

# Darkei HaChizuk

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

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## Rachmanim, Bayshanim, Gomlei Chasadim

Chazal say (*Yevamos* 79a) there are three characteristics that define this nation: *rachmanim*, *bayshanim*, and *gomlei chasadim*." The Jewish nation is blessed with three special *middos*, each one in the Jewish nation: *rachmanim* — in the heart; *gomlei chasadim* — in action; *bayshanim* — this also has to do with the heart.

These three *middos* are exclusive to Am Yisrael, to "this nation." The non-Jews do not have these *middos*. The *pasuk* in *Shmuel II* (21:2) relates that the Givonim were not from Bnei Yisrael because they didn't have these good *middos*.

The truth is, it states (*Devarim* 28:9): "And you shall go in His ways." Chazal say (*Shabbos* 133b and more), "Be similar to Him. Just as He is merciful, you should be merciful." If so, *rachamim* is a *middah* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. He is merciful and we are commanded to go in His ways.

*Gomlei chasadim* is also a *middah* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, as it states in the Gemara (*Sotah* 14a): "The Torah begins with *gemillus chesed* and ends with *gemillus chesed*. The Torah starts with 'And Hashem made for Adam and his wife leather garments and dressed them.' The end is 'And He [Hashem] buried him in the valley.' We were commanded to go in Hashem's ways, as they said, 'Just as He is, so shall you be,' and we should perform acts of *chesed*."

If so, these two *middos*, *rachmanim* and *gomlei chasadim*, are understood — they are *middos* of Hashem, and Klal Yisrael is commanded to go in His ways.

## The Advantage of Shame and Regret for a Sin

Regarding "*bayshanim*," this means a person is embarrassed to do something improper, and if he already did it, he's embarrassed that people might find out about it.

The Gemara teaches (*Berachos* 12b), "One who commits a sin and is embarrassed about it, all his sins are forgiven." This means that the embarrassment gives him the great reward of forgiveness for all his sins! Not only for the specific sin he's embarrassed about, but even if he has many sins and he's ashamed of one, he merits forgiveness for them all.

We learn this from Shaul HaMelech who was embarrassed to say that he consulted with the Urim v'Tumim since he killed out Nov, the city of kohanim. Because he was embarrassed, Shmuel HaNavi told him, "Tomorrow, you and your sons are with me" — in my company. All his sins were forgiven, and he merited being together with Shmuel HaNavi in Gan Eden. And this was all because he was embarrassed to say something — a *shev v'al taaseh!*

Shame is feeling the sin, and it's a subcategory of regret. Rabbeinu Yonah already explained in *Shaarei Teshuvah* in the first gate that there are a number of levels to regret: regret, despondency, and shame. And shame brings atonement, as the Gemara learned from the *pasuk* (*Yechezkel* 16:63), "So that you shall remember and be ashamed... when you will have an atonement for all you have done." That is, the feeling of shame that a person feels regarding a sin and the fact that he's embarrassed by it is like very deep regret and it provides a person with an atonement for everything. This is one of the main principles of *teshuvah*.

This good *middah* of shame is one of the defining characteristics of a Jewish person. Non-Jews do not have this nature of *rachmanim*, *bayshanim*, and *gomlei chasadim*.

## Klal Yisrael's Chesed

If a Jewish person has some difficulty, and another Jew, whom he doesn't even know, hears about it, he sends the first man help from afar! And this happens all the time. For example, there is an organization in America, Ezras Torah, which provides financial assistance specifically for *talmidei chachamim*, but they will assist any type of Jew in need. Jews help each other and do *chesed* with each other.

My father-in-law Rav Yehoshua Zelig Diskin *zt"l* was a rav in a city in Russia (Parislav). There was a point when the entire city lived in dire poverty; there was literally was nothing to eat. My father-in-law took the *sefer Ohalei Shem*, which had addresses of many *rabbanim* from all over the world — *rabbanim* whom he did not know, and they did not know him — and he simply wrote them letters. He sent each rav the address of another member of his community who needed financial assistance. After a while, donations from all over the world started pouring in. The donations were in foreign currency, which was very valuable in Russia at that time, and this assistance sustained the community.

And then a miracle happened. The government officials finally caught on to what was happening and my father-in-law could have been punished severely for "speaking ill of the country" and saying they didn't have food to eat. But the miracle was that he had just left Russia and moved to Eretz Yisrael.

Look at the nature of a Yid! Even if a Jew lives in Africa, America, or England, if he hears about a Jew in another place — someone whom he does not know at all — who needs help, he sends him help! This is the special *middah* of *gomlei chasadim*, which is only present in Yidden, not in non-Jews. It doesn't exist by the *goyim*.

## One Jew Cannot Cause Pain to Another Jew

We've already mentioned the Gemara (*Shabbos* 31a) that discusses the non-Jew who wanted to convert, and asked to be

taught the entire Torah “on one foot.” At first, he approached Shammai, who did not want to answer him, and then he came to Hillel, who told him, “Do not do unto others what you don’t want done to you.” We must understand what the non-Jew was trying to ask, and what Hillel’s answer really meant.

We explained that he wanted to know what he’d gain if he’d become a Jew. After all, as a non-Jew, he would only be obligated to observe the Seven Noachide Laws, so what would he gain if he’d convert and accept the yoke of 613 mitzvos? Hillel answered him, “What you dislike, do not do to your fellow.” That is, if you convert, you’ll gain a new nature; your nature will change and you’ll now care if someone else is suffering or in pain. Hillel presented it in the passive state, a *shev v’al taaseh*: You simply won’t be able to cause anyone else pain! Now, as a non-Jew, you don’t care if you cause someone else pain because you don’t have the *middah* of mercy. But once you convert and receive a Jewish *neshamah*, your entire personality will change. You’ll have a different nature and personality.

And it’s well known that this is the reality. Non-Jews and Jews have different personalities. I’ve already told you that I know someone who travels often. He has international connections in various countries, and he has frequent meetings with both Jews and non-Jews. I asked him if he sees a difference between Jews and non-Jews. He immediately answered that he actually can tell that they have different personalities. This is the *maalah* of Klal Yisrael — they are *rachmanim* and have good *middos*.

This nature is an inheritance from our *Avos*, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Avraham exemplified the *middah* of *chesed*, Yitzchak excelled in *gevurah* and *mesirus nefesh*, and Yaakov’s special *middah* was Torah. These good *middos* are genetic — every Jew inherits these *middos*. And their potency was increased at Matan Torah, as Chazal say (*Shabbos* 146a) that when Bnei Yisrael stood near Har Sinai, their impurity ended. Matan Torah changed their nature to incorporate better *middos*.

One more contemporary story on this topic. I know a convert, who explained to me why he converted. He once came across a *Pirkei Avos* with *peirushim* translated into German (by Rabbi Dr. Marcus Lehman), and he read it. He was so impressed by the exalted *middos* Klal Yisrael have that he decided he wanted to convert. He noticed on his own that as a non-Jew, he did not have these *middos*, but once he’d convert, he would have them, and he really wanted to act with these good *middos*! The desire to be like this is already a *madreigah*, because many others don’t care about, nor do they want to acquire, these *middos*.

### Good Middos — Inborn Nature

The Torah commands us (*Vayikra* 19:18), “*V’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho*.” Ostensibly, love is something that must come naturally; you can’t force someone to love. So how can we be commanded to love someone we don’t naturally love? The answer is that if the Torah commanded us to do so, it’s a sign that this is a Jew’s nature! Every Jew has innate *ahavas habriyos* and good *middos* — but other matters disturb this natural tendency.

Indeed, the *pasuk* in *Koheles* states (7:29): “Hashem made man *yashar*, straight, but they made many calculations.” A

person is naturally created straight, with *yashrus*, which is manifested in good *middos*, but various calculations disturb his *middos*, such as his desire to earn money, honor, etc. So when it comes to *ahavas habriyos*, he doesn’t act exactly as he should, because he makes calculations that he wants to earn something. However, this is a mistake, he will not gain a thing! **One does not profit from acting in contradiction to good *middos*.**

Klal Yisrael’s true nature is *v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho*. We see it in little children — they all love each other. Sometimes they’ll fight over a toy for a short while, but their love is restored immediately. That’s what a Jew’s true nature is like when it’s not impaired by calculations.

### Calculations Lead to Sinas Chinam

Chazal said (*Yoma* 9b) that the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed due to three cardinal sins: idolatry, immorality, and murder. The second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed not because of these grave sins, but due to *sinas chinam* (wanton hatred) and bad *middos*. Even though this is against a Jew’s nature, as we are *rachmanim*, *bayshanim*, and *gomlei chasadim*, since people made so many calculations, it led to *sinas chinam*. And that caused the Churban.

The Gemara there states: “Notice what happened to the castle that returned to the first ones, but not to the later ones.” That is, 70 years after the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, the second Beis HaMikdash was rebuilt, but the second Beis HaMikdash is still in ruins.

The Gemara explains: “The sins of the first ones were revealed, and their end was revealed; the sins of the later ones were not revealed, and their end was not revealed.” During the first Beis HaMikdash, everyone knew that the three cardinal sins were being transgressed, and they did teshuvah for them. The Anshei Knesses HaGedolah davened for the nullification and weakening of the *yetzer hara* for these sins. (See *Yoma* 69.) Once they did teshuvah and stopped sinning, the Beis HaMikdash could be rebuilt. But *sinas chinam*, which caused the destruction of the second Beis HaMikdash, is not a concrete sin and people don’t even notice that they’re sinning. So they can’t do teshuvah, and the Churban is still continuing.

Can it really be that all the Tannaim, Amoraim, Rishonim, Acharonim, and tzaddikim of all generations harbored wanton hatred toward their fellow Jews? Of course not! But most of the *tzibbur* are not Tannaim and Amoraim or *gedolei Torah*, and most of the *tzibbur* do act with *sinas chinam*.

### Achdus Will Bring the Geulah

How will the redemption occur? Just a few weeks ago, we read the haftarah of *Vayigash* (*Yechezkel*, chap. 37), “And you, son of man, take a stick of wood and write upon it ‘for Yehudah and Bnei Yisrael his friends,’ and take another stick of wood and write upon it ‘for Yosef the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Yisrael his friends,’ and bring them close one to the other till they [seem like] one stick and they will be like one in your hands.” This is a prophecy about how and when the *geulah* will occur — when there is *achdus*, unity, between every Jew, with *ahavas habriyos* and without *sinas chinam*. When there is no *sinas chinam*, the *geulah* will occur! *Sinas*

*chinam* is the sin that is preventing the *geulah*, so through unity and *ahavas habriyos*, the *geulah* will take place.

Furthermore, the *pasuk* in *Yeshayah* (chap. 11) says about the *geulah*, “And a shoot shall sprout from the stem of Yishai.” This means that Mashiach will be a descendent of Yishai. The *pasuk* doesn’t mention David HaMelech; it mentions his father Yishai, who was one of the four people who died without sinning, which is a very high *madreigah*. The *pasuk* continues, “And a twig shall sprout from his roots, and Hashem’s spirit shall rest upon him... and a wolf shall dwell with a sheep, and leopard will crouch with a goat.” This means that during Mashiach’s times, even the animals will have good *middos*. The animals’ actual nature will change!

This will happen after Mashiach comes, after the *geulah*. *Achus* is the *zechus* that will bring about the *geulah*; when there won’t be any *sinas chinam*. After the *geulah*, the lack of *sinas chinam* will be even more pronounced, when animals’ nature will change.

### Torah Helps One Change His Middos

But to our great despair, the Churban is still continuing because *sinas chinam* is still present. There are some people who enjoy causing pain to others, they want the other person to be embarrassed. This is *halbanas panim*. One who acts this way does not have a portion in Olam HaBa (see *Bava Metzia* 59a), and it’s comparable to murder (see *Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:139). But the yetzer hara is very persuasive, due to *sinas chinam*, and it can even convince people to behave in a way that is against Klal Yisrael’s true nature.

Chazal give us the solution to this (*Kiddushin* 30b), “I created *Torah tavlin*, the Torah as an antidote against it.” The Torah improves a person’s *middos*. The *Mishnah Berurah* writes in the first *siman* that this is talking about *Toras hayirah*, *mussar sefarim*, which bring a person to *yiras Shamayim* and *middos rectification*. This is the antidote to the yetzer hara. *Torah tavlin*.

And I think I once saw in the *Beis HaLevi* (see *Beis HaLevi Parashas Bo*, s.v. *v’hataam*) that even the *sinas chinam* during the Churban was the result of a deficiency in Torah study. Even though Chazal say (*Yoma*) that the Jews were involved in Torah and mitzvos, it was not *b’sheleimus*. If their Torah study had been *b’sheleimus*, it would have served as an antidote to the yetzer hara, and then there would not have been *sinas chinam*.

And this is quite true. We see the behavior of the *gedolim* of all generations. Did the Ketzos act with *sinas chinam*? Did the Chazon Ish have *sinas chinam*? The same is true regarding all *gedolei Torah* — *sinas chinam* was out of the question. But when someone does not learn Torah *b’sheleimus* it causes *sinas chinam*.

### Everyone Makes a Difference

The truth is, it all depends on us, every person makes a difference. Every person has an influence through his behavior, as the Chazon Ish wrote in a letter (*Igros Chazon Ish* 3:62), that a true *baal Torah* has a visible influence on his surroundings. A true *baal Torah* is someone who learns Torah *b’sheleimus*. He will have an influence on his surroundings, and the influence will be visible, even if he doesn’t say a

thing. The reality is that there is a *hashpaah*! The Chazon Ish adds that a true *baal Torah*’s influence is far-reaching and can affect people outside his immediate circle — but in this case, his influence will be hidden.

If so, we have the tool to bring the *geulah* closer. It’s all dependent on us. If we would be more *b’sheleimus* in our Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and *middos tovos*, it would have an influence on others as well — on those in our immediate vicinity, and on people even farther away.

Many of the 48 ways Torah is acquired (*Avos* chap. 6) are related to *middos tovos*, such as “loving [Hashem’s] creatures,” and many others. This leads a person to success in Torah, and then the **Torah improves his middos, and his middos lead to an increase in Torah, and so the cycle continues. By learning a little Torah, one acquires a little bit of good middos, and if one increases his good middos, his Torah will increase, and when one increases his Torah learning, he will automatically be blessed with more middos tovos.** This obligates every single person, each person according to his *madreigah*, as much as he can progress. And then he will automatically influence others as well!

### Chesed Every Step of the Way

Regarding *chesed*, the Rambam writes in his commentary on the Mishnah (*Avos* 3:15), that “everything depends on the abundance of small deeds.” If a person gives 1000 *zuz* to tzedakah at once and gives it willingly, if surely strengthens his *middah* of *ahavas chesed*. However, if he would divide the same sum into 1000 parts and give one *zuz* each time, when he does the same action 1000 times in 1000 small acts of charity, the “abundance of small deeds” has a much greater effect on him. It changes him completely and he acquires a much stronger love of *chesed*. The effect this has on him is unfathomable.

Anyone who lives around other people can perform good deeds at every given moment — by smiling at others and inquiring after their wellbeing. I already told the story of one of our *talmidim* who didn’t feel comfortable in our yeshivah. One day, he came to a decision that he’d leave for good after Shabbos. But on Friday night, when everyone was standing on line to wish the rabbanim “*gut Shabbos*,” one of the *bachurim* standing near him gave him a pat on the shoulder and asked him how he’s doing. When he saw that someone cared about him, everything changed and he decided to stay in yeshivah. One comment influenced him to stay in yeshivah! A person can do *chesed* just by being friendly and saying a good word.

Whenever a guest came to Kelm, anyone who met him would say hello, and ask him, “How are you? Is there anything I can help you with? Do you need anything specific?” — as if they were his old friends. Guests would wonder how the *bachurim* knew them, and they felt so good. After all, everyone paid attention to them and wanted to help them. If so, **even without any special efforts, a person can gain an abundance of maasim tovim just with one word, or even with a glance, a smile, to give another person a good feeling. A person can acquire many good deeds this way.**

### The Obligation to Be Careful about Coronavirus

Here’s a current issue: coronavirus was finally getting better; there were less patients. Why? Because people were careful,

the *tzibbur* was careful. But after the numbers went down, people started being lax, and then suddenly there were many, many who got sick. Thousands of patients, among them weak people, high-risk people, who are in great danger. And it happened because people were lax and belittled the gravity of the situation and because they didn't follow health precautions. **If someone is lax, not only is he liable to harm himself, he also infects and harms others. And he is like a roidef who is a source of danger to others.**

The *tzibbur* must be aware of this. No one should be lax, *chas v'shalom*; everyone must be one hundred percent careful and follow all the doctors' orders regarding safety precautions, to protect themselves and others. It's dangerous for a person to become sick himself, so he must be extremely careful, and then *b'ezras Hashem*, everyone will be healthy, but otherwise, it is dangerous, *chas v'shalom*.

### No One Ever Gains from Lying

I want to mention something regarding the *middah of emes*, *middas tovos* are all rooted in *emes*, telling the truth, not lying. Hashem's seal is truth (*Shabbos* 55a).

The Gemara states (*Shabbos* 104a) that the letters of the word *emes* are *aleph*, *mem*, and *tav*, which are from the beginning, middle, and end of the *aleph-beis*. The letters of the word *sheker*, on the other hand, are adjacent to each other. (See the hint to this in the Gemara.) All of the letters of *emes* are wide, with two feet, but the letters of *sheker* only have one pointy foot. This is a sign that "*sheker ein lo raglayim*, falsehood has no feet." Falsehood has no foundation or substance.

People who act with the *middah of emes* are very successful — that is, someone who tells the absolute truth and does not exaggerate. The *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap. 11) cites the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 97a) about the people of the city Kushta who were careful about speaking the truth, and in that merit, they were *zocheh* to longevity.

I know someone who had a fire in his house that caused a lot of damage. Usually, people take a lawyer to help them claim the largest sum of money from insurance. He did not hire a lawyer; he went by himself and wrote down exactly what happened and what was damaged without veering from the truth an iota. They realized that he was not exaggerating and honored his claim immediately! If someone is truthful, people believe him and aren't suspicious of him. They can see that he's truthful. A person benefits from the *middah of emes*, and loses from the *middah of sheker*.

The Gemara states (*Yevamos* 65b) that it is a mitzvah to alter the truth to keep the peace — this means that there are cases when lying is a mitzvah. But when it is not a mitzvah and

people want to lie just to gain something, there will be no profit from falsehood! One will only lose whatever profits he earns. He will not have any profit. This is the reality.

The *middah of emes* is a worthy *middah* that brings about success. A truthful person will have success in Torah learning too; in fact, *modeh al haemes*, admitting the truth, is one of the 48 ways Torah is acquired.

### Everyone Loves People with Good Middos

Some of the other ways Torah is acquired are: "*lev tov*, a good heart," "*ohev es habriyos*, loves Hashem's creatures," and "*anavah*, modesty." Someone who has good *middos* and is modest is loved by everyone else. People like him and respect him because he doesn't harm anyone, and he is truthful and does not exaggerate.

I knew people who had these good *middos*; everyone loved them. Whenever they had requests, people were happy to do things for them, and when they would ask for help on behalf of others, their good *middos* was the best *protektzia* ever.

My father-in-law Rav Yehoshua Zelig Diskin *zt"l* was a *rav* in Russia, but when he first came to Eretz Yisrael, he did not find a rabbinical position. He did sometimes give lectures, but he wasn't a practicing *rav*. In order to make a living, he worked as a bookkeeper in an office. Later on, he became the *rav* of Pardes Chana.

After he was already a *rav*, Yeshivas Ponevez wanted to make a purchase in his previous place of employment, a clothing factory. My father-in-law wrote the yeshivah a letter of recommendation asking his former bosses to give the yeshivah a better price. When the yeshivah's messenger came with the letter, they told him, "You have a letter from Rav Diskin? If so, we'll give you as big a reduction as you want!" The messenger asked for a 50% reduction, and they gave it to him. Since they respected Rav Diskin so much, they were happy to do whatever he asked. He had such good *middos* and was so modest, he didn't put on airs and didn't demand respect, which is against human nature. But that's how he was.

When a person lives his life with good *middos* and the *middah of emes*, he will have a wonderful life and be fortunate. Not only will he be happy, everyone around him will be happy. This is the *maalah of middos tovos*. We need *siyatta d'Shemaya* that every single one of us and all of Klal Yisrael will act with good *middos*. We already have good *middos* in our genes, in our nature, but we need *siyatta d'Shemaya* that our actions will be the result of good *middos* and *emes*. *Kein yehi ratzon!*

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

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