

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 • *Re'eh* 5786

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Rabbeinu delivered this uplifting *sichah* about the profound delight and good fortune of *omlei haTorah* and their exclusive *maalah*. Delivered during the Chumash *shiur* on *Leil Shabbos Kodesh Re'eh* 5767 (2007).

Parshas Re'eh: Seeing Reward and Punishment

The *parshah* begins with “ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום, ברכה וקללה, *Re'eh*, See, I have given you today the blessing and the curse.” Let us understand: After all, Hashem surely didn't “show” them the *brachah* and *kelalah*, so why did He use the word “see”? Furthermore, it would have been more appropriate to say “*Shema*, Hear,” as it does in other places in the Torah, and as the *pasuk* states in *Va'eschanan* (6:4), “*Shema Yisrael*, Hear, Yisrael.”

The language of “*re'eyah*, seeing,” is also found later on at the end of *Parshas Nitzavim* (30:15), “See I have placed before you today life and good; death and bad.” And actually, sight has a greater impact than hearing, as Chazal say (*Rosh Hashanah* 25b), “Seeing is greater than hearing.” We must explain why the *pasuk* uses this language of “*re'eyah*.”

It seems that we can explain as follows: In the two places that *re'eyah*, sight, was mentioned, it is discussing the concept of *schar v'onesh*, reward and punishment. That is, if

every single person would just pay a little attention, he'd be able to see the pattern of reward and punishment on his own. This is apparent all throughout *Sefer Melachim* — when they did what was wrong in Hashem's eyes, there were *tzaros*, and when a good king ruled, and the people did *teshuvah* — as in the days of *Chizkiyahu* — the *tzaros* stopped and their conditions improved.

Lomdei Torah Are Visibly Content and Happy

The truth is, this is visible nowadays as well: **someone who is *davuk baTorah* is always content, in all aspects.** Even in the same family, when some family members are connected to Torah while others are not,

it is clearly visible that those who are attached to Torah are more content and happier than the others.

I know about a certain wealthy man who sent some of his children to go into business, like him, while he sent some of his other children to learn Torah. He saw, based on his own experience, that the children who went to learn Torah have a happier life and he regretted that he didn't send all of them to learn Torah. From that point on, he sent all his younger children to learn Torah and instructed them not to go into business.

In every family, you can see the difference between those who are

∞ Preparation for Elul ∞

During summer *bein hazmanim*, Rabbeinu spoke a number of times about the *derech* to prepare for the upcoming month of Elul. Sometimes, he would end off by saying, “*Ksivah v'chasimah tovah.*” In a *sichah* he delivered at the beginning of *bein hazmanim*, Av 5778 (2018), he said:

It's still not Elul, but we need “***Hachanah L'Elul, Preparation for Elul.***” The way to do it is only by setting times for learning *mussar*. Learn a little *mussar* every single day — that is the “**gasoline**” that gives you the energy to continue. Learning *mussar* is the force that gives you the push for all *maasim tovim*. In order to achieve this, one needs a set seder of a few minutes a day, learn from a *mussar sefer*, whatever interests you and entices you. You can't fathom what an influence this has.

During *bein hazmanim* there are no steady *sedarim* in yeshivah, but every person can learn *mussar* on his own — even without a framework. In *Maaseh Rav* (*ois samech*), it's brought down in the name of the Vilna Gaon that one should learn *mussar* a few times a day. That is hard for us, but **we need to stop for a few minutes at least once a day and contemplate, and open a *mussar sefer* and learn inside.** This has a great *hashpaah*.

connected to Torah and those who are not, because the ones who are attached to Torah are happy with what they have and are content. I personally saw this in a number in families, and if anyone wants to research this, they'll see that this is the reality! And even though there are some exceptions, that's like the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (11:5), "Hashem tests the tzaddik." But generally, it's not like that.

Truthfully, we learn in the Mishnah at the beginning of *Peah* (1:1), "These are the matters for which a person enjoys his dividends in this world... and learning Torah is equal to them all." That is, through *esek haTorah*, we merit reaping dividends in this world. In other words, the reality of "*ashrecha baOlam haZeh*, you are fortunate in this World" (*Avos* 6:4) is that we merit good in this world already.

Dividends in This World or Yissurim?

Lichorah, we can question this, based on what they say in *Brachos* (5a), "HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave three gifts to Yisrael and all were given through *yissurim*, afflictions. They are: Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and Olam HaBa. Where is [the proof for] Torah? As it states, 'Fortunate is the man whom Hashem afflicts and he learns from Your Torah.'" A person only merits Torah through hardship and *yissurim*. It's hard to understand the Mishnah in *Peah* that one merits reaping dividends in this world — a good life without hardship and *yissurim* — through Torah learning.

I saw that the Netziv in *Ha'amek Davar* (*Bereishis* 26:5; *Shemos* 15:27) had a similar *kasha*. It says in *Avos* (6:4), "This is the path of Torah, eat bread with salt, drink measured water, and sleep on the ground and live a life of privation, and you toil in Torah." But on the other hand, the Gemara says (*Avodah Zarah* 19b), "Anyone who engages in Torah, he is successful in his properties."

The Netziv explains: the Tanna only said "This is the 'path' of Torah," which means that this is the "path" to reach Torah and merit all the matters mentioned there. However, once a person merit and attains the *maalas haTorah*, he merits earning an expansive livelihood, as well as other things that give him more serenity without difficulty. And *adaraba*, through the dividends he earns in this world, he can continue acquiring more Torah for himself.

Toiling in Torah Is Considered Yissurim

We can suggest another explanation based on the Gemara (*Erechin* 16b): "What is the extent of [what's considered] *yissurim*... even if he puts his hand in his pocket to take out three coins, and he only grasps two." That is, even a very slight difficulty is considered *yissurim*.

In Rabbeinu Yonah's *Shaarei Teshuvah* (4:11) he writes that there are *aveiros* for which even *teshuvah* does not atone, and only *yissurim* atone for them; yet there are matters that can protect a person from *yissurim*, such as *chesed* and Torah. He writes there, "**When he places his toil in Torah and his exertion in it, and when he pushes away sleep from his eyes, that will be in place of *yissurim*.**" That is, *amal haTorah* is also considered *yissurim*. And when a person pushes sleep from his eyes in order to learn Torah, even if he does not deprive himself of sleep beyond what he needs and actually sleeps as is needed in order to continue learning, this minimizing of pleasure, for him, takes the place of *yissurim*. And as we explained, *yissurim* refer to even something very minimal.

If so, we can say that when Chazal told us that the Torah is only acquired through *yissurim*, this does not specifically refer to excruciatingly painful *yissurim*. Even *yissurim* the likes of pushing sleep away from his eyes in order to learn Torah are considered to be enough for acquiring Torah.

Ruling Over Yissurim — The Sweetness of Torah Causes Him Not to Feel His Yissurim

The Gemara (*Beitzah* 32b) tells us about three people whose "life is not life." One of them is one whose *yissurim* take control over his body. The Maharsha explains that this wording is used ("take control over his body") because the opposite can be true as well — a person can take control over his *yissurim*.

Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon asked to be afflicted with *yissurim* (*Bava Metzia* 84b), because the *yissurim* didn't bother him. Even when he had *yissurim*, he overcame them and was in control of them and was engaged in Torah despite them.

When Chazal said "their life is not a life," they were only referring to someone whose *yissurim* control him and take over his body, when the *yissurim* confuse him and disrupt his learning. But if despite the *yissurim* he is *osek baTorah* and can be in control over the *yissurim*, because the Torah's *chashivus* and sweetness cause him not to feel the *yissurim*, then *adaraba*! These are *yissurim shel ahavah*, for which one receives abundant reward, and Torah is acquired in this manner!

"Fortunate Is the Man Who Is Afflicted — And He Learns from Your Torah"

We've already mentioned the Gemara in *Brachos* that *yissurim shel ahavah* are afflictions that do not cause *bittul Torah*, as it states (*Tehillim* 94:12), "Fortunate is the man who Hashem afflicts, and he learns from your Torah."

And this is the order of the *pesukim* in *Tehillim* there: “O Hashem of vengeance Hashem, oh, G-d of vengeance appear. Rise, O Judge of the land... until when will the wicked rejoice? They speak freely, they say malicious lies; they glorify themselves, all evil doers.” That is, the nations of the world bring upon *tzaros* on Klal Yisrael, “they crush Your people, Hashem, and afflict Your inheritance, they murder the widow and the stranger.” This looks like the wicked are happy and content.

Therefore, he says, “Does the One Who implants the ear not hear; will the One Who created the eye not see? The He Who chastises the nations — will He not punish?” In the end, the wicked will receive their punishment. Then it goes on to say, “Hashem knows the thoughts of man, for they are futile.” This is to inform us that there is reward and punishment for the wicked and they will be judged for all their actions.

However, in the rest of the *pesukim* speak about *tzaddikim*. The Gemara quotes a *pasuk* “Fortunate is the man Hashem afflicts” — even when the *tzaddikim* are afflicted, they are happy; they are content with their *yissurim*.

Lichorah, why is the *pasuk* “Fortunate is the man Hashem afflicts” in proximity to the previous *pesukim* about the punishment of the wicked? The explanation is that while it is true that the wicked people will be punished for the *yissurim* they inflict on the *tzaddikim*, the *tzaddikim* are still happy and content with those very same *yissurim*, as they are in order to “You will teach us Your Torah” — they are *yissurim shel ahavah*, which will give them the *zechus* of Torah!

This is the “*ashrecha*, you are fortunate and content” and “*peiroseihem baOlam haZeh*, their dividends in this world,” because even though Torah is acquired through *yissurim*, and even the *tzaddikim* have *yissurim* in order to merit Torah (even *yissurim* of lack of sleep in order to learn as we explained), in any case, they don’t even notice the *yissurim* because they are so attached to Torah and enjoy its sweetness. This is the definition of *yissurim shel ahavah*, as they do not involve *bittul Torah*. And this is not a contradiction at all to receiving the dividends of their reward in this world, which is promised for Torah study.

Contentment of Lomdei Torah vs. Wealthy People

A supporter of Torah asked Maran Rav Ahron Kotler *zt”l* to explain the difference between a “Yissachar” and a “Zevulun.” After all, he pointed out, they both receive equal reward in Olam HaBa. Rav Ahron answered: True, in Olam HaBa they receive equal reward, but only the Yissachar has “*ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*.” The same is true regarding “reaping their dividends in this world.”

It's not a secret that fabulously wealthy people are not happy; they're always worried about their possessions,

as Chazal say (*Koheles Rabbah* 1:13), “One who has one hundred wants two hundred; one who has two hundred wants four hundred.” They live in constant fear of losing their possessions and they are preoccupied and confused. And even after their business collapses and they no longer have money, they still try to act wealthy so that people will give them loans and do business with them.

I heard about a wealthy man who lost his money. Now, rich people are accustomed to spending summer vacation in another country, but he couldn’t afford that. Since he wanted everyone to still think he was rich, he holed himself up in his house so everyone would think he had also gone on vacation. He came out a few weeks later as if he had just come back home...

However, those who are attached to Torah are always content and happy with their lot. They don’t look for other things.

Hardships — Only at the Beginning

Truthfully, all the *yissurim* and hardships connected to Torah are only at when one begins to learn. And as we know, “All beginnings are hard,” and once you start, the difficulty disappears. This is how it is in all areas, and especially in Torah, as Rashi teaches on the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 19:5), “And it will be if you listen to My voice”: If you accept it upon yourselves now, it will be sweet for you from now on, as all beginnings are hard. That is, it’s only hard in the beginning, but afterward, it is sweet and will be pleasant! Because Torah and *mitzvos* have sweetness and a very pleasant feeling, and as time passes, the difficulties pass.

The reality is that anyone who wants to, can learn. All the possibilities are available. It’s just that the beginnings are hard, but it will come easily as time passes.

This week, one of the *bachurim* was *zocheh* to make a *siyum haShas*. He learned in an easy manner until he finished all of Shas. Next week, an *avreich* will be making a *siyum* on all of Shas, along with *Mishnayos Zeraim* and *Taharos*. He told me, in the name of Rav Chaim Kanievsky [*shlita*] that in order to make a *siyum*, you need to complete all of *Seder Zeraim* and *Taharos*. Without that, it’s not considered to have finished all of Shas. In the same manner, anyone who really wants to can advance and can make great achievements, and finish Shas.

How to Achieve Tikkun HaMiddos and Hasmadah

This is the way to act when you want to improve in any matter. If a person is aware of the value of that matter and knows what he really needs to do, even though it’s hard in the beginning, it will be easy later.

Take smoking for example. Cigarettes are harmful to one's health, and it's known that the Gerrer Rebbe, the Imrei Emes, said: Smoking starts off with *gaavah* (arrogance) and ends with *taavah* (desire). A young child only starts smoking because he has *gaavah*, he wants to feel big. It's not that he likes the taste and has a desire to smoke. However, as time passes, it turns into a *taavah* and he starts enjoying it. And in the end, he has *tzaar* and sorrow, *Rachmana litzlan*.

I once heard that the way to stop smoking is to do it gradually. First, don't smoke for one day a week. That's not very hard, because he already does not smoke on Shabbos, an entire day. He can try it and he can do it easily. Then choose two days a week to be smoking-free. Two days are definitely harder than one, but if he managed one day, he should try again for another day. And then, little by little, he should continue cutting back until it is no longer hard for him to stop smoking.

However, if he sees a cigarette again, it's possible that the fire of desire will burn in him again, and he'll need to muster up a lot of strength and courage to overcome it. Because if he smokes even just once and does not control himself, he will break his resolve and go back to smoking completely. So he must be very strong to make sure not to do this and after a short time, the desire to smoke will no longer challenge him.

The same is true regarding all *sheviras hamiddos*, breaking bad *middos*, such as anger. All beginnings are hard, but by habituating yourself to certain behavior you can rectify a bad *middah*. I already told you about a person who would often get angry at his family on *erev Shabbos*. He asked for an *eitzah* how to stop. He was told not shout or scream when he got angry, just to keep quiet. At first, he returned, saying he's incapable of doing that. So he was told to try for a few weeks, and actually, after a short time, he was able to control himself. He no longer got angry.

This is very *l'maasah* regarding *hasmadah* as well. All beginnings are hard, but then it becomes easy. It's very prevalent among young *bachurim* who are used to schmoozing. Chazal say (*Kiddushin* 49b), "Ten portions of *sichah* (conversation) came down to the world, and the ladies took nine." However, you sometimes see the young *bachurim* talking a lot.

The Gra in *Mishlei* (1:23) explains why people have a desire for *devarim beteilim* which don't even give them physical pleasure, like food does. He says a person is comprised of a few basic elements, and one is *Ruach memalela*, the ability to speak — so that he can speak a lot in *divrei Torah*. The Satan counteracts this by giving him his satisfaction in speech with *devarim beteilim*. In order to overcome this yetzer hara, follow the same *eitzah*: stop gradually, little by little, until the *taavah* for speaking *devarim beteilim* is completely gone.

בניינא דיומא

The Magnitude of the Zechus of Learning During Bein HaZmanim

Every year during *bein hazmanim*, Rabbeinu spoke about the magnitude of the *zechus* and obligation to use these days for *esek haTorah*. What follows is a short talk he gave at the opening ceremony for the Dirshu program in *bein hazmanim* Av 5780 (2020):

Learning Torah during *bein hazmanim* is a very great thing. About this is said: "It is a time to do for Hashem, they nullified Your Torah." (See Yerushalmi end of *Brachos*) that when others don't learn and there is a *rifyon*, slacking off, in *esek haTorah*, those who strengthen themselves and learn Torah have a tremendous *zechus*, *zechus haTorah*! During *bein hazmanim* we are lacking *esek haTorah* and we are lacking the *zechus* of Torah for all of Klal Yisrael. Therefore, whatever you learn during *bein hazmanim* is a tremendous *zechus*. It is an obligation and a *zechus*, and whoever learns bring merit to the *rabbim* with his Torah.

Of course, each person has to learn according to his abilities, don't overexert yourself, and you also need to relax. But use your *kocho*s as much as possible to learn and be *osek baTorah* during *bein hazmanim*. It is a great *zechus*, because it's a time that the merit of Torah is lacking. And that's why there were many unpleasant things that happened in the past during *bein hazmanim*, because we are lacking the *zechus* of Torah. Anyone who is *osek baTorah* brings *zechuyos* to himself and the entire *tzibbur*.

Dedicated by the Kroll Family, Los Angeles

להצלחת בניהם ובנותיהם
בתורה וביראת שמים

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