

# Darkei HaChizuk

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

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

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## Rav Yosef Diskin's Dream

The Chazon Ish *zt"l* passed away on a Friday night. Before this information was made public, my brother-in-law, Rav Yosef Diskin *zt"l*, dreamed that this happened. He probably had this dream because he was extremely connected to the Chazon Ish. When a person is very connected to another person, and their souls are very similar, he feels and connects to what is happening to him. If that person has a difficulty or is in pain, often he will feel it, even though he does not know about this through conventional methods of finding out information.

I am sure there are many other stories of people who had a feeling or dreamed about someone whom they were very close to, and that this is not such a rare occurrence.

## The Love of the Chazon Ish

What was the essence of the Chazon Ish? He was a pure soul who had a tremendous love for Torah and the Jewish people. He fulfilled the Passuk in Vayikra (19:18), "And you should love your friend as yourself." The *Mesilas Yesharim (ch.11)* states, that this literally means to love your fellow Jew as much as you love yourself. It is clear that the Chazon Ish fulfilled this directive of the Torah, as explained by the *Mesilas Yesharim*.

One of his relatives once asked him if he has any complaint or grudge against him in anyway. He answered that he has no idea what a grudge or complaint would be! The *Gemara in Bava Metzia (49a)* states, that sometimes it is permitted to have a complaint against others. However, the Chazon Ish had no idea why he would have a personal complaint against anyone!

This shows his greatness in his interpersonal relations with his fellow Jews. A person normally would not have complaints against his son, with whom he has a good

relationship. The Chazon Ish extended this type of relationship to all Jews. He did not just say this as an expression. It is clear that he truly could not fathom having such a complaint against a fellow Jew.

I similarly heard him remark once when asked this question by someone, "In my store, I simply don't carry it!" He worked on himself to the point where it was against his nature to bear a grudge, or even a complaint, against others.

It is possible that he had an inborn nature to be like this from his holy father, Rav Shmaryahu Yosef *zt"l*. However, I am sure that the fact that he was always clinging to Torah helped elevate his good *Middos*. There are many amazing stories about his great *Middos*, and about his caring for his fellow Jews.

## Rav Shteinman's Dream

On the night of Yom Kippur 5734, Rav Shteinman *zt"l* had a dream in which he saw the words "Kra Satan" – "Tear up the Satan," but it was missing one of the letters. This scared him, and caused him to immediately run to the Steipler Gaon *zt"l*, and tell him about it. After relating the dream, they sat down to say chapters of *Tehilim* together for quite some time. This was the year of the Yom Kippur War.

It is logical that because Rav Shteinman *zt"l* cared so much about Klal Yisrael, Hashem showed him this dream that indicated Klal Yisrael were in danger. Since his soul cared so much for Klal Yisrael, he was shown that Klal Yisrael was in danger.

It is possible for every single person to achieve a very high level of Klal Yisrael. While it is true that some of this is inborn, it can also be achieved through thinking how to help others, and praying for them, whether with words or thoughts. This will eventually lead to having a clean and pure soul that cares about every single Jew in Klal Yisrael.

## The Obligation to Have Good Middos

The Sharei Teshuvah (3:36) writes, that a person is obligated to remove from himself any cruel Middos, and to plant there instead true mercy and kindness. In other words, one is obligated to make his nature into a merciful and loving kindness type of nature. This even applies to those people whose nature is not like this, and who were even possibly born to parents whose nature is seemingly unkind. The Rambam (*Hilchos De'os ch.1, Hilchos Teshuvah ch.7*) indeed writes, that one is obligated to uproot any bad nature he was born with due to the Passuk, "And you will go in His ways."

The Sharei Teshuvah (3:17) states, that these positive attributes are the most important positive attributes, and can be acquired through actions, speech, and thoughts. We have previously mentioned that the Mishnah in Avos (3:15) states, that everything is based on "Most of the actions." The Rambam in Pirush Ha'Mishnayos explains that it is better to give one coin everyday to charity for one thousand days, than to give one thousand coins at once, as doing the former will develop a tendency of giving, while the latter is just one action.

Similarly, the more acts of kindness one does, the more he will develop a tendency to become a kind person. The more he thinks about and performs acts of kindness, the more likely he will be to become a kind and merciful person.

## Passively Changing Our Nature

We have previously mentioned the advice given to a person who normally shouted at his family on Erev Shabbos due to the lateness of Shabbos preparations. The advice was to refrain from shouting, and to stay quiet. In the beginning, this was very hard for the person. The next week it was somewhat difficult, and it kept becoming easier every week, until it became his nature to be a calmer and more loving person.

This teaches us that a person can change his nature in a passive way as well, not just in the active way of giving charity or doing Mitzvos. Refraining from sin on a constant basis breaks the need and/or desire one has to sin, and makes it one's nature to refrain from sinning.

Of course, this only applies if one refrains from sin because he wants to refrain from sinning, as opposed to not having the

ability to sin. If a person just refrains because he does not have the ability to sin, his nature stays the same.

On a similar note, I have mentioned previously in the name of the Chazon Ish, that if a person performs an act of Chesed because he feels forced to do so, he will actually hate Chesed and become less inclined to help others. One must perform Chesed out of love for helping his fellow Jew, not out of a feeling of being forced.

## The Influence of Studying Mussar

We have discussed the ways to use our habit to change our nature. It is not so easy to act on this, but it is certainly possible. If a person learns Mussar because he is interested in learning Mussar, and he has a desire to change for the better, it will certainly have a very positive effect on him. If he learns Mussar because he is being forced to learn Mussar, it will not have a positive effect.

Therefore, Yeshivah boys must ensure to go to Mussar Seder. Aside from the fact that the Yeshivah obligated them to do so, it can also change their lives for the better! We have previously mentioned that Rav Shteinman zt"l said that even if a person learns five minutes of Mesilas Yesharim everyday, it will certainly change him for the better! When a person does something everyday it has a great effect, just like water dripping on stone (as it eventually bores a hole in the stone due to the constant dripping).

May we merit perfecting our good Middos!

[The following is adapted from the special edition of Darkei Ha'Chizuk printed recently in Hebrew, which has four hundred anecdotes and/or definitions of four hundred Torah concepts. This was printed in honor of the publishing of the four hundredth edition of Darkei Ha'Chizuk in Hebrew.]

## Bitachon

People say about the Mashgiach Rav Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l, that even in difficult times he was always calm and collected. There were periods of his life in Chutz La'Aretz when he did not even have enough money for firewood, and even so he was not in a panic. Despite the cold and his lack of ability to heat his abode, he remained in a good mood. This was certainly true in good times.

When he came to Eretz Yisrael and was told that he would have his basic needs met, he worried that perhaps he would lose his high level of Bitachon. He therefore especially concentrated on maintaining a high level of Bitachon, in order that he should not get into a mindset of being unaware that Hashem is taking care of our needs.

## Bein Ha'Zemanim

The Gemara in Kidushin (81a) states, that the worst possible time for people to come together and engage in illicit activities is during Yom Tov (see end of Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 529 that says that Beis Din must appoint guards during Yomim Tovim to prevent such mingling). Nowadays, it can also be said that the worst time of year for this is during Bein Ha'Zemanim.

There is a very positive development in recent years, as many Batei Medrash have a program of community learning called Yeshivos Bein Ha'Zemanim. It is excellent that many Yeshivah boys get together and learn for quite a few hours in the morning. However, one must realize that the regular laws of Bitul Torah apply during Bein Ha'Zemanim as well. If one must help out in his house or go with his family on an outing at the request of his parents, he obviously should do so. However, one is not exempt from learning Torah during the rest of the day because he learned a few hours in the morning during Bein Ha'Zemanim!

[Of course, whatever break one needs to take during Bein Ha'Zemanim in order to help him have strength to learn during the Zeman is acceptable, and is not deemed Bitul Torah. However, one must not take more breaks if he knows that he has already rested enough for the coming Zeman.]

It is well known that many accidents happen during Bein Ha'Zemanim. This is because there is less Torah being learned during this time. The Torah learned during the Zeman protects us from most of these tragedies. Since there is less Torah learned during Bein Ha'Zemanim, there is less protection, and hence more of these accidents happen. Therefore, one should understand that when he learns as he is supposed to during Bein Ha'Zemanim, he is supplying Klal Yisrael with much needed protection due to his Torah study.

I have even heard in the name of the Chazon Ish, that it was harder for him to learn during Bein Ha'Zemanim than it

was to learn during the Zeman. This is because he felt less holiness during Bein Ha'Zemanim, as less people were learning Torah. He had to therefore push himself harder in order to achieve the same amount of learning during Bein Ha'Zemanim.

Generals from the Israeli air force once approached the Baba Sali zt"l to ask him for a blessing for a dangerous operation that was going to occur at two o'clock in the afternoon. He told them to move it to four o'clock. He explained that this was because two o'clock was during Bein Ha'Sedarim, when people are taking a break from learning Torah. He therefore wanted them to only do so at four o'clock, once second Seder was already in full swing, and the merit of Torah learning would help the operation.

This teaches us that even during the Zeman, there is more merit at the time of day when people are learning than when people are taking a break. Even though we have previously mentioned that when people take a break in order to replenish their strength to learn again soon, it is also considered a Mitzvah, it is not as great of a Mitzvah as when people are actually learning Torah. This is why the Baba Sali zt"l did not want the operation to happen during Bein Ha'Sedarim.

## Tips For Learning Bein Ha'Zemanim

The following are tips that can help a person with his learning during Bein Ha'Zemanim.

It is certainly understandable that parents might want their child to help in the house. Ask your parents if it is possible that this help can be only at certain times everyday, in order that you can concentrate on your learning during the rest of the time.

One should learn the same specific Beis Medrash everyday. He should preferably not learn in his house if he can avoid it, as one tends to stop learning more easily when he is learning in his house.

One should choose a Mesechta or Perek that he wants to learn in the beginning of Bein Ha'Zemanim, and he should determine if he wants to learn with or without a Chavrusa. If he wants to learn with a Chavrusa, he should make an agreement to learn this Mesechta with this specific Chavrusa at a set time everyday.

One should also choose a place to Daven, and Daven in a set place for his Tefilos b'Tzibur every single day. He should Daven in a Minyan that Davens at a normal pace.

One should also learn at least a small amount of Mussar everyday, from a Mussar Sefer that he is very interested in learning.

Last, but not least, one is often in his house during Bein Ha'Zemanim. He should be very careful to honor his parents properly when he is at home. This is one of the Aseres Ha'Dibros, and is therefore a very important Mitzvah to put into practice.

## Bein Ha'Zemanim - Your Identity

Bein Ha'Zemanim shows you who you really are. There are no Rebbeim who tell you that you have to learn or Daven at any set times. If a person learns during Bein Ha'Zemanim because he chooses to do so, he is showing that Torah is of central importance in his life. This is what he wants to do whether or not people are obligating him to do so. Such a person is a true Ben Torah!

However, if a person does not learn during Bein Ha'Zemanim, and only learns during the Zeman because he is obligated to do so, he is obviously lacking in his connection to Torah study. It is clear that the Yetzer Hara has some sway over his decision making process.

## Too Much of a Masmid

Sometimes there is a person who learns Torah diligently, and he really loves his learning. However, he loves it so much

that he neglects to take care of the basic needs of his family. He rationalizes this by thinking that it is Bitul Torah to take care of these mundane things.

However, nothing could be further from the truth. A person who has a family has obligations towards his family. Neglecting these obligations is against the Torah. Such a person is considered a person who learns, but does not practice what he learns. The Torah that he learns cannot be called Toras Emes. The Yerushalmi in Berachos (2:1) states, that if a person learns Torah but does not plan on keeping it, it is better if he had never been born.

Taking care of your own family is a Chesed that cannot be done by others, and you are therefore obligated to not just perform that Chesed, but to love to perform that Chesed! If a person has good Middos and understands this, he will love to help his family when he must do so!

Moreover, one must realize that his true Middos are determined by how he treats the people closest to him. It is not difficult to treat someone you meet on the street, or even a guest who comes to your house, in a nice and mannerly way. After all, one can act nicely for a small amount of time.

However, a person's true character is revealed in his interaction with his family members. If he treats them nicely all of the time as well, it indeed shows that his character is nearly perfect. If he does not, it is a sign that he has plenty to work on in improving his character.

*Dedicated by the Kroll Family, Los Angeles*

**להצלחת בניהם וכנותיהם בתורה וביראת שמים**

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