

CHAZAK!

Background

Rashi explains that “*derech erez*” refers to one’s occupation. Whether someone is a merchant, a craftsman, or a soldier, pursuing an occupation requires constant motivation, reinforcement, and new inspiration. Rashi also seems to be adding that not only do these areas require fortification, but “a man should constantly strengthen himself with all of his energy,” implying that regularly motivating oneself needs to be an ongoing and almost constant endeavour.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות
דף לב/ב

תנו רבנן ארבעה צריכין
חזוק ואלו הן תורה
ומעשים טובים תפלה
ודרך ארץ

(Braisah) *Our Rabbis taught us, four matters require strengthening, and they are: Torah study, good deeds, prayer, derech erez*

רש"י ברכות דף לב/ב

צריכין חזוק - שיתחזק
אדם בהם תמיד בכל כחו

דרך ארץ - אם אומן
הוא לאומנתו, אם סוחר
הוא לסחורתו, אם איש
מלחמה הוא למלחמתו

require strengthening –
A man should constantly strengthen himself with all of his energy.

derech erez – *If he is a craftsman, to his craft. If he is a merchant, to his commerce. And if he is a soldier, to the ways of war.*

Questions

The first three items listed in the *braisah* – **Torah study, good deeds** and **prayer** – are matters that we would expect require strengthening. After all, there is little reward in this world for doing any of them, and there is much resistance against doing them. But earning a living is something that is necessary for survival; man is very motivated to make a living. There is no *yetzer harah* (evil inclination) against earning money. There are no natural barriers that have to be overcome. So why is *derech erez* listed amongst the four things that require “strengthening?”