker*. To adapt to such a reality causes us inner suffering.

Compare this to walking by a chicken coop that is full of 50 chickens. Is anyone prepared to live in there? No person can handle such a thing. It is unbearable for anyone to live there. So too, the reality around us is really impossible to live in. It is too much suffering to anyone who is a bit sensitive to the spiritual. Anyone who lives a bit of a spiritual life sees this world as a contradiction to his life. The world outside of us totally contradicts our inner and spiritual side to life; there is no resemblance. They are, literally, "worlds apart".

I hope that you are getting the inner point of these words. It is essentially about how we view life. We must see the outside world as a total contradiction to

our inner world. The problem is not simply that there's not enough Torah and *mitzvos* being performed in the outside world. It is a far deeper issue than that. To define the problem as only that would be totally ignoring our inner world. The point is because the life found on the outside world is in total contradiction with our inner world.

Reflecting Each Day During Bein HaZemanim

To internalize these words, one needs to seclude himself and reflect, deeply, into these words. One needs to reflect during specially set aside times for reflection, as well as learning Torah for several hours alone. This enables one to reach an inner place in himself. In this way, even when a person has to be involved with the world, he is able to keep returning to this serene place in his soul.

To practically work on this, one can take a particular Torah thought and keep thinking about it throughout the day. But the point is to enter a deeper and deeper place within oneself. Just as a house contains several rooms, and there can be doors within doors that lead to other doors, so are there rooms within the soul, where one can go deeper and deeper within himself. It takes hard work to get there, but we must know that without it, it is impossible to spiritually survive this world.

Each person, on his own level, is already in touch with the deepest part of himself. Each person needs to reveal it more and become more connected to it throughout this month. When we are in yeshivah, it is not as necessary to do this, because we are protected from the outside world. But when it's *Bein HaZemanim* and we go out into the world, we are in spiritual danger, so we must become more in touch with the inner place in ourselves.

To illustrate, when you *daven Shemoneh Esrei* and you know that you had a good *davening*, you feel like you are going deeper into yourself. That depth you

have reached really needs to be accessed more often throughout the day; you need to live it. Obviously there is always more depth that can be reached. But the point is that you can live and be in that deep place in yourself you have accessed – as opposed to mere temporary inspiration.

Some people think that *Bein HaZemanim* is the perfect time to learn every day, or learning *Shemiras HaLashon* all day, or to listen to speeches and receive inspiration about *shalom bayis* (marital peace) so that one should be able to avoid getting into domestic disputes in the home on *erev Chag*. Something is missing here. This is a totally superficial approach. It means that a person will be living totally superficially and then to try to somehow survive and to make the damage as least as possible.

There is no way to get by life successfully if we remain on the superficial side of life, especially in this generation we live in. What we have explained here is not 'advice' – it is an inner way to live.

Practically speaking, in order to actualize these words, take the time every day and meditate on the inner place in yourself, and protect it, by returning to it in your thoughts, throughout the day. To illustrate, a person knows that he comes home to his house at the end of the day, no matter what he has gone through that day. Our true 'house' is actually our own inner world.

The real place of refuge exists in a deep part of ourselves.

You can keep returning to it throughout the day. When you have access to this place in yourself, your physical body can be involved with this world yet your soul remains in this place of refuge. This enables you to live on this world yet be separate from it at the same time.

This is a concept which at times you may strongly identify with at times, and at other times, it will feel like some high and lofty spiritual level. But you

should know that this is the way we must live, and there is no other way to get by this world.

There are many ways that can get you to this point, which are brought in the words of our Sages, and there is no one way for everybody. But the common denominator is that all people, in order to survive spiritually on this world, need to access this point - the deep place in the soul where one lives alone from the rest of the world.

It is a person's inner home and refuge, where the windows and doors are closed to the outside and there is not even a ray of sunlight from the outside coming in.

Understandably, we have a family to take care of, and we must get along with others. But there are two sides to our life. There is a part of us which relates to others and lives with others, and there is a part of ourselves which is alone and private, and it can be separate and secluded from others.

Bein HaZemanim is a time to protect that which we have gained from during the *zman*, by having quiet time to enter deeper into ourselves.

One can try setting aside an hour, two hours, or three hours (whatever he can do) and to enter deeper into himself.

In Conclusion

I hope these words have been understood properly, and that it should be clear that *Bein HaZemanim* should be seen as a tool to return to our real "home": to the inner "home" in the soul. This is the inner kind of life for one who searches for it and he doesn't want his Torah to become like torn pieces to him. It is to have an orderly kind of life deep within the soul.

There are surely other external things which can protect our spirituality, but those things are only enough to make sure that our level [of *Yiddishkeit*] doesn't become too cold; it keeps us lukewarm. But those external things do not enable us to really keep it strong.

If the words here have spoken to you, try to actualize them on your own level, according to how you have understood them. ■ Translated from the original hebrew shiur: Translated from the original Hebrew shiur: דרשות 0114 – הכנה לבין הזמנים אדר תשע"ו