

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 Shemos 5782

468

The World Stands on Three Pillars

We learn in *Pirkei Avos* (1:2): “The world stands on three matters: on Torah, on *avodah*, and on *gemillus chasadim*.” These three matters uphold the world. If at any given moment, there would be a lack of any one of these three, *chas v’shalom* there would be a *churban*. The entire world exists only in the merit of *Torah*, *avodah*, and *gemillus chasadim*. There are *pesukim* to prove this. (See Rav Ovadia MiBartenura’s and the Gra’s commentary on *Avos* ad loc.)

What does Torah mean? *Esek haTorah*, being involved in Torah. If there would be one moment that no one in the entire world was learning Torah, the world would be destroyed. People have to sleep at night; they don’t learn Torah 24 hours a day. But *rabbanim* say that “Torah” does not refer only to active Torah learning; it includes anything that is necessary in order to be *osek baTorah*. I believe this is written somewhere, and it’s quoted in the name of the Chazon Ish.

The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Deios* chap. 3) that if a person designates all his actions *l’shem Shamayim*, and even performs his physical deeds and needs *l’shem Shamayim* — with the awareness that he needs his body, and without it, he cannot keep the mitzvos — then his physical actions are considered *avodas Hashem*.

The Rambam writes that even when a person goes to sleep, he can sleep *l’shem Shamayim* so that he’ll have energy to serve Hashem and fulfill the mitzvos tomorrow. In this way, his sleep is serving Hashem; he is called an *oveid Hashem* as he sleeps!

Torah, Avodah, and Chesed as He Sleeps

What kind of *avodah* can you do as you sleep? What mitzvah are you fulfilling? It depends what your *avodas Hashem* will be the next day. Every mitzvah is *avodas Hashem*. There are 613 mitzvos, and every single one is *avodas Hashem*. When a person sleeps, it’s considered as if he’s busy with the same mitzvah he’ll be doing the next day.

For example, if he’s sleeping so he’ll have energy to learn Torah, it turns out that he’s fulfilling the mitzvah of *talmud Torah* in his sleep. After all, a person has to sleep too in order to learn, so while he’s sleeping, he’s busy with the mitzvah of Torah.

If someone sleeps, and then when he wakes up, not only does he learn Torah, but he also goes to daven — *avodah she’balev* — then the purpose of his sleeping was also to improve his davening, so he’ll daven with more *kavanah*. This means he was involved in “*hechsher mitzvah*,” preparation for the mitzvah of *tefillah*. This person fulfills two mitzvos as he sleeps: Torah learning and davening, *avodah she’balev*.

If he is also involved in good deeds and doing *chesed* with other people, and he won’t be able to do so if he doesn’t sleep, then his sleep is the cause of *gemillus chasadim* too. So while he sleeps and is seemingly not doing anything, he is actually fulfilling three mitzvos: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemillus chasadim*. Of course, he has to keep in mind that he’s sleeping in order to keep these mitzvos.

As we mentioned, the world needs these three matters: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemillus chasadim*. If there would be no Torah in the world, the world would not exist. So too, if there would be no *avodah*, or if there wouldn’t be *gemillus chasadim*, the world would not exist. And even if just one of these three would be missing for just one moment, *chas v’shalom*, the world would be destroyed.

If so, the fact that our world is standing strong is a sign that these three matters are constantly present. At every given moment, there are people who are being *osek baTorah*, who are involved in *avodah*, and busy with *gemillus chasadim*. And when people sleep with the intention of regaining their strength for *avodas Hashem*, it’s considered as if they’re actually doing these mitzvos. These *zechuyos* uphold the world.

Thoughts Uphold the World

What exactly is *esek haTorah*? First of all, there is *esek haTorah* in speech, which is certainly Torah. Additionally, *esek haTorah* can also be in thought, as the *pasuk* states (*Yehoshua* 1:8), “And you shall contemplate in it day and night.” This too is Torah. The same is true for *avodah*, which is actually *emunah*. *Emunah* can be expressed in speech, but the primary work of *emunah* takes place in one’s heart. If a person only expresses *emunah* in speech, but does not have *emunah* in his heart, it is not *emunah*. Working on *emunah* is called *avodah*.

Regarding *gemillus chasadim*, good deeds can be performed with actions and with speech too. A person can actively do *chesed* for others, but there is such a thing as

thoughts of *chesed*, too. Someone can think about *chesed* and make plans about how to help others. Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:13) writes: “A person is obligated to exert himself to seek out his fellow man’s good. He must dedicate himself *b’amal nafsho* [lit., with the toil of his soul] to the betterment of his friend, [regardless of] whether the friend is poor or wealthy.” This means there’s an obligation to think *chesed* thoughts! Thoughts about how to benefit others, both poor and wealthy. Even wealthy people need help and encouragement at times. A person must think these kinds of thoughts — *b’amal nafsho*, using his *nefesh*. This is how he is involved in *chesed* and this is how he fulfills the mitzvah of *chesed* in thought.

It turns out that a person can go about his daily routine, and by thinking these thoughts of Torah, *emunah*, and *gemillus chasadim*, he can actually be upholding the world! It’s very possible that the world is standing on just one person.

Serving Hashem with Every Berachah

So too, when a person makes a *berachah* — like when he takes a drink and makes a *shehakol* — this is *avodas Hashem*. He’s doing a mitzvah and that’s *avodas Hashem*!

But there many levels here. The level of a person’s *avodah* depends on his *yiras Shamayim*. Does he recite the *berachah* with *yiras Shamayim*, or without? There’s even a level a step lower: when someone makes a *berachah* just because he’s obligated to recite *berachos* over food. He really wants the drink, but since he can’t have it without making a *berachah*, he’ll recite the *berachah*. This too is a *berachah*, and it’s *avodas Hashem*.

There’s a story about a dybbuk in the Chafetz Chaim’s time. This dybbuk entered a young woman’s body. They asked it why it entered her body, and it answered, “Because she drank without reciting a *berachah*.” Since a *berachah* is *avodas Hashem* and it sanctifies a person, if there’s no *berachah*, there’s a lack of *kedushah*. That void was the dybbuk’s entrance pass.

Now, if this young woman would have recited a *berachah*, it would not have been a *berachah* without great *kavanah* — after all, she drank without a *berachah* at all, so she apparently didn’t have great *yiras Shamayim* — and yet, if she had made that *berachah*, the dybbuk wouldn’t have been able to enter her body, because she would have had *kedushah*! After all, a *berachah* is a mitzvah with some level of *kavanah*.

The Obligation to Increase Yiras Shamayim and Ways to Do So

There are many levels of *yiras Shamayim*. Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (see *Shaar* 1:17, 20; *Shaar* 3:15, 17) that there is an obligation to increase

yiras Shamayim, and *yirah* is a *mitzvah d’Oraisa*, a Torah obligation, as the *pasuk* states (*Devarim* 10:20): “Fear Hashem your G-d.” However, the Torah doesn’t give amounts; it doesn’t tell us how much *yiras Shamayim* a person should have. So Rabbeinu Yonah writes that there is an ongoing obligation to augment one’s *yiras Shamayim*. This is certainly not easy. It behooves us to think about ways to increase our *yiras Shamayim*, and how to go about doing it.

One way to increase *yiras Shamayim* is **to look at great people who have *yiras Shamayim***. A certain person related that he built up his *yiras Shamayim* by seeing people who had *yiras Shamayim*. Sight has an influence and when you see people with *yiras Shamayim* who are actually frightened to sin — yes, frightened! — this causes you to become frightened as well.

There’s also ***yiras Shamayim* a person absorbs at home**, when there’s *yirah* at home. When a child grows up in a home where there’s *yiras Shamayim*, he sees the fear and the *yiras Shamayim* at home and it becomes second nature. The person we mentioned probably didn’t see *yiras Shamayim* in his own home, and only experienced it later in life when he saw *gedolei yirah*.

There are also ***mussar sefarim* that arouse readers to *yiras Shamayim***, and explain how and what *yirah* is. These *sefarim* talk about Gehinnom, about punishments in this world — simple *yiras ha-onesh*. Every person can increase his level of *yiras Shamayim* by learning these *sefarim*.

And **there are *tefillos* for *yiras Shamayim***. Although Chazal say (*Berachos* 33b) that everything is in Heaven’s hands except for *yiras Shamayim*, there are still *tefillos* that we recite daily where we request *yiras Shamayim*. For example, in the Ahavah Rabbah *berachah*, we say, “And unify our hearts to love and fear Your name.” In the U’va LeTziyon prayer, we say “And place in our hearts love and fear of Him.” In *Tehillim* as well, there are countless *pesukim* and requests for *yiras Shamayim*, such as (*Tehillim* 86:11): “Unify my heart to fear Your name.” Let’s try to understand why we ask Hashem for this, if *yiras Shamayim* is not in Heaven’s hands.

The explanation is that sometimes there are *sibos*, causes, that arouse people to *yiras Shamayim*. I once heard an example of this from HaGaon HaTzaddik Rav E.E. Dessler zt”l. Let’s say a person is waiting — be it in a doctor’s waiting room, or even waiting for a meeting in someone’s house — and there are *sefarim* available for him to peruse. He picks up a *sefer* at random and opens it — and the section he reads influences him to have more *yiras Shamayim*. This is an example of an *Itra’usa d’l’eila*, an awakening from Above. Heaven sent him exactly to the *sefer* that would give him *yiras Shamayim*; not only that, he has a *zechus* that he received such personal *siyatta d’Shemaya*. This is what we refer to in

our *tefillos*: “to love and fear” — we are asking Hashem to send us the *sibos* that will arouse us to *yiras Shamayim*.

Mussar Sichos in Yeshivos

Mussar sichos also influence people to *yiras Shamayim*. There are *mussar sichos* in *yeshivos*, *sichos* on Aggadah. What’s the purpose of these *sichos*? To influence the *talmidim*! The primary goal is to influence *talmidim* to *yiras Shamayim*.

Additionally, these *sichos* should also influence *talmidim* to have *ahavas haTorah*. Everyone really wants to learn, but not everyone enjoys learning. If each *talmid* would learn what he naturally enjoys learning, it would be different. Sometimes, a *bachur* invests much effort learning *b’amkus*, but this type of learning doesn’t suit his natural abilities. If he’d first learn the *p’shat* of Gemara with Rashi, he’d enjoy it and it would appeal to him. If so, he does have *ahavas Torah*, but he’s not able to put it into practice because he’s learning with great *amkus* beyond his abilities. Over time, he will be capable of learning with such *amkus*, but it’s not time yet — now it’s time for him *ligmar, v’hadar lisbar*, “to cover ground, and then go on and understand deeply” (*Shabbos* 63a). He first has to learn *pashut* Gemara with Rashi, which is very interesting, appealing, and fascinating — sweeter than honey! This is Torah *mamesh*, and it’s *Toras emes*. Not everyone is aware of this.

It’s also important to speak about good *middos* in *mussar shmuessin*. If we don’t talk about good *middos*, it could be that *bachurim* won’t know how to behave. A good influence is always necessary.

Another thing that’s very important to speak about and impress upon the *bachurim* is that everything is in Heaven’s hands, and *Kol mah d’avid Rachmana, l’tav avid*, “Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good” (*Berachos* 60b). We’ve spoken about this already. Whatever happens is from *Shamayim*; there’s no such thing as a coincidence — it’s all from Hashem, and it’s all for our benefit. Of course we realize that good things are good, but even difficulties and challenges are good — and even if another person is the cause of these difficulties. That is, if someone else insults or hurts you, and you are angry at him, remember that everything is from Heaven. The pain you suffered is from *Shamayim* — if that person wouldn’t have done it, it would have reached you some other way, because it’s a Heavenly decree that you should suffer this pain. That man was just a Heavenly messenger. Even if he wasn’t a Heavenly messenger, it was still decreed that you’d experience this pain, and it’s for your good! Because “Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good.”

It turns out that the person who caused the pain actually did him a favor — that’s what the Gemara says and that’s the truth. After all, Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good! It’s for his own good that he should be in pain

or suffer. What’s so good about this? Apparently, he needs a *kaparah* for some sin. If so, the person who caused him pain actually did him a favor; he merited *kaparas avonos*. So there’s certainly no reason to be upset at him or have a *kpeidah* against him! However, this type of reaction is not human nature, but with *emunah*, this is how it should be. There’s no reason to be *makpid*; he should actually have *hakaras hatov* because it’s really good for him. His sins will be cleansed, and besides, Hashem sent this pain to him for his own good!

When a person lives with this mindset and this *emunah*, he doesn’t experience any difficulties; his life is good because he knows that everything is in Heaven’s hands, and everything is for the good. What’s the good? We don’t always know, but even when we don’t know, it’s for the good! There are all sorts of calculations how everything can be for the good, and when a person leads his life in this manner, his life is completely different — he enjoys a happy, fortunate life.

A Happy Life by Following the Torah’s Path

Our Sages taught in *Pirkei Avos* (6:4): “This is the path of Torah: eat bread with salt... and toil in Torah. If you do so, you will be fortunate, and it will be good for you. You will be fortunate in This World!” That is, you will have a life with difficulties — bread and salt, measured water, and more — but you will be fortunate in This World because you are toiling in Torah. A life with Torah is the happiest, best life! That’s the reality, but not everyone can understand it.

Chazal further said in *Pirkei Avos* (6:11): “Whatever Hashem created in His world, He created only for His glory.” The purpose of all of Creation is for *k’vod Shamayim*. Man’s entire life is to bring glory to Hashem!

If so, a person who does not increase *k’vod Shamayim* has no right to exist. Yet, he still lives, and that’s due to *middas harachamim* so that he’ll have a chance to do teshuvah — and because he performs good deeds. Even if a person sins, he is still performing good deeds. He’ll suffer Gehinnom for his sins, but he’ll receive Olam HaBa for his good deeds! When he finishes with Gehinnom, he’ll have Olam HaBa. It’s worth going through Gehinnom to eventually receive Olam HaBa, as the Gemara tells us (*Chagigah* 15b) about Elisha ben Avuyah. This is *middas harachamim*.

In any case, everyone is obligated to generate *k’vod Shamayim*, each person according to his abilities. If he has talents and abilities, he is obligated to use them for *k’vod Shamayim*, for Torah, and to influence others with good *middos* and whatever other good things he can.

The natural way of the world is that a talented person is busy earning money. Desire for money is natural, but it’s a tremendous mistake, because wealthy people are not the epitome of happiness! Wealthy people don’t have happier lives than poor people. The reality is that wealthy people

have other difficulties, but they know how to conceal them so others won't see their troubles.

The reality is that already on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it's been decreed "who will be poor and who will be rich, who will be serene and who will be tormented" — everything is decreed according to one's *zechuyos*, and everything is for one's benefit. Even a person's difficulties are for his benefit. That's why there's no reason to have a lust for money; there's no benefit to it at all.

If a person does many good deeds and gives a lot of tzedakah, and that's why he wants lots of money, because he gives tremendous amounts to tzedakah, more than *ma'aser* and more than a *chomesh*, a fifth of his earnings, then that's another story. It's well known that one who gives a *chomesh* will have great success. Some people even give more than a *chomesh*. I know of a family that only kept *ma'aser* of their earnings for themselves and gave the rest out to tzedakah. What great *zechuyos*! What terrific *middos*! That's the way of Torah, that's the reality.

In any case, every person can lead a happy, fortunate life without any difficulties if he lives with *emunah*. One just has to be aware of this. How fortunate we are that we know about it. A person needs *siyatta d'Shemaya* to merit leading his life with *emunah* — one who does so will merit "Ashrecha b'Olam haZeh v'tov lach l'Olam HaBa."

You Will Be Fortunate in This World and the World to Come

This is what it says in *Avos*: "This is the path of Torah: eat bread with salt, and drink measured water. Sleep on the ground and live a life of privation, and 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."

We've already discussed that this requires thought. The promise "you will be fortunate in this world" is clearly a

chiddush — despite all that privation and difficulty of "eating bread and salt and drinking measured water," Torah learning gives a person such a good feeling that they don't notice the difficulties! Even though he only has bread and salt, he is not hungry. Even though he only has a little water, he is not thirsty. Even if he sleeps on the ground, he feels rested and is not tired. And even though he has other suffering, *esek haTorah* makes him forget all his pain and he's happy in *Olam haZeh*. But we need to understand the *chiddush* in the phrase "and it will be good for you in *Olam HaBa*." It seems simple — why shouldn't someone who gave up so much to toil in Torah, despite his suffering and privation, enjoy *Olam HaBa*? What's the *chiddush*?

We said there is a *chiddush* here too. It's known that if a person experiences worldly pleasures, he loses *Olam HaBa*. I once heard from the *baalei hamussar* that ***Olam HaZeh* is like a very expensive hotel. You pay an exorbitant price for a simple cup of tea. So too, a person will pay a substantial price for all worldly pleasures — as they cause him to lose part of his *Olam HaBa*.** This is the Tanna's *chiddush*: when it comes to learning Torah and the *ashrecha b'Olam HaZeh*, "you will be fortunate in This World," it is different. The enjoyment from learning Torah is not like all other worldly pleasures that come at the expense of *Olam HaBa*. To the contrary, enjoying Torah is a reason for more *Olam HaBa* — it will make a person earn more *Olam HaBa*! And then he will merit both "you will be fortunate in This World, and it will be good for you in the World to Come."

If so, *Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu* that we are aware of this. *Baruch Hashem* we are all *bonei Torah* and we all want to follow "the path of Torah." *Baruch Hashem*, we have merited that in our generation, there are so many people who understand that the purpose of life is "the path of Torah." *B'ezras Hashem*, may we merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* for whatever we need.

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

For donations or dedications of the Hebrew and English flyers, or to receive the *sichos* to your email, please contact: darkei.hachizuk@gmail.com

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