

## Darkei HaChizuk

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

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### Avdus in Mitzvah Fulfillment

We have a *chiyuv*, obligation, of *avodah*, *avodas Hashem*. Indeed, the *pasuk* states (*Devarim* 11:13), "To love Hashem your G-d and to serve Him, with all your heart and all your soul."

We are obligated in the 613 mitzvos: Torah, *maasim tovim*, and all the mitzvos, but we can end up doing mitzvos without them being "*avodah*," without a feeling of servitude. For example, a person can do a mitzvah because it's worth his while, because he'll earn Olam Haba — and maybe even a better life in Olam Hazeh, so it's worthwhile and that's why he does the mitzvah. Is this *avdus*? Is this servitude? No, absolutely not! Servitude is when a person does something because he's a slave, because he must, because there's a master and I am his servant — and the fact that I'm a servant obligates me to do it. This is the feeling of *avdus* — I am not my own master, there's someone above me. There's a master, and I'm the servant.

This is what Chazal said at the beginning of *Pirkei Avos* (1:3): "Don't be like servants who serve their master in order to receive a reward. Instead, be like servants... not in order to receive a reward." When someone serves his master in order to receive reward, it's not *avdus*. He's only doing it because he will gain something for his good deeds. While he believes that he has a master, and he doesn't deny his master's existence — he's not a *kofar* — and he's doing things to make his master happy, his intention is to receive a reward and personally benefit from his deeds. This is not *avdus*!

*Avdus* is to do something because "I am obligated" — not "for myself," but because I am obligated! Because I have a master and I am the servant, and whatever the servant acquires, his master acquires, and I am not my own boss! There is Someone else who is my Boss. That's called *avdus*.

### Harnessing All Abilities for Kevod Shamayim

The *Chovos HaLevavos* writes (*Shaar Avodas HaElokim* chap. 4) that none of man's actions are *reshus*, voluntary

acts. Everything a person does is either a mitzvah or an *aveirah*. Either a *chiyuv*, an obligation, or an *issur*, a prohibition. (If he does something that's necessary, it's a mitzvah, but if his deeds include something unnecessary, it is a sin and a waste of time.)

Since a person is a servant and is completely subjugated to his Master, all his abilities and strengths don't belong to him; they aren't even his — they belong to his Master. He is even more enslaved to his Master than a regular slave. A regular slave serves a human master and is only obligated to serve his master because those are the rules. However, his talents and abilities are still his. But in the Master-servant relationship of a person with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, a person does not have ownership over any of his abilities or strengths. He received everything from Hashem, and the nature of his slavery is that whatever he has, he received from his Master.

Why did HaKadosh Baruch Hu give man strength, talents, and abilities? In order to use them to bring glory to His Name! Indeed, the *pasuk* states (*Yeshayahu* 43:7), "Whatever is called by My name and for My honor, I created it, I formed it, I even made it." All of a person's abilities are for *kevod Shamayim*, and if he doesn't use them for *kevod Shamayim*, he doesn't deserve his strength and power.

Rabbeinu Yonah wrote (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 1:10) that a sinner should think to himself: "The Creator blew within me a living soul, a knowing heart, and the benefit of intelligence so that I can recognize Him, and fear Him, and rule over my body and all its corollaries... and since this is why I was created, but the opposite is happening, what is the purpose of my life?" If a person doesn't fulfill his obligations, then "what is the purpose of my life" — he doesn't deserve to live, because we were given life for the purpose of increasing *kevod Shamayim*.

### Avdus in Regard to Physical Needs and Family

All our physical needs are not "*reshus*," a person is obligated to full them, because without a healthy body

he won't be able to serve Hashem. We've already mentioned the *Sefer HaChinuch's* (mitzvah 488) words that the body needs four things: food, sleep, rest, and happiness — these are all physical needs. Without food, the body cannot exist, living without sleep is also not possible, and in addition to sleep, one also needs rest, and happiness and a good mood are also necessities. A person cannot function without these things.

Regarding all these, Hashem gives a person food, and the *teva* to sleep, to rest, and for happiness — the ability to be happy — and the purpose for all of this is *avdus*! So that a person can function and serve Hashem.

Therefore, it's not a voluntary act — he eats because he must eat. His eating is an *avodah*, a way of serving Hashem. It's not simply because he likes to eat and he's hungry — even though that's human nature — he's eating because he is obligated! Because he is an *eved*, and a servant must be healthy. In order to upkeep his servitude, he needs energy and he must eat. It turns out that his eating is an *avodah*, and the fact that he's in *avdus* obligates him to do so.

Regarding the *mishnah* (*Avos* 2:12), “May all your actions be for the sake of Heaven,” the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Deios* 3:3) that if a person's every action is *l'shem Shamayim*, even his sleep is *avdus* to HaKadosh Baruch Hu! If he has in mind that his sleep is *l'shem Shamayim*, because if he doesn't sleep, he won't be able to observe the 613 mitzvos, then his status of servitude obligates him to sleep. “It turns out that his sleep is *avdus* to Hashem.” He's serving Hashem by sleeping, and fulfilling *avdus* even as he sleeps!

But when is it called “*avdus*,” when is it really serving Hashem as he sleeps? When his whole reason — **not just the *kavanah*, the actual “*sibah*,” reason — for going to sleep is to serve Hashem. If the fact that he's an *eved*, and his *avdus* obligates him to sleep, is the very reason he's going to sleep, that's what it depends on.** It's not merely what a person's *kavanos* are, it's what's the *sibah* for it is. What propels him to perform this action? Is he just sleeping because that's his nature; he's tired, and he wants to sleep, or is he sleeping because he is obligated; because his *avdus* obligates to do so?

*Kavanah*, intent, changes the value of all our actions. If a person isn't doing something because of *avdus*, then it turns into a simple action, just to indulge in physical pleasure, just to satisfy the yetzer hara. Even if it's not the yetzer hara, there's still no value or *avdus*

involved. But if *avdus* propels a person's *kavanah* and *sibah* to complete certain actions, then even his eating and sleeping is *avodas Hashem*!

Similarly, if a person needs to support his family and take care of their needs, that's a *chiyuv* — he is obligated to do so. Even though it's natural for a person to take care of his family, it's also an obligation, so while he's busy supporting his family, he is also involved in *avdus*. He is fulfilling his obligation of *avdus*.

This is what Chazal was referring to when they said “May all your deeds be *l'shem Shamayim*.” A person should carry out his needs and obligations *l'shem Shamayim*, for the purpose of fulfilling his mitzvah of *avdus*. Of course, he has *rachmanus* on his family — so he supports them and takes care of them — and this involves *ahavas chesed* as well. But this is a *chesed* that he's **obligated** to do! And he also fulfills his obligation of *avdus* by doing so.

This is not simple and it's a *madreigah*. Making sure that *avdus* is the main cause for our *maasim* is a great *madreigah*, which is really not simple.

### Learning Torah Out of Love Like Sons

I saw from Rav Chaim Volozhin in *Ruach Chaim* (*Avos* 2:1) the following: “And it's known that because of the Torah we are called ‘sons.’ *Hashem Yisbarach Shemo* reveals His secret like a father to his beloved son, and the mitzvos are like a master's commandment to his servant. Therefore we request in our prayers ‘Return us, our Father, to Your Torah,’ but when we are talking about *avodah*, we use the term ‘Our King’: ‘Our King, bring us close to service of You.’ And the way of most tzaddikim is to act like a son in Torah, and a servant in *avodah*.”

That is, for most tzaddikim, Torah learning is done out of love, without feeling like it's servitude, and that's why we use the term “Our Father” in connection to Torah: “Return us, our Father, to Your Torah,” like a father and son. There's no feeling of servitude there — people learn because they enjoy it and learning is interesting, as it states (*Tehillim* 19:11), “They are sweeter than honey and drippings of honeycombs.” There are many other flavors that the Torah is compared to, such as wine, honey and milk, and water. Indeed, Chazal say (*Bava Kama* 17a): “There is no water aside from Torah, as it states: ‘O! All who thirst go to water.’” That is how it with *limud haTorah*; there is no feeling of servitude. On the other hand, *avodah* does involve a feeling of servitude, that's why we use the term “King” in relation to service.

This shows us that a person does not feel servitude all day long, because when he is involved in Torah, each person according to his abilities, he is just like a son.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* (4:3) quotes the Rosh in *Nedarim* *daf* 62 on the words “*Aseh devarim l’shem pa’alam v’dabeir bahem lishmam.*” The Rosh explains: *Aseh devarim l’shem pa’alam* — for Hashem’s name Who created everything for His sake; *v’dabeir bahem lishmam* — all your speech and negotiations in *divrei Torah* should be **for the Torah’s sake**, such as for knowing and understanding, for increasing teachings and *pilpul*...

That is, he is explaining that when a person does “*devarim*,” matters — mitzvos and *maasim tovim* — he must do them “*l’shem Pa’alam*,” for the sake of the One Who gave him the strength to do and accomplish (meaning, out of a feeling of servitude), but *v’dabeir bahem*, when a person is involved in *divrei Torah*, then it should be “*lishmam*,” for the Torah’s sake, in order to understand better and increase learning and *pilpul*. He explains that Torah learning must be approached with the feeling that it is interesting, out of curiosity to find out the *kasha* and *teiritz*, to know the halachah, to know what the Rashba says and what the Ramban says, what Rava says and what Abaye says, what the svaros are — this is “*lishmam*,” this is the **avodah** of Torah learning!

### **Avdus and Purity in Physical Needs**

The *Mesillas Yesharim* speaks at length about the quality of cleanliness and purity. He writes (chapters 16 - 17) that purity can be applied to physical acts. One can perform all his physical needs with the intent of *l’shem Shamayim*, and thus transform physical needs to *avodas Hashem* and purity. David HaMelech requested (*Tehillim* 51:12), “Elokim created for me a pure heart,” that is, purity of heart. This is the quality of *taharah*, purity, when one incorporates purity into his physical actions; they are then pure.

This is pure *avodah*, complete *avodah*. Indeed, the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes at the beginning of his *sefer* “*ha-avodah hatemimah*, the pure service,” in reference to directing one’s physical needs *l’shem Shamayim*. Of course, one should not do more than is necessary, but it all depends on one’s *kavanah* — what’s the cause. If the cause is *avodah*, that’s the *madreigah*.

### **Sheleimus in Avdus — Out of Love and Fear**

If *avdus* is out of fear, due to fear of punishment, of Gehinnom, then one’s *avdus* is not *b’sheleimus*. Servitude must be out of love, *avodah m’ahavah*.

While one must incorporate both fear and love in his *avdus*, as the Bartenura says on the *mishnah* (*Avos* 1:2): “Be like slaves who serve their master not in order to receive reward, and may the fear of Heaven be upon you.” The Tanna is mentioning two things: 1) serving Hashem without expecting a reward, i.e., out of love, and 2) May the fear of Heaven be upon you, i.e., *yiras Shamayim*; because both love and fear are necessary components of mitzvah observance.

The Bartenura cites Chazal (*Yerushalmi*, end of *Berachos*) who said, “Serve out of love, serve out of fear. Serve out of love — if you’ve come to hate, know that you are someone who loves, and one who loves does not hate. Serve out of fear — if you’ve come to kick, know that you fear, and one who fears does not kick.” On the one hand, we must serve Hashem out of love, because we enjoy it, because we love serving Hashem, but if a person only serves Hashem out of love, it might turn out that while he presently loves serving Hashem, later on he may not love it so much (or other things will be more enticing and he’ll love them more), and then he will stop serving Hashem. Therefore, in addition to *ahavah*, it is also necessary to have *yirah*. Then a person will know that even if he doesn’t love what he’s doing, he must do it anyhow because of *yiras Shamayim*! If *ahavah* would be the only impetus for serving Hashem, he would not serve Hashem when it was hard for him, but when *yirah* is in the equation, he knows he must serve Hashem; he has no choice.

On the other hand, if *yirah* would be the only factor in his servitude, he may end up feeling hatred since fear is propelling him to act even though he doesn’t want to. That’s why *ahavah* is necessary as well — then he won’t end up hating, because “a loved one does not hate.” But *yirah* is also necessary, because without fear, he is liable to “kick” and fail to perform mitzvos, but due to his *yirah*, “one who fears does not kick.” That’s why both *ahavah* and *yirah* are necessary; one without the other is not enough.

How do we do this? That’s why there are *mussar sefarim* which give a person understanding, knowledge and guidance toward leading a good, happy life. *Mussar* doesn’t make a person sad, nor is it frightening — it actually helps a person be calm and leaves him with a pleasant feeling. This is well known, and we’ve spoken about it many times already. Furthermore, the entire atmosphere in one’s house becomes very pleasant. By learning *mussar*, one can acquire *ahavah* and *yirah*.

Another way to incorporate both *ahavah* and *yirah* in one's actions is to follow the Rambam words about "performing *maasim l'shem Shamayim*." Like he says, if a person goes to sleep *l'shem Shamayim* because he feels this is his obligation, he is serving Hashem in his sleep. This is *avodah*, *avodas Hashem*, because he is obligated. HaKadosh Baruch Hu has obligated him to do so, but is it from *ahavah* or *yirah*? They are two different *madreigos*, and both are necessary. A person's *sheleimus* of his deeds is dependent on this.

### **Tefillah — Like a Person Talking to His Friend**

Another part of *avodas Hashem* is *tefillah*. There's a very high *madreigah* in *tefillah* — I've personally seen people on this level — as the *Mesillas Yesharim* states (chap. 19) that when a person davens he should feel "that he's actually standing before the Creator and having a give and take with Him, even though man cannot see Him."

The *Mesillas Yesharim* continues: "It's very difficult for man to create a real image in his heart, since his senses cannot help with it at all. However, with just a little contemplation and attention, a properly intelligent person can set the truth of this matter in his heart, and can imagine himself in discussion with Hashem Yisbarach, and see himself pleading in front of Him, and begging Him, and see how Hashem Yisbarach listens attentively just as a person speaks to his friend, and his friend listens attentively."

I've seen people davening in this manner. (See the introduction to *sefer Hod Tzvi*, written by Rabbeinu's father *zt"l*: "His *tefillos* and *berachos* were enunciated

clearly and pleasantly, with great emotion, and as he davened, he epitomized the *Mesillas Yesharim*'s words in chap. 19 about 'standing before the Creator and having a give and take with Him.'")

This is a *madreigah* of *emunah*, to have such clarity of *emunah* to feel that he's actually speaking to someone when he davens! The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes that this is against our senses, and it's a very difficult *madreigah* to attain, but someone who is "properly intelligent" feels that he is speaking to someone who hears him and wants to listen to him.

The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* states (81:11): "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants man to ask Him for his needs. Chazal say (*Yerushalmi Berachos* 9:5 and *Midrash Tehillim* 84) that when making a request of a human king, if a person presents his request once and the king does not want to fulfill it, he will become extremely angry if the person repeats his request once again. HaKadosh Baruch Hu, however, is not like that. He says: "Open your mouth wide (make many requests) and I will fill it." Ask again and again, as much as you can — HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants to hear your requests and He will fulfill your requests. This is *tefillah*.

These are all not simple *madreigos*, one needs *siyatta d'Shemaya* to merit them. If a person doesn't learn *mussar sefarim*, it's not possible to attain these *madreigos*. But the *Itarusa d'litita* one gains by learning *mussar* will help him be *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya* to attain all these lofty *madreigos* of *avdus*. *Yehi ratzon* that we all merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* to reach these *madreigos* of *avdus*.

Please daven for  
גיטה פייגה בת רבקה  
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The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va'ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein's home.