

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר
רבינוביץ זצ"ל

*Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

ימים נוראים

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הרב משה אליעזר בן הרב ישראל
רבינוביץ זצ"ל
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שיחות מוסר על התורה מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצוק"ל

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קל מְלֶכְךָ יוֹשֵׁב עַל כִּסֵּא רַחֲמִים (פתיחה לאמירת י"ג מדות הרחמים)

G-d, King, Who sits on the Throne of Mercy

לֹא-הֶחְזִיק לְעַד אַפּוֹ (מיכה ז' י"ח)

He does not hold His anger forever

The 13 Middos of Rachamim

As we go through these days of *Yemei Haslichos* and the *Yamim Nora'im*, a major component of our *tefillos* is the י"ג מדות / *The Thirteen Attributes of Hashem's Mercy*. Hashem revealed to Moshe that these *Middos* possess a unique quality; they have a powerful ability to rescue us from misfortune. *Chazal* (ראש) tell us that HaKadosh Baruch Hu appeared to Moshe as if wrapped in a *talis* in a manner symbolizing a *shliach tzibbur* [who is leading the *tzibbur* in davening]. Hashem instructed Moshe that whenever the Bnei Yisrael find themselves in an *eis tzarah*/a time of trouble or crisis, they should daven to Hashem with these expressions of Hashem's Mercy. When they do so, they are assured that they will not be turned away emptyhanded. This story culminated on Yom Kippur, when the Bnei Yisroel were completely forgiven. We therefore repeatedly mention these *Middos* during this time of year, to invoke the Mercy that Hashem revealed at this time.

These *Middos* are written in the Torah as they were revealed by Hashem to Moshe Rabbeinu, beginning with ה' ה' etc., and they are also written in *Sefer Michah* in different words, beginning with (מיכה ז' י"ח-י"ט) מִי קֵל כְּמוֹד etc. In fact, the *sefarim* teach us that in reality these two sets of *Middos* parallel each other. [This can be seen in some machzorim in Tashlich, where these 13 *Middos* as written in the Torah are printed above the *Middos* as written in *Sefer Michah*.] We recite the *Middos* as they are written in *Sefer Michah* at the conclusion of each day's *Selichos*, as well as during *Tashlich* on Rosh Hashana.

We also mentioned the concept in the previous shmues that in truth, in order to merit that these *Middos* be “activated” for our benefit, we must emulate them. The Tomer Devorah formed his own *sefer* on the 13 *Middos* of Hashem as appearing in *Sefer Michah*, and he explains regarding each *middah* how we can follow it as well. Let us focus on some of the *Middos* discussed by the *Tomer Devorah*:

Not ‘Canceling’ Another’s Good Actions

One of these *Middos* is *יכבוש עוונותינו* / *He suppresses our sins*. This means that Hashem does not ‘cancel’ any of the *mitzvos* a person has done based on the corresponding amount of *aveiros* he has on his account; rather, Hashem ‘holds down’ the *aveiros* from interfering with the benefits of the *mitzvos*. The *aveiros* will be dealt with, but they will not detract from the reward for the *mitzvos*.

We too must learn to appreciate the good that others do for us. Even when we may have been wronged, it should not make us forget all the positive things we have received from that same person.

- *A father feels that one of his son’s rebbeim did not do all that he could have for his son. In truth, the complaint may perhaps be real. However, first, the father must still appreciate the all hard work that the rebbi put in throughout the year for the benefit of his son. The rebbi’s efforts must be acknowledged. If there still remains an area of criticism, then possibly the father should say something. The grievance must be addressed – but not at the expense of the appreciation for all the hard work that the rebbi did apply.*
- *A husband feels that his wife did not invest enough effort to fulfill a request he had made of her. Before the husband feels resentment toward his wife, he must realize and appreciate how much his wife does do for him. If there was a shortcoming, it should be discussed – but not at the expense*

of his gratitude for all that she constantly does, and has done, for him.

If we do not work on this *middah*, we will act in the opposite way. The moment we feel that we were wronged in the slightest manner, we will be utterly furious at the individual.

He didn't do me the favor I asked of him? I am finished with him! I will have nothing to do with that rotten, good-for-nothing!

What about all the times that the individual went out of his way quite significantly on your behalf? All of that is completely forgotten.

Completely Exaggerating Another's Wrongdoing

People's *Middos ra'os* can lead them even to exaggerate the *tainah* to no end, while minimizing down to nothing the positive they received.

Avi is coming to Lakewood for a Shabbos, and he makes arrangements to be put up at a certain family. Avi has a particular personal "need"; it is very important to him that he should be served cold soda at his Shabbos Seudos. It is not even enough for him if the soda was placed in the fridge beforehand; there must be ice cubes placed at the table for him to put into his soda. Always careful that this need should be met, Avi specifically sees to it that his host family should know about his preference.

Before Avi reaches the house, he goes into a flower shop to purchase flowers as a gift for his hosts. As he nears the shop he decides that he will spend 12 dollars on flowers and no more than that. Once in the store, he discovers that all the flowers of that price are sold out, and the cheapest available bouquet will cost him 17 dollars. Annoyed, he pays the 17 dollars and proceeds to the home of his hosts. While at his hosts' home over Shabbos, he is treated royally. The family goes out of their way to accommodate him and make sure

he is completely comfortable. However, once at the seudos, he discovers to his dismay that there are no ice cubes served with the soda! He is so upset. He had specifically requested beforehand that there should be ice cubes, and they could not adhere to his simple request. He just can't understand it. Where is their hakaras hatov for the flowers he gave them?

A few months later, a friend of Avi's informs him that he plans on visiting Lakewood for Shabbos. This friend mentions to him that he will be staying at the same family that had hosted Avi previously. At this point, Avi cannot control himself.

"Do you know how I was treated when I was there?", he explodes. "I spent a fortune on them, and you know what they gave me? – Garbage!"

This is an example of how a person can take all the positive he received from someone else, and reduce it to nothing, while any negative element is magnified a hundredfold. What about the beautiful Shabbos which Avi received from his hosts? It has ceased to exist in Avi's mind. All he knows is that he spent a "fortune", and he did not receive ice cubes.

This, says the *Tomer Devorah*, is where we should work on ourselves. If there is a problem, it can, and should, be dealt with, but let us not forget the positive that was done.

If a man feels that his wife should be behaving differently in a given area, he should discuss it with her. But he should not act as though he never receives anything from her. If he is honest, he will see that there is plenty that he does receive from her. Let him begin by appreciating it.

Letting Go of Anger

Another *middah* mentioned in the *passuk* is לא החזיק לעד אפו / *He does not hold His Anger forever*. Even if Hashem is angry at a person for a time, it does not last forever. As time passes, if the

person tries to improve himself, Hashem will cause His Anger to "subside".

We too, must learn to let go of ill feelings we may harbor against our friends and neighbors. Although we may have been wronged, we must let the passage of time serve to ease our hard feelings.

As I was sitting shivah for my wife a"h, a fellow came to be menachem aveil and related the following story:

This person, 'Reuven', was involved in a bitter machlokes with a neighbor of his, and the families had not spoken to each other for over two years. The animosity was so strong between them that when the neighbor's child reached the age where he was to have Reuven as his rebbi, the father made special arrangements that his son should switch classes, to avoid having his son be in the class of his enemy, Reuven.

As Reuven was sitting at the levaya of my wife a"h, the tragedy suddenly hit home. Reuven suddenly realized how precious our time on this world is, and what is truly important in the world. He decided that he cannot let the years waste away on him, while he was involved in such a terrible machlokes. He called up the neighbor and said to him, "Enough is enough. We cannot continue like this anymore. Let us work through our issues and make shalom." The neighbor agreed, and they met with each other. There was loud screaming as each point of contention was duly brought up and worked through. In the end, they made shalom between them, and the two families once again have a pleasant relationship.

This story is a beautiful demonstration of this *middah*. These individuals had finally reached the point that they were able to drop their hard feelings against each other. The argument had been bitter, but it was over. They did not allow the anger to remain forever.

Unfortunately, not always is anger dropped so easily.

There was a man, "Naftali", who had worked for another individual, and had done a real misdeed to his employer. Naftali realized that if his employer understood that he was the one who had perpetrated the wrong against him, he would be fired immediately. In desperation, Naftali asked a good friend of his, "Asher", to take the blame for the misdeed. Asher agreed to take the blame, and indeed, the employer was furious at him. However, there was nothing he could do, because Asher did not work for him.

Eight years passed in this way, until finally Naftali ended up going to a new job. At this point, Asher approached Naftali and asked of him, that as he was no longer working for his employer, perhaps he can go tell the former employer that he was really the one who had wronged him. Naftali agreed that this would really be the right course of action, but he said that because he knew that the employer was still furious about the incident, he just could not bring himself to go and admit that he had done this wrong.

Asher decided that he would ask HaRav Moshe Feinstein zt"l if he himself would be permitted to tell the employer the real story, or if there would be an issur of rechilus. When he asked the shailah, Rav Moshe zt"l was so disturbed by the story, that he could not even pasken the shailah.

"Far acht yahr halt min a tainah [For eight years he is bearing a grudge]?!", R' Moshe kept repeating. Asher tried asking again what the halacha was, but R' Moshe just couldn't deal with the fact that the employer would refuse to let go of his anger for so many years.

The higher the level of Middos that a person is on, the faster he is able to dismiss the feelings of anger from his heart.

My Rebbe Rav Elya Roth zt"l was a rebbi in a yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel. At one point, the menahel fired him from his position. It was a hard time for Rav Elya zt"l, who found himself without his source of parnassah. Later, he told me that after he was fired, he made a point to daven every night

for the menahel's hatzlacha. Someone nearby who had overheard him say this, called out to him sarcastically, "And you meant it too, right?"

Rav Elya zt"l thought about this question seriously for a few moments until he responded. "For the first week, you're right. I did not really mean it. The second week, I was almost there. By the third week though, I meant it!"

This is someone in our own generation who worked on his *Middos* to a degree which had a connection to the *Middos* we are learning about. Each of us can strive to advance and achieve in these areas, from whatever level we find ourselves.

Earning Hashem's Forgiveness

We must remember that through our behavior and manner of relating with other people, we are directly causing how Hashem will relate with us. We are 'signing our own checks'.

The Patience of Rav Preida and the Zechus He Generated

I heard from Rav Matisyahu Salomon Shlita following *pshat* in a *Gemara* in *Eiruv* (נ"ד:) which will demonstrate our point:

The Gemara relates the story of Rav Preida who had a talmid that could not comprehend the Torah of his Rebbe until the lesson was repeated to him 400 times. Each day Rav Preida would patiently teach him, always happy to teach the Torah as much as necessary.

One day, Rav Preida mentioned at the beginning of the shiur, that he was on his way to a d'var mitzvah, and after he was finished delivering the lesson, he would continue on his way. When he had concluded the lesson, repeating it 400 times as usual, he asked the talmid if he understood. The talmid replied in the negative.

"What happened?", Rav Preida asked in dismay.

"You told me that you on your way to fulfill a mitzvah," replied the student, "so I was unable to concentrate. Each time, I was nervous that you would be leaving right then, and I was too distracted!"

If I would have been the rebbe, I imagine that I would have stuck the talmid through the wall.

"I am repeating the lesson to you 400 times! **FOUR HUNDRED TIMES!** And you still can't pay attention? And then you have the utter chutzpah to go and blame me?! You are kicked out of this shiur! I am done with you!" However, that may be how I would have reacted, but that is not how Rav Preida reacted.

Rav Preida took the talmid and said to him softly, "Listen to me. I am not going anywhere until I make sure that you understand. I'll stay here all day if I have to. If I can't get to the d'var mitzvah, fine. Right now, I am completely focused on you. Okay?"

The talmid agreed to listen again, and Rav Preida repeated the lesson another 400 times. This time, the talmid understood it.

The Gemara relates that a bas kol came from Shamayim and offered Rav Preida a choice of living for 400 years, or having the entire generation go straight to Olam Haba. Rav Preida selflessly picked the second choice. As a reward, Hashem gave him both.

HaRav Matisyahu Salomon Shlita asks: We understand the reward of 400 years for the 400 times that he repeated the shiur to his talmid. But where is the *midah k'neged midah* in giving the entire generation *Olam Haba*? Rav Matisyahu explains that Forgiveness from Shamayim stems from the tolerance over our *aveiros*. This is the very *middah* that was displayed by Rav Preida. He had the utmost tolerance for this talmid who demanded from him so much time and patience. He therefore brought a *zechus* for the generation in which Shamayim would tolerate their wrongdoings and allow them into *Olam Haba*.

Tolerance and Patience for Others in our Own Lives

If we will learn to act with this tolerance and patience, if we will be able to overlook the faults and wrongdoings of others, we will be *zoche* for the same treatment upon us.

- *Before 1967, The Mirrer Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel was located right near the Arab border in Yerushalayim. At one point during one of the wars, bombs were being thrown nearby the yeshiva, and the entire yeshiva along with the many of the neighbors had run to the bomb shelters. The buildings shook from the blasts, and everyone was terrified that any minute, the building in which they were hiding could be blown to smithereens. The bachurim were davening with tremendous intensity.*

At one point, a shout was heard from o. "Ribono Shel Olam, ich bin ehm mochel, zeitz unz mochel [I forgive him, forgive us]!" This was the voice of a woman whose husband had abandoned her, leaving her an agunah, and forced to struggle to care for her children on her own. She had committed to let go of her anger against her husband.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l used to mention this incident many times in his shmuessen.

"Do you think your Tehillim saved the yeshiva?", he would cry from the bimah. "It was that woman's midah of forgiveness and vatranus/[overlooking another's faults] that saved us!"

- *There was a frum man in Brooklyn who had been severely harmed by one of his competitors. He had gone to a beis din and had received a heter to go to the goyishe courts and have this competitor put behind bars.*

In the home of his neighbor, there was a mother who was terribly ill with the Machlah, r"l. Things had neared the end point, and the young children had been farmed out to other families, while this mother was in the ICU. The situation was

extremely difficult and trying. This businessman who felt such a compassion for this family, made a decision.

"Ribono Shel Olam", he said, "I will let go of my tainos against my competitor. Please heal this mother."

The next week, the mother had completely recovered, and was home with her family.

It is clear, that in this story as well, this man's *mechilah* was what caused the *yeshuah* for the mother.

Even When it is Difficult

Certainly, it is not always easy.

We say to ourselves, "How can this person do such a thing to me?" "How can he say that?" A yid can act like that? It is disgusting!"

And in truth, we may be right. How can he say/act like that? It is hard to let go of the anger. But if we are strong, if we succeed in diffusing our own anger and looking the other way, we can merit that Hashem will act that way toward us. Iy"H we should be zoche to the Mercy of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and be granted a gut gebenshte yahr, for us and the entire Klal Yisroel.

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