

# Darkei HaChizuk

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

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

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## Rabbanim Don't Need Guarding

The Gemara states (*Bava Basra* 8a), “*Rabbanim* don't need guarding.” That is, *rabbanim* — people who are *osek baTorah* — don't have to pay the tax for guarding the city. Every city needs guarding, and in the past each city had permanent guards stationed at the city entrance to protect the city from thieves and bandits. All the city inhabitants would pay a “guard” tax, but *rabbanim* were exempt from the tax because their Torah protects them. They didn't need the physical guards because they had spiritual guards. Indeed, this is the halachah.

Who is considered “*rabbanan*”? The Rosh writes, “It seems that a *talmid chacham* who has a profession or is involved in a little business merely to support himself, but not to become wealthy, and he spends all his free time from work learning Torah and reviewing Torah, this is called *Toraso um'naso*, ‘his Torah is his profession.’”

A person can be working for a living — but he's working to support himself, to provide for his minimal necessities and is not rushing to strike it rich (see *Mishlei* 28:20) — and still spend all his free time learning Torah. He uses all his free time to learn Torah and doesn't waste a minute.

The amount of time he spends learning does not matter. It may be that he has to work many hours to provide for himself and he is not left with much time for learning. But if he learns as much as possible, and devotes all his spare time to learning, then he too is called “*rabbanan*.” He is on the *madreigah* of a *rav*, whose Torah protects the city and does not need physical protectors. He is exempt from paying the tax for the city guards.

Based on this, let's consider a person who does not have to work, or just works minimally, so he has a lot of free time and learns a lot. But he still has more free time that he could devote to learning and he does not do so. If so, he is not called “*rabbanan*.” On the other hand, the first man who works a lot and learns a little is still called “*rabbanan*,” because he spends all his free time learning. Even though the second man learns many more hours than the first one, since he does not utilize all his free time for learning, he is not called “*rabbanan*.”

## No Bittul Torah — Rabbanan

This is not hard to understand; after all there is a prohibition of *bittul Torah*. If someone has free time and doesn't learn, there is charge against him for *bittul Torah*. Of course, if he has no *koach* left, he may rest, but if he can still learn and he does not, he falls into the category of

one who can learn Torah and doesn't. Chazal say about this type of person (*Sanhedrin* 99a): “About him the *pasuk* states, ‘He has ridiculed the word of Hashem.’” And he is certainly not considered “*rabbanan*” if he has a sin of *bittul Torah*.

What's the *madreigah* of *rabbanan*? The Gemara states (*Bava Basra* *ibid.*), that the *pasuk* “And those who love Him, will be like the sun emerging in all its strength” applies to them. The Tosafos explain that the sun of the future world is seven times as strong as the light of the seven days, and the light of the seven days is seven times as strong as the sun that presently exists in our world. The light of the seven days is the *ohr haganuz*, the light that was hidden during Creation. Now, the *madreigah* of *rabbanan* is seven times greater than that.

If so, it is extremely worthwhile to merit the *madreigah* of *rabbanan*. This does not require major effort; one simply has to learn as much as he can, and then he will merit this lofty level of *rabbanan*!

Furthermore, one receives reward for Torah learning in this world as well, as the Mishnah in the beginning of *Peah* states: “These are the matters whose fruits one enjoys in this world, yet the principle remains for him in the world to come... And Torah learning is equal to them all.” **Torah learning is both Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa. One merits Olam HaZeh through learning Torah — he won't have difficulties in *parnasah*, for he'll enjoy its fruits in this world.** If a person would simply learn as much as he can, with all the strength he has — he does not have to overwork, just as much as he can, he will be *zocheh* to enjoy its fruits in this world.

## Why Do People Lose Spiritual Madreigos

If so, it's really surprising that there are people who have free time and do not use it for learning Torah. It's not worth it! They lose so much; they could have been on the level of *rabbanan* with fruits in this world. Why are they wasting this chance? It's such a great loss, it's really hard to understand.

*Tefillah* is another important matter. One can merit heightened levels of *ruchniyus* through *tefillah*. We've already mentioned what Rav Yisrael Salanter says that davening for *ruchniyus* helps. Davening for success in Torah and *maasim tovim* is effective — this is tried and true.

If so, this is also extremely surprising. Why doesn't everyone ask Hashem for success in *ruchniyus*? If

everyone would ask, they'd be on an extremely high *madreigah*. But they are not *baalei madreigah* because they don't ask — why don't they ask?

### Disregarding Emunah Is Human Nature

The reason probably is because they don't care; it doesn't bother them if there's no success in Torah. Although this is a sin, they are lacking *emunah* and lacking *yiras Shamayim*. Even though they know that there's Gehinnom they don't think about it; they put it out of their mind and there's no *yiras Shamayim*.

This is the answer to everything: why people don't daven for success in *ruchniyus*, and why they don't use all their free time for learning. It's because they don't think, it's not on their minds. *Emunah* is not something innate that happens automatically; one needs to think about it. By nature, people do not think; they just ignore it.

Therefore, Chazal said (*Makkos* 24a), "Chavakuk came and condensed them into one, as it states, 'A tzaddik will live by his *emunah*, faith.'" Chavakuk lived at the end of the period of the *nevi'im*, and he said that the main emphasis of *chizuk* must be put on *emunah*, which is the foundation of all other mitzvos. One must spend time on working on *emunah*, and he must put in effort. Then he will be able to attain other *madreigos*; but *emunah* must come first. "A tzaddik will live by his *emunah*." This is what we must strengthen ourselves in, because without *chizuk*, one will naturally forget about *emunah*. There are various levels in *emunah*; and according to the natural way of the world, without actively strengthening *emunah*, it will simply get weaker.

### Mussar Reminds Us to Have Emunah

The *eitzah* is to learn *mussar*. *Mussar* wakes a person up to become aware of his purpose and duties in this world. It reminds him to be a *yarei Shamayim*, to remember that he will have to give a reckoning of his actions. Learning *mussar sefarim* reminds a person to fulfill his obligations. The *Mishnah Berurah*, in the first *siman*, writes that the antidote against the yetzer hara is Chazal's *mussar*. That means that the "*Torah tavlin*" is the Torah of *yiras Shamayim* — *mussar sefarim* — which are the most effective antidote directly against the yetzer hara.

Simply learning *mussar* is not enough. Some people learn *mussar* and then forget about it. The Vilna Gaon writes (*Iggeres HaGra*): "There are some people who read *mussar sefarim* yet are not excited by it.... This can be compared to one who plants without plowing first. The wind will grab the seeds and satisfy the birds..." See there.

Therefore, Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (2:26), "When a person hears *mussar*, he must arouse his soul and take to heart whatever he heard and constantly think about them... and place the *mussar* on his soul again... until his soul accepts the *mussar* and until he is purified." Even after he hears *mussar*, he must continue thinking about it and not let his mind wander. If there is no

*hesech hada'as*, there can be *yiras Shamayim*, and then all his actions will be good.

### Why Aren't Our Tefillos Answered?

We've already mentioned last week that there are many *tefillos* for *ruchniyus*. For example, in the *Birchos HaTorah*, we ask: Please make Torah sweet in our mouths... and may we and our children and all Jewish children be knowers of Your name, and learn Your Torah for its own sake. Then in *Ahavah Rabbah*, we ask at length for success in Torah study, begging Hashem to have mercy on us: Our Father, the Merciful Father, the Merciful One, Have mercy upon us!

In Shemoneh Esrei, we recite: Return us Our Father to Your Torah — and all the requests are in the plural form. When a person davens, he is not only davening for himself, he is asking for mercy for all of Klal Yisrael. He is davening that all of Klal Yisrael should be osek baTorah.

Rav Yisrael Salanter told us that it's tried and true that *tefillos* for *ruchniyus* help. If so, how can we understand the times that it doesn't help? There are so many *tefillos* for success in *ruchniyus* for all of Klal Yisrael, and we don't see it helping. While there is a slight arousal to teshuvah, it's barely anything, and we are asking for everyone! Why aren't our *tefillos* being answered?

### A Heartfelt Tefillah Is Accepted

There must be a deficiency in *tefillah* — it's obviously not from the depths of their heart — it doesn't bother them so much and it's not that painful that there are so many people who aren't osek baTorah. If they really cared, they would have been davening from the depth of their hearts, and then their *tefillos* would have been answered. And everyone would do teshuvah and be osek baTorah, just as we ask in "Return us to Your Torah." So too, in *Ahavah Rabbah*, when we ask "And put in our heart to understand and elucidate... and unify our hearts to love and fear." If we really cared, we would be asking from the depths of our hearts, and our *tefillos* would be answered!

This really is a great *madreigah*, to care about another Jew, to be so deeply pained that it should cause me to daven from the depths of my heart. It's not simple.

### A Mother and Grandmother's Prayers

A woman once came to the Chazon Ish crying that her son did not want to learn. He gave her the following tefillah to recite in the *berachah* of Shema Koleinu (printed in *Kovetz Igros*, vol 1, p. 74): "May it be Your will Hashem Elohai v'Elokei Avosai, that You have mercy on my son... and transform his heart to love and fear Your name, and be diligent in Your holy Torah. Please remove from him all causes that prevent him from diligence in Your holy Torah and prepare for him all the factors that will bring him to Your holy Torah." This is a mother's prayer for her son, and a mother surely davens from the depth of her heart.

The Chazon Ish related a story about a young bachur who was not very talented; he was not very smart. But in the end, he became a great *lamdan*. The Chazon Ish said that it was probably due to his grandmother's tears. His grandmother probably cried when she lit the Shabbos candles and davened for her grandson to be *osek baTorah*, and her prayer was accepted. A prayer for *ruchniyus* is accepted, even if it's on behalf of someone else.

In letters that Rav Yisrael Salanter wrote to his *talmidim*, he asks them to daven for his success in *ruchniyus*.

### Sound the Great Shofar for Our Freedom

There's another *tefillah* in Shemoneh Esrei: "Sound the great shofar for our freedom." It's reminiscent of the *pasuk* (*Yeshayah* 27:13) mentioned the Yamim Noraim prayers: "And it will be on that day a great shofar will be sounded." That is, in the future redemption, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will blow a great shofar. The *pasuk* then continues: "And the lost ones from the land of Ashur and those exiled in the land of Egypt will come, and they will bow to Hashem on the holy mountain in Yerushalayim." They will bow to Hashem! When Hashem sounds the shofar, there will be repentance and *avodas Hashem*, everyone will bow to Hashem. This is what we mean when we say "Sound the great shofar." It is a prayer for *ruchniyus*. May we merit experiencing it.

The word *l'cheiruseinu*, "for our redemption," can be explained based on the *mishnah* in *Avos* (6:2), "There is no free man aside from one who is *osek baTorah*." This freedom is the true freedom, freedom of the soul. One who is *osek baTorah* is the true free man, as there is no free man "aside from" one who is *osek baTorah*. So aside from the *berachah* of Hasheveinu (Return us to Your Torah), the *berachah* of Teka b'Shofar (Sound the Great Shofar) is a special prayer for *teshuvah* and Torah.

### And Wave a Banner to Gather Our Exiles

The *berachah* continues "and wave a banner to gather our exiles." This is a *tefillah* for the ingathering of the exiles. "Wave a banner" denotes publication, as the *pasuk* in *Yeshayah* (62:10) states: "Lift up a banner." We are publicizing the fact that Hashem is gathering in the exiles. Similarly, the *pasuk* states (*Yeshayah* 49:22), "So says Hashem Elokim, Behold I will raise My hand over the peoples and lift up My banner over the nations, and they shall bring your sons in their armpits and carry your daughters on their shoulders." These *pesukim* refer to the spiritual influence there will be during the future redemption.

We ask for the gathering of exiles to Eretz Yisrael. This too has a spiritual influence, as one who is in Eretz Yisrael is sanctified. The *kedushah* of Eretz Yisrael has an effect on a person's spiritual *madreigah*.

We've already mentioned the Gemara (*Nedarim* 22a) about two people who were traveling to Eretz Yisrael from Bavel. On the way, one got angry at the other and killed his

friend. When this story was told to Rabbi Yochanan, he asked, "How could this be?" The Torah tells us (*Devarim* 28:65), "And Hashem will give you there an angry heart." That is, one can only have an angry heart "there," in Chutz LaAretz, not in Eretz Yisrael. They told him that the two friends were actually still on the other side of the Yarden when the murder occurred. The Gemara explains that if they had crossed the Yarden and entered Eretz Yisrael, this would not have happened, because a person's *middos* get better in Eretz Yisrael, due to the land's inherent *kedushah*.

This is what we are asking for in the *tefillah* "Sound the Great Shofar." We are asking to receive this influence of *kedushas ha-aretz*. If so, all the requests in this prayer are requests for spirituality.

### Shofar of Matan Torah and Mashiach

Let us now try to understand why a shofar is mentioned here. Will it really be an actual shofar? When describing Matan Torah, the *pasuk* states (*Shemos* 19:16): "And the sound of the shofar was very strong." Hashem was the one blowing the shofar then — did He actually hold a shofar and blow it?

It seems that this is not referring to a physical shofar; it's referring to a spiritual shofar. This can be inferred from the *pasuk* describing Matan Torah, which says "the sound of the shofar." They only *heard* the sound of the shofar, but they didn't see it. Here, although the verse states "Sound a great shofar," it is probably not meant to be taken literally, it's just referring to the sound of the shofar, as if there is a shofar there.

The time will come before the final redemption when there will be "the sound of the shofar" just as there was at Matan Torah. Not only will we hear a shofar, it will be "a great shofar." When describing Matan Torah, the *pasuk* says "the sound of the shofar was very strong." The fact that here it says "a great shofar" teaches us that it is referring to the time we will hear the sound of Mashiach's shofar.

Chazal tell us (*Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* chap. 31) that this shofar is the shofar of the ram of *akeidas Yitzchak*. It must be explained that this too, is not to be taken literally. Rather, in the merit of the *akeidah*, we will be *zocheh* to hearing the shofar of Mashiach. [See further in the Ramban *Shemos* 19:13 and Gur Aryeh ad loc.]

### Tefillah Must Be on the Right Madreigah

In any case, we ask "Sound the great shofar for our redemption." The *tefillah* can be effective, and we can merit hearing the shofar of Mashiach through our prayers. And this is a *tefillah* for *ruchniyus*. We daven for it and ask for it, even though our *tefillos* have not yet been answered.

The reason for this is because *tefillah* must be on the right *madreigah*, it must be a quality prayer. The person who's davening also must be taken into consideration. The Gemara relates (*Bava Metzia* 85b) that once Rabbi Chiya and his sons served as the *baalei tefillah*, and when Rabbi Chiya said, "*Mashiv haruach*," the winds started blowing

immediately. When he said, "*Morid hageshem*," rain fell instantaneously. When Rabbi Chiya davened and was the *shaliach tzibbur*, his *tefillos* had an immediate effect. The *madreigah* of the person davening has an influence on whether or not the *tefillah* will be accepted.

### How To Improve the Quality of Our Tefillos

Every single person in Klal Yisrael can improve his *tefillos*. **If we just pay a bit more attention and learn *mussar sefarim*, then we will become a little more sanctified and will receive a little more *kedushah*. Every person already has *kedushah*, the *kedushah* that's inherent in every *neshamah*. Every Jew has a holy *neshamah*, and he can make it even holier, as the *pasuk* states (Vayikra 11:44), "And you shall be holy because I am holy." With just a drop more *kedushah*, one's *tefillah* is completely different.**

*B'ezer Hashem* may we all merit *hatzlachah* in Torah and the *madreigah* of "*rabbanan*." As we said, it doesn't require major efforts, one just has to utilize his time properly, each person according to his own abilities. The key is that there should not be *bittul Torah*. And of course,

one needs *siyatta d'Shemaya* to have energy for this, for Torah, *tefillah*, and *middos tovos*.

### Emunah Produces Good Middos and Happiness

There are many *middos* that become much easier with *emunah*, since we remember that everything is in *Shamayim*'s hands, and whatever the Merciful One does is for the best. If so, then even if someone disturbs me, it's from Heaven and it's for my good. I don't know why it's good, but that is the truth. I have to thank the one who is bothering me. True, this is very hard, but in any case, at least don't be upset at him because everything is from *Shamayim*, and Heaven is giving me this difficulty.

If people would live with this *emunah*, then everything would be peaceful and serene, there would be *ahavas habriyos*, and there wouldn't be any conflicts or friction. If we'd live with *emunah*, everything would be different.

The general rule is, if one lives with *emunah*, then he has a happy, calm life. *B'ezer Hashem* may we all merit living with *emunah*!

### Excerpts from a Keness for Roshei Yeshivah in Rav Edelstein's House

- Especially during this period when *talmidim* can't come to yeshivah because they are sick, it's important for the rebbi to call him, speak to his parents and speak to the *talmid*, to show that the rebbi is thinking about him and cares about him. An important *klal* in *chinuch* is that the child should feel that the rebbi is his friend, he should feel friendship.
- A *kapdan*, someone who is very particular and critical, cannot teach. If someone is a *kapdan* by nature, even if he acts differently, as if he's not *makpid*, he will not be able to have an influence on his *talmidim*! It's simply not *shayach*! In any case, it's very important to treat a *talmid* with kindness, he should feel the rebbi relates to him with a loving, friendly attitude. And it should really be this way, it should be true.
- The actual learning in cheder and yeshivah should be in a way that the *talmidim* enjoy learning, they should love learning Torah. How is this done? The rebbi should ask questions that the *talmidim* can answer. When the *talmid* answers correctly, he feels good and sees that he can do it. This is how he gains *ahavas haTorah*. But if he hears a *shiur* that he cannot participate in, even if he understands what's going on, he's only listening and this provides less *ahavas haTorah*. In some *yeshivos ketanos*, and I think Rav Michel Yehudah *zt"l* would also do this, they let the *talmid* read and explain, and the rebbi helps him. However, this should only be done in a way that the *talmid* feels he knows the Gemara and receives the necessary encouragement.
- Another important thing is to instill within the *talmidim* the *hashkafah* of just what Torah is, and what *esek haTorah* is. They should understand that *esek haTorah* is the very best business, and it gives us the happiest life: *ashrecha b'olam ha-zeh*. One's interests should be in *esek haTorah* and *yedias haTorah*, and they should realize how important it is.

*B'ezer Hashem* all the *rabbanim* should be *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya* in educating their *talmidim* to Torah, *middos tovos* and *yiras Shamayim*. Educating *talmidim* to have *yiras Shamayim* is also very important; speak *divrei chizuk* about *emunah* and about how a Yid should behave in general.

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The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va'ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein's home.