

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 • *Shelach* 5785

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What follows is excerpted from a *sichah* that Rabbeinu delivered on Purim 5751 (1991), after the open miracles and days of terror during the Persian Gulf War.

Seeing Chasdei Hashem with Seichel Yashar

Lately, there have been *nissim geluyim*, open miracles, anyone with intelligence sees *chasdei Hashem*. Some people err and don’t want to admit it, so they just use the word “miracle,” without thinking about Who made the miracle. Chazal have already told us (*Bereishis Rabbah* 8:8), “Whoever wishes to err, may err.” Anyone who “wants to” can make a mistake, but those who act with *seichel yashar* see the *chasdei Hashem* and express gratitude for them.

A Claim against Anyone Who Doesn’t Act with Yashrus

The Gemara tells us (*Beitzah* 25b) that there’s a grass named “*chatzuva*,” which Yehoshua used to mark the borders of Eretz Yisrael. This grass grows straight deep into the ground and does not spread out. It’s just straight. When they wanted to mark the borders of fields, they would plant this grass at the edge of the field, and its roots would grow straight down into the earth. This is how they knew the exact location of the borders, because they could always dig and find the grass.

The Gemara relates that *chatzuva* chops off the legs of the wicked in Gehinnom. Rashi and Rabbeinu Chananel explain that wicked people act with crookedness, the opposite of *yashrus*, so Shamayim has a claim against them. He tells them: Look at this grass; it was not commanded [to be straight], and it’s not even alive, it’s just a plant, and it grows straight, because Hashem made it straight. And you are people with intelligence, and you were created straight, *yesharim*, as the *pasuk* states, (*Koheles* 7:29), “Hashem made man straight.” So why don’t you conduct yourselves with *yashrus*?!

The Yetzer Hara Is Convincing

The truth is, why aren’t people straight? After all, Hashem made man straight. The reason is, as the *pasuk* continues, “And they requested many calculations.” These calculations are from the yetzer hara, who convinces man to go against his *yashrus*.

What follows are excerpts from a *sichah* Rabbeinu delivered in his home in Iyar 5783, just three weeks before his *petirah*, and just a few months before the tragic riots in Eretz HaKodesh.

Hashgachah

Here in Eretz Yisrael as well, we are surrounded on all sides. One side is the ocean, and on all other sides, here, here, and here, all the nations hate us! Some of them hate us less, some hate us more, but they all hate us. And how is that we still exist? It’s a miracle, and it’s *hashgachah*! We are *mamesh* living through *nissim*!

Torah

In order to continue this miracle, we need *zechuyos*. And what are the *zechuyos*? First of all, be *osek baTorah*, as Chazal say (*Sotah* 21a), “Torah protects and saves.” **Esek haTorah is not required only due to our *chiyuv* of *talmud Torah*, learning Torah, but it’s also a *chiyuv* of rescuing Klal Yisrael! Those who are *osek baTorah* are also rescuing those who are not *osek baTorah*.** Aside from every individual’s *chiyuv* to be *osek baTorah*, there’s another facet to it, which is saving Klal Yisrael and saving the *tibbur*.

Now there are tremendous threats coming from the Arabs, they are making terrifying threats, and we need *rachamei Shamayim* to prevent them from succeeding. And we need *zechuyos* to attain this *rachamim*, we need to increase *zechuyos*! This is what we need now, we must increase *zechuyos*. And the *zechus* of Torah is a tremendous *zechus*.

Bein Adam Lachaveiro

There’s also *bein adam lachaveiro*, *v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*. There should be no friction, just be *mevater*, be *mevatar*! Feel the other person as if he is your son, as if he is your brother. This is a *mitzvas asei d’Oraisa*, *v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*.

Tefillah

And there is another need — daven, *tefillah*, and say *Tehillim*. There’s something known about *Sefer Tehillim*: if you recite chapters of *Tehillim* every day, it provides tremendous *zechuyos*. There are great people, true *gedolei Torah*, who said *Tehillim* every day, a few *perakim* every day. It’s a tremendous *zechus*.

Mussar

And above all, one must learn *mussar sefarim*. Have a steady, daily learning session in *mussar sefarim*. It doesn’t matter for how long, even just a few minutes is good. We’ve spoken about this many times, and we’ve discussed how *mussar* has an effect on a person and turns him into another person, and he feels good about it. And then there’s a pleasant atmosphere among the family as well. *B’ezeras Hashem*, this is an individual *zechus* for every single person, and it’s a general *zechus* for all of Klal Yisrael, who need *zechuyos*.

Lichorah, if so, what can we do? After all, we have a yetzer hara, and Hashem Who made man straight also made the yetzer hara. Indeed, Chazal tell us (*Kiddushin* 30b), “HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, I created the yetzer hara.” Just as a person has *sechel yashar*, he also has a yetzer hara luring him to behave with crookedness, against the *sechel yashar*.

The Solution against the Yetzer: Torah and More Torah

But even so, there is a claim against wicked people: why don't they behave with *yashrus*; why aren't they straight? Even though there is a yetzer hara, everyone knows he has a yetzer hara and that there is a solution against him. Chazal tell us, “I created the yetzer hara, I created the Torah as an antidote against it.” If so, fight the yetzer hara, and take the Torah, which is the antidote. And this is the solution: learn more and more Torah!

Fulfill Duties of the Heart as Well

However, learning Torah alone is not enough. One needs a little *hisbonenus*, contemplation, because there are 613 mitzvos in the Torah and many of them are mitzvos that involve *hisbonenus* and are dependent on thought. These mitzvos are called *chovos halevavos*, duties of the heart, things you have to think about. If a person does not pay attention to these mitzvos, he can learn a lot of Torah, but it won't help at all.

The Gra tells us (*Even Sheleimah* chap. 1) that the Torah is a “*koach matzmiach*, a source of development,” and if a person has good *middos*, the Torah strengthens and develops his good *middos*, but if he has bad *middos*, sometimes the Torah strengthens his bad *middos*.

And in order for the Torah to be an antidote and have an effect on the yetzer hara, one must fulfill the *chovos halevavos* as well. The *Biur Halachah*, *siman aleph*, quotes the *Sefer HaChinuch*, who says there are 6 constant mitzvos that hinge on maintaining an internal awareness. It is a constant obligation to be thinking about these mitzvos at every moment; they are dependent on thought — what to think and how to think, how to understand and to feel.

When I was a child, I heard about a certain tremendous *talmid chacham* who traveled to one of the biggest tzaddikim and accepted him as his rav. People asked him, You are greater in Torah than he is, so how can he be your rav? He told them that there are 613 mitzvos in the Torah. There are entire *masechtos* in Gemara that apply to certain individual mitzvos, such as *Shabbos*, *Eiruvin*, and *Bava Kamma*, which includes matters of *nezikin*. But there are other mitzvos that do not have *masechtos* explaining them, such as *yiras Shamayim*, *ahavah*, and *deveikus*. However, there is a complete *sefer* that deals

with these mitzvos, and this rav is greater than me in those matters. He has a well-organized “*masechta*” in these mitzvos. That's how I can be his *talmid*!

Maran Rav Chaim Brisker once saw his son Maran the Brisker Rav learning *Chovos HaLevavos* as a young boy. He told him, “*Zei'er gut, Velvel. Doss is a Shulchan Aruch fun Yiddishkeit*, Very good, Velvel. That is a *Shulchan Aruch* of Yiddishkeit.” It is a *Shulchan Aruch* about the *halachos* of our hearts, how our hearts should be functioning.

The *sefer Maggid Meisharim* relates that the *maggid* told the Beis Yosef to learn the *sefer Chovos HaLevavos* every day. He only merited becoming the Beis Yosef and compiling the *Shulchan Aruch* as a result of this.

Similarly, Shamayim gives every generation the *mussar sefarim* they need for their generation. There are many *mussar sefarim* that open our eyes to see simple, clear things that we just don't think about. And if we see them, it's *Torah tavlin*! And this is why we have a claim against the wicked people, about why they aren't *yesharim*, straight. Because we have the Torah and we have *mussar sefarim*, and all of them together serve as an antidote to the yetzer hara.

Why Does Shamayim Send Us Fear?

Along with all the open miracles, we also had terror-filled days, many Yidden suffered from fear and they were literally in mortal danger. In certain places, professionals were needed to calm the *tzibbur* down. We have to view this in the right perspective, we have to look with *yashrus* and realize that this is from Shamayim.

At the time of the miracle of Purim, for many long months, many Jews throughout Achashveirosh's kingdom were unaware that the decrees had already been annulled. The letters about annihilating all Jews had been sent out on 13 Nissan. Mordechai then fasted for three days, and on the third day, Esther went to Achashveirosh to plead for her nation. The next day there was another party with Esther, Achashveirosh, and Haman, and on that very day, 16 Nissan, Haman was hanged. But the Jews in the other countries did not know about the nullification of the decrees until a second set of letters were sent out on 23 Sivan.

So it turns out that while the Jews in Shushan rejoiced and were happy about their enemies' downfall, Jews in other countries were still sitting in sackcloth and fasting and were terribly frightened. I saw an explanation from Rav Issac Sher *ztvk"l* (*Leket Sichos Mussar*, vol. 2, p. 190), about why they needed that fear. And why did HaKadosh Baruch Hu orchestrate things in a way that the Jews would not hear about the nullification of the decrees immediately?

To Bring Us Closer to HaKadosh Baruch Hu

Rav Y. I. Sher explained that the purpose of all this pain and suffering was to bring Klal Yisrael's hearts closer to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Indeed, the Gemara tells us (*Yoma* 76a) that they asked Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, Why didn't the *mann* fall once for the entire year? He answered with a parable. A human king had an only son. He would give him money once a year for the entire year's living expenses. So the son only visited his father once a year. The king then decided to give him money daily for that day's expenses, and he would visit his father every day. The same is true regarding Yisrael. A person who had four or five children would be worried and would say, Perhaps *mann* will not fall tomorrow and we'll all die of hunger. As a result, they would all direct their hearts to their Father in Heaven.

If the *mann* would have fallen just once a year, they would have forgotten Who actually gave them the *mann*. They would have become used to it, as if it were a natural occurrence. That's why the *mann* fell daily, and only as much as was needed for that day — no more, so that they'd strengthen their *emunah* and dedicate their hearts to their Father in Heaven. Let's pay attention to the Gemara's wording: "a person who had four or five children" — because a person worries about his children more than he worries about himself. So even if he was not worried about himself, he was concerned that his children would have food to eat, and as a result, they would strengthen themselves in *emunah* and would direct their hearts to their Father in Heaven. **And this is the purpose of all the fear and suffering: so that we direct our hearts to HaKadosh Baruch Hu and that we fulfill *chovos halevavos*, the duties of our heart, with *sheleimus*.**

This is what we must do, especially in these days. We must strengthen our fulfillment of all the duties of the heart, and at the same time, we must focus on HaKadosh Baruch Hu's *chasadim*, as it states in *Tehillim* (107:43), "And contemplate the kindnesses of Hashem." We must think about what could have happened, *chas v'shalom*, and acknowledge and recognize the *hashgachah pratis* that accompanied every person who was saved. And just as the Torah writes regarding all the *makkos* during Yetzias Mitzrayim, "And you shall know that I am Hashem," "And Mitzrayim knew that I am Hashem" — the purpose of all miracles is to strengthen our awareness in *hashgachas Hashem*!

HaMishnah HaYomis — *Kovetz al Yad Yarbeyh*

by Rabbeinu's Son, Rav Yisrael Edelstein *shlita*

In Honor of the Siyum on *Seder Zeraim* and Beginning
Seder Moed in the *Mishnah HaYomis* program
and *l'illui nishmas* Maran Rabbeinu *ztk"l*

It's been two years since my father the *gaon ztvk"l's* *petirah*. Shortly after his passing, there was a great awakening to learn *Mishnayos l'illui nishmaso*, one *mishnah* a day. Many people began learning *Maseches Brachos*. They then continued to the other *masechtos* of *Seder Zeraim*, and now, two years later, they were *zocheh* to complete all of *Seder Zeraim*.

This is a tremendous *chizuk* for us — to see how in a short learning *seider* of a few minutes a day, a person can attain vast general knowledge and gain understanding in all of *Seder Zeraim*. They literally become a fulfillment of "*kovetz al yad yarbeyh*, one who gathers little by little will amass a lot," as Chazal say (*Vayikra Rabbah* 19:2), "A imbecile says, Who can learn the Torah... And what does a wise man say? I will learn two *halachos* today, and two *halachos* tomorrow until I learn the entire Torah." We see here how one can acquire broad knowledge and great achievements through a short daily learning *seider*.

Learning *Mishnayos* is very important. *Mishnayos* is the foundation of Torah she'Be'al Peh. Once, when my father was speaking about the *maalah* of learning *mishnayos*, he said, As we know, all of Torah she'Be'al Peh is included in *Mishnayos*. Whatever is in the Gemara is included in *Mishnayos*. Indeed, Chazal say in *Kesuvos daf* 69 that the source of all the *Beraissas* of Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Oshaya are in *Mishnayos*.

My father *ztk"l* would also learn *Mishnayos* regularly. Even with all his learning *sedarim* in yeshivah, he never neglected learning *Mishnayos*. He always had a *Mishnayos* with him, especially when he traveled. He would also learn *Mishnayos* every day *l'illui nishmas* his relatives and *rabbeim*.

Now we are about to begin *Seder Moed*. The *inyanim* in *Seder Moed* are easier and more well known. So it's easier to learn them and review them. And this will be a great *zechus* for anyone who begins learning now. *Yehi ratzon*, may you be *zocheh* to learn and complete all of *Seder Moed*, and all of the *Shishah Sedarim*. And this will also be a *nachas ruach* and *illui neshamah* for my father *ztk"l*.

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The *shiurim* in the *Mishnah Yomis* are delivered by Rabbeinu's grandson **Rav Bentzion Garbuz *shlita***, on a direct phone line on Kol HaLashon: 073-2951425, and by Rabbeinu's grandson **Rav Avraham Simcha Edelstein *shlita***, on a direct phone line on Kol HaLashon: 073-3718551.

בענייני דיומאס

I remember difficult *tekufos* in Eretz HaKodesh before the '67 War. There was an atmosphere of terrible fear and panic. They set aside large fields and parks to be repurposed as cemeteries, *Rachmana litzlan*. Maran the Mashgiach Rav Yechezkel Levenstein ztvk"l spoke in his *sichos* about *bitachon*. He said ***bitachon* does not mean to be sure that everything will be as good as we want it to be. *Bitachon* means believing that whatever happens is good, because "whatever the Merciful One does is for the good"!**

In the end, they miraculously wiped out all the Egyptian's airplanes and they won the war. This was in the *zechus* of a tremendous *chizuk* in *emunah* at the time. One of the heads of the government wanted to reassure the public and told them not to worry because "*b'ezras Hashem* we will win" and it will be good. In their circles, this term was rarely used — as you know, in their Declaration of Independence, they did not want to mention Hashem's name, but in 5727 (1967), since they recognized the tremendous danger, they mentioned Hashem's name. The Egyptians heard about it and mocked them. They said it's a sign that the Israelis know they're in deep trouble — and it instigated the Egyptians to invest themselves more in fighting the Jews. In the *zechus* of *emunah*, we merited a miracle.

But then a lot of people began believing in *kochi v'otzem yadi*, their own physical power and prowess. They put their trust in the army, who had captured many territories, and there was a false feeling of security in the country. And then, a few years later, during the Yom Kippur war, the Egyptians came back and conquered many territories in moments. Because if you rely on *kochi v'otzem yadi*, the results are (*Yirmeyahu* 17:4): "... is one who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm," but when one trusts in HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the *pasuk* states, "Blessed is man who trusts in Hashem, and Hashem will be his trust!"

(Excerpted from a *sichah*, Shevat 5772/2012)

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