

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 Tetzaveh 5782

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Emunah Changes Our Behavior

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (mitzvah 488) writes that the body needs four things: food, sleep, rest, and joy. Food includes food and drink, and a person needs both sleep and rest — he can't be constantly active without taking a rest. And being in a state of happiness is also a necessity, being in a good mood. A person needs all four of these for his body's existence.

In *Hilchos Deios* (3:3), the Rambam cites the *mishnah* in *Avos* (chap. 2): "All your deeds should be for the sake of Heaven." Whenever a person performs even his physical needs, he should have in mind that he is taking care of himself *l'shem Shamayim*. The Rambam gives an example: If a person goes to sleep *l'shem Shamayim*, then he is serving Hashem as he sleeps, and his sleep is *avodas Hashem*.

Sleep is a physical need, and if a person sleeps *l'shem Shamayim*, keeping in mind why he's going to sleep, he will be serving Hashem as he sleeps. If he considers the possibility of going to sleep later, but then realizes that he needs more sleep to have energy to fulfill the 613 mitzvos — yet at the same time knows that too much sleep is not good, but neither is too little sleep — so he calculates exactly how much sleep is necessary to keep up his stamina for *avodas Hashem*, then his sleep is *avodas Hashem*. He is serving Hashem as he sleeps.

The Rambam writes about sleep, but the *Sefer HaChinuch* mentioned four matters that one's body needs and sleep is only one of them. One also needs food, rest, and joy — and these must all be *l'shem Shamayim*. He should calculate how much he must eat to strengthen his body so he can observe all the mitzvos. Then he will be serving Hashem as he eats. The Rambam only discussed sleep as an example, but all four are necessary and must be performed *l'shem Shamayim*.

Joy must also be *l'shem Shamayim*, and then he will be serving Hashem with his joy. The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Yom Tov* 6:20) regarding *simchas Yom Tov* that we were commanded to have "joy which involves *avodas Yotzer Kol*, service of the Creator of all." *Simchas Yom Tov* must be a specific type of joy — the joy of serving our Creator — inane joy is not what's required of us. Indeed, the *pasuk* says (*Koheles* 2:2): "U'le'simchah, mah zeh oseh." This means that it all depends on the purpose of our joy, and our intention while rejoicing: why are we happy. When our *simchah* is *l'shem Shamayim*, joy that includes service of our Creator, then we are serving Hashem with our joy.

The same is true regarding food and rest — they are physical needs. If a person has *kavanah l'shem Shamayim* while he is

eating and resting, if he is doing so in order to function better and fulfill his obligations in *shemiras hamitzvos*, then his actions are called *avodas Hashem*. It all depends on one's intentions.

However, the *tzibbur* is not aware of this, and they want their food to taste better. They have bread, and they have other filling food too, but they want it to be more delicious and delectable. When people start looking for better tasting food, it's not *l'shem Shamayim* anymore.

Happiness in This World — Through Minimizing Pleasures!

When the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes about a person's obligations in this world (chap. 1), he writes that all worldly pleasures that are not necessary, meaning they are being performed with improper intentions, distance a person from attaining *sheleimus*! And a person is obligated to be an "*adam hashaleim*, who is sanctified with Hashem's *kedushah*," and the entire purpose of creation is "*l'his'aneig al Hashem*," to live a life of pleasure. Now, true pleasure is *Olam HaBa*, but there are pleasures in *Olam HaZeh* too — pleasures of Torah and mitzvos, which are blissful and delightful, as Chazal say (*Avos* chap. 6): "This is the way of Torah... And if you do so, you will be fortunate in this world."

They said there: What is the "way of Torah"? Eat bread with salt, drink water sparingly, sleep on the ground, and live a life of privation, yet toil in Torah." Eat bread with salt, which is not pleasurable, but it is filling and it's needed to provide for our physical needs; drink a certain amount of water so you won't be thirsty; and sleep on the ground — which is not extremely comfortable, but it is sleep and mitigates one's tiredness. Living a life of privation and pain is as it sounds: experiencing pain from things that disturb him. But if you toil in Torah — *ashrecha*! You are fortunate! Toiling in Torah is ostensibly another difficulty, so there are five difficulties mentioned in this *mishnah*: 1) eating bread and salt, 2) drinking measured water, 3) sleeping on the ground 4) living a life of privation and pain. Toiling in Torah is the fifth — and despite it all, you are fortunate! Fortunate in *Olam HaZeh*!

That's the reality — *ashrecha baOlam HaZeh* can only occur by living life the Torah way, i.e., eating *pas b'melach* (bread with salt), that is, specifically by eating bread and salt, and specifically drinking measured water — *davka* in that way! The Torah is acquired by minimizing pleasures; that's one of the 48 acquisitions of the Torah mentioned in *Avos* chap. 6 — *mi'ut taanug*, minimizing pleasures. ***Mi'ut taanug is the way to acquire Torah and to be fortunate in this world. The***

more a person minimizes his physical pleasures, the more fortunate he will be in this world!

The *tzibbur* is not aware of this — they don't know the secret of “*ashrecha baOlam haZeh*,” they don't know that the “*ashrecha*” of this world can only occur through minimizing pleasure. All worldly pleasures distance a person from *sheleimus*, and *sheleimus* is the true pleasure in Olam HaBa, but it is also a pleasure of *ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*! One cannot achieve “*ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*” without it.

Olam HaBa is the true pleasure and the greatest of all delights that exist, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* (ibid.) states. We cannot fathom the extent of *taanugei Olam HaBa*; even our *nevi'im* could not grasp what it meant, as the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 31:20), “How great is Your goodness that You have hidden away for those who fear You.” [The *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar HaBitachon* chap. 4) explains the words “that You have hidden away — for those who fear You” as follows: HaKadosh Baruch Hu rewards us for “hidden” service with the good He has “hidden away.” *Yiras Shamayim* is service hidden in the recesses of one's heart and it's a *madreigah* of *chovos halevavos*. That's why the reward for this *avodah* is hidden and we cannot fathom what it is.] The Gemara tells us (*Berachos* 34b) that even the *nevi'im* could not grasp the concept of Olam HaBa, of which is said (*Yeshayah* 64:3), “No eye has seen it, Hashem, aside from You,” since a living person who is present in this world cannot comprehend what Olam HaBa is.

What Happens to Pleasures of Olam HaBa?

On the other hand, the Vilna Gaon writes in *Iggeres HaGra* that all pleasures will turn to “*marah*” in the grave. *Marah* is Gehinnom. That is, if a person enjoys worldly pleasures not for the sake of Heaven, that's simply Gehinnom. I heard from *baalei mussar* that this world is like a very expensive hotel, where one must pay an exorbitant amount of money for a glass of tea. The same is true in this world: for every pleasure that a person enjoys *lo l'shem Shamayim*, he must pay dearly in Olam HaBa.

The reason for this is because **worldly pleasures enjoyed not for the sake of Heaven distance a person from *sheleimus***. That's why the Gra wrote that they'll turn into *marah* in the grave, that he'll receive Gehinnom for it.¹ It's well known that every single word in the *Iggeres HaGra* was taken from Chazal's teachings. I believe someone put out a *sefer* citing every single source for each detail in *Iggeres HaGra*. All pleasures will turn to *marah* in the grave, because whenever we do something not *l'shem Shamayim*, it is Gehinnom.

And what is Gehinnom? What are the afflictions of Gehinnom? They are such atrocious pains that the body cannot bear them, only a *nefesh* without a body can bear them. The body has a limit to how much pain it can bear. There are

certain *yissurim* that the body cannot exist when certain *yissurim* come upon him, and he simply dies from his *yissurim*. These pains cleanse man, but there is a limit to how much physical pain a person can endure. When it comes to spiritual pain, however, there is no limit. In Gehinnom the soul is without the body, but the soul is still “alive” and it suffers the most painful *yissurim*. These *yissurim* are unfathomably horrific! This is what the Gra meant when he wrote “they'll turn into *marah* in the grave.”

Happiness of Torah Does Not Detract from Olam HaBa

Chazal say in *Avos* (ibid.): “This is the way of Torah... And if you do so, you will be fortunate in this world and it will be good for you in Olam HaBa.” We've already mentioned that we can understand the *chiddush* in *ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*, “you will be fortunate in this world,” that even despite the difficulties of “eat bread with salt and drink measured water... and toil in Torah,” a person can live a happy, fortunate life, but the *chiddush* in “it will be good for you in the world to come” requires an explanation. After all, why shouldn't he receive Olam HaBa?

We explained that there really is a *chiddush*. After all, it's well known that all worldly pleasures detract from Olam HaBa. If a person was fortunate in this world, you might suspect that this will cause him to lose part of his Olam HaBa. Therefore, the Tanna comes to tell you that it all depends on the type of pleasure. Only regular physical pleasures in Olam HaZeh detract from his Olam HaBa. However, when it comes to the *ashrecha baOlam haZeh* of Torah learned under minimal material conditions and pleasures, not only doesn't it detract from Olam HaBa, it actually increases his Olam HaBa. Even though he is fortunate and happy, and he is enjoying the greatest pleasure that exists in this world, it does not detract from his Olam HaBa. If someone enjoys a spiritual pleasure, like the pleasure of learning Torah or performing good deeds, it only increases his Olam HaBa.

We've already mentioned that the Torah is acquired with 48 acquisitions, and one of them is “*mi'ut taanug*,” minimizing pleasures. **Without “*mi'ut taanug*,” there can be no success in Torah.** If a person enjoys even a small pleasure not *l'shem Shamayim*, his Torah is lacking already and there is no *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

Chazal say (*Koheles Rabbah* 1:13): “No man dies with half his desires in his hand. If he has one hundred, he wants two hundred.” This is the nature of loving Olam HaZeh: A person is never satisfied; he won't find satisfaction here. A person who wants and desires worldly pleasures, will eventually die without acquiring even half of what he wanted. The explanation of the statement “he has one hundred, he wants two hundred” is that he wants another two hundred in addition to the one hundred he already has, bringing his desires to the

¹ See too the Gra's commentary to *Mishlei* (11:17): “*Gomel nafsho ish chesed v'ocher she'eiro achzari*, A kind man does his own soul good, but a cruel one troubles his own flesh.” He writes: ***Gomel nafsho ish chesed***: A person who only wants to perform kindness and do mitzvos, then when such a person does for himself, such as eating or other physical pleasure, it is considered a mitzvah, since all his *kavanos* are *l'shem Shamayim*. For him, eating is a mitzvah and is considered as

if he brought a korban. ***V'ocher she'eiro achzari***: But one who performs foreign deeds, whatever he does is simply to bring himself pleasure and to satiate his desires. Therefore, he troubles his own flesh because not only aren't his deeds considered a mitzvah, he is actually bringing trouble upon himself, since he will be punished with *chibbut hakever* (torments of the grave).

sum of three hundred. Therefore, when he dies, he doesn't even have half; he only has a third. That's the nature of worldly pleasures...

Torah Is Acquired through Yissurim and Difficulties

Another one of the 48 acquisitions of Torah is *b'kabbalas hayissurim*, "by accepting afflictions." There are 24 acquisitions that begin with the letter *beis*, and these are followed with another 24 that do not begin with *beis*. (See the *Midrash Shmuel* on *Avos*. We will explain further elsewhere.) Acceptance of *yissurim* (*b'kabbalas hayissurim*) is the last of the acquisitions beginning with a *beis*. (Ed. note: Rabbeinu *shlita* explained elsewhere that it is because *kabbalas hayissurim* is the greatest *madreigah* of this set of 24.) **Accepting *yissurim* means that a person is happy with his *yissurim* and accepts them with love, since he understands that all difficulties and afflictions are for his good. This is one of the acquisitions of Torah, as it leads to success in Torah.**

Indeed, the Gemara already said (*Berachos* 5a): "HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave Yisrael three gifts, and they were all given with *yissurim*. They are: Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and Olam HaBa." A *pasuk* for each one of these proves it: Torah is mentioned in *Tehillim* (94:12): "Fortunate is the man whom Hashem afflicts and he learns His Torah" — due to his afflictions, he learns Torah!

Eretz Yisrael refers to *kedushas Eretz Yisrael*. As is known, the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael sanctifies man and has an influence on a person's very nature to receive good *middos*. The Gemara (*Nedarim* 22a) relates a story of two people who came to Eretz Yisrael from Bavel. On the journey to Eretz Yisrael, one of them killed his friend. When they told Rabbi Yochanan about this, he was surprised that an act of murder could have taken place in Eretz Yisrael; after all, the *pasuk* states (*Devarim* 28:65): "And Hashem placed within you *there* an angry heart." That is, the "angry heart" and bad *middos* could only exist "there" — in the *galus* in *Chutz LaAretz*, not in Eretz Yisrael, so how could a murder have occurred in Eretz Yisrael? They told him that the murder actually took place before they crossed the Yarden, which is not *kadosh* with the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael. Had they crossed the Yarden and entered Eretz Yisrael, the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael would have sanctified that man; his *middos* would have changed, and he would have had good *middos*.

Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and Olam HaBa are all acquired through *yissurim* — by refraining from worldly pleasures. As we said, Eretz Yisrael refers to *kedushas Eretz Yisrael*, and the way to attain it, as well as to attain Torah and Olam HaBa, is by *mi'ut taanugei Olam HaZeh*, minimizing pleasure in this world.

Davening for Your Own Ruchniyus and for Others' Ruchniyus

We've already mentioned that Rav Yisrael Salanter said it is tried-and-true that davening for *ruchniyus* is effective. Whenever a person davens for spiritual matters, such as success in Torah, or to daven with *kavanah* and *yiras Shamayim*, or for *middos tovos*, it is tried-and-true that it helps and he will have success in *ruchniyus*. The Gemara says

(*Berachos* 50a) that the *pasuk* states: "Expand your mouth and I will fill it" — this is referring to *divrei Torah*, and *divrei Torah* includes anything that is connected to Torah, whatever the Torah obligates us to do. "Expand your mouth, and I will fill it" — just ask, and you will receive!

We've already told the story of a man from *Chutz LaAretz* who came to the *Kosel*. He was not a *baal emunah*, he had some doubts, and when he came to the *Kosel* he began to think. He thought: If the tenets of *emunah* are correct, I really want to have *emunah*. At that moment, a *kiruv* activist approached him and asked him if he'd like to find out what Judaism is all about. What *siyatta d'Shemaya*! It was a silent, heartfelt *tefillah*, and even though it was a prayer borne of doubt, as he was not certain about the truth of *emunah*, since he truly wanted to know, he was *zocheh* immediately to *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

Davening for *ruchniyus* is effective, and one merits *siyatta d'Shemaya* right away. Even if a prayer is not enunciated out loud, it's just in one's heart, it still helps. We've spoken about the wonderful virtue of a silent, personal *tefillah* — it's more candid than the standard *nusach* we say. We are already used to the regular *nusach*, and it's not simple to have precise *kavanah*. However, if a person thinks and davens in his heart, that is a true *tefillah* with *kavanah* and it's tried-and-true that his *tefillah* is helpful. *Tefillah* helps for all spiritual matters: *Torah, yiras Shamayim, middos tovos*.

Regarding *ruchniyus* matters can be divided into two categories: matters that are individual and personal, such as success in Torah, in *emunah*, in good *middos*; and matters that affect others as well, such as *zikkui harabbim*, to influence others to learn Torah, to be a good influence in *emunah* and *middos tovos*. If a person has *zechuyos*, he will be able to have an influence on others — it all depends on his *zechuyos*. If *tefillah* is helpful when a person wants to daven for his own *ruchniyus*, as the *pasuk* states, "Expand your mouth and I will fill your request," and as Chazal say (*Yoma* 38b), "One who comes to be purified is helped," then *kal va'chomer* if a person wants to help others, he will surely be helped. He will merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* to purify others.

Actually, this is part of the obligation of *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*, of having *ahavas habriyos*. Chazal say (*Yerushalmi Nedarim* 9:4), "*V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha* is a great principle of the Torah." This means that the *sheleimus* in "*v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*" gives one *sheleimus* in the entire Torah. By having *sheleimus* in "*v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*," all your mitzvos will be *b'sheleimus*.

Rav Chaim Vital writes in *Shaarei Kedushah* (1:2) that if a person has some deficiency in *sheleimus hamiddos*, all of his *maasim tovim* also have a *p'gam* (are defective) and are not *b'sheleimus*. One who has good *middos* and *ahavas habriyos*, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes: "*V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*" — literally *kamocha*, like yourself — will then have the "*klal gadol baTorah*," and he will have *siyatta d'Shemaya* for the entire Torah, to fulfill all 613 mitzvos *b'sheleimus*. However, if someone's *ahavas Yisrael* is deficient, and he doesn't love his fellow literally as himself, he will lack *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

Rav Yisrael Salanter penned letters to his *talmidim*, asking them to daven for him, for his *ruchniyus*. He asked them to daven for him with a minyan — they probably honored his request. These letters are printed in *Ohr Yisrael*.

The truth is, Rav Yisrael Salanter was *zocheh* to have a *hashpa'ah* on all the generations since his times. He also influenced his *talmidim* so profoundly that they became *mashpi'im* in their own rights: the Alter of Kelm; Rav Yitzchak Peterburger, the Pri Yitzchak; and the Alter of Slabodka. I once heard that some prestigious psychologists couldn't understand how the Alter of Slabodka had gained such profound knowledge about *kochos hanefesh*, how he knew to educate and guide his *talmidim*. Actually, how did he acquire this knowledge? With *siyatta d'Shemaya*! Because one who comes to be purified is helped. With *siyatta d'Shemaya*, he was *zocheh* to gain outstanding levels of wisdom and understanding, *l'maalah min hateva*. This was all certainly in the *zechus* of *tefillah*, because *tefillah* is something that gives a person *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

Every single person can be *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya* through *tefillah*. As we said, a personal *tefillah* from one's heart can sometimes be more effective, because it's real. If a person offers his own personal *tefillah* and makes an honest request, asking Hashem to have mercy on him and give him *siyatta d'Shemaya* for success in Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and *middos tovos* — and also in *zikkui harabbim* — he will be given *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

The Mussar Spice Puts Flavor in Our Lives

If so, we have a way to merit *ashrecha baOlam haZeh* in *ruchniyus*. Of course, this is by setting a daily *mussar seder*. 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. There are many *mussar sefarim*, and every *sefer* has interesting parts. Each person should learn whatever interests him. The learning will not have an influence immediately, there will be a small *hashpa'ah* today, and then tomorrow a little more, until he becomes a changed person.

Yeshivos have a daily *mussar seder* for a half-hour before Maariv. This is not *middas chassidus*, acting with piety. Not everyone is aware of this fact that *mussar seder* is not *middas chassidus*. It is mandatory; it revives our souls! I've already told you about a young *bachur* who faced disturbances in learning from his family. He would join the yeshivah every day for a half-hour of *mussar*. 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 strengthens him. In the end, he was *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya* and all the disturbances disappeared. He went on to learn in *yeshivah*. Now he is married; he is *mezakeh es harabbim* in Torah and *mussar*. And this all happened in the *zechus* of "coming to be purified" with a steady *mussar seder* of a half-hour every day. And "one who comes to be purified is helped" — in the merit of coming "to be purified," he was *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya* to also "purify" others.

Family men who don't learn in yeshivah can learn a small amount of *mussar* daily at home, five minutes a day. If a person learns an interesting *sefer* every day, on a steady basis, it will have an effect. It will give him a happy life, *ashrecha baOlam haZeh*. I personally am familiar with men who did this and their learning transformed their lives into happy lives. The atmosphere at home changed to a very pleasant one! This is what *mussar* can do; not everyone knows this secret. It is a secret — but it is the reality. This is the way to merit *ashrecha baOlam haZeh*, and this is the way of Torah.

Indeed, the *Mishnah Berurah* writes (*siman aleph*) that the *tavlin* (spice/antidote) to the yetzer hara is *Toras hayirah* in the *mussar sefarim*. The word "*tavlin*" means something that gives a flavor. That is, *mussar* does not just have a slight effect on us, but it puts **flavor in our lives, gives us a spicy life, a happy life, ashrecha baOlam haZeh**. That's what we merit by learning *Toras hayirah* on a steady basis.

Baruch Hashem, we already are aware of this secret. *B'ezras Hashem*, may we all be *zocheh* to fulfill this, to strengthen ourselves, to purify ourselves and purify others with Hashem's help, *kein yehi ratzon!*

Please daven for
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.