

Darkei HaChizuk

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

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Taamu U're'u Ki Tov Hashem

Rabbeinu shlita's *sichah* at the beginning of the *zman* in Yeshivas Ponevez

Curiosity about Mundane Matters — *Batalah*

Curiosity is part of human nature — people are naturally curious; they want to keep up on the news. They want to know what's going on in America, what's going on throughout the world — even when it has nothing to do with them at all. They just want to know what happened. Not only do they want to know what will happen, they want to know what happened already. That's how newspapers keep up their sales — they satiate the human nature of curiosity. But what's the benefit from all this? No benefit can be gained from curiosity. Does it make a difference to a person if he's in the know or not? It does not. But that's human nature — we are curious.

If so, if we, *bnei Torah*, give in to our nature of curiosity and let it control us, it will be *batalah* and *bittul Torah*. After all, there is no benefit from knowing what happened or what's going on in the world. For us, it is irrelevant and there's no benefit from knowing. Therefore, this curiosity to be up-to-date about the news is *bittul Torah*.

Use Curiosity for Divrei Torah

On the other hand, curiosity can also be good. Being curious to know what the Gemara says, what Rashi says, what Tosfos says, what the Rishonim and Achronim say, what the Ramban says, and what the Rashba says. What do the Chazon Ish and the Brisker Rav say, what do Gedolei Torah say — curiosity for Torah! That's excellent curiosity and it's a very good thing; it's *esek haTorah*, *Ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*. Chazal say (*Avos* chap. 6), "...and you toil in Torah.

And if you do so, *ashrecha*." This gives you a happy life.

What's the *eitzah*? How can a person achieve this? You need *chizuk*. But how does one attain *chizuk*? After all, being curious is human nature; how can we overcome this nature? The only way is through *chizuk*, but how? **The only *eitzah* is to learn *mussar sefarim***, because *mussar sefarim* tell us what the duties of our heart are, how the Torah obligates a Jewish heart to act. *Mussar sefarim* tell us how to act according to the Torah, how to train our hearts to act according to the Torah. Not just speech and actions, but also heart, a heart according to the Torah, a heart with *ahavas habriyos*, with *simchah shel mitzvah*, with *ahavas Torah*, *ahavas esek haTorah*, which brings a person to "*ashrecha baOlam haZeh*."

This is the way to do it — take your nature for curiosity and direct it toward curiosity of Torah, which brings you to *ashrecha baOlam haZeh*. However, this is against human nature and we need *chizuk* to succeed. The only *eitzah* is to learn *mussar sefarim*, which give us *chizuk* and help us understand what is truly worthwhile, and what gives us happiness in this world. All the *mussar sefarim*.

Mussar Sefarim Bring Us to Shleimus and Happiness

There are many *mussar sefarim*. The yeshivos learn from four well known *sefarim*: *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Mesillas Yesharim*, *Shaarei*

Teshuvah, and *Orchos Tzaddikim*. And there are many more, such as *Pele Yo'etz* which is really uplifting. **“*Taamu u're'u ki tov Hashem — taste (experience it) and see that Hashem is good!*”** Anyone who did not taste the flavor of *mussar* does not know what it is, he doesn't know what *mussar sefarim* taste like, and he's afraid. Some people are actually scared to learn *mussar*, but it's not frightening. To the contrary, it gives you a good life, a *me'ushar* life. *Ashrecha baOlam haZeh*, because *mussar* teaches a person how to achieve *sheleimus*.

Man naturally is not perfect; a person was not born with *sheleimus*. The *pasuk* states (*Iyov* 11:12), “[From] a wild donkey, a man will be born.” The *baalei mussar* explain that by nature, man is a wild donkey, and the “*mensch*” within him is still waiting to be born. He's not a man yet — and how does he become a man? By learning *mussar*!

As is known, learning *mussar* provides a person with a happy life. I personally know many families who experienced this. The father began learning *mussar*, and the family suddenly noticed that his personality changed. They asked him: What happened? How did you change? He became a totally different person, the atmosphere at home became more pleasant, their life became a different life, a happy life. And what made this all happen? He started learning *mussar*! This is the benefit of *mussar sefarim*, they give man a *madreigah*, and not everyone is aware of this. But as we said, “*taste (experience it) and see that Hashem is good.*” This is how a person attains *chizuk*.

Learning Mussar on a Steady Basis

Therefore, *mussar seder* in yeshivos is not *middas chassidus*, it is a necessity for *ruchniyus*. A person who doesn't have a steady *mussar seder* is a different type of person. If he does have a steady *mussar seder*, he changes and becomes someone else; he becomes a *baal madreigah*. He achieves another *madreigah* and yet another *madreigah* every single day. One who is diligent about learning *mussar* on a daily, steady basis, with *yishuv hadaas* and without

tension, will rise in *madreigah* daily, without unusual efforts and without difficulties.

Learn what interests you, because if learning is boring, it will not have a *hashpaah*. It's interesting to know what the *Mesillas Yesharim* says — it's a *sefer* with 26 chapters, and it's interesting to know what he says and what he is *mechadesh*. The same is true of *Chovos HaLevavos*, which is comprised of 10 Gates, and of *Shaarei Teshuvah*, which has 4 Gates — what are they *mechadesh*? And this gives a person a happy, *me'ushar* life. *Taamu u're'u ki tov Hashem!*

The Gemara states (*Brachos* 32b), “Four matters require *chizuk*, *Torah*, *ma'asim tovim* etc.” Rashi explains what “*chizuk*” means: “A person should strengthen himself in them constantly, with all his strength.” If it is not constant, and a person takes a break one day, there will already be a decline. That is human nature — we have a *yetzer hara* and we need constant *chizuk* against it. “Constantly” means daily, but Rashi adds that it must also be done “with all his strength.” That is, one should invest all his physical *kochos* and *kochos hanefesh* — each person based on his abilities. Pushing oneself past his abilities is harmful; exerting oneself beyond his abilities causes damage. But if a person does what he can — as much as he can — if he is *osek* in *chizuk* constantly, then he will rise from one *madreigah* to the next every day, and he will be increasingly uplifted every single day.

Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu that we are aware of this, that we have Rashi who teaches us this *derech*, that we have *mussar sefarim*. The Chafetz Chaim wrote about his times (*Beis Yisrael* chap. 9) that “in our days, we see clearly that there's no choice. A *mussar seder* in *yeshivos* is imperative for the *bachurim's ruchniyus*.” There's no other *eitzah*, setting a steady *mussar seder* is the only way, and that's how one will have success in *ruchniyus*. Without *mussar*, a person will fall, but with a daily *sefer*, not only won't he fall, he will actually rise! Another *madreigah* is added every single day, and the person himself doesn't even realize that he's changing, but he is. He becomes a new

biryah, a new creation. This is why it's so important to have a *mussar seder* in yeshivah; it's not a *middas chassidus*.

Coming to Be Purified — One Needs Zechuyos to Succeed

Chazal have told us already (*Yoma* 38b), "One who comes to be purified is helped." If someone comes to be purified, and wants to improve his *ruchniyus*, *Shamayim* will help him and give him *siyatta d'Shemaya*. How does a person "come to be purified"? By performing an action. And what kind of action is needed in order to be purified? Learning *mussar*! Someone who learns *mussar* during *mussar seder* is considered "one who comes to be purified," and he receives *siyatta d'Shemaya*. After all, one needs *zechuyos* to receive *siyatta d'Shemaya*, and since he has come to be purified, and exerts effort by learning *mussar*, that is the *zechus* he needs for *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

So too, any success in *ruchniyus* is dependent on *zechuyos*. For example, if someone has a *ruchniyus*-related influence on others, such as if he's *mashpia* Torah or *yiras Shamayim* and *middos tovos* on others, know that every *hashpa'ah* a person has on others is due to prior *zechuyos*. Indeed, Chazal say (*Avos* 5:18), "Moshe merited and brought merit to the masses." Moshe Rabbeinu needed *zechuyos* in order to bring merit to the masses. First he "merited" himself, and through that, he "brought merit to the masses." Prior *zechuyos* provide a person with the *zechus* to be a *mezakeh es harabbim*. This is something that many people are not aware of. They mistakenly think they can become a *mezakeh es harabbim* naturally, *b'derech hateva*. But this does not work through *derech hateva*; it's all based on *zechuyos*.

It's important to be aware of this. Every single person wants to see *hatzlachah* in Torah, and you need *zechuyos* for that! And the *zechuyos* are *middos tovos*, *yiras Shamayim*, and *hasmadah* in Torah. Torah, *avodah*, and *gemillus chassadim*, which are the three pillars

that hold up the world (*Avos* 1:2). With these *zechuyos*, there will surely be *siyatta d'Shemaya*, just as they said, "One who comes to be purified will be helped."

Every Person's Chizuk Affects Others

When there's a *tzibbur*, each person is *mashpia* on the others, even without saying anything. His very presence is *mashpia*, because when a person improves and gains *chizuk*, he is sanctified with the *kedushah* of Torah. Then he has an influence of *kedushah* on his surroundings. It's known that when there is a yeshivah in a settlement or neighborhood, the yeshivah sanctifies the place and is *mashpia kedushah* on its environs.

Therefore, anyone who gains *chizuk* sanctifies himself. Additionally, he has a *hashpaah* on his friends, and anyone who sees him, because *kedushah* is *mashpia*. This is a spiritual *hashpaah*, without saying anything, without any explanations. It's the reality. If someone gains *chizuk*, he gains *kedushah*, and he is *mashpia kedushah* and *chizuk*.

And so, when you are included in a *tzibbur* and **you learn *mussar*, which is the most imperative *chizuk* for *ruchniyus*, you are *mashpia* on others too.** Aside from the benefit each person gains for himself when he "comes to be purified," he also purifies and is *mashpia* on others. These are the *zechuyos* that each and every person can merit attaining. Every single person who is part of a *tzibbur* can merit this. And as we mentioned, one can achieve success in *ruchniyus* only through *zechuyos*, *ruchniyusdik zechuyos*.

B'ezras Hashem, may *Shamayim* have mercy on us, on each and every one of us, and I am talking about myself too, that we merit doing whatever needs to be done in order to achieve *hatzlachah* in *ruchniyus*. Hashem should have mercy on us, and may we merit performing deeds that engender *hatzlachah* in *ruchniyus*. *B'ezras Hashem, kein yehi ratzon*.

Rabbeinu shlita's Address to the Lev L'achim Convention

We learned in *Pirkei Avos*: "Moshe merited and brought merit to the masses. First he merited, and only then was he *mezakeh es harabbim*. That's the order. *Zikkui harabbim* requires prior *zechuyos*. And what was Moshe Rabbeinu's merit? There's a *midrash* that tells us that he had mercy on Hashem's creations when he was a shepherd. Prior *zechuyos* provide the opportunity for *zikkui harabbim* later. Moshe merited and only then was he *mezakeh es harabbim*. Without prior *zechuyos*, one does not have the merit of being *mezakeh es harabbim*. That's the reality. And anyone who thinks they can be *mezakeh harabbim* without prior *zechuyos*, is making a big mistake. Such a thing is not possible.

All those activists who are *mezakeh es harabbim*, men and women, all *mezakei harabbim*, are proving that they had prior *zechuyos*. What are their prior *zechuyos*? We don't know; these are hidden matters. Prior *zechuyos* give a person merit for *zikkui harabbim*, and achieving it any other way is not possible. Every single one of you who are here tonight — as well as those who aren't here — who are *mezakeh es harabbim*, have prior *zechuyos*! *Ashreichem* that you were *zocheh*, through your *zechuyos*, to be of *mezakei harabbim*, because *zikkui harabbim* generates tremendous *zechuyos*.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar Ahavas Hashem* chap. 6) speaks about this. He says that when someone is *mezakeh es harabbim*, all the good deeds performed by people whom he influenced are attributed to him, and it's considered as if he performed those deeds. Therefore, since Moshe Rabbeinu merited and brought merit to the masses, the *mishnah* continues: "*zechus harabbim talui bo*, the merit of the masses belongs to him." The *zechuyos* of the *rabbim*, of all Klal Yisrael from Matan Torah until the end of days, belong to Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe Rabbeinu holds all those *zechuyos* — Klal Yisrael's *zechuyos* from Matan Torah until the end of days, all the *zechuyos* — of every single man and every single woman, and the *hevel tinokos shel beis rabban*, speech that has no sin, they all belong to Moshe Rabbeinu!

And what does he gain? What does he gain from this? Is Moshe Rabbeinu lacking Olam HaBa? Well, we cannot fathom what the pleasures of Olam HaBa are, and they are limitless pleasures. There is no limit to the pleasures of Olam HaBa, no limit! No limit! Just as numbers are endless — there's 1, 2, and 1000 and 2000, and a million, etc., so too, the pleasures of Olam HaBa are endless, in quality. There is no limit to the quality of *ta'anugei Olam HaBa*. And the "*zechus of the masses belong to him*" — Moshe Rabbeinu has all the *zechuyos* of all of Klal Yisrael, of every single person of Klal Yisrael till the end of days; it's all attributed to Moshe Rabbeinu. This is the *ma'alah* and the tremendous *zechuyos* of one who is *mezakeh es harabbim*.

Ashreinu, and *ashreichem* to all of you who are *mezakei harabbim*. *Ashreinu* that *baruch Hashem* we have such a group of *mezakei harabbim*, and in their merit all Klal Yisrael is *zocheh*, for every single one of them provides protection. After all, *Torah magna u'matzla*, Torah protects and saves, and it protects others as well too. These *mezakim* merit the *zechus* of Klal Yisrael's existence, their physical and spiritual existence. Everything is the result of the *hashpa'ah* of these *mezakei es harabbim*. They are garnering *zechuyos* of *chayei netzach*, eternal life, eternal, unfathomable pleasures. *Ashrecha baOlam haZeh* as well, they'll enjoy worldly pleasures as well, but they also merit limitless pleasures in Olam HaBa.

These are the *zechuyos* of *mezakei harabbim*. *Baruch Hashem* we are *zocheh* to have such a wonderful *tzibbur*, and *b'ezras Hashem* this *tzibbur* will grow and expand. Every person has an influence on the next person. The more *mezakei harabbim* there are, inevitably the more *hashpa'ah* there will be, without any *hishtadlus*. The *hashpa'ah* occurs automatically, and it influences all Klal Yisrael. *Yehi ratzon*, that Heaven has mercy on us that all Klal Yisrael, every single person who needs *chizuk*, will attain that *chizuk* to rise in *madreigos* of *emunah*, *middos tovos*, and *yiras Shamayim*. We need *siyatta d'Shemaya* for all these *madreigos*. *B'ezras Hashem*, Heaven should have mercy on us, and may we, all Klal Yisrael, be *zocheh* to rise in the necessary *madreigos*, the *madreigos* we're obligated to grow in, and those that are possible to grow in. May we be *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya* in aspects of our lives.

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