

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 Vayakhel-Pekusdei 5781*

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Sins Create Impurity

Last week was *Parshas Parah*, and we read about the Parah Adumah. The Parah Adumah purifies those who have become impure from being in proximity to deceased humans, *tumas ha-meis*. *Tumas ha-meis* is graver than all other impurities. Regarding any other impurities that occur through touch (*tumas maga*), for example, when a person touches a *metzora*, *tevilah* restores his purity, and no other action is necessary. However, for other impurities — for example, *tumah* emitted from a person's body, like a *zav*, *zavah*, *yoledes*, and a *metzora* himself — a person is required to bring *korbanos*. For *tumas maga*, *tevilah* is enough.

However, regarding *tumas ha-meis*, *tevilah* is not enough; one also needs *haza'as shlishi v'shvi'i*, sprinkling *mei chatas* and the ashes of the *Parah Adumah*, on the third and seventh days. One who is *tamei* from contact with a dead person, whether through touch or from being under the same roof, this is the most severe *tumah*. The *tumah* of a deceased person is greater than that of a dead animal.

This is because a person has sins. All dead creatures — to the exclusion of man — do not have sins. Animals don't sin. The body of a dead non-Jew does not pass on impurity by being under the same roof, but it does through touch, because non-Jews also sin. A deceased Jew has more sins than a non-Jew because he is holier. As such, his body passes on impurity even when merely under the same roof as another person, and *tevilah* is not sufficient to remove the impurity, *mei chatas* is needed as well.

When a person becomes *tamei*, his impurity limits him. He cannot eat *kodshim*, and eating *kodshim* is a mitzvah, so an impure person loses out on this mitzvah. He cannot eat *terumah* or *maaser sheini* either, since they are mitzvos. Additionally, he cannot enter the Beis HaMikdash. So it turns out that all sorts of *tumah* prevent a person from fulfilling many mitzvos.

And even though the person who became impure did not sin — in fact, he may have even been doing a mitzvah when he became impure, perhaps he took care of a *meis mitzvah* or another deceased person whom it is a mitzvah to take care of — in any case, once he becomes impure, he is an *oneis* and the reality is that he is lacking these mitzvos.

Torah and Mitzvos Sanctify Man

Every mitzvah sanctifies man, as we say "*Kadsheinu b'mitzvosecha*," "*v'kidashanu b'mitzvosecha*" — a person is sanctified by performing mitzvos.

During the Chafetz Chaim's time, there was an incident with a dybbuk that entered a young woman's body. When the dybbuk was asked why it entered, it said that the girl drank water without making a *berachah*. If she had made a *berachah*, the dybbuk wouldn't have been able to enter; the *kedushah* of the *berachah* would have made it impossible. The *kedushah* would have prevented the entrance of *tumah* via the dybbuk. Even though this was a simple girl, and she merely forgot to make a *berachah*, whenever she did make a *berachah* — even without *kavanah* — the *berachah* sanctifies her! This is the meaning of "*v'kidashanu b'mitzvosecha*" — a person is sanctified by performing a mitzvah.

The same is true regarding *kedushas ha'aretz*. Someone who is in Eretz Yisrael is sanctified, because Eretz Yisrael is a holy place, even in our times after the Churban. The Gemara (*Nedarim 22a*) says that the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael has an influence on a person's very nature to receive good *middos* and to prevent murder. The Gemara relates a story of two people who came to Eretz Yisrael from Bavel. On the journey to Eretz Yisrael, one of them killed his friend. Rabbi Yochanan was surprised that an act of murder could have taken place in Eretz Yisrael. They told him that the murder actually took place before they crossed the Yarden. Had they crossed the Yarden and entered Eretz Yisrael, the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael would have had an influence on him and he wouldn't have killed his companion.

Those of us in Eretz Yisrael are sanctified just by being here. The *kedushah* of the Land sanctifies us. The *kedushah* of Yerushalayim is even on a greater level, and the *kedushah* of the Old City is even greater. It's well known that there were people who lived in the Old City and never left the city walls, which have the special *kedushah* of "Machaneh Yisrael," and showers even greater *kedushah* on its inhabitants. If so, when a person entered the *Beis HaMikdash*, he surely became even more sanctified, but when he was *tamei*, entry to the *Beis HaMikdash* for him was prohibited. The *tumah* prevented him from attaining this extra *kedushah*.

But we have a solution to attaining more *kedushah*, as Chazal say (beginning of *Peah*), "And Talmud Torah is equal to them all." *Esek haTorah* sanctifies a person more than all other mitzvos do! When a person learns Torah, he is sanctified. While all mitzvos sanctify us, learning Torah is equal to all mitzvos. That *mishnah* is comparing Torah learning to the mitzvos it discusses — for which a person receives the dividends in this world, while the principle awaits him the world to come — but Torah learning also sanctifies a person more than all other mitzvos do. When a person learns, the Shechinah is with him, as Chazal say (*Avos 3:6*): "Ten who sit and learn Torah, the Shechinah is among them... and even five, and even one." When a person learns Torah, the

Shechinah is with him, and *hashraas Shechinah is kedushah*; he becomes sanctified and the place he learning in becomes sanctified too.

The Chazon Ish *zt"l* was once walking with someone in Bnei Brak — on the street that's presently called 'Rechov Chazon Ish' — and when they passed a certain spot, he said, "You can feel the *kedushah* here, *bachurim* must've just been standing here and talking in learning." The *kedushah* is felt, the place becomes *kadosh* — I don't know how long the *kedushah* stays, but one can feel it!

Actions L'shem Shamayim — Taharah

The *middah* of *taharah*, purity, is explained in *Mesillas Yesharim*, right after *neki'us* and *prishus*, cleanliness and abstinence. *Taharah* means that a person should have a pure heart, *lev tahor*, and every mitzvah he fulfills should be *l'shem Shamayim*. Not just when he learns Torah, but every single action. Even physical, necessary actions can become *tahor*, and can make him *tahor*, if they are done *l'shem Shamayim*.

The Rambam discusses this matter as well (*Hilchos Dei'os* 3:3). A person can serve Hashem even without actively doing anything — even when he sleeps, if he's sleeping *l'shem Shamayim*, because he needs energy for the next day to fulfill the 613 mitzvos. If he goes to sleep because he's like a soldier, a soldier in Hashem's army, who needs energy to fulfill his obligations, then he's serving Hashem as he sleeps. His sleep is *avodas Hashem!*

Sleeping is passive, but every single physical action a person does, because otherwise he wouldn't be able to function — such as eating and drinking — is *avodas Hashem* as long as he does it *l'shem Shamayim*. If he has in mind that he is eating and drinking so he will be strong and will be able to function and fulfill the mitzvos, this is *avodas Hashem*, and then his eating sanctifies him. It is an action that brings about *kedushah!* This is called "*taharah*," and these physical actions also sanctify the person.

Based on this, it turns out that even when a person is taking care of his family or supporting them, and as a result, he must stop learning, or if he has to work, but is only doing so to provide for his family and not because he has any ulterior motives for himself, he is doing *chessed* for his family. Not only that, he is being *mezakeh* them. He has to educate and raise his children, and by doing so, he is gaining tremendous *zechuyos*. First of all, he's doing *chessed* and taking care of them, and even if he has to be *mevatel* learning, it is not a sin — to the contrary, he's actually involved in a mitzvah because he is not working for his pleasure; he working *l'shem Shamayim* because he must support his family. It's considered he's *osek b'mitzvah* and he becomes sanctified. This is a wonderful thing.

There's a halachah in *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 38:8)*: "Those who write mezuzos and tefillin, they and their assistants and their assistants' assistants, and all those who are involved in mitzvah-related professions, are absolved from laying tefillin all day, aside from the time of Krias Shema and

tefillah." The Rema adds: "If it would be imperative for them to do their work during the time of Krias Shema and *tefillah*, they would have been absolved from Krias Shema and *tefillah*." *Sofrim* who write *sifrei Torah*, tefillin, and mezuzos — and their assistants, meaning the people who sell these *tashmishei kedushah* — are involved in Heavenly work, mitzvah-related work. They are considered to be *osek b'mitzvah* and are therefore absolved from other mitzvos.

The *Mishnah Berurah* writes in the name of the Magen Avraham that this is only true if the person main intention is to fulfill the mitzvah. While they do need *parnasah*, they chose this profession specifically because it's a mitzvah to write and sell *tashmishei kedushah*, and the mitzvah is the main thing for them. After all, they could have chosen another profession and earned money in a plethora of other ways, but they chose this to bring merit to the *rabbim*. Since their intention is *l'shem Shamayim*, they are in the category of "*oskim b'mitzvah peturim min hamitzvos*," and when they are selling, they are absolved from saying *Krias Shema*, *tefillah*, and *tefillin*.

Usually, *sofrim* and their assistants can arrange it that they can do these mitzvos either before or after work, but if it doesn't work out and they can't do both, then they are "*oskim b'mitzvah peturim min hamitzvos*" because they are being *mezakeh es harabbim* with mitzvos. Everything depends on the intent — what's their reason and why are they doing this.

Davening for Ruchniyus

We ask in our prayers "*V'taheir libeinu l'ovdecha b'emes*, Purify our hearts to serve You in truth." We ask that our heart be pure, that all our good deeds should be performed in purity, *l'shem Shamayim*.

We've already spoken about why we only say "*v'taheir libeinu*" on Shabbos and Yom Tov, and why we don't recite this prayer during the week. (See the Hebrew *sefer Darkei HaChizuk, pirkei hadrachah*, p. 314.)

The truth is, it's not even a question, because there is a tefillah we recite on the weekdays too: *Hashiveinu l'Torasecha*, and *Selach Lanu*, and *Chaneinu*, and many other *tefillos* with requests for *ruchniyus* and purity of the heart, for Torah, *avodah*, and *teshuvah*. On Shabbos, we don't make requests in Shemoneh Esrei, so we say in another manner: "And purify our hearts to serve You in truth." Similarly, there is a *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (51:12): "A pure heart Hashem has created for me." This *pasuk* is a prayer and a request for purity of the heart, asking Hashem to create a pure heart. The entire *sefer Tehillim*, and especially Chapter 119 is replete with prayers and requests for success in Torah and mitzvos and all spiritual matters.

It's well known that Rav Yisrael Salanter said that it's tried and true that prayers for *ruchniyus* help. There is one thing that tefillah doesn't necessarily help for — that's if you ask for a better memory, to remember what you learn. This is because if someone forgets, it's due to a weakness in memory, and this is not a sin at all — it's not in his control, and he's not obligated to do more than he can. The truth is, if he

reviews his learning often, he will remember. If he can't, or if he doesn't have the strength to review more, it's not a sin.

Rav Yisrael's comment that *tefillah* for *ruchniyus* always helps is referring to preventing sin. But when one davens for special success against his nature — for example, asking for a stronger memory to remember his learning better — his *tefillah* will not necessarily go so far as to change nature. This is something very rare, and one needs extraordinary *zechuyos* to receive this. (See the *Maharsha* on *Niddah* 69b.)

Torah and Tefillah of Pious Men

The Gemara (*Berachos* 32b) relates that “*chassidim rishonim* would stand for an hour before their prayers, and then another hour after their prayers. The *Mesillas Yesharim* (Chap. 17) explains why they waited an hour before beginning their prayers: in order to attain the necessary fear and love of Hashem necessary to daven with the proper *kavanah*. *Kavanah* requires preparation. The *chassidim rishonim* would wait a full hour, then daven for another hour, and then they had to wait another hour after davening. Since they reached “nullification of all physicality” while they prayed, they needed time to return to their regular state.

The Gemara asks, “If they spent nine hours on davening daily, how was their Torah ‘*mishtameres*,’ kept, and how did they manage to complete their work?” Three *tefillos* a day, at three hours a *tefillah*, is nine hours, so when did they learn? The Gemara answers, “However, since they were pious, they remembered the Torah they learned, and they saw blessing in their work.”

I heard from my father *zt”l* (and *Ein Yaakov* writes similarly) that the Gemara wrote “*mishtameres*,” to tell us that these pious men had already learned previously, and that’s how they became “*chassidim rishonim*,” earlier pious men, once they learned the entire Torah. One can only act with piety in *tefillah* on such levels after learning Torah intensely and for a long time! But once they learned, they might possibly forget their learning. So this is what the Gemara is telling us: since they were *chassidim*, their Torah was *mishtameres*, kept — they did not forget what they had learned.

This is a special level of *siyatta d’Shemaya* in the merit of their piety. Because they had such a pious level of *avodas Hashem* — *tefillah* is *avodah she’balev* — because they served Hashem with such supernatural *kochos*, they received special *zechuyos* and did not forget what they learned. This is exceptional.

Davening to Understand Torah

One should daven to understand Torah, which is *ruchniyus*, and one needs *siyatta d’Shemaya* for this. We’ve already mentioned the *Tumim* in *Yaaros Devash* (vol. 1, *drush* 4), who writes, “There is nothing that brings a person more merit to attain clarity in Torah and to decipher its hidden parts properly and truthfully than tearfully davening to Hashem to pity him, for Hashem hears *tefillos* and is close to all who call out to Him truthfully.” He said about himself: “When I don’t daven with proper *kavanah*, my Torah learning is not up to par, and I am despondent, but on the other hand, when I

cry out to Hashem from the walls of my heart in prayer to the One Who grants me wisdom, for I am very poor, due to my many sins, He will have mercy on me to enlighten my eyes in His Torah.” The Netziv of Volozhin said about himself that when he doesn’t cry during the *tefillah* of “*Ahavah Rabbah*,” he doesn’t have success in Torah that day.

There are many places in every day davening where one asks for success in Torah, like in *Birkas HaTorah* and *Ahavah Rabbah*. In his *Kovetz Igros* (vol. 3, 151), the Chazon Ish mentions a few examples, and writes: “And a person should always direct his face to his Creator, asking Him grant him understanding Torah, just like the Men of the Great Assembly instituted a *berachah* for knowledge in *Shemoneh Esrei*, and in *Ahavah Rabbah*, and in *Kedushah d’Sidra* (*Hu yiftach libeinu b’Toraso*), and in *Elokai Netzor* (*p’sach libi b’Torasecha*), and in *Brich Shmei* (*d’Tiftach liba’i b’Oraisa*), and in other places.” In *birkos haTorah* as well, we ask “*v’haarev na*,” and we ask *Hashiveinu l’Torasecha*, and in the *Yehi Ratzon* after *Shemoneh Esrei*, we ask *v’sein chelkeinu b’Torasecha*.

If so, we are making numerous requests daily for success in Torah, and so a person has many opportunities to merit success in Torah. A person should have increased *kavanah* in these requests in our daily prayers.

The Power of Even a Wordless Prayer

Aside from the regular *tefillos*, one can also daven his own personal, heartfelt prayers. If a person davens to the *Ribbono shel Olam* for success in *ruchniyus*, asking to merit Torah and *middos tovos*, *shemiras halashon*, and to act according to the Torah, then his personal *tefillah* is also an effective prayer to merit *siyatta d’Shemaya*. While it isn’t considered *tefillah* regarding *hilchos tefillah*, and the three set daily prayers must be spoken out, additional private prayers are also called *tefillah* even if they are just thoughts in one’s mind or heart.

I already told the story about someone from *Chutz LaAretz* who came to the *Kosel*. He wasn’t a believing Jew, but he thought to himself: If matters of *emunah* are true, I beg Hashem for mercy to help me become knowledgeable in *emunah*. The very moment this thought passed through his mind, a *kiruv* activist (either from *Moreshet Avot* or *Arachim*) approached him and asked him if he’d like to learn a little about Judaism. The very same time he davened in his heart, he merited *siyatta d’Shemaya*! Just like Rav Yisrael Salanter said — it’s tried and true that *tefillah*, even unspoken *tefillos*, for *ruchniyus* is effective to merit *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

This is like what Chazal say (*Makkos* 38b), “A person is led in the way he wants to go,” and “One who comes to be purified is helped” (*Yoma* 38b). Even if he only thinks in his heart that he wants to be purified, or that he wants to tread a good path, he merits *siyatta d’Shemaya*. And this is wonderful.

Enslavement to Torah

We learned in *Pirkei Avos* (3:5) that if one accepts the yoke of Torah upon himself, the yoke of the government and of a

livelihood is taken off him. “The yoke of Torah” simply put means that he is in a situation where he must learn. Accepting the yoke, *kabbalos ol*, means that he creates a situation where he is obligated to learn, and he has no other choice. In this *zechus*, the yoke of government and livelihood is removed from him. All types of things that can control a person’s life — like the government and family matters — end up working out and since he accepted the yoke of Torah, he does not bear the burden of these things.

On the other hand, if someone throws away the yoke of Torah, he is given the yoke of government and livelihood. This means that if someone had been “enslaved” to Torah, and had been busy with all sorts of learning schedules that “forced” him to learn, but he removes these “burdens” because he wants an easier life, then it will end up being even worse. Instead, he will once again bear the burden of the government and livelihood. It will be harder for him.

We’ve already mentioned that there’s a well-known rule regarding performing *maasim tovim*. **If a person does *maasim tovim*, but it takes a lot of effort and he wants to make things easier and stop doing so many *maasim tovim*, he will not gain. In fact, he just will be making life harder for himself; by giving up the yoke of Torah and *maasim tovim*, things become harder!** And I personally know people who make *cheshbonos* how to lighten their load, but they just lost out more. One only loses from acting this way; he will not gain.

We Are Here to Help Others

In Rav Yitzchak of Volozhin’s introduction to his father’s *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*, he writes, “And so he would constantly tell me the following: Man was not created for himself; he was created to help others as much as he can.” People were created simply to help others; helping others is our right to existence. If so, if he is “enslaved” because of other people, this is exactly why he’s in this world.

A married man once came to Maran the Chazon Ish *zt”l* and asked if he should take out life insurance. The Chazon Ish told him that it would be dangerous, because he lives for his family. Who knows if he’s alive simply because his family needs him? But if the family would be taken care of even if he’s not around, he might not live, and there’s no way to know in whose *zechus* he is alive. We need *zechuyos*!

Therefore, if other people are dependent on him and he is “enslaved” to them, it’s actually *zechuyos* for him. This might be his right to existence.

It’s well known that the Chafetz Chaim did so much for *zikkui harabbim*. The first *sefer* he wrote was Chafetz Chaim and Shemiras HaLashon, which include both halachos and mussar about lashon hara. At first, he printed them anonymously — that’s why he was called “the Chafetz Chaim,” people didn’t know his name so they referred to him by the name of his *sefer*. In his introduction, he wrote that the sin of the *Churban* was *sinas chinam*, and we must rectify this sin and improve our *shemiras halashon* to bring the *geulah* closer.

Even so, he thought about himself as well and would give himself *mussar*, as the *Shaarei Teshuvah* says one should do (2:26). He would go up to a room and would speak to himself privately: “You are X, you have sin X, and sin Y, and you must do teshuvah.” He also traveled to R’ Nochum’ke Horodner to learn *avodas Hashem* from him.

Whatever he did was for *zikkui harabbim*. For example, his *sefer Mishnah Berurah* was written so halachah would be clear; and so were many other *sefarim* he wrote. For example, *Nidchei Yisrael* was written for Jewish soldiers drafted to the army, to help them understand how to manage with kashrus and other *halachos*. He also wrote Shem Olam for childless couples, to teach them which *maasim tovim* they should do in order to leave behind a legacy. All the *sefarim* he wrote were to benefit others and for *zikkui harabbim*. He merited and brought merit to others, as it says (*Avos* 5:18): “Moshe merited and brought merit to others.” First he ‘merited’ and then he ‘brought merit to others,’ because one needs personal merit in order to bring merit to others. Davening for others is also *zikkui harabbim*, and if a person davens for his friend, he is answered first (*Bava Kama* 92a).

This is the concept of “*V’taheir libeinu*.” Every single person can be *zocheh* to this, one must do *hishtadlus*. One must fall into the category of “one who comes to be purified.” The way to do this is to have a set learning seder in *mussar*, as the *Mishneh Berurah* writes (*siman aleph, siman* 603). It can even be a *sefer* of just a few minutes, but it should be daily, so as not to forget. By doing so, may we all merit *siyatta d’Shemaya* for success in *ruchniyus*!

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

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