

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 Vayeishev* 5781

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One Who Comes to Be Purified

Chazal say (*Yoma* 38b), “One who comes to be purified is helped.” If a person wants to become pure and improve his level of *ruchniyus*, Heaven helps him become pure. Purity is a *madreigah*, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* explains in Chapter 16. If one wants, he will receive *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

If so, this is a very good *eitzah*. All one needs to do is “want” *taharah*, purity, and then Heaven will send him *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

Taharah is just a *mashal* for all spiritual matters. For example, if someone wants to grow in Torah, Heaven will help him have success in Torah.

But “one who comes to be purified” does not mean that he merely has to “want,” he also must “come.” He must do something, put in some *hishtadlus*. For example, regarding Torah, he must learn to the best of his ability, as much as he can. Then, if he “comes to be purified” and does this *maaseh*, if he starts purifying himself by learning Torah to the best of his ability, Heaven will help him become even more successful. He will be *zocheh* to *siyatta d’Shemaya* to succeed even beyond his natural abilities.

This concept of “one who comes to be purified” in Torah is also applicable regarding someone who teaches Torah to others — if he is asked to teach and he does so.

However, “one who comes to be purified” only applies when a person does as much as he can. For example, when he learns Torah, if he learns as much as he can, if he invests all his abilities, he falls into the category of “one who comes to be purified,” and he is helped. But if he is able to learn more, and he does not, this is not considered “one who comes to be purified,” and he is not helped.

The same is true regarding teaching. “One who comes to be purified” will only occur when a rebbi teaches as he should, by utilizing all his *kochos* and exhausting all his abilities — all his *kochos* and all his *havanah* — then he will be helped with *siyatta d’Shemaya* to teach even more.

Meriting Siyatta D’Shemaya Above Nature

Chazal said further (*Nedarim* 55a), “Why does it state: And from Midbar [lit., a desert] to Matanah [lit., a gift], since if a person makes himself like a desert, which is free for all to come use and take, Torah will be given to him as a gift. As it states: “And from Midbar to

Matanah,” and Rashi explains: Like a desert that’s *hefker* and available to everyone, he teaches Torah at no cost to everyone.

If a person makes himself “*hefker*,” meaning, whenever someone asks to learn, he does not refuse and teaches him — and it doesn’t matter who he is or what level of learning he’s on — this is considered like a “desert,” which is *hefker*. Anyone can learn from him and use him to learn Torah. In the *zechus* of this, he will merit “*Matanah*,” Heaven will give him great success in Torah, *l’maalah min hateva*, more than his natural talents. Just as someone else has to give the *matanah*, gift, his success in Torah doesn’t just occur naturally, Heaven gives him a gift of success beyond his natural talent since he was *mafkir* himself to others.

The Gemara relates the story of Rav Preida (*Eiruvin* 54b), who had a student who had a difficult time understanding. Rav Preida had to explain each thing 400 times — the *talmid* was exceptionally weak — he only understood after extensive amounts of explanations. Rav Preida explained and explained every single thing 400 times, making himself like a *midbar*, which is *hefker*. Someone who can teach such a student makes himself *hefker*, as it takes up a tremendous amount of time.

Putting His Needs Aside and Thinking About Others

The end of the story, as related in the Gemara, is astounding. Once Rav Preida taught his *talmid* 400 times, as usual, but the student still didn’t understand. Rav Preida asked him, “What happened? Why didn’t you understand?” And the student answered, “I know that rebbi has to go take care of a mitzvah matter, and I kept worrying that he might leave any minute. I didn’t have the *yishuv hadaas* to concentrate and understand.” Rav Preida told him, “If so, you should know that I am staying here with you, and I’m not going anywhere until you understand.” He then proceeded to teach the information to his *talmid* another 400 times, until he finally understood.

After this, a *bas kol* emanated from Heaven and asked Rav Preida what he would like as a reward for his actions. He was told that he has the *zechus* to choose one of two things: 1) To merit longevity and live another 400 years — one year for each of the 400 times he taught the *talmid*. 2) His entire generation would merit Olam HaBa. That is, in his merit, the entire

generation would merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* to perform good deeds and merit Olam HaBa.

Rav Preida chose the second option — that his entire generation would merit Olam HaBa. He did not think of his own needs, he thought about his generation! Even though he'd be able to perform *zikkui harabbim* if he'd live another 400 years, and his presence would be beneficial for all those generations, he may not have been sure of that. So he requested Olam HaBa for his entire generation — he did not ask for himself, but for his generation.

Heaven told him that since he gave up his personal benefit for the sake of the generation's benefit, since he did not ask for a reward for himself and asked for his generation instead, he will be granted both — a double payment. Just as there's a concept of double payment in a fine, there's double payment in reward as well. He would live another 400 years, and his entire generation would be *zocheh* to Olam HaBa.

We can learn from this that if someone does not think about himself and thinks of others instead, it is a *zechus* for him, and he personally will benefit from it.

Our Tefillos Are in the Plural Form

There are many requests in Shemoneh Esrei, and they are all in the plural form, such as: *Hashiveinu*, Return us; *Selach Lanu*, Forgive us; *Chaneinu*, Grant us. They are all requests for the *tzibbur*, not just for ourselves. It is only at the very end of Shemoneh Esrei that we make a request for ourselves: *Elokai, netzor leshoni*, Hashem, guard my tongue... This is the only personal request. All the other requests are in plural form, and while the individual is included in these requests too, the requests are still general, on behalf of the entire *tzibbur*. The individual is not the *ikkar*!

Shlomo HaMelech: Wisdom to Benefit the Klal

Shlomo HaMelech is another example of this trait. He merited prophecy in a dream (*Melachim I* chap. 3): "In Givon, Hashem appeared to Shlomo in a dream at night, and Hashem said, 'Ask [from Me] what I shall give you.'" HaKadosh Baruch Hu asked him what he would like, and Heaven would grant him whatever he would ask for.

Shlomo said he wanted a *lev shome'a*, "a listening heart" to benefit others, to benefit the nation. "And give Your servant a listening heart to judge Your nation and understand the difference between good and evil." That is, he requested a listening heart so he could help the nation. He wasn't asking for himself; he was asking for Klal Yisrael. He wanted the necessary wisdom and understanding to know how to influence Klal Yisrael, how to direct the nation and lead them.

And HaKadosh Baruch Hu answered him, "Since you asked for this thing, and you did not request long life for yourself, nor did you request wealth, nor did you ask for your enemies' souls, but you asked for understanding to discern judgment" — since you only asked for the nation and not for yourself — "behold I will give you a wise and understanding heart, the likes of which has never been before and will never exist afterward." In this *zechus*, Shlomo merited his extraordinary wisdom, the wisdom of Shlomo, who was the wisest of men. There never was and never will be anyone as wise as him.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu also added, "And even that which you did not request of Me I will give you: wealth and honor, and there shall never be a man like you among the kings all your days." In addition to wisdom, he also was granted wealth. He was so wealthy that there was no one as rich as him. And he also received honor, and he was the most honorable person in the nation, and in the entire world. No one in the world received as much honor as he did. And he merited all this because he did not request something for himself, requesting instead for his nation.

This is how Heaven works. Whenever a person does something to benefit others, if he does not think about himself and only thinks about others, he merits tremendous *zechuyos*.

I heard that Maran Rav Baruch Ber *zt"l* once told his *talmidim*, "I sacrificed my Torah for your sake." It is well known that Rav Baruch Ber gave many *shiurim* to his *talmidim*, and he gave over *shiur* to any *talmid* who asked. During that time, he could have learned all of Shas and come up with many *chiddushei Torah*. But instead, he learned the *masechtos* that are learned in yeshivah. And he sacrificed this for his *talmidim*, in order to teach — to benefit the *tzibbur*!

And actually, Rav Baruch Ber merited that his Torah is very profound Torah. Whether one learns his *sefarim*, or Torah that is written in his name, he will see that his *divrei Torah* are extremely deep.

Prayer for the Klal from the Depths of One's Heart

Another thing we learn from Shlomo HaMelech is that at the beginning, as mentioned, Hashem came to him in a dream and told him to choose whatever he wants. So he asked for something that would benefit Klal Yisrael. Later on, when he finished building the Beis HaMikdash, we see again (*Melachim I* chap. 8) that he davened a very long *tefillah* with a lot of requests. Who were his requests for? For Klal Yisrael! He only made one small request for himself: that the royal line of David HaMelech continue. And he mentioned it very quickly, with just a few words, but the main part of his requests was for all of Klal Yisrael. Just as is mentioned in the *pesukim*, Shlomo asked for many things: to save

Klal Yisrael from the *mageifah*, and that they should not experience any other *tzaros*, and they should only have a good life.

That is the right way to daven and ask for things that will benefit Klal Yisrael.

The Gemara (*Berachos* 50a) cites the *pasuk*, “Widen your mouth and I will fill it” regarding prayer and the request for success in Torah. At first, you may think, “Widen your mouth” sounds singular, for yourself. And the truth is, one must daven for himself and for others, but for others, one must ask even more! This too is included in “Widen your mouth and I will fill it” — don’t only ask for yourself, ask for others as well.

The Merit of Doing Chesed for the Klal

The Gemara tells us about the concept of *middah k'neged middah* (*Bava Kama* 50a): Nechunia Chofer Shichin would dig pits so there would be water for the *tzibbur*. Once his daughter fell into a pit and her life was in danger. They came to tell Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa what had happened, and he said she would be saved. And so it was. Indeed, it cannot be that something this *tzaddik* worked so hard on would harm one of his children. Since he acted with *mesirus nefesh* to benefit the *klal*, it was impossible that his daughter would suffer from something similar. She was saved in his merit!

These are the merits of a *mezakeh harabbim*, of someone who puts in effort and works to benefit the public; whether it is through Torah, or *chesed*, or *tefillah*. If a person davens for others, then Chazal have said (*Ibid.* 92a): “One who asks for mercy for his friend and he needs the same thing, he is answered first.”

When to Stop Learning In Order to Do Chesed

We’ve recently discussed the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18a) that discusses the House of Eli, who were kohanim. It was decreed upon them that they’d all die young: “And most of your house will die young” — by age eighteen. The *pasuk* continues: “Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli that their sin will never be atoned for through sacrifice or *minchah*.” Even *korbanos* would not help to annul the decree. The Gemara goes on to say, “It will not be atoned for through sacrifice or *minchah*, but it will be atoned for through Torah learning and *gemillus chassadim*.” If they are involved in Torah learning and good deeds, the decree will be annulled and they will live long.

The Gemara tells us that both Abaye and Rava were from the house of Eli. Rava learned Torah and lived for forty years, which means he had longevity, he lived twenty-two years past eighteen. This was in the merit of the Torah he learned. Abaye, meanwhile, learned Torah and did *chesed*. In this *zechus*, he lived till age sixty; twenty years longer than Rava. We must understand

why Rava didn’t involve himself in *gemillus chesed* as well and merit Abaye’s degree of longevity.

The answer is the following: *Chesed* is only a mitzvah when it falls upon a person and there’s no one else to do it. But if there’s someone else to perform the *chesed*, and it’s a mitzvah that others can do, then it would be a prohibition of *bittul Torah* to do it. This is the halachah (*Moed Katan* *daf* 9, and Rambam, *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, chap. 3): if there is no one else to do the *chesed*, then one is obligated to do it, and there’s no prohibition of *bittul Torah* involved. But if someone else can do it, it is prohibited to do the *chesed*; one must learn.

If so, we must explain as follows: Abaye was involved in *chesed* as well because there was no one else to do the *chesed* instead of him. He was busy with *chesed*, because *Shamayim* sent him *chesed* to do what no one else could do. In the merit of this, he lived another twenty years. Rava, however, was involved solely in Torah because it was not necessary for him to do *chesed* — there were others who could do it instead. If he would have stopped learning to find *gemillus chesed*, it would have been even worse! Each case is individual and depends on the situation and reality.

Expressing Thanks for Material Needs and for Spirituality

The obligation to express thanks is another important matter. One must express thanks for Hashem’s *chassadim*. In our prayers, we express our thanks: *Modim Anachnu Lach*, “We thank You Hashem... for our lives that are entrusted in Your hands, and for our souls entrusted to You.” This is thanks for physicality, for life in this world. Now, it doesn’t make sense that the gratitude is only for our physical needs. We certainly are required to thank Hashem for our spirituality as well, for our life in Olam HaBa! Sure enough, we go on to thank Hashem for “Your miracles that accompany us daily and for Your wonders and kindnesses that are present at all times” — there is no indication of what the wonders and kindnesses are, and it actually includes spirituality as well. We are thanking Hashem for *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*.

Further on in the *berachah*, we recite: “The Good One, Whose mercy never ends, and the Merciful One, Whose kindness never finishes.” It does not explicate exactly which mercy or kindness we mean, and this includes gratitude for spirituality as well: for Torah and the good deeds we have, and for the opportunities for *zikui harabbim*. One who brings merit to the masses can do so only with *siyatta d’Shemaya*, and there is an obligation to express thanks for this.

Expressing Gratitude and Emunah

It’s not enough to express gratitude verbally, the thanks must be sincere. A person must believe with complete

Steady Growth Via Mussar Sefarim

faith that whatever he has is from Hashem; it was not acquired *b'derech hateva*. Therefore, he understands that he is obligated to express his gratitude. **This is dependent on acknowledging *emunah*, believing with complete faith that nothing happens due to nature — everything is in Heaven's hands, every success is in Heaven's hands, our lives that are entrusted in Your hands — it's in "Your hands"! And our souls entrusted to You — it's "to You"! And Your miracles — it's "Your miracles," Hashem does it, only He alone. *Ein od milvado!***

It's not easy to live with this *emunah* that everything is in Heaven's hands and nothing occurs through *derech hateva*, but it is an obligation. It is the first commandment in the Aseres HaDibros (*Shemos* 20:2), "I am Hashem your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt." This means to believe with complete faith that everything is in Heaven's hands. If one lives with this belief, he will have a happy life, life on a completely different plane.

Everything is in Heaven's hands, despite all our *bechirah*, and our power of thought and understanding. Our ability to speak, to see, to hear — every single breath — is all in Heaven's hands and we must thank Hashem for it all. Chazal said (*Bereishis Rabbah* 14:9), "All souls will praise Hashem — for every breath a person takes, he must thank and praise the Creator."

This is the concept of *emunah* and acknowledging the truth that everything is in Heaven's hands. It truly is not a simple *madreigah* to attain, but if one strengthens himself in it, it is a *zechus*.

The way to advance and strengthen oneself in this matter is by learning *mussar*. There are many *mussar sefarim*, and *Mesillas Yesharim* is especially beneficial. It provides a path to growth based on the *beraisa* of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair. It teaches a person how to advance in *madreigos*, and through it, one can attain very high *madreigos*.

However, **in order to do so, one must learn *mussar* daily, a little bit every day. If it takes place every day, there will not be *hesech hadaas*. Every *hisorerus* increases the effect of *mussar*. A person will not change overnight; it is a slow process. After all, it is human nature to process things slowly. This way, one will be able to advance steadily, of course with *siyatta d'Shemaya*, as Chazal say, "One who comes to be purified will be helped."**

L'maaseh, one must set a steady *mussar* session every day. Choose an interesting *mussar sefer*. Don't learn something that's boring, because if it's boring it will not have an influence on you. If it is steady, it will have a great influence and will increase your *madreigah* in all aspects of *emunah*. This way, one will advance and rise in all the good attributes, such as caution, alacrity, cleanliness, purity, all the *madreigos*. Every little thing has an influence and strengthens the *madreigah*.

B'ezras Hashem, it's in our hands! *Yehi ratzon* that we all fall into the category of "one who comes to be purified" and may we all be *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya!*

Please daven for
גיטה פייגה בת רבקה
לרפואה שלימה ומהירה
בתוך כל חולי ישראל

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