

Darkei HaChizuk

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

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

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Constantly, with All His Might

The Gemara tells us (*Berachos* 32b): “There are four things that require *chizuk*, strenghtening.” But what is *chizuk*? Rashi explains: “Constantly, with all his might.” Constantly means it should be done daily. If it’s not daily, it’s not considered constantly. With all his might is just as it sounds, *mamesh* with all his *koach*, strength.

What are these four things? The first is Torah, *esek haTorah*. One needs *chizuk* to be *osek baTorah*, because the *middah* of laziness is built-in to human nature. People don’t like to exert themselves; they prefer *menuchah*, relaxation. The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (chap. 6), “And notice that a person’s nature weighs heavy on him, the worldiness of materialistic matters is coarse; therefore a person does not want toil and work.” As such, any action that is not rooted in the yetzer hara requires *chizuk*, because the physical nature, which is the yetzer hara, tries to prevent it. This is how powerful the yetzer hara is, and it is a *nisayon* for us.

Without the yetzer hara, we would have neither *nisayon* (challenge/tests) or *schar* (reward). Someone actually once approached Maran the Chazon Ish *zt”l* and said that he didn’t want a yetzer hara. The Chazon Ish told him: “If so, what will you gain? You won’t have any *schar*. If there’s no *nisayon*, you aren’t accomplishing anything. Furthermore, you will be superfluous in this world because you won’t have any *tafkid*, any role.” The fact that we have a yetzer hara gives a person a reason to put in effort and exert himself, and he deserves *schar* for that. And thus, he reaches higher and higher levels. That’s why Torah requires *chizuk*.

What’s the *chizuk* in Torah? First of all, **TIME**. Use all your time; do not allow for *bittul Torah*. There should never be time free of Torah; make sure to always be *osek baTorah* during every available moment. Sometimes, a person has other needs — necessities that must be taken care of — that’s not considered *bittul Torah*, because in this case, *bittulah hi kiyumah* — stopping to learn at that point is what will enable you to continue learning in the future. But whenever there is a free moment — be *osek baTorah*!

How should a person be *osek baTorah*? What’s the level of quality necessary? Torah is still Torah when it’s learned *b’pashtus*, simply, without any exertion, but then there’s a level of Torah which is called *amkus*, and

one’s comprehension is of a high quality. I heard from Rav E.E. Dessler in the name of Rav Chaim Brisker *zt”l* the following: Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 99b), “‘For he has despised the word of Hashem.’ This refers to someone who was able to learn Torah, but did not.” Rav Chaim said if a person could have learned on a higher level of comprehension, and could have reached a greater level of quality and depth in his learning, but he fails to do so, it’s considered as if he had the opportunity to be *osek baTorah*, but did not! He is lacking the *shleimus* of the fulfillment of this mitzvah of *esek haTorah*. This too, is included in the *chizuk* needed for Torah: it should be **QUALITY** learning.

Something else that needs *chizuk* is *tefillah*. Quality of prayer is also a requisite of *tefillah*. One must have *kavanas haleiv*, heartfelt *kavanah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* wrote (*Orach Chaim* 98:1) that the correct level of *tefillah* is when one reaches *hispashtus hagashmiyus*, nullification of physicality. That is, the person who is davening does not feel his physical senses. As is known, when the Chazon Ish and the Brisker Rav *zt”l* davened, people spoke to them, but they didn’t hear.

It’s told about the Brisker Rav that he would daven Shemoneh Esrei out loud to increase his *kavanah*. This is the halachah — if it adds to your level of *kavanah*, one must daven out loud (as long as it does not disturb other people’s davening). Once, people in the same room heard that he forgot to say *yaaleh v’yavo*. They shouted out “*Yaaleh v’yavo, yaaleh v’yavo*,” but he didn’t hear them! This is the desired level of nullifying physicality — his sense of hearing did not work. A similar story occurred with the Chazon Ish. They wanted to ask him an urgent question, it was a *shailah* of *pikuach nefesh*, and they spoke to him while he was davening Shemoneh Esrei, but he didn’t hear them. They finally had to shake him in order to break his deep concentration. This is *tefillah*.

This is a high *madreigah*, but there are many other *madreigos* one must conquer first. The simplest *madreigah*, which is the easiest to attain, is to concentrate on the meaning of the words. I’ve already told you about an *avreich* who would cry during davening of the Yamim Noraim. Then for a few years, he stopped crying, and it bothered him that he wasn’t able to cry. I told him it was because he “wanted” to cry, and he was paying too much attention to his lack of tears. I told him just to concentrate on the meaning of

the words, and that's it. He followed my advice, and that year, he cried copious tears! That's human nature; the simple meaning of the words arouses *hisragshus haleiv*. This is *tefillah*.

Another area that requires *chizuk* is *maasim tovim*, good deeds — which are matters *bein adam lachaveiro* — and *chizuk* is also necessary in *derech erez*, which

includes all household matters, bodily needs, and family needs. One needs to strengthen himself constantly in these matters as well. All family needs are not *bittul Torah*; they are commitments and obligations that the Torah requires each person to fulfill. This is a brief summary of the matters that require *chizuk*.

On the Tenth Yahrtzeit of Maran Rosh HaYeshivah HaGaon Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz *ztvk"l* Excerpts from Hespedit Maran Rabbeinu *yblcht"l* Delivered

Zikkui HaRabbim

When we speak about Rabbeinu, *zt"l*, we see what great *hashpa'ah* he had on others. He was *zocheh* to *zikkui harabbim* in Torah and he was *zocheh* that *Shamayim* gave him the merit to make fences in Yiddishkeit and to establish a network of *Kollel Taharos*. He established many *kollelim* of *Taharos*, full of *avreichim*, Torah giants, who were *osek* in *Taharos*. This is something new, something that never happened before; we never heard of this in the past. At the same time, he was *zocheh* to be an influence on so many through his Torah, *chessed*, and *yiras Shamayim*. All of this was surely resultant of his prior *zechuyos*, as Chazal say (*Avos* 5:18): “Moshe merited and brought merit to the masses.” First he “merited” himself, and then he was able to “bring merit to the masses.”

The Address for Everyone

Even while he was still a *bachur* learning in Chevron Yeshivah, if anyone wanted help in Torah, and probably in other matters as well, he would help them willingly and happily, *b'sever panim yafos*. He'd put his heart and soul into helping others, and use all his brain power too. He would answer and explain so that the questioner would understand and leave with an acquisition of Torah. What *Toras chessed!* — Torah that included *chessed* (see *Sotah* 49b). He started this special behavior even as a young *bachur* in yeshivah. He was a *tel talpiyos* for everyone.

Joy in Amal HaTorah

I once heard that he had a *kushya* in the *Tosfos* that he couldn't resolve. For three full days, he was immersed in clarifying the *Tosfos*. He didn't take his mind off it for three whole days until he finally came up with a way to understand it. And then he opened his own *sefer*, *Minchas Yehudah*, and saw that years before, he had already committed the entire matter to writing. It was discussed and explained clearly in his *sefer*. He was very happy. Not only didn't he feel bad about spending three days toiling over the *Tosfos*, he was actually happy because three days of *yegi'as haTorah* is

extremely valuable. He was happy about his *yegi'ah!* He was happy about the actual *yegi'ah*, and not just after seeing the effects of his toil!

Days Do Not Return!

I heard him once telling a *talmid* to review and always remember the following: *Damim chozrim, v'hayamim einam chozrim* — Money can be regained, but one's days can never be acquired again. (He actually published this in his *sefer Darkei HaChaim* vol. II: There is an old *mussar sefer*, *Divrei Emes*, and at the end of chap. 19, it quotes the *paytan's* comments: “Money comes back, but days don't come back”! As a *bachur* I learned with a *chavrusa* who would always remind us of this whenever some disturbance occurred — and we'd immediately continue learning.)

He told his *talmid* to repeat this many times: *Yamim einam chozrim* — Days can never be acquired again! While *damim*, which can mean money or blood, can be regained, but time that is wasted is lost forever and can never be recouped. That *talmid* actually engrained this in his essence and he was successful.

Idleness — Mother of Sin

I also heard him telling a *talmid* to review and remind himself that *batalah*, idleness, is “the mother of sin”! In *Avos d'Rebbi Nassan*, they said (chap. 20): “If one places *divrei Torah* on his heart, they remove from him thoughts of destruction, thoughts of hunger, thoughts of folly, thoughts of immorality, thoughts of yetzer hara, thoughts of illicit relations, thoughts of meaningless trivia, thoughts of human burden... But one who does not place *divrei Torah* on his heart, they give him thoughts of destruction, thoughts of hunger, thoughts of folly, thoughts of immorality, thoughts of yetzer hara, thoughts of illicit relations, thoughts of meaningless trivia, thoughts of human burden.” **Idleness and removing one's thoughts from Torah are the number one cause of all sin.** Of course, if a person rests because he's tired and needs to rest, this is not idleness, because it's necessary. But if he doesn't have anything to do and he just dreams and wastes time for no reason, this is

called idleness, and idle thoughts are the beginning of all sin.

Make the Most of Every Moment

I remember when Rav Michel Yehudah was young, over sixty years ago, after the *shiur* in yeshivah, he would travel to learn in a *kollel* in Petach Tikva. He wrote many *chiddushei Torah*, including his *chiddushim* on all of *Seder Zera'im*. At that point, he started writing his *peirush Emek HaShaar* on Rav Hai Gaon's *Sefer HaMekach*. Whenever he had a free moment, his brain was occupied with clarifying Rav Hai Gaon's words.

During that *tekufah*, my brother Rav Yaakov and I slept in his house. Before we went to sleep, he'd discuss *divrei Torah* on *Sefer HaMekach* with us. Many of the *chiddushim* he shared with us were eventually published in his *sefer*. Over time, he committed himself to write more and more *chiddushim* and to be *osek baTorah*. He also wrote his *sefarim Minchas Yehudah*. **His entire day was packed, he didn't have one moment free for one extra word, for one unnecessary word.**

When a person lives with a *cheshbon nefesh*, this is how his day looks. He organizes his day in such a way that he doesn't have time for *devarim beteilim*; it would be a shame to lose even one minute on such folly when he could have accomplished something during that time instead. And in this way, he finishes Shas, and finishes Shas again. He has *shiurim* in Shas, and *shiurim* in the entire Torah, if he utilizes his time wisely, either to prepare, to learn on his own, or to write *chiddushei Torah*.

Every single person can maximize his time like this. *Baruch Hashem* there are those who do, but not everyone does, and it is *shayach* that there can be many more who do.

Kavanah in Chazaras HaShatz

I heard that he would often speak about hearing and concentrating on every single word in *Chazaras HaShatz*. Indeed this is also attributed to the Gra (see *Maaseh Rav os 43*; *Keser Rosh os 45*). Rav Michel Yehudah would say that even if someone already had great *kavanah* in his own Shemoneh Esrei, there is no limit to *kavanah*, and when he has *kavanah* on the words of *Chazaras HaShatz*, it's as if he davened again — *shome'a k'oneh* (one who hears is as if he said it himself), and his *schar* is doubled; it's as if he davened twice. Even if he didn't have proper *kavanah* in his personal Shemoneh Esrei, and he should be davening over, if he concentrates on *Chazaras HaShatz*, it's considered as if he davened with *kavanah*. (See *Rabbeinu Yonah's Igros HaTeshuvah*; mentioned in *Beis Yosef siman 124*.)

All this is not only if he has proper *kavanah* during the entire *Chazaras HaShatz* — even if he only concentrates on one *berachah*, or even just one word, it's counted! The main point of *tefillah* is *avodah she'balev*. Indeed, Chazal say at the beginning of *Taanis*, on the *pasuk* “*u'lovdo b'chol levavchem*, and serve Him with all your heart”: *Avodah she'balev*, service of the heart, is *tefillah*. The entire *nusach* of davening and all the *berachos* are *d'Rabbanan*, but every word of *shevach* (praise), *hoda'ah* (thanks), or *bakashah* (request) — if uttered with *kavanah* — is fulfillment of the mitzvah of *avodah she'balev*! *Chazaras HaShatz* is recited with a *tzibbur*, and *tefillah b'tzibbur* is on a different level entirely, so this is especially true during *Chazaras HaShatz*. If one hears every word, and concentrates on each word — calmly, without getting tense about it — and just understands the simple meaning of each word, this is *avodah she'balev* that purifies a person.

Inyanei HaParshah

(excerpted from Rabbeinu *shlita's sichos*)

The Evils of Machlokes

Chazal teach us (*Avos 5:17*): “Every controversy that is for the sake of Heaven will have lasting results, but one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not endure. Which controversy was for the sake of Heaven? The controversy of Hillel and Shammai, and one that is not for the sake of Heaven; the controversy of Korach and his entire company.”

Chazal say about the controversy of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel (*Yevamos 14b*) that the two groups treated each other with love and friendship. Love and friendship

existed alongside the dispute, because when a dispute is *I'shem Shamayim*, there can be love and friendship, and both recognize that “*Eilu v'eilu divrei Elokim chaim* — Both sides are words of the living G-d.” (See *Eiruvin 13b*.) This is what “will have lasting results” means. When there's a dispute *I'shem Shamayim*, both sides endure. Whatever Beis Shammai said and whatever Beis Hillel said remained Torah for all eternity. There are Mishnayos and Baraisos, and earlier and later commentators on Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel, as both were *divrei Elokim chaim*, and they were all *Toras emes*, the true Torah. They argued for the sake of Heaven, and

that type of controversy will endure — both sides still exist.

However, the *machlokes* between Korach and his company did not endure. Even though Moshe Rabbeinu endures — it was *I'shem Shamayim* for him — those who fought against him didn't act for the sake of Heaven. Not only didn't their Torah endure, they themselves did not endure.

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It's important to be aware that joining a *machlokes* is extremely dangerous, and anyone who gets involved is in great danger. It's well known that over the years there were disputes between great *gedolei Yisrael*, between one large side against another, with great *gedolei Yisrael* on each side. The *gedolim* themselves remained *gedolim*, their Torah still endures, people hold by their halachic opinions till this day, but those who got involved in the controversy had a very bitter end. Why? Because between the *gedolim*, the dispute was *I'shem Shamayim*, which endures, but those who intervene have no right to get involved in a *machlokes* between *gedolim*.

* *

I know about people who were involved in controversies that took place closer to our times, after 1940, and they are still suffering immensely. They go to *tzaddikim* to ask for *berachos*, and are constantly running to *tzaddikim* for

berachos because they are still suffering greatly, *Rachmana litzlan*. Even if someone is positive that one side is right, he is not a *baal davar*, and it is prohibited for him to get involved. When one finds himself in a place where there is *machlokes*, don't talk about it, don't even talk *lashon hara* about the person who is riling others up to *machlokes* because there is no benefit in doing so, and there's no *heter* to speak *lashon hara* if it's not *I'to'eles*. One who talks about it transgresses a grave prohibition, as is explained in *sefer Chafetz Chaim*.

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Someone told me that he spent a lot of time listening, speaking, and making inquiries about various controversies because he was a truth-seeker. But after a while, he decided not to speak or hear about these matters anymore. He told me that the very day he made that decision, he felt that his *havanah* in learning became so much stronger; he understood everything so much better. This is the power of *dveikus baTorah* and being careful about not speaking *lashon hara*. The Gra wrote about this in his famous letter: For every moment that a person controls his tongue he merits to some of the hidden light, something that no angel or creature can even fathom." "The hidden light" is the light of Torah, as it states (*Mishlei* 6:23), "And Torah is light." In the *zechus* of controlling one's tongue, a person merits reaching greater heights in Torah. This is true and tried, just as we've seen in the aforementioned story.

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