



Rabbi Chaim Zundel Pearlman

Emeritus Rabbi of the Machzike Hadath Synagogue & Rosh Beit Midrash Hendon
The author can be contacted at: czp@mailteq.com



Parshah

CLARITY IN TIMES OF TURMOIL

וחרה אפי בו ביום ההוא ועזבתים והסתרתני פני מהם והיה לאכל ומצאהו רעות רבות וצרות ואמר ביום ההוא
הלא על כי אין אלקי בקרבי מצאוני הרעות האלה: (וילך לא יז)

“My anger shall be kindled against them on that day, and I will forsake them etc. and many evils and troubles will befall them, so he will say on that day: Since Hashem is not in my midst, these evils have come upon me”.

The earlier part of this verse mentions many evils and troubles - ומצאהו רעות רבות וצרות. However later in the same sentence the Torah refers only to these evils - מצאוני הרעות.

So why does the second part of the *possuk* only refer to these evils - הרעות - and not to the many evils and troubles - רעות רבות וצרות?

This question troubled Rav Shach, and he writes an explanation in his introduction to his monumental work ‘Avi Ezri’, which he was writing in 1948, at the time of the siege of Yerusholayim. Whilst the war was raging outside, and he was suffering intense deprivation and experiencing great fear for his future, he found the strength to produce some of his most original *chidushim*.

He asked himself the following question. On the one hand, our Sages tell us Torah is only acquired when one is at ease - בישוב² and further it is said clarity is required for learning Torah, - שמעתתא בעיא צילותא³. Yet, on the other hand, Shlomo Hamelech says אך אף חכמי עמדה לי⁴ and the Sages interpret this to mean that the wisdom I studied at a time of אך when there was upheaval in the world, that Torah is retained by me and sustains me⁴.

Pirkei Ovos Chapter 6 1

² Eiruvim daf 65a
³ Koheles Chapter 2 verse 9
⁴ Yalkut Koheles ibid.

Surely this is contradictory, if it is a time of war there cannot be *תשוב הדעת*!

Rav Shach gives a profound answer which epitomises his own personality. The more one toils in Torah, the greater the acquisition of Torah, as Chazal say⁵ יגעת ומצאת תאמין. The test is to overcome the diversions and tribulations of life and to be able to concentrate in the most difficult of times to reach the requisite level of *תשוב הדעת* and to attain *שמעתתא בעיא צילותא*. This is a very difficult to achieve, but if one can exercise such self-control then his *chidushim* in Torah can reach a very high level. This was the lofty thought that Rav Shach was able to be *מחדש* at such a difficult time in his life, when he was in grave danger and he did not know whether he would have bread to eat the next day.

With this thought, we can understand the above *possuk*. At a time of danger then many evils and troubles may befall us. The actual persecution - רעות - may be outside our control and cannot be avoided. If there is war and starvation, then inevitably we must suffer. However, as far as the *צרות* are concerned, this refers to the anguish and mental pressures as a consequence of the physical oppression, with effort this can be overcome. If one is unable to

Megilah daf 6b 5

do so it is because ‘Hashem is not in my midst’ - על כי אין אלקי בקרבי. When one recognises that the *צרות* is a result of a lack of *אמונה*, then he will not feel the *צרות*, the mental anxiety, but only the *רעות*, the actual persecution – for one who truly believes in Hashem, his *צרות* is not really *צרות* at all, as King David says

גם כי אלך בגיא צלמות לא אירע רע כי אתה עמדי⁶

“Even though I walk in darkness, evil does not befall me because You are with me”. It is within the ability of the individual, by becoming close to Hashem and by appreciating the greatness and the wisdom of the Torah to put aside his worries and learn Torah with *תשוב הדעת* even when it is a time of אך, untold repression and physical deprivation. Thus, there is no contradiction. The best Torah is acquired at a time of אך and also when there is *תשוב הדעת*.

Rav Shach signs off his *chidush* with the following sentiments:

הכותב בדמע בירושלים הנתונה כיום במצור ובמצוק,
”מחוץ תשכל חרב ומחדרים אימה”.

One who writes with tears in Yerusholayim, which is in a state of siege and oppression, “outside the sword bereaves, and inside there is terror”.

Tehillim chapter 23 verse 4 6
Ha'azinu chapter 32 verse 25 7

SHAILATEX
07403 939 613

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL RESPONSE TO SHAILOS
ON ANY TOPIC WITHIN FOUR WORKING HOURS

Wherever possible it is preferable to take shailos to your own rov who knows you personally. ShailaText is not intended to be used as substitute for a rov but L'zakos es horabim. For more information visit federation.org.uk/shailatext/

To sponsor a day/week/month of Shailatext, please email Batsheva.pels@federation.org.uk



This week's Shailatext is

לע"נ שמעון בן שרגא ז"ל