

# Darkei HaChizuk

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

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## The Maalos of Purim

The Zohar's comment about Purim is well known (*Tikkunei Zohar* 21): Yom Kippur is "K'Purim, like Purim." This means that Purim is a great, lofty day, and Yom Kippur is "also" like Purim, that is, Purim is greater than Yom Kippur. This is hard to understand. After all, Yom Kippur is a day of fasting, davening, doing teshuvah, reciting *piyuttim* and *viduy*; Purim is not like this at all. How can it be that Purim is on a higher level than Yom Kippur?

We can explain this based on Chazal's statement (*Shabbos* 88a) that at Kabbalas HaTorah at Har Sinai "HaKadosh Baruch Hu *kafah aleihem har k'gigis* — held the mountain over their heads like a barrel, as it is written: 'And they stood at the bottom of the mountain' — as if they were under the mountain and the mountain was hovering over them. He said: If you accept the Torah, good. If not, here will be your burial place." You'll be buried under the mountain.

Now, the Maharal explains (*Tiferes Yisrael* chap. 32) that this is not to be taken literally. Hashem didn't actually hold the mountain on top of them — the nation was under mental duress. They saw *emunah* with such perfect clarity that it was as if their logic forced them to accept the Torah. They understood that without accepting the Torah, they have no right to exist. Indeed, regarding the *pasuk* "The sixth day, and the Heavens and earth were finished..." the Gemara states that this is referring to 6 Sivan, the sixth day of the month of Sivan, when we received the Torah. This was the completion of Creation, because without the Torah, the entire world would have been destroyed. Bnei Yisrael understood that they had no choice and their logic forced them to accept the Torah. This is called accepting the Torah out of fear; not out of love.

On Purim, however, the *pasuk* states, "The Yehudim fulfilled and accepted it." And the Gemara expounds: "They fulfilled that which they already had accepted." They re-accepted the Torah out of love. It was a second Kabbalas HaTorah — this time out of love!

In this aspect, Purim is on a higher level than Shavuos, because on Shavuos, Kabbalas HaTorah was out of fear, but on Purim it was out of love.

## The Influence Returns Every Year

The *sefarim* write (see the Ramchal's *Derech Hashem* 4:7) that the *madreigos* Klal Yisrael reached on various occasions return every year at that same time, and once again, people can merit attaining those levels. For example, Pesach is called "*Zman Cheiruseinu*," the time of our redemption, because at that time, we were redeemed from the *tumah* of Mitzrayim.

We mainly experienced spiritual redemption, as Chazal say (*Avos* 6:2), "Only one who is involved in Torah study is called a free man." This is why, in the Yom Tov davening, we say, *Va'tetein lanu es yom chag hamatzos hazeh, zman cheiruseinu*, "And give us 'this' holiday of matzos, a time of our redemption." Every single year again we experience a "time of redemption" on Pesach, when the Heavenly influence descends to grant the ability to merit spiritual redemption, just as there was during the time of Yetziyas Mitzrayim.

Shavuos is called *Zman Matan Toraseinu*, "the time of the giving of the Torah," because there was an influence of Torah on Shavuos, and every year, this *hashpaah* returns and we can merit attaining great levels in Torah.

So too, Sukkos is called *Zman Simchaseinu*, "the time of our joy," because the Torah writes: "And be joyous on your holiday." (See *Yalkut Parshas Emor*, where it states that the word "*simchah*" is written three times in the Torah in conjunction with Sukkos; unlike the other holidays.) This *simchah* is referring to "*simchah shel mitzvah*, the joy of mitzvah fulfillment," as the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Yom Tov* 6:20), "We were only commanded regarding joy that includes service of the Creator of all." That is, our *avodas Hashem* should be *b'simchah*, as the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 100:2), "Serve Hashem in joy." If so, Sukkos is a time for serving Hashem in joy. Simchas Torah as well, which is called Shemini Atzeres, is also a *Zman Simchaseinu*, a time of joy, and every year, the *hashpaah* returns. We can once again merit levels of *simchah shel mitzvah*.

Based on this, since we merited the level of accepting the Torah out of love on Purim, it is a time of a *hashpaah* of *ahavas haTorah* — which we don't have on Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur, when we are busy with teshuvah and *viduy*, a person has to personally bring himself up to greater levels, but **on Purim, there is *siyatta d'Shemaya* to merit *ahavas haTorah*. And just as the Jews during the times of Achashveirosh merited such levels of *ahavas Torah*, every year, so too, this *hashpaah* returns every year.**

That's why Purim is greater than Yom Kippur, because this *hashpaah* isn't present on Yom Kippur. Even though Yom Kippur is a day of atonement, and one can surely merit very high levels, it is not "*kabbalas haTorah* out of love" as was in the days of Purim. Perhaps this is the explanation.

## Receiving the Hashpa'ah Requires Preparation

What's important for us to know is that in order to attain these spiritual *hashpa'os*, such as redemption, joy, or Torah, one must prepare himself for it, and **the level of *hashpaah* he**

receives will be based on his level of preparation and on his *madreigah* and essence. Hashem will give him the *hashpa'ah*, but it depends on how he behaves, it depends on his thoughts and actions. Of course, each person must do what he can; once a person does whatever he can, and he cannot do more, this is considered *sheleimus*, as is explained in many contexts.

Now, the world stands on three things: Torah, *avodah*, and *gemillus chassadim* (*Avos* 1:2). Torah is *esek haTorah*, *avodah* is *emunah* and *tefillah*, and all sorts of *avodas Hashem*, and *gemillus chassadim* is doing good deeds *bein adam lachaveiro*.

Regarding *bein adam lachaveiro*, there is a mitzvah “*v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*,” and there are many levels to this mitzvah. One is mentioned in the *Mesillas Yesharim*, chap. 11, that one must love his fellow “*kamocha mamash*, exactly as he’d love himself.” This is no simple feat. Chazal say (Yerushalmi *Nedarim* 9:4), “*V’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*: Says Rabbi Akiva, This is a great principle in the Torah.” Let us understand. After all, it seems like any other mitzvah; why do Chazal call it a “great principle in the Torah”?

We can explain this based on Rav Chaim Vital’s comments in *Shaarei Kedushah* (1:2) that one’s *sheleimus* in mitzvos is based on his *madreigah* in *middos tovos*. If he fulfills “*v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*” with *sheleimus*, then all other mitzvos he performs will be with *sheleimus*. However, if his *ahavas habriyos* is deficient, then every single mitzvah he performs will be lacking something, as one’s *middos* accompany him in his every action. When someone has bad *middos*, every mitzvah he does comes along with calculations and *p’niyos*, ulterior motives, of bad *middos*.

He explains there that this is why *middos*, such as anger, aren’t explained in the Torah — good *middos* are the preparation for and foundation of Torah, for without good *middos*, Torah cannot be complete. This is how to explain the concept of “a great principle in the Torah.”

In any case, on Purim, one can receive *siyatta d’Shemaya* to rise to greater heights due to the *koach* of the *hashpa'ah* of Purim. However, it’s simple that the person himself must do something in order to merit *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

If a person doesn’t think and doesn’t do anything to prepare himself, well, Chazal have already said (*Kiddushin* 30b) on the *pasuk* “A *rasha* looks out for a *tzaddik* and wants to kill him, but Hashem will not abandon him to his hand” — a person’s *yetzer hara* overpowers him every day and wants to kill him, but if not for HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s help, he would never be able to stand up against his *yetzer hara*. The Gra explains (brought down in *Kol Eliyahu*, *Sukkah* and in *Mesillas Yesharim* chap. 2) Hashem will only give him *siyatta d’Shemaya* and help him if he has done everything in his power and has reached the stage of “if not for HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s help, he would never be able to stand up against his *yetzer hara*.” However, if he does not do whatever he can, he will not have *siyatta d’Shemaya*. One first must do whatever he can.

## Learning Torah with All His Might

How does one go about doing this? How does one garner strength? The Gemara in *Berachos* (32b) discusses four matters that require strengthening. Rashi explains that “*chizuk*, strengthening” means “constantly, and with all his strength.” This is the only way it’s considered *chizuk*.

The way to do this is by following the Mishnah Berurah’s directive in *siman aleph* to learn *mussar* every day. This is the antidote to the *yetzer hara*, and one must learn *mussar* every day, in a steady, set session. That’s the only way it helps and has an influence on a person. If it’s not daily, it’s not considered “constantly.” “With all his strength” differs from person to person — each person must use all his mental and physical strength and abilities to learn Torah as much as possible. A person is limited and is not required to do more than he can, but he is required to do as much as his can.

We’ve spoken about this often, and it might be beneficial to repeat it again. The Gemara states (*Bava Basra* 8a), “*Rabbanan* don’t require guarding.” *Talmidei chachamim* who are busy learning Torah are absolved of paying a tax for city guards because their Torah protects them and they protect the entire city with their Torah.

The Rosh (1:26 and the *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deiah* 243 rules like this too) explains what kind of person is called *Rabbanan*: “It seems that a *talmid chacham* who has a profession or is involved in a little business merely to support himself, but not to become wealthy, and he spends all his free time from work learning Torah and reviewing Torah, this is called *Toraso um’naso*, ‘his Torah is his profession.’”

*Rabbanan* is someone who learns as much Torah as he can. Even if a *talmid chacham* must work for a living and cannot learn for many hours a day, he’s working to support himself, to provide for his minimal necessities and is not rushing to strike it rich (see *Mishlei* 28:20) — and still spend all his free time learning Torah to the best of his ability. This person too is called “*rabbanan*” and is exempt from paying the tax for the city guards.

On the other hand, if someone learns a lot, but he can learn a little bit more — because he has enough to support himself — yet wastes his time unnecessarily, he is not called “*rabbanan*” and he must pay the tax for city guards. It all depends on “according to his ability,” based on his situation and his opportunities. If a person does whatever he can, then even if it’s a small amount, it’s still the best he can do. However, if he learns less than he can, even if he learns a lot, he falls into a different category. Let us explain the obligation of learning Torah with all one’s strength.

## Learning Mussar from the Gedolim

The way to strengthening oneself is by learning *mussar*. I’ve already related that the Brisker Rav ז”ל would learn a chapter of *Mesillas Yesharim* every day. I heard from someone who watched him learn that when he finished the last *perek*, he started the *sefer* again, for a person needs *chizuk* constantly.

Now, the Brisker Rav was already strengthened, he was on an unfathomable *madreigah*. And for example, when he davened, he was so focused on his *tefillos* that he didn't hear when people spoke to him. He once forgot *ya'aleh v'yavo* in Shemoneh Esrei. Because he davened Shemoneh Esrei out loud in order to concentrate better, people realized that he missed *ya'aleh v'yavo*, and they shouted "ya'aleh v'yavo," but he didn't hear them! This is like the level mentioned in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 98:1) about the earlier pious men who would arrive at "nullification of physicality" — all their physical senses stopped working — when they davened. And despite this, he learned *mussar*. *Mussar* really brings a person up to these *madreigos*.

I heard that in his youth, in his father Rav Chaim *zt"l*'s house, he was once learning *Chovos HaLevavos*. Rav Chaim noticed him learning and told him to continue, because that's "the *Shulchan Aruch* of Yiddishkeit." The *sefer* doesn't discuss pious behavior; it speaks about "duties" of the heart, how the heart is supposed to be. It is the *Shulchan Aruch* about *halachos* of what a person's heart should be like. *Mussar* influences us and gives us *chizuk*.

I saw in the Chazon Ish's *Kovetz Igros* (1:3) that one should learn *mussar sefarim* daily. The *Mishnah Berurah* (*siman aleph*) writes the same thing, and in the *Iggeres HaGra*, the Vilna Gaon also wrote to learn *mussar*.

The Gra wrote that it's not enough to learn; after one finishes learning, he must think about it and not take it off his mind. Rabbeinu Yonah writes similarly in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (2:26) regarding someone who hears *mussar*. In the past, *maggidim* would give *mussar* in their *derashos*, just as the *mashgichim* in *yeshivos* today give *divrei chizuk*. Every city had a *maggid*, like the Dubner *Maggid*, who would speak *divrei chizuk* to the people. Rabbeinu Yonah writes that even if someone heard *mussar*, he should not rely solely on the *mussar*, but he should "repeatedly strike *mussar* on his soul." Even after hearing *mussar*, he should continue to give himself *mussar*, because if not, he will have *hesech ha-daas*. While this is not simple, it is necessary.

After I saw in the *sefer Beis Midrash* that came out after the **Maran HaGaon Rav Chaim Ozer *zt"l*** was *niftar*, they published a *sefer zikaron, Beis Midrash*. Some of his *kabbalos* are printed in the *sefer*, and one that I saw reads: "To spend at least a short time learning *mussar sefarim*, like *Shaarei Teshuvah*, *Mesillas Yesharim*, and similar *sefarim*, and to make a mental *cheshbon nefesh* every day." As is known, Rav Chaim Ozer was extremely busy with *klal* work, and yet, he still made time to learn *mussar* daily.

### How Attain Deveikus in Torah

As mentioned, three things require strengthening: *Torah*, *avodah*, and *gemillus chassadim*. There are many levels to these mitzvot. Regarding Torah, Rav Baruch Ber *zt"l* is a good example. He was so engrossed in his learning, that when someone once came to ask his advice about an important matter, even though Rav Baruch Ber heard the questioner, he simply couldn't understand what he was saying because his brain was completely involved in *divrei Torah* and he

couldn't take his mind off it! They asked his son-in-law Rav Reuven Grozovsky *zt"l* to listen to the question instead, and then explain it to him later. He was so focused on his Torah, so concentrated, that he couldn't understand what they were saying. This is a great *madreigah* of *deveikus baTorah*. The same can happen with *tefillah* and *middos tovos*. There are many different levels.

The *madreigah* of *deveikus baTorah* depends on how one utilizes his time; how well he uses his time. A suggestion how to use one's times wisely is mentioned in the name of the Vilna Gaon: to learn a *masechta* by heart, and then whenever you're on the road and you can't learn from a *sefer*, you can review the *masechta* by heart, and fulfill the mitzvah of "u've'lechtech baderech." Memorizing a full *masechta* by heart is not easy, however. But we do have small *gemaros* nowadays, so one can take them wherever he goes. These opportunities for learning are real *siyatta d'Shemaya!*

So too, one can think in learning. Once, someone was on a bus and there was an accident. This person was not harmed, but the Chazon Ish told him, "If you would have been thinking in learning, there wouldn't have been an accident at all, because Torah protects and saves, *Torah magna u'matzla* (*Sotah* 21a)."

Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 99a) on the *pasuk* "For the word of Hashem he has despised," that this relates to someone can learn Torah and doesn't. I heard from Rav E.E. Dessler *zt"l* in the name of Rav Chaim Brisker that this is not referring only to "time," meaning that he has more time to learn but does not — quantity; it's also referring to when he is learning, whether he could've been learning with greater *havanah* and more concentration — quality. This too is considered failing to be *osek baTorah* when he really could have been learning.

Of course, this is individual — each person according to his abilities and strength. But in any case, this concept of wasting quality learning exists. The same is true regarding *tefillah b'kavanah*, in the quality of *tefillah* — each person according to his strength.

### Torah and Chessed

We've discussed the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18a) that discusses the House of Eli, who were *kohanim*. It was decreed upon them that they wouldn't live past age eighteen. However, Rava was *osek baTorah* and lived 40 years, and Abaye was *osek baTorah* and *chessed*, and he lived 60 years.

Abaye, who also did *chesed*, obviously learned less Torah, but he did whatever he could, because he performed *chassadim* that no one else could have done, so he was obligated to stop learning. Rava only learned Torah and was not involved in *chesed*, because others could do the *chesed* instead. If there were other people to do the *chesed*, it was prohibited for him to stop learning for it. One may not be *mevatel Torah* for a mitzvah that can be done by others (*Moed Katan* daf 9). As for Abaye, however, there was no one else to carry out the *chassadim*, so he was obligated to stop learning and perform the *chesed*, as doing *chesed* is a Torah obligation.

We see from here that the obligation does not depend on quantity; each person is obligated to do whatever he can.

### What Gives a Person the Right to Exist?

The Gemara relates that Shaul HaMelech sinned just once — that he did not fulfill the obligation of wiping out Amelek *b'sheleimus*. As a result, he lost his kingship. Dovid HaMelech, on the other hand, sinned twice, and he still retained his kingship. We must understand the reason for this.

The Malbim quotes the Sefer Halkkarim (Maamar 4, chapter 26) who explains as follows: Shaul's sin was connected to the kingship, he didn't fulfill *b'sheleimus* his obligations as king. The mitzvah of *mechiyas Amalek* is incumbent on the king, as Chazal said (*Sanhedrin* 20b): Yisrael was commanded to fulfill three mitzvos when they entered the Land: to appoint a king, to annihilate the seed of Amalek, and to build the Beis HaBechirah. To appoint a king is the mentioned first, and only then is the obligation of *mechiyas Amalek* mentioned, because the obligation is incumbent on the king, and Shaul was the first Jewish king commanded to fulfill the mitzvah of *mechiyas Amalek*.

Since Shaul did not fulfill his obligations as king *b'sheleimus*, why should he deserve the kingship? A king who does not fulfill his royal obligations *b'sheleimus* has no right to be a king, and that's why the royalty was taken away from him. David, however, sinned with personal sins that were not related to the kingship; but he did fulfill his royal obligations and that's why he did not lose the kingship.

Based on this, it turns out that every single person was created to increase *kevod Shamayim*, which is the *tachlis* of Creation. Indeed, at the end of *Pirkei Avos*, it states: "Whatever HaKadosh Baruch Hu created in His world, He created solely to bring honor to Himself, as it states, 'Whatever is called in My name and for My honor, I created, formed, even made.'" If a person does not fulfill his *tafkid* in this world and doesn't

act in a way that brings about *kevod Shamayim*, he has no right to exist.

Rabbeinu Yonah wrote in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (1:10) regarding remorse, *charatah*: "Hashem blew into my nostrils the breath of life, wisdom of heart, and a goodly intelligence to recognize Him and fear Him and control my body... And since I was created for this, and the opposite has occurred, why should I remain alive." (See Rabbeinu Yonah's comments on the *mishnah* in *Avos* chap. 3, regarding morning sleep... takes a person out of this world.)

### Middas HaRachamim Allows Us to Repent

But the fact that we see that man does live despite his sins, is due to *middas harachamim*. HaKadosh Baruch Hu waits for him to do teshuvah. While there are *resha'im* who live good lives in this world, it is only in order to give them their punishment in Gehinnom. But if tzaddikim sin, creating a lack of *kevod Shamayim* as a result, and yet, still continue living, this is due to *middas harachamim*, so that they repent.

The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (chap. 4) that *Middas HaRachamim* waits for a person to do teshuvah, and once he does *teshuvah* his sin is retroactively uprooted, and all his intentional sins turn into unintentional sins, and his unintentional sins become *zechuyos*. (See *Yoma* 86.) Just as a *chacham* can nullify a *neder* and uproot it retroactively, teshuvah can uproot sins retroactively. This too is *middas harachamim*, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* explains.

And so, this is our great hope — *middas harachamim* exists, and we can do teshuvah. In order to do so, we must learn *mussar sefarim* to know how to do teshuvah with remorse, *charatah*, and leaving the sin, *azivas hacheit*. Purim time is a time of *siyatta d'Shemaya* for *kabbalas haTorah*. *Yehi ratzon* may we all merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* to receive the Torah in the best possible manner.

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