

## Darkei HaChizuk

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

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### Attaining the Acquisitions of Torah Is Obligatory

Chazal say the Torah is acquired through 48 attributes. What does “acquired” mean? Aside from the mitzvah of learning Torah, there is a mitzvah to amass Torah knowledge. The Vilna Gaon famously said that when it comes to the mitzvah of learning Torah, he could spend his entire life learning just one *mishnah*, and he wouldn’t get tired of it. There is such sweetness in Torah, he said, that every time he’d review the *mishnah* again, there would be even more sweetness. In one *mishnah*! But there is another mitzvah, and that is *yedias haTorah*; one must learn the entire Torah, so we have to learn all parts of the Torah.

The way to merit *yedias haTorah*, with all the *madreigos* inherent in Torah, is through those 48 acquisitions to Torah. This is *kinyan haTorah*. If a person lacks any of these steps, his success in Torah will be deficient. Through this, we see that **the obligation of *yedias haTorah* includes the obligation to attain all the 48 *kinyanim* of Torah!** The acquisitions are a part of the obligation of *yedias haTorah*, because without them, he will be lacking Torah. And every single person has an obligation to amass Torah knowledge according to his ability, as much as possible — but *b’sheleimus*. To do so, he needs all 48 *kinyanim*. This is no simple matter.

### A Lack of Humility Will Cause a Deficiency in Torah

Chazal say that Torah is acquired through humility. Humility is a very high *madreigah*; the *Mesillas Yesharim* expands on this in two chapters (22 – 23, and see Chap. 11 too). If a person is *b’sheleimus* in his *middah* of humility, then his Torah is *b’sheleimus*, but the reverse is true as well.

The Gemara at the end of *Sotah* (49b) discusses the *mishnah* that says “Once Rebbi passed away, humility no longer existed”: “Rav Yosef said to the Tanna: Humility is still here, for I am here.” Seemingly, isn’t saying “I am humble” arrogance?

The explanation is that humility does not mean that someone fools himself and is not aware of his *maalos*. Even Moshe Rabbeinu, who was the humblest of all men, was cognizant of the high *madreigah* he was on.

Indeed, HaKadosh Baruch Hu testified about him (*Bamidbar* 12:7 – 8), “Not so is My servant Moshe, he is faithful to Me throughout My house. I speak to him mouth to mouth,” and Moshe Rabbeinu himself wrote this down in the Torah. He knew about this, but he was humble because he didn’t feel important because of this!

This is what humility is — not to feel important due to your *maalos*, because everything is a *chesed* from Hashem. Every spiritual *madreigah* a person attains is a gift from *Shamayim*. Heaven gives each person his *kochos hanefesh*, his understanding, his intelligence, and his profession, and he must use them wisely. **If he does not use his Heavenly gifts to the fullest, he is a sinner, and does it make sense to become all proud just because he’s not a sinner? Is it such a high *madreigah* after all?!**

Therefore, there is no reason to feel important, because any *madreigah* a person attains obligates him. If he doesn’t achieve the *madreigah* he has the potential to achieve, he is a sinner. And there’s no reason to feel important because of this. So humility means understanding and recognizing the truth that there’s no reason to feel important. This is one of the acquisitions of Torah.

Arrogance, on the other hand, is the antithesis of humility. The *pasuk* states (*Mishlei* 16:5): “All arrogant people are an abomination to Hashem.” Every lack of humility is already somewhat connected to arrogance, and still is considered “an abomination to Hashem”! *Rachmana litzlan*.

Therefore, Chazal said (*Avos* 4:4): “Be very, very humble.” The Rambam explains (in his commentary on the Mishnah, and in *Hilchos Dei’os* chap. 2) that they said “very, very” because humility has no limits; one has to be as humble as possible. Even a slight lack of *anavah* is a lack in one’s *sheleimus*, which leads to a deficiency in his Torah!

### Staying Away from Honor

The truth is, one of the 48 acquisitions is “distancing oneself from honor.” Not only shouldn’t one run after honor, he should actually distance himself from it! If he doesn’t run far away, his Torah will be deficient. The obligation to amass Torah knowledge obligates him to distance himself from honor, because this is how Torah

is acquired! If he doesn't follow the steps to acquire Torah, his Torah will be deficient, and he will be at fault for his lack of Torah.

On the other hand, the Gemara tells us (*Sanhedrin 7b*) that they said about Rav that when a large crowd would accompany him home from the yeshivah — and he was treated with great honor — he would recite *pesukim* about humility. Similarly, it is told about Mar Zutra Chassida that when they would honor him and carry him on their shoulders on the Shabbos that the laws of Yom Tov are discussed, he would also say *pesukim* about humility.

Rashi explains that this is 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 these *pesukim*.

*Lich'orah*, one is obligated to distance himself from honor, so why did he allow the *tzibbur* to accompany him and honor him? Why didn't he prevent this?

The answer is, the *tzibbur* needs the merit of *kavod haTorah*, honoring Torah scholars, and this was *zikkui harabbim* in the mitzvah of *kavod haTorah*. Had these *gedolim* prevented the *tzibbur* from honoring them, the *tzibbur* would be deficient in *kavod haTorah*, which is a profound mitzvah. The Gemara says (*Shavuos 30b*): “He did so, because *kavod haTorah* is preferred.” He didn't have a choice; he had to accept the honor because the *tzibbur* needed that merit. And since he was concerned that the *kavod* would affect him, he found a solution: to recite *pesukim* so he should not “*tazu'ach da'ato*.”

The Gemara only mentions Rav and Mar Zutra Chassida, but all the Tannaim and Amoraim probably also acted this way, just the Gemara doesn't record the *pesukim* they recited. It's possible they said *pesukim* quietly, and people didn't hear them, but in any case, everyone surely was vigilant that the honor should not have an effect on them. They didn't stop the *tzibbur* from honoring them, but they took care not to let the honor affect them.

### Worldly Honor Causes Profound Loss

It's well known that receiving honor in Olam HaZeh is a big problem, because honor causes a person tremendous pleasure. People enjoy being honored, but worldly pleasures detract from pleasure in Olam HaBa! We all know that Heaven gives the wicked lots of good in this world, instead of in Olam HaBa, while it is the opposite for *tzaddikim*. They do not have worldly pleasures so that they'll have a greater portion in Olam HaBa.

Now, honor is a spiritual pleasure, which is the greatest degree of pleasure possible. Other worldly pleasures are simply material and physical pleasures. The *Mesillas Yesharim* points out (chap. 11) that there are two desires: love of money and love of honor. Love of money is also a great pleasure, but love of honor is even greater. He writes: “Honor pulls a person's heartstrings more than all other worldly desires and lusts. The visible reality is that a person spends a lot of money to receive honor — and this is well known. People want honor and spend a lot of money to receive it, for this is human nature. Since it is such a great spiritual pleasure, it takes away from the pleasures in Olam HaBa, making a person lose large measures of Olam HaBa. Therefore, it is imperative to distance oneself from honor.

But the reality is that a person loves honor and wants it, so not only doesn't he distance himself from honor, he actually runs after honor and asks for it. **And people don't realize the profundity of the loss that honor brings them, or the great benefit of distancing oneself from honor.**

What's the solution? How can one stay away from honor — after all, it's against human nature, so how can one conquer his nature? *Mussar sefarim* explain how to do so. If we learn mussar and review it again and again. One will thus internalize how detrimental honor is, how great its losses are, and how great is the benefit of distancing oneself from honor. *Mussar sefarim* educate a person.

*Maaseh Rav (os samech)* cites the Gra who says one should learn *mussar sefarim* a few times a day; not just once a day, but a few times a day! Be involved in *mussar*, don't take your mind off a person's obligations in these *middos*.

### The Advantage of Not Returning Insults

The Gemara tells us (*Gittin 36b*), “One who is insulted and does not return an insult, one who hears his shame and does not respond [in kind], Scripture says about him: ‘And His loved ones are like the sun when it comes out in all its strength.’” That is, if a person is insulted and he doesn't insult back, or if he's shamed and he keeps quiet, this is such a great *madreigah*, that he is called “and his loved ones are like the sun coming out in all its strength.”

Tosafos (*Bava Basra 8b*) explains what “the sun in all its strength” means. He says it is an inestimable level of pleasures in Olam HaBa, seven times the light of the Seven Days of Creation! A person who is not *makpid* on his honor merits this level! That's right — others are harming his honor and self-respect, insulting him, and he does not insult back; he hears his shame and is silent. This is a very great *madreigah*, and he merits inestimable pleasure as a result: Like the sun when it comes out in its full strength.

## Ahavas HaBriyos Is Essential

Aside from humility and distancing oneself from honor, here is another of the 48 acquisitions: “*ohev es habriyos*, Loving one’s fellow.” *Ahavas habriyos* is actually a mitzvah, as the *pasuk* states (*Vayikra* 19:18): “Love your fellow as yourself,” but it is also one of the *kinyanei haTorah*.

So now there are two reasons to love one’s fellow: First, it is a *mitzvas asei*: “love your fellow as yourself.” Additionally, it is also a cause for success in Torah, so it falls under the category of *Hilchos Talmud Torah*!

In reality, we don’t find that every single person has such a loving nature. I knew someone who did not have even a drop of *ahavas habriyos*; he only thought about himself. Generally, a person is naturally loving and he likes others people, but this man did not have that nature. He was born without *ahavas habriyos*. In any case, the mitzvah is “*v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*” — so change nature. There are ways to do this.

Even if a person naturally has good *middos*, attaining *sheleimus* in this mitzvah of loving one’s fellow “as himself” is a very high *madreigah*. The *baalei hamussar* say that feeling another person’s pain is not that difficult, but rejoicing along with another person when they have a *simchah* is a very great *madreigah*!

Now, feeling another person’s pain “*kamocha*,” is also not simple; it’s a high *madreigah* too to feel that the other person’s difficulty is your difficulty. Rabbi Akiva said about this (*Yerushalmi Nedarim* 9:4): “This is a great principle in the Torah.” All the more so, being happy for your friend when is surely very challenging, but it is an obligation! *V’ahavta l’rei’acha kamocha*, Love your fellow as yourself! Feel their pain and feel their joy as if it’s yours, “*kamocha*.” Rabbi Akiva says it is a great principle in the Torah.

### Exactitude with Rabbi Akiva’s Talmidim

The Gemara tells us (*Yevamos* 62b) that Rabbi Akiva had 24,000 *talmidim*, and they all passed away in the period between Pesach and Shavous. Their sin was that they did not treat each other with *kavod*. The Midrash relates (*Bereishis Rabbah* 61:3) that “*eiynihim tzaru eilu b’eilu*,” loosely translated as they had a begrudging eye for one another, or they viewed each other with a negative perspective. We must explain what is so terrible about this, that it made them liable for death in Heaven’s hands.

The simple answer is that this is a contradiction to the Torah. Rabbi Akiva said, “This is a great principle — in Torah.” Furthermore, Chazal say (*Avos* chap. 6) that “*ohev es habriyos*, loving one’s fellows” is one of the 48 acquisitions of Torah. One must love his fellows

“*kamocha*,” as he loves himself. **If the *kamocha* is missing, he will lack success in Torah. If so, the sin is not merely a deficiency in fulfilling a *mitzvas asei*, which is a grave *mitzvas asei*, but it is a deficiency in Torah, which means it is *bittul Torah*!** So having *tzarus ayin* is not a simple sin or a lesser *madreigah*, it is actually a sin of *bittul Torah*.

The fact that they were punished so severely for *bittul Torah* bespeaks of their great *madreigah*. Only Rabbi Akiva’s *talmidim* were punished so severely, as Chazal say (*Yevamos* 121b): “*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is exacting with *tzaddikim* like a hairsbreadth.” After all, does one deserve death *bi’dai Shamayim* for *bittul Torah*? Now, Chazal say (*Avos* chap. 3) that if someone distracts himself from Torah learning, he is liable to death, and if a traveler stops his learning to say ‘how beautiful this tree is,’ and if someone forgets even one thing from his learning, Scripture considers it as if he is liable to death — so it does seem that the death sentence is invoked for *bittul Torah*. However, the Torah is not so exacting with simple people. Rabbi Akiva’s *talmidim*, on the other hand, were on an exceptionally high *madreigah*, so their *bittul Torah* was much more serious, and they were punished for it. They were extremely pious and on a very high *madreigah*, and HaKadosh Baruch is “exacting with *tzaddikim* like a hairsbreadth.”

Perhaps this is what Rabbi Akiva meant when he said “Love your fellow as yourself is a great principle in the Torah.” Perhaps when Rabbi Akiva saw that his *talmidim* were punished, he understood that this was the reason. He realized that they were lacking in *ahavas habriyos b’sheleimus*. Indeed, the Midrash relates that after the tragedy, he told his remaining *talmidim*: “My sons, the first ones passed away because they treated each other with *tzarus ayin*. Take care not to act the same way.” And that’s why Rabbi Akiva taught them that loving one’s fellow as yourself is a great principle in the Torah. Without it, Torah is deficient, just as it says in *Avos* that loving one’s fellows is one of the acquisitions to Torah.

### Sheleimus in the 48 Acquisitions

If so, we have a lot of work ahead to do to reach *sheleimus* in *ahavas habriyos*. It’s not a simple matter to attain *sheleimus* in *ahavas habriyos* on the level of “*kamocha*.” The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (chap. 11) that it must be “*kamocha mamesh*,” like yourself both in times of pain and in times of joy. This is a lofty *madreigah*. Similarly, the other acquisitions we mentioned — humility, distancing oneself from honor — are also *madreigos* that are connected to one’s heart. They are obligations in and of themselves, yet are also obligations connected to *Hilchos Talmud Torah* — as one can only merit success in Torah by acquiring these virtues. One needs *siyatta d’Shemaya* to attain all these *madreigos*.

The Vilna Gaon's explanation of the following *pasuk* is famous (*Mishlei* 31:10): "אשת חיל מי ימצא". He says that the entire *perek* is referring to Torah, as the Torah is compared to a woman. The *gematria* of חיל is 48, a reference to the 48 acquisitions to Torah. This is his explanation of the *pasuk*: אשת חיל, a level of Torah learning wherein all 48 acquisitions are present; מי ימצא is not found, it is uncommon that one person will be a *mushlam*, complete, with all 48 acquisitions.

However, רבות בנוה — if there is a large *tzibbur* with many people who are *osek baTorah* together, then עשו חיל, certainly among all these people, it's possible to find all 48 acquisitions. One person has this attribute, while his friend has another, and everyone together joins to create a *sheleimus* of the 48 *kinyanei haTorah*. But ואת — (you, singular) if one single person has all 48 acquisitions, עליית על כולנה, you have surpassed them all!

Because it is extremely rare, and an unfathomable level for one person to attain all these attributes.

Therefore, we need *siyatta d'Shemaya* for this, and we must be *osek baTorah*. When we are involved in something, there is *siyatta d'Shemaya* and it is possible to merit success in all these *madreigos* in *kinyanei haTorah* — as there are many steps, and we only mentioned some of them: humility, distancing oneself from honor. These attributes go against human nature and one needs *siyatta d'Shemaya* to merit attaining them. Learning *mussar* is the solution. *Yehi ratzon* that we merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* for all the acquisitions to Torah, and for *hatzlachah* in Torah!

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