

Darkei HaChizuk

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

A Sichah from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita*, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez • Parashas Shelach 5782

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We've often mentioned what Chazal tell us at the end of *Pirkei Avos*: "“Whatever HaKadosh Baruch Hu created in His world, He only created for His glory, as it states, ‘ כל הנהקרא בשמי לכבודי בראתיו, יצרתיו אף עשיתיו — Everything that is called by My name, for My glory I created it, fashioned it, and made it.’” The purpose of the entire world and of all creations is for *kevod Shamayim*.

Kevod Shamayim occurs primarily through three matters: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemillus chasadim*. At the beginning of *Pirkei Avos*, Chazal tells us that the world is upheld by these three matters: Torah, *avodah* and *gemillus chasadim*. The world's right to existence, and every person's right to existence is dependent on his fulfillment of these three things — each person according to his abilities, of course. It is both an obligation and our right to existence.

Let's begin with the first principle: Torah. Every single person is obligated, according to the possibilities available to him, to be *osek baTorah* and to teach others. There is a mitzvah to teach, as the Rambam writes in his list of the 613 mitzvos (*asei* 11) that the mitzvah of Talmud Torah includes learning and teaching.

How long must a person spend learning Torah? The answer is individual, each person according to his possibilities and abilities. If he learns less than he is able, it is a sin. He is obligated to learn Torah according to his ability and strengths; he cannot learn more than he is able to. After all, a person's physical strength is limited.

We've already mentioned what the *Sefer HaChinuch* writes (mitzvah 488) that a person's physical body needs four things: food, sleep, rest (aside from sleep), and joy.

What are the necessary amounts of these? This too is individual; each person according to his needs. Take food, for example. If a person eats less than necessary, he won't be able to function, but if he eats more than he needs, that's unnecessary and it's just *taavah*. The same is true when it comes to sleep. Each person must sleep as much as *he* needs; he cannot sleep less, and if he sleeps more than necessary, he's just wasting his time. And so forth regarding rest/relaxation and joy. Everything must be the necessary amount. Of course, you may not skimp. The general rule

here is that if one is in doubt, be stringent and preserve your physical needs, but excessively catering to one's physical needs unnecessarily is *batalah*.

Now, as we said, aside from the mitzvah of learning Torah, there is also a mitzvah to teach Torah, and one needs *zechuyos* for this. A person needs *zechuyos* to be able to teach Torah, just as he needs *zechuyos* for any type of success in *ruchniyus*. Even for learning Torah, a person needs *zechuyos* to be able to learn. Sometimes, a person can merit success in Torah learning due to *zechus avos*.

There was a story with a young *bachur* who had very weak abilities. He couldn't even understand the simplest things. Suddenly, one day he began to understand and he achieved *havanah* in Torah. The Chazon Ish commented that this was in the *zechus* of his grandmother's tears. When women light the Shabbos candles, they daven for all their children's, and all future generations', success in Torah, and this boy's grandmother davened and shed tears for this. In her merit, her grandson became successful in his Torah learning and eventually became a rav in *Chutz LaAretz*.

I heard this story from someone who heard it straight from the Chazon Ish. He asked the Chazon Ish to tell him the name of the rav, because he felt this story would encourage other young men if they'd hear that a certain person who was not blessed with exceptional talents eventually became a famous rav. But the Chazon Ish didn't want to say his name; he said it is not respectful for everyone to know that the rav was a weak student as a young man. When this person approached the Chazon Ish some time later, the Chazon Ish told him that the rav had already passed away, so he certainly cannot reveal who it was. In any case, the general rule is that all *hatzlachah* is dependent on *zechuyos*. Sometimes a person has *zechus avos*, which also gives him *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

In *Avos* (chap. 6), Chazal tell us that the Torah is acquired with 48 matters which are all avenues toward success in Torah. It seems that these 48 matters are natural matters, but really they are *zechuyos*; they are not things acquired *b'derech hateva*. Success in Torah can only occur with *zechuyos*; without *zechuyos* success is not possible. All *ruchniyus* matters require *zechuyos* for success, and in the

merit of being involved in these 48 matters, a person is *zocheh* to success in Torah.

For example, one of the 48 acquisitions of Torah is “one who learns in order to teach.” Chazal say further in *Pirkei Avos* (4:5), “One who learns Torah in order to teach, he is given the means to learn and to teach.” If a person learns so that he’ll be able to teach others, in that *zechus*, *Shamayim* gives him the opportunity and assists him in both learning and teaching.

Now, this is true when one’s intention in teaching is not for his personal honor. **If he’s looking for the honor involved in teaching, there are no *zechuyos* here and he will not merit *siyatta d’Shemaya*.** He must be prompted by *ahavas habriyos*; he must love doing *chesed* and want to help teach those who don’t know. If he is really teaching because of *ahavas habriyos* or due to the mitzvah of Talmud Torah (teaching others) *l’shem Shamayim*, not for the honor and respect involved, then this is a *zechus* and Heaven enables him to learn and teach! But if he’s doing it for honor, there will be no *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

Chazal said further (*Yoma* 38b): “One who comes to be purified, will be helped.” “Coming to be purified” means that he wants to learn and be *osek baTorah* himself — and he receives *siyatta d’Shemaya* for this, *Shamayim* helps him. But if he also wants to teach others, this is not merely “coming to be purified,” it is coming “to purify others” and that’s a much greater *zechus*. In this case, he will surely be assisted and he will manage to learn and teach, as the *mishnah* asserts. It all depends on one’s *zechuyos*.

The second thing the world stands on is *avodah*. *Avodah* is *emunah*. A person who wants to be *zocheh* to *avodah* also falls into the category of “one who comes to be purified.” But what is he coming to purify? How is one *zocheh* to *avodah*? The answer is by learning *mussar*, because *mussar* gives a person *yiras Shamayim*, and that’s *avodah*, *emunah*. If you learn *mussar* to gain *chizuk*, that’s called “coming to be purified” and *Shamayim* will help you by strengthening your *emunah*.

Similarly, if a person wants to encourage others with *emunah* — not because he wants honor, but because he has *ahavas habriyos* and wants to increase *kevod Shamayim* — then he is coming to be purified and to purify others as well, and he receives *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

In *Pirkei Avos*, they said further, “One who learns to do is given the means to learn, to teach, to safeguard, and to do.” That is, if a person learns in order to observe the Torah he’s learning, because there are 613 mitzvos we are obligated to fulfill, and he learns in order to know what his obligations are, that too, is “coming to be purified,” and *Shamayim* sends him help and gives him the means to do four things: learn, teach, safeguard, and do. He receives help to “learn”

on his own, to “teach” others, to “safeguard” negative mitzvos (*lo sa’asei*), and to “do” positive mitzvos (*asei*) — all 613 mitzvos! Heaven gives him the abilities and assists him with *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

As we said, everything depends on a person’s *zechuyos*, all *ruchniyusdik* success is dependent on one’s merits. If a person wants to be a *mashpia* in *ruchniyus*, doing *hishtadlus* to that end will not help. Only *zechuyos* will help! And if he wants to do so because he has *ahavas habriyos* and it’s *l’shem Shamayim*, that alone is the *zechus*!

So too, learning in order to do is a *zechus* for *siyatta d’Shemaya*, and in this *zechus*, *Shamayim* gives him the means to do four things: to learn, teach, safeguard, and do.

The Ramban writes (*Iggeres HaRamban*), “And when you arise from the *sefer* that you have learned, [see] if there is anything you can fulfill.” That is, after you learn, it’s important to think about how to put your learning into practice; this is what “learning in order to do” means. And this is how one is *zocheh* to *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

Take the *sefer Mesillas Yesharim* for example. Rav Chaim Volozhiner once told his talmid, Rav Zundel of Salant: “All *mussar sefarim* are good to learn from, but *Mesillas Yesharim* should be your guide.” All *mussar sefarim* are good and have an influence on us, but *Mesillas Yesharim* is the primary *sefer*; it is the guide since it paves the way in a systematic way based on man’s spiritual strengths. Obviously, along with *siyatta d’Shemaya*, the method involves how a person advances on all levels, starting only with Torah, and then arriving at caution, alacrity, and all other virtues up until *kedushah*. When a person is involved in this, it is called “one who comes to purify,” and he receives *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

It’s well known that a certain *adam gadol* learned a chapter of *Mesillas Yesharim* every day, and when he finished the last chapter, he started again from the beginning. Because a person needs constant *chizuk*, as it says in the Gemara (*Brachos* 32b): “Four matters require *chizuk*, strengthening.” And Rashi explains: What constitutes *chizuk*? Constantly and with all his strength! “Constantly” means at least once a day, and the *chizuk* occurs by learning *mussar*.

Learning *mussar* is considered “coming to be purified,” and “learning in order to do,” and in this way, we merit the *mishnah*’s promise: “he is given the means to learn, teach, safeguard, and do.” The *mussar seder* in *yeshivos* is not *middas chassidus*; it is a total obligation. These matters are tremendous *zechuyos*. *Halevai* that we merit that all Klal Yisrael can fulfill them.

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Editor's note: In Eretz Yisrael, *yeshivos gedolos* will soon be starting *fahrhers*. As a rule, Rabbeinu *shlita* speaks about proper behavior during this time. The following is a compilation of Rabbeinu *shlita*'s comments over the years. While there is repetition in these pieces, we nevertheless felt it beneficial to quote them again due to their import.

During these few weeks, some *bachurim* are taking tests to get into *yeshivos*, and there are those who were not accepted to the *yeshivos* they wished to learn in. This involves great pain and sorrow to both the *talmidim* and their parents. The truth is, this is a *madreigah* of *ahavas Torah*; the *bachurim* want to grow and be successful in Torah, but they must remember that everything is in Heaven's hands. Shamayim is giving each person what is best for him, as Chazal say (Brachos 60b), "Whatever the Merciful does is for the best." And certainly, wherever he is accepted is the best place for him.

If a person is stubborn and tries too hard to get accepted specifically to a certain yeshivah that's difficult to get into, he will end up losing out. One of the *roshei yeshivos* of a *yeshivah ketanah* told me that every year they try to get their bachurim into good *yeshivos*. Some bachurim were not accepted to the yeshivah they wanted to go to, and they invested much effort and applied pressure to a specific yeshivah. Eventually, they did persuade the *hanhalah* to accept the bachurim, but in the end, the *bachurim* were not happy there.

The general rule is that Hashem gives a person what is good for him, whether in *gashmiyus* or *ruchniyus*, and one has to believe that the yeshivah that accepted him is the best place for him. Don't try to apply excessive pressure. Of course, one has to put in normal *hishtadlus*, but he should not make demands or apply pressure if the yeshivah did not accept him, because in the end, he may not even be successful there.

(5774)

The concept of *emunah* is practically applicable during this period, when *yeshivos gedolos* are accepting applications. Sometimes a person wants to learn in a certain yeshivah, but he is not accepted. While a person really must learn in a place "*she'libo chafeitz*, where his heart desires" (see *Avodah Zarah* 19a), if he wants a certain place, and in the end, it does not work out, this is from *Shamayim*. It's a sign that *Shamayim* does not want him to attend that yeshivah. Why not? It is certainly for his own good, because "whatever the Merciful One does is for the best."

And if he is stubborn and forces his way in against the *hanhalah*'s will, it's tried and true that he will not have *hatzlachah*! Someone who joins a *makom Torah* by forcing his way in, against the yeshivah's will, will not succeed there. **It's tried and true.** *Shamayim* does not want him to learn there. *Shamayim* gives a person what's good for him, and sends him to a place where he's wanted — and that's

where he'll be successful. If a yeshivah doesn't want a certain *bachur* and he forces his way in, he will not have *hatzlachah* there.

This is true regarding both girls' high schools and yeshivahs. Shamayim sends each person to the place that's best for him, and directs him to the best place for him. So why invest efforts against what Shamayim have given you? Against what's best for you? It's really out of the question.

The general rule is, if a person lives with *emunah* that everything is in Heaven's hands, and Whatever the Merciful One does is for the best, he has a happy, fortunate life. He's calm and *sameach b'chelko*, because he knows that everything is from Shamayim and it's for his benefit. Even if he doesn't understand why, he believes that it's for his best.

Just like medicine that a doctor prescribes. The sick person doesn't understand how the medicine works, because he's not a doctor. Sometimes, the medicine is bitter, but it's for the patient's benefit, and he believes the doctor. So too, Shamayim knows what's best for each person, and whatever Shamayim gives him is the best that can be.

(5778 – 5781)

Some *bachurim* have to decide which *yeshivah gedolah* they'll be going to, which yeshivah is the best place for them. The reality is that *bachurim* want to go to the most prestigious yeshivah, the one with the best name, and they search and put in effort to get accepted specifically to those famous *yeshivos* with many *talmidim*, with many *metzuyonim* and great *baalei kishron*. This is human nature.

But many times, it will not benefit that specific bachur, because if he'd learn in a place like that, he won't be one of the *metzuyonim*. He'll end being one of the weaker bachurim, and he'll have *chalishus hadaas* if he's second best in ability and knowledge. Sometimes, it can even cause emotional damage if he pushes himself harder than he's capable of doing, or if he starts feeling inferior and as a result becomes depressed, or the like.

Of course, it's natural for the *talmid*, his *rebbe*, and his parents to look for and to want a prestigious place. Anyone who is *noge'a ba'davar* wants the *talmid* to learn in a prestigious yeshivah with great *baalei kishron*, but the result is not to his benefit; it's to his detriment, since he broke down and is not successful there. Each *bachur* has to learn in a place that suits his level, somewhere where he can be one of the top *bachurim* and feel up to par with all the others, as opposed to learning in a place where he'll feel inferior

compared to the others. When he learns in a yeshivah that's right for him, he'll recognize his importance and be *sameach b'chelko*. His *simchas chaim* will give him energy to succeed and grow. But if he lacks *simchas chaim*, he is like a broken vessel and he won't be able to function or succeed.

Our nature convinces us to go against our logic; that is, the nature of desiring honor applies pressure against the actual reality, and people start looking for what they consider

honorable, but in the end, they don't receive any honor — all they end up with is embarrassment. It's usually very hard to influence *bachurim* to rise above this desire for honor. It's hard to convince them not to look for a "prestigious" yeshivah, and instead look for a yeshivah that will contribute to the *talmid's* success.

(5775)

**Rabbeinu shlita's Address at a Gathering of Rabbanim in His Home to Strengthen Shemiras Shabbos
Organized by Rav Eliyahu Beifus of the "Mishmeres HaShabbos" Organization**

It is a tremendous *zechus* to be involved in saving people from *chillul Shabbos* and in strengthening *shemiras Shabbos*. The *zechus* of *shemiras Shabbos* — that Shabbos protects and guards us, and Shabbos is the source of blessing — is a great thing. All those who are involved in it are involved in *zikkui harabbim* of safeguarding the sanctity of Shabbos, of making sure that Shabbos is observed with its sanctity. Furthermore, they are *mashpia* all of this on their surroundings.

When *bnei Torah* strengthen their *shemiras Shabbos*, it has an influence on those distant from observance and stops them from desecrating Shabbos in public. The following story, involving the Chazon Ish ז"ל, illustrates this point. An episode of public Shabbos desecration *Rachmana litzlan* took place in a city in Eretz Yisrael, in a city where there had not been such *chillul Shabbos* before. Everyone was surprised how such a thing could have happened, and some people traveled to the Chazon Ish to ask him what to do. He told them that the *bnei Torah* have to strengthen their Shabbos observance and be careful about carrying in a public domain. He told them not to rely on the city's *eiruv*. Even though he had told them to make the *eiruv*, he said that they should not rely on it. He said, "When *bnei Torah* strengthen themselves in *shemiras Shabbos*, their merit will have an effect of general *shemiras Shabbos* among all Klal Yisrael." So causing others to improve their *shemiras Shabbos* is a tremendous *zechus*.

It's important to point out that there are many *halachos* that most people are not familiar with, for example, *shriyaso zehu kibuso*, "soaking is washing." There are many who don't know this; they don't know that if they clean their clothing with one drop of water, it's a *melachah d'Oraisa*. I've personally seen observant Jews who are not aware of this halachah. And similarly, there are many simple *halachos* that are *issurei d'Oraisa* and people don't know that these are prohibitions. And this is a big problem. Therefore, it's imperative to learn *hilchos Shabbos*, to learn the normal, common *halachos*.

Mishmeres HaShabbos has done well by keeping the community informed of the commonplace pitfalls nowadays. They are saving many people from *issurei Shabbos*, and this is very important and a tremendous merit. May they merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* in their *zikkui harabbim* of Shabbos observance.

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