

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

From the *Sichos* of Maran Rosh HaYeshivah Rav Gershon Edelstein ztvl”l. **Shabbos Nachamu-Va’eschanan 5785**

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In Kislev 5771 (2011), Rabbeinu delivered a special *sichah* about *Yemos HaMashiach*. This *sichah*, which has never been published before, is presented here in honor of *Shabbos Kodesh Va’eschanan-Nachamu*.

After arriving late, Rabbeinu said the following before he began the actual *drashah*:

First of all, I must ask forgiveness from the entire *tzibbur* for causing a *tircha d’tzibbur*, but I do have some sort of *heter*, because I was engaged in *mitzvos*. I spent a few minutes at a *simchas chasan v’kallah*, and before that, I participated in a *siyum haShas* of *baalei batim* who attend a 5:00 a.m. *daf Yomi shiur*. It was past 9:00 p.m. when I was at the *siyum*, and they still had not gone to sleep — even though they will be up and learning tomorrow at 5:00 a.m. These men do not learn full time, they are working men; yet, they are *kove’a ittim laTorah*. It was important to speak to them about *chashivus haTorah*, so they’ll rejoice in their portion in Torah.

The entire *tzibbur* has a *chiyuv* to encourage and strengthen this, just as everyone is obligated to perform the mitzvah of *hashavas aveidah* and return lost objects. Only an elderly person is exempt if it is unbefitting, but only if it not befitting his stature. But in our case, it’s not disgraceful to wait due to the *kavod haTorah* of those *daf Yomi* participants, and it’s a *chesed* as well. So, there is an aspect of a *heter* of *tircha d’tzibbura*. The *tzibbur* here, who all agreed to wait, enabled me to merit the privilege of *maasim tovim*; it was in the *zechus* of the *tzibbur*. Now — let’s discuss things that are applicable *l’maaseh*, what we should be thinking about today.

Yemos HaMashiach and Chevlei Mashiach

We are waiting for Mashiach, and we daven three times a day: את צמח דוד עבדך מהרה תצמיח, “The blossoming of Dovid your servant may You blossom speedily”; לישועתך קיווינו כל היום, “for we await Your salvation all the day”; מצמיח קרן, “Who makes the power of salvation to flourish. In *bentching* too, we ask for Mashiach, על מלכות בית דוד משיח, “For the dynasty of Dovid Your appointed one.”

Chazal use three terms for Mashiach: *yemos haMashiach*, the days of Mashiach; *chevlei Mashiach*, birth pangs of Mashiach; and *ikvesa d’Meshicha*, footsteps of Mashiach. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 97a) says the following about *yemos haMashiach*: There are two thousand years of *yemos*

haMashiach. That means the fifth and sixth millennium from Brias HaOlam are “*yemos haMashiach*” (see further in the Baal HaTurim at the beginning of *Parshas Vayishlach*), and during this time Mashiach is fit and able to come. Although Mashiach still has not come, if he does come during this time, it is no longer considered miraculous.

The *Gemara* (Ibid. 98a) tells us the following about the *pasuk*, “אני השם בעתה אחישנה, “I am Hashem, in its time, I will hasten it”: “If they merit, I will hasten it; if they do not merit, it will come in its time.” That is, there is a certain time set for the *Geulah*, and it’s not possible that Mashiach will come past that time. If Klal Yisrael have many *zechuyos*, then HaKadosh Baruch Hu will hasten the Redemption before its set time. It’s possible that it is already *b’itah*, “in its time,” which means that it is possible that Mashiach will come without the special *zechuyos* of *achishenah*, “I will hasten it.” We need to look further into the *mefarshim* about this idea, but in any case, the fifth and sixth millennium are *yemos haMashiach*.

And then there are *chevlei Mashiach*, about which the Gemara tells us (Ibid. 88b), “What should a person do to be saved from the birth pangs of Mashiach?” *Chevlei Mashiach* are like *chevlei leidah* (labor pains); they come along with pain and suffering, and we need an *eitzah* — how can we be saved from them? The Gemara tells us that the solution is to be “engaged in Torah and *gemillus chasadim*.”

Ikvesa d’Meshicha Lasts Many Years

And then there are *ikvesa d’Meshicha*, which is its period of an abundance of tribulations, both in *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*, as the *mishnah* says explicitly (*Sotah* 49b), “In *ikvos Meshicha*, *chutzpah* will increase; inflation will soar; ...the wisdom of the Torah scholars will rot, and those who fear sin will be despised...” They also said (*Kesubos* 112b), “In the generation in which Ben Dovid will come, there will be denunciations and indictments against *talmidei chachamim*.’ *Kavod haTorah* will be at its lowest point, and there will terrible hardships in Torah and in *gashmiyus*.

I once told someone that we literally see now the signs of *ikvesa d’Meshicha*. He told me that the signs have been here for years already; it’s nothing new. And he was older than me, and he told me this when I was young — he said then that we’ve been seeing these *tzaros* of *ikvesa d’Meshicha* for many years already.

I looked at the meaning of the words “*ikvesa d’Meshicha*.” *Ikvesa* comes from the word *akev*, heel. Someone once said,

jokingly, that Mashiach has a really long heel. Even though a regular person's heel is not long, Mashiach's heel is very long so it's taking a long time for him to come. And it's a joke, but let's look at this seriously: what does the concept of *ikvesa d'Meshicha* mean? Is Mashiach's heel going to appear before him? Mashiach will certainly come with his entire self; not just his heel. What were Chazal hinting to us with this term, *ikvesa d'Meshicha*?

Follow the Path That Will Bring Mashiach

I did not look into the *mefarshim* just now, but perhaps this idea is connected to the *pasuk* in *Shir haShirim* (1:8), "Go out *b'ikvei hatzon*, in the footsteps of the flock." It says there, "If you do not know, most fairest of women," which is Knesses Yisrael, if you don't know what to do and which path to follow, then "go out in the footsteps of the flock." Rashi explains, "Look at the footprints of sheep; their heels are discernable... Look closely at the path of your earlier ancestors who received My Torah and guarded My watch and My *mitzvos*, and follow in their ways."

That is, there is a discernable path with the footsteps of our Avos HaKedoshim, because when one walks on a path, his tracks are left behind, his heelprints are recognizable. Similarly, the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 77:20), "In the sea was Your way, and Your path in the mighty waters, and Your footsteps were not known." Hashem's way passes through the sea and mighty waters, and His footsteps are unknown — there are no tracks left in the sea or the mighty waters, and Hashem's manner is that He does not leave behind signs or tracks. But there are tracks left behind on the path that the Avos took, and we have to follow in their footsteps: "Go out in the footsteps of the flocks."

It's possible that the following idea is also hinted to in the wording "*ikvesa*" *d'Meshicha*: there is an existing road that Mashiach walks on — his tracks are visible — and we have to walk along the path of Mashiach, along the path that he needs in order to arrive. What is this path? Learning Torah and performing *chesed*! As Chazal told us, "What should a person do to be saved from *chevlei Mashiach*? Engage in Torah and *gemillus chasadim*."

How to Merit a Son Like Rav Chaim of Volozhin

We've already said that *chevlei Mashiach* are like labor pains — the level of pain is a sign of progress. When a woman experiences the strongest pain, we know that the birth is imminent. And when the birth is even closer, she has such terrible pain that she screams in pain.

There is a story told about Rav Chaim of Volozhin's mother. When she was in labor — in those days, everyone gave birth at home — the Shaagas Aryeh was learning in their home. She controlled herself and did not scream so as not to disturb his learning. In that merit, she was *zocheh* that her son was Rav Chaim of Volozhin, who became the prime *talmid* of the Vilna Gaon, both in *nigleh* and *nistar*.

By the way, let me tell you a little about Rav Chaim of Volozhin's greatness. It's known that Rav Chaim Vital was the Arizal's prime *talmid* and he wrote up his Torah. The Arizal himself did not write down his Torah — all we have from him are three *zemiros*: *Azamer b'Shvachin*, *Asader l'Seudasa*, and *Bnei Heichala*, which are in the *nusach* that the Arizal composed. We don't have anything else directly from him, because he was very young when he passed away; he was 38 — although Rav Chaim Vital gained a tremendous amount of Torah from the Arizal, they only learned together for a short period of time. The secrets of Torah that he learned from the Arizal were unknown until then. The truth is, there were Rishonim who knew them, but no one else knew about it. The *Zohar* already existed, but there were some words that no one understood, and no one knew how to explain them.

Rav Chaim Vital transcribed the Arizal's kabbalah *sefarim*: *Eitz Chaim* and *Pri Eitz Chaim* and others. He wrote in the introduction that he was "revealing one *tefach*, and covering two thousand *amos*." Which means that whatever he wrote was comparable to the equation of one *tefach* out of two thousand *amos*, because in order to understand the depths of his words, much lengthier explanations are necessary. He wrote down the information in hints and *meshalim*, which we cannot understand, for example: *mayim nokvin*, and all sorts of *sefiros* and *zivugim*. The Ramchal explains some of these things so that we can understand what they mean.

Now, the Vilna Gaon told Rav Chaim of Volozhin that he was unsure if Rav Chaim Vital properly understood the depths of the *nimshal* — those two thousand *amos* worth of *nistar* — or if there were even more hidden things that he did not understand. But then the Vilna Gaon saw somewhere in Rav Chaim Vital's writings that showed him that Rav Chaim Vital actually did understand the entire *nimshal*; however, since he had hidden his *havanah* so well, people could mistakenly think that he did not understand. But it was all hidden and covered within the two thousand *amah*.

The Vilna Gaon did not tell Rav Chaim of Volozhin where he had seen this in Rav Chaim Vital's writings. Now, Rav Chaim Volozhin had a nephew, Rav Avraham Simcha, who was also a great *mekubal*. Rav Chaim Volozhin once told him what he had heard from the Vilna Gaon. Rav Avraham Simcha asked him, "Perhaps the Gra was referring to *maamar* so-and-so in Rav Chaim Vital's *sefarim*?" Rav Chaim smiled and said, "Yes." This is an indication of Rav Chaim Volozhin's greatness — he was able to understand the depths of *chochmas hakabbalah* from Rav Chaim Vital's words, just as the Vilna Gaon had understood them.

In any case, what we can learn from this is that if a person is quiet when he is in pain, if he makes a calculation that it's worthwhile for him to keep quiet, he gains a son like Rav Chaim! And all the future generations, the entire Brisker dynasty, who are descendants of Rav Chaim Volozhiner, and all the Torah in the world today, is a continuation of this, and so is Brisker Torah, and the

Shapira family, and all the *yeshivos* today. They all stem from Rav Chaim Volozhiner and his *talmidim*. And *Nachlas Dovid*, *Keren Orah*, *Mishkenos Yaakov*, all of those profound *sefarim* that give us a clear understanding of Torah were written by Rav Chaim's *talmidim*.

Bear Shame and Difficulty in Order to Do Chesed

Let's return to our previous matter, that *chevlei Mashiach* are like labor pains. Those who know how to behave as they should, those who follow the path of Mashiach, *ikvesa d'Meshicha*, will merit being saved from *chevlei Mashiach*. And the path to follow, is as we said, "to engage in Torah and *gemillus chasadim*." Now, while this is not very simple, and while it's hard to engage in Torah and *maasim tovim*, that is the primary *maalah* — to engage in Torah and *maasim tovim* despite the hardship! And I am familiar with people who do this, who invest effort and perform *chesed* out of love, despite the horrific difficulties that come along with it, and they are happy to do so. They do the *chesed* happily, *l'shem Shamayim*, due to *ahavas chesed*, despite all the difficulties.

There are others who even suffer shame in order to perform *chesed*. I'll tell you a story about Rav Yeruchem Levovitz *ztvk"l*, who was the *mashgiach* in Mir and who raised many *talmidim*. The *mashgiach* Rav Yechezkel Levenstein and the *rosh yeshivah* Rav Dovid Povarsky *ztvk"l* were also his *talmidim*. There was an excellent *bachur*, really excellent, one of the best *bachurim* in yeshivah, I don't want to say his name, but he is famous in the yeshivah world, a rare *baal kishron* and an outstanding *talmid chacham*, and Rav Yeruchem *redt* him a *shidduch*. And the *bachur* met the girl and when he came back, Rav Yeruchem told him, "I regret having *redt* you that *shidduch*. It's not a good *shidduch* for you." The *bachur* was clever and very sharp, and he thought the girl was suitable for him. He didn't understand why Rav Yeruchem said otherwise, but he did not have a choice, because Rav Yeruchem was the *shadchan*.

After a while, he found out that Rav Yeruchem suggested this same girl for another *bachur* in yeshivah. He was surprised. He couldn't understand: If the *shidduch* wasn't suitable for him, why was it suitable for the other *bachur*? He thought about it and came up with a simple answer: the other *bachur* was a *baal mussar* and was very close to Rav Yeruchem. He thought that Rav Yeruchem apparently decided that "*hakarov karov kodem*" (preference is given to those who are close to you), so he preferred to *redt* the *shidduch* to his close *talmid*. He was positive that Rav Yeruchem had made a mistake and acted improperly, because he had no other way to explain it.

But many years later, he found out that Rav Yeruchem didn't tell him the real reason: the other side had seen him and did not like what they saw. They told Rav Yeruchem unequivocally that this *shidduch* was not an option. Rav Yeruchem thought to himself: how can I tell the *bachur* that they don't want him? He had *rachmanus* on him — how

could he hurt his feelings and tell him this? Even though it's true, it might cause him *tzaar*; and it's permitted to change the truth in order to keep the peace, and for the purpose of a mitzvah. It was a great *chesed* not to tell the *bachur*. Even if, as a result, the *bachur* would hate him after seeing that he *redt* the *shidduch* to another *talmid*, Rav Yeruchem was willing to suffer so his *talmid* would not be hurt!

Becoming a Talmid of Avraham Avinu

And who was the one who did this? Rav Yeruchem! We can also be "Rav Yeruchem's *talmid*." There are *talmidim* guided by Rav Yeruchem's way. After all, there are *talmidim* of Moshe Rabbeinu and *talmidim* of Avraham Avinu, as Chazal tell us (*Avos* 5:19), "Anyone who has these three traits is among the *talmidim* of Avraham Avinu..."

Lichorah, where are Avraham Avinu's *talmidim*? The explanation is that anyone who wants to can become Avraham Avinu's *talmid* just by seeing what Avraham Avinu was like and by aspiring to be like him. That's how he can be his *talmid*! Because Avraham Avinu is teaching him! And even though he never spoke to Avraham Avinu, he knows how Avraham Avinu conducted himself and he knows his Torah, and he acts in the same manner. And then he attains Avraham Avinu's nature and characteristics, a personality of *ahavas chesed*, just as Avraham Avinu had. Avraham Avinu attained the greatest *madreigah* of *chesed*; there's no higher *madreigah* in *chesed*. And Klal Yisrael inherited this *madreigah* from Avraham Avinu.

And *baruch Hashem*, there are people with *ahavas chesed* among us; some of them aren't even Torah and mitzvah observant, but they have good *middos*. And then, from the *koach* of their good *middos*, they become *baalei teshuvah*. I saw in the Malbim that in the days preceding Mashiach, there will be tremendous levels of *ahavas chesed* and in that *zechus*, people will do *teshuvah* and the *geulah* will come.

Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu, How fortunate we are, how good is our portion, that we've come to hear these things. Despite the heat [the room was crowded and hot] and difficulties, people put in effort for *divrei Torah*, to learn and know what our Torah obligations are and what are our benefits. And this is the *ahavas haTorah* and the *kedushah* of the *neshamah* of Klal Yisrael — *Yisrael kedoshim heim*, Klal Yisrael is sacred. And we should be happy about this; there is no one more fortunate than us. Are any non-Jews as fortunate? Do the *goyim* experience this joy and pleasure? It's not possible. And about this we say: "לפיכך אנחנו חייבים, להודות להלל ולשבח ולפאר ולברך, Therefore, we are obligated to thank, laud, praise, glorify and bless." *Ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu u'mah na'im goraleinu*, How fortunate we are; how good is our portion, and how pleasant is our lot!

And let us hope that in the merit of being engaged in Torah and *maasim tovim* now, we will be saved from *chevlei Mashiach*. And we are presently in the period of *ikvesa d'Meshicha* without the *chevlei Mashiach*. *B'ezeras Hashem*, may we soon merit the revelation and arrival of Mashiach!

צ"בעניינא דינאמא"א

When the Gedolim Took a Trip to Relax

It's known that many *gedolim* would travel to take a vacation, such as Rav Baruch Ber, Rav Shimon, and many others, but they did not have *hesich hadaas* from Torah. They spoke in learning there too. The Brisker Rav would also travel to one of these vacation areas because he needed to recuperate in a place with good air for health reasons. So the *gedolim* would meet at these vacation places and speak in learning.

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There were *gedolim* who would travel to a resort area to recoup their strength. Over the *zman* they would exert themselves very much in learning, down to their last ounce of strength, and they became weak. So they would travel during *bein hazmanim* to rest from the exertion. But they didn't stop learning in the resort town either; they just learned Torah in a less pressured manner. They didn't learn with such tremendous *amkus* in order to come up with *chiddushim*, as they did during the *zman*. Sometimes, *bachurim* would come as well and they'd enjoy speaking in learning. This way they would be engaged in Torah there as well, but just with less effort than during the *zman*, and without the pressure and commitment to saying *shiurim*, which they had all year.

### Talking in Limud in the Dat'che

What did the *gedolei hador* do when they went to a *dat'che*? They would talk in learning! As the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 119:97), "All day long it is my conversation." Torah is a conversation, because it's interesting, and it's enticing, and it's also an obligation, which is not hard. *Lichorah*, how is it possible for Torah to be my conversation "all day long"? After all, one also needs minimal [mundane] conversation, as we know that the Gra says a person needs "*mi'ut sichah*" of *devarim beteilim*.

However, the first half of that same *pasuk* is "מה אהבתי תורתך", How I loved Your Torah." When there is *ahavas Torah*, and sweetness of Torah, then the Torah itself is like a "conversation" — "it is my conversation" — and one fulfills the dictum of having "*mi'ut sichah*" through actual *divrei Torah*. One does not feel that it's an effort at all. *Adaraba*, it's interesting, and something that's interesting is not hard — and you can speak about it all day long! [The Malbim writes in *Tehillim*: "How I loved Your Torah..." So much so that it is my conversation all day long — even conversations that I don't initiate, and my mundane conversations as well, are only in Torah."]

### When Talmidei Chachamim Meet, They Speak in Torah

Even when you travel to another location, engage in *divrei Torah*. When two *talmidei chachamim* meet, they speak in *limud*, as Chazal say (*Avos* 3:2), "Two who sit together and words of Torah are between them..." I once heard a *diyuk* on the *mishnah* that the *divrei Torah* must be "between them." If each of them is engaged in Torah by himself, it's not called "between them." It is necessary to have *dibbuk chaverim*, to speak in learning with each other. The *divrei Torah* should be *beinihem*, "between them."

### Rav Shlomo Eiger's Relaxation

There's a *teshuvah* from Rav Shlomo Eiger (printed in *Shu"t Rabbi Akiva Eiger*, the first *chelek*, *siman* 221). He writes that for a certain time, he experienced disturbances in his learning. He had a hard time concentrating, and he needed to rest and learn with less intensity. That was when he reviewed the entire Rif and Nimukei Yosef in *Maseches Yevamos*, and he came up with many *chiddushei Torah*. He included some of them in a long letter he wrote to his father (in the next *teshuvah*, Rav Akiva Eiger answered his letter). And all this happened at a time that he needed to rest; this was his relaxation!

### Rav E. Y. Finkel Reviews All Seder Moed

Rav Simcha Kaplan told me that when Rav E.Y. Finkel, *rosh yeshivah* of Mir, traveled to a *dat'che* in Marienbad for a few weeks, he managed to learn all of *Seder Moed*.

### Their Yiras Shamayim Was B'Shleimus

For many generations already, whenever *gedolei Torah* would travel to a *dat'che*, they would continue learning Torah while on "vacation." They had no *hesich hadaas* or *prikas ol*, and their *yiras Shamayim* was *b'shleimus* as well. They behaved just as the Rema writes (*Orach Chaim siman* 1), "שוייתי השם לנגדי תמיד הוא כלל גדול בתורה ובמעלות הצדיקים וכו'", 'I place Hashem before me always' is a fundamental principle in the Torah and in the attributes of the righteous ones...." This must continue even during *bein hazmanim*.

(Excerpted from *Kuntres Penini Chizuk al Bein HaZmanim*)

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