

Darkei HaChizuk

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

A Sichah from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita* • Behar (chul) 5779

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Influencing People to Keep Shabbos

How can we influence those who do not keep Shabbos to keep Shabbos? A few decades ago, there was a city in Israel that had many traditional Jews. Privately, many of them did not keep Shabbos, but there was no public Shabbos desecration. However, one Shabbos, there was a person who publicly desecrated Shabbos. People came to the Chazon Ish to ask why this happened, and what they can do to stop it from happening again.

The Chazon Ish replied that **if we were more careful about keeping Hilchos Shabbos, this would not have happened.** He blamed this on Torah scholars who joined the regular people in relying on an Eiruv to carry publicly on Shabbos. He understood that while this was fine for regular people, Torah scholars should not rely on this leniency. He therefore said that if Torah scholars would not be relying on this leniency, there would not be public Shabbos desecration in this city! These are the words of the Chazon Ish.

The Greatness of Shabbos

The Iggeres Ha'Gra states, that Shabbos is "Kodesh Kodoshim." The Gra urged people not to speak about things that were unnecessary to speak about on Shabbos, and even when it was necessary to speak about a mundane topic, to only speak to the point. This is as Chazal say that even saying Shalom to a friend on Shabbos was permitted by Chazal, but only barely permitted. This is despite the fact that Shabbos is a Name of Hashem! [See Tosfos on Shabbos 113 in the name of the Yerushalmi.] This means that a person on a very high spiritual level might be stringent to refrain from saying Shalom to his friend on Shabbos! How great is the sanctity of Shabbos!

The Ben Ish Chai (*Shemos, year 2*) states, that learning Torah on Shabbos is one thousand times greater than learning

Torah on a weekday. It seems as if he said this based on Kabbalah. This can only be because of the great sanctity of Shabbos, which turns the Torah learning that a person does on Shabbos into an entirely greater level of learning.

Neshamah Yeseirah

A person has a Neshamah Yeseirah on Shabbos. The Gemara in Beitzah (16a) states, that a person is given a Neshamah Yeseirah on Erev Shabbos, and it is removed on Motzei Shabbos. Once Motzei Shabbos arrives, the Gemara states, "Woe, the extra soul is gone!" Tosfos and the Rashbam in Pesachim (102) state, that this is why we recite a blessing on spices on Motzei Shabbos (to help alleviate our spiritual shock from the departure of the Neshamah Yeseirah). A Neshamah Yeseirah adds holiness to a person throughout Shabbos.

A Shabbos Face

My Rebbe Rav Dessler *zt"l* used to say that one can feel his Neshamah Yeseirah on Shabbos. [The Michtav Mei'Eliyahu states (*vol. 1, pg. 72*), that if a person does not feel holier on Shabbos, it is a sign that he does not have a Neshamah Yeseirah.]

My father *zt"l* once pointed out to me in Ramat Ha'Sharon that there was a certain congregant of his who was not a Torah scholar, but who one could tell was a changed person on Shabbos. His face looked totally different on Shabbos than it looked during the week. The Bereishis Rabah (11:2) indeed states regarding Shabbos, that Hashem blessed Shabbos "In the light of his face." It says that the countenance of his face is different on Shabbos (*see also Tosfos on Kesuvos 7b*).

This person would come to Shul early on Erev Shabbos, and read the Parshah twice, and the Targum once, before Kabbalas Shabbos. The Neshamah Yeseirah clearly changed his inner essence, and this was apparent from his face. After

all, the word “Pnim” – “inside” has the same letters as the word “Panim” – “face.” This is because a person’s face is a reflection of his inner essence. Accordingly, when a person becomes a holier person on Shabbos due to his Neshamah Yeseirah, it changes his countenance in a clearly noticeable manner.

There was another incident I can relate to you about this congregant. A fire once broke out in Shul, and this person rushed into the Shul in order to save the Sifrei Torah, despite the fires being very close to the Aron Kodesh. When people asked him why he had done so, and it wasn’t Pikuach Nefesh a reason to refrain from doing so, he looked at them in shock and said, “These are Sifrei Torah!” He was so bound to the Sifrei Torah in question that there was no way he was going to allow them to be burned! This was the level of this supposedly simple Jew.

Learning Torah Changes a Face

My Rebbi Rav Dessler zt”l used to say that he could tell on someone’s face if he had learned Torah yet that day. My brother Rav Yaakov zt”l once asked him one morning, if he could tell if he learned Torah yet that day. Rav Dessler replied that he could, and that he had. My brother denied that he had learned anything. Rav Dessler told him, “Think if you have possibly discussed a Torah thought with someone for a minute this morning.” My brother thought about his morning, and remembered that he had indeed spoken quickly to someone for a few minutes in learning.

This shows how great of an impact spirituality has on us, as a few minutes of speaking Torah changes a person’s face in the morning! This is the great influence of Torah study!

Torah Study Without Interruption

If someone does not learn, he is lacking in Torah study. We have previously discussed that completion in Torah study depends on how much one is Mevatel Torah, and not on how much he learned Torah. If a person learns a lot of Torah but he also wastes a lot of time, he is not as close to the Torah as one who spends all of his free time learning Torah.

Recognizing the Importance of Torah

One must recognize the importance of learning Torah and doing Mitzvos. This will also lead to him performing these

Mitzvos happily, as he is grateful to have the opportunity to learn Torah and perform Mitzvos.

The reward for performing Mitzvos happily is very great. The Sharei Teshuvah (4:9) discusses at length how great the reward is for performing Mitzvos happily. This is because a person who is happy to perform Mitzvos really values the Mitzvah, and this understanding transforms him into an especially holy and spiritual person.

It is not enough to be on a good schedule of learning Torah and performing Mitzvos, going to Minyanim and doing acts of kindness. **We must value each and every moment of Torah study, and each and every moment of praying with proper intent! We must realize how important it is, and look forward to doing it! Whenever a person Davens or learns with happiness, he merits a special closeness with Hashem.**

Be Happy Not Haughty

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.3) writes, that a person must know his good deeds, as this gives him encouragement to keep building on these good deeds. Similarly, the Orchos Tzadikim (*Shar Ha’Simchah*) and Chovos Ha’Levavos (*Shar Ha’Kniah ch.9*) write, that one must be happy that he has done many good deeds, but he should not become haughty due to this knowledge. It is a fine line between happiness about your good deeds and haughtiness. One must be happy that he has done good deeds, but not feel that it is because he is so great that he has accomplished these good deeds.

Mussar is the Antidote

As we have stated many times previously, the best way to advance in spirituality is by studying Mussar on a permanent basis. It is the antidote to the Yetzer Hara, as the Gemara in Kidushin (30b) states, “I created the Yetzer Hara, and I created Torah as its antidote.” Rav Yisrael Salanter zt”l wrote in Iggeres Ha’Mussar, that it does not matter what part of Torah one studies, as all of them will save him from the Yetzer Hara. If one studies the chapter of Gemara regarding an ox that gores a cow, it will save him from speaking Lashon Hara and from doing other sins. This is despite the fact that this Torah topic and this result seemingly have nothing to do with each other. The holiness of Torah will guard one from sin.

However, Rav Yisrael Salanter added, that the best and most potent Torah learning against the Yetzer Hara was to learn about any sins that he might have done or is tempted to do, and to understand exactly what is forbidden, and the consequences of those actions.

Accordingly, if one learns Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat, he will certainly be more honest in his business dealings. If he learns Mussar, he will be strengthened in all spiritual areas that he needs to strengthen.

The Mishnah Berurah (*ch.1*) writes, that the best antidote for the Yetzer Hara is the rebuke of the words of Chazal. This specifically means that one should learn about increasing his fear of Heaven. This is also considered learning Torah, as the Passuk in Iyov (28:28) states, "Fear of Heaven is wisdom." Learning about the sin, as we mentioned above, gives a person a boost in his Yiras Shamayim.

We have mentioned many times that if a person learns a Mussar Sefer that interests him, it will be very helpful to his spirituality. Even if a person does not realize any immediate effect, he should know that it will definitely have an effect on him as time goes on, and he consistently learns Mussar. This is the best possible advice one can hear about his spirituality.

Davening and Siyata Dishmaya

Everyone needs Siyata Dishmaya and prayer. Interestingly enough, in the forty-eight ways to acquire Torah, prayer is never mentioned. Many other types of good conduct and aspects of Torah study are mentioned, but not prayer.

The reason for this is because all of the forty-eight ways are actions one takes in order to succeed in his Torah learning. For example, one must learn diligently, he must listen carefully to words of Torah, he must speak words of Torah, etc. This helps him acquire his Torah learning. However, prayer is not a direct way to acquire Torah, but rather a request for Siyata Dishmaya. A person must ask Hashem for Torah, as if he does not ask, why should Hashem give it to him? Davening for success in Torah is a sign that a person has Emunah that everything is in the hands of Hashem, including his spiritual success, and specifically his success in Torah learning. If a person does not think Hashem is the One Who gives people success in Torah learning, why should Hashem grant him this success?

Often times, those who have partial success in Torah study because they are smart do not realize that the key ingredient to their success in Torah learning is prayer. They do not feel like they have to Daven for success in Torah learning, as they basically understand their learning. While they indeed do have some success in Torah learning, it is not even close to the level of success they could have if they would wholeheartedly pray for success in Torah learning! Therefore, we must always pray for success in Torah learning, as indicated by the Tefilos that we say everyday, in which we often ask Hashem to grant us wisdom and understanding in our Torah learning.

Daven For Success in Torah Study

One must pray for success in Torah study. The Yaros Devash (1:4) states, that success in Torah study is not dependent on natural brilliance, but rather on Heavenly mercy. He testifies about himself that on a day when he did not pray with proper intent, his Torah study was lacking. In contrast, when he did pray properly, he noticed that he was able to learn very well! This is because Torah study is dependent on Heavenly mercy.

This teaches us that even the Yaros Devash, who was the brilliant author of the Tumim, did not feel that he succeeded in his Torah learning on days when he did not pray properly. I heard this same exact statement, from Rav Shach zt"l in the name of the Netziv.

We pleadingly ask Hashem in Ahavah Rabah for success in Torah each and every morning. We call out to "Avinu," "Av," "Ha'Rachaman," "Ha'Merachem," and beg for success in Torah study and keeping the Mitzvos. It is a powerful Tefilah that can grant a person who says it wholeheartedly much success in his learning.

The truth is that this concept is an explicit Gemara. The Gemara in Nidah (70b) says that people asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananyah, how can they achieve success in Torah study? He answered that they should sit and learn Torah in a Yeshivah, meaning amongst others who are learning Torah. The questioners persisted that many people do so, but they do not have success in learning Torah! He said that they must ask for mercy from the One Who owns all of the wisdom.

The Gemara there continues that “one without the other is not enough.” Rashi explains that while it is obvious that one needs to pray in order to have success in learning, one might have thought that this was enough. Rabbi Yehoshua therefore taught us that one must also learn in a Yeshivah. In other words, unless a person takes all of the necessary steps that he can take, Hashem will not award him more Torah through Heavenly mercy. Therefore, he must learn in a Yeshivah diligently, and if he prays for success, Hashem will help him succeed.

It is very well known that the most important aspect to success in learning is a will to succeed, and to Daven to Hashem for constant Siyata Dishmaya. There are many, many stories of people, in our generation as well, who did not feel they were succeeding in learning. Even recently, I heard a story about such a boy. These people Davened to Hashem with all of their might, and Hashem simply changed their abilities completely. They went from being somewhat dull to being able to quickly grasp complex Torah topics! This is the power of Davening to succeed in learning Torah! The Chazon Ish zt”l used to say that sometimes, the tears that a grandmother cried generations before while lighting Shabbos candles can have an effect on a grandson, and suddenly allow him to blossom into a Torah scholar! If this is true regarding a grandmother, it is certainly true about a person who Davens for himself!

A person should never think that he knows enough, and become complacent in his level of learning. If the Netziv, who wrote so many Sefarim, said that his day of learning was weak if he did not Daven wholeheartedly for success in Torah on that day, certainly we should not become complacent and think that we already are on the highest level possible, and that we do not require Tefilos to succeed in learning!

Everyone Can Merit Spirituality

Everyone can merit being on a high spiritual level, if they work on themselves. If people strengthen their Emunah and learn Mussar Sefarim, they can keep growing in spirituality. One can keep growing his entire life, as there is no limit to how much we can perfect the many spiritual areas that we must work on in life. The Mesilas Yesharim states that a person whose life circumstances dictate that he must be a working man, can be on the same level as a person who is constantly speaking words of Torah! If the working man Davens well, has very strong Emunah, and learns whenever he can, he may indeed be on the same level as a great Talmid Chacham!

It must be noted that when the Mesilas Yesharim states, that a Talmid Chacham never stops speaking in Torah learning, he doesn’t mean that one is not a Talmid Chacham if he speaks a small amount of mundane conversation in his day. The Gra explains that one of the forty-eight ways to acquire Torah is “Miut Sichah” – “A small amount of talk.” This indicates, the Gra explains, that one should speak a certain small amount of mundane speech in his day in order to keep his sanity. People need some speech about worldly or mundane topics in order to maintain their learning.

Even though we have mentioned previously that Chazal did not really want one to speak about mundane matters on Shabbos, a person should not refrain from speaking a minimal amount about mundane matters, even on Shabbos, as it is very important to his sanity. Whenever one needs to speak it helps him acquire Torah, as it maintains his equilibrium.

May we have Siyata Dishmaya to know exactly how to act in order to keep ascending in our service to Hashem!

Dedicated by the Kroll Family, Los Angeles

להצלחת בניהם ובנותיהם בתורה וביראת שמים

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