

# Darkei HaChizuk

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

A *Sichah* from Maran Rosh HaYeshivah Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita* .Parashas Ki Savo 5782

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## Repenting for Past Sins

It's Elul now; it will soon be Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the days of judgment. We need *zechuyos* to be meritorious in judgment, and we have to do teshuvah for our past sins. Elul is also the month of Rachamim, and there is *siyatta d'Shemaya* for teshuvah and for all other *zechuyos* we need for the Yom HaDin. Let us take a look at the type of teshuvah we need to do for our past sins.

The truth is, every single person — from the day he became accountable for his sins, from his bar mitzvah — transgressed the sin of *bittul Torah*. Can anyone who can claim that he hasn't transgressed the sin of *bittul Torah*? It is very rare. It's possible that there are individuals, *yehidei segulah*, and there have been such *yehidei segulah*, but regular people generally are not so careful and *bittul Torah* is a prohibition. On one hand, *esek haTorah* is a tremendous *zechus*, but parallel to it, we have *bittul Torah*, which is a grave sin.

## Bittul Torah — “Despising” Torah

Chazal tell us (*Midrash Pesichta d'Eichah Rabbah* 2), “Hashem was *mevater* regarding idol worship and immorality, and murder, but He did not overlook the despising of Torah.” *Bittul Torah* is called “despising” Torah; when someone wastes time and does not learn Torah it is considered that he “despises” Torah.

The reason for this is as follows: **If he would value *esek haTorah*, which is such a tremendous, important thing that gives a person the merit of “*ashrecha baOlam haZeh v'tov lach l'Olam haBa*,” and if he would internalize that the most wonderful, greatest joy that can exist in this world is Torah, *bittul Torah* would never happen.** *Bittul Torah* stems from the fact that he does not value Torah.

This is the reality. But who has reached this *madreigah*?

Chazal say the following about failing to value Torah (*Sanhedrin* 99a): There is a *pasuk* (*Bamidbar* 15:31), “For the word of Hashem he has despised, and he has transgressed His mitzvos.” The second part of that *pasuk* is terrible, horrible [“he shall surely be cut off...”] What does “he has despised Hashem's word” mean? It is referring to someone who has the ability to learn Torah, but does not. If it's possible to be *osek baTorah*, and a person fails to do so, what's the reason for this? It's because he does not value Torah!

Of course, it could be that he is simply unaware of Torah's great value, and he is an unintentional sinner, but even unintentional sins are sins and require atonement. Rabbeinu Yonah wrote in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (4:15) that an unintentional sinners will surely be punished, because it is still a sin. *Bittul Torah* is called “despising” Torah; it's not that something unavoidable prevented him from learning, he just does not value Torah. And this is despising Torah, even if it's done unintentionally!

## Connecting to Hashem — Through a Fascination with Torah

Regarding the explanation that the *pasuk* “for he has despised Hashem's word” refers to someone who can learn Torah but does not, I heard in the name of an *adam gadol* that this is not only referring to *bittul Torah* in quantity — meaning, he could learn more but does not — but it also includes a person who, although learns whenever he can, he has the ability to learn with greater *havanah* or to be more fascinated by Torah. These are two separate ideas: learning with greater *havanah* and understanding one's learning better, and being more fascinated by and more focused on his learning. If a person is not deeply captivated by Torah or does not make an effort to understand as well as he can, this too is called “being able to learn Torah but does not.”

If a person is completely focused and his mind is captivated by Torah, it's a completely different *madreigah*. I've already told you about someone who wanted to acquire *ahavas Hashem* and feel *kirvas Elokim*, so he traveled to ask an *eitzah* from someone (I don't know who), and that person told him to learn the *sefer Shev Shmayteta*. He didn't ask any questions; he just sat down to follow these instructions. He started learning *Shev Shmayteta* and it really had an influence on him. He acquired *kirvas Elokim* and his *tefillos* became completely different. He felt that it changed his connection with HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

The reason for this is “*Kudsha Brich Hu, Oraysa*, and Yisrael are one” (*Zohar Acharei* 73a). **The Torah connects Am Yisrael and HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The more fascinated one is, the stronger the connection will be.** The *sefer Shev Shmayteta* is a very deep, profound *sefer* and learning it is fascinating. When a person is captivated by Torah it's a *madreigah*; it's *ahavas Torah* along with *ahavas Hashem* and it changes a person's essence.

And *bittul Torah* is called “he has despised Hashem's word,” because if someone values something, he will try to attain it.

Take money, for example. Someone who loves money will put in a lot of effort to earn it. Honor is also something people seek. Some people are willing to make sacrifices and even denigrate themselves just to be honored, because they love honor and it attracts them. If Torah would be attractive and people would value *esek haTorah*, everything would be different.

### Yiras Shamayim and Hasmadah Go Hand in Hand

The truth is that *yiras Shamayim* plays an important role. *Bittul Torah* is a sin, and even an unintentional sinner is punished and subject to *dinei Shamayim*. So we must have *charatah*, remorse for the sin. If a person has complete trust in Hashem, his *yiras Shamayim* obligates him to have *hasmadah* in Torah, because he is frightened; he has *yiras ha-onesh!* There are punishments in this world and in Olam HaBa, but on the other hand, if a person is *osek baTorah*, he is “fortunate in this world and it is good for him in Olam HaBa.” When a person lives with this belief, his way of life is entirely different.

*Yiras Shamayim* is a *mitzvas asei* (*Devarim* 10:20): “Fear Hashem your G-d.” Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:17) that *yirah* is one of the attributes that includes many *madreigos*: “Every one of these has a number of *madreigos*.” And man is obligated to attain all these *madreigos* — he must constantly be increasing his level of *yiras Shamayim*.

Chazal said (*Brachos* 33b) that for Moshe Rabbeinu, *yiras Shamayim* “*milsa zutrassa hi*, is a very simple thing.” Moshe Rabbeinu, with whom Hashem spoke mouth-to-mouth (*Bamidbar* 12:8), and who said about himself (*Shemos* 16:7), “And who are we?”, had such clarity of *emunah*, and for someone on his level, *emunah* was something very simple. But regular people like us must constantly work on increasing our *yiras Shamayim*, we must constantly strengthen our *middah* of *yirah* — and there are many *madreigos* to attain.

True, this is not an easy task, and we need *siyatta d'Shemaya* for this.

### Siyatta d'Shemaya Follows Hishtadlus

The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (37:32,33) states: “A wicked man watches the tzaddik and wants to kill him; but Hashem will not leave him in his hands.” The *rasha* wants to kill the tzaddik, and the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 30b) explains that this *pasuk* is a *mashal* to the yetzer hara. The yetzer hara is the *rasha* who wants to cause a man to stumble while he’s still a tzaddik and kill him eternally — Gehinnom! But Hashem won’t leave the tzaddik alone — that is, a person needs HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s help, and if not for Hashem’s assistance, he would not be able to overcome the yetzer hara, because the yetzer hara is extremely powerful and convinces us to sin. It is impossible for a person to overpower the yetzer hara naturally; it can only be done with Hashem’s help, with *siyatta d'Shemaya*: “And Hashem will not leave him in his hands.”

And when does Hashem help? The *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap. 2) and the Vilna Gaon (*Kol Eliyahu, Sukkah*) say that Hashem only helps once a person has done all he can, once he has exhausted all possible forms of *hishtadlus* against the yetzer hara and has already reached the point of “if HaKadosh Baruch

Hu would not help him, he would not be able to overpower him.” That’s when Hashem helps him overpower the yetzer hara.

What is the proper *hishtadlus*? Learning *mussar*! Learn *mussar* during *mussar seder* in yeshivah a half hour before Maariv — in Elul, there’s another fifteen-minute *seder* before Minchah as well — as *mussar* is the *hishtadlus* against the yetzer hara. And then, once a person has done whatever he can, then Hashem won’t leave him in the yetzer hara’s hand and he will have *siyatta d'Shemaya*. However, if someone does not do whatever he can, why should he receive help? A person like this will not have *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

The Gemara there says that a person’s yetzer hara “overpowers” (*misgabeir*) him every single day and is “renewed” (*mischadeish*) daily. There are two different terms used. (Elsewhere, it’s explained that “*misgabeir*” is referring to a yetzer hara that existed in the past, which comes back and become stronger every day, whereas “*mischadeish*” is a new yetzer hara that did not exist in the past.) If HaKadosh Baruch Hu would not help him, he would not be able to overcome the yetzer. But once a person does whatever he can on his own, then HaKadosh Baruch Hu helps him. And the proper *hishtadlus* is learning *mussar*.

The Gemara says further (*Yoma* 38b), “One who comes to be purified is helped.” Here too, they explain: “**When does one have *siyatta d'Shemaya*? Through the *zechus* of “coming to be purified”! How does one come to be purified? By learning *mussar*!** Learning *sefarim* of *yiras Shamayim*: *Shaarei Teshuvah*, *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Mesillas Yesharim*, and all *sefarim* that increase *yiras Shamayim*. If a person does this, he is coming to be purified, and he is helped with *siyatta d'Shemaya*. That’s the reality.

### Daily Prayers Include the Main Parts of Teshuvah

Rabbeinu Yonah’s *Shaarei Teshuvah* explains the principles of teshuvah. He says there are three principles in repentance (1:19): *Charatah* (regret), *viduy* (confession), and *azivas hacheit* (abandoning the sin).

In our daily *tefillos*, we say, “*Hashiveinu*...Return us to Your Torah.” This is a *tefillah* and request for teshuvah. We also say, “*Selach lanu*... Forgive us for we have sinned,” and this is *viduy*. The *Selach lanu brachah* includes expressions of remorse and confession: “*chatanu, pashanu*” (we have sinned, we have sinned intentionally), so we have already expressed regret, confessed for our sins, and davened for repentance.

Rav Yisrael Salanter says that it’s tried-and-true that a *tefillah* for *ruchniyus* is effective. The reason for this has already been discussed in the Gemara (*Brachos* 50a), ““Open your mouth wide and I will fill [your requests]” — this is referring to *divrei Torah*.” **When it comes to *divrei Torah*, the *pasuk* states “Open your mouth wide” — just ask as much and as often as you can, and “I will fill it”! With what? With *divrei Torah*. That is, whatever the Torah obligates you to do, just ask and you’ll receive it and you’ll have unlimited *siyatta d'Shemaya*.** [See *Sefer Chassidim siman* 131: If a person asks for something that brings praise to his Creator, such as *limud haTorah* or some other *ruchniyus* matter, and he pours out his

soul for it, then even if he does not have *maasim tovim*, HaKadosh Baruch Hu listens to his *tefillah*.]

But how do we ask? Do we just chant the words without thinking? It must be an authentic request, from the bottom of one's heart, with a true heart! When a person asks in this manner, he will have *siyatta d'Shemaya* for all *ruchniyus* matters. *Hasheveinu l'Torasecha, v'karveinu la'avodasecha, Selach lanu ki chatanu* — and he'll get answers. After all, why is he asking? Because he wants it, and if a person wants something and asks for it, he will receive it!

### Achieving Complete Teshuvah Quickly

Rabbeinu Yonah offers a wonderful *eitzah* (Ibid. 2:10). He says that a person can become a complete *baal teshuvah* in a moment, and he can he garner tremendous *zechuyos* and *maasim tovim* even before he actually does them. He can fall into the category of “his deeds are greater than his wisdom” (*Avos* 3:9), because he will have many good deeds that he is unaware of — and yet they will be considered as if they already exist. He'll have the tremendous *zechuyos* of these *maasim tovim*, even though he doesn't know about them and did not perform them.

How does one achieve this? Rabbeinu Yonah writes: “When he hears *mussar* from the *chachamim* and *mochichim*, the sages and the admonishers, he should listen closely and humble himself and repent. He should accept in his heart all their *tochachah*, not ignoring even one word.” This is what happens when a person makes a firm decision to listen to the *mochichim* who deliver *divrei mussar*. In Rabbeinu Yonah's times, there were *mochichim*, they were the *maggids* who rebuked the congregations, and if a person decided to listen to the *mochichim*'s *mussar* and to do whatever they exhorted him to do — following their instructions diligently — then “his repentance has been accepted and he turns into a different person.” He is already a complete *baal teshuvah*.

And not only is he a *baal teshuvah* — it goes even further: “*Tzadak nafsho b'shaah kallah*, he has made his soul righteous in a short time,” and “*kanah l'nafsho zechus v's'char al kol hamitzvos v'ha-mussarim*.” From that point on, he has the *zechuyos* of all the *maasim tovim* he will do in the future, because he is on the path that will lead him to perform all these

mitzvos, and he's made the right decision and is behaving in the proper manner which will lead him to perform all these *maasim tovim* and to do *teshuvah*. That's how he can become a *tzaddik* in a short time, and that's how he can have *zechuyos* for good deeds that he hasn't even performed yet.

This is the meaning of “his deeds are greater than his knowledge” — it's considered as if he already performed his future good deeds, even though he has no idea what they are. He receives reward for them based on the future. This can be compared to a ben *sorer u'moreh*, who is sentenced to death based on his future behavior. [And *middah tovah merubah m'middas pur'anus*, the corresponding reward for doing the right thing is always greater than the punishment for doing the wrong thing.] Although he still hasn't performed all those mitzvos and *maasim tovim*, he still receives reward for them. Rabbeinu Yonah writes that as a result of this *hanhagah*, “**in one small moment, this man will leave behind darkness for a great light,**” and “**how fortunate he is for he has made his soul righteous in a short time**” — in just one moment, by making this decision. All he needs is an honest decision, with his whole heart, and then in just one moment, he becomes a *tzaddik* and receives such tremendous *zechuyos* that we cannot even imagine.

How can we do this, *l'maaseh*? If a person decides that he will learn *mussar* on a steady basis, during the *mussar seder* in *yeshivah* — or if he's not in *yeshivah*, then there are *mussar sefarim* at home too — by having a steady learning session in *mussar*, it will have an effect like “water erodes stones.” Every single drop counts and is continuously effective — a person will constantly be rising in *madreigah* and attaining loftier *madreigos* with more *yiras Shamayim*, more *emunah*, and more *middos tovos* and *ahavas habriyos*, all the spiritual attributes.

So this is the *eitzah* to be *zocheh* to *teshuvah sheleimah*, as well as additional *zechuyos* based on one's future mitzvos. As Rabbeinu Yonah writes, it involves repentance for one's past mistakes and *zechuyos* for future mitzvos that he hasn't even done yet. Of course, one needs *siyatta d'Shemaya*. *Yehi ratzon* that we merit *siyatta d'Shemaya* so that we, and all of Klal Yisrael, merit implementing Rabbeinu Yonah's *eitzos*, and may we, together with all Klal Yisrael, be *zocheh* to a *ksivah v'chasimah tovah*.

## Divrei Chizuk Culled from Rabbeinu shlita's Shiurim this Zman

### A Brachah to the Incoming Mishmar

The Gemara in *Brachos* (12a) discusses the *mishmaros*, shifts, in the Beis HaMikdash. Every week, there would be a new shift of kohanim, and the outgoing *mishmar* would bless the incoming shift — who would be starting the *avodas haMikdash*, the *avodah* of *korbanos* and all the other work involved in the Beis HaMikdash. This was their *brachah*: “May the One Who rests His name in this house,” i.e., HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Whose name rests on the Beis HaMikdash, “place between you love, brotherhood, peace, and friendship.” These four terms “*ahavah, v'achvah, shalom v'rei'us*” are all concepts of good *middos* and part of the mitzvah of *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*. That's the *brachah* they'd give the incoming kohanim.

Why was this *brachah* necessary? Because in order for *avodah* in the Beis HaMikdash to be proper, desired *avodah*, in order for it to be “*l'ratzon*,” all these traits — “*ahavah, v'achvah, shalom v'rei'us* — and good *middos*, and *v'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocha*, the great principle in the Torah, were needed. All these traits were imperative for the success of the *avodas haMikdash*. To ensure that the *avodah* would be performed as necessary, with the proper *kavanah* and completely *l'shem Shamayim* to be successful, the kohanim needed *zechuyos* to merit *siyatta d'Shemaya*, and the *zechuyos* of these good *middos* and *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha* are what gave them *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

Similarly, when you come to yeshivah, a *makom kadosh*, you are increasing *kevod Shamayim*, and that is *avodas Hashem*. There are *zechuyos* of *middos tovos*, and of keeping to the yeshivah's *sedarim* in Torah and *tefillah* — *tefillos* in yeshivah are *tefillah* with *kavanah* — and there are also *mussar sedarim* in yeshivah. And “one who comes to be purified is helped.” *Mussar seder* is considered “coming to be purified,” because why do we learn mussar? Because we want to be pure, we want a *neshamah tehorah*, we want to act with *taharah*, and in this merit, we are helped. And this is something you see clearly — people who learn mussar have *siyatta d'Shemaya*, and these *sedarim* are *zechuyos* for success.

### Curiosity of Getting to Know New Friends

It's only natural that when there's a group of people from different places, they want to get to know each other. Until now, they didn't know each other, they didn't learn together, and now they're together and they want to get to know each other. So at night, *bachurim* start talking — it's human nature to be curious and to want to get to know each other — and then they go to sleep late. And then, *memah nafshach*, either they wake up on time and are tired all day long, or they wake up late and miss davening in yeshivah, and it's also *batalah*.

So it's worth being aware that it's not so important to get to know each other, because you'll get to know each other over time. It's just that natural urge to want to know each other “now,” but it's no rush, and it's not worthwhile. It's not worth wasting time and energy — and it's also *bittul Torah* — to satisfy your curiosity.

### Chazarah in Learning and Shiurim

There's something that's very important — *chazarah* on *shiur*. *Chazarah* in general is a necessity; it's important to review whatever you learn. There are a number of *gemaras* that discuss the importance and virtues of *chazarah*. Every *chazarah* increases *havanah*. Regarding *chazarah* of *shiur*, well, at first you heard the *shiur* and understood it, but when you review it, you realize you have a different level of *havanah*, and when you do a second *chazarah*, you have even more *havanah*. It's the same thing when you learn Gemara — if you review you have much better *havanah*, with more clarity in *havanah*.

In yeshivah, *chazarah* was always done right at the beginning of second *seder*; that's how it has always been, from the yeshivah's very first day. At the beginning of second *seder*, there's *chazarah* on the *shiur*, immediately, when they still remember what they heard in *shiur*. And this leads to tremendous *hatzlachah*. *B'ezras Hashem*, may everyone be *zocheh* to *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

### Fridays and Shabbos

It's Elul now, and we have Fridays and Shabbosim, days on which, generally, naturally, time is wasted, because people are busy getting ready for Shabbos, and for other reasons too. And lots of time is wasted unnecessarily.

But it's not right, and I personally know stories about people who planned out their time and set a time for this and a time for that. Then they were able to complete all their Shabbos preparations very quickly, and they were able to spend a lot of time learning — before starting their preparations and afterward too. If a person plans out his time, he will have *siyatta d'Shemaya*, because one who comes to be purified is helped. So this is how a person can manage learning a lot on Friday and on Shabbos. And while one does have to rest a little on Shabbos, too, he can still spend plenty of time learning. Now especially, in Elul, it's very important to improve in this *inyan*.

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