

Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חיזוק (ברכות לב): – שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כחו (רש"י)

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Decrees Are for Our Benefit

Currently, there are concerns that new laws will harm the *chareidi* sector in general, and specifically, the *bnei Torah*. The government wants to create difficulties to deter us from *osek baTorah* — that's their agenda, and there are concerns that these laws will come into effect. But everything is in *Shamayim*'s hands, and "Whatever the Merciful One does is for the best." Everything is from *Shamayim* and for the best. If so, let us try to understand why Heaven is doing so; and what good is involved.

It is a sign that we need to strengthen ourselves, *bnei Torah* need more *chizuk*, and *Shamayim* wants us to strengthen ourselves. As such, we are presented with difficulties so that we can become stronger and gain more *zechuyos*. Once a person has *chizuk* and *zechuyos*, there are no difficulties and no disturbances.

That's what is happening now. If there are concerns that new laws will be passed, if the government wants to pass laws that will make life harder for the *chareidim*, and specifically for *bnei Torah*; if the government wants to make it harder for us to learn Torah and observe the mitzvos, it's from *Shamayim*. And what do they want from us? They want our good! They want us to be *zocheh* to more merits, to increase *zechuyos*, and once we have more *zechuyos*, everything will be good and there won't be *gezeiros*. This is "for the best." Even the difficulties are for the best. We can understand why difficulties are good — because they act as a wake-up call for *chizuk*.

Chizuk — Constantly, and with All Your Strength

There's no doubt that we need *chizuk*, because *divrei Torah* need constant *chizuk*, as Chazal say (*Berachos* 32b), "Four matters require *chizuk*." The first thing mentioned there is Torah, and it requires constant *chizuk*. Rashi explains: "A person should strengthen himself in them constantly and with all his might." If the *chizuk* is not done constantly, or is not "with all his might," it's not considered *chizuk*. Each person has to improve and strengthen himself with all his might — each person according to his abilities, not more than he can, but as much as he can! This is what *Shamayim* wants from us with all these new laws and difficulties — they want to wake us up to *chizuk*!

How are we supposed to strengthen ourselves? The yetzer hara is so strong, after all. But the Torah is the antidote to the yetzer hara, as Chazal say (*Kiddushin* 30b): "I created

the yetzer hara, and I created the Torah as an antidote against it." The *Mishnah Berurah* (*siman aleph*) cites the Kadmonim that the antidote against the yetzer hara is "*tochachas ma'amarei Chazal*," which means learning *mussar sefarim*, *sefarim* that contain *divrei Torah* and *chizuk* that can arouse us to increased *yiras Shamayim*.

Not everyone has the *zechus* of learning Torah full time, and not everyone can learn Torah all day long. But if a person is *osek baTorah* as much as he can and uses every spare minute for Torah study, he is already on a high *madreigah*.

We've previously mentioned the Rosh's comments on the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 8a) that states, "*Rabbanim* don't need guarding." That is, *rabbanim* — people who are *osek baTorah* — don't have to pay the tax for guarding the city. Every city needs guarding, and in the past each city had permanent guards stationed at the city entrance to protect the city from thieves and bandits. All the city inhabitants would pay a "guard" tax, but *rabbanim* were exempt from the tax because their Torah protects them. Who is considered "*rabbanan*"? The Rosh writes (ad loc. 1:26), "It seems that a *talmid chacham* who has a profession or is involved in a little business merely to support himself, but not to become wealthy, and he spends all his free time from work learning Torah and reviewing Torah, this is called *Toraso um'naso*, 'his Torah is his profession.'"

That is, if a person who must work for a living only spends the time necessary to earn enough to support his family, and not to strike it rich — he's not rushing to become wealthy — and he spends every spare moment "reviewing *divrei Torah* and learning *divrei Torah*," even if this turns out to be only a half an hour a day, he is on the level of "*rabbanan*." In his merit, the city is protected and he doesn't have to pay the city guard tax. It makes no difference how much a person learns; it all depends on how much time he wastes. If he's learning as much as he can and is not wasting time, he is on the level of "*rabbanan*."

Even a lowly laborer can merit high *madreigos*, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes at the end of his *sefer*: "A person who works as a lowly laborer to support himself can be a complete *chassid*, equal to one who never stops learning." Even a menial laborer can reach the exalted level of "*chassid*" — which is higher than the *madreigah* of "*tzaddik*," as it states in *Pirkei Avos* (chap. 6): "And it prepares him to become a *tzaddik*, *chassid*, *yashar*, and *ne'eman*." These are the four *madreigos*, and each proceeding one is higher than the previous ones.

Just one generation ago, there was a shoemaker who was known for his *berachos*. Great, esteemed *rabbanim* would travel to Tel Aviv receive a *berachah* from him. His *berachos* would come true because he was on a high *madreigah*, based on his abilities and level, and he had the *koach* to bless people.

In any case, *Shamayim* is sending us difficulties because they want *bnei Torah* to strengthen themselves and reach higher *madreigos*. *Shamayim* wants us not only to be “*tzaddikim*,” but also “*chassidim*,” based on the *Mesillas Yesharim*’s explanation of *chassidus*. This is what they want from us now — to gain *chizuk*!

As we often say, the way to do is by learning *mussar sefarim*. There are famous *sefarim* like *Mesillas Yesharim*, *Shaarei Teshuvah*, *Chovos HaLevavos*, and *Orchos Tzaddikim*. Then there are others, like *Pele Yoetz*, which is a fabulous *sefer*. It contains many *eitzos* for *chizuk* in *ruchniyus*. There are many other *mussar sefarim* — every single person can find the *sefer* that will influence him, that he enjoys, that will be interesting and enticing, and then he’ll be influenced by it.

This is the only *eitzah* for increasing *zechuyos*. Without this, there are no *zechuyos*, and this is what *Shamayim* wants from us — *chizuk*! All difficulties and challenges are for our benefit, so that we should know to strengthen ourselves, each person according to his natural inclinations, by learning *mussar* that suits his personality, *mussar* that’s enticing and interesting for him. In the *zechus* of this *chizuk*, everything will be good, and we will merit *siyatta d’Shemaya*. This is *l’tav avid*, “is for the best.”

The Power of Dveikus and Love for Torah

Every single person wants to succeed in Torah, and we have an obligation to learn Torah. If a person is not *osek baTorah*, it is *bittul Torah* which is a very grave sin as Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 99a) about someone who can learn Torah but does not. Of course, each person is judged according to his personal abilities.

Esek haTorah is also interesting and enticing, and it is sweet. Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas was the leader in Eretz Yisrael after Rabbi Yochanan. The Gemara (*Eiruv* 54b) tells us that he would sit and learn Torah in the lower marketplace, while his outer cloak was lying in the upper marketplace. He was so engrossed in Torah, he forgot where he left his garment. People would attribute the following *pasuk* to him (*Mishlei* 5:19): “You shall always be intoxicated with its love.” Torah is so interesting; it’s hard to stop thinking about it!

A similar story is told about Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, *zt”l*. One of his *talmidim* came to ask his advice about a pressing matter. He presented the situation, Rav Baruch Ber listened, but he couldn’t process what the *bachur* was saying, because his mind was so engrossed in Torah and he couldn’t disconnect from it. He asked his son-in-law Rav Reuven Grozovsky *zt”l* to listen to the *bachur*’s question and give him an *eitzah*. That’s how far *deveikus baTorah* can go.

There are famous stories about *gedolei Torah* who underwent surgery without anesthesia. They told the surgeons that anesthesia is unnecessary; instead, they asked to be informed ten minutes before surgery would begin, and then they’d delve into an *inyan* in Torah. Since they’d be so engrossed in *divrei Torah*, they wouldn’t feel the pain. Similar stories are told about *tzaddikim* who underwent surgery without anesthesia too; they immersed themselves in thoughts of *tzidkus* and *ahavas Hashem* and did not feel the pain.

Learning According to One’s Nature Breeds Success

In any case, *esek haTorah* is a pleasant, interesting, and enticing matter, and everyone wants to succeed in his Torah learning, but not everyone does. This is because people don’t learn what naturally interests them. The rule of thumb is that Torah learning which is easily understandable will be interesting and enticing, but if a person has to delve deeply to understand — it all depends on the person’s nature. Some people enjoy this style of learning, but others find it boring because it’s beyond their abilities and does not suit their nature.

There was a story about a young man who loved learning *p’shat* and did not appreciate *amkus*. He just enjoyed learning the Gemara on a simple level. His *rabbe im* wanted to explain to him that he should learn on a deeper level, with *amkus*, but an *adam gadol* told them: “Let him learn the way he wants to learn, according to his nature, without *amkus* — because he enjoys this type of learning and he understands the *p’shat*.” The young man continued this style of learning and was extremely successful.

On the other hand, a different *bachur* who also loved *p’shat* was not able to continue learning in this *derech* because his *mechanchim* wanted to teach him to learn *amkus*. This was against his nature and it caused him to stop learning completely. The first *bachur* continued learning *p’shat*, enjoyed the learning, and he is a great *masmid* and a *baki* in Shas. If we force people to adopt a learning style that’s against their nature, it will be impossible for them to have success in learning. That’s the reality.

Sometimes a person forces himself to invest in a method of learning that’s against his nature, and then he ends up losing doubly. For example, *bachurim* or *avreichim* will sometimes force themselves to learn *b’amkus*, even when their nature is to learn and understand *b’pashtus*. Not only don’t they have success in *amkus*, they’ve also lost the opportunity to learn *b’pashtus* — they end up with nothing.

I know about young people who could have learned beautifully *b’pashtus*, they have good memories and they could have been *bakis* in Shas, but they wanted to learn *b’amkus*, and they did so against their natures. And what came out of it? Nothing. I knew someone who had a very quick grasp; he was able to learn 30 *daf* a day *b’pashtus*. He started learning in this manner, but then he stopped because he was embarrassed. And nothing came out of him. If he would have continued the learning style that suited him, he

could have been a *baki* in Shas, because he learned a lot and enjoyed it. But he was embarrassed and he lost everything.

On the other hand, there are great *baalei kishronos*, very talented young men who could learn *b'amkus*, but they're lazy; they don't want to work hard. If they'd learn with *hasmadah* and maximize their potential — after all, they're *baalei havanah* — they'd be extremely successful and they'd enjoy it. They just have to get used to it, but laziness gets in the way! That's human nature, a person has the *middah* of laziness; it defies logic and it causes great losses. After all, if a person would invest a little more effort into his learning, he'd have such pleasure and he'd have a happy life.

There are those who do utilize their *kochos*, and they are happy, even if they don't have such profound *havanah*. If people learn *b'pashtus* according to their abilities, and they learn with *hasmadah*, they'll accrue tremendous *bekius*, and they'll have happy lives with *deveikus baTorah*.

Tefillah Results in Extraordinary Success

Of course, everything also depends on one's *zechuyos*. *Zechuyos* are a necessary component for success in *ruchniyus*. A person can accrue merits by davening for himself, from his parents' *tefillos* for him, or even from his grandmother's *tefillos*.

There is a story of a certain *bachur* who was not very intelligent, actually he was not talented at all, and suddenly he became a *masmid* and had success in his Torah learning. An *adam gadol* said that this was in the *zechus* of his grandmother's *tefillos* when she lit Shabbos candles. In the *tefillah* recited after *hadlakas neiros*, women daven that their children should be "*me'irim baTorah*," illuminated with Torah. The boy's grandmother cried; she davened and shed tears, and her tears gave her grandson the *zechuyos* to become a *gadol baTorah*. Even though it was against his nature, he became a *gadol baTorah*, and he became the official *rav* of a city. All in the *zechus* of his grandmother's tears! That's what this *adam gadol* said — it was in the *zechus* of his grandmother's tears.

Gentleness Brings Success in Chinuch

I want to mention something else, which I've lately been noticing that people don't understand. It's regarding teaching *talmidim*, about what makes someone cut out for teaching Torah. I heard someone say that if a person has a gentle nature, he cannot teach. After all, discipline is so important, and how can he control a class — with his gentle nature? They say a person needs to be forceful and assertive to maintain control. But this is not true!

I've already told the story about someone who was a *maggid shiur* in a *yeshivah ketanah*, he taught *bekius*, which is the afternoon *shiur*. It's no secret that it's very hard to hold the *bachurim*'s interest during *shiur bekius*, but this person was very successful. His *talmidim* behaved beautifully and were very involved in the *shiur*. What was his secret? He once told me that he simply can't bring himself to hurt people, so

even if a student isn't acting with *derech eretz*, he does not get angry and he simply cannot be *makpid* or hurt others. He treats every *talmid* with respect and gentleness. This is why he was so successful — because of his gentleness, his *talmidim* had *yiras haromemus*, innate fear of authority, and when there's *yiras haromemus*, there is classroom control! That's the reality.

This person lives in our generation. He has *middos tovos*, he doesn't get angry or shout; he's calm, and he doesn't take it personally if his *talmidim* disrupt his *shiur*. And that's how he has excellent control. His gentle personality effects control and *yiras haromemus*.

Chinuch — Only with Love

Chazal say in *Pirkei Avos* (1:12): "Love people and bring them close to Torah." That means that if a person has *ahavas habriyos*, he can bring his *talmidim* close to Torah, but if not, he will not succeed! [Editor's note: Rabbeinu addressed a Chinuch Atzmai convention for principals two weeks ago, and he added the following: **If a *rebbe* does not love his *talmid*, he cannot influence him. He might be able to teach his student math, but he won't be able to instill *ahavas Torah* in him, or have any influence on him in matters of *Yiddishkeit*. One can only bring others close to Torah with love!**]

They also said in *Pirkei Avos* (2:6), "A *kapdan*, an uncompromising, intolerant person, cannot teach." If someone by nature is intolerant, he cannot be a *rebbe* even if he won't actually act that way. If his nature is to be a *kapdan*, he cannot teach and he won't be successful either because one needs *ahavas habriyos* to teach, as Chazal say: "Love people and bring them close to Torah."

Additionally, sometimes a person can have *hatzlachah* with his *talmidim* — he does "love people and bring them closer to Torah" — but then other *talmidim* come along, and he is not successful in bringing them close to Torah. Sometimes this can be because the new *talmidim* are more talented than the *rebbe*. Even if he is talented, it could be that the children are more talented than him, so they are bored. He simply can't fascinate them, because if a *talmid* is more talented than the *rebbe*, he will find the learning boring. So this *rebbe* should only teach weaker students; if he teaches top students, he won't be successful.

Good Middos and Zikkui HaRabbim

The following story took place in Chutz LaAretz. A certain *rav* also had a *yeshivah*. He wanted to raise his *yeshivah*'s level, so he brought in a great *rosh yeshivah* to say *shiur* instead of him. He had such *ahavas haTorah* that he didn't mind not being the main *rosh yeshivah*, nor did he mind if someone else was the *rosh yeshivah* instead.

But in the end, through *hashgachah pratis*, the new *rosh yeshivah* had to leave the *yeshivah*, and the first *rav* went back to serving as *rosh yeshivah* as well.

The reason this transpired *min haShamayim* was probably because he was on such a *madreigah* that he didn't mind leaving his position as *rosh yeshivah* and only serving as *rav*. Even though he would still be active in the *yeshivah*, someone else would hold the official position of *rosh yeshivah*, and he wanted this wholeheartedly! He actually already brought in an *adam gadol* who was a tremendous *talmid chacham* and he already started saying *shiurim* — and this made him so happy! Since he was on such a great *madreigah*, *Shamayim* wanted him to teach! Even though he wanted to generate greater *zikkui harabbim*, that a greater *rosh yeshivah* should teach there, *Shamayim* wanted him to receive these *zechuyos* of *zikkui harabbim* because he was a *tzaddik* and on such a high *madreigah*.

Not only that, he said that if he only could, he would have brought in another *rav* to serve as the city *rav* instead of him, but he couldn't find a suitable person. I heard this from someone who heard it directly from him — he heard the *rav* say that he'd give over the *rabbanus* to someone else, but he couldn't find someone else. He mentioned a specific *gadol* to whom he'd give over the *rabbanus*, but this person was already a *rav* of a large city.

What a genuine person. He was willing to give up his position for *zikkui harabbim*, so *Shamayim* made it that he would be the *mezakeh* and continue effecting *zikkui harabbim*.

Tefillah and Mussar — Zechuyos for Success in Ruchniyus

That's how it is in everything — success depends on *zechuyos*. Without *zechuyos*, there is no *hatzlachah*. With *zechuyos*, there is endless *hatzlachah*! *Rav Yisrael Salanter* already said that it's tried-and-true that davening for *ruchniyus* is always effective. However, one must be sure that his *tefillah* is real. If a person davens wholeheartedly for *ruchniyus*, he will merit *siyatta d'Shemaya*. It's different, though, when it comes to *gashmiyus*. There's a limit to

gashmiyus: “who will become poor, who will become wealthy, who will be calm, and who will be tormented” — *gashmiyus* is determined on *Yom HaDin*, on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. However, **there is no limit to *ruchniyus*; it just depends on *zechuyos*. Every single day has its own *zechuyos*; we merit *hatzlachah* in *ruchniyus* based on our *zechuyos*.**

A true story happened many years ago. A young child entered a *shul* one night when no one was there. He opened the *aron hakodesh* and cried to *Hashem* to give him success in *Torah*. [He thought that no one saw him, but there was someone there, and that's how we know about the story.] And his *tefillah* actually was accepted — he became an *adam gadol*, a *tzaddik* and a *gadol baTorah*, someone who had a great influence on others. This is the power of a *tefillah* for *ruchniyus*.

If so, to succeed in *ruchniyus*, one needs the *zechuyos* of davening and of learning *mussar* in order not to falter. Some people think that *mussar seder* in *yeshivos* is “*middas chassidus*,” but it's not — it's absolutely imperative. It is the only *eitzah* and the only antidote against the *yetzer hara*. **And this is what *Hashem* demands of you, this is what *Shamayim* wants from us. *Shamayim* wants us to strengthen ourselves by learning *mussar sefarim*.**

While there is a regular *mussar seder* in *yeshivos*, even family men who aren't learning in *yeshivah* can set a daily schedule to learn a *mussar sefer* for a few minutes. I know stories of people whose entire household changed as a result; their house became a completely calm place. A person who lives with a *cheshbon hanefesh* lives a happy life, and his house becomes a house of “*Ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*.” We all need *siyatta d'Shemaya* for this, every single one of us. May we merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* for success in *ruchniyus*.

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 Edelman's* home.