

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 Vayishlach 5782

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Joy Over Davening to an Incomparable King

There's something very important, and that is "*simchah shel mitzvah*," being happy while performing a mitzvah, making sure that in addition to carrying out the mitzvah, there's joy involved as well.

The *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap 19) cites a saying of Chazal: "When you daven, your heart should be joyous that you are praying before an incomparable king." Additionally, *tefillah* is a mitzvah, as Chazal say (*Taanis* 2a), "'And serve Him with all your heart' — What is service of the heart? You must say that it is *tefillah*." *Tefillah* is *avdus*, servitude, and by davening, one fulfills the mitzvah of "*avodah she'balev*." Therefore, it must be performed with happiness; davening must be a joyful act.

What are we happy about? That we are *zocheh* to serve an incomparable king, the King of all kings, to Whom no one can compare! There is absolutely no reality like Him, there is no kingship like His kingship — which is beyond our comprehension — He is king of the universe Who rules and controls the entire world, all the heavenly hosts, the sun, moon, and stars — every single star, thousands and millions of stars.

There are some new planets that astronomers have only recently discovered. They are positioned very far away from Earth, and due to their great distance, their light hasn't reached Earth till recently. Even though Earth exists for more than 5000 years and the planet was created during *Bri'as HaOlam*, its light only reached us now because it's so far away. And who did this? Who controls it all? The King of all kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu!

"*Melech HaOlam*," The King of the Universe means He has control, guidance, and rulership over whatever takes place in the world, as Chazal say (*Bereishis Rabbah* 10:6), "Every single blade of grass has a *malach* striking it and saying: 'Grow!'" *Malach* means a "messenger." Who's the sender? Of course there's a Sender! The King of all kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu! Hashem is behind everything that happens in this world; whatever takes place

is the result of His will and power. Is something like this understandable? It's beyond our comprehension.

The King Wants Us to Serve Him

Therefore, when we get ready to pray, we should be happy that we are *zocheh* to daven and speak to such an incomparable King, that we have the ability to speak with the King whenever we want, that we can praise and thank Him and ask for whatever we want. And the King is willing to listen.

Chazal say (*Yerushalmi Berachos* 89; *Midrash Tehillim* 84) that if someone makes a request of a human king and the king does not fulfill his request, the king will become angry if the request is proposed once again. The person should have realized that he didn't want to fulfill it. HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the King of all kings is not like this. *Adaraba*, on the contrary, Hashem wants the person to ask again. The Torah tells us about Yitzchak Avinu (*Bereishis* 25:21), "*Va'ye'etar Yitzchak laHashem l'nochach ishto*, And Yitzchak prayed to Hashem opposite his wife." Rashi explains that "*va'ye'etar*" means he prayed a lot, he entreated and begged. Chazal said (*Yevamos* 64a) that HaKadosh Baruch Hu desires *tzaddikim's* prayers. Hashem, so to speak, wants this, He yearns to hear our prayers, and He asks us: Request of Me, ask and ask. I want you to ask." The more a person asks, the more beloved he is and the more important he's considered up High, and his manifold prayers are a *zechus* for him.

Therefore, it's a great joy to be able to speak before such a King. *Tefillah* is *avdus*, servitude; we serve the King through our prayer, and our King wants it and is prepared to listen. [It's as if He says:] "Serve Me," and He is so happy, so to speak, that man is serving Him. He waits for people to serve Him even more — and what's the service He waits for? *Avodah she'balev*, service of the heart — with more and more heart. That is what makes the King even happier and happier, and more and more pleased with people.

Of course, one's heartfelt intention is imperative when serving an incomparable King, to Whom there is no equal.

It's impossible to trick the King of all kings, and if *tefillah* is without *kavanah*, the King will know and will see it. That's why prayer is dependent on *kavanah* — just how authentic one's *kavanah* is, how perfected his *emunah* is, and what level his *emunah* is on. In any case, any amount of *avdus* with any level of *emunah* is already a great thing and is a reason for joy — because the King of all Kings is pleased with it, and His expectations of each person is according to each one's individual abilities.

Avodas Hashem Every Step of the Way

We've already mentioned that every step in a person's life is *avodas Hashem*, as the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Deios* 3:3) about what's written in *Avos* chap. 2 "May all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven": Even when a person sleeps, if he sleeps with the awareness that it is *l'shem Shamayim*, and makes a calculation that he's sleeping because tomorrow is another day and he wants to have energy to fulfill the 613 mitzvos, then he is serving Hashem as he sleeps. His sleep becomes servitude to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

If this is true regarding sleep, which is a "*shev v'al ta'aseh*," a passive mitzvah, then all the more so when it comes to all our other physical needs, which include actions — such as eating and drinking, resting, and all other physical needs. If a person performs these actions *l'shem Shamayim*, he is serving Hashem as he does so. As such, he should be happy that he merited serving Hashem. We eat because it's Hashem's will, and drink because it's Hashem's will, and relax because we need to rest in order to serve Hashem better. This is literally *avdus*, servitude.

We've already mentioned the *Sefer HaChinuch* (*mitzvah* 488), which tells us that there are four things one's body needs: food, sleep, rest, and joy. What is joy? How does one rejoice, and what do we rejoice about? Based on what we just mentioned, we should be happy about our need for happiness — which is to assist us in our mitzvah performance. Joy is a "*hechsher mitzvah*," a preparatory stage of a mitzvah, because it is *l'shem Shamayim*. Just as the Rambam writes about sleep, the same is true regarding rest, eating and drinking, and all necessary physical actions. They are all *avodas Hashem*, and they are a reason to be happy.

So when someone wakes up in the morning and he washes his hands to take away the *ruach ra'ah* from the previous night, this is also a preparation for fulfilling the 613 mitzvos. After all, can he only do the mitzvos once he removes the *ruach ra'ah*. Washing to eat is also a mitzvah, and so is the blessing that's recited. All these actions are

avdus, so "your heart should be joyful" that you merited serving the King of all kings.

Esek haTorah is also *avdus*. *Esek haTorah* is very pleasant and interesting, as the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 19:9 – 11), "Hashem's commandments are straight, they gladden the heart.... They are more pleasant... and are sweeter than honey and the drippings of honeycombs." At the same time, *esek haTorah* is also an obligation that is *avdus*, and that's the meaning of *avdus* out of joy. Torah learning is servitude and an obligation, but it also involves *simchah*, joy.

Joyfully Blessing Over the Bad

I remember once watching an elderly rav, whose wife had died suddenly, as he made the *brachah* "*Baruch Dayan HaEmes*." Before he started reciting the *brachah*, he started thinking about the *mishnah* (*Berachos* 54a), "A person is obligated to make a blessing over bad just as he makes the blessing over good." "Just as" means the blessing must be recited with joy, as Chazal say (*Ibid.*, 60b), "It's coming to teach you to accept it joyfully." He began to think how he could recite the blessing over his wife's passing happily — he certainly wasn't happy that she passed away. So he waited and waited until he had calmed down a bit and felt that he would be able to recite the blessing joyfully. Only then did he recite the *brachah* "*Dayan HaEmes*." That's what Chazal instructed us — one must bless over the bad just as we bless over the good.

How is it really possible to be happy under such circumstances? Since everything is in Heaven's hands, and whatever the Merciful One does is for the best, then whatever happens to anyone is from Hashem and it's for his own good. Even his wife's passing is for his good. And although he doesn't know how and doesn't understand why, it's for his good, and he believes this and knows this. After all, that's what the Gemara says: Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good." Now, since it's for his benefit, why shouldn't he rejoice? This is how a person can achieve "just as" — blessing over the bad just as he blesses over the good — through *yishuv hada'as*, a calm, settled mind, and contemplation. This is a *madreigah*.

Simchah is one of our physical needs, as we mentioned from the *Sefer HaChinuch*. Those four physical needs he mentions are all necessary for *hechsher mitzvah* in order to serve Hashem properly — as the Rambam also notes, specifically regarding sleep. So there is what to be happy about — because we are serving the King of all Kings, and a person is *zocheh* to fulfill His will. One who contemplates this idea will be happy about it. This, too, is a *madreigah*.

Everything depends on a person's *emunah*, and there are many levels in *emunah*. It's one of the things that requires constant *chizuk*, strengthening, as Chazal say in *Berachos* (32b): "There are four things that require *chizuk*." One of them is *tefillah*, and *tefillah* is *emunah*. *Emunah* is not something inborn that just happens; it requires intelligent awareness. There is an extremely strong *yetzer hara* opposing it, and we need constant *chizuk* and contemplation to strengthen the *yetzer tov* over the *yetzer hara*. The way to do so, as we've mentioned many times, is by learning *mussar sefarim*. Choose a *sefer* that's interesting and enticing — it's well known that interesting *divrei mussar* give a person *chizuk* and a good, happy life, as long as one learns on a steady daily basis.

Leading a Torah Life Is the Only Way to Attain Happiness

The general rule one must know is that leading a life according to the Torah's laws gives a person a happy, fortunate life. *Ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*. Chazal say in *Avos* (chap. 6): "This is the way of Torah... If you do so, you will be fortunate in This World."

The *mishnah* there explains what the way of Torah is: "Eat bread with salt" — specifically in this way, minimize pleasures. Indeed, one of the 48 acquisitions of Torah is to minimize pleasure. "Measured water" — just what's necessary, not to satiate his desires. "And sleep on the ground" — with minimal pleasure and as necessary; each person according to his abilities. "And live a life of privation" — but "Toil in Torah." And then "You will be fortunate in This World"! This is the way of Torah and this is the reality. By toiling in Torah, you will merit being "fortunate in This World."

A wealthy person, on the other hand, is not happy! He just acts happy, he smiles and dresses nicely as if he's happy, but he really is not. It's well known that wealth and an abundant of money is not a reason for happiness. Only when a rich man gives a lot of *tzedakah* with his money and gives a fifth of his earnings to *tzedakah*, then he will have a different life, because he's following the Torah. But a person who doesn't live according to the Torah will not have a happy life. *Ashrecha baOlam haZeh* can only be attained by following the Torah's way. This is the reality.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it's decreed on every single person "*mi yishaleiv u'mi yisyasar*, who will be serene, and who will be tormented" — whether he will have a calm life or not. It all depends on one's *zechuyos*, because Heaven gives a person according to his *zechuyos*.

What are the *zechuyos*? Minimizing pleasure! And toiling in Torah!

Your Choice: Toil in Torah or Toil Elsewhere

The *pasuk* states (*Iyov* 5:7): "Man was born to toil." Every single person was born to work and toil. The Gemara says (*Sanhedrin* 99b): "Every person was born to toil, those who merit toiling in Torah are fortunate." That is, every single person is born to be a *sabal*, to bear heavy burdens like a porter; it's decreed on him that he will have to work hard and exert himself. But what in what field will he exert himself? That's up to him. He has *bechirah*, free choice, and he can choose what he wants: will he toil and work hard on *amal haTorah*, toiling in Torah, "You will toil in Torah"? If not, he will have to work hard and toil for other things, for nonsense, like money and honor. That's what he'll be busy with, because man is born to toil.

Everyone has to exert effort and be a "*sabal*" (porter), but what does he have to carry? Torah! Then he will be fortunate and happy, as Chazal say (*Berachos* 17a): "Fortunate is one whose toil is in Torah." If it's not in Torah, it will be in other things and then he won't be happy. This is the reality; it's no secret that wealthy people are not happy.

Of course, it's individual; each person according to his abilities. The main thing is to be *osek baTorah* the entire time he has available for learning. We've already mentioned the Rosh (*Bava Basra* chap. 1, *siman* 26) that each person is measured according to his abilities and possibilities. It could be that someone learns a little, yet he is still called "*rabbanan*" because he is *osek baTorah* with all his strength, based on his personal situation and the possibilities available to him. Conversely, there might be someone who learns more than he does, but he is not called "*rabbanan*" because he has more time available for learning and he does not utilize it properly.

This is a clear halachah in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deiah* 243) regarding paying a tax for city guards, from which *rabbanan* are exempt, because they protect the city with their Torah. Someone who is *osek baTorah* with all his might and does not look for wealth — even if he is also involved in making a living to support his family, as long as he is only working to provide for his needs and not to buy luxuries and he learns whenever he can — is called "*rabbanan*" and does not have to pay the "guard tax." However, someone who can learn more and does not, there is *bittul Torah* present, so even if he learns a lot, he is not called "*rabbanan*" and must pay the guard tax.

When a person only has a small time slot for learning, what should he learn? Someone once told Rav Yisrael Salanter that he only has a half-hour for learning; should he learn *mussar* or Gemara? Rav Yisrael told him to learn *mussar*, because then he'll realize that he has another half hour. Right now, it only seems like he has a half hour, but once he learns *mussar*, he'll see that he has more time for learning, but he hadn't been utilizing it for learning till then. This is the reality. Learning *mussar* gives a person a happy life.

Daven for Klal Yisrael to Merit the Happiness of Torah

We must realize “*Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu,*” how fortunate we are, how good is our lot, we are Yidden, sons of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Every single Jew with a Jewish soul has a special personality. We are not like the non-Jews. Someone who is a non-Jew does not have this

personality! Jews have good, special *middos*, and we are fortunate to have merited this.

Unfortunately, there are Jews who are not aware of the happy life of a Torah life. That's why when we pray, we say “Return us, Our Father, to Your Torah,” and the request is in the plural form. We are davening for all of Klal Yisrael, all authentic Jews who have a Jewish personality and good *middos*, as Chazal say (*Yevamos* 79a): there are three signs in Klal Yisrael: they are merciful, bashful, and perform acts of lovingkindness. That's the nature of every Jewish person, even those who are not Torah-observant. A Jew is something else. But we daven for Heavenly mercy that they should do *teshuvah* and merit the happy, fortunate life of Torah and mitzvos.

As we mentioned, learning *mussar* is what gives a person the happiest life. *B'ezras Hashem*, may we all merit to live a happy, fortunate life according to the Torah.

Rabbeinu's Hespel at Rav Noach Cheifetz's Levayah, 11 Cheshvan 5782

The esteemed *niftar* Rav Noach *alav hashalom* was a seeker of truth, he loved truth, he had the *middah* of *emes*. It is a great *zechus* to love truth — HaKadosh Baruch Hu's seal is *emes* — and Rav Noach sought truth and loved truth. We know the Gemara that tells us about a place Kushta, whose residents only spoke the truth, and they lived happy, long lives. We learn in *Pirkei Avos* that when a person departs from this world, he is not accompanied by gold, silver, or precious stones and pearls; only Torah and his good deeds accompany him. Only Torah and good deeds. The Torah, *Toras emes*, and good deeds. The *emes*, his love of truth, that's the great thing that accompanies a person, and those are his merits. All his merits will accompany him to the *Olam HaEmes*, and he will be a *meilitz yosher* for the entire family, all his friends, and all of Klal Yisrael, who need *zechuyos*. “May Hashem conceal death forever, and may Hashem wipe tears off every face.”

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

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