

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 Emor 5781

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Three Crowns: Influencing Others

During Shabbos in the summer, it is customary to recite *Pirkei Avos*. The sixth chapter in *Pirkei Avos* speaks about Torah. Indeed, the *mishnah* in *Avos* (4:18) states: "There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of *kehunah*, and the crown of royalty." The concept of "crown" relates to *hashpa'ah*, influence. Think about a king — he wears a crown, and he has an influence on the nation and is concerned about his nation's welfare. Indeed, the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Melachim* 3:6) that the king's heart is like the nation's heart, and he has a positive *hashpa'ah* on the nation and acts in a way that benefits them. This is what a "crown" is all about — *hashpa'ah*, influence, just as a king has an influence on the nation.

If so, the concept "the crown of Torah" means that the one who has it brings down an influence of Torah on others. Similarly, the crown of royalty has a similar meaning. *Kehunah* denotes *kedushah*, the sanctity of *kehunah*, so the crown of *kehunah* is referring to a *hashpa'ah* of *kedushah*. The crown of royalty is referring to a *hashpa'ah* of *chesed*.

Chazal said (see *Yoma* 72b) that Aharon and his sons merited the crown of *kehunah* — they were *zocheh* to the *hashpa'ah* of the sanctity of *kehunah*. The *pasuk* in *Malachi* states (2:7): "The lips of a kohen will guard wisdom, and they will seek Torah from his mouth, for he is an angel of G-d." There are numerous other *pesukim* about kohanim and the sanctity of *kehunah*.

Dovid HaMelech merited the crown of royalty; Malchus Beis Dovid was promised to him and his offspring forever, as is written clearly in the *pesukim*. (See *Tehillim* 89 and more): "Until eternity I shall establish his seed." If they don't behave properly, they will endure suffering until they do teshuvah, till Mashiach ben David's arrival. This is the crown of royalty.

The crown of Torah, however, is available. Anyone who wants can merit the crown of Torah.

Kesser Torah Is the Greatest of All

The truth is that the crown of Torah is the greatest, and includes within it the other two crowns, as is written in *pesukim* and Midrashim. (See *Yalkut Mishlei* 941 on the *pasuk* "*Bi melachim yimlochu*": "Who is greater? The

one who crowns kings or the one who rules? ...These two other crowns are empowered solely from the power of Torah.")

This is the meaning of the *mishnah* in *Perek* 6: "Torah is greater than *kehunah* and *malchus*, as royalty is acquired with 30 attributes, and *kehunah* with 24, while Torah is acquired with 48 attributes." There are 48 special attributes necessary to acquire Torah, whereas for *kehunah* — so that the sanctity of *kehunah* will be *b'sheleimus* — only 24 are needed, and royalty only requires 30 special attributes.

Acquisitions of Torah — Natural and Earned

What are those 48 attributes necessary to acquire Torah? The Tanna begins with *talmud*, *sh'mias ozen*, *arichas sefasayim*, and *binas ha'leiv*. **Talmud** is actual learning, learning and being *oseik baTorah*. **Sh'mias ozen** means to listen to the words exactly as he hears them; **arichas sefasayim** means articulating the words of Torah (see *Eiruvin* 54), and **binas ha'leiv** means to understand what he hears and what he says, learning with *havanah*. These are a few of the attributes needed to acquire Torah.

The truth is, these are natural attributes, and they are naturally beneficial. On a simple level, this is what the Tanna meant. But the truth is, these attributes are not only natural, innate behaviors; they are also *zechuyos*. Success in *ruchniyus* does not hinge on natural traits; it is all due to one's merits. Without *zechuyos*, there cannot be any success, as we know. These 48 acquisitions of Torah are also "merits" for success. For example, *talmud* — being *oseik baTorah* is a *zechus*; *sh'mias ozen* is also a *zechus* — he tries to pay attention and process the exact words that he hears. Whatever he tries to understand is *zechuyos* for success in Torah. The very obligations are also *zechuyos* for success. While these attributes are innate character traits, they are not solely natural attributes, they are also *zechuyos*, and through these *zechuyos*, one merits success in Torah.

Every Single Person Can Merit Acquiring Torah

This does not merely apply to a full-time learner. Every single person can attain these levels. Indeed, we've mentioned the comments of the *Mesillas Yesharim*, who writes that even a person involved in lowly labor can be *zocheh* to all the *madreigos* as long as he is *oseik*

baTorah as much as possible and learns Torah during his every free moment. There was a famous shoemaker in Tel Aviv — *rabbanim* would visit him to ask for *brachos* and advice. He was a great *baal havanah*; he had *yashrus*, and profound *emunah*. This shoemaker was an *adam gadol*!

During the Gemara's times, there were Tannaim and Amoraim who worked at simple jobs to earn a living. For example: Rabbi Yochanan haSandlar (the shoemaker); Rabbi Yehoshua, who was a coalman; and many others. In our days, we are *zocheh* to *nissim*. It's possible to sit and learn and still have *parnassah* without going out to work, and those who do so lead happy, fortunate lives. This is special Heavenly *hashgachah* that we merited *b'chasdei Shamayim*.

As we said, all the acquisitions of Torah are beneficial even *b'derech hateva*, but they are also *zechuyos*. Without these merits, we would not have success!

Torah Is Acquired with Dread and Fear

The Tanna continues listing more attributes needed for the acquisition of Torah: *eimah*, *yirah*, *anavah*, *simchah* — dread, fear, humility, and joy. This is the next set of four attributes, and all of them are not only attributes, but *zechuyos* as well.

Eimah and *yirah*, dread and fear, are two *madreigos* of *yiras Shamayim*, as Rashi explains the *pasuk* in Shiras haYam (*Shemos* 15:16): “May dread and fear befall them” — dread refers to those distant and fear refers to those close by. (See Rashi at the end of *Eikev* on the *pasuk*, “פחדכם ומוראכם.”)

We can similarly explain the passage in Shemoneh Esrei of Yamim Noraim: “And so, instill fear of You (פחדך) on all that You have made (מעשיך) and dread of You (אימתך) on all that You have created (שבראת).” Here fear is mentioned together with “on all You have made”, and dread is mentioned with “on all You have created.” As is known, there is Olam HaAsiyah, and Olam HaBri'ah. Olam HaAsiyah is our world; we are called “*ma'asecha*, all You have created.” Olam HaBri'ah is more connected to *ruchniyus*.

That's why the term “*pachad*” is used with Olam HaAsiyah, and “*eimah*” is used in conjunction with Olam HaBri'ah. After all, who has more fear, and where is the level of *emunah* greater along with more profound fear? In the spiritual worlds! We, however, in our physical state, have a much lower level of *yiras Shamayim* than the creations in Olam HaBri'ah. Therefore, when mentioning *ברואים*, we use the term *אימתך*, which is a higher *madreigah* of fear. Indeed, in Birkos Shema, we highlight the *malachim's* fear of Hashem: “They perform their Creator's will with dread and fear.”

If so, *eimah* and *yirah* are two separate levels of *yiras Shamayim*. *Eimah* is the higher level, and *yirah* is lower, but both provide merit for success in Torah.

How to Achieve Yirah

How does one merit to attain *eimah* and *yirah*? There are ways to do so: by learning *mussar sefarim*, by living with the concept of “*Shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid*,” and by living with *emunah*, without taking your mind off it for a moment.

The Chazon Ish's level of *yiras Shamayim* was legendary. When he would recite a *berachah*, he was gripped with such fear that he'd sometimes end up drinking without a *berachah*. How so? He was so thirsty that it was *pikuach nefesh*, and if he'd wait until he'd finally be able to make a *berachah*, he'd faint due to his extreme weakness and profound level of *yiras Shamayim*. What a level of *yirah*! Now, this is an extraordinary level; we haven't heard about other *gedolim* who had such a level of fear. There are wonderful stories about the Chazon Ish's *yiras Shamayim*.

In any case, we have to be involved in *yirah* in order to merit attaining it. We must learn *mussar sefarim* to attain *yiras Shamayim* and remember that “an Eye sees, an Ear hears, and all your deeds are written in the Book” (*Avos* 2:1). We must conduct ourselves with “*Shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid*,” and as is written in the first *se'if* of *Shulchan Aruch*, it is a “great principle” in the Torah. This is the only solution, but it's not easy to implement. However, one is *zocheh* to Torah through *eimah* and *yirah*.

Humility Is a Zechus for Success in Torah

Humility is a *zechus* for success in Torah. The truth is, humility goes against human nature; very few people are naturally humble. I knew someone who naturally ran away from honor. When he was honored, it made him feel bad; it gave him a very unpleasant feeling. While this is extremely rare, the phenomenon does exist. He just wouldn't go places if he knew he'd be honored; he couldn't bear the *kavod*. It wasn't *tzidkus*, it simply was his nature. He was born with this rare nature.

In any case, the *Mesillas Yesharim* devotes two chapters (22 – 23) to explaining what humility is. We've spoken about it many times — humility doesn't mean that the person deceives himself or is unaware of his *maalos*. It means that he knows about his strong points, but does not flaunt them or become arrogant as a result.

The Torah testifies about Moshe Rabbeinu (*Bamidbar* 12:3), “And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any man on the face of the earth.” And he was aware of his level and his *maalos*, as is written (*Bamidbar* 12:7 – 8), “He is faithful throughout My

house. I speak to him mouth to mouth, in a vision, not in riddles, and he beholds a vision of Hashem.” Now, Moshe Rabbeinu himself wrote this, he was aware of it, and yet, he was still acted humbly.

Man’s Talents Are Heavenly Gifts

Humility means recognizing the truth, knowing and understanding the truth that man did not create any of his *maalos*, rather, everything is from Hashem. Just as physical strength is a gift from Hashem, all spiritual abilities are from Hashem. The very fact that a person is alive and breathing is Hashem’s will, as Chazal say (*Bereishis Rabbah* 14:9): Every soul (*neshamah*) will praise Hashem — for every single breath (*neshimah*) that a person breathes, he must thank and praise the Creator, because Heavenly will is what is causing him to breathe.

If so, a person who has *maalos* — for example, he is intelligent, wise, understanding, has a good memory, learns, is *mechadeish chiddushei* Torah, disseminates Torah — these are all Heavenly gifts. Where did he get these *kochos* from? Heaven had mercy on him and gave him these gifts! Every moment that he breathes is a gift from *Shamayim*, and Hashem is reviving him. Indeed, we recite in the *Modim* prayer: “For our lives that are given over in Your hands.” This refers to our physical life. “And for our souls entrusted to You.” This refers to our holy *neshamah*, which is a *cheilek Eloka mi’maal*, a part of Hashem. “And for Your miracles that are with us daily, and for Your constant wonders and goodness.” Every single moment that a person is alive and all the various *kochos* he has — his memory, his talents, his good *middos* — are all a constant Heavenly Creation, and Heaven is giving it to him *b’chesed*. It’s not that he deserves it. Even if he was born this way, why did that happen? It was Heavenly *chesed* and mercy from the outset!

Therefore, there’s really no reason for him to consider himself important if he has a certain *maalah* or advantage over others. Every single *maalah* is a heavenly gift — it has nothing to do with him, and is not dependent on him. Even if he attained some *maalah* through *hishtadlus*, from where did he get the energy to perform the *hishtadlus*, and who gave him the ability to think? Only people can think — and why is this so? It is simply *ratzon Hashem*; everything that happens is *ratzon Hashem*. If so, why should anyone feel he is important? He’s just like a simple beggar who receives handouts and subsequently thinks he’s wealthy. Every *maalah* is a *chesed*; Heaven has mercy on him and gives it to him. But this is not a reason to consider himself important.

Be Happy; Don’t Feel Important

But it’s inborn nature to feel important. Even if a person doesn’t talk about his importance, he still feels

important deep down, and he wants others to know about how important he is, too. This is nature: first a person holds of himself, and he also wants others to know how important he is.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar HaK’niah* chap. 9) writes that a person must rejoice with any *maalah* he has, because having that *maalah* is a wonderful thing, and he can do good deeds with it, so it’s a reason to be happy — but not to become arrogant. One must take care not to feel important. **The difference between happiness and arrogance over one’s *maalos* is as thin as a hairsbreadth.** This is the *madreigah* of *anavah*, humility. Usually, one needs *havanah* to reach this level, aside from those very rare cases of people who naturally don’t feel important. One needs to invest thought and understanding to acquire humility.

Hashem Despises Every Drop of Arrogance

The Gemara relates (*Sanhedrin* 7b) that when Rav saw a large crowd following him and escorting him — giving him great honor — he would recite *pesukim* about humility. Rashi explains that this was so he should not “*tazu’ach da’ato*,” that he shouldn’t move one iota away from his *middah* of humility. There was no concern that he’d become a *baal gaavah* because of all this honor, just that his mind should not “*tazu’ach*,” move a bit away from the *sheleimus* of *anavah*. That’s why he recited *pesukim* to strengthen his *anavah*, so the honor would not affect him. The Gemara also discusses Mar Zutra Chassida’s *anavah*: When he would teach the *halachos* of Yom Tov, the people would carry him to the study hall on their shoulders. And he too would recite *pesukim* about lowliness and humility whenever he was honored.

Now these are the only two Tannaim mentioned in the Gemara that said these *pesukim*, but all the Tannaim and Amoraim surely were careful to stay away from the effects of honor and arrogance. In regard to the others, however, other people didn’t see them reciting *pesukim*. But perhaps they said *pesukim* quietly, or thought *pesukim* in their heads. Even thinking about *anavah* is sufficient.

And this is really necessary, because (*Mishlei* 16:5): “All arrogant people are an abomination to Hashem.” One shouldn’t even have an “eighth of an eighth” of arrogance. Chazal say (*Avos* 4:4): “Be very, very humble.” The Rambam explains (ad loc., and *Hilchos Dei’os* chap. 2) that Chazal overemphasized this by saying “very, very”! One should be exceedingly humble and not feel any importance, because every drop of arrogance is an abomination to Hashem, *Rachmana litzlan*.

Rabbeinu Yonah wrote in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:34): “Arrogance is one of the worst, most destructive sins, as it says ‘All arrogant people are an abomination to

Hashem.' What benefit will all his money and riches and treasures kept in chests (see *Yechezkel* 27:24) bring him, **after all, once he is despised and abhorred, the height of his glorious stature is lower than the grave!**"

If so, how is it possible for someone to feel important; the very fact that he feels important is an abomination. The truth is that this is a great *nisayon*, and it's a very high *madreigah* not to feel important at all. As we said, joy is allowed, and not only that — it is necessary. One must be happy and give praise and thanks to HaKadosh Baruch Hu for the *maalos* He granted him, yet at the same time, take care not to feel important. This is the *madreigah* of *anavah*, humility, which creates *zechuyos* for success in Torah.

Joy in Torah; Zechus for Success in Torah

One of the acquisitions for attaining Torah is *simchah*, joy. *Simchah* is a *zechus* for success in Torah. In the list of 48 acquisitions, it doesn't merely say: *same'ach b'chelko*, happy with his lot, that's something else, and it's mentioned later. It says "*b'simchah*," with happiness — the Torah itself is learned with happiness, and when the person learns, he rejoices with his learning and feels so happy about what he learned.

His joy is so great because he respects Torah and esteems it. When a person has something important, he is happy with it. Joy is a sign of importance; how important the thing is to him. If he wouldn't think it was important, he wouldn't be happy, but if it's important to him, he is happy about it. A person demonstrates what's important to him via his degree of happiness about it.

That's why one of the attributes to acquire Torah is "*b'simchah*," with joy. If a person is happy that he's learning, it's a sign that he is *machshiv* Torah so greatly that he is happy about it, and this is a merit for success in Torah.

Simchas Yom Tov — Through Kirvas Hashem

The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Yom Tov*) regarding the mitzvah of rejoicing on Yom Tov: "We have been commanded about the [type of] joy that contains service of the Creator of all." That is, joy is an *avodah*, *simchah* is *avodas Hashem*, and it's a mitzvah on Yom Tov to be happy about the day's sanctity!

The Midrash (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:32) explains the following *pasuk*: "This is the day Hashem created, let us be joyful and happy on it." It says: Rabbi Avin said: How do we know what to be happy about — the day or HaKadosh Baruch Hu? After all, the *pasuk* is discussing Yom Tov: "this is the day Hashem created." That's what "be joyful and happy on it" is referring to. But we don't know who to be happy about — Hashem or the Yom Tov. The Midrash continues: Shlomo came and explained: "We will be joyful and happy in You (בך)' — in HaKadosh Baruch Hu, in Your salvation, in Your Torah, in fear of You, in the 22 letters that You wrote the Torah for us: כב is *gematria* 22; the letter *beis* is 2, and the letter *kaf* is 20, which equal 22."

The mitzvah of being happy on Yom Tov is being happy about *kirvas Hashem*, the closeness to Hashem, one can attain, and this is called *avodas Hashem* — that we serve Hashem joyfully. This is not an easy feat, to be happy on Yom Tov about the sanctity of the day. But indeed, we say in our *tefillos*: "You chose us from all nations... and You sanctified us with Your mitzvos" — this is what the joy is about! And indeed, the reward for fulfilling mitzvos with joy is exceedingly great. And the converse is true too: lack of *simchah* in mitzvah observance is a great deficiency and a profound sin.

Shavuos is approaching. All these matters we just discussed are from *Pirkei Avos* and are a preparation for *Kabbalas HaTorah*. *Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu* that we are aware of these concepts. This is the best preparation for *Kabbalas HaTorah*.

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