

Darkei HaChizuk

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

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Siyatta D'Shemaya to Fight the Yetzer Hara

Chazal said (*Kiddushin* 30b): “A person’s yetzer hara overpowers him every day and tries to kill him, as it states: “The wicked one looks out for the tzaddik and wants to kill him.” The Gemara explains that the “wicked one” is the yetzer hara — when the yetzer hara sees a tzaddik, he wants to transform him into a *rasha*, and tries to kill him, to send him to his eternal death by “killing” his *neshamah*. He wants the tzaddik to deserve Gehinnom; that’s what the yetzer hara wants. But “*Hashem lo yaazvenu l’yado*, Hashem won’t let him fall into the yetzer hara’s clutches.” Heaven sends him *siyatta d’Shemaya*, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu helps him overcome his yetzer hara. A person doesn’t have enough power to withstand the yetzer hara; he needs *siyatta d’Shemaya*. That’s the only way he can overpower the yetzer hara.

Both the *Mesillas Yesharim* (chap. 2) and the Vilna Gaon (*Kol Eliyahu on Sukkah*) write: When does Hashem help him? When does a person merit *siyatta d’Shemaya*? Only once he has already done everything in his power in order to overcome the yetzer hara, and he’s reached a point where he can’t do anything else. Once he’s already done the maximum, he receives *siyatta d’Shemaya*. However, if he can still do more but fails to do so, if he’s lacking in *sheleimus*, he will not receive *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

Learn Mussar

What’s the *eitzah*? How does a person strengthen himself? By learning *mussar*! Already in his days, the Chafetz Chaim wrote (*Beis Yisrael* p. 89) that “nowadays,” everyone admits that *yeshivos* must have a steady *mussar seder*. There is simply no choice; there’s no other tactic against the yetzer hara — the only effective solution is learning *mussar* daily, steadily. During the year, *yeshivos* have a half-hour *mussar seder* before Maariv, every day except for Fridays and Shabbos. In Elul, another fifteen minutes of *mussar* is added before Minchah as an additional *chizuk* against the yetzer hara.

The truth is, whatever we just said is effective for correcting the present and future, by having daily *chizuk*. Indeed, Chazal said (*Berachos* 32b), “Four matters require *chizuk*.” Rashi explains: “A person should strengthen himself in them constantly, with all his strength.” Rashi is pointing out that “*chizuk*” is only something that is done “constantly” and “with all his strength.” If it is not constantly and not with all his strength, it is not *chizuk*. Even though there’s no *mussar seder* in *yeshivos* on Fridays and Shabbos, everyone is busy with getting ready for Shabbos, and they’re learning too. But in any case, they need constant *chizuk* and it must be with all their strength.

Teshuvah and Rectification for the Past

As we said, this is effective for correcting the present and future. But what about the past? How can we rectify the past? After all, from the day a person is responsible for his actions, from the day of his bar mitzvah, he is obligated in everything: Torah, *avodah she’balev*, which is davening, and the prohibition of *bittul Torah*. All the 613 mitzvos with all their obligations are applicable from the moment he becomes bar mitzvah. Is there anyone who can say that since his bar mitzvah, he’s doing well, he has the right amount of *chizuk*? After all, it’s extremely unlikely that from the day of his bar mitzvah a person immediately starts acting *b’sheleimus*. In the past, there were exceptional individuals who were able to do so, like the Vilna Gaon, Rav Zalman of Volozhin, Rav Chaim of Volozin, and a handful of others, but this is extremely rare.

And so, every single person needs to do teshuvah and correct his past mistakes, his *bittul Torah*, the times he davened without the proper *kavanah*. There’s another thing Rabbeinu Yonah writes about in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3: 61), and in *Iggeres HaTeshuvah* (os 10): uttering Hashem’s name without awe and trepidation. When a person says Hashem’s name, it is supposed to be with awe and trepidation, as it states (*Devarim* 10:20): “Fear Hashem your G-d.” A person must feel the fear when

he mentions Hashem's name. Who can truthfully say that he did so properly over the years? Even now, it's not simple to live like this. So what's the *eitzah*? How can we rectify the past?

Mussar Has a Powerful Influence

In *Shaarei Teshuvah* (2:10) Rabbeinu Yonah presents a solution, which is also a method for rectifying the past, a method that includes *teshuvah* with *charatah* and *vidui*, yet it is also a way to increase many *maasim tovim* and receive reward for the future: If a person accepts upon himself to listen to the *mussar* of the *chachamim* and *mochichim*, the sages and rebukers, and to follow through with their suggestions and admonitions. In Rabbeinu Yonah's times, there were ethical mentors called *mochichim*, admonishers, who would rebuke the *tzibbur*, similar to the *maggidim* of a few generations ago — like the Dubno Maggid — who gave *mussar*.

Whenever the Dubno Maggid came to a town, he'd deliver a speech of *divrei chizuk* in the local shul. The story is told (in the Introduction to *Sefer HaMiddos*) that on one of his travels, he met two young *talmidei chachamim* — one authored the *Yeshuos Yaakov* and the other wrote *Tiv Gittin* — and he warned them not to come to his *drashah*. He told them, "You are weak and you don't have strength, so I don't advise you to come hear me; it will be harmful to your health." But they thought: We're young. Of course we have strength! Why should we be concerned? They didn't listen to him and went to hear his *drashah*. The end of the story was that he made such an impression on them that they both became very ill and their health was affected. It took a long time for them to regain their strength.

That was the extent of the *maggidim*'s power. They spoke from their hearts and their words had a profound influence on their listeners. And the Dubno Maggid was known to be a great man; there are many stories about his greatness. Once there was a halachic question regarding an *agunah*. The Dubno Maggid, who was famous for his parables, had a parable for this case as well, proving that the woman was permitted to remarry.

A Kabbalah to Listen to and Learn Mussar

There were *mochichim* in Rabbeinu Yonah's times, and he was saying that if a person decides to listen to the *mochichim* on a regular basis and accepts upon himself to follow their instructions — even though

he presently doesn't know what they'll tell him to do — "from the moment he accepts this in his thoughts and makes a firm decision in his heart, he has acquired a merit for his soul and reward for all future mitzvos and *mussar*. Fortunate is he for he has made his soul righteous in one quick moment." That is, it's immediately considered as if he already fulfilled and performed all these good deeds that he will do in the future. Since he made such a decision, which guarantees that he will do all these good deeds, it's considered that his "actions are greater than his wisdom." A person may even be unaware of this, yet he'll already have *zechuyos* as if he fulfilled many mitzvos! From that point on, he merits tremendous *zechuyos*!

If so, a person who learns *mussar*, and learns in order to fulfill it — if he makes a firm decision to learn *mussar* every day and implement what he learns — will be *zocheh* to tremendous *zechuyos* based on his future actions, and he has made his soul righteous in one quick moment.

Yeshivos have a *seder* for *mussar*, but even someone who is not in yeshivah can make himself a *seder*. It's known that people who learn *mussar* at home, a little something every day — there's no minimum — every steady *mussar seder* has a strong effect and influence on the person to perform *maasim tovim*. And it also has an effect on the whole atmosphere at home; it creates a pleasant atmosphere at home and leads to a happy life. By learning *mussar*, a person becomes aware of his obligations in this world, and his life is transformed into a happy life on all fronts. That's the reality.

In any case, this is how one can acquire many *zechuyos*. Rabbeinu Yonah writes: "In a short moment, he exits profound darkness and enters a great light"; and "Fortunate is he who has made his soul righteous in one quick moment." This is a wonderful way to come out meritorious on Yom HaDin, for it will be considered as if we already have tremendous amounts of *maasim tovim*.

Review Mussar Over and Over

Rabbeinu Yonah adds (ibid. 2:26), "He should review and mull over the rebukes in his heart. He should not rely solely on the rebuker's admonishments, and his rebuke should be constant, until his soul accepts the *mussar* and until he is purified." After he hears the rebukers' admonishment, he must review what he heard, and he should constantly think about the *mussar* that he

heard, trying to influence himself until it changes his nature — or in Rabbeinu Yonah's words: "until his soul accepts the *mussar* and until he is purified." He should reach *taharas hanefesh!* Through this *kabbalah*, a person can merit emerging from the darkness and entering a great light. And his actions will be considered greater than his wisdom.

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Caring about Others – An Obligation

There's something that's very important, and it's a *mitzvas aseh*, a positive mitzvah. "Love your fellow as yourself" (*Vayikra* 19:18); and "What does Hashem demand of you, if not to perform justice and lovingkindness" (*Michah* 6:8). Rabbeinu Yonah wrote in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (3:13): "A person is obligated to trouble himself to seek out his fellow Jews' good, and to toil diligently to help his fellow, whether he is poor or rich." This is an obligation on every single Jew! He must search and think: How can I do favors for others; how can I do good for others.

I think I once saw an *adam gadol* in yeshivah looking for someone with whom to do *chesed*. He went out of his way and searched till he found a sad-looking *bachur*. He went over to the *bachur* and spoke in learning with him for a long while, for about half an hour! to encourage him and give him a good feeling. This is "seeking out his fellow Jews' good."

Daven for Klal Yisrael's Ruchniyus

We spoke about giving others a good feeling in *gashmiyus* matters, but one must care about his fellow Jews' *ruchniyus* and his eternal life. Many people need *chizuk* in spiritual matters, and the mitzvah of *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha* applies to *chayei netzach* as well. One is obligated to promote his fellow Jew's eternal life, assist him in meriting Olam HaBa with eternal pleasures. How can we do this? There are *kiruv* organizations of course, but how is a regular person supposed to help others with their *ruchniyus*?

The *eitzah*, says Rav Yisrael Salanter, is that davening helps. This is tried-and-true. Indeed, Rav Yisrael himself would ask his *talmidim* to daven for him, for his *ruchniyus*. It turns out that the *madreigah* Rav Yisrael reached was the result of others' *tefillos!* It's simply not possible without

tefillos! If so, davening helps other people's *ruchniyus*.

In our prayers, we say "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah"; "Grant us from Yourself knowledge, insight, and wisdom." We express our requests in the plural form. We don't say "Grant me," we say "Grant us"! And who are we asking for? Who do we refer to when we use the plural form? Are we only referring to our family and close friends? No! We are asking on behalf of all of Klal Yisrael! We ask that they merit knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to learn Your Torah, to serve You, and to do proper teshuvah. If so, we are davening for the *ruchniyus* of others, and this type of prayer can help, just as Rav Yisrael Salanter said.

Caring about Our Wayward Brothers

If only we would really be on this *madreigah*, which is a high *madreigah* indeed; it's not simple. **We should care about and be pained over Klal Yisrael's *ruchniyus*, we should care about *Yiddishe neshamos*; why shouldn't they also merit Olam HaBa? Although they are *shogegim*, unintentional sinners, a *shogeig* doesn't merit Olam HaBa because he doesn't have enough *zechuyos*. **If we really cared about them, and we were really pained over Klal Yisrael's *ruchniyus* and eternal life, we would daven from the depths of our hearts. And it would certainly have an effect!****

But it's not simple; it's actually against our nature to be so pained and care so deeply about another person's lack of Olam HaBa. It's an extraordinary *madreigah* — but that's the way things should be! "*V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*"! Is "Love your fellow as yourself" only referring to material needs? What about Olam HaBa? It's true, they're *shogegim*, but they won't receive Olam HaBa and they'll be missing out on the pleasures of eternal life in Olam HaBa. Why don't we care about this?! It is a high *madreigah*, but at the same time, it is our obligation of *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*.

The Rosh writes in *Orchos Chaim* (os 36): "It's good practice to ask forgiveness for reciting 'Selach lanu, Please forgive us' without *kavanah*." Sometimes, a person has to say "Please forgive us" for saying "Please forgive us" without the proper *kavanah*.

We say "Please forgive us" in the plural, on behalf of all of Klal Yisrael. We must think about whether we really are davening with *kavanah*, whether we are really thinking about ourselves and others, and

whether it really pains us and we are expressing a heartfelt *tefillah*. Is this something we truly want from the depths of our hearts? Therefore, we must recite “*Selach lanu*, Please forgive us” — how could we have uttered such words without giving proper thought as to what we are asking?

Place Your Fear on All Your Creations

In the Yamim Noraim *tefillos* we say: “Place Your fear on all Your creations.” We are davening for all “Your creations” — everyone who lives with us in the *Olam HaAsiyah*, in this world. We are davening for everyone to acquire *yiras Shamayim*: “Place Your fear.” We are asking for a *shefa*, abundance, of *yiras Shamayim* to be showered on all Your creations. This is a *tefillah* for others.

But each person has to daven for himself as well. Does he have perfect *yiras Shamayim* already? Does he have the proper level of fear? He certainly needs *yiras Shamayim* and he needs to daven for this, and the *tefillah* of “Place Your fear” is also for himself personally. *Yiras Shamayim* type of fear is not harmful to one’s health. To the contrary, the *pasuk*

states (*Mishlei* 10:27), “*Yiras Shamayim* will increase days.” Fear of Heaven gives a person good, happy life.

Do we really daven for this from the depth of our hearts? It’s not simple to fulfill our obligation of *v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho* by davening for other people’s *ruchniyus*, or even our own *ruchniyus*. Our *tefillah* would really have to be candid, from the depths of our heart; we would really have to care about the next person. It’s not simple, and we need *siyatta d’Shemaya*.

However, Chazal say (*Yoma* 38b), “One who comes to be purified is helped.” If a person has a steady learning session in *mussar*, then this steady *seder* shows that “he’s coming to be purified.” He is revealing that he wants *siyatta d’Shemaya* and he wants to be the way he’s obligated to be. This steady *seder* proves that he really wants it! And then there’s *siyatta d’Shemaya*. *Yehi ratzon* that we all become strengthened in whatever needs *chizuk*. May we merit a *gmara chasimah tovah* along with all of Klal Yisrael.

Please daven for
גיטה פייגה בת רבקה
לרפואה שלימה ומהירה
בתוך כל חולי ישראל

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The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va’ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein’s home.