

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 Yisro 5781

428

Learning Torah without Wasting Time

Chazal tell us (*Bava Basra* 8a) that “*rabbanan lo tzrichei niterusa*,” *rabbanim* do not require guarding because the Torah protects them. Therefore, if they live in a city that’s protected by guards, they are absolved from paying the special tax for this protection, as the Torah they learn protects them, and they don’t need the extra protection of the city guards.

We’ve already mentioned the Rosh’s comments (*Bava Basra* 1:26) about 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.’”

The title “*rabbanan*” does not depend on how much a person learns, but on how much time he wastes from learning. Even a person who works a little for a living can be considered “*rabbanan*” — as long as he spends all his free time learning Torah and doesn’t waste a minute. This is because he learns as much as he can.

On the other hand, if he doesn’t learn and review during all his free time, he is not called “*rabbanan*.” If a person who doesn’t have difficulty in *parnasah* learns a lot, but he could really learn more, even if he can learn just a little bit more — but he doesn’t, he is not considered *rabbanan*! His Torah will not protect him, and he has to pay the tax for city guards.

It comes out that the term “*rabbanan*” is dependent on a “*mashehu*,” a very small amount. A *mashehu* of *bittul Torah* determines a person’s *madreigah*: whether he is called “*rabbanan*” or not.

The Power of a Drop of Bittul Torah

Rabbanan receive a very great reward, as the Gemara relates (*Bava Basra* 8b): “And *Rabbanan*, what [is their reward]? Ravina says: ‘And those who love Him will be like the sun emerging in all its strength.’” This is an unfathomable reward and *madreigah*, as the Tosfos explains there: The sun of the future world will be seven times stronger than the light of the “*shivas hayamim*.” If so, a person on the *madreigah* of *rabbanan* is *zocheh* to inestimable Olam HaBa, and gets a reward in this world as well — he doesn’t need guarding.

If so, if a person sits and learns, and he’s merely missing a drop of learning to attain the level of “*rabbanan*,” but he

doesn’t learn because he’s lazy, this is really hard to understand! After all, he just has to add a little more learning and he’ll already be on the level of *rabbanan* and be *zocheh* to an inestimable *madreigah* in Olam HaBa, and *sechar* in this world, that he won’t need guarding. Is it worthwhile for him to lose this all just because he wastes a little time? But the reality is that there are people like this. They learn and learn, but they really could add a little more learning, and they don’t. Because a person has a built-in *yetzer hara*, and thus, he loses the option of attaining such a lofty *madreigah*.

Chazal tell us the following about Torah learning (*Avos* 6:4): “This is the way of Torah... and toil in Torah. If you do so, you are fortunate in this world.” This means that not only do people on the level of *rabbanan* gain the exemption from paying city guards, they are simply fortunate in general. Their whole life will be a happy, fortunate life. And this is such a wonderful feeling in this world; it’s a feeling of “*mei’ein Olam HaBa*”! And yet, there are people who can attain this level, but they don’t understand it.

Don’t Be Drawn to the Inquisitiveness of Batalah

The reason for this is because people are naturally curious and inquisitive. They are drawn to *devarim beteilim*, they’re interested in the news, all kinds of world news, what’s going on here and there... And even though it has nothing to do with them, people are naturally curious. We’ve already mentioned in the past that **this nature of curiosity leads to a lot of time wasting.**

The story is told about Rav Elya Lopian *zt”l* (*Lev Eliyahu* vol. 1, in the biographical sketch) who had to take a bus somewhere. Usually, when people wait at a bus stop, they constantly check to see if their bus is coming, but Rav Elya did not do so. He had other things to think about. He did not understand why people get so curious; after all, when the bus comes, they’ll see it.

But that’s human nature: people are curious, and the time wasting that occurs as a result of curiosity is illogical! *Hasmadah* in Torah learning comes to counteract this curiosity. There is sweetness in Torah, and it is interesting. *Divrei Torah* are interesting and attracting.

I remember a story that happened to Maran HaGaon Rav Elazar Menachem Shach *zt”l*, who once wanted to see the *sefer Terumos HaDeshen*, which quotes the Ramban on a certain matter. This matter is brought down in other *sifrei Achronim*, and I told him that the yeshivah’s Otzar haSefarim would be opened in the morning, and we could see it then. He

told me, “The Ponovezer Rav, who lives nearby, probably has the *sefer* too, we can go get it now.” Then he added: “If the Ramban is right nearby, could it be that I won’t go? After all, I have the opportunity to learn by the Ramban!”

This the power of curiosity for Torah. And there is sweetness in Torah as well, as we’ve already mentioned that the Torah is compared to water, bread, and wine, which represent various flavors, just as there are many parts to Torah.

If a person is *osek baTorah* since he is curious and it’s sweet, if a person learns with *hasmadah*, without wasting time — with normal *hasmadah* — he can complete Shas! Even Gemara with Rashi, **one can finish Shas and gain knowledge in Shas without extra special effort. It’s hard to understand why everyone doesn’t do this.**

Ways to Strengthen Torah Learning

The solution is *chizuk*! The Gemara says (*Berachos* 32b), there are four matters that require *chizuk*, strengthening. The first matter is Torah. Rashi explains that *chizuk* must be “constant and with all his strength.” How does a person do this *chizuk*? First of all, if a person knows that he needs *chizuk*, **and he starts learning, he will immediately have *siyatta d’Shemaya*.** After all, Chazal tell us “One who comes to be purified is helped.” Rashi explains that *chizuk* must be performed with all his strength, if it is not, it is not considered “*chizuk*.”

There are *sefarim* that arouse a person to have *chizuk*, such as all *mussar sefarim*. There are also specific *sefarim* on Torah, such as the *sefer Chosen Yehoshua* by Rav Yehoshua Heller. He speaks at length about ways to succeed in Torah, and gives practical examples of how to succeed. If so, one can gain *chizuk* by learning these *sefarim* which provide guidance in attaining the method of *chizuk* in Torah.

In addition, there is also *tefillah*. It’s known that Rav Yisrael Salanter says that it’s tried and true that prayer for *ruchniyus* is effective. If so, one can daven for success in Torah.

There are many requests for success in Torah in our daily prayers. For example, in *Birkas HaTorah*, we request: “Please make the words of Torah sweet in our mouths.... and our children and children’s children... shall learn Torah *lishmah*.” In *Ahavah Rabbah*, we pray at length for success in Torah, and in *Shemoneh Esrei*, there is the *Hashiveinu* prayer, asking Hashem to return us to His Torah. There’s also *Elokai Netzor*, where we say “Open my heart to Your Torah.” There are many other places as well where we express our desire to succeed in Torah learning.

If so, if someone really wants to succeed in Torah and he recites these prayers with *kavanah*, he will merit *siyatta d’Shemaya*! Also, *Perek* 119 in *Tehillim* is replete with requests for Torah. If a person davens and asks, he will have *siyatta d’Shemaya* for *hatzlachah* in Torah. **It all depends on how much the person cares and whether he asks from the depths of his heart.**

It’s well known that the *Tumim* wrote a *sefer Yearos Devash* on *drush*. In that *sefer*, he wrote the following about himself: “When I do not daven with the proper *kavanah*, my Torah learning is lacking direction, and I am clothed in shreds. On the other hand, when I scream and call out to Hashem from the walls of my heart to grant me knowledge, for I am very poor, in our great sins, He will have mercy on me to enlighten my eyes in His Torah.” I heard from Maran HaRav Shach *zt”l* that the *Netziv* said that on the days he didn’t cry during the *berachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah*, he did not have *hatzlachah* in Torah! This is because one needs *rachamei Shamayim* for this, and by begging tearfully one will be *zocheh* to success in Torah.

Minimizing Speech for Torah

Minimizing speech is important — indeed, it is one of the 48 ways Torah is acquired (*Avos* chap. 6). Simply speaking, it means not to talk a lot, but the *Gra* tells us that it can also mean the opposite: that a person must speak “a little.” A person needs to speak a little in order to remain calm.

One of the *bachurim* in our yeshivah decided not to speak *devarim beteilim* at all. After a few days, he decided that it was not for him; he couldn’t keep up with this *kabbalah*. I told him that he’s right — a person must speak a little, *mi’ut sichah*, it’s for the purpose of learning Torah. “Speaking a little” is *chizuk haTorah* — it’s not considered *bittul Torah*.

Even Baalei Madreigah Need Strengthening

How far does one have to take his *chizuk*? Rashi says “constant *chizuk*.” The generation of the *Midbar* experienced *Kriyas Yam Suf*; Chazal tell us, “A maidservant at the sea saw what *Yechezkel ben Buzi* did not see in his prophecy.” Indeed, they said “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him.” They pointed at Him, so to speak. *Yechezkel* saw the *Maaseh Merkavah*, but a maidservant saw something even greater. That’s how clear their *emunah* was.

And yet, just a short while later, the *pasuk* states, “They traveled from there.” Chazal tell us (*Yalkut Behaalosecha* 729, and see also the *Ramban* there) that they traveled from *Har Sinai* happily, like a child runs away from school. The entire time they were camped in front of *Har Sinai*, they learned and exerted great effort in *esek haTorah*, but when it was time to travel, they were happy. They said, Now it won’t be so hard, and we can rest because we aren’t obligated to learn anymore. “Like a child runs away from school.”

Now, who are we talking about? About the *Dor haMidbar*, the generation that received the Torah, they saw *Matan Torah*, they saw the sound of the *shofar* and saw the fire. The entire nation trembled, the mountain trembled, as is explained in the *pesukim*. These same people experienced *Kriyas Yam Suf* too and merited all these lofty *hasagos*. They also observed the *Ten Makkos* in *Mitzrayim*, they saw *hashgachas Hashem*. And even so, there was still a

yetzer hara “to run away from school” because that is human nature. That’s why Rashi wrote that Torah requires constant *chizuk*, with all one’s strength.

The Vilna Gaon asked the Dubner Maggid to give him *mussar*. He wanted to hear *mussar* and criticism, even the Vilna Gaon! He wasn’t satisfied with his own strict observance, he wanted to hear from others as well.

Ways to Strengthen One’s Yiras Shamayim

The Gemara tell us (*Berachos* 28b) that when Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai got sick, his *talmidim* told him: “Rabbeinu, bless us.” He told them: “*Yehi ratzon* that your fear of Heaven should be as strong as your fear of humans.” They asked him, “Is that it?” He told them, “*Halevai!* You should know that a person can transgress a sin in private and say, No one saw me. This means that people don’t want others to know about their sins. Even though Heaven sees everything, and his sin is revealed there, he’s embarrassed of people, but not of Hashem.”

Even if a person sins accidentally, which can happen to anyone — even tzaddikim can sin unintentionally — he doesn’t want people to know about it. And even if Heaven knows, he’s still embarrassed of people and he’s not embarrassed that Hashem knows. His fear of humans is greater than his fear of Heaven.

What can we do so that our fear of Heaven should be on the same level as our fear of humans? Rabbi Yochanan told his *talmidim* “*Yehi ratzon*” — he blessed them; they received a *berachah* from Rav Yochanan ben Zakkai, which is like a *tefillah*. He blessed them for something spiritual, for *siyatta d’Shemaya*. But we don’t have a blessing from Rav Yochanan ben Zakkai, so we must daven ourselves, we must daven for *yiras Shamayim!*

We’ve recently discussed that there are many *tefillos* for *yiras Shamayim*, such as in Ahavah Rabbah, where we ask “Unify our hearts to love and fear You.” And in *Kedushah d’Sidrah*, where we say, “And place His love and His fear in our hearts,” and many other such *tefillos*. Even though Chazal said (*Berachos* 33b), “Everything is in Heaven’s hands except for *yiras Shamayim*,” we still need *siyatta d’Shemaya* to be given the appropriate circumstances that will arouse us to *yiras Shamayim* and to encourage us to learn *mussar*.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (*Shaar* 3, 15, 17, and more) that there are many levels to *yiras Shamayim*, and there is a mitzvah to constantly rise in *madreigah*. The way to do so is by having a steady learning session in matters that increase *yirah*. If one doesn’t do so, he won’t be able to increase his *yiras Shamayim!* A person always has to add more. Even though it is not easy, it is possible. There are many *madreigos* — you can see that there are people with more *yiras Shamayim* than others.

Rav Yisrael Salanter (*Ohr Yisrael* Letter 14) writes that in the past, there was a greater *hashpa’ah* of *yiras Shamayim*

because there were many people who were *yarei Shamayim*, and the fact that others looked at them caused them to have *yiras Shamayim!* But nowadays, we don’t see so much *yiras Shamayim*. He wrote this regarding the Elul. He wrote that he remembers when they recited *Birkas HaChodesh* for Elul, there was trepidation in the air, people were terrified of Yom HaDin. But later on, in our days, this level of fear lessened. There is *yeridas hadoros* in *yiras Shamayim*.

The solution is to learn *sifrei mussar* and to contemplate and think about how to increase *yiras Shamayim*.

Find Deficiencies and Rectify Them

Yiras Shamayim requires a person to find his deficiencies — especially in his heart. He should be attuned to whether or not his heart is clean. It’s true that there are people who are not arrogant and who don’t hold of themselves at all. They were born with this nature; they don’t feel important. This type of nature is very rare, but it does exist.

However, it usually is not like this. A person naturally feels important. There is an opinion in the Gemara (*Sotah* 5a) that says one needs an eighth of an eighth of arrogance, but the Rambam ruled (in his commentary to *Mishnayos Avos* 4:4, and in *Hilchos Deios* 2:3), that one shouldn’t even have this amount. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak holds that one should not have even a smidgeon of arrogance. This is what Chazal said (*Avos* 4:4): “Be very, very humble.” A person must distance himself from arrogance, and go to the opposite extreme.

The *Mesillas Yesharim* spends two chapters discussing modesty (chapters 22, 23) — how one attains modesty, through contemplation and thought, by making calculations how to attain modesty and find my deficiencies. Once a person is aware of his deficiencies, he will not consider himself so important.

But it’s not enough to find deficiencies; one must actually rectify them. Of course, some deficiencies are part of a person’s natural makeup; they aren’t sins, like someone who is not smart. That is not a sin; those are the abilities Hashem granted him.

Thanking Hashem for His Kindnesses

There are other traits that are related to a person’s heart, such as the obligation to thank Hashem. The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* says (116:12), “How can I repay Hashem for all the kindnesses He gave me?” In *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar Avodas HaElokim* chap. 5) it says that the mind tells the soul: “Do you know that you are *chabulah*, pawned, due to the kindnesses of your Creator?” The soul receives so many kindnesses from the Creator and must give something in return for them, but it cannot. So it is pawned as a result; its very life is pawned to HaKadosh Baruch Hu!

A person should calculate all the kindnesses Hashem did with him, beginning with the day of his birth. He should think about all the things that could have turned out

differently *al pi derech hateva*, but Hashem granted him *hashgachah pratis* and made him healthy, he was born with good hearing and vision, and all his limbs intact. There are babies who don't merit this, and he was born healthy; it is all a *chesed Hashem*.

Then he should think about his child development, all the physical aspects of his development, as well as the spiritual aspects. He received a plethora of spiritual *hashpa'os*, beginning in his youth, and he wouldn't have been able to reach the *madreigah* he is presently on without them. This too, is from *Shamayim*. Everything is in Heaven's hands!

If so, it turns out that whatever a person has, both material assets and spiritual assets, are *chasdei Hashem*. Why does he deserve them? After all, it says "Who preceded me, and I will repay him" (*Iyov* 41:3, and see *Vayikra Rabbah* 27:2). From the standpoint of strict judgment, a person doesn't deserve payment for his good deeds, because all the good deeds he performs are obligations. He doesn't deserve payment for that, but Hashem gives him reward anyway and it's all a *chesed* from *Shamayim*.

Contemplation to Fulfill Duties of the Heart

A person should calculate what he is obligated to do, yet does not. He should include duties of the heart as well — whether he has enough *emunah* and *hoda'ah* in his heart for everything he receives from Heaven. He should also notice all the gifts he receives even though he didn't daven for them or ask for them. These are *chasdei Hashem*! Without even davening for them! Without asking for them!

When he davens, he doesn't always daven wholeheartedly. It can sometimes be lip service. The Rosh (*Orchos Chaim*

siman 36) writes, "How good it is to ask forgiveness for saying 'Selach Lanu' without *kavanah*." A person has to say "please forgive me" for failing to concentrate on the "Forgive Us" blessing in *Shemoneh Esrei*. How could we daven without *kavanah*? After all, we are standing in front of Someone Who knows if we are having *kavanah* or not. **If a person is speaking to the king, and the king knows that he's just talking without really meaning it, how will the king treat him?!**

These are all calculations of matters that have no measure, and a person constantly needs *chizuk* in them. A person needs to strengthen his *emunah* and know that whatever he has, both material or spiritual, is from Hashem, and he is obligated to express thanks for them all. He has to pay attention and notice his deficiencies in the duties of his heart. Duties of the heart do not fall into the category of *middas chassidus*, acting with extra piety — they are "duties," obligations that one *must* fulfill. They are explained at length in the *sefer Chovos HaLevavos*.

These are man's duties in this world. If a person does not involve himself in them, and doesn't constantly work on these matters, he will not advance. He'll stay on the same *madreigah*, and he may even sink lower, as the saying goes: "If you aren't rising, know that you are falling." (See the Gra on *Mishlei* 15:24.) If a person isn't advancing in *ruchniyus*, he is automatically going to experience a *yeridah*. Only *malachim* are called "*omdim*," they stand in one place. People, however, are not *omdim*, they are *holchim*, they walk, move, they constantly have to be advancing and growing. One needs *siyatta d'Shemaya* for this. *Yehi ratzon* that we merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* in whatever we need.

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

For donations or dedications of the Hebrew and English flyers, or to receive the *sichos* to your email, please contact:

darkei.hachizuk@gmail.com

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