

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 Noach 5782

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Chizuk for the Beginning of the Zman

Sometimes *bachurim* experience difficulties at the beginning of the *zman*. Rashi (*Parashas Yisro* 19:5) quotes Chazal, who say “All beginnings are difficult, but from now on, it will be sweet.” There are difficulties in the beginning, but once you overcome them, not only won’t it be difficult anymore, it will actually be sweet.

Now, there are some people who don’t have a hard time in the beginning of the *zman*, because it’s not a beginning for them anymore. They had their “beginning” years earlier, and now they’re just continuing the same *retzifus*, with the sweetness, the *areivus*, that has never stopped. So for them, the beginning of a *zman* is not hard at all. For other *bachurim*, though, the new *zman* is a “beginning,” and they face challenges. These *bachurim* must keep in mind that the hardest part is the beginning — and then it will be very pleasant and sweet!

This goes even further. Some people continue experiencing difficulties even after the initial stage. They learn and learn, and still don’t experience any *areivus*, sweetness. This reality is a sign that their “beginning” wasn’t really a beginning; they didn’t approach it as a beginning should be approached, and that’s why they are still facing difficulties.

Let’s take a deeper look. If we already had a beginning at some point, why do we need another beginning, and why is it difficult? Why doesn’t the *areivus* continue? We have no choice but to say that “*bein hazmanim*” breaks up the “beginning,” and that’s why the *areivus* dissipates and we need to restart with a new beginning.

While *bein hazmanim* falls into the category of “*bitulah zehu kiyumah*,” taking a break from learning in order to return to it with renewed strength, if we approach it from the mindset of “*kiyumah*,” it’s not considered that we’ve stopped. Now, even though the Midrash says (*Sifri, Eikev*): “If you leave Me for one day, I will leave you for two days,” this is talking about when one actually leaves Torah. But if the break is in order to uphold Torah, *kiyumah*, it’s not considered leaving or stopping, so why doesn’t the *areivus* continue on? What probably happens is that even

though it’s for *kiyumah*, there does turn out to be some sort of stop, and then the yetzer hara is strengthened and is happy about the *prikas ol* — like a child who runs away from school. So how can it be that there are some people for whom *bein hazemanim* does not constitute stopping — after all, there is some level of *batalah* during *bein hazemanim*. How is it that for them, the *areivus* continues and they don’t experience any difficulties of a “beginning”?

There’s a simple answer to this. The Chayei Adam writes (in his Introduction to *Chochmas Adam*) that his ability to render *psak* in halachah, even though he was a businessman and often traveled to the fair in Leipzig, is because he never took his mind off Torah. This is similar to the Gemara (*Yevamos* 34b) that says a woman who spent ten years without a husband will never have children. The *chachamim* said that this is only true if during those ten years, she never intended on marrying. But if she did want to marry, she will be able to bear children even if more than ten years pass — since there’s no break involved, as she still intends on getting married. Similarly, the Chayei Adam said about himself that even while he was busy with his business, he never took his mind off Torah.

So if a person constantly keeps his mind on Torah, even *bein hazmanim* is not considered a *hefsek*, taking a break. *Adaraba*, it serves to increase *chizuk* and growth. When we make a *siyum* and say “*Daytanalach*,” we are praying that our minds should be focused on the *masechta* even when we aren’t actively learning it. If we don’t take our minds off it, then the *areivus* continues and there’s no need for a new beginning.

However, if there is a break and *hesech hada’as*, a new beginning is necessary, and then there are difficulties. Again, there are those who will continue having difficulties even after the beginning and they don’t experience *areivus* in their learning. Now, how can this be? Torah is sweeter than honey! But the simple answer is that **just like if a healthy person can taste the sweetness of honey, but a sick person doesn’t taste it, this doesn’t mean there’s something wrong with the honey — all it means is that the sick person has a problem. So too, there is innate sweetness in Torah, but sometimes a person has a spiritual**

malady, so all the sweetness turns bitter to him, and he doesn't experience a *ta'am*, a good taste, in learning.

There are spiritual maladies of bad *middos* and of being enamored with Olam HaZeh, having a desire for physical enjoyments like running after certain foods, being money-hungry, or wanting honor, enjoying laziness and relaxing to an extreme — all these things are a contradiction to Torah. Not only that, but there's a new yetzer hara of our times: all types of electronic devices that stimulate the yetzer hara — and they are the yetzer hara himself! Anyone who has these devices is holding the yetzer hara in his own hands and is connected to the yetzer hara. This is incompatible with Torah, so success in Torah is simply not possible.

While there are kosher devices, they lead people to *bittul Torah*. Even though they may have a *hechsher*, **even things that are permitted have limits.** The *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar Avodas HaElokim* chap. 4) writes that there is no such thing that's a "*heter*," that's permitted. Whatever a person does is either a mitzvah or an *aveirah*. If he has good intentions, then the *heter* is a mitzvah, and if he just wants to enjoy the frivolities of this world, this is against the mitzvah. So these devices make people waste time, and *batalah* is the worst thing! When a person has a yetzer hara for wasting time, that's why his difficulties continue, and that's why he doesn't feel *areivus*.

How To Continue the Chizuk of the Beginning of the Zman

There's usually a spirit of *chizuk* at the beginning of the *zman* — each individual has *chizuk*, the Torah is stronger, *tefillah* is stronger, and all the *sedarim* in yeshivah are strengthened. But then, as time passes, the *chizuk* wanes. This is usually the reality and we all know it. Of course, it doesn't happen to everyone, but it does happen to most people. We need to take a deeper look at the cause of this, and figure out how to continue the *chizuk* and keep it strong.

It's simple. When a person is involved in something and he is successful, if he attains his goals, then it gives him the confidence and *chizuk* to continue. But if he isn't successful, he gives up, and then there's no *chizuk*.

It's the same thing here. If there was a feeling of success throughout the *zman*, and the *bachurim* felt they were successful in their learning — which is what we want, to be successful in Torah — if they'd feel the *hatzlachah*, then the *chizuk* would continue! But if they don't feel the *hatzlachah* — if they have great expectations and aspire to achieve *gadlus* in Torah, but

they don't meet their expectations, this causes them to fall into despair.

Let's take a look at the true *eitzah* for success in Torah. Regarding Torah, there is the concept of "*kinyan*," an acquisition. Chazal say in *Avos* (chap. 6) that Torah is acquired through 48 matters. One must acquire, purchase, Torah! If the Torah is "bought" and you feel that it's become your "acquisition," if you feel the *kinyan* of Torah, then the *chizuk* will continue and it will give you more *chizuk* to go further. However, if one doesn't feel the *kinyan*, and doesn't experience success in his learning, his original *chizuk* will wane.

What is this all dependent on? What is the Torah acquired with? There are many matters mentioned in *Pirkei Avos*, 48 acquisitions of Torah. We won't mention them all, but we'll discuss some general topics.

The first thing written in *Pirkei Avos* is "*b'talmud*," by the actual learning, just learning! And what's considered learning? The Rambam writes in his commentary on *Mishnayos* (*Avos* 3:5): "*Hasmadas hakri'ah*" — that means learning *b'hasmadah*, learning straight without taking breaks and wasting time; without periods of *batalah*. That's called "*b'talmud*." And if the learning is *b'retzifus*, then the Torah is acquired. The person will be successful and he'll feel the success, and that will give him the *chizuk* to continue.

But if there is *batalah*, and it doesn't matter how much time is wasted, even if it's just a little *batalah*, and there was no need for it — of course, there are times that things come up and they're important, and then *bitulah zehu kiyumah*, but if this is an unnecessary *batalah*, then there's no success. And when there's no *hatzlachah*, there are no aspirations to go forward.

Now this is really a grave, serious matter. Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 99a) that anyone who can be *osek baTorah* and does not, falls into the category of "And he has despised Hashem's word." It doesn't say how much time he wasted, but once a person is able to learn Torah and he does not, what's the reason for this? It's because he is not *machshiv Torah* enough; he isn't aware of the *chashivus* of Torah. When a person feels something is important, he gets involved and doesn't stop. That's why it's called "he has despised Hashem's word."

Of course, a person needs a lot of *siyatta d'Shemaya* in order to succeed, but if he's in the category of "he has despised Hashem's word," he won't have *siyatta d'Shemaya*; it won't even be possible to have *siyatta d'Shemaya*, and then how can he be successful? Without *siyatta d'Shemaya*, it's not possible to be

successful! Therefore, the first thing one needs to be successful in his learning is *hasmadah*. There shouldn't be any *batalah*. Then there will be *hatzlachah*; then his success is certain.

There's another thing that's very simple, but very often, it's not mentioned, and it's a good idea to mention it at the beginning of the *zman: middos tovos*. Good *middos* are imperative for success in Torah! If a person has a deficiency in *middos tovos*, his Torah will be deficient. This is written clearly in the 48 acquisitions to Torah — many of the acquisitions are good *middos*. For example: humility, slow to anger, good-hearted, love his fellowman, and many other things that are connected to good *middos*.

Middos tovos are the main, most important, thing, and one certainly won't have success in Torah without good *middos*. Besides for the fact that having good *middos* is a requirement in its own right — it's a *mitzvas ase* of “*v'halachta b'drachav*, you shall go in His ways” (*Devarim* 28:9), and Rabbeinu Yonah writes (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:13) that it's one of the gravest mitzvos — it also a necessity for success in Torah. Without good *middos*, it is not possible to be successful in Torah learning.

Another acquisition of Torah is “*b'simchah*,” learning with joy. *Simchah* means being happy about doing the mitzvah. Rabbeinu Yonah writes (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 4:9): “The reward for performing mitzvos with joy is very great.” It seems from here that the reward for performing mitzvos happily is even greater than the reward for the actual performance of the mitzvah. While one must do the mitzvah, and being happy without performing the mitzvah is not worth anything, once a mitzvah comes someone's way and he must do it, if he does it joyfully, he will receive much more reward. The level of reward shows how important happiness is; it's such a great attribute and contributes to a person's *sheleimus* more than the actual performance of the mitzvah.

The simple way to explain this is like the *Chovos HaLevavos* explains (*Shaar HaBitachon* chap. 4) that there are mitzvos that are physically apparent, while there are others that are duties of the heart and are hidden in one's heart. The reward for mitzvos that are visible, is a visible reward — we can see it and comprehend it. Since the physical body is something we can see, the reward for those mitzvos is unconcealed. However, when it comes to duties of the

heart, where the mitzvah itself is concealed, the reward for it is also concealed. He cites the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 31:20), “How great is Your goodness that You have kept hidden for those who fear You.” “Those who fear You” is referring to *yiras Shamayim*, which is a mitzvah that's not physically visible. Since *yirah* is hidden deep inside a person's heart, the reward for it is also hidden — “Your goodness that You have kept hidden” — we cannot comprehend it.

This shows us the importance of inner *sheleimus*, *sheleimus b'penimiyus* — the *sechar* for it is hidden. It follows, then that joy in doing mitzvos is a great thing, since the joy comes from one's heart, from the penimiyus! It's true that joy is usually outwardly visible as well, but where does it come from? Where causes a person to have *simchah shel mitzvah*? The *chashivus*! The level of importance he feels for mitzvos — when a person feels **in his heart** esteem for a mitzvah, to such an extent that it makes him happy, we cannot fathom the great level of *sechar* he'll get for this.

Learning Torah must also be *b'simchah*. We are aware of the importance of Torah and acknowledge the value of Torah, so it automatically leads us to be happy. If knowing all this causes us joy, it brings us to high *madreigah* and gives us *hatzlachah* in acquiring Torah.

Now, aside from the joy in performing the mitzvah of learning Torah, the Torah itself brings us joy. The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* states (19:9): “Hashem's commandments are straight; they gladden the heart.” The actual learning makes a person happy; that's why a person is not allowed to learn Torah on days that rejoicing is prohibited, such as on Tishah b'Av. This is the reality — Torah makes a person happy! The very act of learning Torah makes a person happy.

Especially since *divrei Torah* are “sweeter than honey” (*Tehillim* 19:11). We also daven and ask to be *zocheh* to *areivus* in Torah: “*ve'haarev na*, please make it sweet for us.” If a person feels the sweetness and *areivus*, it makes him happy. This is the “*simchah shel Torah*” which is one of the 48 acquisitions for Torah. This is how to acquire Torah.

Of course, if Torah is learned *b'simchah*, joyfully, then the *chizuk* continues — because *simchah* gives us *chizuk*, and we want to continue the *simchah*.

An Excerpt from Rabbeinu's Shiur in His Home on Wednesday, 30 Tishrei Learning Maseches Kesubos during the Winter Zman

It's known that *Maseches Kesubos* is called "Shas Katan," because it includes many *inyanim* from all over Shas. It talks about *Shabbos*, *davar she'eino miskavein*; *sfeik sfeika*; *Sotah*, *dinei mamonos*; and many other concepts. If we learn and complete all of *Maseches Kesubos*, it is considered as if we finished Shas! It's important to know that finishing a *masechta* is something special, and there's an inherent *segulah* found in finishing a *masechta* — it gives the person a special *sheleimus*. Once a young man told me that he never finished any *masechtas* learned in yeshivah. One time, he completed the *masechta*, and he felt something very special, the feeling of *sheleimus*.

The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21) on the *pasuk* in *Shir HaShirim* "Shishim heim malkos, There are sixty queens," tells us that these are the sixty *masechtos* in Shas. The *masechtos* are called queens, not kings. So if the *masechta* is the queen, who is the king? The person who learns the *masechta* is a king! And who turns him into a king? The *masechta*! He is a king in the merit of the queen. We've already discussed the concept of "melech," and who a king rules over. We explained that a king refers to someone who rules over himself and can control his strengths, guiding them along the Torah's path. The power of *limud haTorah* that comes from learning a complete *masechta* grants a person a level of *sheleimus* where he can rule over his yetzer hara — in all its varied forms.

There's a difference between "meluchah" and "memshalah," as we say in the *piyyut*, "hameluchah v'hamemshalah l'Chai Olamin, Kingship and dominion are His Who lives eternally." Additionally, the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 22:29), "For the kingship is Hashem's, and He has dominion over the nations." The Gra explains this as follows: A *melech* is someone who the nation has chosen as their king; they want him to rule over him because they need a king and a ruler. A *moshel*, on the other hand, is someone who rules by force (a dictator). The Gra explains: "For the kingship (*hameluchah*) is Hashem's" — this refers to Hashem ruling over us, Klal Yisrael. He is a *melech* over us; we accept His kingship willingly. "He has dominion (*moshel*) over the nations" — He rules over the nations by force. We accepted the Torah, and although Hashem "held the mountain forcefully over us like a barrel" (*Shabbos* 88a), we still had Kabbalas HaTorah, we accepted the Torah out of love and fear. The nations of the world, however, did not accept the Torah, and Hashem rules over them against their will.

This is in essence the difference between the nations and Klal Yisrael. Chazal say (*Yevamos* 79a), "There are three signs in this nation: they are merciful, bashful, and act with loving-kindness." These special attributes are unique to Klal Yisrael. The nations do not have the same personality as us. This is the meaning of what we say in our Yom Tov prayers, "You have chosen us from all other nations." What does "chosen us" mean? In *Birkas HaTorah*, too, we say "Who has chosen us from all other nations." What's the meaning of "chosen us"? That he made us "chosen"! And He afforded us the *maalah* and *madreigah* of being chosen, and He endowed us with a unique personality. That's the meaning of "Atah bechartanu." And that's why we should be happy; every Jew should rejoice that he is a Jew.

In any case, by learning a complete *masechta*, one merits the attributes of both *melech* and *moshel*. [Editor's note: Rabbeinu explained elsewhere that there are some things a person fulfills as a "melech" — he understands that these things are worthwhile for him and good for him, and he carries them out willingly and happily. Then there are other things that he does as "memshalah" — he has to control himself, and he has the power of a *moshel* to forcibly rule over all his physical powers and overcome his yetzer hara, going against human nature.] Now, *b'ezras Hashem*, we are starting *Maseches Kesubos*. The *zman* is starting, and it should be with *hatzlachah*!

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