

Darkei HaChizuk

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

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ועתה ישראל מה השם שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה

Two Parts to Yiras Shamayim

Having *yiras Shamayim* is a mitzvah, as the *pasuk* states (*Devarim* 10:20): “Fear Hashem your G-d.” There are many other *pesukim* relating to the mitzvah of *yirah* and the obligation to act with *yiras Shamayim*.

How does one fulfill this mitzvah? By doing whatever *yiras Shamayim* obligates. There are 248 *mitzvos asei*, which *yirah* obligates us to fulfill — if we don’t fulfill these *mitzvos*, we won’t have Gan Eden. After all, there is punishment and reward both in this world and the Next World. There are also 365 *mitzvos lo ta’asei*, and we have a yetzer hara that has a strong desire to transgress them. The only solution to counteract the yetzer hara is *yiras Shamayim* — the fear of transgressing! These are the two parts of *yiras Shamayim*: 1) in *kum v’asei*, active mitzvah fulfillment, and 2) in *shev v’al taaseh*, refraining from committing *aveiros*.

The *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 2:11): “*Ivdu es Hashem b’yirah* — Serve Hashem with fear.” Performance of *mitzvos* is *avodas Hashem*, and it is supposed to be done out of fear — we should have *yiras Shamayim* while actually doing the mitzvah and not merely before the action. Our *yiras Shamayim* compels us to fulfill mitzvos, but we must also have *yirah* when performing the mitzvah. As we do a mitzvah, it should be carried out with *yirah*, with the belief and feeling of “*da lifnei mi atah omeid*, “Know before Whom you are standing.” If we act this way, we will automatically have *yiras Shamayim*.

Regarding *tefillah*, Chazal tell us (see *Berachos* 28b, and *Rashi* ad loc.), “before Whom you are ‘standing,’” but regarding active mitzvos, one must be aware of before Whom he is “serving.” Indeed, Chazal say (*Avos* 2:14): “Know before Whom you are toiling.” This awareness and *emunah* produces *yirah*.

Yirah pertains to all aspects of *avodas Hashem*: in action, speech, and thought. Chazal say (*Avos* 2:1): “Know what is above you. An eye that sees, an ear that

hears, etc.” This includes the awareness that Hashem is watching whatever I do, the actual action, and that He hears whatever I say. Furthermore, it’s the knowledge that He can “see” how I speak and “hear” the speech. Not only that, He also knows my thoughts — the intentions of my actions and speech are clear to Him.

We have obligations in the realm of thought as well — things we are permitted to think about, and those that we are not. For example, we are obligated to think in Torah, as it states (*Yehoshua* 1:8), “And you shall think in it day and night.” This is a high *madreigah* — it is not simple, but this is what the Torah says and this is how it should be: “Think in it day and night”! HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows our thoughts, He knows if a person is fulfilling his obligations in thought, as well as all other mitzvah actions. Hashem knows our thoughts; He is aware of the level of *yirah* we’ve implemented in our mitzvah observance.

One’s Joy Is Commensurate with His Fear

The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* states “*Ivdu es Hashem b’yirah* — Serve Hashem with fear,” and then it continues, “*v’gilu b’re’adah* — and rejoice in trembling.” Our *avodas Hashem* must be carried out with fear, and not only that: “*v’gilu*” — one should be happy that he’s trembling! Trembling, *re’adah*, is a higher level than *yirah* — a person trembles out of fear. But this trembling grants him happiness, because when he reaches this *madreigah*, he is joyous that he merited attaining the *madreigah* of “*re’adah*.”

“*Re’adah*” is a *madreigah*; it’s not simple fear. *Yirah* is simply the fear of what might happen later, but *re’adah* is such intense fear that it causes him to shake. That’s why the *pasuk* states “and rejoice in trembling” — someone who has reached the *madreigah* of “*re’adah*” has good reason to be happy that he merited attaining this level; he’s happy to be trembling!

The choice of words here is also significant — “*Gilu b’re’adah*.” *Gilah* is a higher level of joy than *simchah*.

In the sixth *brachah* of the *sheva berachos*, we say: “*Asher bara sason v’simchah, chasan v’kallah, gilah...*” First *sason* and *simchah* are mentioned, and only then *gilah*, which is on a higher level. It’s a special level of joy, so when we say *gilu b’re’adah*, we are declaring that our trembling is a cause for great joy — joy on a level higher than “*simchah*” — the elevated joy of *gilah*.

If so, there is a level of joy that’s on the same *madreigah* of *yirah*. *Yiras Shamayim* brings a person *simchah*. If someone has *yiras Shamayim*, it’s a reason to be happy. *Yiras Shamayim* is not harmful to one’s health — not only that, it actually makes one happy. Rav Yitzchak Blazer discusses this at length (*Shaarei Ohr, os yud*) — *yiras Shamayim* is not a hazard to your health and it does not cause sadness. To the contrary, it causes joy. It’s like the *pasuk* states: “*Gilu b’re’adah, Rejoice in trembling.*” The more *yirah* one has, the higher *madreigah* of *yiras Shamayim* — when his *yirah* is on the level of “trembling” — the more joy he will experience! Because he has a greater awareness and knowledge of the truth.

Entreaties in our Tefillos

In *Avos* (2:13) we learn that when a person davens, he “should not make his prayer a set routine; rather he should beg for mercy and [pray with] supplications before Hashem.” Let’s take a deeper look at what this means. There are many parts to our *tefillos*. In the Shemoneh Esrei prayer, the first three *berachos* are praise: *Avos*, *Gevuros*, and *Kedushas Hashem*. It’s not possible to insert *tachanunim*, supplications, there. After all, he’s praising his Creator there; he’s not asking for anything in those *berachos*.

However, when reciting the *berachos* that are *bakashos*, requests, supplications are in place. After all, he’s asking because he doesn’t have what he’s asking for. He begs and pleads for compassion: Grant us from You: knowledge, repentance, forgiveness, redemption, healing — all the requests in the intermediate *berachos*. Supplications are appropriate here — ask with “*tachanunim*.” And *tachanunim* doesn’t mean to say the words in a sing-song tune, it means he should feel the “*tachanunim*” in his heart. He should not just be putting on a show; he should actually be pleading in his heart because he lacks these things and he feels pitiful because of his lack. He asks in the plural form so that he’s not asking just for his own needs; he’s asking for all of Klal Yisrael!

When he davens, he must plead for compassion for all of Klal Yisrael. He should feel bad that there are people in Klal Yisrael who lack knowledge and understanding, he should feel pained that there are people who need to do teshuvah but are not repenting.

He begs Hashem for compassion, to have pity on our Jewish brothers and direct them toward teshuvah. After all, if they don’t repent, they are so pathetic! And so unfortunate! Because they won’t do teshuvah and one who sins without doing teshuvah will pay for it in Gehinnom. One has to pity a person who is headed toward Gehinnom.

Klal Yisrael are *rachmanim*, *bonei rachmanim* and they have compassion for those who suffer physical pain in this world. If so, how much more so must we have compassion on the *neshamah*’s suffering in Gehinnom — we cannot even fathom the levels of pain and suffering there. There are Jews who will suffer in Gehinnom even if they are unintentional sinners. And there are intentional sinners also, but even if someone hasn’t sinned intentionally, sins committed unintentionally are punishable too. “One who sins unintentionally will be punished” (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 4:15), and one must repent for unintentional sins. If not, he will suffer Gehinnom, *Rachmana litzlan*.

Klal Yisrael by nature are *rachmanim*, *bayshanim*, and *gomlei chasadim* (*Yevamos* 79a), and they have compassion on matters connected to Olam HaZeh. If so, should they not have pity on matters concerning Gan Eden and Gehinnom? It depends on one’s *emunah*. If one’s *emunah* is *b’sheleimus*, then he has mercy on Bnei Yisrael wherever they are — those who haven’t done teshuvah, for their Gehinnom, and even if they are unintentional sinners.

In any case, the place for *tachnunim* in *tefillah* is in the intermediate *brachos* of Shemoneh Esrei. In the first three and last three *berachos* it is not *shayach*. The *berachah* of Retzei is also a request and one can pray with *tachanunim*: “Be favorable toward Your people Yisrael, and turn to their *tefillah*. Return the service to the Beis HaMikdash.” Retzei is a *tefillah* for *ruchniyus*, for the Beis HaMikdash and for the *avodah*. The following *berachah*, *Modim*, is *hoda’ah*; but *tachanunim* fit in the next one, *Sim Shalom*, which is also a request for Klal Yisrael — *tachanunim*.

As we said, it depends on one’s level of *emunah* and *hergesh*. Some of our fellow Yidden are so unfortunate and we have compassion on them. That’s how it should be and that’s our obligation, but it’s not a simple *madreigah*. But it all depends on one’s level of *emunah*.

Pleading and Supplication

Davening with *kavanah* means to feel that you are speaking to HaKadosh Baruch Hu and HaKadosh Baruch Hu is listening. It’s not simple to do this. The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (chap. 19): “And you shall see that it is extremely hard to create a real image of

this in one's heart, since one's senses don't help in this matter at all." That is, this is in contradiction to one's physical senses.

But the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes: "However, anyone with proper intelligence will be able to set the truth of the matter in his heart: how does he come and literally have a give-and-take with Hashem Yisbarach? How does he plead before Him and make requests of Him? And Hashem Yisbarach is listening to him, just as a friend speaks to his friend, and his friend listens to him." That is, with just a bit of contemplation and attention, if a person has a little intelligence, if it's *seichel yashar*, he can understand and feel that he is literally standing in front of HaKadosh Baruch Hu and speaking with Him, and making requests. And he can realize and feel that Hashem hears him and is listening to him, just as one speaks with a friend!

I've actually seen people like this, people with this "proper intelligence." Some *gedolei Yisrael* were on this level, and when someone has the right intelligence, his prayers will be with *tachanunim*, and he will feel it; he'll realize before Whom he's pleading and begging.

Obligation to Increase Yiras Shamayim

Let's go back to the mitzvah of *yirah*. Having *yiras Shamayim* is a *mitzvas ase*. Furthermore, the *pasuk* states (*Devarim* 10:12): "And now Yisrael, what does Hashem your G-d *sho'el* [ask] of you? Only to fear Hashem your G-d." The word *sho'el* can mean "ask" — Hashem, so to speak, is asking: Do Me a favor and fear Me, since "everything is in Heaven's hands except for *yiras Shamayim*" (*Berachos* 33b). HaKadosh Baruch Hu is asking, so to speak, that man should "do him a favor" and act with *yiras Shamayim*, so that He can shower us with goodness and we'll merit eternal life.

There are many levels of *yiras Shamayim*, which is one of the lofty virtues Rabbeinu Yonah discusses in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:17). He writes that "every one of these has a number of *madreigos*." There is an obligation to constantly be progressing in *yiras Shamayim*. This is the mitzvah of *yiras Shamayim*: "Fear Hashem your G-d" means to add *madreigah* after *madreigah* — but each person's obligation is commensurate with his abilities.

Learning Mussar Is Necessary for Yiras Shamayim

How does one do this? That's why there are *mussar sefarim* which lead a person to have *yiras Shamayim*. There are the four famous *sefarim*: *Mesillas Yesharim*, *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Shaarei Teshuvah*, and *Orchos Tzaddikim*. There are other *sefarim* as well, such as the

Peleh Yoetz — it's a *sefer* with a lot of *yiras Shamayim*. There's also the *Nefesh HaChaim*. The *Nefesh HaChaim* (*Shaar* 1, chap. 3) quotes the *Zohar* "*Oraisa b'lo dechilu lo parcha l'eila*" — Torah without *yirah* will not reach lofty heights. One's level of Torah depends on his level of *yirah*, and Torah without *yirah* is a very low *madreigah* — it will not rise to lofty heights, because one needs *yirah*. And how does one do so? What leads to *yiras Shamayim*? *Mussar sefarim*!

That's why *yeshivos* have a steady *mussar seder* for a half hour every evening before Maariv except for Friday and Shabbos. We've already mentioned the Chafetz Chaim's words (*Beis Yisrael* chap. 9) that nowadays everyone admits there is no other option, no other solution, and in order to have *yiras Shamayim*, one must have a steady *mussar seder*. Without it, there is no *yiras Shamayim*.

My rebbi Rav E.E. Dessler *zt"l* said that in the past, one could see *yiras Shamayim* in the streets. People had *yiras Shamayim*. Rav Yisrael Salanter also discussed at length (*Ohr Yisrael* 14) the extent of *yiras Shamayim* that people had in the previous generations — even the simple folk had fear, they had *yiras Shamayim*. Many years ago, an elderly man from Chutz LaAretz told me that he remembered from his youth when the wagon drivers in the marketplace — the simplest people — would have an argument in Elul, one would admonish the other: How can you talk like that? It's Elul now! That's how he would frighten him with Elul, because there was *yiras Shamayim* on the streets. Since then, there's been *yeridas ha-doros*.

Either Rising or Falling

That's why one needs to have a steady learning *sefer* in *mussar* and increase *yirah*. Aside from the fact that *yiras Shamayim* is an actual mitzvah: "Fear Hashem your G-d," it is also a necessity for fulfilling all the mitzvos in the Torah. Without *yiras Shamayim*, *chas v'shalom* one can transgress many prohibitions. If a person is not involved in it on a steady basis, then every day that he doesn't strengthen himself, he will fall a bit lower. That's nature — if a person doesn't strengthen himself, he falls.

The expression is well-known: "If you aren't rising, know that you are falling." A person is not stagnant, he doesn't stay in one place. Only *malachim*, angels, are called *omdim* (standing) (*Zecharia* 3:7), but man goes either up or down. If he's not going up, he's going down. [See the Gra on *Mishlei* 15:24.] Therefore, the only *eitzah* is to have a steady, daily *mussar* session.

Bachurim in *yeshivos* have this *kevi'us*, but married men can learn *mussar* at home for a few minutes every

day — even for just five minutes. It has an influence and also imparts a very good feeling. Like we said, *yiras Shamayim* is “*gilu b’re’adah*” — it makes a person happy, happier than *simchah* — *gilah*!

This is the essential *eitzah* for moving upward instead of falling — have a daily *kevius* in *mussar*. Even family men should learn *mussar* for five minutes a day. There are many true stories of people who did this and their

entire household changed for the better; they had a pleasant, happy atmosphere at home because someone led his life with a *cheshbon hanefesh* in *yiras Shamayim*. *Yehi ratzon* that we all merit, every single one of us, all of Klal Yisrael, may we merit *b’siyatta d’Shemaya* attaining the *madreigah* of *yiras Shamayim*.

Parashas Yisro — An Auspicious Time for Success in Torah

It’s well known that every *parashah* has an influence on that specific time, even though it isn’t written explicitly in the Torah to specifically read any specific *parashah* on any specific date. In the West, they would complete reading the Torah only once every three years (see *Megillah* 29b), and they had a different division of the *parshiyos* than we do. In those days, at this point in the year, a different *parashah* was read. However, since the accepted custom and the Takanas haKadmonim is to read this *parashah* this week, each *parashah* holds a hint as to why it corresponds to that specific week. [See the Shelah HaKadosh, *chelek Torah She’Bichsav*, beginning of *Parashas Vayeishev*.]

As is known, there was once a decree against the *sefarim* of the *Talmud*. The Magen Avraham (*siman* 580; cited in the *Mishnah Berurah*) writes: “On Friday of *Parashas Chukas*, individuals have the custom to fast since on that day, twenty wagonloads full of *sefarim* were burned in France. They did not designate a certain day during the month, since it became known to them in a dream that the day of the *parashah* caused the *gezeirah* of the [burning of the] Torah: “*Zos chukas haTorah*” [This is the statute of the Torah] is translated into Aramaic: “*Da gezeiras Oraisa*” [This is the decree against the Torah].

The *gezeirah* is not connected to the day of the month; it is connected to the *parashah*, as the Magen Avraham writes: “*Yom haparashah goreim*, the day of the *parashah* caused it.” The *gezeirah* on the Torah is hinted to in the *parashah*, even though it isn’t the exact words of the Torah, it is just the words of *Targum Onkelus*. In any case, the Targum was also written with *ruach hakodesh*, so the Targum’s words can also determine all matters of the *parashah* during that time.

Since this week we read *Parashas Yisro*, which discusses Kabbalas HaTorah, it is certainly an auspicious, propitious time for success in Torah. One just needs *hishtadlus* and preparation, just as Bnei Yisrael had *Sheloshes Yemei Hagbalah* during the time of Matan Torah, as the *pasuk* states (19:15): “Be prepared for three days.” Moshe added another day (see *Shabbos* 87a). These additional days were preparations for Mattan Torah, as it’s impossible to receive the Torah without preparation.

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לרפואה שלימה ומהירה
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