

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 Bereishis 5782

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Rabbeinu shlita's Derashah in the Beis Midrash HaGadol of Vishnitz

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Siyatta D'Shemaya for Ahavas Torah

The Gemara tells us (*Berachos* 63b), “*Poschim bichvod achsania*, One should start off [his lectures] with praises about his host.” When a person is a guest, he must treat his host with respect and speak in a way that honors him. It's an obligation to start off by praising one's host.

Right now, we are in an *achsania shel tzibbur*, a large *tzibbur* is hosting today, and *baruch Hashem* it's a *tzibbur* on a high *madreigah*. What does the *tzibbur* here want? Why have they gathered here today? To hear *divrei Torah*. And why do they want to hear *divrei Torah*? Because they have *ahavas Torah*, they love the Torah. This is a *madreigah*. There's *ahavas Torah* here; the *tzibbur* wants to hear *divrei Torah*.

Ahavas Torah is not simple. Every month, we recite the *birkas haChodesh* prayer and ask for “a life with *ahavas Torah*.” This means we must daven for it; without davening, we won't receive *ahavas Torah*. One needs *siyatta d'Shemaya* for *ahavas Torah* — it doesn't come automatically. This *tzibbur* has *siyatta d'Shemaya* for *ahavas Torah*, and that's a *madreigah*.

So there's a *tefillah* for this every month, and as we know, Rav Yisrael Salanter says that it's tried-and-true that a *tefillah* for *ruchniyus* is effective. If a person wants *ruchniyus* and he wants *kedushah*, he will have *siyatta d'Shemaya*! Indeed, the Gemara says (*Berachos* 50a): “‘Open your mouth wide and I will fill it’ — this is in reference to *divrei Torah*.” If a person wants success in Torah, “open your mouth wide” — he just needs to ask for it — open your mouth wide and I'll fill it! That's the way to merit *ahavas Torah*.

The *tzibbur* here has the *madreigah* of *ahavas Torah*. But how does one reach, and merit, this *madreigah*? Both *tefillah*, prayer, and *siyatta d'Shemaya* are necessary. In this case, the *siyatta d'Shemaya* is that the Rebbe *shlita* has an influence

of *ahavas Torah* on everyone. The Rebbe's *hashpa'ah* is the *zechus*.

Kevod Shamayim in a Large Crowd

Another type of joy is present here — the joy of a *chanukas habayis*, of establishing a great edifice for Torah and *tefillah*, to fulfill the dictum of “*B'rov am, hadras Melech*, the King's glory is in the multitude of people” (*Mishlei* 14:28). Making a *chanukas habayis* for such a tremendous building increases *kevod Shamayim*, because **the larger the *tzibbur*, the greater *kevod Shamayim* there is. There is a manifestation of *kevod Shamayim* and *kiddush Hashem* here, with such a large *tzibbur* involved in Torah and *tefillah*.**

On the *pasuk* “And five of you shall chase 100, and 100 will chase 10,000” (*Vayikra* 26:8), Rashi comments: “Is this the correct calculation? Shouldn't it have said ‘And 100 of you will chase 2000?’ However, one cannot compare a small group upholding the Torah to a large crowd upholding the Torah.”

Five chasing 100 is the ratio of 1 to 20, while 100 chasing 10,000 is a ratio of 1 to 100. The ratios aren't equal, because one cannot compare the strength of many people doing something to when only a small group does the same thing. When many join together for mitzvos, it's a different *madreigah*, and there is *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

Baruch Hashem, here we have many people joining together; not only are they a large group, they also have an influence on others — a *hashpa'ah* of Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, good *middos*, and *emunah*. This is the *zechus* of this *tzibbur*.

Not only that, this actual place, a holy place of a great *tzibbur*, also has an influence of *kedushah* on its environs. We know that a yeshivah has a *hashpa'ah* on its surroundings, and when there's a *beis midrash* that's used for both learning Torah and davening, it's a *makom kadosh* and it has a

hashpa'ah on the entire area. *Baruch Hashem*, here there is a great influence of *yiras Shamayim*, *middos tovos*, and *ahavas Torah*.

Joy in Serving Our Creator

Sukkos is called *Zman Simchaseinu*, the time of our happiness. In davening, we say, “*Vatitein lanu...*, Hashem, give us this day of the Sukkos holiday, the time of our happiness” — Sukkos is a joyous time, and we are thanking Hashem for it. We thank the Ribbono shel Olam for the *zechus* of this joyous time.

Let's take a look at what this joy is, and what makes us happy. Usually, when a person has something that he likes, it makes him happy. For example, money and honor usually make people happy. But is that the joy of our Yom Tov? There's a halachah that one must be happy on Yom Tov, but what should be the source of this happiness? *Simchah shel mitzvah*, joy in performing mitzvos!

The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Yom Tov* 6:20): “When a person eats and drinks and is happy on Yom Tov, he shouldn't be drawn after wine, laughter, or frivolity and claim that anyone who does more of this will increase his mitzvah of *simchas Yom Tov*. Inebriety, profuse laughter, and lightheadedness are not joy; they are emptiness and foolishness. We were not commanded to act with emptiness and foolishness — we were commanded to act with the joy of serving Hashem, as it states: “Since you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy and gladness of heart, when you had an abundance of everything.” This teaches us that serving Hashem must be with joy; it is impossible to serve Hashem through profuse laughter, frivolity, or inebriety.” The joy of *simchas Yom Tov* must be the type of joy that is *avodas Hashem*.

This is the meaning of “*Zman Simchaseinu*,” the time of our joy. It's the time to rejoice in our *avodas Hashem*, to rejoice in the mitzvah of sukkah, of lulav and *arba'ah minim*. It's a time of general joy — in our *tefillos*, in our Torah learning, in the sukkah, which has *kedushah*. It's the joy of *kedushah*! That's what *Zman Simchaseinu* is about, and that is what we're thanking Hashem for when we express gratitude for the *zechus* of *Zman Simchaseinu*.

Joy over Hashem, His Torah and His Mitzvos

The Midrash tells us (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:32) the following about the *pasuk* in Hallel “*Zeh hayom asah Hashem*, This is the day that Hashem made; *nagilah v'nismecha bo*, let us exult and rejoice on it”: We do not know what to rejoice over — the

actual day or HaKadosh Baruch Hu. After all, the *pasuk* mentions both “this is the day” and “that Hashem made” — but to which of them does the next phrase “let us exult and rejoice *bo* (lit., ‘on it,’ or ‘in Him’)” apply to? To answer this question, the Midrash brings another *pasuk* from *Shir HaShirim*: “*Nagilah v'nismecha bach*, Let us exult and rejoice in You.” In this case, it's clear that the joy refers to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The Midrash explains: “In You — in HaKadosh Baruch Hu; in You — in Your salvation; in You — in Your Torah; in You — in fear of You; in You — in the 22 letters You wrote for us in Your Torah (the *gematria* of the word “in You — בך” is 22).

This is the joy we are experiencing — **joy in Torah, joy in HaKadosh Baruch Hu, joy in the fact that we are zocheh to be Hashem's servants, and joy that we have a Ribbono shel Olam Who gave us the Torah and gave us 613 mitzvos. We are so happy and grateful for meriting all this, along with all the other special attributes of Klal Yisrael.**

Chazal say (*Yevamos* 79a), “There are three signs of this nation: they are *rachmanim*, *bayshanim*, *gomlei chasadim*, merciful, bashful, and perform acts of lovingkindness.” These are special attributes found only in Yidden: *rachmanim*, *bayshanim*, *gomlei chasadim*.

How did that happen? It's all from the Ribbono shel Olam! It happened at Har Sinai when we received the Torah; it's from the Avos, our forefathers. It's all *siyatta d'Shemaya* that we can experience such a *madreigah* of *rachmanim*, *bayshanim*, and *gomlei chasadim*. It's a reality unique to us, we are different than the other nations. And who gave this to us? The Ribbono shel Olam! That's why we must thank and praise Him for not creating us like the people of other lands. It is an obligation to thank Him and praise Him.

Use Curiosity for Torah

Practically speaking, how can we make sure the way we act and behave is the Jewish way (*ah Yiddishe hanhageh*), behavior according to the Torah? A person is naturally curious — he's interested in the news and wants to be in the know. Even though it makes no difference to his life, it's just human nature to be curious and to want to know what's happening.

Rashi on the *pasuk* “These words that I command you today shall be on your heart” (*Devarim* 6:6) writes that a person must feel that *divrei Torah* are like “new decrees,” which everyone is interested in

discussing and analyzing, since they're new and it piques their curiosity. *Divrei Torah* should be treated in a similar manner — we should be curious and interested in knowing what's written in the Torah, what the Gemara says, what Rashi says, what Tosfos say. We should be as curious as if it was given today (Rashi, *ibid.* 11:13).

This is actually the reality — *divrei Torah* are intriguing and sweet, as the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 19:11), “They are to be desired more than gold and much fine gold, and are sweeter than honey and drippings of honeycombs.” The Gemara (*Bava Kama* 17a) says that *divrei Torah* are compared to water, as it states “O! All who are thirsty go to water.” The Torah has all sorts of flavors, and *esek haTorah* is very pleasant (*zei'er geshmak*) because it's an obligation, so it really is very desirable and pleasant. The Ribbono shel Olam made it this way since it's obligatory, and it is what brings man to *shleimus*. That's why it's pleasant and sweet.

L'maaseh, every single person can finish Shas, and it shouldn't be difficult — as the *pasuk* states (*Mishlei* 11:13), “He who gathers by hand will increase.” For example, there's the Daf HaYomi, which is simple — learn Shas in seven years. But even without the Daf HaYomi, a person usually has some free time that goes to waste. All he has to do is utilize that time; instead of satiating his curiosity on other things, he should direct his curiosity to Gemara: what does the Gemara say, what does Rashi say. By making the most of his time and using his natural curiosity properly, a person can finish Shas!

Don't Put Gehinnom in Your Pocket

But nowadays, there's a problem. There are electronic devices, devices that are Gehinnom itself. Small devices that fit into a pocket — the yetzer hara is in that pocket! Gehinnom is in that pocket! It's enticing, and it's a very powerful yetzer hara.

Mussar Teaches Us How to Be a Jew

The only solution is to learn *mussar*. There's the *Chovos HaLevavos* and *Shaarei Teshuvah*. There's *Orchos Tzaddikim* and *Mesillas Yesharim*. *Mussar sefarim* are the antidote, as Chazal say (*Kiddushin* 30b), “I created the yetzer hara; I created the Torah as an antidote against it.” All *divrei Torah* are an antidote, but the *Mishnah Berurah* writes (1:12) that the most effective antidote is *Toras haYirah*, *divrei Torah* relating to *yiras Shamayim*. This is the Torah found in *mussar sefarim* like *Shaarei Teshuvah* and *Chovos HaLevavos*.

Chovos HaLevavos is called “*Toras Chovos HaLevavos*,” meaning, this *sefer* is not discussing acts of piety; it deals with obligations and explains the duties of every Jewish person's heart. It presents how a Jew's heart should be, tells us what a “kosher” heart is, and how to form a Jewish heart.

I'd like to give you a practical suggestion: make a steady daily learning session in *mussar*. The amount of time is not important: it can be a half-hour, ten minutes, or even five minutes. When someone has a steady *mussar* session, he becomes a different person.

I know about people whose relatives told them: You're a different person! It's because he learned *mussar* for a few minutes a day, and he was a changed person because of it. It doesn't make him sad; to the contrary, it makes him happy and his entire life changes. He now has a happy, joyful life due to his steady *mussar* session. His family also is happier and there's a good atmosphere in their house.

“One who comes to be purified is helped.” If someone wants to become pure, he has *siyatta d'Shemaya*, and someone who learns *mussar* is in the category of “one who comes to be purified,” and he is helped with *siyatta d'Shemaya*! The practical advice for someone who wants to be a good Jew, a true, sincere Jew (*ah emes'er Yid*), is to learn *mussar*, and learn Torah — each person according to his abilities.

When it comes to paying a tax for city guards, the Gemara tells us (*Bava Basra* 8a) that while every citizen must pay this tax, *rabbanan* are exempt. The Rosh asks (*siman* 26): “Who is called *rabbanan*?” It can be even someone who does not learn full time, such as someone who has to support his family. As long as he's not working in order to become rich; he's only working to provide for his needs and spends the rest of his time learning Torah, he is considered “*rabbanan*” and is exempt from paying this tax. It makes no difference how much he learns, what counts is if he learns as much as he can. This constitutes “*rabbanan*.”

Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu, we are so fortunate that every single person has the ability to be “*rabbanan*.” But we need to strengthen ourselves, learn *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Shaarei Teshuvah*, and all the other *mussar sefarim* — they give us the necessary *chizuk*. With Hashem's help, may we all be *zocheh* to experience the joy of Yom Tov *b'sheleimus* and be *zocheh* to attain all the attributes of *Chovos HaLevavos*.

Continue Simchas Torah by Learning Torah Diligently!

Simchas Torah was just over. Everyone danced and sang and rejoiced with the Torah; we sang songs of *ahavas haTorah* — “*Toras Hashem temimah*”; “*Eidus Hashem ne’emanah, machkimas pesi*” — and it was clear that we are *machshiv Torah*, we esteem and respect Torah greatly and we are rejoicing over it with our heart and soul. If so, right after Simchas Torah, everyone should learn with great *hasmadah*, diligence. After all, if Torah is really so important to us, and we’re so happy with it, the joy should carry over and we should be learning Torah with *hasmadah*.

Let’s take a look. Is this actually the reality? It doesn’t seem like most of the *tzibbur* acts this way; we don’t see extraordinary *hasmadah* specifically after Simchas Torah, especially since it’s *bein hazemanim*. Only a very small amount of people learn with great *hasmadah*, feeling joy and acknowledging the Torah’s greatness and importance. In many people, though, there’s no visible change after Simchas Torah.

The reason is because this is human nature, like it says in *Chovos HaLevavos (Shaar Yichud HaMaaseh chap. 5)* “A person sleeps, but the yetzer hara doesn’t sleep.” A person sometimes forgets about his duties, but the yetzer hara doesn’t forget for a second. He’s always on guard, trying to entice man. He wants to make him enjoy things other than Torah. While we do see people’s true, heartfelt happiness for the Torah on Simchas Torah, over time, the yetzer hara makes him forget about it and entices him and draws him after other matters.

The solution, as we always say, is to learn *mussar* on a steady basis. This influences a person greatly and helps him remember and not forget about his duties in this world. The learning must be interesting; choose a *sefer* that’s interesting and enticing; don’t learn something boring. If the learning isn’t interesting, it will not be beneficial. Learn something stimulating, something that draws you in, and then there will surely be a great benefit to your learning.

(From a *Sichah in Tishrei 5775*)

Please daven for
גיטה פייגה בת רבקה
לרפואה שלימה ומהירה
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The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va'ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein’s home.