

## Darkei HaChizuk

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

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### Relaxation during Bein HaZemanim

Everyone wants to relax during *bein hazemanim* — that's human nature. They learned with *hasmadah* and worked hard the entire *zman*, and now they want to rest a little, that's human nature. The truth is, some people really do need the rest, but not everyone needs it. There are many people who really don't rest — they continue with their regular daily schedule, and it's not hard for them. However, human nature is that people want to rest as much as possible, and they rest even more than necessary.

Chazal tell us a striking fact about Dor HaMidbar. This is the generation that left Mitzrayim and saw all the miracles, all the miracles in Mitzrayim, Krias Yam Suf, the *Anan*, the *amud he'anan* that led them by day, and the *amud ha'eish* that led them by night — they saw Hashem's *hashgachah* clearly, they saw *chasdei Shamayim* — and yet, the *pasuk* says the following about them (*Bamidbar* 10:33): "And they traveled from Hashem's mountain." Chazal say (*Yalkut Beha'alo-secha*, cited in the Ramban ad loc., and in *Tosfos Shabbos* 116) that they left Har Sinai happily "like a young child runs away from school." At first, they were at Har Sinai, and they sat and learned Torah, but once they left and continued their travels, they were happy immediately — they were happy about the rest. This was said about the people of the Dor HaMidbar — who were on a high *madreigah* — because this is human nature. This is the *yetzer hara* within human nature.

### Bittul Torah Bespeaks Belittlement of Torah

However, it is a grave sin, and Chazal have already said about this (*Sanhedrin* 99a) that if a person is able to be *osek baTorah* and he does not, the following *pasuk* is attributed to him: "For he has degraded Hashem's word and nullified His commandments, he will surely be cut off..." This is talking about the sin of *bittul Torah*. The sin is not just the *bittul*, it is also the *bizui*, the **degradation**. "For he has degraded Hashem's word." He is degrading the Torah when he is not learning it. Even though he's not actively doing anything wrong, it's just a "*shev v'al taaseh*," in any case, a *shev v'al taaseh* can be a very grave sin.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:14), "Many simple people think that the loss to the soul is mainly through *aveiros* that involve action, and that one who is pure of active sin and does not follow the path of

*aveiros*, while at the same time does not perform mitzvos and *maasim tovim*, will not taint his soul. Therefore we are obligated to inform these misguided souls that our Sages said: "HaKadosh Baruch Hu overlooked the sins of idolatry, immorality, and murder, but He did not overlook the sin of *bittul Torah*. Furthermore, they said, 'For he has degraded Hashem's word and nullified His commandments,' is attributed to one who can learn Torah, but fails to do so."

Rabbeinu Yonah (3:16) cites the mitzvos of Korban Pesach and *bris milah* as examples of this. These two mitzvos are *mitzvos ase'i*, yet one who fails to perform them is liable for *kareis*, even though his sin is merely a passive sin, a *shev v'al taaseh*. Either he just doesn't sacrifice the Korban Pesach, or he simply refrains from having a *bris milah*. He's not actively doing anything to prevent his observance of these mitzvos, and yet, he is still liable for *kareis*, for the *shev v'al taaseh*. Why is this so? Because these are very grave, serious mitzvos, and the severity of a punishment for failing to fulfill a mitzvah is commensurate with the gravity of the actual mitzvah. Since the mitzvah is so grave and so important, sinning by failing to fulfill it is extremely grave as well — and one is punished with *kareis* even for a *shev v'al taaseh*, for passively refraining from fulfilling the mitzvah.

### Torah Was Unimportant to Them

The Gemara tells us (*Nedarim* 81a): "What is the meaning of the *pasuk*, 'Who is the man so wise that he can understand this, and who is he to whom Hashem has spoken, that he can declare it? Why was the Land destroyed?' This question was asked to the *chachamim*, the *nevi'im*, and the ministering angels, and they could not explain it, just as the *pasuk* states: "Who is the man so wise," and wise men are *chachmei haTorah*, and "he to whom Hashem has spoken," are the *nevi'im* and angels, to whom Hashem speaks — they too didn't understand why the Land was destroyed. Hashem Himself explained it, as the *pasuk* states: "And Hashem said: Because they have forsaken My Torah."

*Lichorah*, "because they have forsaken My Torah" simply means that they were not *osek baTorah*. If so, it's a clear sin; everyone could have noticed it. Why, then, couldn't the *chachamim* and *nevi'im* explain it? The Gemara explains that "they have forsaken My Torah" means that they "did not recite the *brachah* over Torah before beginning to learn." That is, they were *osek*

*baTorah*, but they didn't make a *brachah* first. This is hard to understand, because failing to recite a *brachah* is also a clear, perceivable sin, so why couldn't the *chachamim* and *nevi'im* explain it?

The Ran (ad loc.) explains in the name of Rabbeinu Yonah that "they were surely involved in Torah constantly, that's why the *chachamim* and *nevi'im* were wondering why the Land was destroyed, until Hashem Himself, Who is aware of what transpires deep in our hearts, explained that they didn't recite a *brachah* over Torah before beginning to learn. That is, **they did not think Torah was important** enough to warrant reciting a *brachah* over it, because they did not learn Torah *lishmah*, and as a result, they treated its *brachah* lightly. "They did not follow the Torah," meaning, they did not have the proper intent, nor did they learn *lishmah*."

### The Virtues and Importance of Birkas HaTorah

That is, they really did recite *Birkas haTorah*, but they didn't recite the *brachos* properly, because the *brachos* discuss the importance of Torah: "Who has sanctified us with His mitzvos and commanded us to be involved in the words of Torah." This *brachah* is an expression of gratitude, we are thanking Hashem for having sanctified us and for commanding us to learn Torah. Then we ask "and make it sweet for us" — we want to receive *arvus* and sweetness in Torah.

The next *brachah* is "Who has chosen us from all nations," that is, we are thanking Hashem for having chosen us — for turning us into the chosen, preferred nation — for Klal Yisrael is different from all other nations. Indeed, Chazal say (*Yevamos* 79a) that we are "merciful, bashful, and perform *gemillus chasadim*." And who made us this way? HaKadosh Baruch Hu! Why? Because we are *osek baTorah*! These are all part of the special *maalos* and the importance of Torah.

Klal Yisrael during that time actually were *osek baTorah*, and they recited the *brachos* first, but Torah **was not important to them**, and their *brachah* was not recited as it should have been, with an inner recognition of the *chashivus haTorah*. And even if people are *osek baTorah*, if they do not respect Torah, it's considered as if "they have forsaken My Torah."

Rabbeinu Yonah mentioned that they were not *osek baTorah* "with the proper intent or *lishmah*." What is considered *Torah lishmah*? The *Nefesh HaChaim* (Gate 4) quotes the Rosh in *Nedarim* (62a), "Such as to know and understand, and to increase knowledge and *pilpul*, analysis." That is, if a person learns *Torah lishmah*, because he loves *esek haTorah*, and the learning interests him and he wants to know and understand, he wants to know the *kasha* and *teirutz* and all the *yedios* because he respects *esek haTorah* and loves it with *ahavas haTorah* — that's called *lishmah*.

This is how the Rosh explains what the *chachamim* said: "Perform matters for the sake of the one who created them, and speak in them *lishmam*, for their own sake" — "Perform matters" refers to mitzvos, which one must do "for the sake of the one who created them," meaning, for the sake of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who commanded us to do them, but "speak in them," meaning, speak in *divrei Torah*, *lishmam*, for the sake of the *divrei Torah* themselves, because they are interesting and enticing, regardless of the mitzvah involved. This is called *Torah lishmah*, when one learns due to his *ahavas haTorah*.

This is what was missing in the days of the Churban. While they did recite Birkas HaTorah before learning, they did not feel the *chashivus*, importance, of Torah while reciting the *brachos*. If they hadn't recited the *brachos* at all, the reason for the Churban would have been clear. And if so, why couldn't the *chachamim* or *nevi'im* explain the reason for it? It follows that we must say that they did recite the *brachos*, but they did not do so the way they should have. Their recitation was devoid of any feelings of *chashivus haTorah* or joy in *esek haTorah*, and this was their sin — the degradation and the lack of esteem for Torah.

### Emunah from Esek HaTorah

The Midrash (*Pesichta d'Eichah Rabbah* 2) on the *pasuk* "And they deserted Me and they did not keep My Torah," states: "*Halevai*, if only they had deserted Me and kept My Torah, because had they been *osek baTorah*, the light within it would have brought them back to goodness." The explanation of "they deserted Me" is that they were lacking in *emunah*; the explanation of "and they did not keep My Torah" is that they were not *osek baTorah*. Chazal say, Even though they had already deserted Me, and they already had a lack of *emunah*, in any case, if they would have been *osek baTorah*, the light of Torah would have brought them back. This is **the *koach haTorah*. It has a light that lights up our minds, that makes us understand, and even if someone lacks *emunah*, if he learns Torah, he will gain *emunah*, because *esek haTorah* gives a person *emunah*.** And the light of Torah will bring him back to the right path.

### Mussar Sefarim — Part of Torah

"*Esek haTorah*" literally means learning the actual Torah, but there is another part of Torah that is imperative for success in Torah learning, and that is: learning *mussar*. *Mussar* is also *divrei Torah*; *mussar* is *divrei Torah* of *mussar sefarim* and they are also a *tavlin* (lit., a spice), an antidote, against the yetzer hara. The *Mishnah Berurah* (*siman aleph*), in the name of Kadmonim, writes that when Chazal said (*Kiddushin* 30b), "I created the yetzer hara, I created the Torah as *tavlin* for it," the best antidote is learning *mussar*.

*Tavlin* literally means “spice,” which is something that gives food flavor. Just as spices add flavor to food, **learning mussar adds flavor to Torah, and adds flavor to yiras Shamayim. It gives man pleasure.** *Yiras Shamayim* is not sadness; it’s a pleasure!

### Hishtadlus and Chinuch for Yiras Shamayim

But *yiras Shamayim* is not simple. There could be a *talmid chacham* who learns Torah and performs good deeds, but his *yirah* is not complete. We’re talking about basic *yirah*, awareness that there is Gehinnom and reward and punishment. There’s Gehinnom in this world and Gehinnom in the World to Come. Basic *yirah* does not come naturally, *b’derech hateva*; one needs to be regulated to and taught about *yirah*; one must see it.

An important person who learned in our yeshivah once told me that he saw the Ponevezer Rav *zt”l* and the *mashgiach* Rav Chatzkel Levenstein *zt”l*, and he gained *yiras Shamayim* just from seeing them. Without that, he wouldn’t have had *yiras Shamayim* and he could have fallen, since he had a public position with lots of stress and pressures and he could have stumbled. His *yirah* empowered him to withstand the pressures of his job and he did not fall. In matters *bein adam l’chaveiro*, and certainly in matters *bein adam laMakom*, one needs *yiras Shamayim*.

*Yiras Shamayim* does not come naturally, one needs to invest *hishtadlus*. Rabbeinu Yonah writes (3:15, and more) that one must increase more and more *yiras Shamayim*; it’s a *mitzvas asef* of “Fear Hashem Your G-d.” The Torah writes about *yiras Shamayim* often to teach us that one must constantly be increasing his *yiras Shamayim*; it does not happen on its own. One must constantly be involved in increasing *yiras Shamayim*, constantly investing more and more *hishtadlus*.

This is *emunah*. “I am Hashem Who took you out of the land of Mitzrayim” — knowledge that there is *hashgachah*, and there is reward and punishment, both in this world and the World to Come. There’s *hashgachah*, heavenly supervision, over everything, and there’s Gan Eden and Gehinnom. We must educate our children and teach them about this, **beginning from a very young age. Starting from when a child can understand, he must know that there is Gan Eden and Gehinnom.** There’s nothing to worry about — it will not harm their health. *Yiras Shamayim* is not hazardous to one’s health, nor is it bad *chinuch*. That’s how we are *mechanech*! A person must teach his children about *Akeidas Yitzchak* and all *inyanei emunah*. This is nothing new; it’s simple, it’s well known.

### The Obligation of Chizuk in this Time

Yidden have been murdered lately, *Rachmana litzlan*, and some of the victims were *avreichim*, *talmidei chachamim*. We must take note of this — why did this happen? There’s a *tefillah* that we daven for all of Klal Yisrael: “*Re’eh na v’onyeinu*, See our affliction.” But

why did this happen, what’s the reason for this suddenly? It could be **that since Rav Chaim was just niftar, we are lacking zechuyos. The tzaddik is gone**, and no one is paying attention that the tzaddik was taken because of our evil. It’s a *pasuk* in *Yeshayah* (57:1), and there are a number of commentaries there.

We should contemplate what we should do, what kind of *chizuk* is necessary? We must strengthen ourselves in the three matters that uphold the world: *Torah*, *avodah*, and *gemillus chasadim*. This is applicable to every single person. It doesn’t matter if it’s someone who’s busy making a living or if he’s not. Every Jew is a Jew, and he has obligations! He must do what he can to increase his Torah learning, his *yiras Shamayim*, and *middos tovos*. And the only way he can do this is by learning *mussar*; there’s no other *eitzah*.

We learn in *Avos* (6:2): “Every day a *bas kol* goes out from Har Choreiv and announces: “*Oy lahem labriyos m’elbonah shel Torah* — Woe to them, to the people, because of their insult to the Torah.” There’s a heavenly voice that emanates from Har Choreiv, I don’t know who hears the *bas kol*, or how it’s heard, but this is what it says: “Woe to them, to the people, because of their insult to the Torah”: **Woe to the people because of their insult to the Torah — it’s not that they aren’t being osek baTorah, but there’s an “insult” to Torah, they aren’t machshiv Torah, there’s a lack of esteem for Torah.** Woe to the people, the people are pitiful and they are suffering from the insult to Torah, from the degradation of Torah. And who are the ones who are suffering? Even those who are *osek baTorah*.

*Avreichim* were killed, *talmidei chachamim*, because “*kol Yisrael areivim zeh la’zeh*, all members of Klal Yisrael are responsible for each other.” Why were they killed? There’s a Gemara in *Kesuvos* (8b), “*Ch’shiv at l’atfusei a’dara*, You were important enough to be taken for the generation.” An *adam chashuv* is *zocheh* to be *mashpia zechuyos* on Am Yisrael, because when HaKadosh Baruch Hu exhibits strict justice on tzaddikim, He becomes feared (*Zevachim* 115b). The *din* causes the *tzibbur* to wake up and increase *yiras Shamayim*.

This is why it’s a *zechus* for the tzaddik, because the strict judgment brought upon him caused *hisorerus*, and he merited to be *mezakeh es harabbim* — he does not lose out from this.

The Rashi in *Kesuvos* (ibid.) explains the words “*Ch’shiv at l’atfusei a’dara*”: “The fact that you and your sons were taken for the generation’s sins reveals that you are important On High, for [the saying] ‘As long as tzaddikim are in the generation, the tzaddikim are taken for the generations’ sins,’ was fulfilled in you.” That is, the tzaddik’s *chashivus* gives him the *zechus* to be “taken for the generation” in order to bring

the generation *zechuyos*. Through his *petirah*, he merited the *zechuyos* of *zikkui harabbim* and he influenced his generation to rise to a higher *madreigah*, since they improved their ways. This is the meaning of “*misyarei*,” Hashem becomes feared — the generation gains *yiras Shamayim*. Of course, each person needs to be on a *madreigah* to notice and to be properly aroused, but that’s how it must be. We should not be like the *pasuk* states (*Yirmeyahu* 2:30): “I struck your sons, and they did not accept *mussar*.” Such a situation can exist, *Rachmana litzlan*.

### Mussar Sefarim — For Women Too

Practically speaking, the *chizuk* we need can be attained by setting a daily learning session in *mussar*. We’ve already spoken about the importance of learning an interesting *mussar sefer*, or at least an interesting chapter. If a *sefer* bores you, don’t learn it, because it will not have an influence on you. Something that is interesting, however, will influence you —and it will give you pleasure and a very good feeling. Every single person is obligated! It doesn’t matter if he’s busy making a living, or if he is a full-time learner, learning *mussar* is an excellent thing and there’s no other solution. The entire *tzibbur* must learn, and as Rabbeinu Yonah writes, increasing *yiras Shamayim* is not *middas chassidus*, it is a total *chiyuv*.

Women, too, need it. *Yiras Shamayim* is not a time-bound mitzvah and women are obligated to increase *yiras Shamayim* as well. There is a *sefer* “*Tz’edah Urenah*,” originally written in Yiddish, but now in Lashon HaKodesh [and in English as well – Translator’s note], and it is an excellent *sefer* for women. The author of this *sefer* merited *zikkui harabbim*.

It is also important to say *Tehillim*, *pirkei Tehillim*, with *kavannah*, and davening is important. Every *chizuk* one does — **any *chizuk* that one individual does, brings merit to the entire *tzibbur*!**

### The Dangers of Bein HaZemanim Trips

Here we are at the beginning of *bein hazmanim*. This is another problem — the yetzer hara of trips. People want to go on trips. We all know that there were tragedies in the past on *bein hazmanim* trips. I remember one *bein hazmanim* when

there were no trips the entire time, but on the last day of *bein hazmanim*, the *bachurim* went on a trip, and there was a tragedy, *Rachmana litzlan*. And that’s because the *zechus* of the *tzibbur*’s Torah is missing during *bein hazmanim*.

I’ve already told the story of the famous *tzaddik* from Netivot. Once, military officials paid him a visit before a dangerous operation. He asked them what time the operation was planned for, and they said: During the afternoon hours. He told them not to do it then, because the *yeshivos* have *bein hasedarim* then. He told them to do it when the *yeshivos* are in session, either from morning seder until Minchah Gedolah, or during afternoon seder. But they surely shouldn’t set out when the *bachurim* aren’t learning, because then they’d be lacking the *zechus haTorah*. Even though Torah was being learned that day, during those specific hours, they’d be missing that *zechus*; they wouldn’t have the *zechus haTorah* of a large *tzibbur* learning Torah.

So too during *bein hazemanim*, we are missing the *zechus* of a *tzibbur*’s Torah learning, because there are those who have a *heter* to stop learning, some people need the break, but *l’maaseh*, that’s the reason why there are tragedies on *bein hazemanim* trips.

As we said, the world stands on three things: Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and good *middos*, and we are obligated to fulfill these mitzvos. If we don’t grow, we fall.

This is the only *eitzah* that protects Klal Yisrael, and the only way to attain this is by learning *mussar*, increasing our *yiras Shamayim*.

May *Shamayim* have *rachmanus* that we all merit to strengthen ourselves through learning *mussar* — each person individually, and all Klal Yisrael collectively. We’re not talking specifically about *bnei Torah*; every single person is obligated to fulfill all the mitzvos, every single *Yid* is obligated in *yiras Shamayim* and is obligated to increase *yiras Shamayim*. Every single person — it does not matter what he does for a living, whether he is a full-time learning or not, whether he lives in Eretz Yisrael or not. Every single member of Klal Yisrael must increase his *yiras Shamayim* — it’s written straight-out in the Torah: “Fear Hashem your G-d.” Women, too, must increase *yiras Shamayim*.

*B’ezeras Hashem* we will do our part, we will fulfill our obligations, and *Shamayim* will have *rachamim* on us that we will have whatever we need.

Please daven for  
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