



REFINING ONE'S MIDDOS (2)

HOW TO CHANGE

In the year תרצ"ו (1936), someone asked the Frierdiker Rebbe: "How should I go about tackling *tikkun hamiddos*?"

He replied that the first step is to make an honest assessment of oneself, without exaggerating to either extreme. This skill, he explained, can be learned from the way a craftsman repairs a broken object. Before he starts he checks it carefully: some of its parts need cleaning and strengthening, some must be replaced. He then prepares his tools and begins to work. First, he removes the parts that are to be replaced, then busies himself with the cleaning and strengthening of the other parts, and finally, he shapes the new parts, gradually creating a strong and solid product.

Similarly, with regard to the *avoda* of correcting one's *middos*, a person must remove the negative *middos* and replace them with good ones. He must first analyze himself well, ridding himself of any undesirable *middos*, and then cleaning and strengthening those that are good.

The first task, removing whatever is bad, does not require special tools; anyone can do it. Similarly, the evil *middos* of anger and *gayva* can be removed by anyone who has come to understand their evil nature, by learning *sifrei mussar*. The next step, producing strong, positive *middos*, requires the tools of *Chassidus*: one studies *inyonim* that he can understand and that will arouse his heart (*farshandike inyonim un hartzike inyonim*).

(אג"ק אדהר"צ מ"ג ע' תנ"ו – עיי"ש בארוכה)

The Frierdiker Rebbe said: *Chassidus* must make one into a chossid with *chassidische middos*; otherwise, it can be called *chochmah*, but not *Chassidus*. The path of *Chassidus* is broad and paved; it is the fault of those young chassidim who study *Chassidus* in selfmade ways that the clear path of *Chassidus* is blocked. This is the result of studying without *avoda*.

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 48 ואילך)

TRANSFORMING ONE'S MIDDOS

One day, after having stayed in Mezritch for a while, the Alter Rebbe planned to return home. He had intended to go by foot, but the Maggid directed that a wagon be hired to take him. When his *chavrusa* – the Maggid's son, Reb Avrohom HaMaloch – accompanied him to his wagon, he told the wagon driver loudly, "Whip the horses until they stop being horses."

Hearing this, the Alter Rebbe understood why the Maggid had arranged for the wagon. For the Alter Rebbe, those brief words opened up a new challenge in *avoda* – transforming the bad *middos* into good ones. And in order to internalize that message, he decided to extend his stay in Mezritch.

On this incident the Rebbe commented: Until one reaches this level of **transforming** one's *middos*, he must at least keep them under control, for he cannot wait until then...

(רשימת היומן ע' רמו, תו"מ ח"ה ע' 137)

The Frierdiker Rebbe related: My uncle Reb Zalman Aharon, the Razah, was a *baal middos tovos*, a person of refined character. Despite his many troubles, he was always smiling and never shed a tear over his situation. Yet when encountering a fellow Yid in trouble, his smile would disappear and he would cry – though of course he would also do all he could to help the sufferer.

Once, during a *farbrengen*, the Razah said that the only way to correct one's *middos* is to use one's mind – just as one can safely walk across a narrow beam lying in a pool of mud, by using one's head to keep balance.

The Rebbe Rashab commented, "Why does controlling one's *middos* with the mind resemble walking across a narrow beam? Because safety is only insured when the **head** is keeping balance, preventing the *middos* from making one fall.

"This approach requires constant watchfulness of the mind so that the *middos*

that have not yet been corrected will not return to their natural, wild ways. True correction of *middos* requires transforming the *middos* themselves, by using the mind together with *avoda* of the heart."

The Frierdiker Rebbe noted: The chassidim of earlier times were more devoted, and they corrected their *middos* on an entirely different level, both in quality and quantity. In those days they were able walk with slippers and white socks and their socks would remain clean, for they knew how to sidestep the mud. Nowadays, we go across with boots and even our clothes get dirty.

(ס"ה ת"ש ע' 39)

When the elder chossid, Reb Zalman Zezmer, wanted to arouse his own heart, he would tell the following story:

In his town lived a great *lamdan* who had outstanding *middos*, but he was not acquainted with *Chassidus*. Reb Zalman tried to explain to him the effect that *Chassidus* has on a person's *middos*. Later on, this Yid traveled to the Alter Rebbe and asked about this, and the Alter Rebbe answered, "Animals also have *middos*, but they are instinctive, part of their nature: the raven is mean and the eagle is kind. By contrast, when *HaShem* created people, He made their *middos* keep step with their *seichel* and not merely be dictated by nature – in order to give them the *zechus* of doing *avoda* and working on themselves."

Hearing this, the man realized that all the *middos tovos* that he had developed were only instinctive, and he fell faint. When he came to, the Alter Rebbe showed him how to reach the superior *middos tovos* of *Chassidus*.

(ספר המאמרים ת"ש ע' 88)

CONSIDER THIS!

- How does one learn *Chassidus* so that it should change his *middos*?
- How does one *transform* his *middos*? And how is it different than controlling them?

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A WAY OF LIFE

“LO SEICHONEIM”

If a *Yid* is traveling on a plane and received a non-kosher meal, may he give the meal to a *goy* seated next to him?

- The Torah prohibits giving free gifts to *goyim*, as the Torah states (*Devorim 7*), “*lo seichoneim*,” one should not favor them. The reason for the *issur* is so that we do not develop friendship with *goyim* and learn from their ways.
- If the *Yid's* intention is that the *goy* will return a favor then it is permitted, because it is as if he sold it for the favor.
- If he expects nothing in return, he just simply doesn't want the food to go to waste, it is a dispute among the *poskim*. The *Ran* holds that as long as his intention is not for the benefit of the *goy*, it is permissible.
- Another reason to permit it: Since the *Yid* anyway does not plan on eating the food, it has no value to him. The *Chok Yaakov* holds that when nothing is lost from the *Yid*, the prohibition of ‘*lo seichoneim*’ doesn't apply.
- *Tosfos* and the *Magen Avraham* disagree, and are of the opinion that ‘*lo seichoneim*’ applies as long as the *goy* received it for free. Accordingly it would be forbidden to give it to the *goy* just so that it shouldn't go to waste.

In summary: Since it is prohibited by some of the *poskim*, one should be stringent and not give it to the *goy*.

ט"ז יו"ד סי' קנא ס"ק ח', ר"ן פרק השולח לח ע"ב ד"ה כל המשחרר, חק יעקב או"ח סי' תמ"ח ס"ק י"ב, תוס' עירובין ס"ד ע"ב ד"ה למדנו, מ"א סי' קפ"ט, שו"ת משיב בהלכה סי' עב.

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CURRENT EVENTS

י"א חשוון

RAZAH

Reb Shneur Zalman Aharon, known as the Razah, was the eldest son of the Rebbe Maharash. He was an exceptionally gifted individual, with a sharp wit and exceedingly fine character. After the *histalkus* of his father, he refused to accept the *nesius*, going instead into business and becoming fully involved in community work. He was of a lofty *madreiga* (stature) *b'ruchnius*, and a great “*baal shemuah*” (source of chassidische stories). He passed away at 51 years of age, on the 11th of Cheshvan, תרס"ט (1908).



The Friediker Rebbe writes: “My uncle, the Raza, was a natural *baal middos tovos*, though he had a very firm heart. Even when he was going through great suffering, and he suffered a lot, there was a smile drawn on his face, a smile of humility and pain. It is self-evident that he never cried. That was the extent of his own suffering, but when it came to the suffering of another, he was deeply affected. His smile melted away, his countenance would sadden and tears could be seen in his eyes. And he would do everything in his power to help those who were in distress...”

(ראה סה"ש ת"ש ע' 39)



The Rebbe Rashab said that the degree of humility which the Raza has reached, is a level which even he was not able to achieve!

(שיחת י"א חשוון תשי"ב)

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

“I CANNOT SLEEP AT NIGHT...”

During the month of Tishrei 5721, Harav Shmuel Chefer, the dean of Beis Rivka of Kfar Chabad, had a lengthy *yechidus* with the Rebbe. During the *yechidus*, the Rebbe began to discuss the location of the girls' school and seminary. The Rebbe raised his voice and said, “I cannot sleep at night, due to the close proximity of the girls and boys schools!”



This view was echoed in a letter written to President Shazar (*Igros Kodesh* vol 24, page 126), where the Rebbe writes that only due to technical difficulties was the Kfar originally set up as one village. But now that it has been made possible, the educational institutions “should be situated in separate locations, the boys in Kfar Chabad, and the girls in Kfar Chabad II.”

The letter continues to say that while the villages should be separate, they should be close enough, that the residents may be able to visit each other on Shabbosos. The Rebbe's vision was indeed realized, with the completion of Kfar Chabad II in 5735.

לע"נ ר' אפרים ארי' ב"ר אליעזר ע"ה ומרת דבורה בת ר' משה ע"ה