

# Darkei HaChizuk

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

**A Sichah from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein shlita, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez – Yom Kippur 5774 #129**

## Standing on Trial

Anyone who understands that he is being judged now, during the month of Elul and the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, will seriously think about his situation. He must think if he indeed has enough merits to merit having a Kesivah v'Chasimah Tovah.

The Sharei Teshuvah (2:14) writes that one of the ways to repent is to have fear of this great trial that is happening during this time. He writes, "One who fears the word of Hashem will feel that his heart is panicking because of the fact that all of his actions are written down in a book. During this time (the judgment), Hashem will judge all of his actions, even what is hidden (from man), whether good or bad. A person is judged on Rosh Hashanah, and his sentence is signed on Yom Kippur. If a person would know that he is imminently going to be judged by a human judge he would panic, and focus on how to be acquitted in anyway possible. He would never even contemplate doing anything else during this time."

If we would have such trepidation before a human judge, how much more so should we be scared of a judgment by Hashem who knows every single action that we did throughout the past year! He is aware of all of our sins, whether they are active or passive. People commonly say Lashon Hara and Avak Lashon Hara, they do not daven with proper intent, and refrain from Torah study. There are many Torah obligations that people do not fulfill properly, due to lack of effort.

A person must make every effort to perform Mitzvos, as he is a servant of Hashem. The definition of the name "Adnus" is that Hashem is our Master and we are His servants. A servant must make every effort to serve his master. This is evident from the Halachah regarding an Eved Kenani. His master has the right to say, "You must work for me, and I will not feed you." In this case, the Even Kenani must beg for his food door to door. So too, there is no limit to the effort we must expend

while serving Hashem. We received these abilities from Hashem in order to serve Him.

If someone does not use all of his abilities to serve Hashem, why should Hashem give him another year of having these abilities? This is as the Sharei Teshuvah (1:10) states, "The Creator blew into my nostrils the soul of life, a wise heart, and good wisdom, in order that I should know and fear Him and rule over every aspect of my body (in His service)...If this is the reason that I was created, and I am doing the opposite, why should I continue to live?" In other words, if a person is involved in the physical world, and he is not fulfilling his primary purpose, why should he have the right to continue to live? The point of life is to increase the honor of Hashem, as the Mishnah (*Avos 6:11*) states that everything Hashem created was only in order to increase His honor. This means that it is in order that His bidding should be done.

Accordingly, a serious person who does not fool himself, and whose actions are based on Emunah in Hashem, is certainly not calm during these days of judgment. He is putting every effort into preparation for his trial. If he had a monetary court case in front of a judge; and certainly if there was a possibility of being incarcerated, he would make every effort to ensure that he would be acquitted in his case. This is true even if his life was never actually in danger. How much more so should we be worried about our upcoming trial, which is a matter of whether or not we will be granted life in this world and in the next world!

A serious person understands what we have said, and will try to prepare in any way possible to increase his merits, and repent for any sins he has. Rabeinu Yonah indeed made a list (*Sharei Teshuvah Shar 3*) of many Mitzvos and Aveiros that are commonly transgressed, in order for people to review this list and repent.

## The Main Parts of Repentance

The main parts of repentance are Charatah (regret), Viduy (confession), and Azivas Ha'Chet (not

repeating this sin). There are many levels of Charatah, which are based on how much regret a person has for performing this sin. However, the main part of repentance is no longer performing this sin. One must also confess his sins verbally. Indeed, every day in Shemonah Esreh we say, “Selach Lanu Avinu Ki Chatanu” – “Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned.” We say “us” as “Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh l’Zeh” – “All Jews are guarantors (i.e. responsible) for one another.”

The Mesilas Yesharim (*ch.4*) writes that complete repentance and regretting a sin are like permitting a vow. Just as a sage permits vows retroactively, so too complete repentance uproots a sin retroactively, and makes it as if he never committed this sin. However, it would seem that this only applies to uprooting a past sin. If someone refrains from doing a positive Mitzvah and then repents for not doing it, even though it is no longer considered that he sinned, it is possible that it is still not considered as if he indeed performed that positive Mitzvah.

This is because the Torah is composed of two hundred forty eight positive commandments that correspond to the limbs of the body, and three hundred sixty five negative commandments that correspond to a person’s sinews. This means that a person’s physical body corresponds to his spiritual body, which is made up of his adherence to these commandments. Every part of a person’s physical body is represented spiritually by one of the Mitzvos in the Torah. By fulfilling that Mitzvah, one is both spiritually and physically complete in that limb or sinew. Based on what we have said, if someone refrains from fulfilling a positive commandment, even if he repents, he has not gained fulfillment in that spiritual representative of his physical body.

The Gemara (*Kidushin 40a*) states, “Even if a person thought to do a Mitzvah and due to circumstances beyond his control was unable to perform that Mitzvah, it is considered as if he did it.” However, this is only when he wanted to do that Mitzvah. If he did not want to do this Mitzvah at the time, and this is why he did not do it, it is very possible that while he will not be punished for refraining from doing it since he repented, he is not spiritually fulfilled. Whether or not this is correct requires in depth study.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The Lev Eliyahu (*vol. 3, Mareches Ha’Teshuvah pg. 332*) quotes the Chafetz Chaim as saying that repentance cleans one’s spiritual clothing, but does not sew new buttons onto his clothing. This means that he indeed understands that the person is lacking because he did not fulfill the Mitzvah.

## Repenting for Bitul Torah

The greatest obligation upon a person is to study Torah. The Sharei Teshuvah (*3:14*) writes that just as the reward for Torah study is greater than the reward for any other Mitzvah, so too the punishment for not studying Torah is greater than the punishment for any other sin. Accordingly, we must start our repentance by repenting for Bitul Torah. We know there are times, such as Erev Shabbos and Shabbos, when people do not utilize their time properly to learn Torah. The Yezer Hara specifically tries to ensure that people do not learn on these holy days. There are Sefarim where it is written that a person receives one thousand times more reward for a Mitzvah done on Shabbos than for a similar Mitzvah done during the week. It is also apparent that Shabbos has more holiness from the fact that we have a Neshamah Yeseirah on Shabbos. This clearly indicates that our souls are holier on Shabbos than during the week, due to the holiness of Shabbos.

My Rebbi, Rav Dessler zt”l (*Michtav Mei’Eliyahu vol 1, pg. 72*) writes in the name of his Rebbi

---

Rav Yitzchak Maltzin (*in his footnotes to Even Shleimah, end of ch. 5*) similarly writes that even if a person does complete repentance out of fear of Hashem, he cannot fill the void that he has in his fulfillment of Mitzvos from when he was a sinner. He writes that he heard this from a great Torah scholar. However, if one repents out of love for Hashem, the Gemara (*Yoma 86a*) says that his sins become Mitzvos.

However, the Sefer Ha’Ikrim (*Mamar Revi’i, ch. 25*) writes that a person who completely repents indeed has a portion with Hashem, and is not merely considered not to have sinned. He suggests two possible reasons for this. It is possible that Hashem simply loves a person like this, and through His Love and Kindness this person will have a portion. Alternatively, it is possible that repentance is a greater Mitzvah than any other Mitzvah, as it leads directly to the purpose of the Mitzvos, which is establishing a relationship with Hashem.

The Sefer Akeidas Yitzchak (*Parshas Nitzavim*) similarly says that a person who repents is considered to have a complete portion in Olam Haba, despite his not having actually performed any Mitzvos. He supports this from the Gemara (*Avodah Zarah 17a*) that says regarding an evildoer named Elazar, who completely repented until he died, that a Heavenly voice rang out and said, “Rabbi Elazar is invited to Olam Haba.” Rebbi remarked: “There are those that acquire their world in one instant...and not only that, they are called Rebbi (as the Heavenly voice called this person “Rebbi” Elazar).” The Akeidas Yitzchak states that Rebbi meant that not only are they forgiven from all of their sins for this small amount of repentance, but they are credited as if they exerted much effort and learned in depth many topics in Torah. This is why this person who repented was called “Rebbi.”

that not only can one feel the Neshamah Yeseirah on Shabbos; it actually changes the appearance of his face on Shabbos. This is as the Medrash (*Bereishis Rabah 11:2*) states that one cannot compare a person's countenance during the week to his countenance on Shabbos. My Rebbe even pointed out to me certain people in our shul whose faces looked different on Shabbos than during the week. I heard from a renowned Talmid Chacham that when he once was upset during the week, his young daughter remarked, "Aba, I want you to have your Shabbos face!" Even this young girl realized the difference between her father's face on Shabbos and the rest of the week.

We therefore must be careful to utilize our time for Torah study on Erev Shabbos and on Shabbos. It is known that in Yeshivah Mir they used to have special diligence in learning on Shabbos. I also heard of a special Rebbe for children who inspired his class to learn eighteen hours over each Erev Shabbos and Shabbos (combined). This in fact is not difficult, as how much time do the Tefilos, Zemiros, and meals take? If during a regular Yeshivah day boys learn an average of nine hours, why can't they do this on Erev Shabbos and Shabbos as well?

### **Fixing Midos**

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah 7:3*) writes, "Don't say that repentance is only for active sins...just as a person must repent for such sins, so too must he repent for his bad ideologies such as anger, hate, jealousy, competition, mockery, chasing after money and honor, and chasing after (different types of) food. He must repent for all these things. These are actually harder to stay away from than active sins, as when a person is involved in these things it is hard to stay away from them."

This means that there is an obligation to repent for one's bad Midos. This is true even if a person did not consciously choose to have these bad Midos, which is indeed the case for people who are born with certain tendencies, or who grew up in a bad environment. It is true even if he does not do any bad actions due to these bad Midos. Even so, a person must repent for having bad Midos, because it shows that his soul is not complete. Such a person must repent and fix his bad Midos.

There are many ways to fix bad Midos. First, one must study Torah, as this is the antidote that Hashem gave us to fight the Yetzer Hara. The more a person clings to Torah study, the more his Midos will become complete. Davening also helps one's Midos, as we say in Elokai Netzor, "Guard my tongue from evil, and my lips from speaking treachery." These refer to guarding ourselves

against actively sinning (such as speaking Lashon Hara). We continue, "And to those who curse me let my soul remain quiet, and my soul should be like earth to all." This request is regarding the Midos that remain in our heart. We ask Hashem that we should not feel pain when we are denigrated, and that we should achieve the level of humility reached by Avraham Avinu who said, "And I am earth and ashes." Davening helps us have good Midos.

Even though davening causes us to have Divine Assistance in our efforts to have good Midos, it is not sufficient to merely daven, hoping it has a positive effect. We must do positive actions that help fix these bad Midos, as instructed by the authors of the Sifrei Mussar. Without learning Mussar, one cannot hope to fix his bad Midos. This is as Rav Yisrael Salanter (*Or Yisrael, letter 14*) writes, "Changing from having bad (Midos) to having good (Midos) without learning Mussar, is like expecting to have good vision without having an eye, or having good hearing without having an ear."

The great benefit of learning Mussar is finding out what we must repent for, such as sins and bad Midos. Additionally, Sifrei Mussar give many practical tips on how one should fix his bad Midos. [It is well known that a person's actions have an effect on his heart, as the Sefer HaChinuch (*Mitzvah 16*) writes, "A person operates based on his actions." The Mesilas Yesharim (*end of ch. 7*) also writes, "The outer action awakens one's inner (thoughts)." Part of the obligation of repentance is to be involved in ways to fix one's bad Midos.]

### **"Mavir Al Midosav"**

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah 17a*) states, "Whoever is Mavir Al Midosav, Hashem removes all of his Pesh'a'im (sins)." What does this mean? This means that if a person does not react in kind when people insult him (i.e. he "lets it go"), Hashem takes away all of his Pesh'a'im. The commentaries explain that there are three words commonly used to describe sin: Chet, Avon, and Pesha. Chet refers to an accidental sin, Avon refers to a sin committed on purpose, and Pesha, the most serious of the three, refers to a person who knows who Hashem is and wants to rebel against Him (by doing this sin anyway). This shows the tremendous level of not reacting to people's insults. Hashem forgives even the most serious type of sins for such behavior!

The Chafetz Chaim explains in Shemiras HaLashon (*Shar HaTevunah, ch.8*), "If someone wants Hashem to forgive him, even on Pesha'im, he must make sure that he is not upset in anyway when he is insulted, even if he knows that his friend insulted him specifically in order to

rebel against him, in the same manner that Pesha is deemed a rebellious sin. This is why the Gemara specifically said, “Whose sin does He carry (forgive)? One who does not react to a Pesha.” In other words, this is not a magical formula, but is rather measure for measure. Hashem forgives the rebellion of those who forgive others for purposely rebelling against them.

The Sharei Teshuvah (1:28) writes, “This is a very important doorway of hope.” It is very common that people are offended by others, especially when people interact with many people. If a person is able to be strong and not react negatively to a person who insults him, he will gain tremendously when he is judged by Hashem.

In contrast, a person who does strike back can end up transgressing many Torah prohibitions. He may also transgress Lifnei Iver, as the Gemara (*Moed Katan 17a*) states, “If someone hits an adult son, he transgresses Lifnei Iver.” Rashi explains that since his child is an adult, it is possible he will strike his father back. This means that his father caused him to sin by striking him. Similarly, if a person strikes someone who insulted him (when self defense is not required), it almost guarantees a vicious cycle of verbal or physical injury. This will result in his transgressing Lifnei Iver.

When a person is strong and does not react to the person who insulted him, people realize he is truly righteous and holy. They end up honoring and respecting him. This is as the Mishnah (*Avos 4:1*) states, “Who is honored? One who honors others.” Everyone wants to be his friend and honor him, because he honors others. Similarly, the Mishnah continues, “Who is strong? One who captures his Yetzer Hara.” Being physically strong is not an achievement. There are many animals that are physically strong. True strength is strength of the soul, exhibited by a person who captures his Yetzer Hara and does not react to people who insult him.

\*

There is something we must discuss regarding the honor of Torah and Sefarim. There are people who take Sefarim from the Sefarim shelves and they do not put them back in their proper place when they are finished using them. When Sefarim are piled up randomly in the Beis Medrash, it is an embarrassment to the Sefarim. There are righteous individuals who donate much of their

time to putting the Sefarim back in their proper place.

In Kreina D'Igarta (1:59), the Steipler zt”l writes, “It is certainly a bad Midah of cruelty, and it is evil, to cause others to return a Sefer that he himself took out from its place. It is even more horrific when a Torah scholar must take his precious time to do something that another person was obligated to do!” It is a bad Midah to abuse the goodwill of a person who voluntarily helps honor the Torah.

It is known that the Alter from Slabodka would instruct his students that if they saw a piece of paper lying on the floor, they should not throw it back on the ground. This will cause another person to pick it up to see if it has words of Torah! Rather, he should put the paper in an appropriate place that will not cause another person to waste their time.

This is especially important when we are about to be judged by Hashem. We must work on having better Midos. It is known that there was a note hung on the door of the Talmud Torah in Kelm during Elul stating how we must strengthen ourselves in having good Midos and in loving other Jews, as all Jews are sons of Hashem. This is as the Passuk (*Devarim 14:1*) states, “You are sons to Hashem your G-d.” A father wants his sons to live in peace and not fight amongst one another. This is as the Tana Dvei Eliyahu (*Rabah, ch.28*) states, “Hashem says to Bnei Yisrael: “My sons, what do I ask of you but that you should love one another and honor each other.” By having good Midos, one can merit a good judgment. May it be Hashem’s Will to assist us in having good Midos!



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

For donations or dedications of the Hebrew and English flyers, or to receive the *sichos* to your email, please contact: [darkei.hachizuk@gmail.com](mailto:darkei.hachizuk@gmail.com)

The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va'ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein's home.