

## I. What is *Zerizus*?

In defining the trait of *zerizus*, the *Mesillas Yesharim* points out that while one needs to be incredibly careful and diligent not to fall into the traps of the *Yetzer Hara* to violate *aveiros*, one also must exert the same care and diligence to perform *mitzvos*. The same way the *Yetzer Hara* will attempt to trap a person in sin, he will also try to prevent him from the performance of *Mitzvos*. One who wishes to merit serving Hashem must go against his nature, and conquer it with alacrity.

### מסילת ישרים פרק ו

אחר הזהירות יבוא הוריוות, כי הזהירות טובה על ה"לא תעשה" והוריוות על ה"עשה", והיינו (תהילים לד טו): סור מרע ועשה טוב. וענינו של הוריוות מבואר, שהוא ההקדמה למצות ולהשלמת ענינם. וכלשון הזה אמרו ז"ל (פסחים ד): זריזים מקדימים למצות. וזה, כי כמו שצריך פקחות גדול והשקפה רבה לינצל ממוקשי היצר ולהמלט מן הרע שלא ישלוט בנו להתערב במעשינו בן צריך פקחות גדול והשקפה לאחוז במצות ולזכות בהם ולא תאבדנה ממנו. כי כמו שמסבב היצר הרע בתחבולותיו להפיל את האדם במכמורות החטא, כן משתדל למנוע ממנו עשית המצות ולאבדם ממנו. ואם יתרפה ויתעצל ולא יתחזק לרדוף אחריהם ולתמוך בהם, ישאר נעור וריק מהם בודאי. ותרצה כי טבע האדם כבד מאד, כי עפריות החמירות גם, על כן לא יחפוץ האדם במורה ומלאכה. ומי שרוצה לזכות לעבודת הכורא יתברך, צריך שיתגבר נגד טבעו עצמו ויתגבר ויזדרז.

## II. *Zerizin Makdimin L'Mitzvos*

The *Gemara* (*Yoma 28b*, *Pesachim 4a*) teaches us about the concept of *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos* (alacrity in the fulfillment of *mitzvos*). We learn this concept from *Avraham Avinu*, who woke up early in the morning to carry out the commandment of the *akeidah*.

Interestingly, the *Midrash* (quoted in *Minchas Asher Bereishis* pg. 144) states that the source for *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos* is not from the aforementioned *pasuk* about *akeidas Yitzchak*; rather, it is sourced from a *pasuk* with the same wording, referring to *Avraham davening* for the survival of *S'dom*.

A third approach to the source of *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos* is that of the *Pesikta* (*ibid*) on the *pasuk* (*Bereishis 18:6*) referring to *Avraham Avinu* rushing to tell *Sara* to prepare food for the esteemed guests which visited his tent. Rav Asher Weiss (*ibid*) points out that this source teaches us that the idea of *zerizus* not only applies to *mitzvos* which are *bein adam l'Makom*, but also *bein adam l'chaveiro* as well.

## III. Understanding the *Midrash* Through the Lens of *Tosfos*

The aforementioned *Gemara* in *Pesachim* is in the midst of the discussion regarding checking for *chametz* the night before *Pesach*. The *Gemara* wonders why we search for *chametz* the night before *Pesach*, when the actual prohibition of *chametz* does not begin until the 6th hour of *Erev Pesach* has passed. Wouldn't it make sense to get rid of the *chametz* by searching for it and burning it right before its time of prohibition, at the beginning of the sixth hour? The *Gemara* then asks: If you were to suggest that we search at night because of the principle of *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos*, it would be easy to reject that suggestion, as the

concept would only apply on the morning of, as the *pasuk* states: "וַיִּשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בְּבֶקֶר". Seemingly then, the time to search for *chametz* should be in the morning, and not the night before. The *Gemara* answers that since people are at home at night, it is logically the best time to search for *Chametz*.

On our *Gemara*, *Tosfos* wonders why exactly we would have assumed that the concept of *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos* teaches us that one does not perform the *mitzvah* before the commanded time (the morning of), if the *Gemara* in *Chullin* (91a) teaches this *pasuk* as the source that a *talmid chacham* should not go out alone at night. *Tosfos* answers that the prohibition of a *talmid chacham* going out at night is one which is derived from the *pesukim* describing Avraham waking up early in the morning to pray for *S'dom*. Since this prayer was not a commandment, Avraham was not protected from damage, as messengers for a *mitzvah* are not endangered. At the *akeidah*, Avraham was both with two others (Yishmael and Eliezer) and was a messenger for a *mitzvah*; therefore, he did not need to be concerned about going out alone at night. Clearly, our *pasuk* teaches us that *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos* applies from the time the commandment kicks in.

גמ' פסחים ד.

והשתא דקיימא לן דלכולי עלמא "אור" אורתא הוא, מכדי בין לרבי יהודה ובין לרבי מאיר — חמץ אינו אסור אלא משש שעות ולמעלה, ונבדוק בשיתובי תימא זריזין מקדימין למצות, נבדוק מצפרא. דכתיב: "וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו", ותניא: כל היום כולו בשר למילה, אלא שזריזין מקדימין למצות, שנאמר: "וַיִּשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בְּבֶקֶר". אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: בשעה שבני אדם מצויין בבתיהם, ואור הנר יפה לבדיקה.

תוס' שם שנאמר וישכם אברהם בבקר - ואם תאמר והיכי מוכח מהאי קרא דזריזין מקדימין למצות ואין מקדימין טפי מצפרא והא בפרק גיד הנשה (חולין צא. שם) יליף ר' אבהו מהאי קרא דתלמיד חכם לא יצא יחידי בלילה ויש לומר דהכא מוכח מקרא דעקי" דה דלא היה נמנע אברהם מלצאת יחידי בלילה דשלוחי מצוה אינן נזוקין ועוד דשני נעריזו היו עמו והתם מוכח מוֹיִשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בבקר דכתיב גבי סדום דלא היה מצוה ויחידי היה שלא רצה שיראו במפלתן של סדום:

What is implied from our *Tosfos* is that prayer of *S'dom* was not considered a *mitzvah*. How could the aforementioned *Midrash*, which taught us that the source for *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos* was derived from this *pasuk* about *S'dom*, assume that the prayer for *S'dom* was a *mitzvah*? This seems directly at odds with our *Tosfos*!

#### IV. Understanding and Defending the *Midrash* Against *Tosfos*

Rav Asher Weiss answers that the intent of the *Midrash* must have been as follows: We learn from the *Gemara* in *Brachos* (26b) that Avraham enacted the *tefillah* of *shacharis*. The *Gemara* teaches us this from the *pasuk* of "וַיִּשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בְּבֶקֶר" - the *pasuk* of *S'dom*. Additionally, when the *Shulchan Aruch* codifies the laws of *maariv* (OC 235:3), we are taught that even though one technically has time until *chatzos* to recite *krias shema*, he should say it as early as possible. The *Levush* writes that this is because of the concept of *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos*, which we learn from Avraham. Even though Avraham wasn't necessarily formally commanded to pray, he teaches us *middos* which then lead to laws of *tefillah*; however, his action wasn't a *mitzvah* itself. We can now understand the difference between *Tosfos* and the *Midrash*. For *Tosfos*, the references to *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos* are only in cases where the *mitzvah* was commanded, not to be commanded. However, the *Midrash* is referring to the general laws of *tefillah* which are traced back to the *middos* of Avraham Avinu.

ברכות כו:

תניא כוותיה דרבי יומי ברבי חנינא: אברהם תקן תפלת שחרית, שנאמר: "וישכם אברהם בבקר אל המקום אשר עמד שם", ואין "עמידה" אלא תפלה, שנאמר: "ויעמד פינחס ויפלל".

שו"ע שלה:ג לכתחלה צריך לקרות ק"ש מיד בצאת הככבים וזמנה עד חצי הלילה ואם עבר ואיחר וקרא עד שלא עלה עמוד השחר יצא י"ח:

## V. Putting Hashem Before Anyone Else

The *Sfas Emes* (*Vayikra* 5658) writes in the name of *Rabbeinu Tam* that "וישכם אברהם בבקר" as the source for *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos* means that one should rush to the service of Hashem to give his "בקר", his best and brightest, to Him. A true sign of love is placing that which one loves before anything and everything else. In the peculiar episode of the rebellious son, the *Ben Sorer U'Moreh*, *Rabbeinu Bachaye* expounds on why the Torah found it necessary to teach such a peculiar and gruesome story, resulting in parents having their child sentenced to death. He teaches that the penultimate lesson of the rebellious son is that no matter how much love a parent can have for their child, their love for Hashem must come first and foremost. This trait is exemplified by *Avraham Avinu*, who, with tremendous self-control, offered his son *Yitzchak* at the *akeidah*. Perhaps this lesson of *Avraham Avinu* relates to the driving force of *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos*, we rush to do our best in the performance of *mitzvos*, because it is Hashem who always comes first and foremost. Not only do we see that *Avraham* exemplifies the trait of *zerizus* when he woke up early in the morning to perform the *akeidah*, but the *zerizus* carried into the act of the *akeidah* itself, putting Hashem before his son.