

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 Korach 5782

492

Since the Churban Beis HaMikdash, Am Yisrael is in *galus* — without our own independent country. Even here in Eretz Yisrael, the Greeks and the Romans controlled the land; Bnei Yisrael were not independent rulers. We are in *galus*, scattered and dispersed between all other nations; we are scattered throughout the world, we are not all together.

And yet, Am Yisrael still exists as a nation unto itself. We have not assimilated with other nations. We have remained on the same level of Yiddishkeit as before, and we continue observing the Torah and mitzvos — according to all the *halachos* of *Torah she'Bichsav and Torah she'Be'al Peh*, as it was given to Moshe Rabbeinu, and as we say in the beginning of *Pirkei Avos*, “Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and passed it over to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the elders...” The *mesorah* of *Torah she'Be'al Peh* continues among Jews throughout the world, Yidden who observe and uphold the very same Torah with the very same *dinim* and the very same *halachos* throughout the ages.

The Rambam (in his introduction to his commentary of *Mishnayos Seder Zeraim*, and in his introduction to *Yad HaChazakah*) delineates the chain of passing down the Torah, from Churban Bayis Sheini until the times of the Geonim, one generation after another. He notes who the *gedolim* in each generation were, he lists the Tannaim and Amoraim who passed the Torah down to future generations.

Throughout the generations, there have been terrible decrees to force us to convert, they wanted to issue decrees of *shmad*, to force us to be like all the nations, similar to the times of the Yevanim, who wanted “to make them forget Your Torah, and to make them stray from Your laws.” This was not exclusive to the times of the Yevanim, it happened in later generations as well. When the Jews lived among the *goyim*, there were decrees. And they withstood the *nisayon* and were murdered *al Kiddush HaShem*. They were *moser nefesh al kiddush Shem Shamayim*, literally. We mention this in the Av HaRachamim *tefillah* every Shabbos: “These *kehillos haKodesh*, holy communities, who gave up their lives *al kedushas HaShem*.” *Kehillos haKodesh* — entire

communities! Gave up their lives to sanctify Hashem's Name. That was the reality throughout the generations.

And even though Klal Yisrael was dispersed among the *goyim*, the Jews still lived good, happy lives — and in the *gashmiyus* realm as well. Sometimes, they enjoyed more material success than the *goyim*. Indeed, the *Chovos HaLevavos* writes (*Shaar HaBechinah*, end of chap. 5) that if a person wants to see miracles similar to those performed during Yetzias Mitzrayim, he should “look with a truthful eye at our status between the nations, from the time of our exile, and see how our affairs were arranged among them, despite all the disagreements we have with them, both overtly and covertly, and they are aware of these disagreements. And he shall see, our financial situation is close to theirs, or maybe even better than theirs. He will see that an average person among them must work harder for his livelihood than an average or even below average among us.” Over the generations, Jews have been money-lenders and lent money, with interest, to non-Jews. Even Rabbeinu Tam lent with interest to non-Jews (see *Tosfos Bava Metzia* 70b, s.v. *tashich*), as it is halachically permissible and accepted. The Jews lived good lives, and were even financially better off than the *goyim*.

We see that there is special Heavenly *hashgachah* over Klal Yisrael, who lived good lives. This is so that they won't assimilate with the non-Jews and they'll continue to promote *kevod Shamayim* — which is the purpose of the Creation, as we say at the end of *Pirkei Avos*, “Whatever HaKadosh Baruch Hu created in His world, He created solely to bring honor to His name.” The entire Creation is to promote *kevod Shamayim*, which happens when the Jewish nation is promoting *kevod Shamayim*. That's why there is special supervision over Klal Yisrael — to make sure they remain a living, vibrant nation all throughout the *galus*.

And what is the greatest *kevod Shamayim*? **Those who are *osek baTorah* with all their strength, those who live a life of Torah and are *osek baTorah*. That is the greatest *kevod Shamayim*.** Of course, each person must learn according to his abilities. Some people cannot learn so much, but the *esek haTorah* that exists within Klal

Yisrael is the greatest *kevod Shamayim* — and this is simple. That's why we see such tremendous *hashgachah pratis* that enables us to continue increasing *kevod Shamayim* and continue to be *osek baTorah*.

And we've seen this clearly during this past *tekufah* in Eretz Yisrael. The previous government had set forth numerous proposals of terrible decrees. They wanted to pass decrees to "make them forget Your Torah and make them stray from Your laws," they wanted to do away with anything connected to *kedushah* and turn us into imitation *goyim*, "k'chol hagoyim Beis Yisrael." That was their intent, *Rachmana litzlan*. And what happened in the end? They did not succeed; they couldn't implement anything. Why not? Because *kevod Shamayim* mandates that there will be no success in such matters! They wanted to pass decrees against Torah and mitzvos, against everything, but *b'chasdei Hashem*, it was all nullified. We see that there is special Heavenly supervision to enable us to be *osek baTorah* properly.

In Birkas HaTorah we say, "Who has chosen us from all the nations and given us His Torah." We've already explained this — what does "Who has chosen us" mean? That He made us "chosen"! Similarly, in Yom Tov davening, we say "You have chosen us from all the nations." The meaning of this is that You made us chosen, You made us into greater *baalei madreigah* than people of other nations, by creating such differences between a Jew and a non-Jew. Chazal say (*Yevamos 79a*): "There are three signs in the Jewish nation: they are merciful, bashful, and perform acts of loving-kindness." It's well known that these signs only exist among Jews. There's no such thing among the *goyim*. Someone who travels often and meets many Jews and non-Jews, told me that he sees this clearly. Jews have a different personality. Who did this? *Asher bachar banu*, Who has chosen us; You have chosen us, You made us chosen!

This obligates us. Since we have such *siyatta d'Shemaya* to act the way the Torah obligates us, with good *middos* and this type of personality, with such special *hashgachah* that enables us to sit and learn and be *osek baTorah*; well, this is an obligation! We've been given the *siyatta d'Shemaya*, so why won't we do it? It obligates us to learn and fulfill the entire Torah.

And this is what we ask for every day in Shemoneh Esrei "Hashiveinu Avinu l'Torasecha, Return us, our Father, to Your Torah." We state the request in the plural form, we are including all Klal Yisrael in our request. We are including those who are far from Torah and those who are close to Torah, who learn a little but could really learn more. We daven that they should do complete teshuvah, that they shouldn't have any free time that isn't utilized for learning Torah.

When a person does have some free time, while he does need to relax, he can still be *osek baTorah* when he's relaxing instead of just *stam* resting and being busy with *devarim beteilim*.

It's human nature to be interested in what's going on in the world. Newspapers are kept in business because people are interested in the news and they read the paper to find out what's going on in the world. But if a person would just think — what difference does it make to me, and what does it give me? What would I missing if I did not know this? After all, this news does not benefit me in any way.

Instead of being curious about what's going on in the world, there is curiosity for Torah! What does it say in the Chumash, and what does Rashi say? What does the Gemara say, and what do Rashi and Tosfos say? What does it say in this Gemara, and what does it say in the other Gemara? What does it say in all of Shas? And it's possible! It can be done! Instead of using your *middah* of curiosity for news which has no benefit, you can garner tremendous *zechuyos* of *esek haTorah* and *kevod Shamayim*.

Why don't people do this? Because the *yetzer hara* is convincing! So the *eitzah*, as we've already said, is to have a *kvius* in learning a *mussar sefer* for a few minutes daily. If a person learns *mussar* for a few minutes a day, then he lives a different life, and he is happier. Instead of simple curiosity, he is doing something that gives him "*ashrecha baOlam haZeh*, you will be fortunate and happy in this world." Indeed, Chazal say in *Pirkei Avos* (6:4), "This is the path of Torah... and toil in Torah. If you do so, you will be fortunate in this world."

Amal haTorah, toiling in Torah, is what gives a person the happiest life, not money! People who have money are not so happy! And this is no secret. On Rosh Hashanah, it is decreed "who will be poor, who will be rich, who will be calm, who will suffer." The *zechus* of living a life of "*ashrecha baOlam haZeh*" can only happen through Torah. Each person according to his abilities and based on his reality. But everyone should make sure they don't have time without *esek haTorah*.

In the end of *sefer Mesillas Yesharim*, after writing about all the steps up until *kedushah*, sanctity, the author writes that even someone who is a simple laborer can be *kadosh*, if he performs all his actions *l'shem Shamayim* and if he is *osek baTorah* as much as he can. It's well known that there was a shoemaker in Tel Aviv who was a *tzaddik yesod olam*. People would go to him for *brachos*, and his *brachos* would come true. He was a *baal emunah* and he lived with *emunah*. He fixed shoes with *emunah*. When a person lives with *emunah* and everything he does is with

yiras Shamayim and *middos tovos* as the Torah mandates, it gives him *zechuyos* for a happy, fortunate life.

Since it's possible to do this, and there is *siyatta d'Shemaya*, every single one of us is obligated to do so! And we daven and beg "*Hasheveinu Avinu l'Torasecha, v'karveinu Malkeinu laAvodasecha,*" we ask that *Shamayim* should have mercy on all of Klal Yisrael, every single one of us, that we should be *osek baTorah* and *maasim tovim*. We ask that we should complete our obligations and live happy, *me'ushar* lives. *Halevai* that all Klal Yisrael should merit leading a life of true happiness.

Inyanei HaParshah / Culled from Rabbeinu shlita's sichos

"And you shall not be like Korach and his congregation" (*Bamidbar* 17:5). Chazal say (*Pirkei Avos* 5:17), "Any argument that is for the sake of Heaven will endure. And one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not endure. What kind of argument was for the sake of Heaven? The argument between Hillel and Shammai, and which one was not for the sake of Heaven? The argument of Korach and his congregation."

Regarding the dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel, Chazal said (*Yevamos* 14b) that they treated each other with love and friendship. That is, despite the dispute, they still treated each other with love and friendship. Because when a dispute is *l'shem Shamayim*, love and friendship can exist, and "*eilu v'eilu divrei Elokim Chaim,* these and these are the words of a living G-d" (*Eiruvin* 13b). This is the meaning of "will endure." When a *machlokes* is *l'shem Shamayim*, both sides exist — whatever Beis Shammai said and whatever Beis Hillel said remains Torah for all eternity. There are *mishnayos* and *Braisos*, there are *mefarshim*, *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* on the Torah of Beis Shammai and on the Torah of Beis Hillel, as both are "*divrei Elokim Chaim.*" They are both *Toras Emes*, since their dispute was solely for the sake of Heaven, and that type of dispute will "endure" — both sides endure, both sides exist.

But the dispute of Korach and his congregation will not endure. Moshe Rabbeinu did endure, because his side of the dispute was *l'shem Shamayim*. However, his detractors, who were not acting *l'shem Shamayim*, did not endure. Not only didn't their Torah last, they themselves did not last.

We must be aware of the great dangers of becoming involved in controversies. Anyone involved in *machlokes* is in great danger. It's known that over the years there were many disputes between real *gedolei Yisrael*. There were *gedolim* on both sides; the *gedolim* themselves remained *gedolim* and their Torah endures and is still around, and we

respect their opinions in halachah to this day. But the other people who became involved in their *machlokes* had a bitter end. For the *gedolim*, it was a dispute *l'shem Shamayim* that would endure, but the other people who mixed in had no right to get involved in a *machlokes* between *gedolim*.

This is true even regarding disputes in more recent times, after 1940. I know some people who got involved in a *machlokes* and they are still suffering greatly as a result. They're constantly going to *tzaddikim* for *brachos*, because they are still suffering terribly, *Rachmana litzlan*. It's very dangerous to get involved in *machlokes*. Even if someone is positive that one side is right, it has nothing to do with him, and he has no right to get involved.

When someone is in a place of *machlokes*, he should be careful not to speak about the *machlokes*, not to speak lashon hara even about the person who instigated the *machlokes*, because there's usually no benefit (*to'eles*). There is no *heter* to talk lashon hara if there's no benefit involved, and speaking lashon hara is a grave sin, as stated in *sefer Chafetz Chaim*.

I know someone who was a truth-seeker and would often talk about or listen to the latest in the disputes. But then he decided not to talk about or listen to such things anymore. He told me that on the very same day he decided to stop, he felt a great *chizuk* in his learning, his *havanah* became better; he understood his learning better; his *havanah* rose a level. This is the power of *dveikus baTorah* and being careful about staying away from lashon hara. This is what the Gra writes in his *Iggeres HaGra*: Every moment that a person keeps quiet [in a dispute], he is *zocheh* to the hidden light that no angel or creation can even fathom." The *ohr haganuz*, the hidden light, is the light of Torah, as it states (*Mishlei* 6:23), "And Torah is light." In the merit of keeping quiet, a person is *zocheh* to grow in Torah. It's tried-and-true — as we see from this story.

The prohibition includes not speaking or listening to lashon hara, and even listening without believing is prohibited. Specifically, it is extremely grave to actively do something against your friend. Chazal have already said (*Sanhedrin* 58b), "One who lifts up his hand against his friend is called a *rasha*." Even if he has claims against his friend, he cannot do anything before turning to *beis din* and receiving a *psak*. Even a murderer is protected as long as *beis din* has not finalized his judgment. If someone would kill him beforehand, that person is called a murderer. Lifting a hand against another person is wicked and it disqualifies him from serving as a witness. Besides for the grave sin it involves, doing something that's forbidden will not cause any benefit. It's impossible for any advantage to come out of forbidden actions — even *b'derech hateva*. Everyone understands that any and all violence is not constructive.

From a Sichah in Shevat, 5765/2005

Excerpts from Rabbeinu's Address at a Keness in His Home for Principals of Cheders

Shalom Aleichem, bo'achem l'shalom to principals who are *osek* in *zikkui harabbim* in Torah. It's a great *zechus* to teach young children Torah. Most of the children in your institutions are not bar mitzvah, and the Gemara says (*Shabbos* 119b) that their breath (speech) is breath that does not contain sin, and the world stands on their Torah, even more than on the Torah of the Amoraim. Those who teach them also uphold and support the world. Principals of cheders have tremendous *zechuyos*.

On the other hand, this job also comes along with great responsibility — that the *chinuch* should be *b'shleimus*, that they should learn as much Torah as possible, Torah is the *ikkar*, and there should be an emphasis on *chashivus haTorah*. Any secular studies that are learned should just be the bare minimum, whatever is absolutely necessary, but the *ikkar* is Torah. This is what the rebbis and principals should know: they should know what a tremendous *zechus* it is to teach and to give over *chinuch* that the *ikkar* is Torah. Everything else is secondary to Torah, and should only be used for the purpose of Torah study. Whatever is not needed in order to learn Torah is *bittul Torah*, and that's already a sin.

*

Principals: The “Mamlachti-Chareidi” (state-run “chareidi” schools) are reaching out to our *melamdim* and offering them a job in their schools, and they're offering a much higher salary. Some rebbis have accepted jobs there and this causes damage to the cheders, as the rebbis are leaving. What should we tell the rebbis about this?

Rabbeinu shlita: They are losing Olam HaBa, they're losing Olam HaBa.

Principals: Even though they're teaching the same Torah there? Are they still losing Olam HaBa?

Rabbeinu shlita: Of course. The rebbi is losing Olam HaBa. It's damaging cheders.

Principals: Can we say this more clearly? If a person gives any form of support to the “Mamlachti-Chareidi,” which was established against the *gedolei Yisrael's* wishes, even if he is teaching Torah there, he loses his Olam HaBa?

Rabbeinu shlita: Yes, correct.

Principals: Secular studies are usually taught in the afternoons in cheders, and that's a hard time for the boys. Is it proper to make contests to encourage the boys to learn secular studies, or should we leave the contests just for *limudei kodesh*, and not encourage *limudei chol*?

Rabbeinu shlita: It's not a good idea to encourage learning secular studies.

Dedicated by
the Kroll Family, Los Angeles
להצלחת בניהם ובנותיהם
בתורה וביראת שמים

**For donations or dedications of the Hebrew and English flyers,
or to receive the *sichos* to your email, please contact:**

darkei.hachizuk@gmail.com

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