

## Darkei HaChizuk

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

A *Sichah* from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita*, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez • *Parashas Vayeira 5781*

415

### Moshe's Zechuyos and His Far-reaching Influence

We learn in *Avos* (5:18): "Moshe was meritorious and influenced the masses to be meritorious; so the merit of the masses is credited to him." Three matters are mentioned here: 1) was meritorious 2) influenced the masses to be meritorious 3) so the merit of the masses is credited to him. The fact that he **was meritorious** means that he had prior *zechuyos*, before he received the Torah on Har Sinai. After all, one needs *zechuyos* in order to receive the Torah. But the *mishnah* doesn't tell us explicitly what his prior *zechuyos* were. Afterward, he **influenced the masses to be meritorious**. This means that due to his prior *zechuyos*, he was able to receive and teach Torah. This means that we received from Moshe Rabbeinu all the Torah we have today — both *Torah she'bichsav* and *Torah she'be'al Peh*.

And this is the meaning of: **so the merit of the masses is credited to him**: whatever good deeds the public does — being involved in Torah study and observing the 613 mitzvos — till the end of times, belongs to Moshe Rabbeinu and is credited to his *zechus* as if he personally did them. This applies to whatever we do, and to whatever anyone in Klal Yisrael did or will do throughout the generations. While Klal Yisrael are the active performers, the merit is also credited to Moshe Rabbeinu and it is considered as if he did it. Just as there's reward in Olam HaBa for a person who does a mitzvah, Moshe also receives this eternal reward since he was the one who influenced us to perform the mitzvos.

There are millions and trillions of the good deeds from the times of Moshe Rabbeinu until the present — the *maasim tovim* of all men and women, young and old alike. And they are all credited to Moshe Rabbeinu and are considered as if he did them! Whatever will be done in the future — all the *maasim tovim* of every member of Klal Yisrael — will also be considered as if Moshe Rabbeinu did it, since he was the cause who influenced the masses to act this way.

Now, Moshe Rabbeinu already has an unimaginably immense portion in Olam HaBa, so what then, is there to add to his portion?

But the truth is, it is *shayach* to add more, because we cannot comprehend the pleasures of Olam HaBa, and we have no concept how far Olam HaBa's pleasures can grow infinitely and limitlessly. The Gemara (*Berachos* 34b) cites the *pasuk* "No eye has seen it, Elokim, aside from You," and explains that even the prophets could not understand

what Olam HaBa was. While we know that it is something extremely pleasurable, we don't know what the pleasure is, and what type of pleasure it is. We can only experience "*mei'ein Olam HaBa*," a taste of Olam HaBa. Chazal say (*Berachos* 57b) that Shabbos is "*mei'ein Olam HaBa*." There are other things also, but they too are only "*mei'ein*," but we have absolutely no concept of what Olam HaBa actually is about. Therefore, although Moshe Rabbeinu already has an unimaginable level of Olam HaBa, it is still possible to add to it. More and more pleasures are constantly being added to his Olam HaBa.

### The Merit That Leads to Zikui HaRabbim

Indeed, the introduction to all this is as Chazal said, "Moshe was meritorious" — he had prior *zechuyos*, and only later, was he able to "influence the masses to be meritorious," and he received *siyatta d'Shemaya* for Kabbalas HaTorah in the merit of his prior *zechuyos*. Let us take a deeper look: what made Moshe Rabbeinu meritorious and what *zechuyos* did he have before Kabbalas HaTorah?

There is one answer written explicitly in the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 2:2) on the *pasuk*: "And Moshe shepherded Yisro's sheep... in the desert..." "Our rabbis said: When Moshe Rabbeinu shepherded Yisro's sheep in the desert, a lamb ran away from him. Moshe ran after the lamb till it reached a small, shaded place. When the lamb arrived there, it came across a water spring and it drank its fill. When Moshe caught up with the lamb, he said to it, 'I didn't know that you ran away because you were thirsty. And now you must be tired.' Moshe lifted the lamb on his shoulders and carried it back [to the rest of the flock]. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, 'You act with mercy while shepherding a human's flock of sheep; by your life, you will shepherd My sheep, Bnei Yisrael.'" This shows us that Moshe merited leading Klal Yisrael and receiving the Torah from Har Sinai due to his trait of *rachmanus*, mercy.

This clearly shows us the importance of the trait of *rachamim* and *ahavas habriyos*, as it states in the Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85a) on the verse "And He has mercy on all His creations" — One must act with mercy not only toward people, but on creations — animals — as well. **This trait of *rachamim*, feeling for others and making an effort to help them — including feeling the pain of and helping animals — is what created the *zechus* to receive the Torah from Sinai.** This was Moshe's first *zechus* due to which he merited to receive the Torah. And this *zechus* continues to this very day, as all our

Torah is from Moshe Rabbeinu. This is the magnitude of the *zechus* of *chessed* with *ahavas chessed*.

The Gemara elsewhere states (*Sukkah* 49b): “It states ‘She opens her mouth with wisdom and the Torah of *chessed* is on her lips’ — Is there Torah of *chessed* and Torah that is not of *chessed*? The answer is, Torah studied in order to teach is Torah of *chessed*, and not in order to teach is Torah that is not Torah of *chessed*.” There is a difference between the Torah a person learns by himself to the Torah he teaches others. When he teaches others, he is doing *chessed* with Torah, so it’s called “*Toras chessed*,” the Torah of *chessed*, and it is a completely different league of Torah learning, because it includes *ahavas chessed* and *ahavas habriyos*.

Although *v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho*, “love your fellow as yourself,” is a *mitzvas ase*, many people do not fulfill it properly. It is possible to do so, but not everyone is on the *madreigah*. Rabbi Akiva says “This is a great principle in the Torah” (*Yerushalmi Nedarim* 9:4), but it is not so simple nor as easy as it sounds. The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (chap. 11) that loving your fellow as yourself has to be “*kamocho mamesh*,” literally like yourself! This is a high *madreigah*. This teaches us, that **to the extent a person accustoms himself to be on the *madreigah* of *chessed*, his Torah will be in a different league — on a different *madreigah* of Torah!**

The Midrash speaks about David HaMelech as well (*Shemos Rabbah* ad loc.) On the *pasuk* “Hashem tests the righteous,” the Midrash states: “Hashem tested David via his sheep and found him to be a good shepherd, as it states, ‘And He took him from the sheep pens.’ He would hold the older ones back and take out the smallest sheep to graze on the tender grass. Then he would take out the elderly sheep to graze on the ordinary grass, and then he’d take out the young, lusty sheep who would eat the tough grass. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, ‘One who knows how to shepherd humans’ sheep, giving each one the care it deserves, shall come and shepherd My nation.’ This is as it’s written: ‘From behind the nursing ewes He brought him to shepherd Yaakov His nation and Yisrael His portion.’” It was David HaMelech’s trait of mercy, as well, that gave him the merit of becoming King of Klal Yisrael — in the *zechus* of having mercy on sheep. Through this, HaKadosh saw that he could be a good king and would have mercy on every single person in Klal Yisrael.

### **It’s a Mistake to Do Hishtadlus for Zikkui haRabbim**

One can only promote *zikkui harabbim* if he has prior *zechuyos*, as it says, “Moshe was meritorious and influenced the masses to be meritorious.” The truth is, Moshe was **obligated** to influence the masses to be meritorious because he received the Torah from Sinai in order to teach it, as it says (*Devarim* 4:14), “And Hashem commanded me at that time to teach you laws and statutes.” That is, he was commanded to do so, and

because of this commandment, he influenced the masses to be meritorious. If not for the commandment, he would not have been able to do so — the commandment gave him the power to be *mezakeh es harabbim*. HaKadosh Baruch Hu issued this commandment in the merit of Moshe’s *chessed* and good *middos*.

The general rule is that one can only promote *zikkui harabbim* if he has prior *zechuyos*, and as a result of these *zechuyos*, Hashem presents him with the opportunity for *zikkui harabbim*. Without *zechuyos*, it is not possible to effect *zikkui harabbim*. Many people have an erroneous approach and don’t understand this concept. They want to be *mezakeh es harabbim* and actually do *hishtadlus* to this end, but what they don’t understand is that one needs prior *zechuyos* for it. *Zikkui harabbim* is not something that can occur *al pi derech hateva*; it can only happen if one has previous *zechuyos*. Moshe Rabbeinu, as we mentioned, is an example — he had previous merits of *middos tovos*, and in that *zechus*, *Shamayim* given him the opportunity for *zikkui harabbim*. At that point, it turned into an obligation for him — it was an opportunity that became an obligation.

Doing *hishtadlus* is irrelevant when it comes to *zikkui harabbim*. If one has *zechuyos*, he receives the opportunity from *Shamayim*, but if he doesn’t have *zechuyos*, *hishtadlus* will not help! This is something that many do not understand, but if they pay attention — I noticed this as well, and it’s tried and true — they’ll see that all the famous *mezakei harabbim* did not ask for it, nor did they invest *hishtadlus* to attain their positions as *mezakei harabbim*; it was something others asked them to do. A person only has to fulfill his obligations, and then he will have *zechuyos*, and *Shamayim* will then send him opportunities for *zikkui harabbim*. Not only that, he will be “enslaved” to *zikkui harabbim* — but it will come from *Shamayim*, without any *hishtadlus*!

### **The Many Faces to Zikkui HaRabbim**

*Zikkui harabbim* can occur in a variety of matters: the foremost medium of *zikkui harabbim* is through Torah, in *harbatzas Torah*. There are many ways to disseminate Torah, such as to *avreichim*, to *bachurim* — both *yeshivah ketanah* and *yeshivah gedolah* — in cheder, which is also *zikkui harabbim*, and even teaching aleph-beis is a form of *zikkui harabbim*. A rebbi who teaches children aleph-beis is influencing the masses to be meritorious because aleph-beis is also Torah, and he is teaching Torah. Aleph-beis is the foundation via which one can later learn Torah his entire life. An aleph-beis rebbi will be a *mezakeh es harabbim* based on his *madreigah* — if he has the abilities to do more, and he starts with teaching aleph-beis, he will be given *siyatta d’Shemaya* to influence the masses on a greater level. It’s all from *Shamayim*; *hishtadlus* will not help at all.

I have seen clearly that people who cling to Torah have special *siyatta d’Shemaya* for *zikkui harabbim*. How?

There are many forms of *zikkui harabbim*, such as delivering *shiurim* to the public — not that he advertises himself, but others come to him and ask him to deliver *shiurim* to them.

Then there are those who don't deliver *shiurim* verbally, but they are *mezakeh es harabbim* through written Torah, such as Rav Meir Simchah *zt"l*. Although he was not a *rosh yeshivah*, he authored the *sefer Ohr Sameach* and everyone uses it and learns from it! This is *zikkui harabbim* through writing. So too, the *gaon* Rav Chaim Ozer *zt"l* did not have a *yeshivah*, but many people spoke with him in learning and he published *sefarim* as well. Maran the Chazon Ish *zt"l* didn't have a *yeshivah* either but many individuals would come to talk in learning. He did not deliver *shiurim* in public, but he was *mezakeh es harabbim* through his *sefarim*. These are the various manners of accomplishing *zikkui harabbim* in Torah.

There is also room for *zikkui harabbim* to occur in the realms of *yiras Shamayim*, *middos tovos*, and *ahavas haTorah* — such as *mashgichim* in *yeshivos*, who influence their *talmidim* to have *ahavas Torah*, while at the same time, they are actually influencing their *talmidim* to learn Torah. As mentioned, one who has an influence on the masses to be meritorious, the merit of the masses is credited to him — so when one influences others to have *ahavas Torah* and is the impetus for others' *hasmadah*, it is considered as if he was learning himself. *Middah k'neged middah*, he merits learning Torah.

Similarly, any act of *zikkui harabbim* grants one *siyatta d'Shemaya*, *middah k'neged middah*. If one influences others to learn Torah, he is *zocheh* to Torah. If he is a good influence and promotes *yiras Shamayim*, he will be *zocheh* to increased *yiras Shamayim*. If he influences people to act with *middos tovos*, he will be *zocheh* to have *middos tovos*. The same is true regarding any manner of *zikkui harabbim* — *middah k'neged middah*, the person who influences others is *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya* in that specific matter.

Last week, HaGaon HaTzaddik Rav Yehudah Gutterman *zt"l* passed away. He was the *mashgiach* in our *yeshivah ketanah* and had a tremendous influence on the *bachurim*. He did not do any "*hishtadlus*" to secure this position — he was asked to be *mashpia*, because he had his own prior merits. As a *bachur*, he transcribed the *sichos* of the *Mashgiach*, Maran the Ohr Yechezkel *zt"l* and brought merit to the masses through this. And he had such good *middos*, one cannot even imagine! Not everyone was aware of his good *middos*, just wonderful deeds with good *middos*, things that not everyone knows about. In this *zechus*, he was able to be an influence on the masses. Since he "was meritorious," he "influenced the masses to be meritorious"!

As we mentioned, all *mezakei harabbim* secured their positions without personally doing *hishtadlus*. Sometimes, someone else put in the effort to get them the job, but they did not do the *hishtadlus* themselves.

### Influencing Others Through Virtuous Behavior

Truthfully, every single person can influence the masses to be meritorious. How? Through his behavior. When he's in the company of others, they see his behavior and this has an influence — every single person has an influence on his surroundings just by behaving properly.

The Chazon Ish wrote in more detail (*Kovetz Igros* Vol. 3, 62) that a true *baal Torah* — someone on a high *madreigah* — 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.

Every single person has some *maalah*, virtue, whether or not he is a true *baal Torah* on such a high level, and he will influence his surroundings with this *maalah*. To what extent? The influence may be slight — but it is an influence nonetheless! If so, every single person is *mezakeh es harabbim* with his special virtue, and he must be happy that he is a good influence and is *mezakeh es harabbim*. This joy will give him *chizuk* to continue growing and attaining more *maalos*.

### Influencing Others to Ahavas HaTorah in Our Generation

There are *mezakei harabbim* who have a tremendous influence, such as Maran the Ponovezer Rav *zt"l*. He had such a massive influence on the world and made a revolution beyond description — here in Eretz Yisrael, and maybe in Chutz LaAretz as well. You have no idea what was going on here before he came and after he came, how the concept of *kavod haTorah* was completely transformed. Nowadays, *baruch Hashem* people already understand the *chashivus* of *lomdei Torah* and girls only want to marry a *yeshivah bachur*. A young man who is not learning in a *yeshivah* setting has a hard time finding a *shidduch*. In the Ponovezer Rav's time, it was just the opposite. Girls looked for someone with a profession, someone who was bringing home a salary — they did not respect *lomdei Torah*. The Ponovezer Rav came and made a revolution. He influenced others to have *kavod haTorah*, to respect, esteem, and honor *lomdei Torah*.

So too, when Maran HaGaon Rav Aharon Kotler *zt"l* arrived in America, he was a great influence in the realm of *ahavas haTorah*. He transformed America — because of him, people want to learn and be *bnei Torah*. While there were *yeshivos* in America before Rav Aharon came, there were not as many as there are now — this change occurred due to Rav Aharon's influence. This is the power of the influence of a true *baal Torah*.

## The Virtue of “Many Fulfilling Torah”

There is another matter written in *Parashas Bechukosai* (*Vayikra* 26:8), “And five of you will chase one hundred, and one hundred will pursue ten thousand.” Rashi explains, “Is this a proper equation? It should have said, ‘One hundred will pursue two thousand.’” After all, it says ‘five will chase one hundred,’ which means that each one will overpower twenty, but then it says “one hundred will pursue ten thousand,” which means that each person will overpower one hundred others. A workable equation would be that one hundred will chase two thousand — one to twenty.

“However, we cannot compare a small group of people who fulfill the Torah to a large group of people who fulfill the Torah.” That is, when many people are fulfilling the Torah’s commandments, the *zechuyos* of every single person in that *tzibbur* are greater. If there are only five people fulfilling the Torah, each one only has enough *zechuyos* to win over twenty others. But if there are a hundred in the group, which is considered a “large group of people who fulfill the Torah,” then the equation is completely different. Each one can win over one hundred others. It’s a different level of strength with completely different *zechuyos*. It’s not the same type of *zechuyos* of five overpowering twenty — it’s much more! A *tzibbur* is a different league. The bigger the *tzibbur*, the more *zechuyos* — we can’t even imagine how great their *zechuyos* are.

It turns out that if someone is a *mezakeh es harabbim*, he causes the *tzibbur* to grow! When he has an influence on one hundred people, he is really influencing ten thousand because the *tzibbur*’s power is multiplied further. Therefore, it’s impossible to estimate the power of *zikkui harabbim*.

## A Tzibbur’s Merits — And the Value of Our Deeds

As we mentioned, every single person influences his surroundings — this creates tremendous *zechuyos*. *Baruch Hashem*, the *tzibbur* acts according to the Torah. Nowadays, there are many more people comprising one *tzibbur*, so we receive the *zechuyos* of a large *tzibbur* — we cannot imagine how many *zechuyos* this is. *Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu!* How fortunate we are! How good is our lot!

The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (Chap. 3) that a person must be aware of the value of the good deeds he does, because that will give him *chizuk*, energy, and vitality to continue performing good deeds. We all have *maasim tovim*, we all do what the Torah requires of us — each person according to his abilities. Whoever does what he is able to do is considered to have achieved *sheleimus ha’adam*. *Baruch Hashem*, there is a *tzibbur* behaving in this way, and the *zechuyos* they have are unimaginable, since they are a “large group of people who fulfill the Torah,” and each one influences one hundred or ten thousand.

We must rejoice that we are able to continue performing good deeds and serving as *mezakei harabbim*; we should remember that there is *siyatta d’Shemaya* for this — after all, one needs *zechuyos* to become a *mezakeh es harabbim*. *Baruch Hashem* there is *siyatta d’Shemaya* for *zechuyos* as well, and there is *siyatta d’Shemaya* for “he was meritorious.” The *tzibbur* has good *middos*, *Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu!* How fortunate we are! How good is our lot! *Yehi ratzon* that we merit *siyatta d’Shemaya* in *zikkui harabbim*.

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