

Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חזוק (ברכות לב:) - שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כחו (רש"י)

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Torah's Influence Continues Past Shavuos

We just celebrated Shavuos, *Zman Matan Toraseinu*, a short time ago. We already discussed that *Zman Matan Toraseinu* means it is a time when the *hashpa'ah* of Torah is especially present — a person can attain success in Torah on Shavuos. Of course, this depends on whether or not the person is *oseik* in Torah. If he isn't, it's not possible for him to accept the *hashpa'ah*. One who is involved in Torah will merit, on Shavuos, to a greater *hashpa'ah* of Torah than during the rest of the year.

Even when Shavuos is over, the *hashpa'ah* still remains — this is due to the *tashlumin*, “make up *korbanos*” of the Yom Tov, which can be sacrificed for the next six days. (There are no *tashlumin* for *korbanos tzibbur*, like the Mussaf or Tamid offerings. Once the time for that *korban* has passed, the *korban* is not relevant anymore. It's like we say in the Shabbos prayers: ...*olas Shabbos b'Shabbato*, “the *olah* of Shabbos on that specific Shabbos” — and not on any other Shabbos. There are *tashlumin* for *korbanos* sacrificed by an individual, such as *olas re'eiyah* and *shalmei chagigah*. Similar to Pesach, when *tashlumin* can be brought throughout Yom Tov, and Sukkos, when *tashlumin* may be brought over the entire Yom Tov and Shemini Atzeres). There are seven days of *tashlumin* for Shavuos too — on Shavuos itself and on the six subsequent days.

This is why we do not recite Tachanun during these days, as the *Mishnah Berurah* states (131:36), “In some places, it is customary not to fall on one's face during the six days following Shavuos because there were *tashlumin* for Shavuos *korbanos* that whole week.” The six days following Shavuos were seen as a continuation of Shavuos — aside from the fact that there is no prohibition against doing *melachah*. Regarding *korbanos*, however, these days are like Shavuos.

The same is true regarding Torah. There is currently a *hashpa'ah* of Torah; the *hashpa'ah* of “*Zman Matan Toraseinu*” continues. Just as the actual day of Shavuos has an influence of success in Torah when someone learns, during these specific days as well, if someone strengthens himself and is *oseik* in Torah to the best of his ability, he will merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* for success in Torah throughout the year.

When there's *siyatta d'Shemaya*, the obligation is greater as well.

The Magnitude of the Obligation to Learn Torah All Year Round

Rabbeinu Yonah actually writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:17) that “the punishment for a person who refrains from performing a mitzvah is commensurate with the magnitude of that mitzvah.” He cites the mitzvos of *korban Pesach* and *bris milah* as proof. If a person does not sacrifice the *korban Pesach* or fails to perform a *bris milah* — which is a *shev v'al ta'aseh*, simply refraining from taking action — he is punished with *kareis*. All other sins punished with *kareis* are sins that involve an action: desecrating Shabbos, *avodah zarah*, illicit relationships. Without an action, there is no *kareis*; but when it comes to Pesach and *milah*, there is *kareis* even without performing an act, since these mitzvos are very important. Failing to carry them out is grave indeed, even though no action is committed.

The same is true regarding *esek haTorah* — the punishment of *bittul Torah* is *kareis*. On the *pasuk*, “For he has despised the word of Hashem,” Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 99a) that this is referring to one who has the ability to learn Torah, but does not do so. The end of the *pasuk* states: “that soul shall surely be cut off (*kareis*).” A person who could learn Torah but does not (see *Nefesh HaChaim* 4:24), even though it is a *shev v'al ta'aseh*, is punished very severely, *Rachmana litzlan*.

Since *esek haTorah* is extremely important — Torah is Hashem's words, and Torah study is equal to all other mitzvos (*Pe'ah* 1:1) — *esek haTorah* sanctifies a person more than all other mitzvos and good deeds. They said (*Avos* 6:1), “Whoever is involved in Torah for its own sake merits many things.” “Many things” means hidden things about which we have no concept of, aside from whatever is written about them explicitly. They also said that Torah learning “makes him greater and raises him up higher than [does] all deeds.” The *Ruach Chaim* explains: Torah is even greater than good deeds. This shows that ***esek haTorah* brings man to a greater level than all other mitzvos or *maasim tovim* he performs.**

Therefore, the reward for Torah study is extremely great, and so is the converse. Throughout the year, if one does not learn Torah and belittles Torah it is a very grave sin.

Because Torah Is So Sweet, the Obligation Is Greater

This is especially true since learning Torah is so pleasant and interesting, and is sweeter than honey. Each person must learn as much as he is able, learning *inyanim* that interest him and entice him. There are many parts to Torah: halachah, Aggadah, Gemara, Mishnayos, Midrashim. Each person should choose what interests him, after all, it is interesting and sweet to him. Since it is so interesting and sweet, if he does not become involved in it, the sin is more serious. After all, it is so easy to fulfill!

In Rav Yisrael Salanter's letters (*Ohr Yisrael* 7-8), he quotes the Gemara (*Menachos* 43b): "The punishment of the 'white' is greater than the punishment connected to 'techeiles'." White tzitzis exist and *techeiles* (a blue colored strand woven with the *tzitzis*) exists; one who does not wear white *tzitzis* receives a much stronger punishment than one who doesn't wear *techeiles*. It's hard to find *techeiles* and it's very costly. Since it's difficult to carry out this mitzvah, the sin is not as severe. However, it's quite easy to procure white tzitzis, so if someone refrains from wearing them, his sin is graver. So it is with everything: if it's easy to fulfill, the punishment for failing to do is very great.

Siyatta D'Shemaya Attained on Shavuos

During the six days following Shavuos, the days of *tashlumin*, the *hashpa'ah* of Shavuos still lingers, and people experience *siyatta d'Shemaya* in their learning — after all, the obligation is greater than during the rest of the year! Throughout the year, there is an obligation to learn Torah, but it's easier then and there's *siyatta d'Shemaya*. The easier something is, the more grave the sin if a person fails to fulfill it.

So on the one hand, *esek haTorah* comes along with tremendous *sechar*, but on the other hand, the punishment is graver. When there's extra *siyatta d'Shemaya*, the obligation is greater.

We need *siyatta d'Shemaya* for everything, and one merits it through *zechuyos*, as Chazal say (*Makkos* 10b): A person is led on the path he wants to tread; or (*Yoma* 38b): One who comes to be purified is helped. The more a person wants to be purified, the more *siyatta d'Shemaya* he receives to attain his goal.

Daven for *Siyatta d'Shemaya* in Spiritual Matters

Tefillah is another way to merit *siyatta d'Shemaya*. Through davening, one can merit many things, and can also be an influence on others by davening for them.

I heard from my rebbi HaGaon Rav E.E. Dessler, in the name of Rav Yisrael Salanter, that it is tried and true that davening for one's success in *ruchniyus* is effective. A person's success in Torah depends on his *tefillah*. It is

actually a Gemara (*Niddah* 70b): "What should man do to become smart? He should increase *yeshivah* (sitting and learning) and beg for mercy." Yes, one must beg for mercy.

Since it is tried and true that it is effective to daven for success in *ruchniyus* matters, Rav Yisrael Salanter would ask his *talmidim* to daven for him in a minyan. Whenever there would be a minyan, they would daven for his success in *ruchniyus*.

Now, we are finally davening together, we're part of a *tzibbur*. At the appropriate sections in the *tefillah*, a person can concentrate on his own personal needs. For example, he can think about himself and others — the request is in plural; he can daven for Klal Yisrael. When a person truly concentrates, he will merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* for whatever he's davening for, provided that it is from the bottom of his heart. As Rav Yisrael Salanter said, It is tried and true that it is effective.

This is so relevant. One can concentrate in the blessing of "Atah chonein l'adam da'as," and in the *brachos* of *Hashiveinu* and *Selach lanu* — where the requests are in plural, for all Klal Yisrael. And Chazal say (*Bava Kama* 92a), "Whoever davens for his friend and he needs the same thing, he is answered first." In the *zechus* of davening for others, he merits the salvation he needed and is answered first. This is what *tefillah* is about.

Of course, *tefillah* requires concentration, it is not simple, but the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (chap. 19): "Even though it is against one's nature to feel that he is standing in front of the king, in any case, anyone with proper intelligence will be able to set the truth of the matter in his heart: how does he come and literally have a give-and-take with Hashem Yisbarach? How does he plead before Him and make requests of Him? And Hashem Yisbarach is listening to him, just as a friend speaks to his friend, and his friend listens to him." Anyone who has a little intelligence, if it's *seichel yashar*, it's not hard to feel that he is standing in front of the King and speaking with Him, just as one speaks with a friend. This is a high level, it isn't simple, but there are *baalei madreigah*.

One Who Comes to Be Purified — Through *Mussar*

"One who comes to be purified" is accomplished through learning *mussar*. Someone who learns *mussar* is called "*haba l'taheir*." After all, why is he learning *mussar*? Because he wants to do what's written there, to increase *yiras Shamayim*.

We've already discussed that *yiras Shamayim* is a mitzvah itself, as well as a tool to help a person stay away from sin. There are a plethora of levels in *yiras Shamayim* — there's *yiras Shamayim* and *yiras cheit*. The Gemara in *Kesuvos* (103b) states that before Rabbeinu HaKadosh passed away, he wanted to appoint

his successor. He had two sons, one was greater in Torah and the other in *yiras cheit*. He appointed the son who was greater in *yiras cheit* as his successor; he would be the leader of the generation due to his greatness in *yiras cheit*. The *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap. 24) explains what it means to have *yiras cheit*; see there.

As mentioned, there are many levels of *yiras cheit*, and **the way to attain them is by becoming involved in this matter. How? By learning *mussar*!**

Rav Shteinman *zt"l* once spoke about the impact that learning *Mesillas Yesharim* can have on a person. Even if it's just for five minutes a day, if it's on a regular basis, the effect is unfathomable, what a great effect this can have. Learning without pressure, choosing something interesting to you, calmly — it has an influence. I already told you about many family men who told me that their lives changed drastically due to learning *mussar*. Their homes are now pleasant places to be. This is the advantage of *mussar*.

***Mussar* Is a Necessity Nowadays**

Maran the Chafetz Chaim wrote (*Beis Yisrael*, chap. 9), “It is fitting and necessary to set times in all *yeshivos* for daily *mussar* study. I've spoken to *gedolim* who previously had been against learning *mussar* in *yeshivos*, but now everyone has admitted that nowadays, learning *mussar* is very necessary. Without *mussar* study, we cannot be assured that *Toras Hashem* and *yiras Shamayim* will continue to exist. *Yeshivah* students and *baalei batim* alike must designate a certain time to learn *mussar* daily.”

The current *matzav* is that we cannot manage without *mussar*. It has become accepted, and all *yeshivos* have a set time for *mussar*, a half-hour a day. A number of years ago the question arose whether all *bachurim* should learn *mussar* at the same time, or whether it was okay for each person to learn at a time good for him. But the present reality, writes the Chafetz Chaim, is that everyone admits that we need a fixed *seder* for *mussar*. There is no other option.

A story is told about Maran HaGaon Rav Baruch Ber [Leibowitz] *zt"l* (I don't know the exact details), that someone once convinced him to learn *mussar*. So he did. Afterward, Rav Baruch Ber said that he cannot learn *mussar*, because that night he simply could not sleep!

Well, Rav Baruch Ber really did not need to learn *mussar* because he lived with *mussar* constantly, he lived with *emunah* all the time. My father *zt"l*, who learned under Rav Baruch Ber in Slabodka, told me that when Rav Baruch Ber made a *berachah* — during *Havdalah* or *Kiddush* — before he recited the words “*Baruch Atah*” he was so terrified he couldn't bring himself to utter those words! If someone on such a level

of *yiras Shamayim* would start learning *mussar*, it would really be too much, and he does not need it. He lives with *mussar* all the time, with unfathomable levels of *yiras Shamayim* and *deveikus baTorah*. But we need it.

Practically speaking, we've already said that we must strengthen ourselves in *esek haTorah*, especially during the *tashlumin* days after *Shavuos*, when it is possible to have greater success.

Learning *mussar* is another way to strengthen ourselves, as it prompts a person grow constantly — adding another level day after day. *Sifrei mussar* leads to constant improvement. It's a *maalah* that we have these opportunities to have success in *ruchniyus*.

One can strengthen himself through *tefillah* as well, as Rav Yisrael Salanter said, “It is tried and true that it is effective.” One can add his own personal requests while davening, especially at the end of *Shemoneh Esrei* in “*Elokai Netzor*,” before reciting “*Yehiyu l'ratzon*.” That's the best place to add personal *tefillas*. I heard in the name of Maran HaGaon Rav Isser Zalmen [Meltzer] *zt"l* that it's preferable to daven for *cholim* at the end of davening, and not in “*Refa'einu*.” [See *Mishnah Berurah* 122, citing the *Chayei Adam*: It is better to designate the recital of prayers for all one's necessary matters until after he concludes the entire *Shemoneh Esrei*, than to pray for them in the *berachah* of “*Shome'a Tefillah*,” so that when he must respond to *Kaddish* and *Kedushah* he will be permitted to so — after reciting “*Yehiyu l'ratzon*,” according to all opinions.]

When a person learns Torah, davens, and learns *mussar*, this provides him with *hatzlachah* — one can merit tremendous *hatzlachah*. *Yehi ratzon* that we are *zocheh*!

The *Maalah* of Curiosity and Passion for Torah

A *Sichah* Delivered on Erev *Shavuos*
to the *talmidim* of *Orchos Torah Yeshivah*

Shavuos is *Zman Matan Toraseinu*, as we say in davening: “And give us this day of the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuos*, *Zman Matan Toraseinu*...” We are speaking about the present: “*this* day of the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuos*,” which is *Zman Matan Toraseinu*. You might ask: *Matan Torah* happened long ago, so why is the *Yom Tov* still called *Zman Matan Toraseinu* in our times?

The explanation is as follows: the *sefarim* tell us that throughout history, whenever *Bnei Yisrael* reached a certain *madreigah* at a specific time, this *hashpa'ah* returns to the world every year at that time, and it's up for the taking. Just as *Matan Torah* took place on 6 *Sivan*, and *Bnei Yisrael* merited a *hashpa'ah* of Torah, so too, every year on *Shavuos*, the *hashpa'ah* of Torah returns. Of course, receiving this *hashpa'ah* is

individual and depends on how prepared the person has made himself to receive it, how much he deserves to receive, and how many *zechuyos* he has. The level of *siyatta d'Shemaya* and *hashpa'ah* of Torah that he receives is based on his level of *zechuyos*.

At Matan Torah, all Klal Yisrael said, *Naaseh v'nishma* — first we will do and then we'll hear what our responsibilities are. If they would have said, "*Nishma v'naaseh*," they would have been saying that the main thing is "doing," action, and the "hearing" is just a preparatory step toward knowing what to do. But they said just the opposite: first *Naaseh*, "We will do," and then *nishma*, "we will hear." This means that "doing" is one thing, and "hearing" is a completely different clause, *nishma!* First of all, we'll do; we're willing to do whatever Hashem commands us to do, and we're also going to hear — we want to hear *divrei Torah!* We want to know the Torah and be *oseik baTorah!* And when there is such passion for Torah — commensurate with the level of preparation and passion that each one of us has for Torah — he will receive his *hashpa'ah* of Torah.

During Matan Torah, Klal Yisrael had a deep, overwhelming passion for Torah, as is written in the *Sefer HaChinuch* (Mitzvah 306) about the essence of Sefiras HaOmer. They waited fifty days and counted the days, and they were so overjoyed with every day that passed, as it brought them closer to Kabbalas HaTorah.

It was through this deep passion and yearning for Torah that they merited receiving the Torah. So too in our days: **Every single person will receive *siyatta d'Shemaya* for success in Torah based on the degree of his passion and desire for Torah.**

Of course, it also depends on how much a person is actively engrossed in Torah, how much does he learn, how often does he waste time, and how much does Torah interest him. It all depends on a person's *deveikus baTorah*, attachment to Torah. It is extremely easy to attain *deveikus baTorah* because Torah learning is sweet and interesting, as Rashi writes on the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 6:6), "And these words that I command you today" — The Torah is like a new decree just issued by the king, and everyone is eager to learn about the new rule, because curiosity is a natural impulse, so they take interest in it. Just like there's a curiosity to read newspapers — people are interested in knowing what's happening in the big world. But we must harness our natural curiosity for Torah learning!

The level of curiosity and passion one has for Torah is his preparation for Torah. And through it, he will be *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya* for success in Torah. *Baruch Hashem*, we are all *bnei Torah* and are engrossed in Torah all the time. *B'ezras Hashem* may we be *zocheh* to success in Torah all year long.

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