

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

A Sichah from Maran Rosh HaYeshivah Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita* . *Va'era* 5783

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## The Mitzvah of Emunah Obligates Us to Daven

*Emunah* is a *mitzvas aseï*, and it's the first mitzvah included in the *Aseres HaDibros*: "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*." The Rambam composed Thirteen Principles of Faith (*Ikrei Emunah*), and the mitzvah of "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*" encompasses them all; it obligates belief in all the *Ikrei Emunah*.

*Emunah* is connected to one's heart, but it also finds expression in the practical world. What does *emunah* obligate us to do, *l'maaseh*? One of the obligations is *tefillah*.

*Tefillah* is *emunah*. We believe that there is Someone Who can help us, and when we daven, we are speaking to Him. This is "*avodah she'balev*," as Chazal say (beginning of *Taanis*), "עבודה שבלב, זו תפילה," Service of the heart is *tefillah*." And this comes from *emunah*.

There are many parts to *tefillah*: praises, requests, and thanks. This is the order of *Shemoneh Esrei*. We start off with praises, then we make requests, and then we express thanks. The first three *brachos* are all praise: *Birkas Avos*, *Atah Gibbor*, *Atah Kadosh*. They are all just praises.

### Open My Lips — The Ability to Speak Is from Hashem

Before the first three *brachos*, there's another introduction. We say: "השם שפתי תפתח, **Hashem, open my lips.**" We are referring to the ability of speech; we are declaring that we believe and know that our power of speech is completely from Hashem Yisbarach, He is the one Who gives us the ability to speak, and whatever speaking abilities we have are *chesed Hashem*. It is not "natural," it's not *derech hateva*. Every single individual receives special *hashgachah pratis* to be able to speak. And who gives him the power and ability to speak? Hashem! 'שפתי תפתח', [You] **open my lips**. We speak in second person, You! *Hashem Yisbarach*.

This is also part of the mitzvah of *emunah*, we are obligated to believe this. *B'derech hateva*, a person doesn't really believe this. It's not a natural, inborn

belief to remember and believe that a person's ability to speak is not naturally the result of his own strength, it's a *chesed* from Hashem. And Hashem is giving him this ability every single second of the day. This is not natural *emunah*, it's a *madreigah*.

Therefore, we preface this entreaty with "**Hashem, open my lips.**" Here, the name Hashem is written with an **aleph and dalet**, *Shem HaAdnus*, which means "the Master of all." HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the Master of all, and the entire Creation is His slaves. And the Master gives His slaves life and existence. Not only does this Master give his slaves food, the slaves' entire existence and all their abilities come from Him. He gives the slave power and abilities, including the ability of speech, every single moment! The truth is, *Shem Havayah* is enunciated the same way *Shem HaAdnus* is, which expresses that Hashem is "*Adon Hakol*, the Master of all," but based on its spelling, it expresses that Hashem was, is, and will be. *Adnus* is just the way we verbalize it.

### Reciting Hashem's Praises Is Obligatory

So we preface *Shemoneh Esrei* by saying "Hashem, open my lips," we acknowledge and believe that He is the Master of all, and the entire world is His slaves. Not just any old slaves — slaves that He brings to life and gives them life and strength and abilities every single second. **This obligates the slave tremendously!** A master gives his slave the ability to speak, for example, and it's not just the ability to speak, all our abilities and strengths are from HaKadosh Baruch Hu, speech is merely one small detail. The slave's entire ability to speak is from his Master.

In what way does this obligate the slave? Since the Master gave his slave the ability to speak, what must he say, what does this obligate him to say? **ופי יגיד, תהילתך, And my mouth will relate Your praises!** He must praise and exalt the Master! Since the Master gave him the ability to speak, this first thing he should say is "*Tehillas Hashem yedaber pi*, My mouth will speak of Hashem's praises." That is his obligation.

If the servant does not do so, he is an ingrate, he's *kafoi tovah*. The Master has given him the ability to speak, and he doesn't use this ability to give Him anything in return? He's an ingrate! The Master gave him goodness, and he's ignoring it, as if it the Master doesn't deserve anything. Doesn't the Master deserve something in exchange for the favor He did for you? You have to now give him something, He is your master and you are the servant. Even a regular servant is obligated to serve his master, so especially a servant like this one, whose master gives him and provides him with such wonderful goodness, has an even greater obligation to serve Him. Therefore, **"my mouth will relate Your praises"** is a real obligation. If the Master gave me the ability to speak, I must serve him with my speech and relate His praises.

### Publicizing Emunah

The *pasuk* states "My mouth will relate (*yagid*) Your praises." *יגיד* comes from *הגדה*, relating to other people, as opposed to simple *אמירה*, saying. Some other times this word is used: *הגדתי היום להשם אלוקי*, I declare this day" (*Devarim* 26:3); *ונגד לו*, and we told him" (*Bereishis* 44:24), and *ופי יגיד תהלתך*, and my mouth will relate Your praises" — we must tell over Hashem's praises to other people.

To whom? First of all, we must tell them to the Master Himself, we must be *makir tov* and express our thanks to the Master. We must say, "I acknowledge and appreciate that You give me my *kochos*, abilities and strengths." But we also have to tell it to the world. Since the Master gives me the ability to speak, and I'm obligated to repay him and honor Him, it obligates me to relate and publicize *emunah* to the whole world: "To relate that Hashem is upright" (*Tehillim* 92:16). To relate! To others.

Relating to the Master Himself is *hoda'ah*, we are thanking and acknowledging the fact that whatever strengths and abilities we have are from Him. But we also have to tell this over to others — *ופי יגיד תהלתך* — we must extol Him and speak His praises.

### The First Brachah of Shemoneh Esrei

The first three *brachos* of Shemoneh Esrei include many praises: "...*Elokeinu, v'Elokei Avoseinu, Avraham, Yitzchak, v'Yaakov. HaKeil, haGadol, haGibbor, v'haNora...*" **HaKeil** refers to *middas harachamim*. **HaGadol** also refers to Hashem's *middah* of beneficence, as Rashi explains on the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 3:24), *Es gadlecha* — "this is Your attribute of goodness." **HaGibbor** refers to *middas hadin*.

**HaNora** is described by Chazal (*Yoma* 69b), "And these are His *nora'os*: If not for trepidation of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, how would one nation be able to exist among all other nations? There is special *hashgachah* over the Jewish nation, as Chazal said (*Esther Rabbah* 10:11), 'One sheep between seventy wolves.' Am Yisrael is existing for thousands of years, without a country, dispersed and scattered between other nations, and yet still holding up, through *Hashem Yisbarach's hashgachah*.

And for all this, "My mouth will speak Hashem's praises," and "my mouth will relate Your praises"!

### Davening for Ruchniyus — Verbally and Silently

There is a concept of davening for one's *ruchniyus*. I've already related what I heard from my rebbi, Rav E.E. Dessler *zt"l* in the name of Rav Yisrael Salanter, who said that it's **tried-and-true that davening for *ruchniyus* is helpful.**

The truth is, this is an explicit Gemara (*Brachos* 50a): "*Harchev picha v'amalahu*, Open your mouth wide and I'll fill [your requests]" — is referring to *divrei Torah*." That is, there is no limit on all *ruchniyus* matters, one just has to ask, an earnest, true request. He must really want it, and really care about it. If it really pains him, and he really wants it and asks for it, then HaKadosh Baruch Hu will help him and his *tefillos* will be answered.

*Tefillah* is not relegated only to speech; it can **also take place in one's heart**. While we learn in *hilchos tefillah* that "thought is not like speech," and one is required to verbalize his *tefillos*, in addition to the set *tefillos* a person must daven daily, he can daven other *tefillos* in his heart. He can daven that Hashem help him, and even non-verbal *tefillos* in one's heart are effective! This is well known, and there are true stories about people who, in their mind, silently asked for *siyatta d'Shemaya* in *ruchniyus* and received it immediately.

I've already told the story of someone who came from Chutz LaAretz and went to the Kosel. He was not a *baal emunah*, but when he was at the Kosel, something stirred in him, and he began to think that if *emunah* is something real, he wants to see it and wants to become a *baal emunah*. And Heaven sent him help. At the very moment this thought crossed his mind, a *kiruv* activist asked him if he wants to learn about Yiddishkeit — just at the minute he was thinking about it! He received *siyatta d'Shemaya* for *ruchniyus*, without expressing his request verbally; just by thinking and having a

heartfelt aspiration. His heartfelt desire for *ruchniyus* brought him *siyatta d'Shemaya*.

### Davening for Others' Ruchniyus

The same is true regarding other people's *ruchniyus*. If a person begs and davens for other people's success in *ruchniyus*, there will be *siyatta d'Shemaya*. It's known (see *Ohr Yisrael* Letter 14) that Rav Yisrael Salanter asked his *talmidim* to daven for him, for his *ruchniyus*. Because through davening, *siyatta d'Shemaya* in *ruchniyus* can be attained for others as well!

There is a *nusach* that the Chazon Ish composed for a mother whose son who needed *chizuk* in *ruchniyus* (see *Kovetz Igros*, vol. 1, 74). He gave her this special *nusach* to daven during Shema Koleinu: "May it be Your will *Hashem Elokei v'Elokei Avosai*, that You have mercy on my son... and transform his heart to love and fear Your name, and be diligent in Your holy Torah. Please remove from him all causes that prevent him from diligence in Your holy Torah and prepare for him all the factors that will bring him to Your holy Torah."

### Tefillah Is More Effective than All Other Hishtadlus

The Chazon Ish wrote in a separate letter (vol. 3, 62): **"One must remember that we don't have the power to do anything. Through our actions we arouse the Gates of Mercy, that our actions have the desired results. And one who davens and is *marbeh b'tachanunim* does more than the one who does active *hishtadlus*."** *Tefillah* is more effective than any *hishtadlus*, and any *hishtadlus* is less effective than davening!

Therefore, if we want *ruchniyus* — for ourselves or for others — the most important thing is to daven, because *tefillah* is more effective than *hishtadlus*.

### Davening for Children's Emunah and Torah

The *Mishnah Berurah* writes (*siman 47, seif katan 10*), "A father and mother's *tefillas* should constantly be on their lips, to daven for their children to be *lomdei Torah*, *tzaddikim*, and *baalei middos tovos*. They should have much *kavanah* in the *brachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah*, and in *Birkas HaTorah*, when they say, 'we and our offspring... know Your name and study your Torah for its sake.' Additionally, in *U'va Le'Tziyon*, when he says 'so that we do not toil in vain or produce for futility.'" That is, parents must daven for their children's *ruchniyus*, and in *Birkas HaTorah*, when they say, "we and our offspring... know Your name

and study your Torah for its sake," have *kavanah* that their offspring have success in *ruchniyus*. If the *tefillah* is recited with *kavanah*, it helps!

We ask to be "knowers of Your name and study your Torah for its sake." *Pashtus*, "knowers of Your name" refers to *emunah*, to merit knowing Hashem, *emunah*. It's *shayach* to daven for your children to attain this too — that your children should be *baalei emunah*.

A silent, heartfelt *tefillah* will be effective too, both for Torah and for *emunah*. Similarly, a mother's prayers for her child's *ruchniyus* can also be a wordless prayer from her heart — she can daven and beseech HaKadosh Baruch Hu about her children, *emunah*, and Torah. And as the Chazon Ish wrote, *tefillah* is more effective than any *hishtadlus*! For himself and for others.

### If Someone Does Not Ask...

If so, we have many ways to merit *ruchniyus* through *tefillah*, but the prayer must be a true *tefillah*, with *kavanah*, one must really care! But it's not enough to care, one also must daven, because if he doesn't ask, why should they give him? He knows there's Someone Who can give him, and if doesn't ask from the One Who has the ability to give, he doesn't deserve it.

We find in the Gemara (*Niddah 70b*), that they asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanina, "What should a man do to become wise?" That is, how can a person merit *chochmas haTorah*? Rabbi Yehoshua answered that he should do two things: increase *yeshivah* (sitting and learning in *yeshivah*), and beg mercy from the One to Whom wisdom belongs. That is, to learn Torah and also ask for *rachamim*. The Gemara there asks, "What is this coming to teach us?" And they answered, "One without the other is not effective." That is, one must increase *yeshivah* and beg for mercy. One is not enough without the other.

Rashi explains the meaning of the Gemara's words, "What is this coming to teach us?" — "Why does it have to tell us to 'increase *yeshivah*' if success depends on davening for mercy?" Since he already begged for *rachamim*, he already received *siyatta d'Shemaya*, so why does he have to put in more effort and sit in *yeshivah* for a long time? Rav Yehoshua ben Chanina's *chiddush* was that this is not how it works — begging for *rachamim* is not enough; one must put in effort and "increase *yeshivah*," because one without the other is not effective.

In any case, we see **that the foremost, most important thing — without which is not possible to have *hatzlachah* — is *tefillah***. Perhaps a little bit of success is possible, but true *hatzlachah*, *b'sheleimus*, tremendous *hatzlachah*, can only occur through *tefillah* and begging for *rachamim*.

### Hishtadlus Alongside Tefillah

As we said, together with *tefillah*, one must also do *hishtadlus*, put in effort. How much is necessary? Each person according to his abilities, and then he'll have *siyatta d'Shemaya*. While davening for *ruchniyus* matters helps, if *hishtadlus* is possible, one must do his *hishtadlus*!

If it's impossible to do *hishtadlus*, then *tefillah* is enough, but if *hishtadlus* can be done, one must make the effort. A person who does not put in as much *hishtadlus* as he can, [there's a claim against him] why isn't he doing so. But even when *hishtadlus* is possible, and one must do his *hishtadlus*, he must always remember that davening is the main, primary effort, as the Chazon Ish wrote that *tefillah* is more effective than any form of *hishtadlus*.

This is the *eitzah tovah* and good path to follow: through davening and with our individual *hishtadlus*, we have possibilities for *ruchniyus*. At the end of *sefer Mesillas Yesharim*, he writes, "And someone who has to work as a menial laborer can be a complete *chassid* just as one who is constantly learning." That is, there could be a person who spends his days working for a

living, and only has a little bit of time to spend on *ruchniyus*, but he is an *adam hashaleim* — because *sheleimus* depends on each person's situation. And if he does whatever he can, he is an *adam hashaleim*.

### The Adam HaShaleim Is Sanctified

The *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap. 1) writes, "The *adam hashaleim* is sanctified with Hashem Yisbarach's *kedushah*." What is an *adam hashaleim*? One who is sanctified with His *kedushah*! He is sanctified! A person who is *osek baTorah* becomes *kadosh*. He is sanctified at every moment that he is *osek baTorah*. Now, too, as we are being *osek baTorah*, we are being sanctified! This is the best feeling that can be, a true feeling, that we are being sanctified every second that we do *maasim tovim*. And it gives us *chizuk* to continue.

But of course, it must be according to each individual's *kochos*. One cannot do more than his abilities and strength permits. Someone who does whatever he has the ability to do and cannot do more is already *b'sheleimus* — he does not need to do anymore. And if a person can do more but does not, even if he already did a lot, but he can do more and fails to do so, he is not *b'sheleimus*! But if does what he can, even if it's just a little, he is *b'sheleimus* since he did whatever he could. He is an *adam hashaleim* who is sanctified with Hashem Yisbarach's *kedushah*. HaKadosh Baruch Hu should help that all Klal Yisrael become sanctified with Hashem Yisbarach's *kedushah*!

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