

## Darkei HaChizuk

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

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

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# Whoever Accepts the Yoke of Torah, the Yoke of Government Is Removed from Him

A New Israeli Government – What Are Our Duties at This Time?

### The Reward for Torah — More Opportunities for Torah

Every day we say the Mishnah and *Beraisa* in *Maseches Peah*: “These are the matters that have no limits... These are the matters which one reaps their dividends in this world, and the principle awaits him in Olam HaBa — but the study of Torah is equal to them all.”

We can understand what the principle in the next world is, but what are the dividends in this world? After all, the principle awaits us in Olam HaBa, and Olam HaBa is comprised of spiritual pleasures, delicacies of the soul, of which the Navi said (*Yeshayah* 64:3): “No eye has ever seen...” We have no concept of these matters; even the prophets had no inkling of the level of Olam HaBa’s pleasures. (See *Berachos* 34b.)

Dividends are always a part of the principle. For example, take a fruit tree — its fruit are the same species as the tree. If so, how is it possible to enjoy the dividends, the fruits, of the principle? How can we derive an Olam HaBa-type pleasure in our worldly, materialistic world? Where is the connection between Olam HaBa and Olam HaZeh?

It seems that the explanation is that Heaven gives a person the type of Olam HaZeh that will assist him in attaining Olam HaBa — there are certain means that are necessary for this. After all, one needs Torah and *maasim tovim* to merit Olam HaBa, and Torah study is equal to all other mitzvos. There are other good deeds aside from Torah study that one is obligated to perform, and a person needs strength and stamina to do all these good deeds. That’s why this world, with all its physical needs, is necessary in order to merit Olam HaBa.

So these are the “dividends in this World” for Torah study. If a person is *osek baTorah* in the manner discussed in *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, he learns Torah as he should and fulfills his obligations — of course, it’s individual for every person according to his abilities — if he fulfills the halachah of *Talmud Torah*, Heaven provides him with the worldly needs required to continue upholding the Torah and performing *maasim tovim*. This is the meaning of “dividends in this World” — in the *zechus* of the Torah, he is given all his necessities in this world to continue learning Torah and doing *maasim tovim*. That’s what it seems to be.

This is like Chazal say (*Yoma* 38b): “One who comes to be purified is helped.” If a person comes to be purified, and wants to fulfill his requirements in purity, with *taharas haleiv*, with a pure heart, then he receives Heavenly help; he is given *siyatta d’Shemaya* to fulfill his obligations and continue performing *maasim tovim* properly.

### The Yoke of Torah Instead of Other Difficulties

This is taught in *Avos* (3:5) as well: “Whoever accepts the yoke of Torah upon himself, the yoke of government and *derech erez* is removed from him.” That is, in the merit of accepting the yoke of Torah, he is absolved of all other difficulties. If a person accepts the yoke of Torah — which then becomes his difficulty and the activity he is involved in — as long as he accepts the entire “yoke,” which means he devotes all his energies to Torah, treating Torah as if he is subjugated to it and is obligated to learn — then Heaven removes all other difficulties from his path: that is, the yoke of government and the yoke of *derech erez*, which is *parnassah* (see Rashi on *Berachos* 32). The yoke of government refers to whatever the government

demands of its citizens. He is absolved of it all, because he is busy and he has a different “yoke” — the yoke of Torah!

The yoke of Torah is individual — each person according to his abilities. It’s not something that can be measured. Take a weak person who does not have much energy, or someone who has no choice and must be involved in making a living — each of them must learn as much as he can, for as long as he can, and whatever he can understand. There’s Chumash, Mishnayos, and Gemara; one can come up with *chiddushei Torah*. There are many levels in learning, and each person must learn as much as he can; each person must accept his own personal yoke of Torah.

In his *sefer Toras HaBayis*, I think the Chafetz Chaim delineates how a person can set up his day to utilize every moment, and not waste any time or cause *bittul Torah*. In this *zechus*, this person won’t have other difficulties. If someone accepts the difficulty of *ol Torah*, Heaven removes all other difficulties from him. This is the reality.

### **Zechuyos Eliminate Disturbances!**

**It’s no secret that presently the new Israeli government has ill intentions — and they are openly saying that they want to issue decrees against religion, against halachah, that the public should behave against *dinei Torah*. That’s their agenda. If so, what can we do? What’s the solution? It all depends on *zechuyos*! When we have *zechuyos*, there are no disturbances.** When there are *zechuyos*, then it follows that “one who comes to be purified is helped” and disturbances are eliminated.

Therefore, it all depends now on our *zechuyos*. It depends on how well we fulfill our obligations in Torah and *maasim tovim*, all the *Taryag mitzvos*, both *bein adam la Makom* and *bein adam lachaveiro*. Everything must be *b’sheleimus*, without *negios*, don’t let the yetzer hara bribe you, do everything without the yetzer hara, overcome the yetzer hara. These *zechuyos* provide the merits that there won’t be any difficulties or disturbances; they give you *siyatta d’Shemaya*. That’s the reality.

These *zechuyos* are the result of all the good deeds that we are obligated to do even if there wouldn’t have been these decrees. After all, a person must bring about *k’vod Shamayim*, as the *mishnah* at the end of *Pirkei Avos* states: “Whatever Hashem

created in His world was only created to bring glory to His name, as it states: ‘All that is called by My Name, indeed, it is for My glory that I have created it, formed it, and made it.’” The entire world was created to increase *k’vod Shamayim*; the world’s continued existence is for the purpose of *k’vod Shamayim*.

Torah is the *ikkar*, is the most important thing, as Chazal say (*Pesachim* 68b), “If not for the Torah, heavens and earth would not exist, as it states (*Yirmeyahu* 33:25): “If not for My covenant with the day and night, the statutes of heaven and earth I would not place.” Rashi explains: If not My covenant — of day and night, which is Torah study, about which is written: And you shall toil in it day and night (*Yehoshua* 1:8). The *Nefesh HaChaim* (4:11) expounds on this and says that the world’s entire existence is in the merit of Klal Yisrael’s Torah that’s learned day and night.

### **Fulfilling Mitzvos While Sleeping**

What is *esek haTorah* at night? If a person goes to sleep so that he will have energy to learn Torah later, that is also considered as doing a mitzvah. Indeed, the Gemara (*Sukkah* 25a) discusses the halachah regarding whether a person on a mission to complete a mitzvah, a *shaliach mitzvah*, is absolved from fulfilling the mitzvah of *sukkah*. Rashi there explains what is considered a *shaliach mitzvah*: People on their way to do a mitzvah, such as learning Torah etc. are absolved from *sukkah*, even when they have stopped their travels to rest. That is, they are *patur* from the mitzvah of *sukkah* even while they sleep. The Mordechai (*siman* 740) explains: “Because when they rest and sleep at night comfortably, they can learn Torah the next day. As such, it’s all included in ‘*osek bamitzvah*.’” By enjoying a more comfortable night’s sleep outside a *sukkah*, the *shaliach mitzvah* will be able to fulfill the mitzvah the next day with a greater degree of *sheleimus*. That’s why it’s considered being involved in the mitzvah even when he sleeps, and he is thus absolved from the mitzvah of *sukkah*. Even when he sleeps, he’s doing a mitzvah!

The Rambam writes specifically about this (*Hilchos Deios* 3:3): When a person sleeps *l’shem Shamayim*, if he keeps in mind that he’s sleeping in order to be energized for his mitzvah fulfillment the next day, then he’s sleeping in order to fulfill his obligations. If this indeed is the case, “it turns out that his sleep is service of Hashem.” He’s serving

Hashem as he sleeps! This can be done — one can be an *oveid Hashem* by sleeping, by being passive.

All the more so when a person actively does something — such as eating and drinking and all other physical needs which are necessary in order to have energy to perform *maasim tovim* — these physical actions are *avodas Hashem* and *k'vod Shamayim*. A person is called an *eved Hashem* through these actions; it's servitude to Hashem, just as the Rambam writes.

### How to Annul the Evil Decree

In any case, even if there wouldn't be any decrees, we still are obligated to be *osek baTorah* and *maasim tovim*, each person according to his individual ability and strength. **But when there is a decree hanging over us, it serves as a greater wake-up call! And we are inspired to do more! Without decrees, a person can forget, but when there are decrees, it reminds us not to take things lightly. If so, the decrees are for our benefit, to wake us up, to remind us to strengthen ourselves in whatever needs strengthening and correcting.**

During the Yamim Noraim, we say: “And *teshuvah* (repentance), *tefillah* (prayer), and *tzedakah* (charity) annul the evil decree.” When there is a *gezeirah*, a decree, how do we annul it? Through *teshuvah*! We already discussed what *teshuvah* refers to: *teshuvah* for negligence in Torah study and whatever else we need repentance for. *Tefillah* means to beg for Heavenly mercy, and *tzedakah* means performing more good deeds. In the *zechus* of *tzedakah*, Hashem treats us *middah k'neged middah*. When a person gives *tzedakah*, he merits being treated charitably as well. *Tzedakah* is a something tremendous and one can merit many things as a result of the *zechuyos* of *tzedakah*.

As we've said, even without all these *gezeiros*, we are obligated to be *osek baTorah*. Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 99a) that the verse (*Bamidbar* 15:31) “He has scorned the word of Hashem” refers to one who is able to learn Torah but does not. *Esek haTorah* is an obligation even when there are no *gezeiros*; these decrees simply serve as a reminder of our obligations to be *osek baTorah*. Otherwise, if we are not *osek baTorah*, it's called “he has scorned the word of Hashem.” And the second part of that *pasuk* is simply terrible, *Rachmana litzlan*.

### Feeling Pain over an Unfulfilled Mitzvah

It is true that through no fault of his own, a person may be under duress and unable to learn Torah (*oness*). However, if the only reason for this is because he doesn't know how to learn, it is considered a *shogeig*, an unintentional sin, but a sin nonetheless which requires *teshuvah* and atonement. In the *Viduy* prayer we mention unintentional sins, because they are sins. But if someone cannot learn because he is an *oness*, then *oness Rachmana patrei*, “Hashem absolves someone who is an *oness*.”

Furthermore, regarding the *pasuk* “to those who contemplate His Name,” Chazal said (*Kiddushin* 40a) that even if someone contemplated doing a mitzvah but couldn't do it because he was an *oness*, Scripture considers it as if he did the mitzvah. That is, a person who wants to do a mitzvah, but cannot, due to no fault of his own, it is considered as if he did it. Now, this requires an explanation. After all, he did not do it, so why is it considered that he did?

The *Sefer HaAkeidah* (see *Parshas Netzavim, Shaar haMe'ah*) says that since he felt bad about his inability to fulfill the mitzvah, in the merit of his pain it's considered as if he did it. Since he cares so much about doing mitzvos and he wants to complete that mitzvah, the pain itself is also a great mitzvah. It's a *madreigah* of *ahavas hamitzvah*, serving Hashem out of love. As reward for that pain — it's considered as if he did something and he deserves *schar* for it — it's considered as if he did the mitzvah!

We learn from here that if a person does as much as he has the ability to, and the only reason why he doesn't do more is because he simply cannot, it's as if he did a tremendous amount. Any time he desires to do a mitzvah but cannot do it because he is under duress, *oness*, it is as if he did it. For example, if he wants to learn Torah, give *tzedakah*, daven with greater *kavanah*, but cannot because he is an *oness*, and it bothers him and pains him, it is considered as if he did it. He receives the *schar* for *esek haTorah* as if he learned Torah. He receives *schar* for *tzedakah* and *tefillah* as if he actually did these mitzvos.

These matters can provide a person with tremendous *zechuyos* just for his heartfelt feeling and desire! *Yehi ratzon*, May it be Hashem's will that we are all *zocheh* to fulfill all our obligations *b'sheleimus*. May we be *zocheh* to have whatever we need.

## Excerpts from Rabbeinu's Address at a Recent Family Simchah in His Home

"Mah ashiv laHashem, kol tagmulohi alai, How can I repay Hashem for all His kindness to me?"  
*Mah ashiv laHashem*, what can I give Him — whatever I have is also from Him. Would I think of giving Him something that belongs to Him? What can I give Hashem? Only *shevach v'hoda'ah*, praise and thanks. That's the only thing one can pay Him with.

However, how does a person have the ability to give praise and thanks? It comes from the ability to speak and think. But where does this come from? It's all from *Shamayim!* As such, *Mah ashiv laHashem* — it's not possible for a person to properly fulfill this obligation.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* says (*Shaar Avodas HaElokim* chap. 5) that the intellect tells the soul: Do you know that you are debtor to your Creator's goodness? You are indebted for all the good you receive from the Creator. A person receives so much good and cannot give anything in return for it. That makes him indebted; his soul is indebted because it can never fulfill its obligations to the *Borei Olam*.

But what we can do, is to believe that everything is in Heaven's hands. Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good, *Kol mah d'avid Rachmana, l'tav avid*. Everything is in Heaven's hands and everything occurs based on a person's *zechuyos*. Each person receives *siyatta d'Shemaya* based on his *zechuyos*, and nothing can happen without *zechuyos*. The wicked *reshaim* receive *Olam HaZeh* instead of *Gan Eden*, but *tzaddikim* do not have *Olam HaZeh* so that they'll receive a greater portion in *Olam HaBa*. It's true that there is the concept of "*Ashrecha ba'Olam HaZeh*," but that's something else. *Ashrecha ba'Olam HaZeh* is *Torah*, it's *ruchniyus*. It's not a materialistic "*ashrecha*," it's spiritual.

This brings us back to *Mah ashiv laHashem, kol tagmulohi alai*. This is all about coming to the realization that everything is in Hashem's hands, and a person must offer thanks as much as possible. This is a person's obligation in this world — increasing *k'vod Shamayim*, as it states (*Yeshayahu* 43:7): "All that is called by My Name, indeed, it is for My glory that I have created it, formed it, and made it."

A person cannot say that he deserves good because he has merits. We are all *baalei chov*, debtors; we are obligated to fulfill the *mitzvos*. If we don't fulfill them, we are sinners. And just because we aren't sinners, is that a reason for us to deserve accolades and merit? It's true that we have a *yetzer hara* and we must exert ourselves to overcome it, but still, who gave us the power to stand up against the *yetzer hara*? Where is this ability from? It's all from Hashem, it's all in Heaven's hands. A person can never fulfill all his obligations; he will always be indebted to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Whatever he has is only the result of *chasdei Shamayim!*

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