

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 Terumah 5782

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Emunah Changes Our Behavior

There is a *sefer* “*Chovos HaLevavos*.” The word “*Chovos*” means “duties” — it reveals to us that the contents of this *sefer* are not *middas chassidus*, they are not for *machmirim*, but they are actual duties and obligations regarding how to conduct our heart, what should be found inside our heart. *Chovos HaLevavos* explains this and divides our obligations into categories called *She'arim*, “Gates.” All duties of the heart are explicated in the *sefer's* ten gates: *Shaar HaYichud*, *Bechinah*, *Avodas Elokim*, *Bitachon*, *Yichud HaMaaseh* etc. They all discuss duties of the heart, how one's heart should be.

Shaar HaYichud is the first gate. It discusses the *mitzvas asef* of *yichud Hashem*, recognizing Hashem's Oneness, as the *pasuk* states (*Devarim* 6:4): “*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*.” We must believe with perfect belief that Hashem is One. What does “One” mean? That there is no other power aside from Him; nothing in this world can exist if Hashem does not will it to exist. The entire Creation exists only due to Hashem's will, as the Rambam writes at the beginning of *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*: “If a person should speculate that He does not exist, no other being could possibly exist.” That is, if the reality of Hashem would not exist, there would be absolutely no existence in this world, because the entire Creation is upheld only as the result of His will.

This is the *mitzvah* of “*Hashem Echad*,” believing that all existence we see with our eyes is not a true, existing reality; it is merely *retzon Hashem*, Hashem's will, since He renews and recreates every single thing at every given moment. Whatever was, and whatever there is in Creation — the past, present, and future — is only the will of Hashem, and there is nothing else aside from Him.

This is what the *Shulchan Aruch* writes in the first *se'if*, citing from the Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim*: “‘I will place Hashem before me always’ is a great principle in the Torah and the ways of the righteous who walk before Hashem.” He writes that one who keeps this principle in mind will see that his entire behavior changes: “For a person's sitting, movements, and activities when he is alone are not the same as his sitting, movements, and activities when he is standing in front of a great king. Neither is his voluntary speech and expression when he is with his family and close ones the same as his speech in the king's presence. All the more so, when a person takes to heart that the Great King, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Whose glory fills the world, is standing over

him and watching his actions... there will immediately come upon him fear (*yirah*) and submissiveness due to the fear (*pachad*) of *Hashem Yisbarach* and constant shame in front of Him.”

A person acts differently depending on where he is — when he's at home with family or when he's standing in front of the king. Especially when he is standing in front of the King of kings, his entire demeanor and behavior — both in speech and action — will be completely different. One's manner of sitting, walking, speaking — and what he says — all changes through this *emunah*, which is knowing the truth!

Levels in Emunah and Yiras Shamayim

Every morning we say “*Modeh Ani lefanecha*.” One of the *Kadmonim*, Rabbi Moshe ben Machir (the *Seder HaYom*), composed this *tefillah*. We must pay attention to Whom we are speaking: I give thanks before You, before *Melech Malchei HaMelachim!* It really is a *madreigah* to say *Modeh Ani* with *kavanah*; there are many *madreigos* involved.

Similarly, whenever we make *berachos* — such as *Birkas HaMazon* or the *berachah* of *shehakol* — if one recites the *berachah* with true *kavanah*, with the knowledge and recognition of the truth and with clarity of *emunah*, it's literally frightening — he's speaking to the King of all kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu! This is the *mitzvas asef* mentioned in *Devarim* (10:20): “Fear Hashem your G-d.” There are many *madreigos* in *yiras Shamayim*, as Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (*Shaar* 3, 15:17), and we have a constant obligation to increase our *madreigah* of *yiras Shamayim*.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* writes (*Shaar Avodas Elokim* chap. 4) that nothing is a *reshus*, voluntary. Man's every action is either a sin or a *mitzvah*. For example, tending to one's physical needs is obligatory because one needs a healthy body to fulfill the 613 *mitzvos*. If one does more than necessary, however, that's merely fulfilling his *taavos*, and that's a sin. Similarly, regarding all other human actions, nothing is voluntary — it's either a sin or a *mitzvah*, an obligation or a prohibition.

Dveikus and Love of Torah

The first thing is *esek haTorah*. Every person has to learn based on his abilities, according to his possibilities and his situation, but there is a level of (*Mishlei* 5:19), “He will constantly be intoxicated with its love.” The Gemara

(Eiruvin 54b) relates a story about Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas who was learning Torah in the lower marketplace and his outer garment was strewn in the upper marketplace. That is, he was so engrossed in Torah, and while deep in thought, he removed his outer garment and left it in the upper marketplace. He went somewhere else and forgot where he left his cloak since he was so engrossed in his learning. The Gemara there attributes to him the *pasuk* “He will constantly be intoxicated with its love.” His *ahavas haTorah* was so strong, he had such intense levels of *dveikus* to and fascination with Torah. There are many *madreigos* in this.

A story is told about Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz *zt”l* who was well known for his *shkius* in Torah. Once, his *talmid* came for advice on a certain matter. Rav Baruch Ber listened to him, but he could not grasp what the *bachur* was asking — his mind space was occupied with Torah and he couldn’t stop thinking about it! He could not grasp what people were telling him regarding other matters. His concentration of thought in Torah was so intense, just as the *pasuk* states: “He will constantly be intoxicated with its love!”

Madreigos in Tefillah

The same is true regarding *tefillah*, which is *avodah she’balev*, and especially Shemoneh Esrei. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 98:1) writes that there is a level in *tefillah* of *hispashtus hagashmiyus*, nullification of physical senses. He writes as follows: “And the pious ones and men of deed would do as follows: they would isolate themselves and concentrate on their prayers until they’d rise above physicality. Their powers of intellect would prevail until they’d come close to the attribute of prophecy.” That is, there is a *madreigah* in *tefillah* where *gashmiyus* simply doesn’t exist while the person davens; all his bodily senses would become inactive.

It’s well known that there were *gedolei Yisrael* on this level. We’ve already told about the Brisker Rav who was so engrossed in his Shemoneh Esrei that he didn’t hear people speaking to him. Once he forgot Ya’aleh v’Yavo. He would daven Shemoneh Esrei out loud to help his *kavanah* — that’s the halachah. If davening out loud will increase *kavanah*, one must daven out loud (as long as it doesn’t disturb others). Since he was davening out loud, people heard that he skipped Ya’aleh v’Yavo, and they said: “Ya’aleh v’Yavo! Ya’aleh v’Yavo!”, but he simply didn’t hear, because he was davening with nullification of his physical senses. A similar story is told about the Chazon Ish *zt”l*, who was davening with *hispashtus hagashmiyus*, and his sense of hearing stopped working.

Regarding all the *brachos* a person makes, his level of *kavanah* depends on the level of *yiras Shamayim* he has as he’s reciting the *berachah*. He should feel Who he is talking to: to the *Melech Malchei HaMelachim!* He should also think about the words, about what he is saying.

There’s a famous story about the Chazon Ish *zt”l*, who had to eat and had to make a *berachah*, but sometimes he was so weak that he felt if he’d make a *berachah*, he’d faint. If he’d

make a *berachah* with his level of *yiras Shamayim* — where his *yirah* is so tangible and clear, and he feels like he’s talking to HaKadosh Baruch Hu — he’d faint! He was so weak, and he had to eat; it would be *pikuach nefesh* if he didn’t eat, so he was obligated to eat without a *berachah*. That was the height of his level of *yiras Shamayim*.

It’s well known that doctors would consult with the Chazon Ish about surgeries. The story is told about a Dr. Ashkenazi, a brain surgeon in Beilenson Hospital, who came to consult with the Chazon Ish about a certain surgery. He showed the Chazon Ish two options, and the Chazon Ish decided which was the better way to operate. Even though the Chazon Ish had never learned medicine, he knew which way would be better. How? *Sod Hashem — l’yirei’av* — “Hashem’s secret is given over to those who fear Him!” *L’maalah min hateva*, above nature! (See *Shut Shevet HaLevi* 10:13 for more about this.)

Middos Tovos and Ahavas Chesed

We also told a story about the Chazon Ish regarding *ahavas chesed*. A man from Tel Aviv was sitting in a shul there, learning through the Chazon Ish’s *sefarim*. Once he noticed that the Chazon Ish wrote things that were already written straight out in the *sefer Turei Even*, but the Chazon Ish didn’t mention his source. The man was very surprised about this, but people explained to him that the Chazon Ish didn’t learn *sifrei Achronim*, and that’s why he didn’t cite the *Turei Even*.

Then, as he spent more time learning, he came across something in the *Chazon Ish* that’s written straight out in the *Yerushalmi*. Now, he was really quite surprised about that — how could the Chazon Ish mention the *Yerushalmi*’s comments without giving credit? He decided to travel to Bnei Brak and ask the Chazon Ish about it personally. He arrived at the Chazon Ish’s house and showed him what he had written in his *sefer* from the *Yerushalmi*. The Chazon Ish read it, and said, “Right, that’s what’s written in *Chazon Ish*, and that’s what’s written in the *Yerushalmi* too.” He didn’t make a big deal out of it.

At that time, the Chazon Ish didn’t realize that the man wanted to hear how this could have happened. He just told the man, “Right,” because he *was* right — the Chazon Ish had written something that was written straight out in the *Yerushalmi*. The questioner did not understand this, and he left the Chazon Ish’s home feeling very dejected. After a while, the Chazon Ish started to wonder: “Maybe the man didn’t understand me; maybe he doesn’t understand how it can be that I wasn’t familiar with the *Yerushalmi*.” He sent a messenger specially to Tel Aviv to find the questioner.

That man had only visited the Chazon Ish that one time, but while he was there, one of the Chazon Ish’s *talmidim* had been there and seen the man, so the Chazon Ish asked him to travel to Tel Aviv and find the man. His *talmid* had no idea where this man lived, but he went to the main shul in Tel Aviv, where there are *minyanim* for *Minchah* and *Maariv* all the time, hoping that he’d meet him there. He found the man there and told him: The Chazon Ish wants you to come visit him again.

So this man went back to the Chazon Ish, who sat with him and explained as follows: “I see that you are surprised how it could be that I didn’t quote the *Yerushalmi*. But the truth is, I wrote my *sefer* while I was in Vilna, and the shul there barely had any *sefarim*, and it did not have a copy of the *Yerushalmi*. So how could I have known that *Yerushalmi*?!” That’s what the Chazon Ish told him in order to calm him down, so that it shouldn’t seem so strange to him why the *gadol* didn’t quote the *Yerushalmi*. The Chazon Ish put in effort and sent a messenger to find him so that the man shouldn’t be disappointed and have *chalishus hada’as* and he shouldn’t think that the Chazon Ish didn’t want to answer him.

A similar story happened with the Brisker Rav, ז”ל. A man from a different city would bring the Brisker Rav an esrog every year before Sukkos. Another resident of that city, who was a great *talmid chacham* and *baki b’Shas*, was learning *Kodshim*. He had some *kashas* in his learning and wanted to ask the Brisker Rav, who was a great expert in *Kodshim*. So he asked the first man if he could go with him when he brings an esrog to the Brisker Rav.

So that year before Sukkos, he arrived at the Brisker Rav’s house and asked his questions. The Brisker Rav listened, and his response to whatever the man said was: “Right, right. I hear.” He didn’t give him any answers! The man was extremely surprised and could not understand why the Brisker Rav wasn’t answering his *sheilahs*. He was sure that the Brisker Rav had answers, but just didn’t want to tell them to him. He left the house very dejected.

The Brisker Rav didn’t notice the man’s surprise as they spoke, but once he left, he started thinking: Maybe the man thought I had an answer, but simply didn’t want to tell him, and he’ll have *chalishus hada’as* from this. That entire year, the Brisker Rav kept this story in his mind. The next year, when the man came with his *esrogim*, the Brisker Rav told him: “Last year, a *talmid chacham* from your city came along with you and asked me *sheilahs* in *Kodshim*. They are good questions, and I don’t have the answers to them either.” The Brisker Rav expected this man to pass the message on to the *talmid chacham*, so he wouldn’t feel bad.

The Brisker Rav had such strong *ahavas chesed* that he thought about the other man for a full year, and kept it in mind to make sure this *talmid chacham* wouldn’t have *chalishus hada’as*. He thought about this matter for a full year so he could appease the *talmid chacham*.

Ruach HaKodesh — Seeing without Eyes

I’ll tell you another story that happened in our times. A *gadol* sent a messenger to someone to tell him that he has the shape of a cross in his house. This person lived in Yerushalayim, and the *gadol* did not live in Yerushalayim. He couldn’t see what was going on in the other person’s home, but he still sent someone to tell him that he had a cross in his house. This person searched through his things until he found a pack of cards in his children’s toys, and the cards had the shape of cross on them. This *gadol* was able to see without eyes! He understood, through *ruach hakodesh*, that there was a cross in that house. This happened in our times.

How can this be? The *pasuk* says about Yaakov Avinu (*Bereishis* 49:1) that he called his sons together and said:

“Gather together and I will tell what will happen to you in the end of day.” Rashi explains that he wanted to reveal the *keitz* (when Mashiach would arrive) to them. But the Shechinah left him and he started saying other things. Yaakov Avinu wanted to tell his sons when Mashiach would come, but it became hidden from him. This requires an explanation. Since he knew the *keitz*, how could it suddenly become hidden from him? Did he just forget what he knew a short time before?

The answer is that his knowledge came from *ruach hakodesh*. Knowledge that comes from *ruach hakodesh* is not tangible knowledge, it’s spiritual knowledge. It comes from the force of a high *madreigah* — the same *madreigah* where one can see without eyes. Indeed, the *Chovos HaLevavos* says (*Shaar Cheshbon HaNefesh* chap. 3, in the tenth *cheshbon*) that there is a *madreigah* wherein “he will see without an eye, and hear without an ear; speak without a tongue, and feel intangible matters.” When a person is on this *madreigah*, he can see without eyes, but once he goes down from that *madreigah*, his eyeless vision stops and he can’t see. This is because it is not tangible vision; it’s *ruach hakodesh*. (See a similar topic in Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz’s *Sichos Mussar*, 5733, *maamar* 23.)

Mussar — The Way to Attain All Madreigos

These are all *madreigos*, but *l’maaseh*, we must strengthen our *emunah* and strengthen our *yiras Shamayim*. The way to do this is by learning *mussar*. Yeshivos have a steady *mussar seder* for a half-hour every day before Maariv. When a person is *osek* in learning *mussar* on a steady basis, it has an influence on him.

I’ve already told you recently about a young *bachur* who faced disturbances in learning from his family. He was forced to leave yeshivah and go to work to help his family. In the end, he would join the yeshivah for a half-hour of *mussar*. He sat near me, and I asked him why he specifically chose to learn *mussar* and why he didn’t learn Gemara. He answered that he felt *mussar* revitalizes him and influences him. In the *zechus* of his learning *mussar*, all the disturbances disappeared. He was a young *bachur*, about 15 years old, and *b’siyatta d’Shemaya* he went to learn in *yeshivah ketanah*. He finished *yeshivah ketanah*, and continued on to *yeshivah gedolah*. Now he is married and he is already a *marbitz Torah* and is influencing others to Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. And he was *zocheh* to *siyatta d’Shemaya* in the *zechus* of the *mussar* he learned, like Chazal say (*Yoma* 38b): “One who comes to be purified is helped.”

If a person comes to be purified and learns a half hour of *mussar* daily, it has an influence on him. Every day he adds another half hour, which is a greater *hashpa’ah*, and yet a greater *hashpa’ah*. With time, the influence becomes stronger and turns into another *madreigah*. In that *zechus*, he is *zocheh* to *siyatta d’Shemaya*, Heavenly assistance.

We’ve already said that the rule is that one must learn a *mussar sefer* that interests him, because if it’s boring, it will

not have a *hashpa'ah* on him. If a person learns *mussar* that's interesting, there will be a *hashpa'ah* — every day, more and more. It is a slow, steady *hashpa'ah*, not something that happens all at once. But over time, it will have a *hashpa'ah*, slowly, slowly, to reach a higher *madreigah*. And “you will be fortunate in *Olam HaZeh!*”

Mussar Will Bring About a Happy Life

We learned in *Avos* (6:4): “This is the path of Torah... and you toil in Torah. If you do so, you will be fortunate in this World.” One is *zocheh* to “*ashrecha baOlam haZeh!*” through Torah, and *mussar sefarim* are *Toras hayirah*. The *Mishnah Berurah* writes (*siman aleph*) that the *tavlin* (spice/antidote) to the *yetzer hara* is *Toras hayirah*, as Chazal say: “I created the *yetzer hara*, I created the Torah as a *tavlin* to it.” While all *divrei Torah* are a spice/antidote to the *yetzer hara*, there is a special part of Torah, the Torah of *yiras Shamayim*, which is the most effective antidote to the *yetzer hara*.

The word “*tavlin*” means *mussar* is like an actual spice that adds taste to food. *Mussar* gives you a very good taste and pleasant feeling. And a life with *mussar* is a fortunate life, *Ashrecha baOlam HaZeh* — through the spice of *yiras Shamayim*. *Yiras Shamayim* is literally a *tavlin*, spice.

When one learns *mussar* on a steady, daily basis, it has a *hashpa'ah*, and the *hashpa'ah* is constantly becoming stronger — *ashrecha baOlam haZeh!* Of course, there can be a *yeridah*, and a person can't be certain that his *hashpa'ah* will get stronger every day. After all, if a person learns *mussar* every day, but then finishes learning and takes his mind off the *chizuk*, he will experience a *yeridah*. Then he'll have to work hard on re-reaching his previous state. And it's not clear whether his *aliyah* is constant, or if it just helps to prevent a greater *yeridah* each time. It's all individual — each person based on his specific situation. Additionally, every person can sometimes have *aliyos* and sometimes *yeridos*.

In any case, *l'maaseh* learning *mussar* on a daily basis is the path to *ashrecha baOlam haZeh!*; it's also the way to fulfill

the obligation of *yiras Shamayim*: “Fear Hashem your G-d,” and it's also the way to be *zocheh* to *ashrecha baOlam haZeh*. *Yeshivah bachurim* have a steady *mussar seder* in *yeshivah*, but married men can also learn a few minutes a day from an interesting *mussar sefer*. It's known that learning *mussar* gives a person a good feeling, and instills a pleasant atmosphere in the house — because he's living with a *cheshbon hanefesh*. This is how one can attain *ashrecha baOlam haZeh* — he's happy, and his entire family is happy.

If so, we have a path toward a good, happy life. This path is an obligation as well as the recipe for a happy, fortunate life. And what's the path? *Dveikus* in Torah and setting a steady *mussar* learning session.

Tefillah Uplifts and Purifies the Nefesh

Davening daily is so important. The *Kuzari* writes (3:5) that just like the body needs food every day — two or three times a day — the *nefesh* also needs food. The *nefesh's* food is *emunah* and *tefillah*, and we need three *tefillos* a day. Each *tefillah* strengthens and purifies the *nefesh* until the next *tefillah*.

Chazal say (*Berachos* 6b) that *tefillah* is one of the things that stands *b'rumo shel Olam*, at the pinnacle of the world, and people are *mezalzel*, disregard, it, as the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 12:9): *Krum zulus livnei adam*. The *baalei mussar* explain this as follows (see *Siddur HaGra*, in the introduction *Siach Yitzchak*): Prayer uplifts man, and man is also a world, as he's called an “*olam katan*,” a small world. Every *tefillah* uplifts and purifies the soul — of course, it depends what kind of *tefillah* it is, how much *kavanah* is involved, but in any case, *tefillah* is something that purifies the soul.

But besides for all of this, a person needs to achieve *chizuk* by maintaining a steady learning session in *mussar*. This is the only way to achieve *chizuk*. *Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu* that we have such an interesting, not boring way to merit *ashrecha ba'Olam HaZeh*. *Yehi ratzon* that we merit *siyatta d'Shemaya!*

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