

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

A *Sichah* from Maran Rosh HaYeshivah Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita* . *Vayechi* 5783

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Chanukah is over. We were *zocheh* to a *chizuk* in our *yeshivah hakedoshah* over Chanukah and everyone stayed to learn in yeshivah, especially on Shabbos Chanukah. All the *talmidim* stayed in yeshivah; no one went home.

The truth is, the reality is that on Friday and Shabbos, *yeshivos* don't have a daily *shiur* and that causes a *hefsek* in the *hasmadah*. There are no *shiurim*, and there's no *seder* obligating the *bachurim* to sit and learn. Also, the *bachurim* are busy with their Shabbos preparations, so time does get wasted.

But it should not be this way. We have a *chiyuv* of *esek haTorah*, *la'asok b'divrei Torah*. ***Hasmadah* is not a *middas chassidus*; it is a *chiyuv*, an obligation.** Of course, it's individual and goes according to each person's personal abilities.

The *sefarim* say that learning Torah on Shabbos creates a much greater *zechus* than learning on a weekday. All the mitzvos performed on Shabbos, especially *esek haTorah*, garner greater *zechuyos* than are earned on a regular weekday. (The *sefer Ben Ish Chai*, *Shemos*, *shanah* 2, quoting the Mekubalim writes: "The influence created from *esek haTorah* on Shabbos is 1000 times greater than that created from *esek haTorah* on weekdays.")

Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:16), "When a person stops doing a mitzvah, he will be punished according to the mitzvah's importance." The greater a mitzvah is, the greater the punishment for failing to perform it — if the reward for fulfilling this mitzvah is so great, the opposite is true as well: one who fails to perform a mitzvah will receive a graver punishment.

He cites the mitzvos of *Korban Pesach* and *milah* as examples. These mitzvos are *mitzvos aseï*, and a person who does not fulfill them — even though he

doesn't do anything actively, he just refrains from taking action — is punished with *kareis*. He is punished with *kareis* for a *shev v'al ta'aseh*, for not doing anything.

The reason for this is since *Pesach* and *milah* are such lofty, important mitzvos and their reward is so great, similarly, the punishment is much greater. *Korban Pesach* is the foundation of *emunah* and *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, when Hashem passed over Bnei Yisrael's homes in Mitzrayim, and thirteen covenants (*brisos*) were established for the mitzvah of *milah* (see *Nedarim* 31b). So since they are such great, lofty mitzvos, the punishment for failing to uphold them is so grave, and even if one doesn't actively do anything, he is still punished with *kareis*.

Chazal say (Yerushalmi, end of *Maseches Brachos*) on the *pasuk*, *Eis laasos laHashem*, *heifeiru Torasecha*, It is a time to take action for Hashem, they have annulled Your Torah: "Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches: If you see that people have significantly despaired from Torah, stand up and become stronger in Torah, and you will receive the reward of them all."

That is, during a time when people are slacking off and aren't strengthening *esek haTorah*, if someone is *mischazek* at such a time, he will receive the *sechar* everyone else should have received. "Stand up and become stronger in Torah, and you will receive the reward of them all!" Let us understand what "the reward of them all" means.

I heard from my rebbi Rav E.E. Dessler *zt"l* (see *Michtav MeEliyahu*, vol. 4, p. 118) who explained this based on a similar idea from *Avos*, chap. 5: "There are ten generations from Adam to Noach, to inform you how much patience Hashem has, as all the generations had been angering Him until He brought the waters of the Mabul upon them. There were ten generations from Noach to Avraham... as

all the generations has been angering Him until Avraham came and received **the reward for them all.**”

All ten generations from Adam to Noach were angering Hashem — they served *avodah zarah*, they had bad *middos*, and they were thieves, as it states (*Bereishis* 6:11), “And the land was full of theft.” In the end, they were punished with a *mabul*.

And then there were another ten generations between Noach and Avraham, and they too angered Hashem and served *avodah zarah*. But after these ten generations, Hashem did not bring a *mabul*; instead Avraham Avinu came and took the reward of them all.

Avraham Avinu Influenced His Generation

Then Avraham Avinu came and rectified all the wrongdoing that took place over ten generations and influenced the entire world, as the *pasuk* states (*Bereishis* 23:6), “You are a prince of G-d in our midst” — he was esteemed and accepted worldwide, and he impacted everyone and publicized *emunah*. Therefore, even though ten generations of people were angering Hashem, they didn’t receive a punishment like the *Mabul* because Avraham corrected whatever they ruined, and he spread *emunah* throughout the world. Since there was *emunah*, the world continued to exist.

This is the meaning of “Avraham Avinu received the reward of them all,” as the *Yerushalmi* says about one who strengthens himself during a time of *rifyon*, slacking off. Rav E.E. Dessler *zt”l* explains what “the reward of them all” means. If all ten generations from Noach to Avraham would have been *tzaddikim*, they would have deserved tremendous reward — because there would have been millions and billions of people all over world doing many *mitzvos* and *maasim tovim* over a period of ten generations. And they would have been worthy of tremendous *sechar* in *Olam HaBa* and *Gan Eden*.

However, they were continuously angering Hashem. And when Avraham Avinu came and influenced his generation, he had to work hard to retract the negative influence and fix up whatever they ruined. It was ten generations’ worth of negative influence,

of lack of *emunah*, bad *middos* — and Avraham Avinu had to uproot all the evil in his generation, and influence the people in his times to do *teshuvah*. And truthfully, he did it, he influenced them and caused his generation to repent. That’s why he received the “reward of them all.”

The “reward of them all” means all the *sechar* that every person would have received had he been a *tzaddik* — all ten generations worth. In those day, a normal lifespan was hundreds of years long, so a generation was a very long time. If they were all *tzaddikim*, they would have amassed tremendous *sechar*, and Avraham Avinu received all this reward that could have been, because he influenced them and rectified whatever they ruined. In the *zechus* of being a positive influence, one can merit receiving the reward of them all.

Strengthening Torah Learning on Friday and Shabbos and Its Great Reward

Based on this it turns out that if a person strengthens himself on Friday and Shabbos — which are times of *rifyon* and the *zechus* of Torah is lacking — he is filling in the missing *kevod Shamayim* and he takes the reward of them all! The same amount of *sechar* everyone would have received if they had been *osek baTorah* — of course it depends on each person, on his abilities, on the possibilities available to him, and on his personal reality — if he would be *osek baTorah* on Friday and Shabbos, he would receive the reward of everyone who was not *osek baTorah* on those days.

If so, is a tremendous *zechus* to be *mischazek* in *esek haTorah* on Friday and Shabbos. After all, going back to Rabbeinu Yonah’s comments that we mentioned earlier, the greater a *mitzvah* is, the more severe it is to fail to uphold it. If so, if a person wastes time on Friday and Shabbos, it is a greater *aveirah*.

The Power of Ahavas HaTorah

It is well known that *esek haTorah* is very interesting, *divrei Torah* are very interesting, and when someone learns what he’s naturally drawn to learning, it is very interesting and enticing.

The Gemara (*Eiruv* 54b) tells us about the *pasuk*, “You shall always be intoxicated with love for it,” due to a person’s love of Torah, he acts like someone who has lost his mind. This *pasuk* was attributed to Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas who would sit and learn Torah in the lower marketplace of Tzipori, while his garment would be lying in the upper marketplace. That is, he sat down to learn Torah and took off his upper garment, and then he continued walking as he was engrossed in Torah, and forgot where he put his garment.

This is the power of “love for it,” *ahavas haTorah*, which is so interesting and enthralling, and it causes a person to forget everything else.

A young *bachur* from the yeshivah was taught how to learn in an interesting way that fit his personal nature, and he implemented that learning style. The learning was so sweet that he couldn’t stop. It was so interesting and enthralling that it was hard for him to stop! And he learned with tremendous *hasmadah*, beyond his actual abilities. But then he got weak and he didn’t have any energy and he was forced to stop learning. He left yeshivah to rest for a few weeks until he regained his strength. This was not harmful to his health, he just was weak and had to stop learning for a short while, but then he came back to himself. This is the power of *ahavas Torah*, which is so enthralling. A person just has to pay attention to his *kochos* and not push himself beyond his strength.

Torah Is Sweet To Sustain the Nefesh

Why is *esek haTorah* is so interesting and enthralling? HaKadosh Baruch Hu made nature in such a way that a person is drawn toward the things he needs. Take, for example, one’s physical needs. The body needs food, so Hashem created hunger as a part of human nature. A person gets hungry and he wants to eat. If he wouldn’t be hungry, and he’d just know intellectually that he must eat, he would have

to always be on the alert and remember to eat. Eating would be similar to taking medicine, and if he’d forget to eat, he’d become weak and reach a state of exhaustion. So in order to keep man healthy, HaKadosh Baruch Hu created hunger so that a person will have to eat and remain healthy. Similarly, in order to maintain animal life, Hashem created animals — and all living creatures — with a nature that draws them toward the food they need.

This is what happens in our physical life, *gashmiyus*. And the same is true regarding our spiritual life, our *chayei hanefesh*, a person’s eternal life. Eternal life, *chayei hanetzach*, is Torah, as Chazal say (*Kesubos* 111b) regarding the *pasuk*, “For Your dew is a dew of lights”: The light of Torah gives life to all who use its light.” Therefore, HaKadosh Baruch Hu implanted a special flavor and sweetness in *esek haTorah* so that a person will have a *taam* for learning, so that it will draw him in. Torah is enthralling and entrancing so that a person will achieve *chayei netzach*!

That’s what we are so happy and feel so fortunate about — we have an obligation to be *osek baTorah*, but at the same time, there is sweetness in Torah. It’s enticing and interesting, because this is how we are *zocheh* to our wonderful, eternal life.

Sorrowfully, however, not all of Klal Yisrael lives this happy, fortunate life, and this is what we daven for in Shemoneh Esrei in “*Hashiveinu Avinu L’Torasecha*, Our Father, return us to Your Torah.” We beg for *rachamim* for all of Klal Yisrael. We’ve already mentioned that when a person davens with true *kavanah* from the depths of his heart, if someone really cares about our distant Jewish brothers and hopes that they come close to Torah, then his *tefillah* will have an effect, and it will have an influence on one person after another. *Baruch Hashem*, the *teshuvah* movement in our generation is strong, and that too is due to *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

Rabbeinu’s Address at the Building Campaign for Yeshivas Chemed L’Tzeirim

This is a place of Torah and *tefillah*, it is a *beis midrash* and *beis knesses*, and it’s a *chinuch* center too, for generations of *talmidei chachamim* are being taught here. It’s a great *zechus* to take part in building a permanent structure, so there can be a greater *chizuk* and more *hatzlachah* in all *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus* matters. It’s a great *zechus* to partner in the expenses for this great enterprise. Anyone who takes part in building this holy structure will be *zocheh* to *siyatta d’Shemaya* and to *brachah* and *hatzlachah*.

Rabbeinu's Address at a Keness Chizuk and Guidance for the "Chelki b'Kehillasi" Organization

An organization that functions under the direction of *gedolei Torah* and is involved in setting up communities and *shiurei Torah* and *chinuch* for yeshivah alumni in the workforce

Chazal say (*Berachos* 32b), "Four matters require strengthening." A person needs *chizuk*, that's the *teva*. Without *chizuk*, a person will have a *yeridah*, he will fall. With *chizuk* he stays strong — or even rises in *madreigah*.

How does one attain this *chizuk*? If someone is a full-time learner and he's submerged in Torah and learns *mussar*, or if he hears *mussar* and he's constantly acquiring *chizuk*, then at least he has acquired *chizuk* and he won't experience a *yeridah*. But if someone is involved in worldly matters, what should he do to acquire *chizuk*, how can he stay strong and even become stronger?

The *mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* states (1:6): "Make for yourself a *rav*." **A person must have a *rav*. Whenever anything comes up, he has a *rav* and he asks him his *shailos*! The *rav* must be a *bar samcha*, an important *rav*, a *baal Torah*, a *baal madreigah*, with good *middos* and *yiras Shamayim* who is *osek baTorah* — a *rav* who is a *bar samcha*. Whenever he has any questions, he should not *passen* for himself, he must go to a *rav* who is a *posek*. A person should not be his own *rav*; every person should have a *rav* who is a *bar samcha* and a *moreh derech*. *Baruch Hashem*, there are *rabbanim* who are *barei samcha* and they can give instructions and guidance.**

Anyone who has a *rav* like this — it's very important, "make for yourself a *rav*" — it gives him a happy, fortunate life. When a person lives on the Torah's path and his entire household runs according to the Torah's ways, that is the happiest life! 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, *ashrecha*." Even if you only have bread and salt and measured water, it doesn't matter and it doesn't bother you, because the connection and attachment to Torah gives you a happy, fortunate life, *ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*. This is the reality. In order to maintain this connection to Torah — doing everything according to Torah — one needs a *rav*, a *rav* who is a *bar samcha*.

This organization, Chelki b'Kehillasi, functions under the directives of *rabbanim*, and that's a wonderful thing. The *ikkar* is to add more and more *shiurei Torah*, including *mussar*, to increase *yiras Shamayim*, because "if there is no *yirah*, there is no *chochmah*, and if there is no *chochmah*, there is no *yirah*" (*Avos* 3:17).

What this organization is doing is *zikkui harabbim*, and it's a very good thing. You cannot imagine the merit of *zikkui harabbim*, as it states in *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar Ahavas Hashem* chap. 6), that when someone is involved in *zikkui harabbim*, all the good deeds performed as a result of his influence, belong to him and are considered as if he performed them himself. Even a few generations later when the *meshpia* is already in *Olam HaEmes*, his influence still carries on, and as a result he attains more *Gan Eden* and more *Olam HaBa*.

B'ezras Hashem, may there be *siyatta d'Shemaya* for those influencing and those gaining an influence. Chazal have already said (*Yoma* 38b), "One who comes to be purified is helped." Someone who makes a step toward improvement receives *siyatta d'Shemaya*. Anyone who "makes for himself a *rav*," and anyone who comes to hear *divrei chizuk*, any connection to *chizuk*, it's considered "one who comes to be purified," and *Shamayim* sends him *siyatta d'Shemaya*! It's an explicit *Gemara* — they help him, and there's no limit to *siyatta d'Shemaya*!

There's a very simple way to be "one who comes to be purified." If a person learns *mussar* for a few minutes a day — a *sefer* that's interesting, not something boring, and there are many interesting *mussar sefarim* — fathers who learn a few minutes of interesting *mussar* every day see that it transforms their homes to a completely different home. Their homes become more pleasant, it's well known. And this is a good *eitzah* for anyone who wants a happy, fortunate life.

Anyone who comes to be purified, or comes to purify others, is promised *siyatta d'Shemaya*, and they will be *zocheh* to a good, happy, fortunate life — for themselves and for their entire family.

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