

Darkei HaChizuk

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

A *Sichah* from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita*, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez • *Parashas Bo* 5781

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Tefillah for Yiras Shamayim

Yiras Shamayim is a mitzvah, a *mitzvas asei*. The Torah mentions it many times. For example: “Fear Hashem your G-d” (*Devarim* 6:13; 10:20); And now Yisrael, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you if not to fear Him (*Devarim* 10:12). That is, HaKadosh Baruch Hu asks us, as if He, so to speak, needs man to act with *yiras Shamayim*. Chazal tell us (*Berachos* 33b): “Everything is in Heaven’s hands except for *yiras Shamayim*.” Fear of Heaven is dependent on us; it is not in Heaven’s hands. Therefore, Hashem asks us to act in this manner.

But even so, in many of our prayers, we ask Hashem to grant us *yiras Shamayim*. For example, in the blessing of Ahavah Rabbah, we say, “and unify our hearts to love and fear Your name.” In *Kedushah d’Sidrah* we say, “And place in our hearts love and fear of Him.” In *Tehillim* there are many *perakim* of *tefillos* for *yiras Shamayim*. It seems strange why we should be able to ask for this — after all, fear is dependent on us; it’s not in Heaven’s hands.

The explanation is that there are some things that arouse us to act with *yiras Shamayim*, while there are others that hinder our fear of Heaven. **This is what we are davening for: We are asking for *siyatta d’Shemaya* to remove the hindrances, that nothing should disturb our *yiras Shamayim*, and we are also asking Hashem to give us opportunities that will arouse our *yiras Shamayim*.**

This is similar to what I heard from HaGaon HaTzaddik Rav E.E. Dessler *zt”l*. He says that it is possible for a person to receive an *Itarusa de-l’Eila*, an arousing from Above, that Hashem gives a person *siyatta d’Shemaya* for *yiras Shamayim*. He gave the following example: If a person is sitting in a waiting room with nothing to do. There are some *sefarim* there, including *mussar sefarim*, and he picks one up. He opens it at random — exactly to a particular section that inspires him, and he gains *yiras Shamayim*. Now, even though fear of Heaven is not in Heaven’s hands, it is still possible that Heaven will present a person with an opportunity that arouses him to *yiras Shamayim*.

Yiras Shamayim Leads to All Mitzvos

Yiras Shamayim is a positive mitzvah in and of itself, but it also is a springboard to all 613 mitzvos. When a

person is fearful and careful, it causes him to refrain from committing *aveiros*, and stimulates him to fulfill all the mitzvos. There are *mitzvos asei* and *lo ta’asei*, and a person’s *yiras Shamayim* is what prompts him to fulfill them. On the other hand, a lack of *yiras Shamayim* causes a person to make allowances for himself.

Take for example, the mitzvah of Talmud Torah, Torah study. Chazal say (*Peah* 1:1) that Torah study falls into the category of things a person enjoys its fruits in this world, while the principal awaits him in the next world. How wonderful Torah study is; what great benefit it incurs! Its fruits in this world, and the principal awaiting him in the next world. And not only that, “Torah study is equal to them all” — the reward for learning Torah is equal to the reward for all the other mitzvos mentioned in the *mishnah*. On the other hand, the punishment for failing to learn Torah is severe. In *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:14), Rabbeinu Yonah mentions a number of Chazal’s statements regarding the gravity of *bittul Torah*, how terrible it is, and nevertheless, once a person acts with *bittul Torah* a number of times, he ends up thinking that it’s permissible (*Kiddushin* 40a). This is why we need *yiras Shamayim*; the fear of Heaven obligates us and gives us *chizuk*.

Chazal say (*Avos* 2:1), “Look at three things and you will not come to sin: Know what is above you: an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and all your deeds are inscribed in the book.” Three matters are mentioned here: “an eye that sees” — your deeds, “an ear that hears” — your speech, “and all your actions are inscribed in the book” — this is a general reference to everything you do. Not only does it include deeds and speech, it also includes your thoughts. Everything is written and sealed in a book, and each person signs his book himself, as the *pasuk* states (*Iyov* 37:7), “It will be sealed by the hand of every man.” If a person remembers this, then he will be fearful and will not do an *aveirah*, since he knows that all his deeds are written in the book.

There’s also the matter of reward and punishment, knowing that there is a reward for every mitzvah and punishment for every *aveirah*. Tzaddikim receive their punishment in this world, and the reward in the next world. For the *resha’im*, however, it is the opposite. They receive their reward in this world and their punishments in Gehinnom, which is much harsher than punishments in this world. When a person keeps this in

mind, he will have *yiras Shamayim* and refrain from *bittul Torah*.

Sweetness of Torah — *Siyatta d'Shemaya*

Torah is sweetness, as it states in *Tehillim* (19:11), “And they are sweeter than honey and the drippings of honeycombs.” **Since the mitzvah of Talmud Torah is such a great mitzvah, there is special *siyatta d'Shemaya* that it's sweet and people want to learn Torah. Once a person just tastes the Torah's delicious taste, they want to continue.** It is sweeter than honey — a person cannot eat too much honey, and if he does, it doesn't even taste good. However, when it comes to Torah, the more Torah one learns, the sweeter it is! And *divrei Torah* is also very interesting “like new laws” (see *Rashi Devarim* 6:6), and this is due to the special *siyatta d'Shemaya* that there is sweetness and interest in Torah, so that a person will continue learning Torah.

There are many flavors to Torah. Indeed, the Torah is compared to water (*Yeshayah* 55:1), “O! All those who are thirsty head to water.” And water refers to Torah (*Bava Kama* 17a). It's also compared to wine and milk, as the same *pasuk* continues: “Go buy wine and milk without money and without a price.” Torah is also compared to bread, as it states (*Mishlei* 9:5): “Come partake of my bread.” The Torah is compared to many various things, parallel to the various sections in Torah — some are called bread, others are called wine. The secrets of Torah are wine, and the revealed parts are bread. Water refers to the simple *divrei Torah*. In any case, there are many “flavors” in Torah, and this was all created with special Divine providence so its nature will draw man to learn Torah.

Furthermore, Chazal say about Torah (see *Eiruvim* 54b), “You shall always be intoxicated with its love.” It's no secret that some people simply forget about everything else in the world while they are learning Torah because of their immense love of Torah and attachment to it.

It's a Mitzvah to Increase *Yiras Shamayim*

Yiras Shamayim helps a person refrain from *bittul Torah*, and it's an impetus to fulfill all 613 mitzvos, but a person cannot be complacent with his level of *yiras Shamayim*. There is a *mitzvas asef* to increase one's level of *yiras Shamayim*, as Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (First *Shaar* 17:20, and Third *Shaar* 15:17) that there are many levels to *yiras Shamayim*. The mitzvah involves constantly increasing *yiras Shamayim* — and this is doable.

How does one increase *yiras Shamayim*? By learning *mussar sefarim*: *Mesillas Yesharim*, *Shaarei Teshuvah*, *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Orchos Tzaddikim*, and all the other *mussar sefarim*. There are so many *mussar sefarim*

which discuss matters that lead one to increase his *yiras Shamayim*. Increasing *yirah* is a mitzvah!

Learning from *Yiras Shamayim*

Yiras Shamayim also depends on one's *chinuch*. If a person receives an upbringing with *yiras Shamayim*, if there is *yiras Shamayim* in his home, or *yiras Shamayim* in the schools or yeshivos he attends, it will influence the way he leads his life. It all depends on what he sees, if there is *yiras Shamayim* there or not.

There are also *mussar schmuessin* in *yeshivos*. This also depends on what the *schmuess* is about — will it cause an increase in *yiras Shamayim*, or is it a *schmuess* about other things, like the *pshat* in *divrei aggadah*, which is not related to *yiras Shamayim*. The obligation is to increase *yiras Shamayim*; the *schmuessin* should include *yiras Shamayim*!

There are people who can influence others to increase *yiras Shamayim*. Everyone can influence himself as well to increase *yiras Shamayim* in various ways.

I've already related the story of one of our former *talmidim*, who presently holds a position that involves many *nisyonos* and difficulties. It's very difficult to act with *yashrus* in his position, but he stands strong against these *nisyonos*. He once told me what it is that gives him the inner strength to withstand all his challenges. He said the fact that he learned in yeshiva and saw the Ponevezher Rav *zt"l* and the Mashgiach Rav Yechezkel Levenstein *zt"l*, and he saw their *yiras Shamayim*, he also gained *yiras Shamayim*. Even though they never spoke about explicitly, he saw their behavior and their *yiras Shamayim*. **And when one sees *yiras Shamayim*, it makes an influence on him!**

It's well known that Rav Elchanan Wasserman would travel to the Chafetz Chaim every single year. Even though he was the *rosh yeshiva* in Baranovitz, every Elul he put his needs first — as he had to increase his *yiras Shamayim* — and travel to gain *yiras Shamayim* from the Chafetz Chaim. After the Chafetz Chaim was *niftar*, he would travel to Kelm, where there was a great *hashpa'ah* of *yiras Shamayim* as well. Rav Elchanan looked for all sorts of ways to increase his *yiras Shamayim*; he didn't rely on himself, he looked for a place that would influence him.

Love and Fear Complement Each Other

Now, *yiras Shamayim* on its own is not enough; fear must come along with love of Hashem, as Chazal teach in *Avos* (1:3), “Don't be like servants who serve their master to receive a reward, but be like servants who serve their master not to receive a reward.” We need to serve Hashem because we love Him, not just to receive a reward. Yet, continues the Tanna, “And may the fear

of Heaven be upon you” — at the same time, one needs *yiras Shamayim*.

The Bartenura quotes the Yerushalmi (at the end of *Berachos*) which states, “Serve Him with love, serve Him with fear. With love — if you start feeling hatred, know that you love Him, and a lover does not have hatred. With fear — if you are ready to kick, know that you fear Him, and one who’s fearful does not kick.” That is, we must act with both love and fear. If a person merely fears Hashem, and does not love Him, he will fulfill the mitzvos just because he has to, not *l’shem Shamayim*. This can cause him to hate what he’s doing. Therefore, one needs *ahavas Hashem*, because then he’s an *ohev*, a lover, and an *ohev* does not hate.

But love alone is not enough, because if he does the mitzvos from *ahavah*, then when things become difficult, he might “kick things away” and not perform the mitzvos. That’s why he needs *yirah* as well, because if someone is fearful and in awe, this will prevent him from “kicking.” Every person needs both love of Hashem and fear of Hashem; the two complement each other.

Daven for Siyatta D’Shemaya

However, once a person has both love and fear of Heaven — which is dependent on the person himself, as we will explain — one still needs *siyatta d’Shemaya* for this.

Similarly, Chazal said (*Avos* 1:14), “If I am not for myself, who will be for me; and when I am for myself, what am I.” The Tanna means to say: First of all, a person must do whatever he can himself, for “If I am not for myself, who will be for me” — if I don’t do things myself, what will influence me? After all, I’m not doing anything! Therefore, a person first has to try and put in his own effort, but if it’s still not enough — since “when I am for me, what am I” — I cannot do anything on my own, I need *siyatta d’Shemaya*, or I need others to have an influence on me, one certainly needs to daven.

Therefore, in addition to the necessity to increase one’s *yiras Shamayim* and love of *maasim tovim*, he must daven for *siyatta d’Shemaya* for this, because the *yetzer hara* is very strong. One needs to work against his nature and overcome his *yetzer hara*, so he must daven for *siyatta d’Shemaya* to be successful. As we mentioned, one must daven to get rid of hindrances and to receive opportunities to arouse *ahavas Hashem* and *yiras Shamayim*.

There is no limit to how high a person can grow in *yirah* and *ahavah*, as Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:17) about the lofty *maalos* “each one of these has a number of levels.” A person can advance and ascend higher by performing actions that strengthen each *maalah*. It all depends on the person himself! And

chas v’shalom, a person can descend or ascend in all the *maalos*.

What are these actions? Learning *mussar sefarim*. Learning *Mesillas Yesharim* or any other *mussar sefer* arouse a person and encourage him, and give him guidance regarding what to do or what not to do. This also brings a person to a good, happy life. Indeed, we’ve often discussed that someone who has a steady learning session in *mussar* will have a happy, fortunate life, and his home will be a happy home with a pleasant atmosphere. A person who lives his life according to the Torah, with *yiras Shamayim* is especially successful. His life is a completely different life.

Heartfelt Prayers for the Sick

We are presently faced with the coronavirus *lo aleinu*, a very contagious illness and there are many, many sick people *Rachmana litzlan*. Many people are suffering, families are suffering and the patient himself is suffering. Everything is from *Shamayim*, and we need *siyatta d’Shemaya*. What can we do? We can increase our *maasim tovim*, and we can daven!

It’s known that Rav Yisrael Salanter said that it’s tried and true that davening for *ruchniyus* is effective. But prayers for material matters, when a person wants material matters for himself, don’t always work, because everything is already decided on Rosh Hashanah. However if someone davens for his fellow’s *gashmiyus*, that he should be healthy and not get sick, it’s like he’s davening for *ruchniyus* because it is totally *l’shem Shamayim* — it has nothing to do with him personally. This type of prayer is accepted and effective.

If so, if we’d daven from the bottom of our heart, with intense *kavanah*, out of pity and pain for the sick people, our *tefillos* would be answered! All we need is that our prayers should be heartfelt, we should really care.

The *tefillah* has to be the result of *emunah*, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* explains (chap. 19) that prayer is when he “literally converses with Hashem Yisbarach and pleads and asks, and Hashem Yisbarach listens to him, as a man speaks to his friend and his friend listens and hears him.” When the prayer is sincere, it helps.

The mitzvah of *v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha* obligates us to feel the pain of our fellow Jews and to beg Hashem for mercy. It is a tremendous obligation on every single one of us!

Of course, **we recite *Tehillim* after the davening, one *perek* after each *tefillah*, but it all depends on how we say it, with how much *kavanah* and caring. We must strengthen ourselves.** If we would all be davening as we should for those who are sick, it would be like a prayer for *ruchniyus* — like when a person is davening

for others and not for himself — and Rav Yisrael Salanter said that this type of *tefillah* is always accepted.

The Chazon Ish's Tefillos

Someone once came to Maran the Chazon Ish *zt"l* and told the *gadol hador* that he was sick, and the doctors told him he had to have surgery. The Chazon Ish blessed him that the surgery should be successful. This was before Minchah. The sick man stayed to daven Minchah in the Chazon Ish's house, and after davening, the Chazon Ish called him over and told him that he does not need surgery anymore, since they just davened Minchah. That is, the Chazon Ish davened for him and he felt that his *tefillah* was accepted!

The Gemara relates a similar episode with Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa who would daven for sick people, and then tell them if they'd live or die, because he was able to tell if his *tefillah* was accepted or not. The Chazon Ish also was so sure that his *tefillah* was accepted that he was certain that surgery was unnecessary! Like Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa's *tefillah*. This was the Chazon Ish's *madreigah* — we can't even fathom the *madreigah* he was on.

Something similar was told about Rabbi Akiva Eiger (*Igros Sofrim* 56). He was asked to daven for a sick person. He davened, and he said, "I davened, and I was not answered. Maybe there's a mistake in the name." He felt that his *tefillah* was not answered and realized that it must be a mistake in the name, because his prayer had no deficiency in it at all, and according to *derech hateva*, he should have felt that his *tefillah* was answered. And if it wasn't, there must be another reason, not connected to him. This was the *madreigah* of the Chazon Ish and Rabbi Akiva Eiger, the *madreigah* of great people who lived above *derech hateva*.

In any case, Rav Yisrael Salanter wrote that it's tried and true that a *tefillah* for *ruchniyus* is accepted. Davening for others can be considered *ruchniyus*, so it's not even a miracle when the *tefillas* are answered. The same is actually true regarding any prayer. The Maharsha writes (*Kiddushin* 29) that it's not a miracle; it's *derech hateva* that *tefillas* are answered, because prayer is above *teva*!

Therefore, in our present situation, it is extremely important to daven a sincere prayer, a heartfelt prayer with true *kavanah*. Feel the pain of the sick people, and then your *tefillah* will surely be accepted and they will recover *b'ezras Hashem*. This is the obligation of *tefillah*.

Rectifying Middos Through Emunah

There's another obligation to increase *yiras Shamayim*, as we mentioned. Acting with *middos tovos* is also very important. It's one of the things that needs to be strengthened, as the Churban occurred because of a deficiency in *middos* (*Yoma* 9:2). And it still needs rectification.

Good *middos* depends on *emunah*; if one's *emunah* is *b'shleimus* and he believes that everything is from *Shamayim*, he won't be able to have bad *middos*! Even if someone else causes him pain and difficulties, he will not be angry, nor will he have *kpeidos* against him, since this is from *Shamayim*. Even without the other person, he would have had the pain and difficulty, because it was decreed in Heaven that he deserves it.

A person must simply think: why is this pain happening? And *Chazal* say (*Berachos* 5:1), "If a person sees difficulties and pain befalling him, he should search out (*yepashpeish*) his deeds, and feel (*yemashmeish*) his deeds (*Eiruv* 13b). The *Mesillas Yesharim* explains what these two terms refer to: they must find which actions need rectification and correct them. Of course, someone who causes harm or pain to others is to be pitied and has sinned, but there is no place to blame him or be upset at him, because it was all from *Shamayim*, and I am to blame for it! This should be every person's understanding.

Therefore, if a person lives with *emunah*, he will have good *middos*. There is no reason to be *makpid* on any person. Without *kpeidos*, there are many *zechuyos*. Someone who doesn't get upset at others reaps tremendous *zechuyos*. He also has *ahavas habriyos*; others love him and are happy to spend time in his company. One needs *siyatta d'Shemaya* to merit all these good things and all these exalted *maalos*. *B'ezras Hashem*, may we all merit *siyatta d'Shemaya*!

Please daven for
גיטה פייגה בת רבקה
לרפואה שלימה ומהירה בתוך כל חולי ישראל

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