

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 Vayetzei 5782

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Esek HaTorah MiToch HaDachak

It's no secret that the government is passing laws to hit the *chareidi* public financially and create difficulties for them. One law has already been instituted.

Learning Torah during Trying Times

Maran the Chazon Ish *zt"l* once told me, "*Torah mitoch hadachak, der Eibershter hut doss lieb*," Hashem loves Torah that is learned during trying times. Someone who learns Torah during trying times or under financial stress is beloved by Hashem!

Chazal expounded on the *maalah* of learning *Torah mitoch hadachak* in a few Gemaras. In *Sanhedrin* (20a) cites the *pasuk*: "*Sheker hachein... ishah yiras Hashem hi tis'hallal*, Vanity is false... but a G-d-fearing woman shall be praised" — this is referring to the generation of Rabbi Yehudah b'Rabbi Illa'ei when six *talmidim* covered themselves with one tallis and were *osek baTorah*." There was rampant poverty in those days, terrible poverty, but despite it, they were still *osek baTorah*. The term "*yiras Hashem hi tis'hallal*," the greatest *madreigah* and *zechus*, is attributed to them.

Chazal say further (*Koheles Rabbah* 2:9) on the *pasuk* "*Af chochmasi omdah li*" — The Torah that I learnt "*b'af*," stood by me. That is, Torah learned "*b'af*," Torah that was learnt amid pressure and difficult, trying times, is the greatest *zechus*.

The Decrees Are for Our Benefit

If so, *avreichim* who are learning *Torah mitoch hadachak* are gaining tremendous *zechuyos*! Not only that, we know that everything is in Heaven's hands, and "Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good," and if so, all the decrees and laws, all the difficulties and challenges that they're instituting against *chareidim*, are from *Shamayim*. Challenges come from *Shamayim* for our benefit, to benefit *oskei haTorah*, and the benefit is that we are *zocheh* to even greater *zechuyos* when learning *Torah mitoch hadachak*. That's the "for the good."

Difficulties and Pressure Lead to a Happy Life

The truth is, Chazal say (*Avos* 6:4): "This is the way of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink measured water, sleep on the ground, and live a life of privation. If you do this, you will be fortunate and it

will be good for you: Fortunate in This World and good for you in the World to Come."

Four types of difficulties are mentioned here: bread with salt, measured water, sleep on the ground, and a life of privation. Yet despite this all, "you will be fortunate in This World." *Lichorah*, how can one be happy and fortunate with so many difficulties? But this is the reality! **And we see in reality that it's true. These difficulties of learning *Torah mitoch hadachak* is what gives a person a good life.** It also brings a person tremendous *zechuyos*, and these *zechuyos* provide the learner with a happy life — *Ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*!

Being Fortunate in Olam HaZeh Doesn't Detract from Olam HaBa

We once mentioned that we need to understand the rest of the Tanna's words, where he says "And it will be good for you in the World to Come." What's the *chiddush* here? We can understand the *chiddush* of "*ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*" — despite all the pressure and difficulties, he's still happy in This World — but it's simple that it will be good for you in Olam HaBa! Who else, if not for one who toiled in *Torah mitoch hadachak* without worldly pleasures, deserves Olam HaZeh?

Indeed, the answer is that since he is so fortunate in This World, as it states: "*Ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*" — that it's the greatest delight in the world — if so, he already received Olam HaZeh! And it's well known that all worldly pleasures detract from a person's Olam HaBa.

The Vilna Gaon writes in *Iggeres HaGra* that all worldly pleasures will turn to "*marah*," bitterness, in the grave. Of course, this is referring to worldly pleasures that are not *l'shem Shamayim*. After all, a person must eat and drink because he is obligated to fulfill the 613 mitzvos — without food and drink, he cannot live! But any pleasures beyond his necessities, pleasures just to enjoy Olam HaZeh, are already "Gehinnom," and will turn into *marah* in the grave, because that causes him to lose Olam HaBa.

This is the Tanna's *chiddush*: the Olam HaZeh that a person has when he leads a life of "*pas b'melach*," the fact that he becomes fortunate in This World, does not detract from or take anything away from his portion in Olam HaBa. To the contrary, it adds to his Olam HaBa! The "you will be fortunate in This World" of Torah — the fact that a person is happy despite living a life of pain

and tribulation and still toils in Torah — is not a reason to lose Olam HaBa. *Adaraba!* This type of Olam HaZeh increases his Olam HaBa! He doesn't lose anything from it. This pertains to *avreichim* who learn *Torah mitoch hadachak*.

Find a Torah-related Profession

There's a corollary to this. When people need to do something to make a living, to support their family, what's the right kind of job to look for? The best thing is to find a Torah-related job, such as teaching *talmidim*, and even teaching *aleph-beis* — that's Torah too and it's *Toras emes*. It's even better to find a job teaching Chumash with Rashi, or teaching Gemara — any type of Torah learning is the best *parnasah* and will give you a happy life. It's tried-and-true. I've seen it in reality: when someone needs to make a living and he makes a living through Torah, he has a happy life.

Of course, it's all individual — each person according to his possibilities and his situation. Not everyone can do it. Heaven sends each person his own set of means and conditions.

Here's practical advice how to merit all these *zechuyos*: we've already mentioned many times that the way to do it is by having a daily learning session in *mussar sefarim*. Choose a *sefer* that's not boring, because if it's boring, it does not have an effect. Each person should set aside a few minutes every day to learn an interesting *mussar sefer* — it's tried-and-true that this will bring about a happy life, and then the whole atmosphere at home will be happy and pleasant. It doesn't matter how many minutes exactly, just devote a few minutes a day to learning *mussar sefarim*.

Success in Torah and Zikui HaRabbim Depends on Prior Merit

It's important to be aware that success in Torah depends on one's *zechuyos*. Without *zechuyos*, one cannot have *hatzlachah* in Torah. One needs prior *zechuyos* also to perform *zikui harabbim* in Torah, to give others the merit of Torah — such as by saying *shiurim*, one needs *zechuyos* for that. Without *zechuyos*, *zikui harabbim* is not possible.

While giving over *shiurim* entails *zikui harabbim*, many *gedolei Yisrael* — such as the Chazon Ish and the Ohr Sameach — did not have positions in *yeshivos*; individuals would come speak with them in learning. And yet, they merited the masses with their Torah, through their famous *sefarim*: *Chazon Ish* and *Ohr Sameach*, which everyone learns.

People are still learning their *sefarim* nowadays, so even though these *gedolim* are in the Olam HaEmes, they are still receiving reward for their *zikui harabbim* in Torah. The *zikui harabbim* they started in their lifetimes is still having an influence, and they are *zocheh* to increased Olam HaBa and unfathomable levels of pleasure in Olam HaBa! And this is happening because they wrote and printed *chiddushei Torah*, and other people are learning their *sefarim*, and then creating their own *pilpuls* and *chiddushim* based on their *sefarim*.

Good Middos Create Zechuyos for Zikui HaRabbim

But it all depends on *zechuyos*. How does a person gain *zechuyos* for *zikui harabbim*? We've already mentioned once that there are all types of *zechuyos*. Chazal said about Moshe Rabbeinu (*Avos* 5:18), "Moshe merited and brought merit to the masses" — that is, he first "merited" on his own, due to his own prior *zechuyos*, he was then worthy of "bringing merit to the masses" and he brought down the Torah from Har Sinai. The entire Torah that we have — *Torah she'bichsav* and *Torah she'be'al Peh* and *halachah l'Moshe miSinai* — was all received from Moshe. We were *zocheh* to it in his merit.

How did Moshe "merit" the ability to perform such tremendous *zikui harabbim*? The Midrash states (*Shemos Rabbah* 2:2) that when he was shepherding Yisro's sheep, a sheep once ran away from the flock. The shepherd must guard his sheep, so Moshe ran after the sheep and tried to catch it. The sheep ran and ran until it stopped near a spring of water and began to drink. When Moshe saw that, he said, If so, the sheep wasn't trying to escape; it was simply thirsty and wanted a drink. Now it must be tired from running so far. Moshe then picked up the sheep and carried it on his shoulders so it could rest.

The Midrash says that when HaKadosh Baruch Hu saw how Moshe acted toward the sheep, He said: "You have mercy to shepherd a human's flock, by your life, you will shepherd My flock, Bnei Yisrael!" It was in this merit that Moshe was *zocheh* to be the one to receive the Torah from Sinai. The *zechus* of having good *middos*, of having mercy on Hashem's creatures, even on animals, and of acting with such good *middos* and *rachmanus*, is the *zechus* one needs to merit performing *zikui harabbim* in Torah. So much so that Moshe Rabbeinu was *zocheh* to receive the Torah, the entire Torah, from Har Sinai.

The Midrash there also talks about Dovid HaMelech who merited *Malchus Beis Dovid* for all generations until Mashiach's arrival. Why was he *zocheh*? The Midrash quotes the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 78:71), "From behind the nursing ewes He brought him to shepherd Yaakov His nation and Yisrael His portion." That is, Dovid was also a shepherd, and when Shmuel went to look for him to anoint him as king, he found Dovid with the sheep. He was so concerned about each and every sheep and made sure each one the right type of food to eat. [The Midrash says: He would hold the older ones back while he let the younger ones out to graze on the softer grass. Then he'd take out the older sheep to graze on the medium grass, and finally he'd take out the hearty middle-aged sheep, who could chew the tough grass.]

When Hashem saw this, He said, "One who can shepherd a human's sheep... will come and shepherd My nation." In the *zechus* of having mercy on sheep, because Dovid had such good *middos* to have mercy on Hashem's creatures, he was *zocheh* to *Malchus Beis Dovid* for all generations and Mashiach ben Dovid. **Good middos are the most powerful zechuyos!**

Our Gedolim's Good Middos

The Chazon Ish ז"ל merited that everyone learns his *sefarim*, and so did the Brisker Rav ז"ל. Everyone learns his *sefer Chiddushei Maran Ri"z HaLevi*. They were *zocheh* to *zikui harabbim* in Torah till this day. What gave them this merit? The truth is, there were many *zechuyos* involved, but for now we will discuss the *zechus* of good *middos*, from stories that I know personally.

Let's first talk about the Chazon Ish. Once a person was learning *sefer Chazon Ish* in a shul in Tel Aviv. He came upon an *inyan* that the Chazon Ish writes about, and the *Turei Even* writes about it too, but the Chazon Ish did not quote him. The man was surprised at this, but people told him that the Chazon Ish doesn't look at *sifrei Achronim*, so that's why he didn't quote the *Turei Even*.

The man continued learning, and then he found another place where the Chazon Ish writes something that's written straight out in the *Yerushalmi*, and he didn't quote the *Yerushalmi*. This was already too strange for him. He decided to travel to the Chazon Ish's house and ask him about it.

When he got there, he showed the Chazon Ish the *Yerushalmi* and what he had written in his *sefer Chazon Ish*. The Chazon Ish looked at the *sefarim* and said, "You're right, it is actually written in the *Yerushalmi*." He didn't explain to the man why he didn't quote the *Yerushalmi*, and the man's question was left unanswered.

While the man was there, the Chazon Ish didn't realize that he was expecting an answer, but after he left, he started to think that maybe the man didn't understand. He said, we have to find him so we can explain. The Chazon Ish asked his *talmid* Rav Shraga Feivel Steinberg ז"ל (who was a *ben bayis* and a very clever man) to travel to Tel Aviv and find the man. Rav Steinberg had no idea where this man lived, but he went to the main shul in Tel Aviv, where there are *minyanim* for *Minchah* and *Maariv* all the time, hoping that he'd meet him there. He found the man there and told him that the Chazon Ish wanted to speak with him.

So this man went back to the Chazon Ish, who sat with him and explained as follows: "I see that you don't understand how it could be that I didn't quote the *Yerushalmi*. But the truth is, I wrote my *sefer* while I was in Vilna, and the shul did not have a copy of the *Yerushalmi*. So what could I do? I didn't have a *Yerushalmi*!" That's what the Chazon Ish told him in order to calm him down, so that it shouldn't seem so strange to him why the *gadol* didn't quote the *Yerushalmi*. The Chazon Ish put in effort and sent a messenger to find him so that the man shouldn't be disappointed and upset that he didn't receive an answer. This is called acting with good *middos*.

A similar story happened with the Brisker Rav. A man from Herzliya would bring the Brisker Rav an *esrog* every year before *Sukkos*. Another Herzliya resident, who was a great *talmid chacham* and *baki b'Shas*, was learning *Kodshim*. He had some

kashas in his learning and wanted to ask the Brisker Rav, who was a great expert in *Kodshim*. So he asked the first man if he could come along with him when he goes to bring an *esrog* to the Brisker Rav.

So that year before *Sukkos*, he arrived at the Brisker Rav's house and asked his questions. The Brisker Rav listened, and his response to whatever the man said was: "Right, right. I hear." He didn't give him any answers! The man was extremely surprised and could not understand why the Brisker Rav wasn't answering his *sheilahs*. He was sure that the Brisker Rav had answers, but just didn't want to tell them to him. The Brisker Rav didn't notice the man's surprise as they spoke, but once he left, he started thinking: Maybe the man thought I had an answer, but simply didn't want to tell him. We have to apologize.

That entire year, the Brisker Rav kept this story in his mind. The next year, when the man from Herzliya came with his *esrog*, the Brisker Rav told him: "Last year, a *talmid chacham* from your city came along with you and asked me *sheilahs* in *Kodshim*. They are good questions, and I don't have the answers to them either." The Brisker Rav expected this man to pass the message on to the *talmid chacham*, so he wouldn't feel bad. So for a full year, the Brisker Rav kept this in mind to make sure this *talmid chacham* wouldn't have *chalishus hadaas* that he didn't receive an answer to his questions. This is another example of *gedolei Yisrael's* good *middos*.

The Level of Yiras Shamayim Is Taken into Account

One can also do *zikui harabbim* in *yiras Shamayim*, for example by giving *mussar shmuessin*. One needs *zechuyos* to have an influence of *yiras Shamayim*, too. The *mashpia* must initially have *yiras Shamayim* himself, because if not, he has no *zechus* to influence others. He can give fiery, passionate *shmuessin*, but if he does not practice what he preaches, his speeches will not influence anyone.

The Dubno Maggid writes in his *sefer Ohel Yaakov (Parshas Tazria)*: "When I was in Vilna visiting my teacher Rabbeinu HaKadosh, HaGaon v'heChassid, Rabbeinu Eliyahu of Vilna ז"א, I asked him to tell me how a *tzaddik* can be *mashpia* his *yiras Shamayim* on his generation. He responded with a *mashal* about a large vessel surrounded by smaller vessels on all sides. If you spill liquid — without stopping — into the larger vessel, once it is full it will automatically start overflowing into the smaller vessels. But as long as it is not full itself, not even one drop will make its way to the smaller vessels."

In order to inspire people to *yiras Shamayim*, the *mashpia* himself must be full of *yirah*, and then he will have an influence on others. But as long as he's not full, he will not be able to influence others. He can deliver powerful *divrei chizuk*, but if he's not "full," his words will not influence anyone. The truth is, there were *gedolim* who were influential in arousing people with their *mussar*, but they would not speak about topics that they did not attain *sheleimus* in personally. Once they felt they had attained *sheleimus*

in a certain area, then they would speak about that area. This is a *madreigah*.

And yet, Rav Yisrael Salanter's words are famous: He said that it's worthwhile to give a *mussar shmuess* to a thousand people, even if it will only have an influence on one person, and even if that person is you! Sometimes a person wants to influence others and he is not successful, but since he's involved in this matter, it has an influence on him. It's a *zechus* to be influenced.

Three Crowns — Three Concepts

Chazal say (*Avos* 4:13), "There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of *kehunah*, and the crown of royalty." And they said further (see *Yoma* 72b, *Rambam, Hilchos Talmud Torah* chap. 3), "Aharon merited the crown of *kehunah*, Dovid merited the crown of royalty, but the crown of Torah is available, and every single person can merit it." It can be explained that a "crown" symbolizes *hashpa'ah*, influence, because a crown is a kingly item and a king influences the nation. Indeed, the Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim*) explains that a king's role is to be a good influence on the nation. This is what Chazal meant when they said there are three crowns: there are three concepts of *hashpa'ah*, and the crown of Torah is the *hashpa'ah* of Torah.

The crown of *kehunah* is the influence of *kedushah*. Aharon merited the *kedushah* of *kehunah* and he is the one who influences holiness on Klal Yisrael, as the *pasuk* says (*Malachi* 2:7): "The lips of a *kohen* will guard knowledge and Torah shall be sought from his mouth." Since he has the sanctity of *kehunah*, this gives him the ability to be an influence of more *kedushah*. The level of *kedushah* he can be *mashpia* is based on the level of his own *madreigah*. This is the meaning of "the crown of *kehunah*" — the ability to influence the *tzibbur* to *kedushah*.

Dovid HaMelech merited the crown of royalty. The Rambam explains concept of "royalty" (*Hilchos Melachim* 3:6): "The king's heart is the heart of all Klal Yisrael." He also writes (*ibid.* 2:6): "He must be gracious and merciful to both young and old,

deal with their wants and desires, and suffer their burdens, complaints, and anger as a nursemaid carries a suckling... The Torah calls him 'a shepherd.'" That is, the king's job is to care for the nation's general good and welfare, to be a positive influence in both physical and spiritual matters. Dovid merited this position throughout the generations until Mashiach. Mashiach is the most influential figure in Klal Yisrael, and he will bring about *sheleimus* in Klal Yisrael.

But the crown of Torah is available and anyone can merit it. The concept "the crown of Torah" refers to having a *hashpa'ah* of Torah on others, and anyone can merit doing so — but you need *zechuyos* first! Without *zechuyos*, it is not possible. Just as we mentioned regarding Moshe Rabbeinu that he had prior *zechuyos* due to the way he acted toward the sheep, there are *zechuyos* of Torah. The *mashpia* must be *osek baTorah*, because if not, what kind of *zechuyos* does he have?! But once he's been *osek baTorah* with *sheleimus*, then he may have *zechuyos* to influence Torah on others. This is what "the crown of Torah" means — to be *mashpia Torah*, but not before garnering the necessary *zechuyos* to do so.

The way to attain all these *zechuyos* is as we mentioned — by learning *mussar*, a little bit every day, just a few minutes. This also influences the entire family and infuses a very pleasant atmosphere in the house. It's well known that learning *mussar* even just for five minutes a day — as long as it's interesting and not boring — has the greatest influence. It gives a person "*ashrecha baOlam haZeh*." Not only that, it fulfills "and if you toil in Torah," because *mussar* is *divrei Torah* of *yiras Shamayim*, *middos tovos*, and *ahavas Torah*. These are the greatest *zechuyos* that every single person can merit, and everyone can do it — learn an interesting *mussar sefer* for a few minutes every day. It is tried-and-true that this influences the learner himself, and his entire surroundings. *Yehi ratzon* that we all merit becoming strengthened, and continue to be strengthened in whatever needs *chizuk*!

Please daven for
 גיטה פייגה בת רבקה
 לרפואה שלימה ומהירה
 בתוך כל חולי ישראל

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