

Darkei HaChizuk

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

A *Sichah* from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita* • *Shoftim* 5779

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The Transition to Yeshivah Gedolah

[The following was said at a gathering of boys who are entering Yeshivah Gedolah (Beis Medrash). The gathering was organized by Iggud Bnei Ha'Yeshivos of Beit Shemesh.]

Q: What should a boy focus on upon entering Yeshivah Gedolah?

A: He must focus on keeping all of the Sedarim of the Yeshivah. He must also focus on understanding Gemara, Rashi, and Tosfos well.

Q: How many times should one review the Gemara, Rashi, and Tosfos before Shiur?

A: One should review it the day before the Shiur, and on the day of the Shiur.

Q: When should one review the Shiur: at night or the next morning?

A: One should review it during Second Seder after the Shiur.

Q: How much time should a boy sleep?

A: He should sleep as much as he needs to feel refreshed and energetic.

Q: There are boys who sleep for two hours between Sedarim. Is that appropriate behavior?

A: If they get used to this, it is a problem. At home, we never slept during Bein Ha'Sedarim. However, in Yeshivah some slept for a short amount of time. However, it wasn't for that long. The main thing is one must come on time for Seder.

Q: Is it appropriate to tell boys that it would be better for them not to start this habit?

A: If it is not difficult for a boy to stay awake, it will be easy for him to stay away from this habit.

Q: How does a boy become interested in Davening?

A: He should think carefully about what he is saying.

Q: Should boys spend time learning the explanation of Tefilah?

A: No. They should simply think about what they are saying.

Q: Sometimes a boy is asked to learn with a boy who is on a lesser intellectual level. Should he give up advancing in his studies by learning with this boy?

A: He will not give up anything, this is Lechatchilah!

Q: Is it better to have a Chavrusa who is not as smart as you?

A: It certainly is a good thing, as he will be the Rebbi in this partnership, and one learns from his student more than from anyone else (i.e. than from a Rebbi or a peer, see Tanis 7a).

Q: If a boy has a choice of a Chavrusa who is very bright or who is very diligent, which should he choose?

A: He should probably choose the diligent learner...However, every situation is different. The main thing is that there should be a pleasant chemistry between the two, instead of a feeling of rivalry. If there is pleasantness and friendship, that is the main ingredient for a successful Charvusa partnership.

Q: During Bein Ha'Sedarim, should a person learn what the Yeshivah is learning, or should they learn whatever they like to learn?

A: They should learn whatever they like to learn.

Q: Should they even learn Chumash?

A: They must learn Shnayim Mikra v'Echad Targum everyday with the explanation of Rashi. They should learn Parshah everyday!

Q: Should they learn Halachah everyday?

A: They should learn a small amount of Halachah everyday, as one must know Mishnah Berurah.

Q: How much Halachah should be learned everyday?

A: They should not learn more than half an hour of Halachah everyday.

Q: How much time should a boy spend speaking with his friends about regular matters?

A: As much as he feels he needs to.

The Seder Limud of Rabeinu Yblch"t and his Brother Ha'Gaon Rav Yaakov zt"l with their Father zt"l

[The following is from a Sichah given nine years ago by the Rosh Yeshivah shlit"ta, that related how he and his brother Rav Yaakov zt"l used to learn together with their father zt"l when they were young.]

In my youth, I learned all of my years with my father zt"l, and my brother Rav Yaakov zt"l, and I will tell you a little bit about how I learned then.

When we came to Eretz Yisrael in 5694 (86 years ago), I was still younger than Bar Mitzvah. We had started learning Bava Kama with Rashi's commentary, and we learned everything twice. There were three Gemaros on the table. One of the Gemaros we brought with us from Russia, and two of the Gemaros my father brought from the shul. One of us would read the Gemara to our father until the end of a topic, and then afterwards we would switch and the other brother would read. This is as is done in Cheder, that they allow the children to read. I later heard that Ha'Gaon Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz zt"l would often do this in his Shiurim. He would let the students read, and he would help them explain things. This is what we did. We started learning Bava Kama in Russia when we were seven or eight, and we continued and finished the Mesechta in Eretz Yisrael.

We then had to start another Mesechta, but we did not own any more Gemaros at the time, besides an old Vilna edition volume of Sanhedrin, Makos, and Shevuos. Therefore, we started Meseches Sanhedrin. We took two small Gemaros from the shul that did not have commentaries. Our father used the big Gemara, and we used the small ones. We started Sanhedrin, and we learned without Tosfos, and we learned everything twice. We would learn each day as much as we could. In the beginning of every morning, we would review everything we learned the day before, and only then start to learn new material. It would usually take us about two hours to finish one Daf of Gemara. We would review everything we learned the day before, and only then start to learn new material. At the end of every Perek we reviewed the entire Perek, resulting in us reviewing each Gemara three times. We started Sanhedrin in winter Zeman, and made a Siyum on it on Erev Pesach.

We then started Shevuos, as it was part of the Gemara we already had. We started learning the Gemara with not just Rashi, but also Tosfos, in a quick and simple manner. Sometimes my brother and I did not really understand the Tosfos the first time we learned it, and only got a basic understanding of it when we reviewed it the next day. After each chapter, we also learned the Rosh and Ran on the entire chapter from beginning to end. We also learned the Rambam in Hilchos Toen v'Nitan that was relative to Meseches Shevuos, namely from the beginning until the ninth Perek, together with the explanation of the Kesef Mishneh.

Our schedule was that we learned three Sedarim a day. We learned first Seder for four hours, but had a half-hour break in the middle. My father zt"l would rest, and my brother and I

would play. We learned second Seder until Minchah Ketanah. After Davening Minchah, we would have a Shiur in Mishnayos. We then learned Ein Yaakov or Chumash with Rashi until Maariv. We then would go home, and learn by ourselves whatever we would want to learn for night Seder. It was very enjoyable, and without any pressure.

After Meseches Shevuos, we learned Bava Metzia, as it is relative to the chapter of Shevuos Ha'Dayanim (in Shevuos). We again learned everything twice together with Rashi and Tosfos, and we would not stop to try to understand something that we didn't completely understand. At the end of every chapter, we would review the entire chapter at once. It would go very quickly, because we already knew it and was easy to review. It was very pleasant and interesting to learn.

When we finished Bava Metzia, I think that we learned the Rosh and Nimukei Yosef after each chapter, with the pertinent chapters of Rambam such as Hilchos Toen v'Nitan, Hilchos Malveh v'Loveh, Hilchos Ribis, and more.

After Bava Metzia, we learned Bava Basra in the same manner. We then learned more Hilchos Toen v'Nitan from the Rambam, starting from the ninth chapter of Hilchos Chezkas Karkaos. We then learned Mesechtos Nedarim, Kidushin, and Makos.

After that, we started to learn Meseches Pesachim, but I don't remember why we specifically chose that Mesechta. My father zt"l started to say Shiurim to Balei Batim in Gemara after Mariv everyday, and he gave Shiur in Meseches Berachos and Shabbos. I think he skipped Meseches Eruvin. As children, we sat and listened to his Shiurim. We got something out of the Shiur.

We started Meseches Pesachim after Davening on Rosh Hashanah. My father was already the Rav in Ramat Ha'Sharon, and Davening finished quicker than the Davening in Yeshivah. We were finished with the entire Davening by twelve o'clock. We quickly went home, made Kiddush, and then came back to start Meseches Pesachim. We also learned Gemara, Rashi, Tosfos, Rambam, and then we learned Tur, Beis Yosef, and Magen Avraham. We learned everything quite quickly and in a simple manner. By Rosh Chodesh Shevat, we had already finished the Mesechta four times!

Since much of Pesachim deals with Kodshim, my father suggested that we start learning Kodshim Mesechtos after Pesachim. He had also heard that Rav Meir Shapiro had instituted the learning of Kodshim in his Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. We started with Zevachim.

There was not yet a Chidushei Ha'Griz. We learned the Asifas Zekeinim, Zevach Todah (of the Chafetz Chaim), Keren Orah, and Rashash, and more. We learned everything twice, and then reviewed at the end of every Perek, and then we reviewed the entire Mesechta after finishing the Mesechta. We then learned the Rambam's Hilchos Pesulei Ha'Mukdashim and Maaseh Ha'Korbanos.

We learned all of Kodshim this way, even Tamid, Kinim, and Middos, aside from Meseches Chulin, which deals more with Yoreh Deah topics than with Kodshim topics. We did not learn the Mesechtos in order (in which they are listed in

Kodshim), and finished with Meseches Bechoros. We learned all of the Maharit Algazi on Bechoros, in a very simple and easy to understand manner.

Sometimes I would ask a question on the logic of what we were learning, and my father would answer it. We could ask another question on his answer, and he would answer that as well. However, if we would ask a third question, he would say that we should continue learning, and there is no need to dally on this point.

After Seder Kodshim, we started to learn Meseches Yevamos. My father's life at that point became a little more hectic. He had to travel here and there. We learned Meseches Yevamos for two years. I already had time to learn on my own, and would often learn the Rosh and Rashba, and sometimes look at Rabbi Akiva Eiger and the Chazon Ish.

At that time in our lives, my father was unsure if it was appropriate that we should continue learning at home with him. An important guest at our house told my father that perhaps if his children continue learning at home, they will become haughty, as they will think they are the only ones in the world! My father therefore asked the Chazon Ish and Brisker Rav if his approach was appropriate, and they said that it is good that he himself teaches us at home, and he should continue to do so.

This was the first time my father met the Brisker Rav. He told the Brisker Rav a deep Torah thought about Hiddur Mitzvah. The Brisker Rav asked him, "How long have you been in Eretz Yisrael?" He answered that he was there for seven years. "And you still haven't forgotten how to learn?" He didn't want to compliment my father outright by saying, "You are a Lamdan!" so he found a backhanded way of complimenting him. Apparently, many people used to come to the Brisker Rav and tell him Torah thoughts that were not very straight and true. The Brisker Rav appreciated my father's Chiddush, and in fact wrote it down in his Hilchos Chanukah. He wrote, "And I was made aware of this by one of the Rabbanim here in Eretz Yisrael." This Torah thought is also published in my father's Sefer Hod Tzvi.

We continued learning at home, but we felt that we weren't maximizing our time. There were disturbances. We therefore decided to go to Yeshivah. My brother and I went to Yeshivas Lomzhe for Elul Zeman in 5702. However, they were learning the ninth Perek of Bava Basra, which we had already learned with our father. We therefore decided to learn Meseches Sukah together, very quickly and simply, and we finished it at the end of Elul Zeman.

We then wrote letters home to our father. We did not have a table to write on in our room. I used to go to a store that sold stamps and envelopes, and there was a place there to sit and write. I would write down my Chiddushim from Meseches Sukkah on paper on the desk. My brother Yaakov wrote to our father that he was writing this letter on his bed, while holding his paper on a tin box, so that he could write his Chiddushim on the paper in a readable manner. However, soon Gershon will go to the store to buy a stamp and envelope, and there he will be able to write more. Those were the conditions at the time.

Rebbi Eliyahu Mishkovski and Rebbi Shmuel Grossbard were the big Masmidim of the Yeshivah. They would learn from morning until late at night, with minimal breaks for eating quickly and Davening. They would eat quickly after Shacharis, and then learn without breaks until Minchah. They then took a short break for lunch, and then learned until Mussar Seder and Maariv. After Maariv, Rebbi Eliyahu would learn Chulin without a Chavrusa until eleven thirty p.m., and Rebbi Shmuel would learn until midnight. This was when the lights were turned off in the Yeshivah.

In the summer Zeman of 5703, my brother learned Kidushin b'Chavrusa with Rav Shmuel Grossbard. They would always learn all of the Ritva, Rashba, and Avnei Miluim on the Sugya. There were only one or two volumes of Rashba in the Yeshivah, and therefore people needed to sign up to use them at certain hours by the person who was in charge of this in the Yeshivah. He would have to give it back at the appointed time. They learned all of the Rashba and Avnei Miluim that pertained to the Sugyas. They progressed at a certain quick pace. I think they finished the entire first Perek, and started the second Perek by the end of the Zeman.

After we were in Yeshivah for a year, my father said that he was not pleased with our progress in the Yeshivah, as it wasn't what he thought it would be. He therefore told us to come home, and learn with him again. We did so after Sukkos 5704.

However, immediately after we returned, we heard that the Ponevezher Rav was opening a Yeshivah, and that Rav Shmuel Rozovsky was going to be the Rosh Yeshivah. Rav Shmuel came to our house in Ramat Ha'Sharon, and told my father that the Ponevezher Rav wants to open a Yeshivah, and he wants us to attend. My father agreed, because he said that we could learn a lot from being close with and helping the Ponevezher Rav.

The Yeshivah opened in Kislev 5704 with four other students besides us. The four other boys were Rav Chaim Friedlander, Rav Uri Kellerman, Rav Shmuel's nephew, and one other boy who became sick soon after starting in the Yeshivah.

We originally learned in the Heligman shul, and we used to eat and Daven in the Ponevezh children's homes, together with the boys from Teheran. The Yeshivah rented part of Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz's house for us as our bedroom. It was a small house to begin with, consisting of a living room and a bedroom. They would eat in the kitchen, and there was a couch in the living room. The Yeshivah bought another bed for us, and this where my brother and I slept. Rav Michel Yehudah would often speak to us about what we were learning before we went to sleep.

Rav Shmuel started saying Shiurim in Bava Metzia in the beginning of Kislev. We started from the beginning, and were already in the middle of Perek Ha'Zahav at the end of Adar! We continued in summer Zeman in the same manner with Perek Eizehu Neshech, Perek Ha'Soche Es Ha'Umnin, and I think that at the end of the Zeman we had already started Ha'Shoel (the eighth Perek). He did not say Shiurim on every single Daf, if he felt that there was not much to add.

Whenever he would not say Shiur on a particular Daf, we would ensure that we would learn it ourselves. This was all primarily done during first Seder. During second Seder, we would first review the Shiur, and then we would learn a different Mesechta for the rest of the afternoon.

I then got to the point where people were offering me Shidduchim. I went to the Chazon Ish, and told him that I wanted to continue learning in Yeshivah, as I really was getting guidance on how to learn there. The Chazon Ish told me that I had already acquired a very good way to learn from my father. I just had to ensure that I did not ruin it.

I was originally unsure of how I learned, as certain things were very obvious and simple to me, when other people would say that they were not simple at all. The opposite was also true. However, I went to speak to the Brisker Rav many times in learning, and I realized that he too went with a more simple approach in learning.

Once I spoke to him about the prohibition against Kohanim with long hair performing Avodah in the Beis Ha'Mikdash. Due to this question, I wanted to say that the Avodah wasn't actually forbidden, but rather there was a prohibition against having long hair during the Avodah because it was denigrating to the Avodah. This is similar to the argument regarding why a mourner cannot put on Tefilin. Is it because Tefilin is a contradiction to mourning, or is it because it is denigrating for the Tefilin that they should be worn by a mourner? (Editor's note: See the Rosh Yeshivah's Shiurim on Kesuvos 6.) Similarly, I wanted to say that Kohanim performing Avodah with long hair is simply denigrating to the Avodah. Rav Shach zt"l was together with the Brisker Rav when I was speaking to him, and thought to agree with me. However, the Brisker Rav zt"l did not agree with me and said it didn't seem logical. Rather, it is forbidden to perform the service, just as a Kohen with a blemish cannot perform the service.

I saw that the Brisker Rav learned in a simple manner, and this gave me tremendous validation to continue learning in a simple manner. We also gained and added from the way we learned in Yeshivah, however the way to understand what is

straight and what is not, I learned from my father. This is how my father learned, and this is how he learned how to learn from his illustrious grandfather, the Chiddushei Ben Aryeh. My father used to learn with my grandfather in his youth, and picked up this way of learning from him.

The Chidushei Ben Aryeh finished Shas when he was thirteen, by learning with a Chavrusa seven blatt a day with Rashi and Tosfos. He would review everything he had learned that week on Shabbos. However, his Chavrusa fell ill after half a year, as he started to cough up blood and could not continue to learn. He therefore continued on his own, and finished Shas in that one year. While he would go on to finish Shas many times, he would often say that he remembers the Gemaras from when he was thirteen.

After marrying, he learned in Volozhin under Rav Chaim Brisker for six years. He was then handpicked by the Netziv to be one of ten outstanding Avreichim who were supported financially by a wealthy person named Brodsky. Rav Simcha Zelig was also one of these ten. There were many other Torah greats there, and their names are written in books that record the history of Volozhin. He was known then as "Rav Gershon Kaminetzer." He learned in Volozhin for another six years before becoming a Rav.

My father finished Shas at the age of fourteen. He said that it was common back then for people to finish Shas at a young age. Sometimes a Rav from a neighboring city would come over to my grandfather's house with his young boy who was around the same age as my father. The adults would speak about a topic in learning, and the children would join in the asking, answering, and bringing proofs from all over Shas.

Even today, there is a Torah scholar in Bnei Brak who learns with children in seventh and eighth grade, and he learns with them two Dafim of Gemara a day. They finish the entire Shas in three years. I know children who learned from him and finished Shas. They also review their learning and remember it. One can speak to them about Kodshim topics, and they know the material. This is how my father learned, and this is how he taught us.

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