

# Darkei HaChizuk

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

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## Love Your Fellow as Yourself

We have 613 mitzvos. Some mitzvos are performed with an action, such as tzitzis and tefillin, which are fulfilled by an action, and some are done through speech, such as Krias Shema and *esek haTorah*. Some of our mitzvos are performed in thought, as the *pasuk* states regarding *esek haTorah* (*Yehoshua* 1:8): “*V’hagisa bo yomam va’laylah*, And you shall toil (lit., think) in it day and night.” The word *higayon* denotes thought.

Other mitzvos are heart-related mitzvos, mitzvos that direct us to make sure we have a *lev tov*, a good heart — such as the mitzvah of “*V’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*, Love your fellow as yourself,” *ahavas Yisrael*. This is a mitzvah that is not connected to thought; it is related to the character of man’s heart.

The *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap. 11) writes that the mitzvah of “Love your fellow,” must be *kamocha mamash*, “literally like you love yourself.” This is Klal Yisrael’s nature, because if these are the requirements of the mitzvah, it is a sign that it’s implanted in our nature. External causes work against our nature, but our true nature is to love our fellow Jew.

## Merciful on All His Creations

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85a) relates an episode that occurred with Rabbeinu HaKadosh. Some small rodents were in his house, and the cleaning woman wanted to sweep them out. He told her not to do so, since the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 145:9): “And His mercy is upon all His creations.” Animals, too, are Hashem’s creations, and He has mercy on them.

Actually, there’s another mitzvah (*Devarim* 28:9): “And go in His ways.” Chazal said (see *Shabbos* 133): “Just as He is merciful, you too shall be merciful.”

Let us understand what the Gemara relates (*Bava Metzia* 32b) about the question of whether the prohibition of *tza’ar baalei chaim* (causing pain to animals) is *mi’d’Oraisa* or *mi’d’Rabbanan*. After all, the *pasuk* states, “*V’Rachamav al kol ma’asav*, And His mercy is upon all His creations,” and there is a mitzvah of following in Hashem’s ways: “*v’halachta b’drachav*.” Just as He is merciful, you too shall be

merciful. If so, why would it only be a Rabbinic prohibition, and not a Biblical prohibition?

After all, “*v’Rachamav al kol ma’asav*” includes having mercy on animals, and not just refraining from causing them pain. If so, how could there even be a question of whether the prohibition of causing pain is prohibited or not, and how could it be that causing pain to animals would be permitted *mi’d’Oraisa*? As part of the mitzvah of “*v’halachta b’drachav*,” we are commanded to follow in Hashem’s ways — to act with good *middos* and to have mercy on animals as well. I do not know the answer to this question.

## Esek HaTorah: An Obligation, a Pleasure

There is another obligation of *esek haTorah*, as is written (*Devarim* 6:7): “And you shall teach them to your children, and you shall speak in them.” The obligation as recorded here is individual, each person according to his abilities, yet, it is still an obligation. It turns out that *hasmadah* is not a “*madreigah*,” or “*middas chassidus*,” it is an actual obligation, a *chiyuv* of the *mitzvas asei* of “*v’darbarta bam*, and you shall speak in them.” Hashem told Yehoshua “And you shall think in it day and in night,” and He also told him previously, “This book of Torah shall not depart from your mouth.” Two parts of the mitzvah of *esek haTorah* are included here: “This book of Torah shall not depart from **your mouth**” — in speech; and “And you **shall think**” — in thought as well.

Therefore, being vigilant about the concept of *bittul Torah* is not merely *middas chassidus*, it is a *chiyuv*, an obligation! In *Sanhedrin* (99a), Chazal attributed the following *pasuk* to someone who can learn Torah but does not (*Bamidbar* 15:31): “For he has despised Hashem’s word, and nullified His commandments.” The continuation of the *pasuk* is terrifying, if a person can be *osek baTorah*, but does not. Of course, each person is held accountable according to his abilities and his personal reality.

Of course, *divrei Torah* are sweeter than honey (*Tehillim* 19:11), and the Torah is compared to all sorts of tastes, such as bread and wine, honey and milk, as the *pasuk* states (*Mishlei* 9:5): “*Lechu lachmu b’lachmi u’shsu bayayim masachti*, Come, partake of my bread

and drink of the wine I have mingled,” and (*Shir HaShirim* 4:11), “*D’vash v’chalav tachas lishonecha*, honey and milk are under my tongue” because the Torah gives us sweetness, it is interesting and very enticing.

### Man’s Needs Are Created with Sweetness

The reason for this is as follows: It’s well known that whatever man needs to maintain his physical body is sweet. For example, the body needs nourishment, food and drink, so food has taste. If there would be no taste in food, and if the body wouldn’t feel hungry or thirsty, then whenever the body needed nourishment, a person would have to calculate whether or not he had to eat right then. By the time he’d make his calculations, the body would not be viable.

Therefore, the Borei Olam created His world this way. He created both man and animals with a nature that requires them to maintain their physical needs. That’s why the body’s nature is that it must sleep, and all its other physical needs must be met. Furthermore, there is flavor and sweetness in these physical needs, so that one’s nature will be attracted to them and thus, uphold the world’s existence.

The same is true regarding our spiritual life, which is eternal life. It is imperative that our nature be attracted to it, so the man was created with a nature of sweetness to merit eternal life. That’s why there is such sweetness in *divrei Torah*, which are “sweeter than honey and the drippings of honeycombs.” As we mentioned, the Torah is compared to many foods, such as bread and water, wine, honey, and milk — as the *pasuk* states (*Yeshayah* 55a): “O! All you thirsty ones go the water...” Many other *pesukim* in *Navi* and *Kesuvim* also compare Torah to food.

The objective of this all is for eternal life and Olam HaBa, as the Torah is what nourishes one’s soul in Olam HaBa. Indeed, Chazal say (*Kesuvos* 111b) on the *pasuk* “For Your dew is a dew of lights” — the Torah’s light sustains anyone who uses it. And this is why Hashem created the Torah with such sweetness — so that man will be *osek baTorah* and thus merit eternal life!

### Deveikus baTorah — Intoxicated with Love

The *pasuk* in *Mishlei* states (5:19): “You shall always be intoxicated with love of it” — *ahavas haTorah* is so vast that due to his immersion in and attraction to *divrei Torah*, a person becomes like a fool, like someone lacking intelligence.

The Gemara relates a story about Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas who would sit and learn Torah in the lower marketplace, while his upper garment was in the upper

marketplace. That is, he was so immersed in and fascinated by *divrei Torah* that he forgot where he left his garment. Torah was so enthralling that he simply forgot about his jacket.

This is the power of Torah’s sweetness. **And because Torah is eternal life, it has such special sweetness so that it can attract a person and give him the opportunity to merit eternal life.** That’s how Hashem created man.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88a) also relates an episode with Rava who was sitting and learning Torah. As he learned, he squeezed his finger so hard that it began to bleed. He didn’t even notice because he was so engrossed in his learning, and a gentile said to him: “You are a hasty nation, lacking intelligence and lacking understanding.” However, this is the power of Torah and its sweetness! And this is our nature: “You shall always be intoxicated with love of it” — learning Torah is so fascinating that one doesn’t even feel it if he’s bleeding; one doesn’t feel the pain.

There’s a well-known story about Rav Baruch Ber *zt”l* who was once approached by his *talmid* who wanted his advice on a certain matter. His *talmid* presented the situation and asked questions. Rav Baruch Ber listened, but he couldn’t understand a thing because his head was so engrossed in Torah that he could not concentrate on understanding what his *talmid* was asking. You shall always be intoxicated with love of it! This is *deveikus baTorah*, which is eternal life.

They say that when the Germans *yimach shemam* came to Kamenetz and occupied the city, as long as Rav Baruch Ber was there, they said they’d give him whatever he wanted, and they treated the entire city with respect, kindness, and mercy — because Rav Baruch Ber was there! That’s the power of the *hashpa’ah* of Rav Baruch Ber’s *kedushah*. *Kedushah* drives away disturbances.

### Deveikus in Tefillah — No Physical Senses

Just as *deveikus* in Torah exists, *deveikus* in *tefillah*, which is *avodah she’balev*, is also a reality. We’ve already discussed the *Shulchan Aruch*’s comments (*Orach Chaim* 98:1) that when *baalei madreigah* would daven Shemoneh Esrei, they’d arrive at *hispashtus hagashmiyus*, nullification of physical senses, and come close to the level of prophecy. *Hispashtus hagashmiyus* is like there is no body, that one does not feel his physical body as a result of his immense *deveikus* in *tefillah*.

There are stories about *gedolim* in recent times, as we’ve already mentioned about one *gadol* who would daven Shemoneh Esrei out loud, because he would

have greater *kavanah* that way. Once when he was davening, other people heard that he forgot to say “*Yaaleh v’yavo*,” and they tried to remind him by saying “*Yaaleh v’yavo, yaaleh v’yavo*.” He did not hear them, however, because he was so involved in davening and had reached *hispashtus hagashmiyus* in *tefillah*, just as is written in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

A similar story occurred with another *gadol*. He was in middle of davening *Shemoneh Esrei* and someone came to him with a question of life-and-death, *pikuach nefesh*. They spoke to him but he did not hear them. Even though it was *pikuach nefesh*, he simply didn’t hear anyone talking to him because he was so engrossed in his prayers that his physical senses became de-activated. His sense of hearing did not work. That is how far *hispashtus hagashmiyus* can go; it’s a great *madreigah* of *tefillah* and *deveikus*.

These are all *madreigos* of *gedolei Yisrael*, *madreigos* of *tefillah*, *madreigos* of Torah. We are not on these levels, but **every single drop, every drop of progress in these *madreigos* brings about unfathomable *zechuyos*!**

### **Zechus HaTorah for the Rosh Yeshivah’s Recovery**

The *Ruach Chaim* on *Pirkei Avos* (1:1) brings down a story involving the Taz. Once the Taz was learning with his *talmidim*, and some people came in to ask him to daven for a sick child. The Taz said he could not stop learning right then, but he told them he’d dedicate the *zechus* of the Torah he’s learning for the child’s recovery. And that is what happened — during those hours, the child recovered.

When I was a *bachur* learning in Lomzhe Yeshivah in Petach Tikvah, the *mashgiach* was the tzaddik Rav Eliyahu Dushnitzer. I remember that whenever people would ask him to daven for *cholim*, he’d tell the *bachurim* that they should dedicate the *zechus* of their Torah for a *refuah* for the sick person.

Let us do the same: the *zechus* of the Torah we discussed now should be for the **recovery of Rabbeinu the Rosh Yeshivah Rav Baruch Dov ben Chaya Feigel [Povarsky] for a *refuah sheleimah*.**

### **Learning Mussar Revives the Nefesh**

The *zechus* of Torah is a tremendous *zechus*. Whatever we just discussed, about Torah, *tefillah*, *maasim tovim*, *ahavas habriyos*, *v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho*, are all obligations. There are many *madreigos* of these obligations, and one has to put in *hishtadlus* in order to attain these levels. What is the *hishtadlus*? Learning *mussar*!

*Mussar* that’s interesting has a *hashpaah*. If one learns something that bores him, it will not have a *hashpaah*. But there are many interesting *mussar sefarim*, many *sefarim* that can have a *hashpaah*. *Yeshivos* have a regular set *mussar seder* every night for a half-hour before Maariv. It’s important to know that learning *mussar* is not a *middas chassidus*, it is a necessity for the preservation of one’s emotional and spiritual life, for his *chayei hanefesh*.

We are going to relate a story we’ve told a number of times already. A young *bachur* in his early teens wanted to learn Torah, but he faced many obstacles from his family, and in the end, he had to go out to work. But he would still come to the yeshivah every evening before Maariv for *mussar seder*. I asked him why he chose to learn *mussar* and not Gemara. He told me: “I feel that it revives me, it’s *mechayeh* me!” In the end, he merited *siyatta d’Shemaya* — he was able to stop working and joined the yeshivah. Now he’s married and he is *mezakeh es harabbim* through Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. All in the *zechus* of that half-hour of learning *mussar*.

### **Every Small Chizuk Is a Great Zechus**

When one is involved in *chizuk* by learning *mussar* on a steady basis, when one is encouraged and strengthened a little more every day — any *chizuk* in *ruchniyus* — one cannot fathom the tremendous *zechuyos* he garners.

Of course, each person is held accountable based on the opportunities available to him. Men with families have more responsibilities, but they can do it too. I know men who started learning a little bit every day, just a few minutes a day, five minutes of *mussar*, interesting — not boring — *mussar*, and their house became a happy, joyful home, with a pleasant atmosphere. I personally know stories like this — men who learned a few minutes of *mussar* every day, in an interesting *sefer*, and it changed their entire essence. It gave them a happy, fortunate life. *Ashrecha baOlam HaZeh!*

### **Osher in Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa**

This is the path of Torah, as they said in *Avos* (6:4): “This is the way of Torah: eat bread with salt... and toil in Torah.” If you do so, you will be fortunate in this World. Even though there are all sorts of difficulties: bread with salt, measured water, sleeping on the ground, living a life of privation — none of these disturb him because **after all, he’s eating and drinking as much as he needs, he’s not hungry or thirsty, he can rest as much as he needs and is not tired, and since he toils in Torah, he is *me’ushar*,**

**happy and fortunate.** *Ashrecha baOlam haZeh*, this is the greatest happiness possible in Olam HaZeh!

The Tanna adds: “*V’tov lach baOlam HaBa*, And it will be good for you in Olam HaBa.” In addition to all this, he will also receive Olam HaBa. We’ve already discussed that the *chiddush* in “it will be good for you in the world to come” requires an explanation. After all, it’s self-understood that if a person toils in Torah, he’ll receive Olam HaBa. Why shouldn’t he?

We explained that there really is a *chiddush*. After all, it’s well known that all worldly pleasures detract from Olam HaBa. (The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes at length about materialism and worldly pleasures. He explains that if a person’s use of materialism and worldly pleasures are not *l’shem Shamayim*, and are not based on what a person needs for his *yishuv hadaas* to fulfill the 613 mitzvos, then they are Gehinnom and distance a person from *kedushah*.)

If so, usually physical pleasures in Olam HaZeh detract from his Olam HaBa. However, when it comes to the way of Torah, *ashrecha baOlam haZeh* — and it’s also

*tov lach l’Olam HaBa*, one receives even more Olam HaBa! Because *ashrecha baOlam haZeh* that is acquired through toiling in Torah, “*baTorah atah amal*,” does not detract from one’s Olam HaBa, it actually increases his Olam HaBa.

A person can merit this all by learning *sifrei mussar*, which revive us and revive our soul, and strengthen our spiritual level. *Chovos HaLevavos* is *sefer* that is aptly named, as it discusses the “duties” of one’s heart. The matters this *sefer* discusses are not *middas chassidus*, they are not acts of piety; they are duties, obligations — they how the heart is supposed to be. We must influence our hearts to be hearts of “*Chovos HaLevavos*.” **The way to influence your heart is to do it slowly, a little bit every day. Another small influence each time. This is how a person’s heart becomes a special heart, a heart *b’sheleimus*!**

We all need *siyatta d’Shemaya* to be *zocheh* to the path of Torah, to be *zocheh* to *ashrecha baOlam haZeh v’tov lach l’Olam haBa*. *Yehi ratzon* that we merit this.

### Chizuk for the Bonei Olam Organization

It is clear; Chazal have already said (*Gittin* 41b): “The world was created solely for *piryah v’rivyah*, as it states: “*Lo sohu bera’ah lasheves yitzara* — He did not create it for a waste, He formed it to be inhabited.” This is a great mitzvah (see *Tosfos Bava Basra* 13a). Surely all those who are involved in this and assist them are *zocheh* to tremendous merits. They are bringing more Jews into this world, and this brings the *geulah* closer, as the Gemara says (*Yevamos* 62a): “Ben David does not come until all Jewish *neshamos* come down to this world.” It is a great *zechus* for anyone involved, the supporters, those involved, anyone connected to this organization, your *zechus* is tremendous. May they be *zocheh* to “eat their fruit in this world and enjoy the principal in the World to Come!

Please daven for  
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The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va’ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein’s home.