



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 19 | Vaeschanan | Sichah 1

Childish Torah Study

Translated by Rabbi Shmuel Kesselman
Edited by Rabbi Eliezer Robbins and Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

A note on the translation: Rounded parentheses and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; squiggly parentheses are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in squiggly parentheses are those of the translators or editors, and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time maintaining readability. The translation, however, carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed – please send all comments to: info@projectlikkuteisichos.org**

1.

TO STUDY AND TO TEACH

The *mitzvah* of Torah study, in a general sense, comprises two commandments:

a) “To study”¹ — the obligation to learn Torah² ({beginning from the age} when a person can understand {what is being taught}).³

b) “To teach (it)” — to teach Torah to others,⁴ and specifically — a father’s obligation to teach Torah to his son.⁵

We find something most surprising in this regard: **Neither Rambam** nor the *Alter Rebbe* begin the laws of Torah study with the law outlining who is obligated to study Torah. Rather, they begin with a father’s obligation (which is positive Torah *mitzvah*) to teach Torah to his minor son.⁶

Seemingly, this is difficult to understand:

First of all, the general obligation of a person to study Torah himself should be defined, and only afterward specify (that it is not enough for him to study, but he must also) “to teach it” (to others {such as}) to his minor son!

¹ *Rasag*, *Sefer Hamitzvos*, “*Mitzvas Aseh* 14, 15”; *Rambam*, *Sefer Hamitzvos*, “*Mitzvas Aseh*,” 11; see also *Rambam’s mitzvah* count in the beginning of his *Mishneh Torah* (however, in the heading under *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, he only includes, “To study Torah”); *Chinuch*, *Mitzvah* 419; see also Rashi’s commentary on *Devarim* 4:10: “*yelmedun* — they shall learn, for themselves; *yelameidun* — they shall teach others.”

² *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 1, par. 1-3, 8; *Tur Shulchan Aruch*, “*Yoreh Deah*,” ch. 245, 246; *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” beg. of ch. 155; *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” beg. of ch. 2.

³ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 1, par. 3; see also *Tzemach Tzedek’s* ruling on this statement of *Rambam*. See also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, pp. 233, 238; see there, fn. 17, for the opinion of the *Alter Rebbe*.

⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 1 par. 1-3, 6, 7; *Tur Shulchan Aruch*, “*Yoreh Deah*,” ch. 245; *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 1, par. 1, 4, 8.

⁵ A father must give precedence to teaching his sons Torah over teaching anyone else; see *Rambam*, *ibid.* (par. 2, 3); *Tur*, *ibid.*, sec. 3; *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid.*, par. 8.

⁶ {Throughout this translation, the term “minor” will appear often. This refers to a child below the age of *mitzvah* obligation, that is, under 13 years of age for a boy, or under 12 year of age for a girl. A younger child has no obligation to perform *mitzvos*; even his parents’ obligation to educate him in the performance of *mitzvos* is only rabbinic.}

For as obvious from a simple analysis of the Torah's commandment, a person's obligation to teach his minor son Torah springs from the obligation to study Torah. This is an **additional** obligation effectuated by the {biblical} *mitzvah* of Torah study, in contrast to a father's obligation to educate his child regarding other Torah *mitzvos*. (The obligation to teach a child to perform all the other *mitzvos* is only rabbinic).

Especially {priority ought to be given to explaining a person's own general obligation, considering that} a person cannot teach Torah without first studying himself (until the words of Torah "are sharp in your mouth").⁷

On the surface we can explain that there are two reasons for this:

a) Since there is an obligation (a positive *mitzvah*) from the Torah to learn Torah with a child (unlike all other *mitzvos*, regarding which the Torah does not obligate us to educate our children to perform them) it emerges that every person must begin, and does begin, studying Torah — as the Torah obligates — already from childhood. Therefore, the laws of Torah study begin with the laws relating to the initiation of Torah study for every Jew — when they are a child.

b) The Torah repeats the commandment of Torah study many times,⁸ both "to study"⁹ and "to teach."¹⁰ However, the **primary** commandment, i.e., the one counted as part of the (Rambam's)¹¹ *minyán hamitzvos*¹² is, "You shall teach them to your sons."¹³ This *mitzvah* includes (as *Rambam* writes

⁷ *Kiddushin* 30a; *Sifrei* and *Rashi* on *Devarim* 6:7, commenting on the words of the verse, "You shall teach them to your sons" {"The words of Torah should be sharp in your mouth, so that if a person asks you a matter of Torah, you should not have to hesitate. Rather, answer him immediately."}; Rambam's *Sefer Hamitzvos*, *ibid.*; Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, "*Hilchos Talmud Torah*," ch. 2., par. 3.

⁸ *Rambam*, *Sefer HaMitzvos*, *ibid.*; *Chinuch*, *ibid.*

⁹ *Devarim* 4:6, 5:1, 6:7, and other places.

¹⁰ *Devarim* 4:9, 6:7, and other places.

¹¹ See *Sefer HaMitzvos*, *ibid.* And the *Chinuch's* count also.

¹² {*Minyan Hamitzvos*. The *Talmud* (*Makos* 23b) writes that Moshe was given 613 *mitzvos* at Sinai, consisting of 365 prohibitions and 248 positive commandments. Neither the Torah nor the *Talmud* offer exact comprehensive lists. Therefore, many of the great Sages of post-Talmudic period, such as *Rambam*, *Rasag*, and the author of *Sefer HaChinuch* sought to compile exact lists of the *mitzvos* and their definitions. There is debate among these authorities as to which *mitzvos* to include in the count.}

¹³ *Devarim* 6:7.

there) “**to study Torah and teach it.**” Since the primary **source** of the obligation to study Torah (including the “to study” aspect) is from the clause, “you shall teach them **to your sons**” (which **simply** means a person’s (minor) son), the laws of Torah study begin with a father’s obligation to teach his minor son Torah.

However, this idea itself needs clarification: Why is the *mitzvah* of Torah study singled out from all the other *mitzvos* in that: a) Torah study is relevant (according to Torah) to a minor, and furthermore, b) the obligation to study Torah oneself is included in the commandment, “you shall teach them **to your sons**”?

2.

KEEPING TORAH AND MITZVOS NOW COMPARED TO THE FUTURE ERA

Perhaps we can answer (albeit with difficulty): The reason Torah study is singled out is in order to convey the difference between Torah study presently and in the Future Era.

Obviously, in the era when the Jewish people “will be free to involve themselves in Torah and its wisdom,” then “the Jews will be great sages,” “the world will be filled with knowledge,” and “knowledge, wisdom, and truth will become abundant.”¹⁴ Torah study and our grasp of its concepts will be on an entirely higher plane than it is now. As our Rabbis say,¹⁵ the Torah that we study now is “naught” {insignificant} compared with the Torah that we will study in the Future Era with Moshiach. Thus, all the Torah studied nowadays, even by adults {comparatively speaking} is nothing more than the study of a child.

Additionally, just as a child’s studies are educational, preparing him for his future obligations (after he becomes an adult), the same is true regarding all of our Torah study nowadays. Torah study nowadays educates and prepares us for

¹⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” ch. 12, par. 4, 5; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuva*,” ch. 9, par. 2.

¹⁵ *Kohelles Rabbah*, ch. 2, and end of ch. 11; see *Matnos Kehunah* there, on ch. 2.

the Torah study of the Future Era. For only after a person has “his studies in hand”¹⁶ (i.e., he has studied Torah in this present era) can he absorb completely the Torah of Moshiach.

But this explanation is not altogether satisfactory. Because we find a similar concept regarding the fulfilment of other *mitzvos*, as the expression¹⁷ that the *mitzvos* performed in this era are “markers” for the *mitzvos* that will be performed in the Future Era. For then we will fulfil “the *mitzvos* in accordance with Your will”¹⁸ with the epitome of perfection.

Meaning, the fulfilment of *mitzvos* presently is also “childish” (“markers”), in a sense, compared with how *mitzvos* will be observed in the Future Era. For this reason, the *mitzvos* performed nowadays are pedagogic, serving as a preparation for the consummate fulfilment of *mitzvos*.

However, the *mitzvah* of Torah study, specifically, is (also) linked to children; furthermore, the general commandment to study Torah is expressed by, and included in, the command that “you shall teach them to your **sons**.” Understandably, then, the *mitzvah* of Torah study contains a unique element {that is associated with minors more than all the other *mitzvos*}.

3.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TORAH AND MITZVOS?

This will be clarified by prefacing with an explanation of the difference between Torah and *mitzvos*.

Mitzvos: A person performs *mitzvos* with physical items. Thus, *mitzvos* primarily affect items in the **world**. (This is **analogous** to the concept and

¹⁶ *Pesachim* 50a. {The full quote reads: “Rav Yosef added: I heard that they were saying in that world: Praiseworthy is the one who arrives here with his studies in hand.”}

¹⁷ *Sifrei*, “*Ekev*” commenting on *Devarim* 11:17 {sec. 43, end} (quoted in Rashi’s commentary on *Devarim* 11:18.)

¹⁸ Prayer liturgy, *Musaf* of Shabbos and festivals.

terminology that the *gavra* affects the *cheftzah*.)¹⁹ A *mitzvah* serves to refine and purify a physical object (and the person's animalistic soul) with which he performs the *mitzvah*. Therefore, although a person must perform *mitzvos* with *bitul*²⁰ — meaning, not because reason mandates it, but rather because Hashem desires it (as we say in a blessing prior to performing a *mitzvah*) “...Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and **commanded** us”) ²¹ — the primary element of *mitzvah* observance is the **action**.²² The *bitul* (in addition to its general impact — as the Sages say²³ that *mitzvos* “refine people”), which the *mitzvah* calls forth from (a *gavra*,) a **person**, does not, after the fact, impede the fulfilment of the *mitzvah* if absent. It is like something auxiliary to the actual fulfilment of the *mitzvah*.

Torah: The objective of Torah study is for a person, using **his** own intellect, to understand and unify himself with the **idea** studied.²⁴ A person must not try to reach conclusions that **he desires**; rather, he must search for the truth of **the idea** (and submit his desires to it). Regarding Torah, a person grasps **Hashem's chochmah**.²⁵ Therefore, *bitul* plays a **primary** role specifically in Torah study. Since Hashem's *chochmah* is completely beyond the realm of created beings, a person can only take hold of it if he studies Torah with *bitul*. If a person studies using only his intellectual capacities, this may lead him to “interpret the Torah in a manner contradictory to {the true} *halachah*.”²⁶ He may, in fact, possess knowledge;²⁷ he may come up with sound rationales; but his knowledge will not constitute a *halachah* of **Torah** (Hashem's *chochmah*).

¹⁹ {“*Cheftzah*” vs. “*gavra*” is a well-known distinction that can be made when analyzing any particular obligation or relationship. When approaching an obligation, we can ask: Does the obligation devolve upon the object (*cheftzah*) or on the person (*gavra*)? Meaning, does the object require a certain activity to be performed with it, the person being merely the means by which it is accomplished; or does the person need to perform a certain activity, the object being merely a means for doing so? }

²⁰ {*Bittul* connotes self-nullification, humility, and the negation of ego. It is the antithesis of *yeshus*.}

²¹ Prayer liturgy for all blessings preceding performance of a *mitzvah*.

²² See *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 38.

²³ *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 44, at the beginning.

²⁴ See *Moreh Nevuchim*, part 1, ch. 68.

²⁵ {*Chochmah*, lit., “wisdom,” the *sefirah* following *kesser*, the highest of the intellectual faculties.}

²⁶ *Pirkei Avos* ch. 3, *mishnah*. 11.

²⁷ Consider the teaching of our Rabbis (*Eichah Rabbah* ch. 2, par. 13), “If someone says that wisdom can be found among the non-Jews, believe him... that Torah {wisdom} can be found among them, don't believe him.”

For this reason, our Sages teach that a person must “first make a blessing over the Torah.”²⁸ A person must recite the blessings over Torah as a preface to, and a foundation of, his Torah study. The blessings emphasize that “**He gave us His Torah,**” which elicits *bitul* to the **Giver** of the Torah. This *bitul* makes the person into a fitting recipient of **Hashem’s Torah**.

4.

BITUL IN TORAH STUDY

Just as a person needs to feel *bitul* as a **preface** to, and a **foundation** of, his Torah study, for in this way he becomes a fitting recipient of Hashem’s Torah, so, too, does a **person who studies** Torah needs to **ensure** he feels *bitul* while actually studying Torah, more so than while observing other *mitzvos*.

Regarding other *mitzvos*: When a person performs *mitzvos* with the correct attitude — because Hashem **said so** (as discussed above) — his ego does not get “mixed in.” From the outset, his disposition is to **follow** Hashem’s instructions. Thus, it is not (so) important to ensure that he performs his *avodah* out of a sense of *bitul*.

However, the point of Torah study is to **unite** a person’s intellect with the subject he studies — Hashem’s *chochmah*. Meaning, when his insight aligns with the Torah’s true intent, it turns out that the rationale that he conceived using **his** intellect is, so to speak, Hashem’s *chochmah*. Therefore, care must be taken that a person avoids mixing in his own intellectual (and personal) ulterior motives and “graft.”

A person studying Torah can occasionally make a mistake: He may think that he has already reached lofty spiritual heights to the extent that he **only** cares about the truth of Torah. As a result, if another person suggests an idea

²⁸ *Nedarim* 81a. {The full context is as follows: For what reason is it not common for Torah scholars to have Torah scholars from among their sons? Why are Torah scholars generally born to paupers, who are not Torah scholars themselves? Ravina says: They are punished because they do not first recite a blessing over the Torah before commencing their studies.}

contrary to what he, according to his rationale, believes to be true, he assumes that the other person is contradicting **Torah** [as the Rabbis say,²⁹ “His Torah study causes him to be angry”]. But the truth is that this person is at a level where he is disturbed (at least somewhat) because someone suggested an idea that runs contrary to **his** rationale.

Therefore, a person’s Torah study itself also needs to be saturated with *bitul*, in order to ensure that his own persona and *yeshus*³⁰ should not alter, influence, or twist his intellectual effort in understanding and revealing Hashems’s *chochmah*.

5.

TWO ASPECTS OF *BITUL*

Perhaps this explains the two points mentioned above (in section 1): a) Torah study also applies to (and is biblically obligated for) minors; b) the commandment “you shall teach them to your sons” includes the commandment for adults to study Torah. For these two points express the two components of *bitul* necessary for Torah study.

The fact that Torah study begins when a person is still a child — and in a similar vein, at least rabbinically, even prior to the age when a child can understand and grasp, right from the time that a child knows how to speak³¹ — emphasizes that Torah study **starts** and is **founded** not upon the **rationality** of Torah, but rather upon a person humbling and deflating himself, so that he has *bitul* to the Giver of Torah, beyond the dictates of reason. **This** (*bitul*) does not depend on a person’s greatness or on his intellectual capacities. On the contrary, even an infant who is just beginning to speak can attain this *bitul* on account of {the influence exerted by} his soul.

²⁹ *Taanis* 4a.

³⁰ {Ego, arrogance and overestimating one’s own value. The antithesis of *bitul*.}

³¹ *Sukkah* 42a. *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 1, par. 6; *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Yoreh Deah*,” ch. 245, par. 5; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 1, par. 1.

The second point — that the commandment “you shall teach them to your sons” also includes the commandment for adults to study Torah — teaches us that even during the time of study **itself**, when a person invests his intellectual capacities (as an adult does when he studies), seeking to understand and grasp, he must still maintain his (child-like) *bitul*.

6.

PIRKEI AVOS ON TISHAH B'AV?

We have discussed many times³² that since everything, and particularly Torah, occurs by Divine providence and is precise, obviously the content of the weekly *parshah* and the chapter of *Pirkei Avos* which we review and study on that Shabbos are {thematically} connected. [This holds true for each Shabbos between Pesach and Shavuos,³³ and likewise for every summer *Shabbos* — as the custom³⁴ is to review *Pirkei Avos* every Shabbos of the summer.]

Thus, in our context — since *halachic* authorities debate whether we should recite *Pirkei Avos* on Shabbos on which *Tishah BeAv* falls,³⁵ and “both opinions are the word of the living G-d” — we will clarify this matter according to the opinion of the authorities who maintain that we do say *Pirkei Avos* on this Shabbos.

Clarifying this matter according to this opinion is especially appropriate, since every day we anticipate (with tremendous yearning) the coming of Moshiach, when these days will be transformed into festivals. Our eager anticipation continues up until the **very** onset of Shabbos *Tishah BeAv*. Meaning, we anticipate Moshiach’s arrival with tremendous yearning, and so {with his arrival} **according to all opinions**, we will recite *Pirkei Avos* on *Shabbos Tishah BeAv*.

³² See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 7, p. 175; vol. 17, p. 303.

³³ As the *Alter Rebbe* writes in his *Siddur*. See the fns. to *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 7, *ibid.* (fn. 1, 2).

³⁴ See the *Alter Rebbe's Siddur* where he writes, “Some have the custom....”

³⁵ {In the year 5738 (1978), *Tishah BeAv* fell on *Shabbos*.}

There is a general connection between *parshas Vaeschanan* and Chapter Four of *Pirkei Avos* (which, based on the above, we also recite this year on *Shabbos parshas Vaeschanan*). Both contain numerous teachings regarding Torah study: *Parshas Vaeschanan* contains a number of the commandments regarding Torah study, and many of the *mishnayos* in this chapter contain lessons regarding Torah study. Additionally, in two of the *mishnayos* in this chapter, we also find a special directive regarding, and an emphasis on, the two elements of *bitul* mentioned above that are necessary for Torah study:

7.

FRESH PAPER VS. WORN PAPER

(*Mishnah* 20):

He who studies Torah as a child, to what can he be compared? To ink written on fresh paper; and he who studies Torah as an old man {*zakein*}, to what can he be compared? To ink written on paper that has been worn.

We need to clarify:

We can appreciate the directive found in the first part of the *Mishnah*, “he who studies Torah as a **child...**”; this encourages a Jew to appreciate the importance of learning Torah during childhood and early stages of life, and not to delay such learning until old age.

But why in the second part does the *Mishnah* emphasize the exhortation, “he who studies Torah as an old man, to what can he be compared?” Is the *Mishnah’s* intention to teach us that someone who had not studied Torah (for whatever reason) until becoming old should abandon hope of ever succeeding in Torah study?!

The explanation:

Based on the above, the phrase “He who studies Torah as a **child**” can also be interpreted to refer to someone who studies Torah with **bitul** (he humbles and nullifies himself {viewing himself} like a child). Specifically, in this way, he **absorbs** the Torah (like “ink written on fresh paper”). But if a person studies Torah **only** utilizing his *chochmah* and intellectual capacities (“*zakein* זקן {an old man,” is an acronym for the phrase} “*zeh shekanah chochmah* זה שקנה חכמה³⁶ {“he who has acquired wisdom”}) without *bitul*, then the Torah — **Hashem’s Torah** — is not absorbed properly.

8.

WHEN YOUR ENEMY FALLS

(*Mishnah* 19)

Shmuel HaKatan said: When your enemy falls, do not rejoice; and when he stumbles, let your heart not be glad, lest Hashem see and it will be displeasing to Him, and He will divert His wrath from him {to you}.

A well-known question: What novel insight does Shmuel HaKatan contribute? “When your enemy falls...” is an explicit verse in *Mishlei*!³⁷

*Machzor Vitri*³⁸ explains: The verse is referring to a war “in worldly matters.” Shmuel HaKatan’s novel insight is that the same holds true in *the war of Torah*.³⁹ When two Torah scholars contend with each other over a matter of *halachah*, and then one of them “wins,” the victor must know that “when your enemy falls do not rejoice” (over the victory upon the other person), etc. This idea is along the same lines as Rabbi Nechunya ben HaKanah’s prayer, “{I pray}

³⁶ *Toras Kohanim* (and Rashi) on *Vayikra* 19:32; *Kiddushin* 32b.

³⁷ *Mishlei* 24:17, 18.

³⁸ In his commentary on *Pirkei Avos*, *ibid.*; quoted also in *Midrash Shmuel*, *ibid.* (in the name of *Mahari ben Shlomo*) {*Machzor Vitry*, authored by Simcha ben Shmuel of Vitry, France (c. 1070 - c. 1105), primary pupil of Rashi.}

³⁹ See *Tanna D’Vei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 18.

that my colleagues will not fail in any matter of *halachah* and {if they do} that I not rejoice in their failure.”⁴⁰

Why should the war of Torah be different? Why would we assume that a person **may** rejoice over the fall of his enemy, thereby compelling Shmuel HaKatan to caution us not to do so?

The explanation:

When a person vanquishes another person in a matter of *halachah*, this is not **his** victory. Rather, it is a victory for **Torah**, for an issue in Torah has achieved clarity. This achievement, then, should elicit great joy in the victor.⁴¹

Shmuel HaKatan thus teaches that “when your enemy falls do not rejoice.” If a victor would only care about the truth of Torah, his joy would not come as a result of his {personal} success, “**your enemy falls**,” i.e., he was victorious over *the other person*. Rather, his joy should only reflect **positivity** — he clarified a matter in Torah.

Another idea:

If a victor acts with true devotion to reveal Hashem’s wisdom, he would have no reason to believe that his success caused his **enemy to fall**, for “both these and those **are the words of the living G-d**.”⁴²

[The (**practical**) *halachah* cannot accord with both opinions, for practically we can only act in accordance with one opinion. Nevertheless, both opinions hold true from the perspective of “the words of the living G-d.”]

⁴⁰ *Berachos* 28b. *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” ch. 110; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid.*, see there. {Rabbi Nechunya ben HaKanah used to recite a prayer upon entering the study hall: May it be Your will, Hashem, that no mishap in determining the *halachah* is caused by me; that I not fail in any matter of *halachah* and my colleagues rejoice over my failing; and that I will neither declare pure that which is impure, nor declare impure that which is pure, and that my colleagues will not fail in any matter of *halachah*, and that I will rejoice in them.}

⁴¹ See *Tanya*, “*Iggeres Hakodesh*,” ch. 26 (144b ff.), “*Kuntres Acharon*,” s.v. “*ulehavin pratei hahalachos*.”

⁴² *Eiruvin* 13b; see also *Chagigah* 3b (“they are given from one shepherd”).

Since even after the *halachah* has been decided, the other opinion remains a part of Torah, so we cannot say that the other opinion “**fell**,” nor call his disputant “**your enemy**.”

If a Torah scholar rejoices over his victory and his joy insinuates that his success means the downfall of his disputant — “your enemy falls” — then this indicates that mixed in with his joy is a feeling of personal victory, i.e., **he** vanquished the **other** person. Therefore, Shmuel **HaKatan** — who was so called because “he humbled himself”⁴³ — teaches that a person must study Torah with selflessness. Then a person will adhere to the adage, “When your enemy falls, do not rejoice,” as his only concern is to reach the Torah’s truth.

9.

AVOIDING THE WRATH

However, a person might make the claim: True, the “enemy’s” opinion may also be “the words of the living G-d,” and therefore it remains a part of Torah. However, the other person wanted the **practical halachah** to conform with his opinion. So in **this** regard, the other person did make a mistake, since the *halachah* clearly does **not** follow his opinion. Therefore, this is a situation described by Scripture as, “when your enemy **falls**.”

If so, why do we expect the victor to work on himself and bring himself to fulfill the dictate, “do not rejoice”? (Furthermore, we expect him not to feel that “your enemy **falls**.”) At the end of the day, the victor debunked an untruth, and this should warrant joy.

To address this, Shmuel HaKatan continues, “lest Hashem see and it will be displeasing to Him, and He will divert His wrath from him {to you}.” Conceivably, the reason why the outlook of one’s opponent does not align with the *halachah* is not due to a deficiency in his intellect, or the like. Rather, this is a punishment; **Hashem’s wrath** caused him not to merit having his opinion

⁴³ {*HaKatan* means “the small one,” connoting humility.} *Yerushalmi Sotah*, ch. 9, halachah 13.

align with the *halachah*. Therefore, a person must not rejoice when his enemy falls. Meaning, a person must not rejoice when Hashem metes out punishment on his opponent (through him). He may only rejoice because a *halachah* has been truly clarified.

On the contrary! If a person rejoices over the fall of his enemy, this misplaced rejoicing would make it possible for Hashem to “**divert** His wrath **from him** {unto you}.” Hashem will, so to speak, divert His anger from the other person to him.

By contemplating this, a person can bring himself to not feel joy “when your enemy falls,” but on the contrary, to experience the opposite. “They do not leave there until they love each other.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, as our Sages say⁴⁵ (regarding *Beis Hillel* and *Beis Shammai*): “They conducted themselves with affection and camaraderie toward each other, fulfilling the verse,⁴⁶ ‘Love truth and peace.’”

-Based on talks delivered on 24 *Teves* 5738 (1978) and Shabbos *parshas Vaeschanan*, 5737 (1977)

⁴⁴ *Kiddushin* 30b.

⁴⁵ *Yevamos* 14b.

⁴⁶ *Zecharyah* 8:19.