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ערב שב"ק ויקהל פקודי פר' החודש תש"פ

Many people have requested to hear divrei chizuk during this difficult period that we are now in, locked in our houses, and all the shuls are locked and public tefillos and shiurei Torah have been closed down.

It is worthwhile quoting a letter that was written by the Belzer Rebbe (Reb Yehoshua Rokach zt"l) to the first Vizhnitzer Rebbe zt"l when he was very ill, in which he writes as follows:

"I was very concerned to hear that his close chassidim are worried that his honour might consider fasting on Yom Kippur, how can I believe such a rumour about a holy person like him. Surely, Hashem who has commanded us to fast on Yom Kippur has also commanded us '*venishmartem lenafshoseichem*' that we guard our health.

I remember that when my father zt"l (the first Belzer Rebbe Reb Sholom Rokeach) was ill, we went around with a worry that he might not want to eat on Yom Kippur, but in his great righteousness, he hurried as soon as Kol Nidrei was over and commanded that he be brought food to eat as much as he needed, and he proclaimed 'I hereby am fulfilling the wish of my Creator, **and he ate with such a simcha the likes of which we never saw on him, only when he ate the matza at the seder and shook the lulav on Succos.** Therefore no doubt his honour will also be diligent in this mitzvah to guard his health and obey the advice of the doctors, especially a great person of his honours stature to whom Klall Yisroel looks up to for guidance, and he will be extremely careful not to fast, lest others learn from him and thereby put their lives at risk".

Similarly, we are all now obligated with a very great and lofty mitzvah of '*venishmartem moed lenafshoseichem*' "ונשמרתם מאוד לנפשותיכם" to look after our health and wellbeing,

and although we cannot daven with a minyan or go to a public shiur, now is not the correct time to worry and be upset that we have been deprived from these mitzvos that have been taken from us, **rather we should be besimcha that we have been given a great and holy mitzvah of ‘venishmartem moed lenafshoseichem’ to fulfill the wish of Hashem in accordance of the way we have been instructed in the Torah,** and so the Gerer Rebbe zt”l the Chidushei Harim told his son when he was very ill, that his obligation is now to keep the mitzva of ‘Uvacharta Bachaim’ “ובחרת בחיים” to choose life, and to strengthen himself with a will to live and be healthy to serve Hashem and keep His Torah.

Yesterday I spoke to the Boyaner Rebbe shlita and I asked him to tell me some divrei chizuk that I can relay to others and he said to me as follows: The first thing a person needs to know are the words of Dovid Hamelech in Tehillim (chapter 131) “כגמול עלי אמו כגמול עלי נפשי” Like a small baby who feels and secure in his mothers arms, so we are in the Hands of Hashem who He is a merciful Father, and we must not allow ourselves to fall into a panic.

The Rebbe also added that in the Torah it is written “ושמרתם את המצות” “*veshermartem es hamatzos*” you shall guard the matzos to ensure they are kosher lePesach and have not in any way had their kashrus compromised. We know how careful we are every year to make sure that under no circumstances even the tiniest speck of chometz should come into contact with our pesach food. If this is true about the matzos, how much more careful do we all have to be regarding our health as the Torah has exhorted us “ונשמרתם מאוד לנפשותיכם” ‘*venishmartem moed lenafshoseichem*’, the *shemirah* has to be **מאוד** *moed* way above the level of care and stringency of guarding the matzos. We cannot afford and we are not allowed to take any chances or liberties with our health and we are all obligated to listen and to obey the rulings of the government and the health officials.

But at the same time we are also all obligated to know that together with the shmiras haguf has to be a shemiras hanefesh to strengthen ourselves in Torah and Tefilla, and not to constantly need to know all the time the latest news. The month of Nissan is coming, we have to prepare bechol yom sheyovo, **to believe that Moshiach can come any day, any hour any minute!** (until here is the message of the Boyaner Rebbe Shlita).

It is written in the name of the Apta Rov zt"l to explain the possuk "ונשגב ה' לבדו ביום ההוא" "And Hashem will be exalted on that day" that in order for Moshiach to come, we all need to come to the understanding and the realization that we have no one to turn to except for Hashem Yisborach. In this Corona pandemic, we have all been aroused to the words of the Novi Hoshia (chapter 14) who tells Klall Yisroel to repent and return to Hashem, Assarya will not save you, your fast horses will not spirit you to safety.

"שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך וכו' אשור לא ישיענו על סוס לא נרכב"

Similarly we have all come to the realization that neither America nor England, not the U.N. the E.U. Nato etc. etc. can stop the virus, we have no fast horses with which to run away to a safe haven, planes are grounded and travel has come to a halt and there is nowhere to run to as Dovid Hamelech exclaimed (chapter 139) "where can I go and to where can I flee from before you" וכו' "אנה אלך מרוחך ואנה מפניך אברח" וכו' .

The gemara (Baba Kama 60:) tells us that in a time of a plague one has to stay at home and the gemara quotes two pesukim in support of this ruling. The first possuk is a possuk we are all familiar with, and is written in connection to Makos Bechoros ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו and you shall not leave your house until the morning. Whilst the plague of Makos Bechoros was raging the Yidden all had to stay indoors so as not to be affected. The gemara then quotes a second possuk from ספר ישעיה go my people into your homes and shut your doors behind you לך עמי בא בחדריך וסגור דלתיך בערך . The gematria of "Corona" is 367 which is exactly the gematria of the words עמי בא בחדריך My people go into your rooms!

We should take a chizuk from the words of this gemara that this possuk of ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו and you shall not leave your house until the morning is written regarding the very last night that Klall Yisroel were in Golus in Egypt and in the morning they went out to freedom, so we have to daven and have emunah that this corona pandemic should be the very last trial that we have to deal with in our long and hard golus and it should herald the beginning of the Geula speedily in these days

ומי שעשה נסים לאבותינו וגאל אותם מעבודת לחירות הוא יגאל אותנו בקרוב ויקבץ נדחינו מארבע כנפות הארץ חברים כל ישראל ונאמר אמן.

ידידכם ישראל פרידמן

