



Mussar! For besides that the *sifrei* Mussar arouse fear, they also bring a person to simplify the crookedness of the heart, and his study of Torah will then be only for the sake of Heaven, and such Torah will certainly increase in him fear upon fear.

This is the intention of Rabbah bar Rav Huna (Shabbos 31a), who said: "Any person who has Torah but does not have fear of Heaven, is like a treasurer to whom they gave the keys to the inner chambers, but the keys to the outer chambers they did not give him. How shall he enter?!" And Rashi explained: "Fear of Heaven is like the outer doors, for through them one enters the inner ones. So too, if he has fear of Heaven, he becomes careful to guard and to do. And if not, he does not care about his Torah." End quote. Meaning, when a person does what is necessary to arouse fear within him, which is that he studies the *sifrei* Mussar, then he elevates himself above the vanities of the world, and his desires become purified, and then he no longer studies Torah out of ulterior motives, but rather for its main purpose, which is to guard and to do. This is not the case when he does not merit fear, for he does not strive to arouse it, then he does not care about his Torah. Meaning, he does not set his mind to the purpose of the commandment of Torah study, and he does not purify his intention that it should be for the sake of Heaven, to guard and to do, and to be in awe and fear of Hashem Yisbarach.

In light of the above, there would be room to say that one who has not yet merited to purify his ulterior motives is forbidden to open a Gemara or Shulchan Aruch without studying the *sifrei* Mussar. For behold, it is known the contradiction in the words of Chazal, that in one place (Sotah 22b) it is stated: "Rebbe Yehudah said in the name of Rav: A person should always engage in Torah and mitzvos even not for their own sake, for out of [learning] not for its own sake, he will come to [learning] for its own sake." And this

implies from this saying that there is not so much blemish in learning not for its own sake. On the contrary, beginners should be encouraged to study initially not for its own sake, for only through this will they come .to for its own sake

However, on the other hand, there are statements in the words of Chazal regarding the severity of studying Torah not for its own sake. As it says in the Gemara (Taanis 7a): "Anyone who engages in Torah not for its own sake, his Torah becomes for him a deadly poison." And in another place (Berachos 17a) they expressed themselves in a very harsh manner, saying: "Anyone who does [mitzvos] not for its own sake, it would have been better had he not been created." And in the Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah, Parashas Bechukosai) it is stated: "Rebbe Yochanan said: One who learns not in order to practice, it would have been better had his placenta been turned over upon his face." And see Tosafos (Pesachim 50b, s.v. V'kan) who were also troubled by this contradiction and sought to distinguish between study with the intent to provoke and between study for other ulterior motives. And others said to resolve that there is to distinguish between one whose entire intention is not for its own sake, and one whose ultimate desire is to merit Torah for its own sake, but so long as he has not yet merited to ascend and to reach the purification of intention, he engages not for its own sake with the desire that this Torah will bring him to the level of for its own sake.

However, according to what is proven from the above words of the Sifri, that Torah studied not for its own sake does not cause elevation and fear, it is no longer possible to resolve and to say that Torah study not for its own sake brings to 'for its own sake'. We must necessarily explain that the intention of Chazal when they said "out of [learning] not for its own sake, he will come to [learning] for its own sake," is with the addition of studying *seforim* of fear,

which straighten the crookedness of the heart. And you thus find yourself saying that one who does not study *sifrei* Mussar is also not fitting to study Gemara, for concerning such study they did not say at all "out of not for its own sake, he will come to for its own sake." And there is room to say that HaKadosh Baruch Hu has no satisfaction from his Torah...

However, there is no doubt that in our times it is impossible to rule so in practice, and even those who have no portion in the Torah of Mussar are obligated to study Torah, and especially the Torah of Halachah, so that he will know what is permitted and what is forbidden. And still, these words are fitting to be said, so that one who is lax in Mussar should understand how Chazal viewed him.

Also, those who do study Mussar must know that the study of Mussar is not a cure that endures long-term, unless it is with consistency. As reality proves, even if a person merited to be aroused by words of Mussar, his feeling cools after a short while. Only if he persists with consistency will he accustom himself to fear, and his Torah will also be with a more desirable intention, and he will merit to elevate himself through it.

And who is greater for us than our master, the holy Chasam Sofer zy"q, who testified about himself that on the day he did not learn Mussar, he felt weakness in his service of the Creator. And if this great cedar, the teacher of all the exile, testified this about himself, what shall we answer, we, who are like weeds of the wall, people of our lowly level? Certainly, without studying Mussar each and every day, we will feel coldness in the fear of Heaven.

Therefore, every man who desires eternal life should choose for himself a Mussar *sefer* that arouses his heart, and he should study it each and every day without missing even one day, and then he will merit to elevate himself in the levels of Torah, and the fear of Hashem will be upon his face, so that he will not sin.

**‘The path of the heart’**

A business associate who grew up distant from Torah and mitzvos was sitting shivah. I promised him that I would come and arrange for Mincha and Maariv with a minyan. He would gather the people, and I would take care of whatever was connected to observance that they were unfamiliar with from home. My friend was very happy, and indeed I left early enough to arrive on time for the tefillos. Except that I had not taken into account a huge traffic jam that was caused by a certain group of protesters that blocked the road. The GPS showed that it would take 40 minutes to pass a distance of 4.6 kilometers, which should take 5 minutes if the road were clear. Time was passing, and the GPS was now showing 52 minutes... The pressure was mounting, and I knew that if I was not there, there would be no tefillos and no Kaddish. I tried to arrange for people from his city, perhaps there was someone who could go up to the shivah house and arrange it in my place, but I was not successful. My friend who was with me in the car tried to calm me and said that I was considered an oneis [circumstances beyond my control], and that we would make a minyan at the side of the road... But on the line was my associate, and I was calming him, telling him that everything would be fine and that there would be miracles...

I cried out to the Creator of the world that He should help me. Suddenly I decided to go down to the side of the road. I drove a few dozen meters until I saw a right turn onto an unpaved path. I turned and drove, not knowing where, but the main thing was not to sit in this traffic jam that was not moving. My friend told me that I was completely insane, because I was also missing the opportunity for Mincha that could be arranged with a minyan at the side of the road. But my heart simply led me onto this path. I reached a side road. I glanced at the navigation device, and it showed me 2 minutes to the destination!!! From fifty-two minutes down to two minutes!!! A few minutes before shkiya [sunset] we were already standing for Mincha!!!

It sounds imaginary and absurd, but it actually happened to me, and I have a reliable witness who thought I was not sane to testify to the miracle. If you truly want and truly cry out with all your heart, the Creator of the world is not limited to making for you a Kefitzas Haderach (a miraculous shortening of the way)!!!

**!This Pasuk Spells out Elul**

*In the Gemara (Berachos 32a) we find the following passage:*

**“Rabbi Simlai taught: ‘A person should always arrange the praises of Hakadosh Baruch Hu (by praising Hashem first), and only then pray. From where do we derive this? From Moshe, as it is written (Devarim 3:23) וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֵלֶיךָ בְּעֵת הַהוּא - And I implored Hashem at that time, and it is written afterward (ibid. 24) אֲדַלֵּךְ ה' אֶתְּהַלּוֹת הַהַרְאוֹת אֶת עַבְדְּךָ אֶת גְּדֻלְךָ וְאֶת יָדְךָ הַחֲזָקָה אֲשֶׁר מִי הָלַ בְּשָׁמַיִם, וְבָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה כְּמַעֲשֵׂיךָ וְכַגְבוּרֹתֶיךָ - Hashem God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can perform deeds and mighty acts like Yours? And then it is written (ibid. 25) אָעֲבֹרָה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה - Please let me cross and see the good land.”**

Based on this passage, the holy sefarim (see *Likkutei HaRim* on the month of Elul) encouraged one to praise Hashem more during the holy month of Elul.

The reason for arranging Hashem’s praises first is explained by Rashi (*Berachos* 4b): “David Hamelech hinted at this practice in Tehillim, as it is written (19:15) יְהִי לְרִצּוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהִגִּיֵּן לִבִּי, וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֵלֶיךָ בְּעֵת הַהוּא - May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing before You, Hashem, my rock and my Redeemer. This is immediately followed by (20:2) יַעֲנֵךְ ה' - May Hashem answer you on the day of distress. The Yerushalmi (*Berachos* 1:1) elaborates: “One who does not juxtapose redemption (the tefillos ending with *Ga'al Yisrael*) to prayer is like a friend of the king who comes and knocks on the king’s door. When the king opens and finds that the person has distanced himself, the king, too, distances himself. Instead, a person should draw close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, appeasing Him with praises and songs so that God, in turn, draws close to him. While the person remains close, he should then present his requests.”

These ideas align beautifully with the pasuk (*Shemos* 15:1) וַיִּאמְרוּ לַיהוָה אֲשִׁירָה לָהּ, - And they said, saying, I will sing to Hashem, as the initial letters of this phrase form the word אלול, Elul.

Thus, the essence of the work of Elul is to arrange Hashem’s praises for all the goodness He has bestowed upon us, individually and collectively, throughout the past year. We recognize His abundant kindness, express gratitude, and praise Him for it. This is the basis for the custom of reciting Tehillim and *piyutim* during Elul.

As Rashi explains, arranging praises and songs to Hashem constitutes our “knocking” on the gates of Heaven during Elul, much like a beloved friend of the king knocking on his door. These songs and praises serve as our knock on the Gates of Mercy, as we say in the *Selichos*: “Like paupers and destitute, we knock on Your door.” (See *Bnei Yissaschar*, *Elul* 1:8, where it is explained that in this month, the gates and doorways are opened.) Through this preparation, we will merit that the King comes out to greet us on the Day of Kingship, Rosh Hashanah, and during the approaching Days of Awe, accepting our prayers with mercy and favor, Amen.

It is told of two Karliner chassidim, devout and learned men, who once visited the court of the holy Rav Yehoshua of Belz zt”l to spend Shabbos in his presence. As was the custom of Karliner chassidim, who served Hashem with all their might, they asked the tzaddik for permission to pray aloud with great cries, following their holy tradition. However, the Rebbe refused and instructed them to adapt to the local customs.

During *Kabbalas Shabbos* and *Maariv*, they restrained themselves and refrained from shouting, as instructed. During the beginning of *Shacharis*, they held back with great effort. But they could no longer contain themselves when they reached *Nishmas Kol Chai*. Suddenly, they began praying with loud cries as though transported back to the *shul* in Karlin. Every phrase they uttered during *Nishmas* echoed like a cannon firing mighty blasts, followed by brief pauses before another resounding explosion shook the *shul*. Thus, their voices filled the *shul* in Belz with an overwhelming, powerful sound.

After Shabbos, the two Karliner chassidim approached the Rebbe with embarrassment, asking forgiveness for defying his instruction and shouting during *davening*.

The tzaddik smiled warmly and said with wit, “That’s not what I meant at all! “There are many paths in serving Hashem, and all are beloved and valid, each man with his camp and banner. In Karlin, the custom is to pray with cries from start to finish, while other

