

## Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חיוזק (ברכות לב:) - שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כהו (רש"י)

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### Incitement against the Chareidi World

It's no secret that presently there is incitement against the chareidim. It's not that everyone is inciting, but there are those who are, and it has an influence on some Israeli citizens who believe the untruths that they are saying.

The truth is, this is not a new phenomenon. The Gemara (*Pesachim* 49b) tells us that Rabbi Akiva said, "When I was an *am haaretz*, I said: If only someone would give me a *talmid chacham*, I'd bite him like a donkey." Rabbi Akiva had excellent *middos* even while he was still an *am haaretz* (it says in *Kesubos* 62 that he was "*tzania u'maali*" [modest and had good attributes]), but nevertheless, when he was still an *am haaretz*, he said, "If only someone would give me a *talmid chacham*, I'd bite him like a donkey." Despite the fact that he had excellent *middos*, he hated *talmidei chachomim*.

This is because (as explained in Tosfos on *Kesubos* 62) *amei haaretz's* hatred of *talmidei chachamim* is based on mistaken reasoning. They suspect that *talmidei chachamim* hate them, but this is not true! *Talmidei chachamim* don't hate *amei haaretz*; they pity them. *Amei haaretz* are making a mistake when they think *talmidei chachamim* hate them; that's the reality.

And the incitement has an influence. It makes an impression on part of the country. The inciters' purpose is to gain political clout, because elections are imminent. They think they'll gain voters in this manner. That's their calculation and that's what they expect to gain through badmouthing the chareidim. They hope to gain political power.

And if they do win the elections, that will be very dangerous. The present situation is actually dangerous because the inciters are having an influence, and there is a *tzibbur* that believes them.

### Hashgachah's on the Side of Oskei Torah

On the other hand, however, we see that *hashgachah* has set matters so that the inciters have no control in the current political arena, and there's no disturbance from them, and *oskei haTorah* have what they need to exist.

And we see the Heavenly *hashgachah* that the present government — even though there's a lot of propaganda and criticism against it — lately has won the support of

many countries. I heard that representatives from about fifty countries came to Israel. Included in this delegation are countries that have opposing worldviews, but they united for this purpose, which is not self-understood. **This shows us that there was Heavenly *hashgachah* for the benefit of *oskei Torah*.**

This *hashgachah pratis* that the government presently received a boost of encouragement, may cause people to think "*kochi v'otzem yadi*," that they have wisdom, shrewdness, and intelligence and that's what caused the world to come in their honor. But it says explicitly in the Torah that this is not so! It's written (*Devarim* 8:17): *V'amarta bilvavcha kochi v'otzem yadi asah li es hachayil hazeh* — "And you will say in your heart: My strength and the might of my hand has accumulated this wealth." And the Torah says that it is not true; there is no such thing as "*kochi v'otzem yadi*." Everything takes place through *hashgachah*.

### Klal Yisrael's Existence at All Times Is in Our Forefathers' Merit

Klal Yisrael's existence throughout the generations is in the *zechus* of our *Avos*, due to Hashem's promise (Ibid. 8:18), "In order to uphold His covenant that He swore to your forefathers." There was a promise, as is written (*Bereishis* 22:16,17), "'By Myself have I sworn,' says Hashem", "And I will make their descendants very great", HaKadosh Baruch Hu swore to Avraham Avinu, and to Yitzchak and Yaakov, and the promise continues that Klal Yisrael will exist. It's all the result of this promise, not due to *kochi v'otzem yadi*.

And there's another *pasuk* (*Devarim* 9:4,5): "Don't say in your heart, 'Due to my righteousness Hashem has brought me...'" Don't think that you merited just because you are a *tzaddik* and you have a lot of *zechuyos*, "Not because of your righteousness or the honesty of your heart," it's solely due to the promise that HaKadosh Baruch Hu promised the *Avos*: "In order to uphold His covenant that He swore to your forefathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak, to Yaakov." This promise is the reason for the *hashgachah pratis* over Klal Yisrael throughout all generations: it's not the result of *kochi v'otzem yadi*, not because of "your righteousness," not due to our *zechuyos*, not because of our smarts or strengths; rather, everything occurs due to *hashgachah pratis* because of the promise that HaKadosh Baruch Hu promised our *Avos*.

## Plagues – Punishment for Klal Yisrael

Chazal say (*Yevamos* 63a), “The world is struck with calamity solely for Klal Yisrael.” That is, when there are world tragedies the purpose is to bring Klal Yisrael to repentance. The Gemara cites a *pasuk* (*Tzefaniah* 3: 6,7) “I cut down nations; their towers have become desolate, I have destroyed their streets... I said, ‘Surely you will fear Me, you will accept *mussar*.’” That is, we must gain *yiras Shamayim* from this, for world tragedies are from Hashem. We are *maaminin bnei maaminim*, and if there are Heavenly calamities, we see that there is *hashgachah pratis*, and there is most probably a sin that preempted this tragedy. As a result of the tragedy, we also gain *yiras Shamayim* and we fear sin and understand that we must do *teshuvah*.

**In the past, the calamities were floods, earthquakes, and volcanos, but nowadays, I heard that there’s a different kind of tragedy: a plague has broken out in a very distant country, a horrific plague and they don’t know how to stop it. Tens of millions of people are in danger. When a world tragedy occurs, its purpose is to cause Klal Yisrael to strengthen their mitzvah observance and learn a *mussar* lesson.**

### Heaven Demands Change Primarily from *Bnei Torah*

And what do the words “for Klal Yisrael” mean? If Heaven demands *chizuk*, from whom are they demanding it? Maran the Brisker Rav *zt”l* said that they don’t demand improvements from *tinokos shenishbu*, as those who are not connected to Torah and *mitzvos* are like babies who were taken captive and nothing is expected of them. When they [sin], it is by mistake (*shogeig*) or because they were forced (*oness*). Demands cannot be made of them — the demands are made of *bnei Torah*! We are *maaminim bnei maaminim*, and we are expected to take *chizuk* from these episodes and do *teshuvah*, as the *pasuk* states (*Eichah* 3:40): “Let us search out and examine our ways, and let us return to Hashem.” We should take heed to strengthen ourselves in all areas.

The world stands on three basic matters (*Avos* 1:2): *Torah*, *avodah* and *gemillus chasadim*. *Torah* is *esek haTorah*, *avodah* is *tefillah* and *emunah*, and *gemillus chasadim* is acting with good *middos* between a man and his fellowman, *bein adam lachaveiro*. And one must strengthen himself in all three matters: in *Torah*, in *tefillah* and *emunah*, and in good *middos* between fellow Jews.

### Chizuk in Good Middos

There is a need for *chizuk* in good *middos* — even though there are people with good *middos*, this is not true across-the-board. Very often, if there is even the smallest personal bias involved, there will be friction — people

don’t know that the person who is *mevater*, gives in, will ultimately gain.

Good *middos* are the foundation for the entire Torah. Rav Chaim Vital writes in *Shaarei Kedushah* that there are hardly any *mitzvos* directly about *middos tovos* because good *middos* are the foundation and introduction to the entire Torah. And if a person is lacking perfection in *middos tovos*, none of the *mitzvos* he does can be done with perfection.

There are two principal characteristics in *middos* that have an influence on a person: desire for honor and desire for money. The *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap. 11) writes at length about the immense power of the *yetzer hara* who pressures man in these matters. This is what we must strengthen ourselves in — there should not be any personal biases and these calculations should not have an effect on us.

It’s important to be aware that everything is in Hashem’s hands, and “no one can touch even a hairsbreadth of that which is prepared for his friend” (*Yoma* 38b), and “all materialism is prepared for man from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur” (*Beitzah* 16a), just as we say in the *piyyut*: “On Rosh Hashanah it is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed... who will become poor and who will become wealthy, who will be calm and who will be troubled, who will fall to the depths and who will be lifted up.” Honor and money — everything is in Hashem’s hands and is decreed on Rosh Hashanah. It is not dependent on *kochi v’otzem yadi*; rather, it comes from a Heavenly decree.

What needs strengthening in the passive side of this is not to be dragged after the personal biases of money and honor. Regarding taking a positive action, one must strengthen his *emunah* that everything is from Hashem. Additionally, in *esek haTorah* one must utilize his time properly, each person according to his abilities, and one who is *oness* and cannot learn Torah all day long, should take advantage of every free moment to learn Torah.

### Learning Torah During Every Free Moment

We’ve already mentioned the Rosh’s comments on what Chazal said in *Bava Basra* *daf* 8: *Rabbanan lo tzrichi netirusa* — “*Rabbanim* don’t need guarding.” This was talking about paying a fee to the city guards. It was necessary to hire guards to protect the city from robbers and bandits, and every resident had to contribute a fee to pay the city guards. The rabbis did not have to pay, however, because they were involved in Torah learning, and their Torah is protection.

The Rosh writes there (chap. 1, *siman* 26), “And it seems that a *talmid chacham* who has a trade (*umnus*) or does a little business to provide for his basic needs but not to become wealthy, and whenever he is free from his business, he returns to *divrei Torah* and learns Torah, this

is what's called *Torasao umnaso*, "Torah is his trade." That is, a rabbi is not just someone who sits and learns Torah all the time and has no other occupation. Even someone who must work a bit to support himself — as long as he works just to support himself and no more — and during the rest of his available time he learns Torah, even if it's not many hours, he is also called *Rabbanan sheToraso umnuso*, "a rabbi whose occupation is Torah" and he is exempt from paying the fee for the city guards.

It seems that the converse is true as well. Someone who has more time and does learn a lot — but he really could learn more and is wasting time a bit instead of learning, is no longer called "*rabbanan*." Despite his many hours of learning, he could have learned more and is just wasting his time due to laziness, not because he doesn't have the energy or because he needs to speak a little, "*mi'ut sichah*." The Gra taught us that sometimes a person needs a little time speaking about inconsequential matters in order to attain *yishuv hada'as*. **However, if the person wastes more time than "*mi'ut sichah*," just because he's lazy, he cannot be called "*rabbanan*" any longer.** And he must pay the fee for the city guards because he doesn't have the *madreigah* of "*rabbanan*."

Chazal said about those on the *madreigah* of "*rabbanan*" (*Bava Basra* 8b) that they are "And those who love Him will be like the sun coming out in all its might." This is an awesome level and a tremendous *maalah*.

It's so worthwhile to be "*rabbanan*"! To be involved in Torah which has sweetness and is also interesting. Of course, learning Torah does involve some effort, but it's pleasant effort that is sweet and interesting. Of course, each person must learn according to his abilities — not more than that.

### ***Bittul Torah: Time and Perception***

The flip side is also true. If there is *bittul Torah*, Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 99a): "For he has despised the word of Hashem' — as long as one can learn Torah and he doesn't, that is, when someone has free time and doesn't use it to learn Torah, the *pasuk* says about him: 'For he has despised the word of Hashem' (*Bamidbar* 15:31), and this is horrible, as is explained in the *pesukim* that follow.

I heard from HaGaon HaTzaddik Rav E.E. Dessler *zt"l* in the name of HaGaon Rav Chaim of Brisk *zt"l* that even someone who is involved in Torah and doesn't waste time, if he has the ability to learn more in depth and attain more *havanah*, perception, but he doesn't learn *b'amkus* because he is lazy, this also falls under the category of one who can learn Torah but does not. The mitzvah of learning Torah includes acquiring knowledge in Torah and perception, as Chazal say (*Kiddushin* 30a): "*V'shinantam*' — *divrei Torah* should be sharp on your tongue." If someone does not involve himself in *havanas haTorah*, understanding Torah to the best of his ability,

he also falls under the category of "for he has despised the word of Hashem."

### ***Emunah in Hashgachah Pratis Is Lifechanging***

The following *hanhagos* are expected of us: being involved in Torah, having good *middos*, not being exacting with others, and not attributing any importance to Olam HaZeh. We also are obligated to have *emunah*: "My eyes are on the faithful of the land to sit with me" (*Tehillim* 101:6), and "And a righteous man will live in his faith" (*Chavakuk* 2:4) — live with more *emunah*, as everything is in Hashem's hands!

And this is something that is applicable at every given moment, as is written (*Tehillim* 16:8), "I will place Hashem before me always." In the first section of *Shulchan Aruch*, the Rema cites the Rambam's comments in *Moreh Nevuchim* that always remembering Hashem's *hashgachah* is a great principle in the Torah and in the attributes of the righteous. If a person lives with the *emunah* that everything occurs due to *hashgachah*, his life is on a completely different plane, with completely different thought processes.

At first, he'll think about life itself — that he is alive and breathing. He'll think about how he is alive — it's due to *hashgachas Hashem*, which obligates him to behave accordingly. He'll think about his ability to walk — where did this come from; his ability to talk, and see, and hear — after all, there are people who cannot see or hear and who cannot speak, *Rachmana litzlan*. The fact that he does have these abilities is only due to Hashem's mercy and kindness. And this obligates him!

Rashi at the end of *Parashas Beshalach* (17:8) quotes the Midrash: This can be compared to a man who places his son on his shoulders and sets out on a journey. They meet a person, and the son asks him, "Have you seen my father?" His father is holding him on his shoulders and he's asking, Where's my father? He is acting as if his father is far away and he has no idea where he is, or he doesn't even know that he has a father. When his father hears this, he becomes very angry. He takes his son off his shoulders so that he should know that he does have a father, and so that he should see who his father is.

**So too, we must first internalize the simple belief that we have a Father, our Father in Heaven, and whatever we have is from Him! Of course, this knowledge also obligates us, but at least one must be aware of this truth, that our Heavenly Father is holding us and watching over us.** If we don't know this, we are just like that child whose father held him on his shoulders and he does not even know it. This is *emunah*.

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There is also a concept of having *emunah* in davening. The *Mesillas Yesharim* chap. 19 explains that a person should feel that he is speaking to HaKadosh Baruch Hu like one man speaking to another, and that HaKadosh Baruch Hu hears and listens to what he is saying. It also says that although people don't feel this way naturally, but if a person has proper intelligence, then with a little contemplation and attention, he can achieve this feeling that he is speaking with someone who hears him. And this is true, as it says (*Yeshayahu* 6:3), "His glory fills the entire world." This is a *madreigah* in *emunah*.

Having *emunah* charges us to behave in a certain way: to be involved in Torah and to act with *middos tovos*, such as greeting everyone with a cheerful countenance (*sever panim yafos*), not to be exacting with anyone. We've spoken about this point often — there's no reason to get upset and be acting with people because everything is in Hashem's hands. So too, we must be careful about *shemiras halashon*, not to speak *lashon hara*.

Truthfully, we see that *shemiras halashon* is a very difficult matter. We daven for it in *Elokai netzor*. The

Amoraim instituted this *tefillah*, as it says in *Berachos* 17 that Mar Barya d'Ravina would recite this prayer at the end of Shemoneh Esrei: Guard my tongue from speaking evil! And my lips from speaking deceitfully. Even the Amoraim needed this *tefillah* for *siyatta d'Shemaya* not to transgress this mitzvah. Without *siyatta d'Shemaya* we are liable to transgress and we need a prayer to be saved from transgression.

These are the matters that need *chizuk*, and Hashem helps the one who comes to be purified (*Yoma* 38b). If a person wants to strengthen himself, Hashem helps him.

And the way to do this is by learning *mussar*, which gives a person *chizuk*. Anyone who learns even a small amount of *mussar* every day will be fortunate, and everyone around him will be fortunate as well, because he will control his *yetzer hara*. Controlling his *yetzer hara* is what makes him happy and fortunate. We have the ability to do so; it is attainable. *Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu. B'ezras Hashem*, may we all merit achieving this goal.

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