

## 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 Tzav/Purim 5782

479

### Purim: A Time for Increasing Ahavas haBriyos

There's a common misconception about Purim. Some people who are upset at another person and want to cause him pain wait for Purim. They think Purim is the perfect time to embarrass him and cause him pain, but this is not right. There is no *heter* to act this way. People who acted this way in the past were punished in very strange ways, unusual, queer punishments — because they allowed themselves to harm another person's *kavod*. This is an extremely grave sin.

Why is it so grave to act this way specifically on Purim? Because Purim is a time for the reverse behavior, it's a time of *ahavas habriyos* — of sending *mishloach manos* and *matanos l'evyonim*. There is a special obligation *bein adam l'chaveiro* to increase and strengthen *ahavas habriyos*, as part of the *mitzvas asei* of *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*. To this end, we are given *siyatta d'Shemaya* to fulfill this mitzvah and to strengthen our *ahavas habriyos* — which is a *mitzvas asei* and a "great principle in the Torah" (see *Yerushalmi Nedarim* 9:4). Since we have the opportunity to merit these *zechuyos*, *zechuyos* of *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*, which is a *klal gadol baTorah*, if we don't take advantage of it and instead act in the opposite manner, it is a more severe sin, and the punishment is greater.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:16): that the punishment for a sin is commensurate with the gravity of the mitzvah. The greater the mitzvah, the graver the punishment if one fails to upkeep it. He cites the mitzvos of *Korban Pesach* and *bris milah* as proof for this — the punishment for failing to perform these mitzvos is *kares*, even though one is merely refraining from doing them, *shev v'al taaseh*. The reason is because *Pesach* and *milah* are very important, great *mitzvos*: thirteen *brisos* (covenants) were enacted upon it, and *Pesach* is a remembrance for *Yetzias Mitzrayim* on *Pesach*, *Zman Cheiruseinu*, when we merited spiritual redemption from the 49 Gates of Impurity. Since these *mitzvos* are so important and grave, the punishment of one who fails to uphold them is much more severe.

Similarly, on Purim we have an increased obligation to fulfill "*v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*" and to

strengthen our *ahavas habriyos*. Indeed, the *chachamim* instituted the mitzvos of *mishloach manos* and *matanos l'evyonim* to increase love and brotherhood between fellow Jews. And since we have a special *chiyuv* and Heaven sends us special *siyatta d'Shemaya*, the mitzvah is greater — and the sin and punishment are commensurately greater, *Rachmana litzlan*. As we've said, the greater the mitzvah, the graver the punishment if one fails to upkeep it.

### An Auspicious Time for *Ahavas Hashem* and *Ahavas HaBriyos*

What's the reason for this? Why is there actually a special mitzvah of *ahavas habriyos* on Purim? Because on Purim, Klal Yisrael reaccepted the Torah out of love. Indeed, Chazal say (*Shabbos* 88a) that our acceptance of the Torah at Har Sinai was only out of fear — HaKadosh Baruch Hu *kafah aleihem har k'gigis* — held the mountain over them like a barrel and told them: "If you accept the Torah, good, but if not, here will be your burial place." The commentators explain (see the Maharal's *Tiferes Yisrael*, chap. 32) that this is not to be taken literally. Hashem didn't actually hold the mountain on top of them — the nation was under mental duress because intellectually they realized that it was worthwhile for them. It was as if their logic forced them to accept the Torah — their acceptance wasn't the result of *ahavas Hashem*, but because they understood that keeping the Torah would give them a happy life. This is the concept of "*har k'gigis*" — they were under mental duress, their intellect forced them to accept the Torah.

Now, all Klal Yisrael probably didn't fall into this category. Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen certainly accepted the Torah out of love. Chazal were talking about the general public; most of the *tzibbur* did not accept the Torah out of love; they accepted it because they realized intellectually that it wasn't worthwhile for them to live life without Torah. Purim was the miracle that led the general public to accept the Torah out of love, as the Gemara relates regarding the *pasuk* "*kimu v'kiblu haYehudim*, the Jews fulfilled and accepted" — they accepted that which they had already accepted. Rashi explains: This was the result of the love they felt due to the miracle performed for them. The miracle brought them to

love Hashem, to have *ahavas Hashem*, and they accepted the Torah not because it was “worthwhile,” but out of love!

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 8a) teaches us that if someone says, “[I give] this coin to *tzedakah* so that my son will live, or so that I will merit Olam HaBa,” he is a complete tzaddik. However, while he is a tzaddik, he is not a *chassid*, because he is doing the mitzvah since it’s worthwhile for him — so that his son will live, or so that he merits Olam HaBa. Now, both intentions are good, kosher intentions, so what’s wrong? However, he has an ulterior motive and he’s benefiting from the mitzvah, so his mitzvah is not due to *ahavas Hashem*. That’s why he is only called a “tzaddik,” and doesn’t receive a higher title. There are greater *madreigos* than tzaddik, as Chazal teach in *Pirkei Avos*, chap. 6: “And it equips him to be a tzaddik, *chassid*, *yashar*, and *ne’eman*.” The commentators explain (see *Ruach Chaim*) that each of these four *madreigos* is higher than the previous one, and tzaddik is the lowest level. So too at Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah because they realized that it was “worth their while,” not because they were infused with *ahavas Hashem*.

But on Purim, they accepted the Torah *b’ahavah*, out of love, due to *ahavas Hashem*. That was the reality because they saw the miracle — it was an overt miracle, a *neis galui*. Even though circumstances unfolded in a way that could have seemed natural, they understood that it was not nature at work, but a Heavenly miracle. And that brought about *ahavas Hashem*.

Since it was a time of Kabbalas HaTorah out of love, the *hashpaah* returns every Purim, and on every Purim there is special *siyatta d’Shemaya* for *ahavas Hashem*. ***Ahavas Hashem* is also a cause of *ahavas habriyos***, as we find in a number of places (for example: *Avos* 6:1-6): “Love Hashem, and love His creations.” That’s the order, that’s how it all starts. *Ahavas Hashem* causes a person to have *ahavas habriyos*. If so, Purim is also a time *mesugal* for achieving *ahavas habriyos* and there’s special *siyatta d’Shemaya* to this end. Indeed, on Purim we have the mitzvos of *mishloach manos* and *matanos l’evyonim*. If we don’t take advantage of this special time, and instead behave in the opposite manner, this is a grave sin.

### **The Great Zechus of Esek HaTorah on Purim**

The same is true regarding *bittul Torah* on Purim. On one hand, learning Torah on Purim is a tremendous *zechus*. I’ve heard stories from Chutz LaAretz about a *tzibbur* who strengthened themselves to have *hasmadah* on Purim and they were *zocheh* to *yeshuos*! Special *zechuyos* are needed to earn *yeshuos*, and in the *zechus* of *esek haTorah* on Purim, they merited their *yeshuah*.

Why is this so? There’s a *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (119:126): “*Eis laasos laHashem, heifeiru Torasecha*, It is a time to take action for Hashem, they have annulled Your Torah.” There a number of commentaries on this *pasuk*. Chazal give one (*Yerushalmi*, end of *Berachos*): when it is a time of “*heifeiru Torasecha*,” when there are people who are slacking off and are not involved in Torah study, it is “*eis laasos laHashem*,” a time to strengthen ourselves further in *esek haTorah*. They said, “If you see that people have significantly despaired from Torah, stand up and become stronger in Torah, and you will receive the reward of them all.” During a time when people are slacking off, that’s when you can merit special *zechuyos*. Anyone who is *mischazek* at such a time will receive the *sechar* everyone else should have received.

This is true, too, regarding *esek haTorah* on Purim. Not everyone learns on Purim is not a day when every single person sits and learns. Some people don’t even feel there is a *chiyuv* to learn on Purim; they don’t treat Torah with the proper respect. They don’t understand. And so, those who are *mechazek* themselves and are *oseik baTorah* on Purim will merit tremendous *zechuyos*, because they have to “go against the tide.” Furthermore, these people bring Klal Yisrael merit because Klal Yisrael’s existence is dependent on Torah study, as it states (*Yirmeyahu* 33:25): “If not for My covenant [that is learned] day and night, I would not have set the laws of heaven and earth.” If there would be a moment devoid of Torah, the world would be destroyed, as it says in *Nefesh HaChaim*, *Shaar* 4.

Now, *esek haTorah* does not only include time spent actually learning; it also includes whatever is needed in order to learn. This is like the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Deios* 3:3) that a person who sleeps so that he’ll have energy and strength to learn Torah and fulfill the mitzvos, is called an *eved Hashem* even as he sleeps. His sleep is service of Hashem — he is actually being *oived Hashem* as he sleeps, because the purpose of his sleep is *avodas Hashem*, so that he can be involved in Torah and perform the mitzvos. And so, his sleep too is called being involved in a mitzvah. What mitzvah? Any mitzvah that he fulfills afterwards.

In any case, when there’s a time of “*heifeiru Torasecha*,” someone who strengthens himself and learns Torah brings *zechuyos* down for all Klal Yisrael and he holds up the world. Therefore, one who learns Torah on Purim, on a day that one must go against the general atmosphere, will receive tremendous reward. Whenever a person faces anything that involves even a small challenge, and he goes against his nature to overcome that challenge, he will receive even greater reward! Just as Chazal say (*Avos* 5:23): “According to the effort is the reward.”

## The Joy of Siyum Seder Moed

Daf Yomi learners have just finished *Seder Moed*. They've finished *Maseches Chagigah*, the last *masechta* in *Seder Moed*, and many *siyums* and *seudahs* are being held. The joy of *simchas haTorah* abounds. There are few matters to discuss here.

First of all, the actual *simchah* of doing a mitzvah is something extremely important. Just as Rabbeinu Yonah writes (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 4:9): "The reward for joy over performance of a mitzvah increases and grows tremendously!" This is talking about the reward for the joy one has while fulfilling mitzvos, and when one makes a *siyum* because he's happy about *esek haTorah*, this is *simchah shel mitzvah*, which is a very great matter.

Joy is a sign of *chashivus*, of importance — it expresses the fact that we esteem Torah, and that's why we are happy. We're happy because we are *machshiv* Hashem's Torah, the *Torah HaKedoshah*. It's a tremendous *zechus* and a very high *madreigah* to be *machshiv* Torah.

Furthermore, aside from the advantage of an actual *siyum*, when we express our happiness and show how we are *machshiv* Torah, it becomes an impetus for more *shiurim* to begin, so more Torah *shiurim* are created and more people begin learning. This is *zikui harabbim*.

The greatness of the virtue of *simchah* is the feeling of *chashivus* it imparts, the fact that we're *machshiv* Torah. And the opposite behavior, failing to be *machshiv* Torah *chas v'shalom*, is a grave sin. Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 99a) attribute the following *pasuk* to a person who can learn Torah but does not: "He has despised the word of Hashem." The next part of that *pasuk* reads: "He will surely be cut off..." It is simply horrifying. Just as joy in mitzvah fulfillment brings about tremendous *zechuyos*, the flipside is true too: treating Torah with a lack of *chashivus* effects an extremely severe punishment, *Rachmana litzlan*. Indeed, Rabbeinu Yonah writes that the punishment for failing to uphold a mitzvah is parallel to the mitzvah's greatness.

### Zechuyos for Saving Ukrainian Jewry

There's another relevant matter — regarding our brethren in the Ukraine. Many Jews are suffering there greatly, and there have been tragedies and death as well. They need *rachmei Shamayim* and *zechuyos* to stop the suffering.

Actually, there are many sections of davening with requests for Klal Yisrael, such as *Re'eh na v'onyeinu*.

There we daven for Klal Yisrael who are suffering. **If the entire *tzibbur* would daven this *tefillah*, *Re'eh na v'onyeinu*, and daven with *kavanah* because it pains us, then this *tefillas tzibbur* would have helped. Indeed, it says: "Behold, Hashem is great and He will not despise..." (See *Berachos* 8.) We would have been *zocheh* to a *yeshuah*.**

Of course, it is a *madreigah* to daven because their pain causes us pain. And it certainly causes us pain — that's Klal Yisrael's nature. It's well known that when a Yid hears about another Yid suffering, even in a far-off place, it pains him and he sends help. Chazal say (*Yevamos* 79a) that there are three characteristics in the Jewish nation: they are merciful, bashful, and perform acts of lovingkindness. This means that this is Klal Yisrael's nature — they have mercy and do *chesed*, and one can help even more through his davening!

But it's not simple to daven with your whole heart, to actually feel love for your fellow as much as you love yourself. It's a very high *madreigah*.

The *zechus* of Torah is very great. We've already told the story about the Taz (cited in *Ruach Chaim*, *Avos* chap. 1) and a woman who came to ask him to daven for her son who was very sick. He was in middle of giving a *shiur* to his *talmidim*, and he told her that he could not stop their learning to daven, but the *zechus* of the Torah he's learning with his *talmidim* will be for the child's recovery. And it actually helped — the child was healed, because the *zechus* of Torah is even greater than *tefillah*! Of course, we need *tefillah* as well, but the merit of Torah is stronger than the merit of *tefillah*.

I also remember from my yeshivah days in Yeshivas Lomzhe. The *mashgiach* Rav Eliyahu Dushnitzer *zt"l* was a great *tzaddik* and a *gadol baTorah*. When people would ask him to daven for a sick person, he'd ask the *talmidim* to have in mind, or even say out loud, that their learning should be a *zechus* for the sick person. And it could help, the merit of *esek haTorah* can help. Of course, it obviously also depends on whether we beg for *rachamim* and whether it truly pains us.

And now that Daf Yomi learners have completed *Seder Moed*, those who are *osek* in Torah and are rejoice in it, create the *zechus* of a good, happy life for all of Klal Yisrael.

*Yehi ratzon* that we all merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* to perform all these good deeds and to have proper *kavanos*. May every single person in Klal Yisrael merit this!

