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בס"ד

Darkei HaChizuk

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

From the *Sichos* of Maran Rosh HaYeshivah Rav Gershon Edelstein *ztvk"l* • *Lech Lecha 5787*

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V'agadlah Shemecha — Does Avraham Need Publicity?

The *pasuk* states (12:2), "And I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you and I will make your name great." Rashi explains: "*Lech lecha*, go for yourself, for your benefit and for your good, and there I will make you into a great nation, but you will not merit sons here. Furthermore, I will make your character known in the world."

Lichorah, why did he need publicity? Does Avraham Avinu want publicity and honor? After all, Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 14a), "Rabbi Elazar said, One should always remain hidden, and [thus] survive (*kaval v'kayam*)." That is, it's worthwhile to remain hidden (*kaval* means "in the shadows"), so people should not know him and not know about his *chashivus*. And then he will be *kayam*, he will survive. But if his name is publicized, there is concern for jealousy and *ayin hara*, as publicity is very harmful. Therefore, it is preferable to stay hidden, and stay out of the public eye.

A Prominent Position and Forgiveness of Sins

However, the Gemara then tells us about Rabbi Zeira. They wanted to give him *semichah* so that he'd be able to arbitrate *dinei knasos* (laws of fines). At first, he hid and did not want to accept *semichah* — because he heard the words of Rabbi Elazar "Be *kaval v'kayam*." However, then he heard another statement from Rabbi Elazar, who said, "A person does not rise to a position of greatness unless they forgive him for all his sins." One who rises to greatness merits *mechilas avonos*. If so, he said, it's worthwhile to gain forgiveness of his sins. From then on, he stopped hiding and made himself available so they'd be able to give him *semichah*. He did not "ask" for *semichah*, but he "made himself available," so they'd no longer have to look for him. Despite the publicity, it was worthwhile, since he'd merit forgiveness of sins.

Let's take a look at this. Why does a person who rises to greatness merit forgiveness of his sins? Is it possible to have sins forgiven without doing teshuvah? The truth is, the Midrash relates further (*Midrash Shmuel* ch. 17), "Three people are forgiven for their sins: a convert when he converts, one who is appointed to a prominent position, and one who gets married." An explanation is required: why do they merit *mechilas avonos*? Can one receive forgiveness for sins without doing *teshuvah*?

One Who Is Appointed to a Prominent Position Receives Renewed Strength

The Meiri writes the following about one who is appointed to a prominent position, "It is a sign of renewal of his conduct and growth in his *middos* in order to achieve his *tachlis*, purpose." That is, if a person receives a position of greatness and is appointed to a role in which he has a *hashpaah* on others, it is a sign that *Shamayim* is

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I heard from the following about the Chazon Ish. Someone came to ask him a *shailah*: This man was a *baal madreigah*, and there were *mitzvos* he had to do, *mitzvos* that no one else could do. The halachah is that if no one can do the mitzvah besides him, he has to do it, even if it will take him away from his learning. But he was concerned about the *bittul Torah* this would cause, so he came to ask the Chazon Ish what to do.

Maran told him, when you are busy with such good things, which you have a *chiyuv* to do, you become more *kadosh*, more sanctified, and your Torah becomes different too. Since you are fulfilling the *mitzvos* you are obligated to do due to *ahavas habriyos*, you become a *baal madreigah*. Since you are doing *chesed* with *ahavas chesed*, you become more sanctified and you will have greater *hatzlachah* in Torah, in the quality of your Torah!

Maran himself actually had to take long breaks from his learning in order to take care of both community matters and to help individuals, as a tremendous amount of people would come to him to ask his advice. He would answer at all hours of the day and night; he didn't have specific hours, as is customary nowadays. He was available throughout the day and the night for anyone who needed an *eitzah*. So is this considered *bittul Torah*? Did this make him fall to a lower *madreigah*? Definitely not.

Someone once asked the Chazon Ish why he didn't set hours for questioners. He replied that some questions can be *pikuach nefesh* — people would come to him with medical questions, and he would make decisions and give his advice; he was also knowledgeable in medicine. And despite all this, even though he had to take care of *tzorchei haklal* and help everyone who came to him, his *madreigah* was not minimized at all, and he remained "The Chazon Ish." Because when one does what he is obligated to do, it sanctifies him and it does not take away from his *madreigah* at all!

(Excerpted from a sichah, Adar 5777)

giving him new *kochos*: "Renewal of his conduct" — that is, he can behave in a new manner, "growth in his *middos*" — his *middos* grow and his entire *penimiyus* improves and rises higher, "to achieve his *tachlis*" — with *sheleimus*.

Therefore, he merits forgiveness of his sins, because whatever sins he had previously and any distance from *kedushah* that he had was because the *yetzer hara* controlled him. But now that he holds a prominent position, Shamayim gives him new *kochos* to overcome the *yetzer hara*, and he receives new abilities that he did not have previously. This is called *mechilas avonos*, forgiveness of sins, as he is not connected to the sins he had previously — since he is now like a different person.

Forgiveness of Sins for a Chassan and a Convert

With this in mind, we can understand why a convert's sins are forgiven. A convert who converts is "like a child just born" (*Yevamos* 22a). He receives *kedushah* and a new *neshamah*, *a Yiddishe neshamah*, and he is sanctified with the sanctity of a Yisrael. And now he certainly is not connected to the sins he had done previously, because his *geirus* is a change in his entire *ruchniyus* and his lofty *maalos*. And it's clear that he is a new person in a completely different state than he had been in originally.

When a person gets married, it's similar. Chazal say (*Yevamos* 62b) that a person without a wife is without Torah, and a person is lacking in *sheleimus* in many other matters as well if he does not have a wife, as the Gemara there mentions. We find (*Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 12) that Adam HaRishon was first called "Adam," as he was *afar min ha'adamah*, dust from the earth. After he married Chavah, however, he was called "Ish," which denotes a higher level of *ruchniyus*, as in the title, "Ish HaElokim" — because his *ezer k'negdo* gives him *sheleimus hanefesh*, as both of their *neshamos* are joined together and they become one *neshamah*.

When a person gets married, he receives *sheleimus hanefesh*, which is similar to a *neshamah yeseirah*, and he definitely has renewed *kochos* as a result. He now has greater strength to withstand all his previous *nisyonos* and to control his *yetzer hara*.

Additionally, a married man has more responsibilities; he is called the "*baal habayis*," and he needs good *middos* for that role. Without good *middos*, it's impossible to run a home; to the contrary, without good *middos*, it's a Churban HaBayis! Since he is married, Shamayim definitely has given him new *kochos* for this — he now has better *middos tovos*, and he therefore merits forgiveness of his sins. After all, he is like a new person and has no connection to what he had been like before.

And as for one who receives a position of prominence? This too is from Shamayim, as Chazal say (*Bava Basra* 91b), "Even an appointee over irrigation (a lowly position) is appointed from Shamayim." Now, a person who receives *semichah* from the *chachamim* to judge in *dinei kenasos* receives the power of ruling over others. He can declare a person innocent or guilty, and he needs a tremendous amount of *siyatta d'Shemaya* to withstand the *nisyonos* inherent in this power. His *yetzer hara* is greater than others', as Chazal say (*Sukkah* 52a), "Anyone who is greater than his friend, his yetzer hara is greater than his friend's *yetzer hara*." Therefore, along with this prominence, Shamayim gives him new *kochos* to overcome his *yetzer hara*. And while he does have a new, bigger *yetzer hara* now, his old *yetzer hara* no longer exists, and he is forgiven for all his sins, as he is no longer connected to his previous sins.

Prominence — to Increase Zechuyos and Influence

It turns out that anyone who is appointed to a prominent position can use the new *kochos* Shamayim gave him to generate many more *zechuyos* that he did not have previously, as the Meiri puts it: "renewal of his conduct and growth in his *middos*." Therefore when Rabbi Zeira heard this, he made himself available so they'd be able to find him, give him *semichah*, and then he'd merit all these *maalos*.

In this light, we can explain Avraham Avinu's situation. He had a great *hashpaah* on others, as the *pasuk* states (12:5), "And the *nefesh* he made in Charan," and Rashi explains, "Avraham converted the men…" Therefore, HaKadosh Baruch Hu told him, "And I will make your name great — I will make your character known in the 'world.'" By doing so, Hashem was telling him, you will be able to have an influence not only in Charan, but in the entire world, and you will be *zocheh* to have a more widespread *hashpaah* and be *mezakeh* the *rabbim*. And the truth is, since Avraham Avinu was known throughout the world — as the *pasuk* says (23:6), "You are a prince of Elokim in our midst" — he saved his entire generation and brought them to teshuvah.

This is what Hashem intended when he said, "I will make your character known in the world." "Your character" — your influence on others will be what you actually are; that is, everyone will be like you. Eliezer the servant of Avraham, for example, went into Gan Eden alive (see *Yalkut Chayei Sarah* 109); he did not die. Who influenced him? How did he reach this *madreigah*? Avraham Avinu influenced him! Therefore, it was worthwhile for Avraham Avinu to become known to the public, because that way, he'd be able to influence others to *emunah* in a more profound way and generate increased *kevod Shamayim*.

But for that, he first had to come to Eretz Yisrael. As long as he was in Charan, his influence only reached the people in Charan; it couldn't be extended further. Once he would arrive in Eretz Yisrael, then "I will make your character known in the 'world,'" and you will merit having an influence on the entire world, not just in Charan.

☙ B'Inyanei D'Yoma — Our Current Duty ❧

Rabbeinu's Address at the "Hei'asfu" Kenness Before the Last Elections

in his *beis midrash*, where he delivered his daily *shiur*. This address was broadcasted to Jewish communities worldwide.

It's important to know that the present situation is that unfortunately our Jewish brothers want to uproot the *taryag mitzvos* and issue decrees against our children's *chinuch* and against yeshivahs, so *bachurim* won't be able to learn Torah. They also want to stop *yungeleit* from learning, and they also want to pass decrees against the Bais Yaakovs and girls' high schools. They are against *kashrus* and *giyur*, they want to prevent *giyur k'halachah*, and want to pass laws permitting many other grave *issurim* — just as the wicked Greek kingdom did, "to make them forget Your Torah and make them transgress the statutes of Your will!" There are those, sadly enough, insiders, our own Jewish brethren, who want to make this terrible *chillul Hashem*.

And our representatives, of Yahadus HaTorah v'HaShabbat / Gimmel, are working hard to prevent all these decrees, and to make a *kiddush HaShem*, to make sure we follow the Torah, "*Moshe emes v'Toraso emes*." This is what the "Degel HaTorah" representatives in the Knesset — the ones we are voting for — are busy with. Voting for Gimmel is for them, and every vote for Gimmel is a declaration "*Ani maamin she'Moshe emes v'Toraso emes*" — it's literally a *kiddush Hashem.*

Those who refrain from voting, *chas v'shalom*… It's a time when we are busy with *kiddush Hashem*, with the glory of *Melech Malchei HaMelachim, HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and if someone refrains from joining in, what a *chillul Hashem* that is! It is belittling *HaKadosh Baruch Hu's* honor; he's showing that he does not care.

The *mishnah* states at the end of *Pirkei Avos*: "Whatever HaKadosh Baruch Hu created in His world was only created for His glory," The entire Creation — "I created it, I formed it, I made it" — the entire Creation, whatever exists in this world, is for Hashem's glory. Of course, He is the *Melech HaKavod*, he doesn't need our honor; it is only for our benefit, to give us opportunities to merit generating *kevod Shamayim*. Every vote for Gimmel is a vote for *kevod Shamayim*; it is a declaration of "*Hashem Hu HaElokim*."

But when someone abstains, when someone refrains from voting, he is not partaking in the *kevod Shamayim* of voting Gimmel. There's a **Rabbeinu Yonah** in *Shaarei Teshuvah* about those who "separate from the *tzibbur* and do not have a portion in Olam HaBa." When the *tzibbur* is occupied with *kevod Shamayim* and a person does not join in with them, **he does not have portion in Olam HaBa!** People are engaged in *kevod Shamayim*, in *kiddush HaShem*, and he does not join them? He is belittling *kevod Hashem*, **this is a *chillul HaShem***. But one who votes Gimmel is announcing: *Hashem Hu HaElokim*, and *Moshe emes v'Toraso emes,* and he is making a *kiddush Hashem.*

If someone can influence others to vote Gimmel, it's incumbent on him to do so, as this is all *kevod Shamayim*. And what does Hashem want from you? *Kevod Shamayim*! "I created it for My glory!" And influencing others to also go out and influence others, whatever you can do to encourage others to vote Gimmel and to increase *kevod Shamayim* is a *kiddush Hashem*. Aside from the practical benefit it has to stop the decrees, the actual act of voting is a *kiddush Hashem, kevod Shamayim*.

Ashreinu, how fortunate we are that we have this *tekufah* when we can merit *kiddush Shem Shamayim, v'nikdashti b'soch bnei Yisrael*. It is a *mitzvas asei* to sanctify Hashem's name, and now we have an opportunity and a tremendous obligation to fulfill this *chiyuv*, to merit *kiddush shem Shamayim*. *Chas v'shalom*, do not refrain from doing so. We need to daven for this; it's a *tefillah* for *ruchniyus*. It's known that Rav Yisrael Salanter that it is tried-and-true that a tefillah for *ruchniyus* is beneficial. Everyone has to daven, men and women, that there will be *kevod Shamayim*. May *Shamayim* have mercy on us that we merit a situation of *kevod Shamayim*!

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Rabbeinu also spoke about the need to increase *zechuyos*, especially during these days, and **not to waste one's time keeping updated on what's going on.** He would exhort attendees at various election gatherings not to follow the election results, but to return to their learning immediately.

During the last elections, his family members testified that the entire burden of the *tzibbur* was on him, and he devoted much of his time for many long weeks, deciding and instructing regarding all the relevant questions that came up. He repeatedly encouraged anyone who could influence others to do so. However, as soon as elections were over, at 10:00 p.m., he did not ask one question about the results. His obligation for *hishtadlus* was over.

At a *keness* before elections in 2021, he said as follows:

There's something else that's very important to know. After the elections, there is a nature of curiosity to know about the results. Instead of being occupied with Torah, people are occupying themselves with curiosity. It's true that it's natural, but it should not be this way! Because there is a prohibition of *bittul Torah*, and *talmud Torah k'neged kulam*. And what difference does it make whether or not he knows the results? After all, elections happened already, and whatever will be, will be.

We need *rachamei Shamayim* to merit success in these elections, so there will be a *kiddush shem Shamayim*, and we need *zechuyos* for this! And the *zechuyos* are *esek haTorah* and *tefillah*, learning and davening. But **being curious about the results is real *bittul Torah*, and there is no *heter*. It's true that it's natural to be curious, but there's no *heter* for it. One must overcome his natural instinct. Don't get involved in it; just sit and learn.** And Hashem should help that we have *hatzlachah* to be *mekadeish shem Shamayim*!

Gedolei HaDor —Chachimai D'Yehudai

In the winter of 5774 (2014), during the fateful election campaign in Eretz Yisrael, there was a *keness* for *avreichim* in Kollel Ponevez. What follows is Rabbeinu's address:

Some people claim and think that the *gedolei hador* are incompetent, and do not understand when it comes to worldly matters. They claim they are directed by the *askanim* who influence them, and they think that the *gedolei hador* are only involved in Torah, in the *dalet amos* of *halachah*, that they aren't knowledgeable in worldly matters and don't know about the world. Truthfully, this claim is not new to our generation; throughout the generations, the *maskilim* were the one who made these claims against the *gedolei hador*, who said they don't understand and cannot make decisions in worldly matters.

Maran Rav Yitzchak Elchanon [Spektor] *zt"l* was known as a *gadol hador* in halachah and in *hanhagah,* and he bore all *tzorchei tzibbur* on his shoulders. There were many *gezeiros* from the government then, both in *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*, and *shtadlanim* had to meet government officials to intervene and nullify the decrees. He also fought against the *maskilim* who made breaches in Yiddishkeit and wanted to destroy Yiddishkeit and ruin our *chinuch*. The *maskilim* wrote against and defamed the *rabbanim*. They wrote that Rav Yitzchak Elchanon is unaware of what goes on in the world, is not proficient in worldly matters, and the people in his home influence him and tell him what to write and say. When Rav Yitzchak Elchanon heard this, he was very upset. He penned a letter saying, "Woe is to me, that in my old age they defame me and say that other people control me."

A similar thing occurred with Rav Chaim Brisker *zt"l*. He battled against the Haskalah and against the Zionists. One of his *talmidim* once told someone else that Rav Chaim is a *gaon* and a *gadol* in Torah, but worldly matters have nothing to do with him; they are the domain of other competent people who understand worldly matters. I knew that person, he was a tzaddik and *kadosh*, and he was Rav Chaim's prime *talmid,* but the *maskilim* influenced him in this realm, so that he should think that Rav Chaim is incompetent in worldly matters.

On the other hand, one of the *maskilim* was a famous author, I don't want to mention his name in this *kadosh* place. He had been a *yeshivah bachur* and went off the *derech,* and he wrote a lot of criticism against the *rabbanim* and *gedolei Torah* in an attempt to influence *kefirah* and to degrade and belittle Torah and *mitzvos*. He once paid Rav Chaim *zt"l* a visit, and Rav Chaim greeted him kindly and spoke with him. After he left, he published an article titled: *Chachima d'Yehuda'i*. That is, even though he was a *maskil,* he had to admit the truth that Rav Chaim was a *chachima d'Yehuda'i*. On the other hand, it's possible that a *talmid chacham* and *tzaddik* does not understand that Rav Chaim is a *chachima d'Yehuda'i*.

We must understand that *gedolei hador* are *chachimai d'Yehuda'i* and they understand whatever is necessary to make decisions in worldly matters! I remember, when I was a child in Russia, even the simple women understood this. There was a Yiddish proverb they would say, "*Vu s'iz Torah dahrten iz chochmah* — Wherever Torah is, that's where wisdom is." That is, *gedolei haTorah* are the *gedolei hachochmah*. You would hear this proverb often. It's elementary, but to our great misfortune, there are those who don't understand this.

Therefore, there is definitely an obligation to vote Gimmel, according to the *gedolei hador's* instructions. Anyone who can influence others must do so. It is a great mitzvah of *zikkui harabbim* in Torah and *tzorchei tzibbur*, in *ruchniyus* and in *gashmiyus*!

During the previous elections, just a few months before Rabbeinu's *petirah*, someone asked Rabbeinu the following question:

There's a Yid who never voted, but began to vote a few years ago, because Maran Rav Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l* gave him a *brachah*, which came true. He voted because of Rav Chaim, but now Rav Chaim is no longer alive…

Rabbeinu answered: **Rav Chaim did not change his mind; he wants you to vote now as well! Is Rav Chaim no longer alive? He lives in Gan Eden, his *neshamah* exists, and he wants everyone to vote Gimmel!**

--- "And his words are living and enduring."

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