

# 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 Bamidbar* 5782

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## The Acquisitions of Torah — Zechuyos for Hatzlachah

Everything requires *zechuyos*. Even success in Torah requires *zechuyos*, and 48 acquisitions of Torah, as elucidated in *Avos* chap. 6, are the *zechuyos* for success in Torah.

We see something very special in these 48 *kinyanei haTorah*. The first 24 acquisitions begin with the letter “*beis*”: *b'talmud* (actual learning), *b'shemi'as ozen* (listening), *b'arichas sefasayim* (verbalizing one's learning), *b'binas halev* (comprehension of the heart), etc., all the way until *b'kabbalas hayissurim* (by accepting suffering). Then there are 24 additional acquisitions, which begin with the letter “*hei*”: *ha'makir es mekomo* (one who knows his place), *ha'sameach b'chelko* (one who is happy with his lot) etc. There are exactly 24 of each, half begin with *beis*, and half with *hei*. And we must understand what this is all about.

The *Midrash Shmuel* explains that there is a difference between the two groups. The first 24 acquisitions relate to the *tzuras halimud*, the proper way to actually learn: *b'talmud*, *b'shemias ozen* etc. These are all matters related to actual learning. The next 24, which start with the letter *hei*, are more general attributes relating to a person's essence, how he should act even when he's not learning. They teach us what a person's essence should be and how a person should behave — in action and in thought. For example, a person should “know his place,” and should be “happy with his lot,” along with all the other matters mentioned there.

The concept “*ha'sameach b'chelko*” is different than its counterpart in the first grouping, “*b'simchah*” (with joy). They are actually two different things. “*B'simchah*” means he's learning with joy, the learning itself is making him happy, while “*ha'sameach b'chelko*” is more general, it's even after he finishes learning. Even when he's not learning, he's happy with his lot and is content with what he did learn, he's happy with his *ruchniyus* and the first group of 24 *kinyanei Torah* that he had while he was learning.

The same is true regarding all the other concepts in the last 24 acquisitions. They are all general concepts relating to a person's essence, through which we can become an *adam hashalem*, “a complete person” who is equipped for success in Torah. For example, there is “one who makes a fence for his words,” “one who does not take credit for himself,” “likeable,” “loves Hashem,” “loves other people” etc.

Many of these attributes are not simple matters; they are great *madreigos*. For example: “distancing himself from honor” — not just that he doesn't like honor, he actually distances himself from it! There is a nature to run away from honor, to not want people to honor him. I myself have seen someone like this; it's hard for him to bear it when others honor him. When someone cannot bear honor and is uncomfortable when others honor him, it points to purity of the soul and a very special *madreigah*. Similarly, there are many other matters; 24 regarding the way to learn, and 24 regarding a person's essence and behavior.

Of course, **all these 48 attributes necessary to acquire Torah are not just natural ways to succeed, they are *zechuyos*!** For example, “by learning,” “by listening” — the first 24 which relate to *tzuras halimud* — are *zechuyos* for success in Torah. The same is true regarding the concepts that also apply after learning, such as “being happy with his lot.” We already mentioned that there are two concepts included here: first one must be happy while he's actually learning, because the learning makes him happy, but he also must be happy afterwards — he should be happy about what he already learned. All his happiness is connected to *ruchniyus*; he wants *ruchniyus* and is happy about *ruchniyus*. That's a *zechus* for success in Torah.

## Twenty-four — A Special Sheleimus

We explained that there are 24, and then another 24. The number 24 appears in another Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 84a) about Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish. The two were *chavrusas*, and when Reish Lakish died, Rabbi Yochanan cried and shouted, Where is Reish Lakish? He needed Reish Lakish to continue learning with him. He couldn't live without Reish Lakish. The *chachamim* tried to calm him down, and they sent Rabbi Elazar, who was the *gadol hador* after Rabbi Yochanan. For every halacha that Rabbi Yochanan said, Rabbi Elazar would cite a proof. Rabbi Yochanan complained, “Do I need someone to bring me a proof? I am sure that it is correct. Reish Lakish would have asked 24 questions on everything I said and I would give him 24 answers. Through these questions and answers, we had such pleasure and the *sugya* became even clearer!” Rabbi Yochanan was so troubled that he lost his mind, because he lacked life, he lacked the very thing that gave him life.

In any case, the number 24 is mentioned here: 24 questions and 24 answers. [See *Shabbos* daf 33, when Rabbi Shimon

bar Yochai left the cave, he would give 24 answers for every one of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair's questions.] There could be a connection to the *kinyanei haTorah*, which are also 24 and another 24. It seems that there is a special *sheleimus* to the number 24.

Perhaps it might be connected to the 24 *sefarim* of Tanach [see *Taanis daf* 8, "Rav Ada would review his learning 24 times, corresponding to Torah, Neviim, and Kesuvim"]. And there are 12 *shevatim* — 24 is two times 12. Perhaps there is a connection, but this needs further clarification.

### **Tefillah Is Effective Only Together with Kinyanim**

It's important to take note that among all the 48 *kinyanei haTorah*, *tefillah* is not mentioned. But one must daven for success in Torah! If so, why isn't *tefillah* mentioned as one of the *kinyanei haTorah*?

The Gemara tells us (*Niddah* 70b) that they asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanina, "What should a person do to become wise?" I.e., how can a person merit *hatzlachah* in Torah. He said, "Increase yeshivah (lit. sitting)." That is, learn diligently in a yeshivah, along with a *tzibbur* who is *osek baTorah*. They asked him, "There are many who have done so and it did not help them." Many people learned diligently in yeshivah and were not successful. Rabbi Yehoshua answered that they must also "beg for mercy from the One to Whom Wisdom belongs." That is, daven for success in Torah. Here is it written straight out that learning Torah is not enough and *tefillah* is necessary also. So why isn't *tefillah* counted as one of the ways to acquire Torah?

Further on in the Gemara, they asked where is the *chiddush* in Rabbi Yehoshua's comments? They answered, "One without the other is not effective." The *chiddush* is that one needs both *tefillah* and to increase sitting in yeshivah and learning. Just one is not enough. Rashi there explains that the main *chiddush* is that a person also must increase learning, but **the fact that *tefillah* is necessary is clear and simple; it's not a *chiddush* at all. After all, of course it is dependent on Hashem's *rachamim*, and if a person doesn't ask for mercy, why should he receive it?** After all, he's not asking. If he's not asking, he doesn't deserve it, because if he's not asking, it means it's not important to him, or it means he thinks he'll manage on his own. But everything is dependent on *siyatta d'Shemaya*, and everything is in *Shamayim's* hands, and you must ask! If you don't ask, you won't get.

Therefore, it's simple that we need *tefillah*, and the *chiddush* is that one must also increase sitting in yeshivah. We shouldn't wrongly think, "If I daven, I'll have *siyatta d'Shemaya*, so why should I bother sitting and learning so much?" A person might think he can have *hatzlachah* in Torah even if he doesn't learn with *hasmadah* all day, or even if he doesn't learn with a *tzibbur* in a yeshivah. Rabbi Yehoshua was *mechadeish* that this is not true; one without the other is not effective. **Along with *tefillah*, one must also**

**perform the necessary actions for success in Torah, he must increase sitting in yeshivah and implement all the 48 attributes to acquire Torah. Because without doing so, his *tefillah* will not be effective!** *Tefillah* only helps after a person has implemented all the actions and has acquired the *zechuyos*. One needs all the *kinyanei haTorah*, which are the cause and the *zechuyos* for *hatzlachah* in Torah. Once the *kinyanei haTorah* are in place, then *tefillah* can increase his success even further. One must daven and ask, but the *kinyanim* are necessary as well, and *tefillah* without the acquisitions is not a possibility.

Rav Yisrael Salanter tells us something similar. (See *Ohr Yisrael*, letter 14). Aside from davening for *ruchniyus*, one must also take action: he must learn *mussar sefarim* and strengthen himself, as Chazal say (*Berachos* 32b), "There are four matters that require constant *chizuk*; Torah, *maasim tovim* etc." Rashi explains, "A person should strengthen himself in them constantly and with all his strength." If a person strengthens himself and does whatever he must, then *tefillah* can help. But if he doesn't, and he wants his prayers to provide him with success in Torah without even putting in any effort, he is like a person who has no eyes, but still wants to see. Can one see without eyes? That defies nature. *Tefillah* is not effective for such miraculous occurrences, because there is a spiritual nature, and one first must carry out the spiritual means. Only then is *tefillah* and *siyatta d'Shemaya* possible. Without it, *tefillah* is not the answer.

This is why *tefillah* is not mentioned as one of the 48 acquisitions of Torah, because *tefillah* is not a *maaseh kinyan*, an act of acquisition. Only once all the natural spiritual means and acts have been employed, then *tefillah* can be of help. We need *tefillah*, but *tefillah* on its own is nothing. It is not possible that *tefillah* will help without employing the proper practical *hishtadlus*, because that is against nature.

### **The Yetzer Hara's Main Agenda**

It's well known, and it's also brought down in the name of the *Chafetz Chaim* (*Kovetz He'aros b'Dugmaos l'Biurei Aggados al daas Hapshat, siman* 6) that the yetzer hara's main desire is to stop us from *esek haTorah*. He lures man with all sorts of temptations, including *mitzvos* and *maasim tovim*, just to keep him away from learning Torah. Because if one does not learn, the yetzer hara has power over him, as the Torah is the antidote to the yetzer hara. The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (chap. 5) that the antidote is "only" Torah. And that's why the yetzer hara entices him to stop learning. It finds all sorts of excuses and reason why a person should do this or do that, just so that he should not learn.

Sometimes the yetzer entices a person with the claim of *parnasah*. It tells man, You need *parnasah*, so go out to work and make a living. But what happens in the end? **I know about this — people come and talk to me about this. They tell me that when they had been *oseik baTorah*, they had enough income to cover their needs, but since they started**

**working and tried to earn a little more, they don't have anything!** This is the reality, as Chazal say (*Avos* 3:5), "One who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah, they remove the yoke of *malchus* and *derech eretz* from him." If a person has *ol Torah*, the yoke of Torah, on him, he doesn't have any other difficulties because he is totally involved with and connected to Torah. All the other difficulties disappear; there's no yoke of government or of *derech eretz* and everything is fine and good. But one who removes the yoke of Torah from himself, *Rachmana litzlan*, one who does not continue with the yoke of Torah and is not *osek baTorah*, then they give him the yoke of government and *derech eretz*, and he's faced with all sorts of other difficulties. That's the general rule.

The same is true regarding *mitzvos*. If a person is involved in a *mitzvah*, but it's too hard for him and he doesn't want this difficulty so he stops, other difficulties, even bigger ones, will come his way. I know stories like this — a person was very involved in a certain *mitzvah*, it wasn't even Torah, for example he couldn't learn so was instead busy with other good deeds, but it was hard for him, so he stopped those *maasim tovim*, and instead he was hit with much bigger challenges.

The yoke of Torah is really the most important, but even other things that are connected to Torah, such as the obligatory *mitzvos* and *maasim tovim* recorded in the Torah, are included in "the yoke of Torah" and they too save a person from experiencing other difficulties. If a person is *osek baTorah* and fulfills his obligations, there are no other difficulties. But if he removes the yoke of Torah from himself, other, bigger challenges come his way.

### Torah Is the Flavorful Spice Against the Yetzer Hara

Therefore, Chazal said (*Kiddushin* 30b) that HaKadosh Baruch Hu created the Torah as a *tavlin* (lit., spice). It is like a spice that adds flavor to food. So too, the Torah has a special flavor, and the flavor of Torah counteracts the yetzer hara.

It's well known that anything necessary for a person's existence has a flavor. For example, food. The body needs food, so Hashem created food with a good taste and people want to eat. If there would be no taste to food, and people would have to eat just because he knows it will give him energy like medicine, he wouldn't eat. When he's sick, he has to take his medicine, but when he doesn't feel anything and actually feels good — if he didn't have that desire for food, he wouldn't eat and he'd get weak. That's why HaKadosh Baruch Hu made food taste good — so that a person would eat it and be healthy. That's why whatever is essential for our bodies has a good taste, so that our bodies remain healthy.

The same is true regarding whatever our *nefesh* needs. Whatever is essential for our *nefesh*, which is eternal life, also has a good flavor. Since the Torah is eternal life, HaKadosh Baruch Hu created Torah with a good taste; *limud haTorah* is interesting and enticing. There are many flavors to Torah; it's

compared to wine, milk, honey, and water. "Honey and milk under your tongue" (*Shir HaShirim* 4:11). The Torah is so flavorful, because the *nefesh* needs *esek haTorah*, so it has a special taste.

There's one more thing that's *esek haTorah*, and it's even a better spice/antidote than all other parts of Torah: learning *mussar*. The *Mishnah Berurah siman 1* quotes the Kadmonim that the spice for the yetzer hara is learning *mussar sefarim*. Rav Yisrael Salanter also wrote (*Iggeres haMussar*) that learning *mussar* is more of a spice/antidote because it has a direct effect on the yetzer hara. It is both a spice with a taste, because *mussar sefarim* are interesting. While not every person's enjoyment of learning *mussar* is equal, *mussar sefarim* are generally interesting, and there are many different sections in *mussar sefarim*, many chapters, and many interesting *sefarim*. So each person can choose the section or *sefer* that interests him. There are many *mussar sefarim*, and the four main ones are: *Mesillas Yesharim*, *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Shaarei Teshuvah*, and *Orchos Tzaddikim*. And there are many more. For example, there's the *Pele Yoetz*, which is a special *sefer* that has a great influence. There are many more too — and they are all "Torah tavlin."

*Baruch Hashem* we have the *tavlin* of the actual Torah and of *Toras hamussar* against the yetzer hara. These spices have flavors that are essential for our *nefesh's* life, and if a person removes the yoke of Torah *chas v'shalom*... But when someone takes the yoke of Torah upon himself, *Shamayim* removes from him all other difficulties, and he is *zocheh* to eternal life, as well as a happy, fortunate life in this world.

### Minimizing Pleasures and Minimizing Conversation

Chazal say (*Avos* 6:4), "This is the path of Torah, eat bread with salt and drink measured water... and toil in Torah. If you do so, you will be fortunate in this world." "Bread with salt" is minimizing pleasure, which is one of the 48 acquisitions of Torah, *mi'ut taanug* — another two are *mi'ut sheinah* and *mi'ut sichah*, minimizing sleep and minimizing conversation.

Regarding "minimizing conversation," the Gra teaches us that it doesn't mean to do without speech at all; one actually needs "minimal" speech about mundane matters to attain *yishuv hadaas*. Indeed, one of the *talmidim* in yeshivah tried not to speak about any mundane matters at all, and after a short time, he realized that he couldn't keep it up. A person needs *mi'ut sichah*.

But there's a question. After all, it states in *Tehillim* (119:97), "All day long I converse in it [Torah]." If so, it's written straight-out that it is possible for a person to only converse in *divrei Torah* all day long, and there is no need for conversing in mundane matters.

But the answer appears in that very same *pasuk*, which starts off with, "How I loved Your Torah." That is, in order to fulfill

the second half of the *pasuk*, one must have a tremendous *ahavas haTorah*, an extraordinary love for Torah: the *pasuk* states “*Mah ahavti Torasecha, How I loved Your Torah*” — not just “*ahavti Torasecha, I loved Your Torah,*” but “*mah ahavti.*” When one has such tremendous love for *Torah*, then *Torah* is his constant conversation, and he is able to fulfill “*mi’ut sichah*” with actual *divrei Torah*. He doesn’t need the *mi’ut sichah* of mundane matters. But it all depends on whether a person is on the level of “*Mah ahavti.*” If a person is not on this *madreigah*, he has no choice; he needs the *mi’ut sichah*, as the *Gra* teaches.

In any case, the *derech* of *Torah* involves minimizing pleasures, eating bread and salt and drinking measured water. The *Mishnah* does not specifically mean that one must only eat bread with salt etc.; the intention is that each person should live simply on his own standards. One shouldn’t go seeking out worldly pleasures. In the *Iggeres HaGra*, it says that all worldly pleasures will turn into “*marah,*” which is *Gehinnom*. Pleasures should be utilized as necessary, as much as a person needs to maintain his health, to keep his body healthy. However, needless pleasure — more than is necessary — pleasure just for the sake of *Olam haZeh*, is *Gehinnom*.

### Happiness in Life — Only Through Amal haTorah

The *Tanna* continues in the *mishnah*, “Eat bread with salt, and drink measured water, and sleep on the ground, and live a life of privation.” There are four difficulties: bread with salt, measured water, sleeping on the ground, and besides all this — living a life of privation. And you toil in *Torah* — this is a fifth difficulty, *amal haTorah*. But if you do all this, “*ashrecha baOlam haZeh*, you will be fortunate and happy in this world.” Ostensibly, how is this possible? How can one be happy with so many challenges and difficulties? But this is the reality!

As we’ve mentioned in the past, even if he only eats bread with salt, the fact is that he’s still satiated. He’s not hungry. So too, when he drinks measured water, he is still drinking as much as he needs and he’s not thirsty. And when he sleeps on the ground, it may not be so comfortable, but he’s still

sleeping as much as he needs — he’s alert and he’s not tired. And even if he has more pain in life, if something else disturbs him, he will forget about his pain and troubles, because he’s toiling in *Torah*! Toil, *amal*, doesn’t mean to do more than he’s able to, it means doing as much as he can. By acting in this manner, he will enjoy “*ashrecha baOlam haZeh.*”

This type of life is the happiest life. There’s no greater happiness or fortune in this world; in *Olam HaBa* there is, but in *Olam haZeh*, “*Ashrecha*” can only occur through “*baTorah atah ameil, You toil in Torah*” — with all of your *kochos*! With all your *kochos*, but not beyond your abilities. But you must use all your abilities, use them for *Torah*, and then you will be fortunate in this world. This is the greatest *osher*, happiness, in the world, because this is the *Torah*’s way.

But the *yetzer hara* is trying to lure us and disturb us from attaining this. So the *eitzah* is to become involved in learning *mussar*, which is the flavorful antidote. And that’s why the *yetzer hara* attacks *mussar seder*. *Mussar seder* in *yeshivos* is not *middas chassidus*, it’s something essential for all aspects of *ruchniyus*. But the *yetzer hara* tries to persuade us that we don’t need it, because it is the strongest antidote against him.

Even men with families, although they aren’t *bachurim* anymore, they still have to learn *mussar* every day. *Maran HaRav Steinman zt”l* once said that even if a person learns only five minutes of *Mesillas Yesharim* every day, it will have an effect. He’ll become a different person and he’ll live a happy, fortunate life. I’ve already told stories about family men who started learning *mussar* and changed completely. One man told me that his wife asked him, What happened to you? You changed; you became so happy. It turns out that he started learning *mussar* every day — even just five minutes can do it! It affects you, you’ll have a different life, a happy, fortunate life, with a pleasant atmosphere at home.

And this is why “*ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu,*” and “*ashrecha baOlam haZeh.*” *B’ezer Hashem*, may all *Klal Yisrael* be *zocheh* to *siyatta d’Shemaya* in all these matters which are essential for “*ashrecha baOlam haZeh.*”

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