

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 Acharei Mos 5782

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The Yoke of Torah During Bein HaZemanim

We are reaching the end of *bein hazemanim* of Chodesh Nissan. During *bein hazemanim* people learn less, and the *zechuyos* of *esek haTorah* are reduced. That's the reality.

The truth is, even when an individual is not *osek baTorah*, changes occur. We learn in *Avos* (3:5): "Anyone who removes *ol Torah* from himself is given *ol malchus* and *ol derech erez*." That is, if someone was bearing the yoke of Torah and he removed it — for example, if he spent a specific amount of time with *ol Torah*, either learning or teaching, being *osek baTorah* in any way, and he stops — he is given the yoke of government and the yoke of *derech erez*, which is much worse. He receives other challenges.

Originally, he had to bear the yoke of Torah, which is difficult, but it involved the *zechus* of Torah. And if he eliminates this difficulty and removes the yoke of Torah, he receives other difficulties — much greater difficulties that do not come along with *zechuyos*. That's the reality.

I personally know such stories. I know someone who did *maasim tovim*. However, these good deeds required a certain degree of effort on his part, and for a certain reason, he wanted to relax and not work so hard. He stopped performing these *maasim tovim*. In the end, it was much worse; it was not a good ending, since he removed from himself the yoke of Torah and mitzvos.

This is true even regarding an individual who removes the yoke of Torah, so all the more so is it true when it comes to a *tzibbur*. While *bachurim* are *osek baTorah* in *yeshivos*, there is a tremendous group *baruch Hashem* learning Torah, and there is a *rifyon*, a slacking off, during *bein hazemanim*. Now we're lacking the *zechus*! Removing the yoke of Torah from the *tzibbur* is ostensibly more serious than when an individual removes *ol Torah*. That's why there have been tragedies during *bein hazemanim*. This seems to be the reason — the *tzibbur* is lacking the *zechus* of Torah.

The truth is, there are those who do need to rest, because during the *zman* they work very hard; and for them, keeping the *sedarim* and learning requires great effort, and they need the rest. But they are just individuals — not everyone needs it so much. Some people really do carry on with the same *sedarim* during *bein hazemanim* as they did during the *zman*. *Baruch Hashem*, we see people like this, for whom there is no difference between the *zman*

and *bein hazemanim*. But for many others, *bein hazemanim* causes a *rifyon*, and this is removing the yoke of Torah of a *tzibbur*, not just of individuals. It's *assur* to speak against a *tzibbur*, but this is the reality.

Therefore, it is a tremendous *zechus* for every person who maintains his Torah learning without *rifyon* during *bein hazemanim* — each person according to his abilities, whether he generally learns full time or not. If he has a steady learning session and he maintains his learning schedule as much as possible, it is a tremendous *zechus*.

Esek HaTorah Holds Up the World

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 68b) tells us that if not for the Torah, the heavens and earth would not exist. They learn this from the following *pasuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 33:25): "If not for My covenant [that is learned] day and night, the laws of heaven and earth I would not place." Rashi explains that the covenant refers to Torah study, as it is written, "And you shall speak in it day and night." "Covenant" is Torah, and without *esek haTorah*, "the laws of heaven and earth I would not place."

The *Nefesh HaChaim* expounded on this in *Shaar* 4. If the world would be void of Torah for just a moment, *chas v'shalom*, the entire Creation would not exist, because *esek haTorah* must be occurring day and night.

How is this possible? It's known that in Volozhin Yeshivah, the *bachurim* learned in shifts so that even a moment would not pass without Torah study. This is very rare, though. It's rare to have *esek haTorah* day and night in this manner.

The truth is, I heard, and I think it's already been explained (brought down in the name of the Chazon Ish *zt"l*) that *esek haTorah* includes anything necessary in order to learn Torah. Even when a person rests, if he's resting so that he'll have energy to continue learning, it's considered part of *esek haTorah*. After all, if he wouldn't rest, he wouldn't be able to continue learning, so that rest is a necessity.

The *mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (2:12) states: "And all your deeds shall be for the sake of Heaven," meaning that even a person's physical deeds should be *l'shem Shamayim*. The Rambam (*Hilchos Dei'os* 3:3) writes the following about this: If a person arranges his sleeping schedule *l'shem Shamayim*, then he is serving Hashem in his sleep. His sleep is *avodas Hashem*! That is, even if he could

presently learn more or perform other mitzvos, but he knows that if he goes to sleep later, he won't be able to function properly and keep all 613 mitzvos and do *maasim tovim*, so instead he goes to sleep earlier. His sleep is *avodas Hashem*! Even though he isn't doing anything as he sleeps, he's just sleeping — *shev v'al taaseh* — since he's going to sleep so that he can continue performing *maasim tovim*, he is serving Hashem through his sleep.

What *avodah* is he doing and what mitzvah is he fulfilling as he sleeps? Whatever he will be doing after he sleeps, because his sleep is for that purpose. For example, if he's sleeping so that he can learn and teach Torah, it's considered as if he's learning and teaching Torah as he sleeps. If he will be performing *chessed*, then it's considered as if he's doing those actual *chassadim* as he sleeps. This is what the Rambam meant when he wrote that one's sleep is considered *avodas Hashem*. Which mitzvah or *avodah*? Whatever mitzvos or *avodah* he intends on carrying out the next day.

Make the Family Happy on Shabbos

By the way, I want to mention something very important about Shabbos. How should a person behave on Shabbos? Shabbos is a day of rest and joy, as we say in the beginning of the Shabbos *zemiros* "*Menuchah v'simchah*." Shabbos is a day of *menuchah*, rest, along with *simchah*, joy. What kind of joy? A person himself should be joyful and he should cultivate a joyful atmosphere at home: *menuchah v'simchah*. There should be a pleasant atmosphere of joy. Shabbos is a holy day, and the *kedushah* of Shabbos requires both rest and joy.

A person can learn *mussar* and constantly be thinking about his *ruchniyus*, thinking that he wants to increase his *ruchniyus* levels. As a result of being so involved and busy with this, he becomes extremely serious and is not happy. But a person must be aware that Shabbos is not the time for this. The *kedushah* of Shabbos necessitates joy! Not excessive seriousness, joy! Of course, the joy cannot be joy of *prikas ol*; it must be happiness with a pleasant atmosphere. A pleasant atmosphere should be maintained during the Shabbos *seudahs*. This is what the *kedushah* of Shabbos requires. On Shabbos, the family is together, and one must make sure his family is happy.

This is included in the mitzvah of "*v'halachta b'drachav*" (*Devarim* 28:9), as Chazal say (*Shabbos* 133, *Sotah* 14 and more): "Just as He is merciful and gracious, you too shall be merciful and gracious. Just as HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the Father of orphans and Judge of widows and cares about others and makes them happy, a person must behave this way and resemble Hashem Yisbarach.

Man Was Created to Benefit Others

The son of Rav Chaim Volozhin wrote the introduction to his father's *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*, and in it, he writes the following about his father Rav Chaim: "And so he

would constantly tell me: this is the purpose of man. He was not created for himself, but only to benefit others as much as he is able." A person was not created for himself; he was created for others. A person's role in this world is to help others; that's why he was created — to help them in both physical and spiritual matters. This is a person's role, and this is how he achieves *sheleimus* — on Shabbos, during *bein hazemanim*, and at all times: he's here for others! Indeed, the *pasuk* states "*V'halachta b'drachav*," just as He is, so shall you be — act with *ahavas habriyos*.

The truth is, a person needs constant *chizuk* when it comes to Torah and *maasim tovim*, as Chazal say (*Berachos* 32b): "Four matters require *chizuk*..." *Maasim tovim* refers to *bein adam lachaveiro* — make sure to benefit your fellow as much as possible. How does one go about doing this? Who will teach him to do it? The way to do so is through *mussar sefarim*.

There are *mussar sefarim* that speak in detail about matters of *bein adam lachaveiro*, such as the *Tomer Devorah*. The *Tomer Devorah* speaks a lot about good *middos* and explains the 13 *middos* of *rachamim*: *Mi Keil kamocha*... A person must resemble his Creator by acting with these 13 *middos*. The *sefer* explains how to go about doing so, how a person can fulfill "just as He is, so shall you be" — how a person can act so that others will benefit from him.

It's well known that in Kelm, they would learn *Tomer Devorah* on Shabbos. (This is cited in *sefer Lev Eliyahu*, by Rav Elya Lopian *zt"l* [vol. 1, p. 31, 191]: "In Kelm, on Leil Shabbos Kodesh between Kabbalas Shabbos and Maariv, they'd learn *Tomer Devorah*. The reason for this is because the *sefer* speaks in great depth about "*v'halachta b'drachav*." The Alter said that *Tomer Devorah* is the *Shulchan Aruch* of *middos tovos*. There are other *sifrei mussar* that make a person bitter as he learns, and even if he becomes happy later, it is questionable whether or not it's worthwhile to learn these *sefarim* on Shabbos. *Tomer Devorah* is not like this, though.")

Throughout the week, there are many *mussar sefarim* that give a person *chizuk* in *yiras Shamayim* and *emunah*, but on Shabbos, learn *Tomer Devorah*, which is about *middos tovos*, in order to benefit others. This is how one should conduct himself on Shabbos — with rest and joy.

I think I once heard that when an unfamiliar person would come to Kelm, everyone would greet him cheerfully and ask how he's doing, and how could they help him — as if he were their friend. And then the newcomer would wonder how everyone knows him. This is the meaning of "for others," and this is how our conduct should be all week long — "For others!"

Receive Everyone's Reward

There is a *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (119:126): "It is a time to take action for Hashem, they have made void Your Torah." The *Yerushalmi* at the end of *Berachos* says:

“Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai taught: If you see that people have despaired of learning Torah, stand up and strengthen it and you will receive the reward of them all. What’s the proof? ‘They have made void your Torah, it is a time to take action for Hashem.’” This is discussing a time of “they have made void your Torah,” a time when the *tzibbur* is not acting according to the Torah, and there’s a single individual who is not influenced by them. This person goes against the tide and does act according to the Torah — and even though people are naturally influenced by their surroundings, this person defies his surroundings. He is *zocheh* to receive the reward “of them all.”

And what is the reward “of them all”? I heard from Rav E.E. Dessler zt”l (see *Michtav MeEliyahu* vol. 4, p.118), about the following *mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (5:2): “There are ten generations from Adam to Noach... as all the generations had been angering Him until He brought the waters of the Mabul upon them. There are ten generations from Noach to Avraham... as all the generations had been angering Him until Avraham came and received the reward for them all.”

That is, during the world’s first ten generations, they were all angering Hashem, and in the end, Hashem brought the waters of the Mabul upon them. However, the next ten generations also angered Hashem, until Avraham Avinu came and corrected whatever they ruined. Avraham Avinu publicized the concept of *emunah* and he was accepted throughout the world, as the *pasuk* states (*Bereishis* 23:6): “You are a G-dly prince in our midst.” He would bring guests to his home and teach *emunah* (see *Sotah* 10b), and thus he saved the entire world — they were not punished like the first ten generations.

This is why Avraham Avinu received the “reward of them all.” This would be the amount of reward they would have all received, had they been *tzaddikim*. Now, if all ten generations would have been *tzaddikim*, that would have been extraordinary great levels of reward — as every single *tzaddik* receives tremendous *sechar* in this world and in Gan Eden. It’s impossible to fathom the pleasures, as the *pasuk* states (*Yeshayah* 64:3): “No eye has seen it, Hashem, aside from You.” Avraham Avinu received it all, the reward of ten generations, as if they were all *tzaddikim*.

Stand Up Against the Influence of Your Environment

The reason for this is because after those ten generations were angering Hashem, when Avraham Avinu came, he had to exert lots of effort to go against the tide, to stand up against his environment and not only not be influenced by them, but to influence them in the opposite direction. This requires great effort and is a great *nisayon*. Indeed, Chazal say (*Avos* 5:3): “Avraham Avinu was tested with ten tests.” Each test added another level to his *madreigah*, as the Ramban (*Bereishis* 22) explains that a *nisayon*

involves transforming passive strengths into action, activating one’s *kochos hanefesh* for *k’vod Shamayim*.

If a person shows up after ten generations of *avodah zarah* and impurity, and he can stand up against it and not be influenced by society, and not only that, he influences the entire world to have *emunah*, *yiras Shamayim* and good *middos*, despite ten generation’s worth of negative *hashpaah*, he needs tremendous strength. It is a tremendous *nisayon*.

That’s why Avraham received the reward of them all — the reward of all ten generations, as if they had all been *tzaddikim*. If they had been *tzaddikim* and been doing *maasim tovim*, they would have had a lot of *sechar* in Olam HaBa and Gan Eden. And Avraham was *zocheh* and received all this *sechar* because he withstood his test.

We can similarly explain the *pasuk* “It is a time to take action for Hashem, they have made void Your Torah.” If, at time that there’s a *rifyon*, a slacking off, in the *tzibbur*, and one person stands up against the influence of those who are weak, he receives the reward of them all. Again, this is the reward that they could have received had they been *tzaddikim*, which is tremendous. The person who stands strong receives the generation’s collective reward — he deserves the reward of them all for standing firm in his *nisayon* and refraining from becoming influenced from his surroundings.

Every single one of us, no matter where he is, can have a *hashpaah*. A person is automatically influenced by his surroundings, but if he stands up against this influence, he can become stronger than the people around him, even just a little better! Every little drop elevates a person more. Even a small amount is tremendous, because the *maalah* of a small amount in *ruchniyus* cannot be fathomed.

The way to do this is by learning *mussar*. *Mussar sefarim* give a person *yiras Shamayim*, good *middos*, *emunah*, whatever is necessary to achieve *sheleimus haadam*. The world stands on three things: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemillus chassadim* (*Avos* 1:2): Torah; *avodah*, which is *emunah*; and *chessed* with *ahavas habriyos*.

There are many *madreigos* to *v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (chap. 11) that one’s love of his fellow must be “*kamocha mamash*,” literally like yourself. While there are many challenges hindering this, the *Mesillas Yesharim* discusses it at length. It’s very important to see what he says. Additionally, *mussar sefarim* like the *Mesillas Yesharim* give us clarity and guide us how to live life in this world and how to merit *zechuyos*.

B’ezras Hashem, we all need *chizuk*, every single person needs *chizuk*. May we all be *zocheh* to *siyatta d’Shemaya* to strengthen ourselves in whatever needs *chizuk*, and to have success in *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*.

Rabbeinu Maran Rosh HaYeshivah *shlita*'s Address at the ceremony in his home marking the opening of Yeshivas Migdal Oz

During Bein HaZemanim, we are lacking the *zechus haTorah*. There were terrorist attacks and fatal tragedies during *bein hazemanim*. "If not for My covenant day and night, I would not have set the statutes of heaven and earth" (*Yirmeyahu* 33:25). Rav Chaim Volozhiner says in *Nefesh HaChaim* (4:11) that if there would be even a second without any Torah learning in the world, the entire Creation would cease to exist. *Esek haTorah* includes whatever is necessary for learning Torah, as the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Dei'os* 3:3), that if a person sleeps *l'shem Shamayim*, in order to fulfill the 613 mitzvos, then his sleep is *avodas Hashem*. He is serving Hashem as he sleeps.

If now, during *bein hazemanim*, we have gathered here and are involved in *esek haTorah*, building another yeshivah, another *makom Torah*, another *kadosh* place that will be an influence of sanctity, we are being *osek baTorah*. This is called *esek haTorah*, as it's necessary in order to upkeep Torah. Therefore, it is wonderful that now, during *bein hazemanim*, we are busy with *esek haTorah*, which protects all of Klal Yisrael.

B'ezras Hashem, there should be *siyatta d'Shemaya* for this new *makom Torah*. It should be a place of Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and *middos tovos*, and it will surely have an influence on its surroundings, and on the entire generation. The Chazon Ish writes (*Iggeres Chazon Ish* vol. 3, 62), that a true *baal Torah* has an influence on his surroundings. Even an individual who is a true *baal Torah* has a visible influence on his surroundings, and there is a hidden *hashpaah* in more distant areas as well. *Kal v'chomer* when there is a *tzibbur* learning Torah, who will learn Torah *b'ezras Hashem*, Torah with *yiras Shamayim* and *middos tovos*, it will surely have a visible and hidden influence on the entire world, on all Klal Yisrael. May Hashem have mercy on us and give us all *siyatta d'Shemaya* for whatever we need. *Zechuyos* for all of Klal Yisrael, *zechuyos* of Torah — all possible *zechuyos*, *b'ezras Hashem*.

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