

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 Ki Savo 5781

452

Torah, Avodah, Gemillus Chasadim

It's the middle of Elul and we need *zechuyos* for the *Yom HaDin*. There are three matters that comprise the entire Torah, as Chazal say (*Avos* 1:2): "The world stands on three things: on *Torah*, *avodah*, and *gemillus chasadim*." "The world" is the entire world in general, and each person specifically, as the Midrash states (*Tanchuma Pekudei* 3) that man is a miniature world. A person's world and his *madreigah* depends on these three matters, which comprise the entire Torah: *Torah*, *avodah*, *gemillus chasadim*.

Torah is as it sounds: use your time wisely for *esek haTorah*; don't waste time. Every person's *madreigah* depends on his abilities; each person must do as much as he can — and not only isn't he obligated to do more than that, it's actually *assur* for him to push himself beyond his abilities. But each person must use his time to the fullest *l'fi kocho*, as far as his abilities allow.

Esek haTorah is very interesting. The words of Torah are "sweeter than honey" (*Tehillim* 19:11), and are like "new decrees" (Rashi on *Devarim* 6:5). So aside from the *zechus* inherent in learning Torah, it's not hard to do. It's interesting and enticing.

Avodah is *emunah*, strengthening your belief that everything is from Hashem, *hakol bidei Shamayim*. There are many steps toward acquiring *emunah*, and that's why we have *mussar sefarim*. Of course, one must learn *mussar sefarim* that are interesting. Don't let your *mussar* sessions be boring; something that's boring won't have an influence on you. Throughout the year, *yeshivos* learn for a half-hour before Maariv, but in Elul, another 15 minutes are added before Minchah, to increase the *chizuk*. This too is not hard to implement, since *mussar sefarim* are interesting. One simply must utilize his time properly and learn *mussar*.

Gemillus chasadim includes anything that has to do with *bein adam l'chaveiro*. For example, treating everyone respectfully and cheerfully, as Chazal say (*Avos* 1:15), "*Hevei mekabel es kol haadam b'sever panim yafos*." This includes wishing everyone you meet good morning, asking "how are you?" and generally giving the other person a good feeling.

Chesed can be performed in the spiritual realm as well. If someone asks you for advice regarding how to progress in his *ruchniyus* and you give him advice, that's *chesed*. Every person is only expected to do what he can; if you don't know how to advise people, send them to someone who can give them proper advice.

Davening for Other People's Ruchniyus

There's another way to do *chesed* in *ruchniyus*. As is well known, Rav Yisrael Salanter said that it's tried and true that davening for *ruchniyus* helps. If so, one can do *chesed* with his prayers — he can daven for his friend's *ruchniyus*! The truth is, there are many requests in our *tefillos* that are in the plural form, such as: *Targeleinu b'Torasecha*, regulate us in Your Torah; *Hasheveinu*, Return us; *Re'ei b'onyeinu*, See our affliction; prayers for both spiritual and material matters — and they're all in plural; we're asking that all of Klal Yisrael be successful in their spiritual and material matters.

All we have to do is think about this with *yishuv hadaas* as we daven — when I ask "*Chaneinu*," I'm not merely asking for myself, I'm asking for all of Klal Yisrael. My family and relatives are included in Klal Yisrael, and I'm asking on behalf of everyone, not just for myself. Aside from tangible acts of *chesed*, this too is *chesed*. It's true *chesed* in davening, *chesed bein adam lachaveiro*.

The Chazon Ish once wrote a prayer (*Kovetz Igros* vol. 1, p. 74) for a mother to daven for her son who needed *chizuk* for *hasmadah* in Torah learning. The Chazon Ish wrote up this *tefillah* to be said in *Shema Koleinu*: "*Yehi ratzon*, May it be Your will, Hashem my G-d and the G-d of my forefathers, that You have mercy on my son _____ and transform his heart to love and fear Your name, and to diligently learn Your holy Torah. Please remove from him all causes that prevent him from having diligence in Your holy Torah, and prepare all means that will bring him [close] to Your holy Torah," *ki Atah shomea*, for You hear...

Every single person can daven for his friend in this manner. Chazal said (*Bava Kama* 92a), "Anyone who begs for mercy for his friend and he needs the same thing, he is answered first." That is, if someone davens

for his friend and doesn't ask for himself — even though he also needs a *yeshua*, whether in *gashmiyus* or *ruchniyus* matters. If he asks for his friend, he is answered first!

Listen to and Learn Mussar from Our Chachamim

One more thing. Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (2:10) that the following scenario can occur: A person's deeds can be greater than his knowledge, and in the merit of the many *zechuyos* of mitzvos that he still is unaware of, and in the *zechus* of *maasim tovim* that he still hasn't performed and doesn't even know that he is supposed to be performing, it will be considered that he has already done them.

When does this happen? Rabbeinu Yonah writes: "When he hears *mussar* from the *chachamim* and *mochichim*, the sages and the admonishers." In his times, there were specific people who rebuked the congregations, just like the *maggidim* who deliver sermons of rebuke and guidance in *ruchniyus* and tell the *tzibbur* how to do *teshuvah*. The Dubno Maggid, for example, was famous, but every single city had a "*shtoht maggid*," the town maggid. Nowadays, every yeshivah has a mashgiach who delivers *divrei chizuk*. That's how it was then, every city had a *maggid* who would deliver *divrei chizuk* and strengthen the *tzibbur*.

That's what Rabbeinu Yonah was referring to. Rabbeinu Yonah was talking about a person who decided to listen to the *mochichim* on a regular basis, and to do whatever they exhorted him to do. There were *mochichim* who knew how to guide people to proper behavior, so if he'd listen, and do as he was told, then even if he still hadn't heard and still didn't know what to do, since he had already accepted upon himself that he'd listen to the *mochichim*, it's considered as if he did so already, and then "*tzadak nafsho b'shaah kallah*," he has made his soul righteous in a short time, in Rabbeinu Yonah's words.

Although he still hasn't performed all those mitzvos and *maasim tovim*, he still receives reward for them. Whatever he does later is considered as if those actions had been done now, because he's on the right path, on the path that will lead him to perform many, many *maasim tovim*. That's why it says "his deeds are greater than his knowledge" — for he already received *sechar* for his future good deeds, even though he has no idea what they are and he hasn't performed them. This is simply extraordinary!

Rabbeinu Yonah writes this about people who listen to *divrei tochachah*, but in our days we have *mussar sefarim*, which are also *mochichim*. Anyone who has a

steady learning session in *mussar*, even if it's for a short time every day, in a *sefer* that's interesting, interesting *mussar*, it will have a *hashpa'ah*. The influence won't be felt immediately, but it will have an influence.

If a person has a *k'vius* for learning *mussar*, in a manner that's interesting, then he will immediately acquire the rewards for his entire future, and he is already considered a *tzaddik gamur*, a complete *tzaddik*. Even if he still has sins and doesn't know how to rectify them, he will eventually correct them. And regarding the missing *maasim tovim* that he hasn't yet performed, he will eventually perform them too. So he receives his "title" based on the end result; it's as if he already did everything and rectified whatever needed fixing since he's on the path leading in this direction.

So this is the *eitzah*: learn *mussar sefarim* that are available. In *yeshivos*, there's a half-hour *sefer* every day before Maariv, and in Elul we add another 15 minutes before Minchah. Every single person should do so as well, even someone who doesn't learn in yeshivah, such as someone who has a family to care for. He should make up a steady time to learn *mussar*. Learning *mussar* gives over a very pleasant feeling, that pleasant feeling will carry over to his family, and then the whole family will be happy.

Hashem Is Happy and Wants Us to Daven

Additionally, we also have *koach hatefillah*, the power of prayer. Rav Yisrael Salanter said it's true and tried that *tefillah* for *ruchniyus* helps. **HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants a person to beg and daven more and more. It doesn't disturb HaKadosh Baruch Hu to hear more and more requests — to the contrary, that's what He wants!** Chazal said (*Yerushalmi Berachos* 9:1), "Rabbi Pinchas said in the name of Rabbi Zeira: A human being has a benefactor. If he badgers him too much, he will say, 'I find this man to be a real disturbance.' But HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not like this. No matter how much you disturb Him, He accepts you, as it states, 'Cast upon Hashem your burden and He will support you.'"

The *Midrash Tehillim* (chap. 4) states: "Rabbi Zeira said, 'A person has a *ben bayis*, someone who visits him often. The first time his guest comes, he sits him down on a comfortable sofa, the second time, on a chair, the third time on a bench. The fourth time, he says, "This bench is really crowded, Ploni is disturbing me." But HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not like this. The more Yisrael pressure Him and come to His place of prayer, it brings Him joy. Therefore it states: [Who is] like Hashem Elokeinu, at all times that we call upon Him?'" That is, when a person makes a request of a

human king and the king disregards his request and does not answer him, if the person would repeat his request again, the king would become angry. After all, he should have noticed that the king didn't want to help him, so why is he asking again? But HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not like this. *Adaraba, Hashem Yisbarach* wants people to ask, and ask, and ask. No matter how many times as he asks, Hashem still wants to hear from him.

Regarding Yitzchak Avinu, it states (*Bereishis* 25:21), "And Yitzchak davened (*vaye'etar*) to Hashem facing his wife." The wording used denotes increasing, as Rashi states there: *Vaye'etar*: He prayed very much and entreated Hashem with prayer. Furthermore, it states regarding Moshe Rabbeinu (*Shemos* 8:25): "Behold I am leaving you and I will daven (*he'etarti*) to Hashem," and (ibid. verse 26): "And Moshe left Pharaoh and he davened (*vaye'etar*) to Hashem." Rashi explains: He put effort into his prayers... and prayed a lot." When a person makes requests and increases his *tefillos*, one *tefillah* and another, HaKadosh Baruch Hu desires this.

Utilize the Yemei Ratzon for Davening

Especially now, in the month of Elul which is an *eis ratzon*, we must utilize these days for davening. We must daven for success in Torah, in *avodah*, in *ahavas habriyos*. We must also beg for mercy for Klal Yisrael. Like we've mentioned, almost all the requests in Shemoneh Esrei, and in other parts of davening too, are worded in the plural form. We are davening for all of Klal Yisrael, and we make many requests — for both *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*. We ask that it should be good for everyone, and that all Klal Yisrael live good lives. That's *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha!* One just has to really mean it and think about it — remember that we're asking for all of Klal Yisrael.

Chazal say (*Yoma* 38b): "One who comes to be purified is helped." If a person tries to act as he is supposed to in *ruchniyus*, there is *siyatta d'Shemaya* and Heaven helps him. If that's how it is when he comes to be "purified" himself, *kal v'chomer* it must be so when he comes to "purify" others. If he wants to have an influence on others and begs for mercy on their behalf — or if he can even be an active influence, for example, if he has the gift of words and can influence others through his speech — then *kal v'chomer*, Heaven will help him. After all, if he receives *siyatta d'Shemaya* when he comes to purify himself, then when he wants to purify and cleanse others, which is a profound *zechus*, he will surely be helped.

There's no end to the *zechuyos* a person can merit through *tefillah*. We've mentioned the Gemara's words (*Berachos* 50a) on the *pasuk* "Widen your

mouth and I will fill [your requests]" — that this is talking about *divrei Torah*. If we ask for *ruchniyus* matters, we will receive them and we will have *siyatta d'Shemaya*. Indeed, as Rav Yisrael Salanter says, It's tried and true that *tefillah* helps for *ruchniyus*.

Difficulties Don't Worry a Baal Emunah

It's also important to strengthen *emunah*, as we always say. It's important to remember that everything is *bidei Shamayim*, in Heaven's hands — this gives a person a good, happy life. If we know that everything is in Heaven's hands, and "Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good," and that difficulty is also for man's benefit, and even if we don't know how it is good, it is still good, then there's nothing to worry about! That's why we must be happy with difficulties, because they are for our good. When we live with this *emunah*, it gives us a happy life.

Minimize Pleasures

There's something else that not everyone knows about — and that's minimizing pleasures. Chazal say in *Pirkei Avos* (6:5) that Torah is acquired through 48 matters. One of them is by *mi'ut taanug*, minimizing pleasure, and all our success in *ruchniyus* matters hinges on minimizing pleasures.

They've already told us (Ibid. 4): "This is the way of Torah, eat bread with salt, drink measured water, sleep on the ground, and live a life of privation, yet still toil in Torah. If you do so, you will be fortunate in this world and it will be good for you in the world to come."

All sorts of difficulties are mentioned here, such as "bread with salt." This person only has bread and salt to eat — but he eats to satiation and is not hungry. "Measured water" means that he drinks as much as he needs until he's no longer thirsty. "Sleep on the ground" means that he sleeps on the ground and doesn't enjoy himself, but nevertheless, he rests enough and is not tired anymore. "Lives a life of privation" means that in addition to everything else mentioned, he has other pains and difficulties. And yet, "you still toil in Torah" — since he toils in Torah, it makes him forget all his troubles. And that is what makes him fortunate in this world!

This is the reality. **If a person experiences physical, material difficulties that make it hard to learn Torah, but he knows that *gashmiyus* is not the most important thing in life, in fact, it's worthless, and *adaraba*, Torah is acquired by minimizing pleasures and only utilizing pleasures when necessary — not for simple enjoyment per se, but only when necessary — then it gives him a good**

feeling and success in *ruchniyus*. And that's how "fortunate in this world" is manifested. Furthermore, he will also have Olam HaBa, as the Tanna concludes: "You will be fortunate in this world and it will be good for you in the World to Come."

Fortunate in This World and in the World to Come

We've already mentioned that we can understand the *chiddush* in "you will be fortunate in this world," that even despite the pain and difficulty a person can live a happy, fortunate life, but the *chiddush* in "it will be good for you in the world to come" requires an explanation. After all, he surely deserves Olam HaBa.

However, there really is a *chiddush*. After all, it's well known that all worldly pleasures take away from Olam HaBa. The Vilna Gaon writes in *Iggeres HaGra* that all pleasures will turn to "*marah*" in the grave. *Marah* is Gehinnom. If so, if a person was fortunate in this world, why would he receive Olam HaBa? Olam HaZeh comes on account of Olam HaBa. The Tanna's *chiddush* is that it all depends on the type of pleasure. If someone enjoys a spiritual pleasure, like the pleasure of learning Torah, then it does not cause him to lose Olam HaBa. To the contrary, this type of Olam HaZeh

provides the person with even more *zechuyos*. And the "you will be fortunate in this world" also gives him *zechuyos* for Olam HaBa!

It turns out that if one goes in the path of Torah, he will have a happy, fortunate life. That is the path of Torah. At the beginning of *Mesillas Yesharim*, it states that all types of materialism are harmful to a person, and *gashmiyus* makes a person lose his *ruchniyus*. Therefore, one must only use what this world has to offer in order to attain the requisite *yishuv hadaas* necessary for a person's *ruchniyus* needs. This way, he will have a happy, fortunate life in this world and he will merit Olam HaBa.

Now in Elul, it's an *eis ratzon*, a time of favor, and it is easier to merit all the *maalos*, all *tefillos* are more readily accepted, and there's special *siyatta d'Shemaya* for success in *ruchniyus*. It is an *eis ratzon* before the Yom HaDin to merit many tremendous *zechuyos*, and through that, may we merit, *b'ezras Hashem* to a *k'sivah v'chasimah tovah* on the Yom HaDin. May the entire *tzibbur* — those who are here [at the *shiur*] and those who are not — merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* in whatever they need.

Please daven for
גיטה פייגה בת רבקה
לרפואה שלימה ומהירה
בתוך כל חולי ישראל

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