

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

From the *Sichos* of Maran Rosh HaYeshivah Rav Gershon Edelstein ztvl • *Yom Kippur 5786*

634

The Purpose of Torah — Teshuvah and Maasim Tovim

Chazal say (*Brachos* 17a), “The purpose of *chochmah* is *teshuvah* and *maasim tovim*.” That is, the purpose and goal of learning Torah is to attain *teshuvah* and *maasim tovim*, and Torah is a means to achieve *teshuvah* and *maasim tovim*.”

Now, we certainly cannot fathom the *maalah* and value of Torah itself, but if *teshuvah* and *maasim tovim* are lacking, this is not fulfilling the Torah’s requirements. The Torah demands that a person does *teshuvah* and *maasim tovim*; without this, it is like one who learns and does not fulfill what he is learning. Doing *teshuvah* and performing *maasim tovim* is part of fulfilling the Torah.

The importance of doing *teshuvah* is well known and understandable, but not everyone knows about doing *maasim tovim*. The truth is, we have 613 mitzvos, so besides these mitzvos, what are the other *maasim tovim*? In davening, we ask “accustom us to [learn] Your Torah and attach us to Your mitzvos.” And then, we ask again, “and attach us to the yetzer tov and to *maasim tovim*.” The commentators explain that mitzvos and *maasim tovim* are two separate matters. Let us explain what *maasim tovim* are all about.

There are many levels in mitzvah fulfillment. There are mitzvos that are performed with *negios*, personal bias, which means that there is a blemish and a deficiency in the *sheleimus* of that mitzvah. *Maasim tovim* means to perform the mitzvah with *sheleimus* solely for the sake of doing the mitzvah — *lishmah*. This means the person does not do the mitzvah in order to feel important, or for any other calculations; the mitzvah is done solely out of love and fear of Hashem.

And that’s why *maasim tovim* are mentioned after *teshuvah*. *Lichorah*, if one has already attained *teshuvah*, why does he still need *maasim tovim*?

After all, he has already done *teshuvah* and received atonement for his sins — he no longer has sins, so why does he have to add more *maasim tovim*? But the explanation is that while it’s true that he is fulfilling all the mitzvos after having done *teshuvah*, the meaning of “*maasim tovim*” is that a person is not merely fulfilling his duty in mitzvah observance, but he is doing the *mitzvah b’sheleimus*. This is a higher *madreigah* and an additional *maalah* that comes after Torah and *teshuvah*.

The order is, as we said: Torah, *teshuvah*, and *maasim tovim*. Without Torah, the yetzer hara is in control and nothing you do will be effective. The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (Chap. 5) that Torah is the only antidote to the yetzer hara, as HaKadosh Baruch Hu says, “I created the Torah as an antidote to it.” There is no other solution. And once a person has Torah, the yetzer hara no longer has control. Then the person can advance further — in *teshuvah* and *maasim tovim*.

Four Main Parts of Teshuvah

There are main principles of *teshuvah*. Rabbeinu Yonah in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (*Shaar* 1) explains twenty principles of *teshuvah*, and the *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar HaTeshuvah*) also delineates twenty principles of *teshuvah*, which he divides into five categories.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes (1:19) that even though there are many *madreigos* in *teshuvah*, there are three main components of *teshuvah*: *charatah* (sincerely regretting the sin), *vidui* (verbally confessing the sin before Hashem), and *azivas hacheit* (abandoning the sin). While there are many other levels in *teshuvah*, these three components are the minimum necessary — without them, a person’s remorse is not considered *teshuvah* at all.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* writes that *teshuvah* has four main components — the three Rabbeinu

Yonah listed, as well as *kabbalah l'haba*, resolution not to repeat a sin. All the other principles are offshoots of the main components, and are not principles of teshuvah.

Machlokes between Rambam and Ramban

The Rambam and the Ramban have differing opinions regarding whether teshuvah is a *mitzvas aseï*. The Ramban holds (*Devarim* 30:11) that teshuvah is a *mitzvas aseï*, as the *pasuk* states, “And return to Hashem your G-d... And you will return.” This is then followed by another *pasuk* [about *teshuvah*], “For this mitzvah about which I command you...” The Rambam, however, does not mention a *mitzvas aseï* of teshuvah. He just writes (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 1:1; *Sefer Hamitzvos* Positive Mitzvos 73) that there is a mitzvah of *vidui*, which is part of teshuvah, and when a person does teshuvah, he is obligated to confess his sins. However, the Rambam does not list the actual act of teshuvah as a mitzvah.

The simple explanation of the Rambam’s view is as follows: What is *charatah* (regret), and why does a person express regret? Because he is afraid; he has *yiras ha’onesh*, fear of punishment. There is also a higher *madreigah* of *yiras ha’romemus*, which is related to *ahavah*, but in any case, *charatah* is the result of simple *yiras ha’onesh*.

Rabbeinu Yonah explains the concept of *charatah* 1:10), “One must understand in his heart that abandoning Hashem is evil and bitter. And he must take it to heart that there is punishment, vengeance and retribution for every sin, as it states, “To Me is vengeance, and retribution.” ... And he shall say in his heart, “What have I done? How did I not have the fear of Hashem in front of my eyes, and how was I not afraid of the rebukes for my sin and from the harsh judgments? ...for the wicked have many pains.” That is, *charatah* is the result of *yiras Shamayim*.

If so, the Rambam holds that it is included in the mitzvah of *yirah* — as there is a mitzvah of *yiras Shamayim* — and it is not a separate mitzvah. After all, *yirah* is not exclusively related to teshuvah, there is a general mitzvah of *yiras Shamayim* — the mitzvah of *yirah* — which leads to *charatah*. Once a person has *yirah*, his *charatah*

Vidui Is Verbal; Kabbalah Is in the Heart

On Erev Yom Kippur, Rabbeinu *ztkv”l* would eat the *seudah* with *yblcht”a* his son-in-law Rav Itamar Garbuz’s family, and they would discuss timely matters. What follows is from Erev Yom Kippur 5782 (2021).

Rav I. Garbuz: People ask, Having a *kabbalah al ha’asid*, resolution not to repeat a sin, is not mentioned anywhere in all the *tefillos*. *Vidui* of Yom Kippur is all about past sins, and the Rambam writes that *kabbalah al ha’asid* is a necessary component of teshuvah.

Rabbeinu: **In teshuvah it’s necessary; the tefillah is something else.**

Rav I. Garbuz: *Kabbalah* is not mentioned at all in the ten times we say *Vidui* on Yom Kippur. At the end of *Vidui*, we say a *Yehi ratzon*, asking not to sin again, but that’s not part of the *Vidui*. Is this *yehi ratzon* perhaps how we fulfill the obligation for *kabbalah al ha’asid*?

Rabbeinu: ***Kabbalah* is in one’s heart, *Vidui* must be expressed verbally, *v’hisvadu* (confess verbally), but *kabbalah* is in one’s heart.**

Rav I. Garbuz: And you don’t verbalize your *kabbalah*?

Rabbeinu: **It has to be a *kabbalah* in your heart. How will it help to say it out loud... If he says it and doesn’t mean it, it’s not worth anything without meaning it.**

Rav I. Garbuz: The heart is needed in *Vidui* as well. If a person confesses his sins and doesn’t mean it, that’s not *Vidui*...

Rabbeinu: **For *Vidui*, both the heart and speech are needed. It’s called *vidui devarim*, verbal confession, “Take words with yourselves,” but speech is not needed for *kabbalah al ha’asid*.**

is inevitable. He does not have to perform an action to achieve *charatah*; he simply must be engaged in *yiras Shamayim*. When one learns *mussar*, he has *yiras Shamayim*, and then he will

automatically have *charatah*! Because if one has *yirah*, he has *charatah* as well.

The same is true regarding *azivas hacheit*. If a person has *yiras Shamayim*, is it possible that he will continue to sin? He has *charatah* and is in pain due to the sins he has already done, so would he go and commit more sins?! Therefore, if he has *yirah*, he definitely has *azivas hacheit*, and it's impossible to commit additional sins, because he knows that there is a punishment and he is frightened. Only someone who knows his Creator and intends to rebel against Him — only someone with such a big yetzer hara will continue sinning. We aren't talking about someone like this; a regular person's *yirah* obligates him to abandon his sins. And not only does his *yirah* "obligate" him to have *azivas hacheit*, it is a "natural result" that comes automatically. Due to *yirah*, he also has *azivas hacheit*.

The same is true regarding *kabbalah l'haba*, resolution not to repeat a sin. If a person thinks that he will continue to perform *aveiros* in the future, that evil thought is also a sin, as the *pasuk* states, "Do not stray after your hearts," which is a sin and general prohibition from the 613 mitzvos, and is not related solely to teshuvah. And that's why the Rambam did not list it as a specific mitzvah.

Vidui, however, is when one must verbally confess his sins, as the *pasuk* states, "Take words with yourselves... and let us render [for] bulls [the offering of] our lips." Why are "words" needed? After all, he's already a *tzaddik* and a *yarei Shamayim*, he has *yirah* and *ahavah*; he already went through the steps of *charatah*, *azivas hacheit*, and *kabbalah l'haba*, so why is speech necessary? After all, Hashem knows man's thoughts! However, the requirement of verbal confession is a unique halachah — it is a *chiddush*, something we would not understand logically — as part of the teshuvah process, and that's why the Rambam said *vidui* is a separate mitzvah.

Increase Yirah and Minimize the Nisayon

Practically speaking, all these matters are applicable — Torah, *teshuvah*, and *maasim tovim*. As we said, everything starts with Torah, but we have a yetzer hara of *bittul Torah*. The solution is, as Rav Yisrael Salanter taught us, "to increase *yirah* and minimize the *nisayon*." On one hand, we must increase *yiras Shamayim*, and just as *yirah* leads to *charatah* and *azivas hacheit*, it also prevents *bittul Torah*. And on the other hand, we must "minimize the *nisayon*" — we should understand that it's not so difficult, it's just that there are difficulties in the beginning, but afterward, it becomes pleasant, and it's not hard.

In this manner, one will be able to overcome the yetzer hara of *bittul Torah* — he should increase his *yirah* with a small measure of *yiras Shamayim*, and minimize his *nisayon* with a small amount of *chochmah* in order to understand that it's pleasant and not difficult. One merely has to make a small investment. After all, people invest heavily in other matters and in frivolity for the future, and here, just by a small investment, you can merit "you will be fortunate in this world" and enjoy a life so pleasant that it defies description.

The way to attain teshuvah is by learning *Mesillas Yescharim* and other *mussar sefarim*. If a person is engaged in *mussar sefarim* on a consistent basis, he will automatically have a *hisorerus*, and every learning session will have an impression on him. The *hashpaah* is not felt immediately, but in the end, it will be recognizable and felt. It's just important to learn in a manner that is interesting, because if your method of learning is boring and feels forced, it will not have an effect on you. One must learn in a pleasant, light manner that will draw you in further, and then your learning will have an effect on you.

For donations or dedications of the Hebrew and English flyers, or to receive the *sichos* to your email, please contact:

darkei.hachizuk@gmail.com

Donations can also be made at Kehillos or Nedarim Plus stations. Search for דרכי החיזוק (Code 710).

Dedicated by the Kroll Family, Los Angeles

להצלחת בניהם ובנותיהם
בתורה וביראת שמים