

Darkei HaChizuk

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

A *Sichah* from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita*, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez • *Parashas Mishpatim 5780*

385

The Import of Bringing Merit to the Masses

There is a very important matter which is also a tremendous *zechus*: bringing merit to the masses, *zikui harabbim*, influencing and meriting the public to Torah, mitzvos, and *maasim tovim*.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar Ahavas Hashem* chap. 6) writes about the profound merits of a person who brings merit to the masses: "My brother, it is worthwhile for you to know that the believer's *zechuyos* — even if he would reach the most distant goal in rectifying his soul for *Hashem Yisbarach*, and even if he would have come close to the angels' level in their good *middos*, their praiseworthy behavior, their efforts in serving the Creator, and their pure love for Him — cannot be compared to the *zechuyos* of one who directs men on the good path and straightens out the wicked toward service of the Creator, for his *zechuyos* are doubled [as payment] for their merits, every day and at all times."

Meaning, even someone who personally performs many mitzvos and *maasim tovim*, no matter how many he does, and even if he has the abilities of an angel, he will never attain the *zechuyos* of a person who is involved in *zikui harabbim*. This is because one who is *mezakeh harabbim* earns the merits of *maasim tovim* performed due to his influence. Whatever the *tzibbur* does because of him is exponentially more than if he would be performing good deeds by himself — even if he exerted himself to the utmost and even if he had extraordinary abilities. There is still a limit to how much he can do. However, when a person is *mezakeh the rabbim*, he has an influence on one person, and then another, and those people carry his influence further, and their children continue in their ways one generation and then another — many generations! — and they've all been influenced by the first person. All their *zechuyos* and good deeds are accredited to the *mashpiah's* merit, and this chain never ends.

One can be *mezakeh the rabbim* in many different areas: in Torah, one can say *shiurim*, be *marbitz Torah* — there are many different ways — it can be with a large group of people or a small group. In the realm of *yiras Shamayim*, one can give *mussar shmuessin*, and influence others to *yiras Shamayim*. One can influence others to act with good *middos*, one can be an influence of *ahavas Torah*, etc., etc. There are a multitude of ways that one can be involved in *zikui harabbim*. [We will describe the

influence of a true *baal Torah* whose mere presence serves to be *mezakeh the rabbim*.]

All the good deeds of those who have been influenced by someone else belong both to him and to the person who influenced him, and are considered as if the *mashpiah* did it himself. These are tremendous *zechuyos*.

Moshe Merited and Brought Merit to the Masses

However, there are many people who want to be *mezakeh the rabbim*, but they do not succeed. Many want to have influence on others, but not everyone is *zocheh*. A person needs prior *zechuyos* to be *mashpiah* on others, as Chazal said about Moshe Rabbeinu (*Avos 5:18*): "Moshe merited and brought merit to the masses." That is, Moshe Rabbeinu first "merited" and performed *maasim tovim* himself, and then he "brought merit to the masses" when he gave the Torah to Klal Yisrael. One needs prior *zechuyos*, and due to those merits, one is *zocheh* to bring merit to the masses.

What were the *zechuyos* that Moshe Rabbeinu had before Matan Torah? We've already discussed a number of times that we specifically see his good *middos* — he went out to see his brothers' suffering (*Shemos 2:11*), and he also had pity on animals, as the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah 2:2*) relates that once, when Moshe Rabbeinu was shepherding Yisro's sheep in the desert, a lamb ran away. He ran after the lamb until it reached a small, shaded place. The lamb came across a pool of water and stood near it to drink. When Moshe arrived, he said, "I didn't know that you ran away because you were thirsty. You must be tired." He put the lamb on his shoulder and began the walk back. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, "You have mercy while guiding a human's flock of sheep, by your life, you will shepherd My flock, Bnei Yisrael." This is the explanation of "And Moshe shepherded the sheep."

The Midrash also mentioned David HaMelech, who is Mashiach, who influenced Klal Yisrael with his reign of justice and righteousness, as the *pasuk* states (*Shmuel II 8:15*), "And David performed justice and charity for his entire nation." He was the leader, the king who influenced all of Klal Yisrael, as the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Melachim 3:6*) that the king is the heart of the nation. David merited all this because of the way he treated his flock, as it says in *Tehillim (78:71)*: "From behind the nursing ewes He brought him to shepherd Yaakov His nation and Yisrael His portion."

“The nursing ewes” are the weak sheep who needed mercy, and David had mercy on them.

The Middah of Mercy Is a Natural Instinct

The truth is that Chazal (*Bava Metzia* 32b) were undecided whether *tzaar baalei chaim* is an *issur d’Oraysa* or just an *issur d’Rabbanan*. When *tzaar baalei chaim* is necessary to benefit man, of course there is no question and *l’chatchilah* it is permitted, such as when an animal is slaughtered for human consumption, and when we use animals for plowing and other purposes. However, the *safek* in the Gemara about whether *tzaar baalei chaim* is a Torah prohibition or just prohibited by the Rabbis is talking about causing pain to animals for no reason. And in any case, this is referring to *tzaar* — where is there a halachah that one must have *rachmanus*, mercy, on animals too?

The point is that a person must have a merciful nature, just as Hashem is merciful, as it says in *Tehillim* (145:9): “And His mercies are on all His creations.” Chazal said (*Shabbos* 133b), “Be similar to Him. Just as He is merciful and compassionate, you shall be merciful and compassionate.” If someone is by nature merciful, his nature obligates him and forces him to act this way.

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85a) relates the following story involving Rabbeinu HaKadosh. A person was taking a calf to the slaughterhouse. Apparently, the calf realized that they wanted to slaughter it, so it went over to Rabbeinu HaKadosh for protection. But Rebbi told him: *L’kach notzarta* — “This is what you were created for.” Subsequently, Rebbi was afflicted with terrible *yissurim* from *Shamayim* as atonement for the sin of not having pity on the calf. Even though it is the way of the world to slaughter and eat animals and this is why they were created, in any case, in specific situations where the calf asks for mercy, it is fitting to have mercy on it.

Actually, later on in the Gemara, it says that another episode occurred in Rabbeinu HaKadosh’s home. In his house, there were small creatures, unkosher animals, which are prohibited to eat, and Rabbeinu HaKadosh’s maidservant wanted to sweep them out of the house. He told her not to do so, because it says, “And His mercies are on all His creations,” and we must have pity on them. From then on, his terrible pain and suffering stopped. In *Shamayim*, it was now clear that he was merciful. This is the nature of *middas harachamim*.

Good Middos: Merit for Zikkui HaRabbim

Through good *middos*, Moshe Rabbeinu merited giving Klal Yisrael the *zechus* of Torah MiSinai. So too, David HaMelech, who brought merit to Klal Yisrael — and his influence is lasting till today with *Tehillim* — merited doing so as a result of his good *middos*, since he had mercy on animals. That is, **the essence of his soul included a natural inclination for *rachmanus*. And**

this is how one is *zocheh* to such levels as Moshe Rabbeinu and David HaMelech.

Therefore, not every person who wants to be *mezakeh* the *rabbim* is able to actualize his intentions. Many want to but are not *zocheh*, because one needs prior *zechuyos* for this; everything happens through *hashgachah pratis* based on one’s previous *zechuyos*. I’ve also noticed that usually a person doesn’t have to invest any *hishtadlus* to become a *mezakeh harabbim*. Instead, other people exert *hishtadlus* for him and ask him for help — one request and then another, and then he becomes a *mezakeh harabbim*. Everything is from *Shamayim*. If he is *zocheh*, he becomes a *mezakeh harabbim*.

Unintentional Zikkui HaRabbim

We’ve already mentioned the episode mentioned in the Gemara (*Moed Katan* 21b) that Rabbi Akiva had two sons who died young. Since Rabbi Akiva was the *onein*, all Klal Yisrael participated in the *levayah*. When Rabbi Akiva saw this, he stood on a large bench and said, “My brothers Bnei Yisrael, for whom did you come? If you’ve come for me, whose name is Akiva, there are many others in the marketplace named Akiva, so what’s the difference between me and them? However, you must have said, *Toras Elokav b’libo* — ‘His *Elokim*’s Torah is in his heart.’” That is, you came because Rabbi Akiva is a *gadol baTorah*. It is not considered haughtiness to say as much about himself, because he wasn’t prideful about it — he merely was aware of the reality, which was well known. Since everyone came in honor of the Torah, his sons brought about this great merit of *kavod haTorah*. In their death, they merited being *mezakeh harabbim* in such a great matter. They accrued many *zechuyos* for causing this.

And even though they didn’t intend to do as much, and they didn’t want to die, in any case, since the end result was that this occurred through them, they receive merit for it. This is similar to the mitzvah of *shichechah* — when a person forgets a sheaf in the field and poor people come to take it, he is *zocheh* to the Torah’s blessings (*Devarim* 24:19): “So that *Hashem Elokecha* will bless you.” Rashi explains: “Even though this [sheaf] came to his hand without the owner’s intention... Hence, you must say, if someone dropped a *sela*, and a poor man found it and was sustained through it, he is blessed because of this.” That is, even if a person had no intention to forget or lose something, since in the end, poor people found it and had food to eat due to his forgetfulness or loss, it is considered charity and the owner is blessed for it. Therefore, if someone’s death causes *zikkui harabbim*, even though he had no intention of doing so, the *zechuyos* are his.

Zikkui HaRabbim: Indicator of Previous Zechuyos

However, one needs prior *zechuyos* to merit *zikkui harabbim*, and Rabbi Akiva added (cited in *Maseches*

Semachos chap. 8 and in *Yalkut Parashas Yisro*) that since he sees that his sons merited such immense *zikkui harabbim* through their death — that all Klal Yisrael came to honor the Torah since his sons passed away — this is an indicator that they had prior merits which he was unaware of, and this was a comfort for him.

The story is told about Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin in Chutz LaAretz. A wealthy man donated the yeshivah building. One of the *tzaddikim* who spoke at the yeshivah said, “I am not jealous of the rich man’s mitzvah of *zikkui harabbim* that he earned when he donated the building, because I cannot do the same; I don’t have those sums of money to donate. However, there are prior *zechuyos* that precede *zikkui harabbim*, and I am jealous of him for those earlier *zechuyos*, which led him to merit this *zikkui harabbim*. If I would have had his prior *zechuyos*, I too would have brought merit to the masses. That is what I am jealous of — his previous *zechus*!”

This is the matter of *zikkui harabbim*, which one merits through previous *zechuyos*. It makes no difference if it is *zikkui harabbim* in the realm of Torah, or *yiras Shamayim*, or *middos tovos*, or good deeds through which one brings merit to the masses — they all indicate that he has prior *zechuyos*.

There are people who are wonderful *baalei chesed*. Besides for the *chesed* they do on their own, they prompt others to do *chesed*. This is *zikkui harabbim*. Aside from the fact that the public benefits and is the recipient of their *chesed*, they give others the *zechus* to be involved in *chesed*, as many people help them and do *chesed* through them. This too, is a sign that they have prior *zechuyos* that caused this.

A Baal Madreigah Influences Just by Being There

However, regarding *zikkui harabbim*, it’s prudent to know what else Maran the Chazon Ish wrote in a letter (*Kovetz Igros* Vol. 3, 62): “And in the company of a true *baal Torah*, a great influence on many people is visible, something that no practical *hishtadlus* could achieve. So too, there are effects on those distant, but the fine points of these effects cannot be felt with the seeing eye.” A person who is on a high level, someone who is a true *baal Torah*, who is involved in Torah and leads his life according to the Torah’s laws, has a visible influence on his surroundings. Even if he doesn’t say a word and has no intention of influencing anyone, the simple fact that he is around will make an impact on his surroundings.

Take, for example, the Chazon Ish himself, who was in Bnei Brak. He did not give *derashos* in public; people would come to him to ask and get advice, and he had a tremendous influence. Anyone who came to him would be influenced even though he didn’t give any *chizuk* talks; he merely answered the questions he was asked. But he had an influence on the entire world. This is exactly as he wrote in his letter: a true *baal Torah* automatically has an

influence. His influence is apparent on his surroundings, and even in more distant places, he has an influence, though it is hidden and not recognizable. That’s the reality.

Therefore, **any person who has some *maalah*, virtue, be it Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, *middos tovos*, due to that *maalah* he has an influence on his surroundings — even without speaking, there is no need to speak because the fact that he’s around has an influence.** And this is *zikkui harabbim*.

Yeravam Sinned and Caused the Masses to Sin

On the other side of the spectrum, Chazal say in *Pirkei Avos*, “Yeravam ben Nevat sinned and caused the masses to sin; the sin of the masses is charged against him.” Here too, first “sin” is mentioned, and only then is “caused to sin” mentioned. By sinning himself, his *yetzer hara*’s power became even stronger, as Chazal say (*Avos* 4:2): “One sin leads to another.” And as a result, he led the masses to sin.

Chazal say (*Yoma* 38b), “One who comes to be purified is helped, and one who comes to become impure, they open the way for him.” That is, if a person comes and wants to become pure, his will is a merit for *siyatta d’Shemaya*, and from *Shamayim* they help him become pure.

And if it is so when he comes to purify himself, *kal v’chomer* when he comes to help others become pure. He wants to, and has the ability to, influence when he has prior *zechuyos*. He is coming to purify others due to his *rachmanus*; he has pity on them and wants them to earn merit. So certainly in this situation, he will be helped — the desire to make others pure is an additional merit for *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

But this is all only regarding one who comes to become pure and to purify others — for that one needs *siyatta d’Shemaya*. But regarding a person who comes to become impure, it doesn’t say “he is helped.” Rather, it says, “they open the way for him,” because no help is necessary here — the *yetzer hara* is constantly there. They merely “open the way,” they don’t prevent him from sinning, so he is automatically drawn after the *yetzer hara*, *Rachmana litzlan*.

The Power of Influence: For Good and For Evil

Elifaz, Eisav’s son, is another example of the power of influence. When Yaakov Avinu went to Charan, he had a lot of money and possessions. Elifaz ran after him at the behest of Eisav, intending to kill him. But in the end, he drew his hand back and did not kill Yaakov; he merely took all Yaakov’s money. The reason he had pity on him is brought down in Rashi (*Bereishis* 29:11): “Because Elifaz grew up in Yitzchak’s lap, he drew his hand back.” That is, since he saw Yitzchak Avinu and grew up in his

house, he was influenced by Yitzchak. Even though he was a *rasha*, the son of Eisav, he had a tiny bit of the *middah* of mercy. He didn't have the same personality as Eisav because he grew up in Yitzchak's lap. Of course, Eisav was also Yitzchak's son and he practiced *kibbud av*, but he left Yitzchak and went to Se'ir.

Another example of the power of influence is mentioned in Rashi at the end of *Parashas Behar* in conjunction with an *eved Ivri* that is sold to a non-Jew. It says there (*Vayikra* 26:1-2): "Don't make idols for yourselves... guard My Shabbosos..." At first thought, you might say, What does this have to do with an *eved Ivri* sold to a non-Jew? Rashi explains that since he is together with the non-Jew and sees him serve *avodah zarah* and watches him desecrate Shabbos, there is a concern that it will have an influence on him, and he too might desecrate Shabbos and serve *avodah zarah* like the non-Jew. Therefore, the Torah warns him specifically about this.

Let us understand. It's true that when the non-Jew serves *avodah zarah*, it is a sin because it is one of the Seven Noachide Mitzvos. And when the non-Jew sins and serves *avodah zarah*, there is a concern that this will influence his slave to sin, but when the non-Jew desecrates Shabbos, it's permissible. *Adaraba*, it's actually prohibited for him to observe Shabbos — a Noachide who keeps Shabbos is liable for the death penalty. So how is it possible that his Shabbos desecration will influence his Jewish slave to learn to desecrate Shabbos? For his master, it is permissible, while for himself it is forbidden.

This indicates just how strong the power of influence is. Even though the master is a non-Jew and is permitted to desecrate Shabbos, in any case, since he is the master and the Jew is his slave, and since there is a natural human instinct of submissiveness toward a person who is in control — it's known that this is the reality, someone who is controlled esteems the person who controls him. So since he sees the master who controls him desecrating Shabbos, it can cause him and have an influence over him to do so as well, even though it is forbidden for him and permissible for his master. That's the reality of the power of influence.

"One Who Comes to Be Purified"— Through Learning *Mussar*

In practice, the solution is learning *mussar*. I've already told you about the young man who had no choice but to go to work and couldn't continue learning in yeshivah. He had a half hour free every night and he would come to yeshivah and learn *mussar*. He was *zocheh*, in the merit of this, that *Shamayim* arranged matters so that he didn't have to work anymore, and he began learning full time again. Today, he is a *mezakeh harabbim* and *marbitz Torah*. And this is in the merit of the fact that he came to be purified and learned *mussar*. He was *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya*, as Chazal say: "One who comes to be purified is helped."

And we can do the same and come to be purified. Everyone who came to hear *divrei chizuk* is in the category of "ones who came to be purified," and they will merit *siyatta d'Shemaya*. Just make sure to take advantage of the *siyatta d'Shemaya*. The way to use it is to learn Torah, each person according to his abilities. Someone who cannot learn all day should be involved with Torah as much as he can. It's even more important to learn *mussar*. Rav Yisrael Salanter was asked: if someone only has a half hour daily available, should he learn Gemara or *mussar*? Rav Yisrael answered: "*Mussar*. If he learns *mussar*, he'll discover that he has another half hour."

A person who learns *mussar* lives with a *cheshbon hanefesh* and knows what Hashem wants from him. He thinks: What should I do? Should I fulfill this or not? What are my abilities? Can I do more? When a person lives with a calculation about what his obligations are and what his abilities are, what he does and doesn't do, he is a happy, fortunate person. *Mishnah Berurah*, in the first *siman*, mentions Chazal's statement that Torah is the antidote to *the yetzer hara*. That is, specifically *Toras hayirah* in *sifrei mussar* — that is the most effective antidote against the *yetzer hara*.

Baruch Hashem we have all the opportunities, and the *tzibbur* wants to come and be purified. *B'ezras Hashem*, may we all merit to be on the *madreigah* of *mezakei harabbim*!

***Dedicated by
the Kroll Family, Los Angeles
להצלחת בניהם ובנותיהם
בתורה וביראת שמים***

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