

Darkei HaChizuk

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

A Sichah from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita*, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez • Parashas Shoftim 5780

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The Sadigura Rebbe, זי"ל

The Sadigura Rebbe was *niftar* today [21 Av, the day this *sichah* was given – ed.]. He learned in our yeshivah and was a greatly respected and *chashuve* person. He had a very good influence on the *tzibbur*. His passing is a great loss to the *tzibbur*; now his *hashpa'ah* is lacking.

Physical Acts *L'shem Shamayim*

We learn in *Avos* (1:12): “And all your deeds shall be *l'shem Shamayim*, for the sake of Heaven.” This means that whatever a person does, even acts that aren't mitzvos, should be *l'shem Shamayim*. Of course, when it comes to mitzvos, it's self-understood that they must be done *l'shem Shamayim*; after all, these are mitzvos and they should be performed for the sake of the mitzvah, not for honor or the like. But in this case, the *mishnah* is discussing simple daily acts which are not necessarily mitzvos, such as physical needs like eating, drinking, and sleeping. These actions, too, should be performed *l'shem Shamayim*.

Actually, eating is a mitzvah, because a person needs to eat — if he doesn't eat, he won't have strength, and there are 613 mitzvos he must fulfill. If he's weak, he won't be able to perform them, or his performance will be compromised; it won't be *b'shleimus*. It turns out that his eating is necessary for his *Taryag mitzvos*.

The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Deios* 3:3): “It turns out that one who always follows this path is constantly serving Hashem... Because no matter what he does, when fulfilling his needs, he has a single intention: that his body be healthy to serve Hashem. Even while he sleeps, if he sleeps in order to rest his mind and his body so he will not fall ill — for he cannot serve Hashem if he's sick — it turns out that even his sleep is service of Hashem. This is what our Sages commanded when they said, “And all your deeds shall be *l'shem Shamayim*, for the sake of Heaven.”

Intent Transforms Actions to Mitzvos

When a person has *kavanah* to carry out all his physical acts *l'shem Shamayim*, then he is serving Hashem even as he sleeps. As the Rambam says, his

sleep is service of Hashem. After all, he could have chosen not to sleep, and instead be involved in other, more interesting, matters. But he goes to sleep because he knows that if he does not sleep now, he'll be tired tomorrow, and all his *avodas Hashem* will not be *b'shleimus*. It turns out that he needs to sleep for *avodas Hashem*. The same is true regarding all physical needs, like eating and drinking. If he has in mind to do so *l'shem Shamayim*, it is considered *avodas Hashem*.

But if he carries out these physical acts without thought or *kavanah*, they are not considered *avodas Hashem*. Even though they really are necessary for *avodas Hashem*, since he does not think about it, and all he's thinking about is that he wants to eat to maintain his health, or to satisfy his desires, it is not a mitzvah at all. When he has intention to eat to facilitate his *avodas Hashem*, so that he'll have *koach* to serve Hashem, then his eating is a mitzvah and *avodas Hashem*.

Therefore, the amount of food he eats is also a factor — if he eats just enough to be healthy. If he eats more than necessary, or if he wants more tasteful food, well, he can eat and be healthy even without that. This is simply *taavah*, *taavas Olam HaZeh*, and it is not *l'shem Shamayim*. It's the yetzer hara of *gashmiyus* and that is not a mitzvah.

However, if he needs this for his *yishuv hadaas*, a calm state of mind, meaning, if the food doesn't taste good, he'll be lacking *yishuv hadaas*, then this is for *avodas Hashem*, for a person needs *yishuv hadaas*. The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (Chapter 1): “Worldly pleasures are only fitting when used to assist man, so that he should attain *nachas ruach* and *yishuv hadaas* in order to direct his heart to the tasks incumbent upon him.”

In this manner, if a person is involved in his physical needs just as much as is necessary, and no more, and he has in mind that it is only so that he can fulfill the *Taryag mitzvos*, then all his actions are mitzvos and *avodas Hashem*, for he is performing them *l'shem Shamayim*, to serve Hashem.

In *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 38:8)* it states: “Scribes who write *tefillin* and *mezuzos*, them, their distributors, and their distributors’ distributors, and all those who are involved in the work of Heaven, are exempt from laying *tefillin* all day long, except for the time of *Krias Shema* and *tefillah*.” The Rema adds, “If they had to work during the time of *Krias Shema* and *tefillah*, then they are exempt from *Krias Shema*, *tefillah*, and *tefillin*.”

That is, *sofrim* who write *sifrei Torah*, *tefillin*, and *mezuzos*, as well as those who sell *tashmishei kedushah*, are involved in Heavenly work. Even though they benefit and earn a living from it, they are involved in a *mitzvah*, and those who are involved in one *mitzvah* are exempt from other *mitzvos*.

The *Mishnah Berurah (seif katan 24)* writes in the name of the *Magen Avraham* that this is only true if their intention is to perform a *mitzvah*. Although they do need to make a living, and they are writing or selling *tashmishei kedushah* in order to earn money, they specifically chose this profession since it is a *mitzvah*, and the *mitzvah* is what is most important to them. After all, they could have chosen any other job, but they chose this — for the *mitzvah*! And as such, they are considered “those who are involved in a *mitzvah* are exempt from another *mitzvah*.” But if a person does this without thinking about doing a *mitzvah*, and he only does it because he wants to, it is not considered that he is involved in a *mitzvah*.

It turns out **that the very same act can be considered being involved in a mitzvah or not, and it all depends on the intention. If he has kavanah to do a mitzvah, it is an act of mitzvah and is considered “osek b’mitzvah,” but if he does not have kavanah, it is not a mitzvah.**

Guarding One’s Health *l’Shem Mitzvah*

Now we are in the middle of the corona pandemic, and everyone must be careful about himself and others — everyone must take care to stay healthy and not to harm others. If he is careful not to harm others, it’s *pashut* that this is really a *mitzvah* — he cares about others and has *rachmanus* on them that they shouldn’t get infected and they shouldn’t suffer from it. This is like *hashavas aveidah*, such as when a person sees water about to flood his friend’s field and he blocks the water (*Bava Metzia 31a*). Since he is careful not to harm others, it’s really a *mitzvah*.

If he is careful for himself, so that he will stay healthy, it depends on his *kavanah* — why does he want to be healthy? Does he want to be healthy just for health’s sake, or does he want to be healthy so he

can fulfill the *mitzvos*? If it is the latter, then he is considered “involved in a *mitzvah*.” Even without this intention, being careful about one’s health is an obligation; a person must watch his health. But the *kavanah*, intent, makes all the difference: does he just want to be healthy or does he intend on watching his health *l’shem mitzvah*.*

The Gemara (*Pesachim 8a*) teaches us that if someone says, “[I give] this coin to *tzedakah* so that my son will live, or so that I will merit *Olam HaBa*,” he is a complete *tzaddik*. This is because both intentions are good, kosher intentions, even though this isn’t *shleimus*, the optimum intention. Giving *tzedakah* due to his love of the *mitzvah* is considered *shleimus*, but even if he gives *tzedakah* so that he will receive *Olam HaBa* or that his son will live, he is still considered a complete *tzaddik*.

Why is this so? Because *Olam HaBa* is a good thing, and he really needs *Olam HaBa*. Likewise, for his son to live is *pikuach nefesh*, and he is obligated to do whatever he can so that his son will live. Giving *tzedakah* for this purpose is a wonderful thing and it’s also called *l’shem Shamayim*. (See the *Beis HaLevi, Parashas Terumah*: “For when a believing Jew gives *tzedakah* so that his son will live, this is *retzon Hashem*, [for Hashem wants] that those who believe in Him should live and should have a good life. It turns out that his intention is also a *mitzvah*.”) He is obligated to do so, he must be concerned and take care that others live, whether they are his sons, or even if they aren’t his sons. There is an obligation, a *chiyuv*, of *pikuach nefesh*, and it is a *mitzvah*!

So in any case, when one is involved in physical needs, his intention is what counts. If he has no specific intention, there is no *maalah*. But if he has *kavanah l’shem Shamayim*, this is an act of a *mitzvah*. And this the meaning of: “*maasim hateluyim b’kavanah*,” actions that are dependent on intent.

Mitzvos That Are Dependent on the Heart

Then there are other things that require intent, but are not actions at all. For example, the *Biur Halachah, siman aleph* quotes the *Sefer HaChinuch*, who discusses the Six Constant *Mitzvos*, which are dependent on the heart. They are matters of *emunah*, such as to believe in Hashem’s reality, in *yetzias*

* The Rambam writes in the beginning of *Hilchos Deios*: “One who follows medical conventions, if he makes sure that his body and all his limbs are healthy... this is not a good approach. Rather, he should make sure his body is healthy and strong **so that his nefesh will be well-kept to focus on knowledge of Hashem.**” See also *Shemoneh Perakim LaRambam*, Chapter 5.

Mitzrayim, in Creation, and other matters of *emunah* which are rooted in the heart.

These thoughts are mitzvos, and one receives great reward for them, as the *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar HaBitachon*, Chapter 4) writes: Since mitzvos that include actions are revealed, the reward for them is revealed as well, but for mitzvos that involve thought, which is hidden, the reward is also hidden. It is a special reward awaiting us in Olam HaBa, and we have no inkling of what it is, as the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* states (31:20): How great is Your goodness that You've hidden for those who fear You." Because fear is something private, hidden inside one's heart, so the reward is also hidden: How great is Your goodness that You've hidden — for those who fear You!

The Power of *Tefillah* in Thought

There is a concept of prayer in thought, when a person can daven in his heart and ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu for his needs, for Hashem is aware of our thoughts and listens to our *tefillos* even if they aren't expressed verbally. I've already told the story about someone who merited *siyatta d'Shemaya* by davening in his thoughts.

After telling this story, I received feedback that this concept is discussed clearly in *Midrash Tehillim*, Chapter 4: "HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael, 'I told you that when you daven, pray in the *beis knesses* in your city. If you cannot... think in your heart, as it states: Say it in your hearts.'" (See further in *Midrash Tanchuma Emor* 16.)

Of course, for obligatory *tefillos*, one will not fulfill his obligation by thinking a prayer. One must daven verbally — he must hear with his own ears, or mouth the words (see *Orach Chaim siman* 101), but in addition to obligatory *tefillos*, davening in thought, in one's heart, is also important. HaKadosh Baruch Hu hears and accepts *tefillah she'balev* as well.

It is possible that *tefillah she'balev* is more effective than verbal prayer, if the verbal prayer is without heartfelt feelings, while the *tefillah she'balev*, which is wordless, is heartfelt! This is a greater *zechus*, and this type of *tefillah* can be more beneficial.

One can accrue many *zechuyos* by davening silently in his heart, especially about spiritual matters. Davening does not always work for material matters,

as there is a limit to materialism. But there is no limit or boundary to spirituality. Rav Yisrael Salanter said that it is tried and true that *tefillah* for *ruchniyus* always helps.

Silently Expressing Gratitude for Heavenly *Chassadim*

There are other things one can merit through thought, such as expressing gratitude for past occurrences. Every person experiences Hashem's *chassadim* throughout his life, and he has to thank Hashem for them. Expressing gratitude in one's heart is also considered saying thank-you. Whether it's for the past or present, there is a lot to be grateful for. And one needs to daven for the future as well.

This is a true story. A respected man suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized. The doctors forbade him from getting out of bed. He was so weak, he could barely talk, but he could talk a little, quietly. So he started talking and thinking about the Heavenly *chassadim* he experienced throughout his life: he was successful in his children's *chinuch*, he performed many *maasim tovim*, and he expressed his thanks to Hashem for this.

This is one example of what a person can merit through thought. One can merit many things just by thinking, by thinking thoughts of *emunah*, thoughts of gratitude, of *tefillah*, or *yiras Shamayim*. This is what the *pasuk* is referring to: "How great is Your goodness that You've hidden for those who fear You." All spiritual *madreigos* depend on the heart, as is written (*Mishlei* 23:26): "My son, give Me your heart" — whatever the heart wants, whatever the heart thinks. Additionally, the Six Constant Mitzvos mentioned in the *Biur Halachah*, quoting the *Sefer HaChinuch*, are also mitzvos that depend on one's heart, and the reward for them is tremendous, as we mentioned, quoting the *Chovos HaLevavos*.

This is something that has no limit. A person can merit endless *zechuyos* with his heart, without speaking at all, by just thinking thoughts of *emunah*, thoughts of *divrei Torah*; through *deveikus* of thought one can merit many *zechuyos* just through thought! *Yehi ratzon* that we all merit attaining all these *madreigos*.

Rabbeinu's Address at the Grand Opening of Cheder "Darchei Yosher" in Ofakim

A *makom Torah* brings down an influence of *kedushah* on its surroundings, and especially so the *hevel pihem shel tinokos shel beis rabban*, Torah learning of young children, as their speech is without sin and is greater than the Torah of the Amoraim. The world exists because of *hevel pihem shel tinokos shel beis rabban*. In the times of Mordechai, during the decree of Haman, the young children's Torah learning saved Klal Yisrael from the decree. Therefore, this is a very good thing, and *b'ezras Hashem* there will be many more cheders, for everyone in Ofakim; everyone should send their sons to cheders.

Those who were involved in establishing this cheder are *mezakei harabbim*. Bringing merit to the public in Torah is a very great thing; all the good deeds that the public does belong to the *mezakeh*. When a child is taught *aleph-beis*, this is the foundation; without it, he cannot continue. All the Torah and *maasim tovim* of these children, and their children till the end of time, will be attributed to the merit of the first *mashpia*.

The *mashpia* also merits knowing the Torah that is learned due to his efforts. I've already told the story of someone who left over a *yerushah* to be used to support Torah. The money was used to buy *sefarim* shelves with *sefarim* for Ponevez Yeshivah. During that time, the yeshivah was learning *Maseches Gittin*. A while later, the deceased man appeared in a dream to the person who took care of buying the *sefarim* and shelves. He recited the *Rashba* in *Gittin* by heart. The person who dreamed the dream didn't remember the *Rashba's* words by heart word for word, and the *niftar* had never learned *Rashba*, but since a *Rashba* had been purchased from his *yerushah*, and *bachurim* learned it in his merit, he merited to learn it in the Heavenly yeshivah!

So too anyone who is an influence in Torah-related matters already has these *zechuyos* in his lifetime. The Torah that is learned due to his influence enters his *neshamah*. It's just that in this physical world we cannot see it. But once he passes away, it will be revealed in Olam HaBa. It was a special thing that they gave the *niftar* permission to appear to someone in a dream, so that we should know about this. This is the *maalah* of *zikkui harabbim*.

May the principals merit success in *zikkui harabbim*, and in the merit of *zikkui harabbim* there is *siyatta d'Shemaya*, as Chazal said (*Yoma 38b*): "One who comes to be purified is helped." If this is talking about a person who comes to purify himself, *kal v'chomer*, if someone comes to influence others, he has *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

We learn in *Avos* (2:2), "All those who labor with the community should labor with them *l'shem Shamayim* for the merit of their forefathers sustains them... And I credit you with tremendous reward as if you did it yourself." The Bartenura explains that "the merit of their forefathers" means that the community's *zechus avos* is what helps the *askanim* take care of community matters, and it's in this merit that they're successful. "And I credit you with tremendous reward as if you did it" means that even though the *askanim's* success is not in their own merit — they have *siyatta d'Shemaya* due to the community's merit — even so, Shamayim rewards them as if they had done it themselves, because they are acting *l'shem Shamayim*.

B'ezras Hashem, may there be success with *siyatta d'Shemaya* in meriting the public. May you have many *talmidim*, proper *talmidim* who will continue in the Torah's path and become *gedolei Torah*, *tzaddikim*, and men of good deeds. And this will have an influence on the entire city.

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the Kroll Family, Los Angeles
להצלחת בניהם ובנותיהם
בתורה וביראת שמים

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