

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 Kedoshim 5782

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Sefirah — An Auspicious Time for Ahavas Torah

We are presently in middle of Sefiras HaOmer. The *Sefer HaChinuch* writes (mitzvah 306) that when Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim, they knew that the point of leaving Mitzrayim was Kabbalas HaTorah. They yearned for the long-awaited day of Kabbalas HaTorah, and counted the days — as every passing day brought them closer to Kabbalas HaTorah.

There was a great yearning and deep desire to receive the Torah at Har Sinai, when they would hear the voice of Hashem, along with thunder, lightning, and a heavy cloud atop the mountain. They heard the first two Dibros, “*Anochi*,” and “*Lo yih'yeh lachem*” from Hashem’s mouth (*Makkos* 24a), and they waited with great anticipation for the day of Kabbalas HaTorah.

This is the counting; it starts on the second day of Pesach and concludes on Shavuos, when Klal Yisrael counted the days, as each passing day brought them closer to Kabbalas HaTorah. We too, count these days, because we too, are waiting for Kabbalas HaTorah.

There’s another special thing about Sefirah. All our Yamim Tovim fall out on a certain day of the month. For example, Pesach is always on 15 Nissan, Rosh Hashanah on 1 Tishrei, Yom Kippur on 10 Tishrei, and Sukkos is always on 15 Tishrei. All the Yamim Tovim fall out on a specific day of the month, always. Shavuos, however, is different. Shavuos falls out on the “fiftieth day” of Sefiras HaOmer, after counting forty-nine

days of the Omer. Indeed, the Gemara states (*Rosh Hashanah* 6b): “Atzeres is sometimes on the 5th, sometimes on the 6th, sometimes on the 7th.” It depends on whether Nissan and Iyar are full months (30-day months) or not (29-day months), or if one is full and one is not. It does not depend on the actual date; it follows the count of Sefiras HaOmer and falls out on the fiftieth day.

The Yom Tov of Shavuos is established based on our preparation for Kabbalas HaTorah, a fifty-day preparation. We have forty-nine days of Sefirah, and Shavuos is on the fiftieth day. The actual date doesn’t matter, the counting and preparation for Torah is what’s important.

As is well known, every year, all the spiritual *hashpa'os* that Klal Yisrael experienced descend to our world on the same date they originally occurred. Since there was a *hashpaah* of *ahavas Torah* during the days of Sefirah, every year during these days, this *hashpaah* of *ahavas Torah* returns. The days of Sefiras HaOmer are an auspicious time to acquire *ahavas Torah*, with deep yearning for Torah — of course, this is true only if one is *osek baTorah*. If one is not *osek baTorah*, he loses the *hashpaah*. But in any case, during Sefirah, the acquisition of *ahavas Torah* is more accessible.

May Hashem have mercy on us and may we all merit, all Klal Yisrael, to be ready with all the *madreigos* and *zechuyos* for success in Torah. May it be His will.

Q and A with the Rabbanim of Lev Shomei’a Organization In Advance of the Yearly Convention for Mechanchim and Marbitzei Torah in Eretz Yisrael

Question: There are many *roshei yeshivos*, *ram'im* and *mashgichim* who will be coming to the Lev Shomei’a convention. They want to learn about and know the correct manner of interacting with their *talmidim* in yeshivah. We have a few questions we’d like to ask the Rosh Yeshivah *shlita*, so that everyone can hear and know how to act and what to do. The main topic we’ll be focusing on this year is as follows: *Baruch Hashem*, nowadays, there are many *bachurim* who learn very well, and they really are connected to the learning, but when it comes to the proper decorum and behavior of a ben Torah, they are not so special, there’s a little weakness in that realm.

In the past, the Rosh Yeshivah *shlita* discussed — and we’ve heard from Gedolei Yisrael in previous generations — that it would be beneficial if the *ram'im* themselves would speak about the topic of *yiras Shamayim* and *mussar*...

Rabbeinu shlita: And good middos.

Question: It’s important that the *ram'im* discuss that too.

Rabbeinu shlita: Yes, absolutely. But not everyone can, it’s not something that every person is well-suited for, not every *ra"m* knows how to do it with *darchei no'am*, pleasantly; with *hasbarah*, explaining it well.

Question: The *ram'im* certainly want to speak about it, and they want to hear the Rosh Yeshivah *shlita*’s suggestions: how should they approach the issues, how should they prepare, and what they should discuss.

Rabbeinu shlita: What’s most important is to encourage the *bachurim*. It shouldn’t be presented as *mussar*, it should be encouragement: you can do it, you can do it, you can do it.

Sometimes, it’s important to speak to a specific *talmid* privately and to tell him: It will be worth it for you to change, you’ll make a good name for yourself, because your good name depends on your behavior. But it must be privately,

not in public! If a *talmid* needs special *chizuk*, he must be spoken to privately; he must be told that it's worthwhile for him, that it's for his own good.

Question: But the actual idea the Rosh Yeshivah *shlita* mentioned about speaking in a way that the *bachur* feels it is worth his while to change — is it preferable to mention this idea individually, or can this be brought up in public?

Rabbeinu shlita: **It can be mentioned in public, because we aren't talking about a specific *bachur* here, so it won't insult anyone.**

Question: And the main thing is to encourage the *bachurim* and speak positively?

Rabbeinu shlita: **Yes, positive. For example, tell them that every *bachur* can know Shas, but it has to be approached with *yishuv hadaas* and without any pressure.**

Question: Is this really the *ra"m*'s responsibility? If a *ra"m* is well-suited for this and can speak properly, is he obligated to do so?

Rabbeinu shlita: **Yes. A *ra"m* must be *ohev es habriyos* (and then he can bring them close to Torah, as it states in *Avos* chap. 1). He must have *ahavas habriyos*. If he does not, then he falls into the category of “*ein hakapdan melameid, one who is excessively strict may not teach*” (*Avos* 2:5).**

Question: That means that if he loves his *talmidim*, he'll surely do it?

Rabbeinu shlita: **He can be *mashpia*, he can have an influence, with love.**

Question: Does that mean that if presenting this concept ends up taking a *ra"m* a long time, because he has to prepare what he's going to say — not only does he have to prepare the *shiur*, he also has to prepare some *divrei mussar* —he is still required to do so?

Rabbeinu shlita: **Correct. But it should not be *tochachah*, rebuke. It must be presented in an explanatory manner and with encouragement — telling the *bachurim* that it can be done, and it's worthwhile. Not with *tochachah*.**

Question: How long should the *ra"m* speak?

Rabbeinu shlita: **As long as he needs, whatever he thinks, but it doesn't have to be very long. He should be able to feel, he knows his *talmidim*.**

Question: Is there a difference between *yeshivah ketanah* (*mesivta*) and *yeshivah gedolah* regarding the *ra"m*'s requirements, and how much or how often he should be discussing this concept?

Rabbeinu shlita: **No difference. It's important to discuss this in *cheder* too. And encouragement is necessary in *cheder* too, the child must feel that he can do it and that he'll have the energy for it, because if a child sees that he's not succeeding and feels like he can't do it, he gives up, and that's not right.**

Question: There's more time in *yeshivah ketanah*, because the *shiurim* are longer, but the *shiurim* are shorter in *yeshivah gedolah*, and the *ra"m* feels like he doesn't even have enough time to say his *shiur*...

Rabbeinu shlita: **The truth is, the *shiur* should be easy so that everyone can understand it. Everyone should be able to understand and enjoy the *shiur*, and you should involve the *talmidim* in the *shiur* so everyone can see and feel that he knows it. The *ra"m* should ask a *kasha* and wait for a *teiretz*. Everyone should feel that he can give a *teiretz*.**

Question: But when we're talking about *mussar*, is it *k'dai* that a *ra"m* in *yeshivah gedolah* should give *mussar* in his *shiur*?

Rabbeinu shlita: **A little bit, yes.**

Question: Sometimes there are unusual circumstances, like a terror attack *chas v'shalom*, or something significant and everyone's talking about it. Is it proper for the *ra"m* to share with his *talmidim* the Torah's *hashkafah* on this matter?

Rabbeinu shlita: **But he has to know what to say and how to say it, in the correct manner. It's not simple, one needs *havanah* in these matters to know what to say and what not to say.**

Question: Usually when things like this happen, the *gedolim* issue a letter, so the *ra"m* can use that letter and expand on it as he sees fit...

Rabbeinu shlita: **Right, yes.**

Question: Is it necessary and proper for the *ra"m* to speak about it?

Rabbeinu shlita: **Well, it does go public in any case, doesn't it?**

Question: It usually is publicized, but the *bachurim* don't always understand the circumstances enough, and if the *ra"m* discusses it and explains the Torah *hashkafah* in the matter, it may be beneficial.

Rabbeinu shlita: **Right, it's important to explain a little.**

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Question: The Rosh Yeshivah *shlita* said many times at Lev Shomei'a conventions that a *bachur* should learn what interests him. If it's *mussar*, he should choose a *sefer* that he can connect with, and in Gemara as well, he should learn whatever interests him.

Rabbeinu shlita: **In an interesting way. Not “whatever” interests him, but in “the way” that interests him. The *tzuras halimud*, the way he learns, should be interesting.**

Question: What is the Rosh Yeshivah emphasizing by “the way” he learns?

Rabbeinu shlita: **Take for example, a *bachur* who feels that delving deeply into *sugyos* is boring, and he enjoys learning when it's not *b'oimek*. When he learns Gemara and Rashi he enjoys it; it's interesting and it entices him**

to learn more and more. Or even with Tosfos — all the Tosfosim or just some of them. And sometimes it's difficult and boring, so he has to learn in a way that's interesting. Each person has to learn in a way that fascinates him.

Question: When it comes to learning Gemara, of course the *bachur* has to learn what the yeshivah's learning, but when it comes to *mussar*, can the *bachur* choose a *mussar sefer* that interests him?

Rabbeinu shlita: **There are four *mussar sefarim*: Chovos HaLevavos, Shaarei Teshuvah, Mesillas Yesharim, and Orchos Tzaddikim. These are four accepted *sefarim* that are very interesting. They can choose from these four; each person can choose a chapter or a section that's interesting.**

Question: There are some esteemed *roshei yeshivah* who mentioned that there are *bachurim* who lack the *maalah* and understanding of what a Yid is. They suggested that perhaps it would be a good idea to learn the Ramchal's *Derech Hashem*, and that perhaps *ram"im* or *mashgichim* can be involved and give *shiurim* in this *sefer*.

Rabbeinu shlita: **I don't know. It's a tough question. Tzarich iyun. It's important to speak about everything in the *shmuessin*, to speak about all *inyanei emunah*, to give the *bachurim chizuk* in *yiras Shamayim*, to speak about Gehinnom, to strengthen their *emunah peshutah* that there is Gan Eden and Gehinnom. It's important to speak about it — that there's Gehinnom and Gan Eden, that there's *schar* and *onesh*, all the Rambam's 13 *Ikrei Emunah*.**

Question: One of the *ziknei roshei yeshivah* related that he made a coming-on-time-to-davening-and-*sefer* campaign. He asked the *bachurim* what they'd want for a prize, and basically they all asked for a personal connection...

Rabbeinu shlita: **A personal connection with the staff members really is important. It gives the *talmid* more *koach*.**

Question: This same rosh yeshivah related that on the first Shabbos of *bein hazemanim*, he went away for Shabbos with the *bachurim*. They sat with him until 3:00 a.m. and asked him all sorts of questions about the yeshivah's policies and how things worked. Some time later, a *bachur* who had already left their yeshivah heard about this, and he said that had he had such an opportunity while he was still in yeshivah, he would have not left yeshivah... The *bachurim* are begging for connections — as the Rosh Yeshivah mentioned about how important a connection is.

Rabbeinu shlita: **I personally know about a *bachur* who had decided to leave his yeshivah for good after Shabbos. That Friday night when everyone wished the *rabbanim* "gut Shabbos," another *bachur* came over to him and asked how he was doing. Because of this, he decided to stay in yeshivah.**

Question: In that case, it was a *bachur* who reached out to him...

Rabbeinu shlita: **Yes. And in that *zechus*, he stayed in yeshivah. That's why a *kesher* is so important, it's so important to give the other person a good feeling.**

Question: The *ram"im* are paid to give a Gemara *shiur*. Does their salary also require them to deliver *mussar*?

Rabbeinu shlita: **It's an obligation that has nothing to do with their salary. The salary is not what obligates them; it's a *chiyuv*. But because they need *parnasah*, they have no choice and they also need a salary. But it's not the salary that obligates them, they have an obligation to fill even without the salary!**

Question: Should the *roshei yeshivos* be making sure the *ram"im* include *mussar* in their *shiurim*, or should it be coming from the *ram"im* on their own?

Rabbeinu shlita: **Explain to them that it's worthwhile, but don't force them. It's not *shayach* with pressure.**

Question: But they should ask, they should try.

Rabbeinu shlita: **Yes, they should suggest that it's worthwhile and tell them it's a *zechus*. But without pressure. One cannot have an influence on another through force.**

Question: It's not considered *bittul Torah*? Some people feel that it's *inyanei chullin* to discuss *mussar*.

Rabbeinu shlita: **A *mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* tells us that Torah is acquired through *mi'ut sichah*, minimizing speech. It's brought down in the name of the Gra that we do need *mi'ut*, minimal speech... A little *sichas chullin*. I know of and am familiar with such things, that people do need to talk a little and without it, they don't feel well.**

Question: Is that referring to what Chazal say about "*sichas chullin* of *talmidei chachamim* requires *limud*"?

Rabbeinu shlita: **That's something else. That's Torah, that's not *sichah*, speaking. But one also needs minimal speech of *devarim b'teilim*. Of course, there's also a *madreigah* of "kol hayom hi sichasi, I speak in it all day long." That's a *madreigah* — if "mah ahavti Torasecha, how I love Your Torah."**

Question: Does the *ra"m* need to find time to go over to shy *bachurim* who don't approach him on their own?

Rabbeinu shlita: **He should call them over, in a pleasant manner, in a way that will give them a good feeling.**

Question: In *yeshivah ketanah* and in *yeshivah gedolah*?

Rabbeinu shlita: **Yes, it's very important. A *talmid* should feel good, he should feel that the staff thinks about him and respects him. It's imperative. However, there are *talmidim* who feel good in any case, but not everyone does. There are some *bachurim* who don't feel good and it's imperative to give them a good feeling.**

Question: Can the Rosh Yeshivah give a *brachah* to the Lev Shomei'a organization and all the participants in this convention?

Rabbeinu shlita: ***Siyatta d'Shemaya* and *hatzlachah* in *zikkui harabbim*.**

Maran Sar HaTorah ztvk"l's Petirah — Let Us Strengthen Ourselves in the Three Pillars

The lack is obvious. There's no doubt about what we're missing, and there's no need to go into detail about what's missing. We are missing the protector of our generation, someone like him protects the generation, and now that protection is lacking.

What's the *eitzah*? It depends on us; it depends on every single one of us. We must strengthen ourselves in matters that need *chizuk*, which are primarily three things: *Torah*, *avodah*, and *gemillus chasadim*. The world stands on these three things.

Torah — *esek haTorah*. We must strengthen ourselves in *esek haTorah*, and the simplest way to do so is with time: utilizing one's time properly, one minute and another minute. *Talmud Torah* is equal to all other mitzvos. It's brought down in the name of the Gra that every single word of Torah is a mitzvah. Every word is another mitzvah, *k'neged kulam*! Just strengthen yourselves in using time wisely for Torah. Aside from *chizuk* in quantity, *chizuk* in quality is also important. Rav Chaim Brisker says that one can be "*osek baTorah* and not be *osek*." This is true regarding quality as well. If possible, a person should learn with better quality, with greater *havanah* — every single person is obligated to do so, according to his individual abilities. He must use his time wisely for Torah and use his energy wisely for Torah too, and it should all be done with greater *havanah*.

The mitzvah of *Talmud Torah* includes learning and teaching. *Zikui harabbim* in Torah. Every person is obligated based on the possibilities available to him. Supporting Torah is also a tremendous thing. If someone who supports Torah, all the Torah learned in his *zechus* belongs to him. And there are many stories about this, but there's no time now for them.

Avodah — this is *tefillah* and *emunah*, the levels of *emunah*. There are many *madreigos* in *emunah*. "I am Hashem Your G-d Who took you out of Mitzrayim" — that's believing that everything is in Heaven's hands, *hakol bi'dei Shamayim*. Every single thing. A person who lives with this *emunah* will have a very happy, fortunate life, a totally different life. He won't hold a grudge against anyone, because he knows everything is from *Shamayim*, and "whatever the Merciful One does is for the good." *Tefillah*, too, is part of *avodah*. *Tefillah* with *emunah* is totally different, and it all depends on one's level of *emunah*.

Gemillus chasadim — *ahavas habriyos*, *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho*. There are many *madreigos* in this as well. There's *ahavas habriyos* and *ahavas chesed*, up till the level of Avraham Avinu who sat in the doorway of his tent, in the heat of the day, on the third day after his *milah* and waited for guests. Why? Because he missed doing *chessed* and he felt bad without *chessed*. Hashem performed a miracle and sent him angels in the form of men so that he would think he's doing *chessed*. There are many levels of *chessed*. Every single person must improve and strengthen himself in these three matters.

How does one strengthen himself? The only way to do so is by learning *mussar* daily. Every single person must learn a *sefer* that interests him, because if it's boring, it will not have a *hashpaah* on him. Choose an interesting section, or an interesting chapter, it doesn't matter which *sefer*; all *mussar sefarim* are good. But *Mesillas Yesharim* is the best, as Rav Chaim Volozhin told us. In any case, the path to *chizuk* is through learning *mussar* every day.

Mussar also provides us with a happy, fortunate life, truly happy life. *Ashrecha ba'olam hazeh*, as they say in *Avos*: "This is the path of Torah... and toil in Torah, and if you do so, *ashrecha ba'olam hazeh*." *Toras hayirah*, *mussar*, *yiras Shamayim*, is what is most important, because it is not simple. It's against human nature. If one does not strengthen himself in this, he falls.

Hashem should have mercy on every single one of us, may we be *zocheh* to fulfill all our obligations, and may we merit *hatzlachah* in whatever we need. The *hisorerus* from this gathering should be *l'illui nishmas* Rav Chaim zt"l; this also gives Rav Chaim *zechuyos*. Because if in his *zechus*, due to his *petirah*, there is such *hisorerus*, it gives the *niftar zechuyos*. There are many proofs for this, but now is not the time to discuss them. *Hashem yaazor* that we all have a good, happy life, and may we fulfill all our obligations.

Excerpts from Rabbeinu *shlita*'s address at Kupat HaIr's gathering of Gedolei haDor in his home, Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan

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להצלחת בניהם ובנותיהם
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darkei.hachizuk@gmail.com

The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va'ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein's home.