"דבריהם הם זכרונם"
לעילוי נשמת מרן רבינו
ירחמיאל גרשון ב"ר **צבי יהודה** זללה"ה

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* • *Noach 5787*

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This *sichah* was delivered before the beginning of the zman in the Merkazi Shul, Ramat Elchanan, Nissan 5763/2003. (The first part of this *sichah* was presented last week; this part is about the importance of *tikkun hamiddos* for success in Torah.)

Being Aware of Torah's Chashivus

Chazal say (*Brachos* 32b) that Torah requires *chizuk*: Torah. What is *chizuk* in Torah and how does one attain *chizuk*? First of all, one must be aware of the *chashivus haTorah*, how important it is to learn Torah. The Gra writes (*Shenos Eliyahu*, beginning of *Peah*) that every word of Torah is a mitzvah, every complete word is a mitzvah, and a mitzvah increases *kedushah* and sanctifies the person who performs it. And the *kedushah* of Torah is extremely great, greater than all the *mitzvos*, as Chazal say in the beginning of *Peah*: "And learning Torah is equal to them all."

In *Avos*, beginning of chap. 6, Chazal say the following about one who engages in *Torah lishmah*: "it makes him great and exalts him over all *maasim* (lit., things)." That is, Torah makes a person great and exalted — this applies both to his *nefesh* and his *neshamah* — and it increases his *kedushah* immensely, over all *maasim* (lit., things). The *mefarshim* explain (*Ruach Chaim*) that this means "more than all the *maasim tovim* in the world." All the 613 *mitzvos* add *kedushah* to a person, as we say in davening "*v'kidashtanu b'mitzvosecha*, You have sanctified us through your *mitzvos*," and we also ask "*kadesheinu b'mitzvosecha*, sanctify us through your *mitzvos*," but this does not come close to the level of *kedushas haTorah*. Torah sanctifies a person and exalts him more than all other *maasim*, more than all the 613 *mitzvos*. This is the *koach* of Torah.

Torah Is So Sweet; Why Is It Hard to Learn?

These concepts are simple and well known, and yet, we see that it's not so easy to learn. Not very many people have the *kochos* for *hasmadah*, because it is against human nature. That's why we need *chizuk*

בענייני הפרשה

ומשם הפיצם ד' על פני כל הארץ, "And from there Hashem scattered them upon the face of the entire earth" (11:9).

Rashi: "Which [sins] were worse? Those of Dor HaMabul or of Dor Haflagah? The former did not stretch out their hand against Hashem, while the latter did stretch their hand out to battle against Him, so to speak. The former were drowned, while the latter were not destroyed. This is because Dor HaMabul were robbers and there was discord between them, therefore, they perished. The latter acted toward each other with love and friendship, as it states, 'One language and uniform words.' This teaches us that controversy is hated and peace is great."

Even though Dor Haflagah were *lichorah* more wicked, as they extended their hands against Hashem and wanted to build a tower in order to, so to speak, wage war against HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and their sin was more severe than the sin of Dor HaMabul, their sin reflected a blemish in their *ruchniyus* and *emunah*, not *bein adam lachaveiro*. Since they were good in the realm of *bein adam lachaveiro*, and behaved with love and friendship, even though they were so wicked that they did not have Olam HaBa, they still had Olam HaZeh, because of their love and friendship!

There are wicked people who receive Olam HaZeh so that they will not receive reward for their *mitzvos* in Olam HaBa, as the *pasuk* states (*Devarim* 7:10), "And He repays those who hate Him to their face to destroy them." Rashi explains: "He pays him for his good deeds in his lifetime in order to cause him to be lost from Olam HaBa." However, the Dor Haflagah did not deserve Olam HaBa at all, and yet they still received Olam HaZeh — for behaving with good *middos*, they deserved Olam HaZeh, *middah k'neged middah*. This is the general rule in *hanhagah* — there is *middah k'neged middah*. A person who acts properly in *bein adam lachaveiro* deserves Olam HaZeh. [See the Rambam's commentary to *Mishnayos*, beginning of *Peah*, "And he will find goodness in Olam HaZeh since he acted nicely among people."]

Similarly, Chazal tell us (*Yerushalmi*, beginning of *Peah*) about Achav's generation. They were idol worshipers, yet they still were always victorious in battle, because there were no baalei lashon hara among them. Even when Ovadiah HaNavi hid 100 *nevi'im* in a cave and Izevel wanted to kill them, the entire nation kept this a secret and no one told Izevel, even though they were idol worshipers! Since they had good *middos* in *bein adam l'chaveiro*, they were victorious in war, since one receives Olam HaZeh in return for good *middos*, *middah k'neged middah*.

(Excerpted from a *sichah*, Cheshvan 5762 (end 2001)

for Torah learning. The truth is, it's a real question: Why do we need so much *chizuk* for Torah; after all, Torah is sweeter than honey, makes the heart happy, and restores one's soul (*Tehillim* chap. 19). We actually see that there are many for whom learning comes easy and it's not hard for them. Learning attracts them so much, that wasting time is even hard for them. So why is it so hard for others to learn?

Joy in Torah Depends on Sheleimus HaMiddos

We can explain this matter based on the Midrash (*Yalkut Tehillim* 674) on the *pasuk*, "תורת ד' תמימה משיבת נפש, Hashem's Torah is complete, it restores the soul." "When is it *temimah*, complete? When it comes out of the mouth of a *tamim*, a whole-hearted person." Meaning, if the person who's learning is *tamim*, only then is his Torah *temimah*, and then, in turn, his Torah is *meshivas nafesh*, restores the soul. That is, if he is *b'sheleimus* — and the principal part of *sheleimus* is in one's *middos* — if he has *sheleimus* in *middos*, then his Torah is *temimah*. When his Torah is *temimah*, it then is also *meshivas nafesh*, and one feels how it restores his soul, with a sense of "*ashrecha baOlam haZeh*, you are fortunate and content in this world."

The *Yalkut* continues: "'עדות ד' נאמנה מחכימת פתי, Hashem's testimony is faithful, making the simple one wise.' When is it faithful? When it comes out of the mouth of a *ne'eman*, a faithful person." That is, if the person learning Torah is *ne'eman*, which is also a *madreigah* of *sheleimus*, then his Torah is also *ne'emanah*, and then it also "makes the simple one wise." We all know about people who, as children, seemed simple, but due to their *deveikus baTorah*, they became truly intelligent and sharp.

The *Yalkut* does not explain the rest of the *pesukim* but it seems that we can continue in the same vein: " פקודי ד' ישרים משמחי לב, Hashem's orders are upright, they make the heart rejoice." When are they *yesharim*, upright? When they come out of the mouth of an *adam yashar*, an upright person. And then they also make the heart happy. That is, when a person learning Torah is an upright person — as the *pasuk* states (*Koheles* 7:29), "And Hashem made man upright (*yashar*, lit., straight)," which is also a level in *sheleimus hamiddos* — then the Torah he learns is upright and makes his heart happy. However, if he is deficient in the *sheleimus* of his *middos*, then his *divrei Torah* are not upright, nor do they make his heart happy. That's why learning is hard for some people.

The Delight Borne of Learning Amid Difficulties

The truth is, this is what Chazal say in *Pirkei Avos* (6:4), "This is the path of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink measured water, sleep on the ground, live a life of privation, and toil in Torah. And if you do so, you will be fortunate and content and it will be good for you. 'Fortunate and content' in this world, and "will be good for you' in the world to come." This requires an explanation: Are we required to eat only bread and salt? After all, Chazal tell us about Rabbeinu HaKadosh (*Brachos* 57b) that he always had radishes, horseradish, and squash on this table, both during the summer months and the rainy season.

However, the explanation is that even if a person only has bread and salt to eat, he should still continue toiling in Torah. [Rashi ad loc. explains: "He is not saying that the wealthy man must live a life of privation in order to learn Torah; he is saying that even if a person only has bread and salt etc., and even if he doesn't have a pillow and blanket to sleep on, but must sleep on the ground, he should not hold himself back from engaging in Torah study."] That is, Chazal was giving us an example to show that a person should not strive for luxuries; rather, he should eat enough to sustain himself. And bread and salt is also filling. So too, in order not to be thirsty, it is enough to drink measured water.

A person on this *madreigah* of being able to toil in Torah despite all the difficulties and pain, and it does not disturb his Torah learning because he has *ahavas Torah* and is aware of the importance of Torah, he is *osek baTorah* even if he must live a life a privation and eat only bread and salt. Then he merits the lofty *madreigah* of "you will be fortunate and content in this world" and learning is not difficult.

It turns out that the "*ashrecha*" is the result of understanding the benefit of minimizing pleasures, of not attaching importance to Olam HaZeh and not striving to attain material pleasures. He has aspirations for Torah and he lends greater importance to them. While he has to fill his material needs, he does so with a *cheshbon*, but he esteems Torah more than any *gashmiyus* matters. So when *ruchniyus* is more important to him than *gashmiyus*, he will have *hatzlachah*. This mindset also makes a person *tamim*, *ne'eman*, and *yashar*, and then his Torah restores his soul, makes a simple one wise, and makes his heart happy. And then his learning is no longer difficult; to the contrary, "*ashrecha baOlam haZeh*, you are fortunate and content in this world," and you toil in Torah, as it is no longer against your nature. It actually becomes your nature, since it brings you joy and contentment!

The Obligation of Teshuvah and Rectifying Bad Middos

The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* (7:3) writes that one must do teshuvah not just for deeds, but also for *dei'os*

ra'os, which means a bad nature or disposition. The Rambam explains that this can be anger, for example. Anger is a natural reaction. A person gets angry because he has a reason to be angry, and he naturally gets angry. However, when a person reaches *sheleimus*, when he has *sheleimus hamiddos* and *sheleimus* in *emunah*, he has no reason to get angry. If someone disturbs him, he understands that it's from *Shamayim*; he knows that it's not a coincidence, it's *hashgachah pratis*. And he understands that it's a sign that he has to suffer, and that there's no reason to be angry at others. He's the only one to blame for all his suffering and pain.

The *maggid* of Palatzk was a *talmid* of the Gra, and he wrote the following in his *sefer Rosh HaGivah*: People generally complain about their situations, but a person really should be embarrassed to complain, because if he has difficulties, it's from Hashem. And it's a sign that he deserves these difficulties. He should be embarrassed to talk about them, because then others will realize that he deserves difficulties and it's a sign that he does not have *zechuyos*. It says there, "Therefore, the person should be shamed and humiliated to reveal his lack, just as he is embarrassed to reveal a big, disgusting blemish he has. All the more so, he should not complain about *Hashem Yisbarach chas v'shalom*. He should complain about himself and his deeds and put dust in his mouth."

The Rambam continues and explains many bad *dei'os* one must do teshuvah for: "Anger, hatred, jealousy, mockery, chasing after money and honor, and chasing after culinary desires." Anger is as we mentioned, and so is hatred. According to *teva*, there are reasons for hatred. A person hates someone who causes him pain, but if he has *emunah* that everything is from Shamayim, he understands that the one who pained him is just a messenger, and he would not get angry at him, just as he would not get angry at the stick that hits him. Indeed, the *pasuk* states (*Yeshayahu* 10:5), "Woe that Ashur is the rod of My wrath." So it's irrelevant to be angry at, or hate someone, who pains him.

The same is true regarding jealousy. Logically, jealousy is incomprehensible. Why do you care about what someone else has? Why does it hurt you?! But that's human nature, and a person needs to be on a *madreigah* of *havanah* and good *middos* not to be jealous. In any case, jealousy is a sin, and one must do teshuvah for it. The same is true regarding frivolity, *leitzanus*. A person naturally enjoys *leitzanus*. Some people are funny, and there is kosher humor, but there's also frivolity, which is too much *leitzanus*.[1]

Regarding chasing after money and honor, there is no prohibition against money and honor per se. There have been many great tzaddikim who were wealthy, and tzaddikim also receive honor. However, the *issur* is chasing after these things and the love of honor and money. Human nature desires and aspires to have money and honor, and that is a bad, innate *middah*. It all depends on how much a person puts his mind in control or how much he is drawn after his nature. Someone who is lacking in *sheleimus* in all these *middos* is not *tamim*, or *ne'eman*, or *yashar*. And then he lacks the characteristic of being satisfied with bread and salt etc., and as a result, it's also hard for him to learn *b'sheleimus*.

Torah Tavlin — Recognizing the Chashivus of Torah

If so, what's the solution? If this is human nature, how can a person overcome it? The solution is, as Chazal say (*Kiddushin* 30b), "I created the yetzer hara, I created the Torah as an antidote against it. The yetzer hara is a person's nature which draws him to things that are contrary to Torah. Chazal teach us that *esek haTorah* is the only the antidote for it.

Even if it's hard to learn, a person should keep in mind that Torah is the antidote; it is his salvation and for his own benefit, and he has no other path to follow. Also, his entire Olam HaBa depends on Torah, and his entire Olam HaZeh does too, as a person can only have a good life in this world through Torah. Indeed Chazal say (*Avodah Zarah* 19b), "Anyone who is *osek baTorah*, his property dealings will be successful," and they said (*Avos* 6:4), "You will be fortunate and content in this world." Indeed, any intelligent person wants to do whatever is possible, and when he knows that the Torah is the solution, he forces himself to learn. And once he's already learning, every single moment and every word of Torah gives him increased *kedushah* and more *tavlin*, an increased antidote, and the learning becomes easier.

In order to achieve this, one needs *havanah*, without *hesich hadaas*. For that, *chizuk* is necessary, as Rashi writes in *Brachos* (32b), "constant *chizuk*." It must be constant, without *hesich hadaas*. *Hesich hadaas* is natural, and if person does not strengthen himself, his mind will stray from his learning. He must always keep this awareness at the front of his mind. Knowing and being aware of the truth is the biggest *chizuk*, knowing that Torah study is his salvation and there is no other way — this is the only way he will be fortunate and content in this world and in Olam HaBa!

[1] On another occasion, Rabbeinu clarified: The difference between humor and *leitzanus* is that in the presence of an *adam gadol*, there are some sentences you would say, but there are others that you would not be capable of saying. Because when you are with an *adam gadol*, you feel different and there is *yiras ha'rommemus*. That is how it should be: you can speak in a joyful manner, but without *leitzanus*.

מסכת כתובות

Yeshivas Ponovez and many other *yeshivos* are beginning *Maseches Kesubos* this *zman*. What follows is a *sichah* Rabbeinu delivered in yeshivah at a *siyum* marking the completion of *Maseches Makkos*, and the start of *Maseches Kesubos*, in Cheshvan 5771 (2010).

Lichorah, there should be a difference in the joy of finishing *Maseches Makkos* or *Bava Basra*, as *Bava Basra* is a very large *masechta*, and *Makkos* is a very small *masechta* that is not hard to complete. If so, *lichorah*, the joy of a *siyum* on *Makkos* should be less than the joy of completing *Bava Basra*. But *l'maaseh*, it seems here that the *tzibbur* is just as happy now. The joy of a *siyum* is the joy of completing a *masechta*, which is a special form of *sheleimus*. And even when one completes a small *masechta*, it involves the same joy of *sheleimus*.

You just sang "*Avinu Av harachaman, hameracheim, racheim aleinu, v'sein b'libeinu l'havin u'lehaskil, lishmo'a, lilmod u'lelameid*," and **I thought: there really is a reason to have so much compassion on us, because not everyone here completed *Maseches Makkos*; excellent *bachurim* did not complete the *masechta***, as they are not aware of the importance of a complete *masechta*.

There's another song: "*Ashreichem talmidei chachamim, she'divrei Torah chavivim aleichem b'yoiser*, Torah scholars, you are fortunate, as *divrei Torah* are especially cherished to you." These words are from a Gemara in *Menachos* daf 18. This *gemara* is not discussing *divrei Torah* of *svaros* and *chiddushim*; it was merely a question about who said a certain *mimra*. And when he found out which Tanna said it, he was so happy and said, "You returned my *aveidah*." And then they told him, "*Talmidei chachamim*, you are fortunate etc."

This is because Torah is precious and cherished, even simple *divrei Torah* without *svaros* involve sweetness. We daven for this, we say, "And please make *divrei Torah* sweet in our mouths." We are asking to feel the sweetness even in simple *divrei Torah* (in our mouths, and not just in our minds). This is why we must pity those who don't have the sweetness in *pshat*, in simple things. Because then they are lacking in *yedias haTorah*, in explicit *halachos* and *dinim*. And there are explicit *mishnayos* and *gemaras* that people don't know, and that's what we are davening for when we say "*racheim aleinu*, have compassion on us!"

On one hand, we are happy that *baruch Hashem* many have completed *Maseches Makkos* now. Before this *masechta*, they also finished *Bava Basra*, and *b'ezras Hashem*, they will also finish *Maseches Kesubos*, which is called "*Shas katan*, a miniature Shas," and there is reason to be happy. **We have to hope that everyone will complete *Maseches Kesubos***, that they acquire the flavor and dearness of learning, and finish the *masechta*. *B'ezras Hashem*, we'll need a bigger place for the *siyum* on *Kesubos*; so many people will be making a *siyum* that this place won't be big enough. May we be *zocheh b'ezras Hashem* to rejoice in the *simchah* of Torah!

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At the end of a *chaburah* for *bachurim* in his home on Thursday night, *Parshas Noach* 5782 (2021), Rabbeinu said: **"We are now starting to learn *Kesubos*, and we all know that *Kesubos* is called "*Shas katan*," but I don't know the source for this."**

Some of those present showed him that it's from the Chida (*Birkei Yosef, Yoreh Deiah* 246:6), who writes**: "*Kesubos* includes all of the Talmud."**

Rabbeinu continued: **If so, we need to finish the entire *masechta*. It's not such a big *masechta*, it only has about 110 *dapim*. We have the entire winter now. Especially this year, as it's a leap year, we certainly must finish the *masechta*. Every single person should make a *siyum*.**

And it's not hard, if you learn *b'pashtus*, without learning too much *b'iyun*. And this *pashtus* is definitely *Toras emes*, whereas when people learn *b'iyun* with deep *svaros*, you can't know with certainty that everything is *emes*. But the *pshat*, what's written in the Gemara, Rashi, and Tosfos, is definitely *Toras emes*!

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