

Darkei HaChizuk

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

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

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Freedom of Torah in Nissan

Pesach, *zman cheiruseinu*, the time of our freedom, was just over. After Pesach, there's still one more week of Nissan, the month of the *geulah*. Chazal tell us (*Avos* 6:2), "Only one who is *osek* in Torah is considered a free man." If so, freedom equals Torah learning, and *zman cheiruseinu* is a time of Torah. *Esek haTorah* is *cheirus* and Nissan is a time of success in Torah learning.

But the reality is that many people go on trips right after Pesach, and there have been many tragedies during this time, *Rachmana litzlan*. If we would be *osek baTorah* properly during this time, there wouldn't be any trips, and if there are no trips, there are no tragedies! It turns out that *zman cheiruseinu* is not a time of freedom for everyone; not everyone can be called "*bonei chorin*."

In general, *bein hazemanim* is a time when there's a scarcity of Torah being learned; less Torah is learned than during the rest of the year. While there are *yeshivos bein hazemanim*, and these learning programs create *chizuk*, no amount of *chizuk* can compare to the level of learning in the middle of the *zman*. There's less Torah and we lack the *zechus* of Torah. So it's no wonder that there are tragedies, *Rachmana litzlan*, since we are lacking the *zechus* of Torah.

The Hashpa'ah of Torah's Kedushah

When people are *osek baTorah*, it brings down *kedushah*, affecting even those who aren't learning Torah. We've already mentioned the Chazon Ish's comments (*Igros Chazon Ish* 3:62), "If *bonei Torah* are toiling in Torah to learn its true meaning, they will be saving many children and adults from contemplating committing sins, from falling into heresy, and the like, just through the influence of their sanctity and by causing a flow of a *ruach taharah* in the world. In the vicinity of a true *baal Torah*, this is clearly visible — his blessed influence affects many people and accomplishes that which practical *hishtadlus* cannot achieve. Likewise, it also affects people who are physically distant from them, even if the human eye cannot see it."

A true *baal Torah* has a visible influence on his surroundings. A true *baal Torah* is someone who sits and learns Torah, and whose behavior follows the dictates of Torah; who davens properly, has good *middos*, and learns Torah with *hasmadah*, diligence. Even if he is not involved with the *tzibbur* and doesn't deliver discourses or speak publicly, his actual presence has an influence! His holiness

has an influence, because whenever *kedushah* is present, it has an influence.

Chazal said the following about *esek haTorah* (*Avos* 3:6): "When ten men sit together and discuss Torah, the Shechinah is present among them. And even five, and three, and two. Even if one person is *osek baTorah*, the Shechinah is with him, but ten men have a special advantage, as the Gemara states (*Berachos* 6a) that the Shechinah is present among ten. When there are ten people learning Torah together, the Shechinah appears before them — there is *kedushah* present even before they arrive. Why is this so? Because *kedushah* is present in a place where Torah is learned, and the *kedushah* has an influence.

Those Who Learn Torah Bring Merit to the Rabbim

This teaches us that people who learn Torah are *mezakei harabbim*, they bring merit to the masses, because they influence others. It's just as the Chazon Ish writes: a true *baal Torah* has an influence on his surroundings even if he doesn't exchange one word with anyone but just sits and learns as he should, and davens with *kavanah* and attains *deveikus baTorah*; he is *mezakeh es harabbim*!

Chazal said about someone like this (*Avos* 5:18): "Whoever brings merit to the public, no sin shall come through his hand." The word used for sin, *cheit*, connotes unintentional sins. As is known, there are three levels of sin: *cheit*, *avon*, and *pesha*. (In *vidui* we say, *chatsi, avisi, pasha'ti*.) So here Chazal say that a *mezakeh es harabbim* won't even sin unintentionally (*cheit*)! Due to his merit of being *mezakeh es harabbim*. **A person who is *osek baTorah* has an influence on others due to his *kedushah*, and he is thus *mezakeh es harabbim*. If so, he will never sin, even unintentionally!**

His Sins Are Forgiven

We say a "*Mi shebeirach*" prayer on Shabbos after reciting *Yekum Purkan: Mi shebeirach*... The One Who blesses all those who designate a *beis knesses* for prayer... and all those who are involved in the public's needs faithfully, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will pay them their due... and He will forgive all their sins (*avonam*)! Those who are involved in *tzorchei tzibbur*, which can even refer to physical needs, merit forgiveness for *avonam*, their intentional sins (which are worse than *cheit*). Heaven forgives those who concern themselves with the public's needs and perform acts of kindness for others.

Lichorah, how can a person merit forgiveness without repentance? It seems to be that the explanation is that he actually did repent! In the merit of faithfully being involved in *tzorchei tzibbur*, and doing *chesed* for others, he will merit repenting. Now, let us understand how a person can repent if he does not think about *teshuvah* at all.

There is a concept of *Itra'usa d'l'Eila*, a Heavenly awakening — when Heaven causes a person to be aroused to do *teshuvah*. Even if he hadn't intended on repenting, even if he wasn't thinking about it at all, and even if he had no idea that there were sins he had to repent for, *Shamayim* influences him to wake up and do *teshuvah*.

My *rebbe* HaGaon HaTzaddik Rav E.E. Dessler *zt"l* told me an example of *Itra'usa d'l'Eila*. If a person has a doctor's appointment and has to wait, he picks up a *sefer* in the waiting room for lack of anything better to do. This *sefer* was a *mussar sefer* and he opens exactly to a *maamar* of *chizuk* that has an effect on him and wakes him up. If he hadn't been in that waiting room, he wouldn't have experienced this *hisorerus*, so it's clear that it was Heavenly arranged for him to come to this waiting room, wait there, find exactly that *sefer*, open exactly to the page he did, which had just the right information for him to wake up and do *teshuvah*. This is *Itra'usa d'l'Eila*.

If so, we can use this to explain why we say “and He will forgive all their sins.” After all, one needs *zechuyos* to be presented with an “*Itra'usa d'l'Eila*,” to be given a Heavenly awakening. And why does he deserve it? Because he's involved in *tzorchei tzibbur*. In the merit of helping others, he deserved a Heavenly awakening, so he “accidentally” opened a *mussar sefer* and thus did *teshuvah*. And that's why “He will forgive all their sins” — because they'll have done *teshuvah*. This is a possible explanation.

This is discussing someone who is involved in physical *tzorchei tzibbur*, so *kal v'chomer*, one who is involved in spiritual *tzorchei tzibbur* receives even greater reward. For example, someone who sits and learns and influences *ruchniyus* on the *tzibbur* will surely merit “He will forgive all his sins.” He will be *zocheh* to a Heavenly *hashpa'ah* so that even if he committed a sin intentionally, he will do *teshuvah*.

The Magnitude of Learning During Bein HaZemanim

Bein ha-zemanim is a time of *rifyon*, slackness, and less learning takes place then than during the rest of the year. The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (119:126) — “*Eis la'asos laHashem, heifeiru Torahsecha*, It is the time to act for Hashem, they have made null Your Torah” — refers to such times. Chazal explain (Yerushalmi, end of *Berachos*): “When is the time of ‘acting for Hashem’? At a time when ‘they have made null Your Torah’” — at a time of slackness in Torah learning. Someone who learns during such a time is *zocheh* to a profound merit and receives reward for everyone else. Others are slacking off, and not

only is he *not* slacking off, he's actually strengthening his learning and is *osek baTorah*. This is a tremendous *zechus*.

The reason for this is since there's a *rifyon* — and the very nature of *bein hazemanim* causes *rifyon*. Indeed, it's similar to what the Torah writes about the Dor haMidbar (*Bamidbar* 10:33): “And they traveled from Hashem's mountain” — “They traveled joyfully, like a young child runs away from school.” As long as they were at Har Sinai, Har Hashem, they were *osek baTorah* and it was pleasant and good for them, but when people travel, it's natural for them to get excited. Bnei Yisrael were happy about traveling; they no longer bore the yoke of Torah. When people go on a trip and travel, the yoke of Torah isn't so prominent. The Gemara termed this situation “*פורענות*,” calamity, since they were like children running away from school — human nature is to enjoy being unencumbered. (See *Shabbos* 116, and Ramban on *Behaalosecha*: “And they called the sin “*פורענות*” even though no calamity befell them as a result.”) **Therefore, if a person accepts the yoke of Torah upon himself, against human nature, especially when many people make Torah null, and he overcomes the prevalent nature surrounding him, it is simply extraordinary, and he receives the *sechar* of everyone else.**

I heard the following from my *rebbe* HaGaon HaTzaddik Rav E.E. Dessler *zt"l* on the *mishnah* in *Avos* (5:2): “There were ten generations from Adam to Noach, to teach you how slow to anger Hashem is. All the generations would anger Him, until He brought the waters of the *mabul* upon them. There were ten generations from Noach to Avraham to teach how slow to anger Hashem is. All the generations angered Him, until Avraham Avinu came and received the reward for them all.”

HaKadosh Baruch Hu is slow to anger and waits up to ten generations for people to do *teshuvah*. In Noach's time, more than ten generations had angered Hashem and did not repent, so Hashem punished them with the *Mabul*. In Avraham's time, ten generations of people angering Hashem passed as well, but they were not punished because Avraham rectified the situation and influenced his generation to repent. That's why he received the reward of them all — of the ten previous generations. Let us understand: What kind of *sechar* did they have; what did they deserve a reward for? After all, they were constantly angering Hashem.

HaGaon HaTzaddik Rav E.E. Dessler *zt"l* explains that the “reward of them all” means the collective reward they would have received had they all been *tzaddikim*. Avraham Avinu came after ten generations had brought down a *hashpa'ah* of impurity — they continuously angered Hashem and served *avodah zarah*. “Constantly angering” means that every generation added and added and added till they finally overdid it at the end of ten generations, and Hashem did not exhibit His *middah* of “slow to anger” anymore. If not for Avraham Avinu, they

would have been punished with a Mabul once again. Of course, it wouldn't have been an actual Mabul, since Hashem promised never to bring another Mabul on the world, but it would have been something similar since there was such rampant sin for ten generations. However, had the people been tzaddikim, it would have been ten generations worth of mitzvos and they would have been eligible for tremendous reward. Avraham Avinu received this reward!

The reason he received such great reward is because he had to prevail over ten generations' worth of a *hashpa'ah* of impurity, he deserved the reward of them all — he exerted himself to prevail over the natural challenge of such a strong *hashpa'ah* of *tumah*. Indeed, Chazal say (*Bereishis Rabbah* 42:8) that he was called “Avraham HaIvri,” since the entire world was on one side (*eiver*), and Avraham was on the other side. He prevailed against nature and against the *hashpa'ah* of the entire world. Ten generations kept angering Hashem, and every successive generation created additional challenges for Avraham. Since he stood up against the challenges and difficulties of these ten generations, he deserved reward for these ten generations, as if they had been tzaddikim. After all, a person receives reward based on his effort. (See *Avos* 5:23.)

Based on this, since many people do not learn during *bein hazemanim*, it's harder to actually sit and learn. If so, someone who does learn receives the reward of everyone else — the reward they would have received had they all been learning. Someone who learns during *bein hazemanim* deserves such special, tremendous *sechar!* This is the *maalah* of learning Torah during *bein hazemanim*.

Free of the Yetzer Hara's Dominion

“Only someone who learns Torah is called a free man.” *Zman cheiruseinu* should be utilized for Torah, since *esek haTorah* is true freedom! We need to understand how *esek haTorah* is freedom, and why someone who learns Torah is called a *ben chorin*, a free man. After all, is someone who does not learn Torah a slave? If so, who is his master, and what kind of slave is he?

The answer is that the natural way of the world is that the *yetzer ha-ra* controls a person. Man capitulates and is ruled by his *yetzer ha-ra*. Every morning, we pray in *Birkos HaShachar*: “Do not let the *yetzer ha-ra* control us.” The *yetzer ha-ra* is very powerful and can control man and force him to sin. Once needs *siyatta d'Shemaya* and *tefillah* to prevent the *yetzer ha-ra* from controlling us, and the way to merit this is by learning Torah! One who learns Torah is called a “*ben chorin*,” a free man, as the *yetzer ha-*

ra cannot control him. And parallelly, someone who does not learn Torah is a slave to the *yetzer ha-ra*! The *yetzer ha-ra* controls him and he is a slave who is forced to do whatever his *yetzer ha-ra* demands of him. He doesn't have the strength to overcome him. The only power against the *yetzer ha-ra* is Torah! That's why Chazal said, “Only someone who learns Torah is called a free man.”

Torah and Mussar: Antidote to the Yetzer Hara

The solution to overpower the *yetzer ha-ra* is to learn Torah. Chazal say (*Bava Basra* and *Kiddushin* 30b), “I created the *yetzer ha-ra*, I created the Torah as an antidote against it.” **Some people claim: I have a *yetzer ha-ra*, what can I do?** The Gemara states that Iyov used this claim. **And the answer is: there is a solution! Torah is the antidote!** One merits freedom from the *yetzer ha-ra* through Torah.

The truth is, all Torah study is an antidote against the *yetzer ha-ra*, because the holiness of Torah has an *hashpa'ah*. Indeed, the *Mishnah Berurah* (*siman aleph*) cites Kadmonim that the most powerful form of Torah against the *yetzer ha-ra* is *Toras ha-yirah*, which means learning *sifrei yirah* which cause a person to increase *yiras Shamayim*. There are many *sifrei yirah* written by Rishonim and Acharonim, since the *yetzer ha-ra* is still present and we need guidance how to fight against it. This is done by increasing *yiras Shamayim*, and also by knowing how to go about this. The *Mesillas Yesharim* explains this well, and presents us with a path and method based on a person's inner strength — starting with *zehirus*, caution. However, the very first step is learning Torah, as Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair writes in the Baraisa: Torah leads to caution, and caution leads to alacrity, and all the other traits, till one attains sanctity, *kedushah*. It's attainable! And we are so fortunate to have methods and solutions how to become more *kadosh*, how to ascend the ladder all the way to *kedushah*.

The truth is, *kedushah* is not a *middas chassidus*. The Torah exhorts us: “And you shall be *kadosh*.” Every single person, on his own level, can become *kadosh*. Even someone involved in lowly labor can attain this, just as the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes at the end of his *sefer*. Indeed, there was a shoemaker in Tel Aviv who was on an extremely exalted level. He would give out *berachos*, even *rabbanim* came to receive *berachos* from him.

Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu! How fortunate we are; how good is our lot that we have *mussar sefarim* and we have the Torah, and we can learn Torah. *B'ezras Hashem*, may we all merit *siyatta d'Shemaya*, may we merit *Itra'usa d'l'tata* and *d'l'Eila* in whatever we need, *b'ezras Hashem*.

Excerpts from Rabbeinu shlita's Derashah to Participants of Tiferes Bachurim, a Father-Son Learning Program ׀ ׀ Lederman Shul, 24 Nissan 5781

“Torah learning is equal to them all” (*Pe'ah* 1:1). *Esek haTorah* is greater than all the mitzvos. When a person learns Torah, the Shechinah is with him, as Chazal say (*Avos* 3:6), “When ten men sit together and discuss Torah, the Shechinah is present among them. And even five, and three, and two.” Even if one person is *osek baTorah*, the Shechinah is with him. Now it doesn't say that the Shechinah is present when a person does a mitzvah, even though a mitzvah also sanctifies a person. But Torah is greater; it is equal to them all! Chazal also said (*Ibid.* 6:2): “Only someone who learns Torah is called a free man.” Now, we don't find that someone becomes a free man by doing mitzvos; it's a special *maalah* of *esek haTorah*. In this venue, where fathers and their *bachurim* are *osek baTorah* together, the mitzvah of *v'shinantam l'vanecha* is present as well. It's also *esek haTorah*, and when two people sit and learn Torah together, the Shechinah dwells with them. And when a bigger crowd is learning together, and people are *osek baTorah b'tzibbur*, the great *zechus* is simply unfathomable. The Mishnah mentions the *maalah* of ten people learning Torah together, so certainly if there are more than ten people, it adds more *kedushah*. And the more people there are, the more *kedushah* there is. Regarding a *zimun* in Birkas HaMazon, the Gemara says (*Berachos* 49b) that if ten people are present, Hashem's name is added, and we recite: *Nezareich Elokeinu*. One Tanna opines that if there are 100 people present, another Name is added, and we recite: *Nezareich Hashem Elokeinu*. And if there are 1000, or 10,000, another Name is added. Halachah does not follow this opinion, but in any case, there's no doubt that the greater the *tzibbur*, the more *kedushah* there is. While there is no change in the *berachah*, the reality is that there is more *kedushah*.

On the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 26:8) “And five of you will chase 100, and 100 of you will chase after 10,000” Rashi asks: “Is this proper math? Shouldn't it have said 100 of you will chase after 2000? Five to one hundred holds the same ratio as one to twenty, but **100 to 10,000 is a ratio of one to one hundred. The answer is, one cannot compare when a few people fulfill the Torah to when multitudes fulfill the Torah.**” When many people uphold the Torah in a group, this generates a completely different power and *koach*, with special *siyatta d'Shemaya* and special *zechuyos* of “many people *osek baTorah*.”

Therefore, if we are *osek baTorah* together, fathers and sons, in a *tzibbur* of many people, and it's done with a *k'vius*, which is also very special — one cannot fathom the *zechus* this creates.

Truthfully, the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes that when a person performs good deeds, he must be cognizant of the import of the deeds he's doing, because being aware of the *chashivus* increases *chizuk* — and then he'll do it again, with greater joy, with more love, and with more *sheleimus*! That's why being aware of the *chashivus* of one's actions is very important.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (4:9) regarding the mitzvah of *simchas Yom Tov*: “The reward for performing mitzvos with joy is much greater than the reward for actually performing the mitzvah.” There is a reward for the actual mitzvah, but the reward for performing it with happiness is even greater. Rabbeinu Yonah used three terms to describe how great it is: *yigdal*, *v'yasge*, *me'od* — it will increase, and it will proliferate, very much! This is the reward for *simchah shel mitzvah* — and **when can a person be b'simchah? If he knows how important his action is!**

Therefore, we must recognize the importance of those who are *osek baTorah*, *bachurim* and parents who are learning Torah together, and “Talmud Torah is equal to them all.” One cannot fathom the prominence of this mitzvah, what a *madreigah* they are on! And they are sanctified with the *kedushah* of the Torah!

Not only are they sanctified themselves, they also influence *kedushah* on their surroundings, as the Chazon Ish writes that even one true *baal Torah* has a *hashpa'ah* of *kedushah*. If there's a large group learning together, the *kedushah* has a greater influence. A city that has a yeshivah merits that the yeshivah influences the entire city. It's well known that the locals here in Bnei Brak, even if they aren't *bnei Torah*, are influenced by Bnei Brak; their personality and essence is different from people who live in places without yeshivos.

This is the great *zechus* of *esek haTorah*, especially when fathers learn together with their *bachurim*. That's why this organization is called “Tiferes Bachurim” — it's *tiferes*, glory! It's a wonderful thing. It's good for those who are learning, and it's also good for the entire *tzibbur*, because it has a positive effect on the *tzibbur*. Indeed, the Chazon Ish writes that there is a visible *hashpa'ah* on one's surroundings, and we must be cognizant of the *chashivus* of this great matter.

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