Forty Days to Acquire a Middah - Explanation of the Words of Rebbe Elimelech zy"a (Auto Translated) | תמלול וסיכום מתורגם

English

Auto Translated

Shiur Overview

Summary of the Entire Shiur: Middos, Teshuva, and the Forty Days

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A. Introduction

The shiur wants to be mechadesh (innovate) an important Torah about Elul, Rosh Hashana, and the entire period — an explanation of something that has been learned for a long time.

[[Small digression: Practical remarks about a drink — not relevant to the topic.]]

B. Definition of "Middah" — What is a Middah?

1. The Literal Translation

"Middah" means a "measurement." But here we're not talking about a dictionary definition, rather about the essential concept.

2. Rambam's Terminology

The Rambam (Hilchos Deos, Chapter 1) calls this matter "deos" (opinions/dispositions). The mitzvah is to have the deos **b'middah hanechonah** — in the correct measure.

3. Middah = hexis (Aristotle)

A middah is what Aristotle calls a **hexis** — a "stable disposition." In Yiddish: a **hergel** (habit), a **tzogevoinheit** (accustomedness), a **teva sheni** (second nature).

C. The "Vertical" Structure: Seichel — Middah — Pe'ulah

1. Three Layers in the Nefesh

- **Seichel** = what I **understand** to be correct/good
- **Pe'ulah** = what I **do** in practice (action)
- **Middah** = the thing **in between** — what **predicts** what a person will actually do

2. The Problem: Seichel Alone is Not Enough

Not everything people understand, they do. People have free choice to act differently than they understand. Therefore, seichel alone is not enough to predict behavior.

3. Middah is the True Predictor

What people do **consistently** — that is determined by their middos. A "masmid" (diligent learner) for example — he learns consistently not because he struggles each time, but because he **is** that kind of person.

D. Middah vs. Mere Habit, and Middah vs. Hisgabrus

1. Middah ≠ Mere Mechanical Habit

A middah is **more** than a habit — it comes with a certain **daas** (understanding). Not automatic like a machine, but like a **person** who understands what he's doing.

2. Middah ≠ Hisgabrus

Key point: If you need to be **misgaber** (overcome yourself), you **don't yet have** the middah. A middah is when you **want** to do it, you **love** it — not "wish" (dream/desire), but "like" (an internal attraction).

3. The Mitzvah of Good Middos

It's not enough to **think** that good is good (seichel), and not enough to **do** good things through hisgabrus (action). The mitzvah is to **have the middah** of goodness — to **be** a good person.

E. Critique of Mesilas Yesharim and Tanya

[[Announced digression]]:

- The **Mesilas Yesharim's** framing in its introduction is "very incomplete" — he speaks almost not at all about middos.
- The **Tanya** speaks **never** about middos.
- Many **Acharonim** didn't understand what a middah truly means — a basic part is missing that stands in the Rambam and other sefarim.

F. "Horizontal" Division: Many Middos, Not One

1. Middos Divide into Different Subjects

If we look most generally, one would say there's only **one** middah (does he do it or not; "moach sholit al halev" or not). But in truth there are **many** particular middos, each in its own subject.

2. "Moach Sholit Al Halev" — Only B'dieved

According to the Rambam, "moach sholit al halev" is only a **b'dieved** situation. The **lechatchilah** is that the **lev itself** (= middos, what I love) should already **be good**. One can train the lev to be good — one doesn't need to rule over it.

[[Main thesis until here:]] A middah is a stable internal disposition between seichel and pe'ulah, which predicts what a person will do. The true goal is not hisgabrus (struggle) but **transformation** of the middah itself — that the lev should already be good on its own.

G. How Does One Train the Lev?

1. The Lev Learns Through Doing

The training comes **through doing** (pe'ulos/hergalim), not through speeches. The goal: the person should do it **because he loves it**, with pleasure.

[[Small side remark: Iskafya vs. Middos Tovos]]

A student asks if this is "iskafya" (as in Tanya). What the **Tanya** calls "iskafya" or "tzaddik gamur" is approximately what the **Rambam** calls "good middos," but there are differences in details that require more study.

H. Psychological Research About Self-Control

1. The Naive Assumption

People naturally think that **self-control = winning more "fights"** (wars) with the yetzer hara. That is, a person who succeeds on a diet has 24 conflicts a day with his desire, and he wins 23 of them; the one who fails loses most fights.

2. What the Research Actually Shows

This is not true. People who are more "controlled" **don't have more fights** – they **have fewer fights overall**. Their experience is that they **already want it that way**. They have **gotten used to it**, they **love** the right thing – not that they have stronger "gevurah" to conquer the yetzer.

3. What This Means for Middos

- A person with good middos **loves to eat** (not that he hates it), but he loves **in the right amount**.

- He loves **eating**, not **gorging**.

- This comes through **hergalim, lifestyle, training** – he becomes that kind of person.

- **Without daas** (the intellectual standard of "derech ha'emtza'i"), one cannot describe a middah – one must know how much is right.

- A "baal ta'avah" with **unlimited** desire is a "totally messed up person" – he must **each time** be misgaber (= unhappy situation).

I. Three False Models of Avodas HaMiddos

1. Coercion / Force – "Moach Sholet Al Halev" Like a Lock Controls a Door

People imagine "willpower" as a physical force that pushes down the yetzer hara. This is **not** the goal.

2. Mechanical Habit – Like a Stone That Water Makes a Hole In

People think that "hergel" means like by Rabbi Akiva's stone – a pure mechanical repetition. But a person is not a bench that's been pushed with iron enough times. **Simply being accustomed like a parrot is not a virtue** – "mitzvas anashim melumadah" is not a good thing.

3. Only Intellectual Understanding – "I Do It Because I Understand"

Also not enough, because **a middah never understands** in the way that seichel understands.

J. The Correct Model: The "Child" Parable (Three-Part Person)

The person has **three parts**:

1. **Seichel** – understands on its own why something is good/bad

2. **Guf/Ta'avah** – doesn't understand at all

3. **Middah (Lev)** – the **middle**, "half seichel" – understands **secondarily**, like a **small child**

The Child Parable Expanded:

- A child doesn't understand on his own why something is bad, but he **trusts his father** and accepts.

- If you ask him "is it good?" – he answers "no, because my father told me."

- He doesn't understand **autonomously**, but he understands **truly** – not like a machine.

- **Chinuch** is not just punishment (reward and punishment) – that's only a means to reach the goal that the child should **accept from the father's seichel**.

So too: One trains the middos **according to their way** – through hergel, reward and punishment, pain and pleasure – but the goal is that the lev should **receive true love**, not just mechanically follow.

K. Correct Formulation of Avodas HaMiddos

> **Avodas HaMiddos is not:**

> - Forcing the actions to follow the seichel

> - Forcing the heart to follow the seichel

> - Being habituated in a mechanical way

>

> **Avodas HaMiddos is:**

> - **Training** the lev – "al pi darko" – according to how it learns

> - It should receive **true love** for the right thing

L. Why "Fighting" with the Yetzer Hara Doesn't Work

Many people who constantly fight with their yetzer hara never get better – specifically because they remain in the "fight" model instead of training the lev.

A well-known saying: "When you break a middah – you get two bad middos: **kinah and ga'avah**." That is, the struggle itself can make things worse, not better.

Main principle: "When one fights – one doesn't learn."

M. Parable of Chinuch – Three False Ways

Educating children serves as a parable for avodas hamiddos in general. **Three methods** are all problematic:

1. Coercion / Hitting (Forcing)

- The child follows only out of fear.

- **The moment the father is no longer "baal habayis"** (quotes the Gemara "tachas yadecha"), the child does what it wants.

- The child has **on its own** never wanted good – it was only "forced."

- Even a **horse** that's trained well, eventually you don't need to stand with a stick anymore – the horse **already wants it itself**. But with coercion without training – the person remains forever dependent on the stick.

- Quotes the verse **"Chanoch lana'ar al pi darko, gam ki yazkin lo yasur mimenah"** – chinuch must last a whole life, without a stick.

2. "Let Him Alone" (Laissez-faire)

- Let the child figure out on its own what is good.

- **Critique:** A child has only yetzer hara (= no seichel), it cannot figure it out alone. People do **not** learn themselves.

- Comparison with **Dovid HaMelech with Avshalom** – he didn't educate him, and it ended catastrophically.

3. Emotional Manipulation / "Love Bombing"

- "Educate with love" – but in practice it's **manipulation**: "I'll love you so much that you'll want to please me."

- This is called **"love bombing"** (a term from cults).

- **Critique:** It "works" – but it's **fake**, not authentic.

> **[[Small aside – personal remark:]]** Mentions that his own father didn't do this, and he himself doesn't try it with his children.

N. Side Point: "We Train People That They Are Bad"

[[Important side remark in the argument:]]

When we talk too much about "milchemes hayetzer" and "the body is evil" – **we train the person that he actually wants bad things**. We tell him: without the Torah with the stick you would do "kol mah shelibo chafetz."

Answer: This is **not true**. A person with chinuch **no longer wants** to run away. He is "happy" – not because someone is standing over him, but because he's been **trained**. (This doesn't speak of a non-Jew without chinuch – "ayir pera adam yivaled" – but of people with chinuch.)

O. The Positive Proposal: Imitation

After rejecting all three false ways, comes the answer: **"What yes?"**

The correct way is **imitation – copying**. Copying is **"very different from forcing."** This applies both to chinuch of children and to a person working on himself.

P. Parable: The Father Who Yells at His Family – "Hisgabrus" in Practice

A **"very normal" parable**: A father who knows he should be calm and smile at his children, but he comes home after a hard day, angry and tense.

Strategy 1: Get Angry (= give in to the anger)

- Clearly not good.

Strategy 2: Be Misgaber (= hold yourself back)

- He learns Mesilas Yesharim / Orchos Tzaddikim, comes home, and says to himself: "Don't get angry!"

- **It works sometimes** – but usually **it bursts out in the end**.

- The mechanism: You hold yourself back for a few hours, and then **it bursts out with even more force** – "nismale'ah sa'asah."

- **Strong point: People do this for seventy years** – hold back, hold back – and then it breaks out. This is the best proof that **hisgabrus/holding back alone doesn't work**.

Q. The Difference Between "Holding Back" and "Playing/Pretending"

1. Holding Back is Only an Emergency

The Rambam calls someone who holds himself back from a bad desire (e.g., anger at his wife when she's not guilty) a **"misgaber" – a chol sholeid benafshoi**, not a chassid. **One must sometimes do it** – a person has no choice. But this is only a small-scale, short-term solution.

2. The Better Advice: Pretend / Play (Play-acting)

Instead of **holding back** from anger, one should **play** that he's in a state of great love with the person.

How it works: Every person knows what a "good day" with his partner looks like – what tone you speak in, what things you do. One has a **model** in mind. One plays the model.

The key innovation: After a few minutes of playing, **it becomes real** – you actually want it that way. The anger doesn't come back (though it can start again later).

3. The Great Difference

- **Holding back** = you feel the anger, you press it down, you sit quietly on the chair. The anger remains inside.

- **Playing** = you take an active role, you act out the positive model, and through this **transforms** the internal state. It's not just suppression, it's **transformation**.

4. Condition: There Must Be a Good Foundation

We're not talking about two complete strangers. There must already be a true foundation of love – only in the difficult moments do you play the "good day" until it becomes real.

R. Second Application: Playing Also Works for Chinuch

People who play with their children that they are tzaddikim – the children become tzaddikim. Reb Nachman: When you judge favorably, the other person actually becomes good. This works as well as (or better than) other chinuch approaches.

Why It Works – The Deeper Principle:

- When you only know "hisgabrus" (holding back), you think being good is **always a struggle**.

- But when you **know tzaddikim** (or play them), you see that you can actually **have pleasure** from doing good – it's not just holding back.

- **The Skulener Rebbe** is brought as an example: He never got angry, he was always happy. He didn't **hold himself back** – he actually **felt** that way. The Rebbe understood higher things why it was so; **we don't understand – but we can pretend**, and through that we arrive.

S. Third Application: Davening – Imitation is Not Faking

1. The Problem

Many young people don't know how to daven. What do they do? **They copy** someone who davens.

[[2. Sidedigression – Shuckling During Davening]]

In a beis medrash with different chassiduses you can **recognize from the shuckel** who someone's rebbe is (Bobov gang, etc.). It's a "signature." **Why do people shuckel?** Theory: It's "cold fidgeting" – you don't feel comfortable, davening is a strange thing. (It's very old, not new, and non-Jews don't shuckel.)

3. The World Belittles Imitation

"Chachamim" hold that imitation (the rebbe's shuckel, crying because the rebbe cries, etc.) is **childish, mere copying, fake**. **On the contrary**: The imitation is legitimate!

4. Davening is Learned Through Imitation

You cannot describe what "davening" means (it's more than just asking from Hashem). **How do you learn it?** You copy the one who already feels it. **Gradually you learn** – it becomes real. This is a **great principle in Torah**.

5. Older Jews vs. Young Men

Older Jews are **more real** in their davening, they're not embarrassed to cry. Young men – when they cry, it's often

imitated. **But somewhere the bachur also started with imitation.**

6. The Innovation

> **Imitation doesn't mean faking.** The world is confused between the two.

T. The Parable of the Rebbe Who Prepares for Yom Tov

Someone made fun of a rebbe who practices his davening with chazzanim and cries already at the practice. **He's right!** He's saying the same words ("mi yichyeh umi yamus") – it's emotional, it's sad – what's the difference between practice and "real"?

Dispute between Arizal and Vilna Gaon: The Arizal says one should cry, the Vilna Gaon says one shouldn't. **The fact that both discuss it** proves that feelings are not something that "just happen" – you can steer them, you can choose them. Feelings come through a person's middos and hergalim, not just from heaven.

U. Chitzoniyus Me'oreres Es HaPenimiyus – The Hat Parable

[[Example from his father, a Kotzker chassid]] People come to shul and don't put on their hat before davening, with the claim "I daven as I am." The father answered: **"As you are you remain as you are"** – putting on a hat is not fake, it's a form of respect for the standing of davening. It's chitzoniyus, yes – but chitzoniyus is "itself a thing."

Expansion: Just as the hat is on your clothes, the crying is in your body – both are chitzoniyus. **The entire shiur is built on the principle of "chitzoniyus me'oreres es hapenimiyus."**

V. Acting is Not Lying – A Critical Distinction

1. Main Claim

Doing/pretending/acting is **not** the same as lying. People are confused – they think an "actor" is a "liar." **No** – an actor knows how to put himself into a situation. When a real actor cries in a play, he cries **really** – even though the story didn't happen.

2. What is Sheker?

Sheker is only when you represent something **as** something it's not. When a person cries, it doesn't mean "something happened this second" – it means he **intentionally** put himself in that state, and he cried properly.

W. Imitation is the First Step – And Almost Every Serious Person Does It

Imitation is the first step: You see what the other does, you start to do the same. The next step is to learn the sefarim that he learns, think the thoughts he thinks. **Almost every serious person you know imitates someone.**

Imitation is "necessary" – but it's only the **first** step.

[[Small digression]] Quotes his father's words: "A fake ehrliche Yid is better than a real shaygetz" – and laughs about bochurim who fight with friends in the name of "ish emes" but can't be truthful with their kallah.

The Problem with "Authenticity"

People have a strong tendency against imitation, because they believe in "authenticity" – which is **a false idea**. People don't work that way. **This is what makes people not know how to teach their children** – because training (without imitation) is almost impossible, and you're left with nothing.

Most people most of the time don't yet hold at the real level of their own daas – they need to be habituated, they need to be shown.

X. "Piv Velibo Einam Shavim" – A New Definition of Authenticity

1. The World's Mistake

The world is "emes emes tafsa lei gavra" – very occupied with being "authentic." But **it's a mistake in understanding what "emes" means**.

2. The Verse "Bisfasav Kib'duni Velibo Rachok Mimeni"

People think this means – when someone says "I love Hashem" but doesn't feel love in the moment, he's a hypocrite. **This is a mistake.**

[[Example – The Kotzker Chassid and His Wife]]

A wife asks "do you love me?" – he answers "a minute, I need to be misbonein if I feel love now." **This is not normal!** When your wife asks, you say "yes" – not because you're lying, but because you **mean** it, even though you don't feel it exactly in the moment.

3. The True Definition of "Piv Velibo Einam Shavim"

It doesn't mean **not** that you don't feel in the moment – **it means you don't mean it seriously, you're faking, you're bluffing**. For example: He says "I love you" but loves another – **that** is sheker. But he says "I love you" and doesn't feel it in the moment? **That's not sheker** – it's perhaps a greater sheker to say "I don't love you" than to say "I love you."

4. Application to Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim

When you say Krias Shema, people claim it's a lie because you don't feel it. Answer: If you look at hechsher when you go to the store, you're one hundred percent kabbalas ol malchus shamayim. You can be more profound, but **it's no lie**. "The whole claim of sheker doesn't begin."

5. Practical Conclusion

If a person loves his wife, "part" of that means to **say** he loves her and **conduct himself** in ways of love – not necessarily to **feel** it every minute. He will also feel it, there's an order how it works. **One must not be "blocked"** by not feeling – that's a "mistake from the start" in understanding "mitzvas anashim melumadah."

Y. The Process of Imitation – How It Works in Practice

1. The First Step: Imitation

A person sees how the rebbe davens with more chiyus, he doesn't know what the rebbe thinks, but he **copies the physical actions** – shuckels right, shuckels left. This is how **most people learn to daven**, and it's legitimate.

Parallel to love: Exactly so a person learns how to love his wife – he watches how his father behaved with his mother, he goes to a shiur, he copies. He doesn't know what the other feels, but he takes the **external form** as a starting point.

2. The Key Point: "Getting in the Mood"

If a person is not in the "mood" for davening, but he **does what he does when he is in the mood** – after ten minutes **he becomes in the mood**. But if he would have been mekabel (= accepted that he can't), he would **never** have gotten in the mood. **This is the main innovation.**

3. The Next Step: Independence from the Training

After he's already in the mood, he no longer **needs to copy** the rebbe's shuckel. Now he already feels on his own – sometimes he wants to shuckel this way, sometimes differently. In the first ten minutes something will be "off" – not exact, not fake but not precise. This is normal.

⟦An important remark – "gibor hamiddah" also means knowing how it applies to each situation.⟧ There are never any fixed rules that fit all cases.

⟦Parable of the Bachur with the Note⟧

The bachur who learned how to talk to a girl from a note – he had mechayeh been "pickles" that are written on the note, but that's not how you talk. **But** – this doesn't mean the notes don't work at all. You need to start with it, but **afterward you must throw it away**. If you don't throw it away, nothing became any conversation.

The next step = independence from the training. This applies equally to davening, to middos, to everything.

Z. The Zohar's Parable – The Ox with the Yoke

The **Zohar** says a parable: Kabbalas ol malchus shamayim is like an **ox on which you place a yoke at the beginning**, so that when he grows bigger you will **not need any yoke**. People think that kabbalas ol malchus shamayim you must **always** have – **no**: it's **the first level** (yiras tata'ah, yiras hakolel). It creates in the person good actions, behaviors, natures. **Afterward he no longer needs the yoke** – not because he becomes a porek ol, but because he **already understands on his own** what he's doing.

Practical example: A beginner needs to put on the gartel to know where davening begins. After he already knows, **he doesn't always need to go with the gartel** – he's already trained, he's already "yodei shoro vekoneihu."

Support from Chassidic sefarim, Tanya, Sefer HaMa'amarim: When a person is young/beginning, he needs to be **much more frum** than an advanced person – more boundaries, more kabbalas ol – because without it nothing remains.

AA. The Rambam's Mitzvah of Middos – And the Difference Between Ma'aseh and Middah

1. Introduction: Mitzvos Are Generally Ma'asim

The Rambam himself (Shemonah Perakim, Chapter 2) says that **most mitzvos are on actions/ma'asim**. Ma'asim is the **lowest level** in the nefesh structure. A ma'aseh takes a **moment** – put on tefillin, pick up a lulav, already yotzei.

⟦Small digression:⟧ Hilchos Teshuva appears in Rambam but almost not in Shulchan Aruch – a joke that "it seems Hilchos Teshuva is not relevant bizman hazeh." Only a little appears by Yom Kippur.

How long can a ma'aseh be? Maximum a day (for example fasting Yom Kippur). **⟦Small lomdishe digression:⟧** Investigation whether each minute of fasting is a separate mitzvah, or only the whole day. Most mitzvos/aveiros b'ma'aseh take **no more than a minute**.

2. The Main Difference: A Middah Takes Time

The Rambam says there's a **mitzvah to have good middos** (v'halachta bidrachav) – not just to do good ma'asim. A **middah is not something you do** – it's **the thing that makes you do**. You can't see a middah from one ma'aseh; you need to look **at a few weeks** minimum. "You need to know the person" – not just hear one ma'aseh.

⟦Critique of the typical chinuch approach:⟧ In cheder/school they teach "middos tovos" as **actions** – helping another, going to a nursing home. But the Rambam means something else: **not getting angry** – that's not an action, that's a **middah**.

3. Teshuva is Primarily on Middos

The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva Chapter 7) says: "Don't think teshuva is only from ma'asim – it's **also** from middos." This "also" means it's **primarily** from middos. From ma'asim teshuva is simple – **stop doing it, say vidui, a good day**. The true avodas hateshuva is **aliyat middos**.

4. The Problem of "Attention Span"

A middah takes **half a year** to acquire. People – especially those who only think halachically – can only perceive **one minute/one day at a time**. They can understand an action that you do and see, but **something that takes half a year** – for this people don't have the attention span. This is the difficulty.

BB. A Person Can Only Understand Short Actions – But Hashem Sees the Whole Person

A person naturally understands an **action** that takes a minute – something short, concrete. But something that **a person does** (not what happens to him) that takes **half a year** – that's hard to understand, because most people don't have the "attention span" to see a long period at once. **Abstract things** are often such that take a long time to understand, to have, or to be.

The Beis Din Shel Ma'alah Judges the Whole Person – At Death

The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva Chapter 3) says: A person is judged on his **entire life** – whether more mitzvos or more aveiros, whether tzaddik or rasha. **When?** At death. Why? Because the beis din shel ma'alah judges the **whole person** at once, not individual ma'asim. "V'ein HaKadosh Baruch Hu meyached shemo al hachayim" – a living person can do a good action, but we don't yet know if he's a **good person**.

"Is There Such a Thing as a Person?" – The Deeper View

A person who can't see a long time at once, for him there doesn't exist "a person" as a whole entity – he only sees "a person in the minute." But someone who understands **deeper** understands that there is such a thing as **a person** as a totality. Hashem can understand even **humanity** at once – "Ki elef shanim be'einecha keyom eshmol ki ya'avor." **With this one can do teshuva** – this is the continuation of the shiur.

CC. A Middah is a Mitzvah in Continuity

The main innovation:

- A **middah** is the kind of thing that **takes time to have** – it's a "mitzvah in continuity" (a mitzvah that extends).

- The Rambam says clearly: It's a **mitzvah to have good middos**.

- But a middah you **cannot do in a minute** – when you do something in a minute, you have a **ma'aseh**, not a **middah**.

[Dialogue / Question-Answer with a Student:]

- **Question:** If a middah is a mitzvah, have I **sinned every minute** that I don't have the middah?

- **Answer:** No – it's **one big mitzvah** for the whole thing. The mitzvah is when you **work** on it.

- **Another point:** The Rambam says a mitzvah doesn't have to **be ma'asim** – it can be in the "chelek hamis'orer" (feelings/impulses). For example: **rachamim** – to become a "baal rachamim" is a mitzvah d'oraisa: "liheyos rachaman."

[Side remark:]

Rachamim doesn't mean just "feeling for" – it means **to

[Side remark:]

Rachamim doesn't mean just "feeling for" – it means **to do**. To be **that kind of person** who when he hears of trouble, **does something**. That itself is the mitzvah of "mah hu rachum af atah rachum."

DD. The Measure of a Middah: Forty Days

1. How Long Does It Minimally Take to Acquire a Middah?

- A month (30 days) is **not enough**.

- The **Tzettel Katan** (from Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk) says: **forty days**.

[Side remark:]

Heard from Yudel Melbrerer that there's modern research that confirms this number – but not certain.

2. Why Specifically 40 Days? Proofs from the Torah

The number **40** appears many times in Torah:

- The **Mabul** – 40 days and 40 nights

- **Moshe Rabbeinu** learned Torah 40 days (from this comes Elul)

- **Taharat hayoledes** – 40 days

- **Malkos** – 40 lashes (chinuch)

The reasoning: 40 days is the **minimum period of time** that you can say about a person that he **is** that kind of person – it's already a "piece of his life story." It's more than a month (which is only one lunar cycle), and it already begins to be a **middah**, not just an **action**.

3. Why Not 30 Days?

30 days is the normal halachic measure for other matters (like a simple loan), because it's the easiest period of time that you can **see** – the moon comes back. But **for a person to become a person** (a middah to become part of him) you need **more** than a month.

EE. The Final Innovation: Teshuva Requires Forty Days

The climax of the entire shiur:

- **Yonah HaNavi** said to Nineveh: Do teshuva for **forty days** – this is the innovation of Sefer Yonah.

- **No other mitzvah** in the Torah has a special period of a whole week, ten days, or forty days in the year – **except for teshuva**.

- **Miderabanan:** Aseres Yemei Teshuva – 10 days.

- **Minhag** (a very old one, from the time of the Geonim, Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer): **forty days** (Elul + Aseres Yemei Teshuva).

The Final Torah:

> **Forty days is the minimum to do teshuva.** If you do teshuva for less than 40 days, you've only done teshuva **b'ma'aseh**, not **b'middos**. But the Rambam says that **the essence of teshuva is b'middos**. B'middos takes forty days. **This is the Torah.**

Flow of the Entire Shiur – Overview:

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What is a middah? (stable disposition, hexis, between seichel and pe'ulah)
↓
Middah ≠ seichel, ≠ mechanical hergel, ≠ hisgabrus
↓
The lev must be trained – not forced
↓
Critique of three false models (coercion / laissez-faire / manipulation)
↓
The correct way: imitation → playing → it becomes real
↓
Applications: shalom bayis / chinuch / davening
↓
Imitation ≠ faking; acting ≠ lying; "authenticity" is a modern mistake
↓
Chitzoniyus me'oreres es hapenimiyus
↓
The next step: independence from training (Zohar's parable: ox/yoke)
↓
A middah is a mitzvah in continuity – takes time, not a moment
↓
Hashem sees the whole person; people only see minutes
↓
Minimum measure of a middah = 40 days (Tzettel Katan + Torah proofs)
↓
The essence of teshuva is b'middos (Rambam Hilchos Teshuva Ch. 7)
↓
Therefore: Elul + Aseres Yemei Teshuva = 40 days = the minimum for true teshuva b'middos
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END OF SHIUR SUMMARY

Full Transcript

The Nature of a Middah: Between Intellect and Action

Introduction: The Topic of the Shiur

Gentlemen, as Rosh Hashanah approaches, I want to tell you an important Torah thought that I have innovated regarding the topic of Elul and Rosh Hashanah and this entire period, which is truly, yes, really an explanation of something that we've been learning here for a long time.

If you have a little drink or something, you can give me. Yasher koach. I'll take anything. Yes, it's good, yasher koach.

Defining a Middah: What is a Middah?

The Literal Meaning

So, we learn this way, we learn here about... no, yasher koach, I won't drink. We learn here about something called a middah. A very interesting thing. What does middah mean? What is a middah? A "virtue" or a "character trait", something of that sort. Everyone already knows what it is. What is it? Nu, what is a middah? A "measurement". Middah is a "measurement". The translation of the word middah is a "measurement". That's why, again, we're not learning "dictionary" now.

Rambam's Terminology: De'os

When the Rambam says that there is a mitzvah that a Jew should have good midos, yes? What is that? What is that? What is that? What is this kind of thing called a middah? De'os. De'os, yes. Nu, "actually", okay, "it's more complicated than that", but... let's call it, whatever, "not a dictionary thing". The Rambam "calls the thing that midos are about" de'os, but the mitzvah is to have the de'os b'middah hanechonah, as he teaches in chapter 1 of Hilchos De'os.

Middah = Hexis: A Stable Disposition

So, de'os means... did I speak about this? "There were so many shiurim about this", but I need to get to something simple. What? A middah is something that Aristotle calls a "hexis". "It's not helping you". A "stable disposition". In Yiddish, we often call this a hergel, a habit, or a teva sheni, a "second nature". This is a word that people like, which is a bit easier to understand.

In other words, what? A techunah. Yes, a techunah is of the nefesh. A middah is something between an action, that is an action, something that I do, and something that I, that would be like the other side of that, would be something like a will, just a will, or dreaming, or something like that.

The Vertical Structure: Intellect — Middah — Action

Midos Between Intellect and Actions

So a middah is this, that people, when you see a person, let me say the clear way that I'm saying, because this is what I feel I want to get to here. A middah is such a thing, when you see a person conducting himself consistently in a certain topic, in a certain way, that is, we have learned that the midos are divided in two ways, you could call it vertically and horizontally.

That is, vertically is like in the soul, a person has intellect and he has actions. That is, the midos are between intellect and actions. Intellect means I understand that this is correct, and actions is what I do. As is known, not everything that people understand do they do. It's a known fact which I deny as is known. But it's such a knowledge.

Middah is the True Predictor of Actions

But what is the thing that predicts yes what people do? The things in between, not intellect and not action, but a middah. True? So what we see a person does consistently a certain kind of thing in a certain topic, about this we say that there are many midos.

Because if you would say the second thing that you said, the horizontal difference, the division of midos, which we also speak much about, but first, let's understand, with this, let's say first vertically, with this it doesn't mean that I do what I understand, I do what I understand. There are people who perhaps always do what they understand, there are people who don't do what they understand. There one still writes midos.

Intellect, Action, and Middah: The Three Layers

Yes, what is the intellect? What I understand. All the names, the proper names, are like words that we call for what I understand that something needs to be done, or something is correct, that something is good, something is such a thing. That is called intellect, that we call intellect.

And what I do, a person has something that we call bechirah, or some such ability to do things not what he understands. Although it's hard to understand how this is possible, but I don't know, people claim that they do things differently than they understand. True? And that is an action, it's an action.

Very good. The things between the two things, about this we always say, that all those mussar sefarim that are occupied the whole time to teach a person to do what he understands, they speak of the v'hashevosa el levavecha, they have forgotten about the thing called a middah.

Middah is Not Hisgabrus

The Foundation: Middah Doesn't Mean Being Misgaber

A middah is what makes you not need to always, as the Rebbe z"l says. The foundation of having a good middah is not that he needs to be misgaber. If one needs to be misgaber, he doesn't have the middah. Here is another important discussion that I still need to learn. But a middah is when one doesn't need to be misgaber. Yes, l'ma'an shefoso rabos atzma. What does the Rambam say about this? Something he says about this? Right? Chapter 3. He is one of the sources, we spoke about this another time.

"Wish" vs. "Like": Two Kinds of Desires

But yes, a middah is when I want to do this, but not I want, and it's I understand or I wish to do it, when we make a distinction between wanting and dreaming. There are two kinds of things that in Yiddish are both called wanting. But in English one can say better the word wish and the word like.

If you wish to be a masmid, that doesn't yet mean that you are a middah of being a masmid. It's like an intellect, or it's even not an intellect, it's something else. That you hold that it would be good to be a masmid, that's one thing. Afterwards there is one, you can be misgaber, sit and learn, you're a masmid, that's the action. That is not, both things are not a middah.

The Third Thing: Middah

And when people, many people don't know that there is at all a third thing. They think that the whole life is to fight, life is a fight, constantly to war, poor thing. That was two weeks ago. We're already finishing the war, already nitzavon. We're standing ready. Yes? We're standing ready. So what? So... what

is the stability? People here have stability, more than what you predict.

That is the reason why we say that there are midos. One of the reasons why we say that there are midos, is because people are not actually just, either they do what they understand, or they don't do what they understand. People consistently do the same thing, in certain topics.

Middah is More Than a Habit

The Horizontal Division: Many Midos

That is, if you go in the most general way, further. This is the next kind of division that one must remember with midos. But the first thing is that people do what in certain ways, consistently do the same thing.

A person whom we call a masmid, for example there is a middah called hasmadah, that is a middah. You can call it a habit, it's then a bit more than a habit, because there is also in this a certain... what? Techunas hanefesh. Yes, techunah is the same word. But techunah is just a more general word. Techunah can mean anything, techunah is an attribute or something like that, right? A characteristic. The techunas hanefesh, this kind of techunah is called a middah, yes.

"He is That Kind of Person"

A techunah that... what? Eigenschaft. Yes, a person that he is that kind of person. You ask him, why does he do this? Because he is that kind of person. Right? That is the meaning of a middah. When one has a middah, then one doesn't struggle, then one doesn't fight. A middah is something that one likes.

Middah Comes With Da'as

Beyond that I say, a middah is not just a habit, a person gets a habit that he doesn't like. I don't know if that's called a middah. A middah means that it always comes with a certain intellect, we call it a certain da'as, that he understands what he needs to do in that matter.

It's not just that he is accustomed, as if automatically, not like a machine is accustomed, or like a piece of wood is accustomed, like a person is accustomed. A middah is a thing between intellect and actions, right?

Midos are the Main Thing of What People Do

And since most of what people do according to the whole process understands that what people consistently do is mostly built on their midos, it happens sometimes that a person is misgaber on himself. And certainly, a person, midos is something that one learns, one learns consistently, right? A midos is something that one trains. One can train oneself, the more one is accustomed to the action, one does consistently the same thing, then one acquires the middah.

But everyone in practice does more or less what his middah tells him, what his middah is.

The Mitzvah of Good Midos

Not Enough to Think or to Do

About this, the mitzvah of being a good person means having the middah of being a good person, right? It's not enough to do good things, certainly not enough to think that what is good is good.

As Aristotle says, many people have already gone to lectures of philosophy and hisorerus, and they have explained why what is good is good, and they haven't become a good person from it. From thinking that what is good is good one doesn't become a good person. That is, one doesn't do any good things, except through hisgabrus it happens.

The Mitzvah is to Have the Middah

One becomes a good person from having the middah of goodness. Right? That is the meaning of a middah.

Critique of Mesilas Yesharim and Tanya

Now, in the same way, since we say that there is such a thing as a middah, it also divides... no, I have a long discourse to explain why I argue with the midos discussions. What do I argue about? I will try to explain why I argue with the midos discussions.

I look at the Mesilas Yesharim's framing in his introduction as very incomplete, it's missing very much of what the reality is. And one sees that the Mesilas Yesharim hardly speaks of midos, because he's missing something of the part that stands in Rambam and other sefarim. Or the same thing the Tanya. The Tanya never speaks of midos, and I feel that a very basic thing is missing in the story here.

For some reason, the Acharonim were not... many of the Acharonim didn't understand what a middah means, and they struggle with it. They spoke about this truth many times.

And the same way, I need to explain this, and the same way, since I will say that a middah is a certain, it's not a techunah, or a certain liking, a certain attraction that a person has to be in a certain way, he is that kind of person, that is also something that divides.

When one speaks of midos, one can argue otherwise, but when one speaks of midos, it also divides between very many midos, and not just one middah. If one thinks only in the most general way, you think on the greatest level, you will basically say that there is one middah, right? Either he does the thing, or he doesn't do the thing. Either he is moach shalit al halev, or he is not moach shalit al halev, true?

But we don't say. It could be that there is some middah called moach shalit al halev. I'm not sure about that. One should better think that it itself should be a middah. But I think that that would also be according to certain subjects. In other words, what we call... what?

"Moach Shalit Al Halev" — Only B'dieved

Moach shalit al halev is a middah? Maybe. It's definitely not a thing. In other words, it's only b'dieved. In the Rambam's world, it's only b'dieved. Because the lechatchilah should be that your lev, the Rambam says that lev means midos, lev means what I like, should already be good. One can teach the lev to be good. One doesn't need to rule over it.

Avodas HaMidos: Teaching the Heart Through Habits

Review: The Foundation of Avodas HaMidos

Okay, anyway, very good. Let's then in a general way, right? Every thing exists in extremes, in the extremes there are all kinds of problems. Did I say that a middah is the lev, and what one needs to then do is not suppress one's lev, but teach it.

How does one teach the lev? Through doing, not through drashos, mostly not through drashos, but one teaches it, and afterwards he does it because he likes it, he does it with pleasure. I saw... what?

Student: Is it iskafya?

Instructor: So, yes, I told you, I don't know how to translate this thing. It's much more what... certainly. It's certain that

what the Tanya calls iskafya or a tzaddik gamur is what the Rambam calls having good midos. By him it's more... there's a whole... in short, one needs to learn much more details to bring out, but on course.

Psychological Research About Self-Control

A middah is... I saw that there is much research about this today in psychology, that people thought, there are people who... I mean, the problem of self-control, of... how do you say, willpower and so on, things that every gentile has, right? This is the kind of question that I like, that people understand it. It's not a question that is only difficult because there are arba kanfayim that are forgotten, is it true? It's a real problem.

So, there is much research today that shows that when one looks into people, one sees that there are people, I call it sometimes executive function, or self control. A person who has self control, he does only less what he holds that one should do. There is a person who is not.

What? I'm not speaking just of emotional, but someone who is, nu, he sees something in a store, he steals it, because it's a good candy, you know? Impulsive. Impulsive is a better word, or things like that. Not controlled. What? And or just, everyone has this in their things, and there are extremes, like everything.

The Naive Understanding About Self-Control

So, they checked by the people who are more controlled, is the explanation that they win more fights? That's what you would think. You would think that a person has a dispute, his intellect has a dispute with his desire or with his heart, he likes to eat, but he also knows that it's not good for his diet, that he fights constantly. One who succeeds to be on a diet is one who wins most fights, and the one who doesn't succeed is the one who loses most fights. That's what people think naively, that's what one could think.

What the Research Actually Shows

But we learn otherwise, the scholars checked and they saw that it's not true. The people who succeed at the diet, who are more controlled, yes. The people who are more controlled, are not such people. It's not the explanation that he feels, you want to ask him, I didn't check how they found it out, but I think that it's true, so I'm saying it.

It's not the explanation that he feels that he wins more fights, that he has a greater gevurah, that he is strong, as they say, a kovesh es yitzro, is not one who is more kovesh es yitzro, not that he has more... you have twenty-four disputes with the yetzer hara a day, one wins twenty-three for the yetzer hara a day, and that one wins twenty-three for the yetzer hara.

They saw that the reality is, one asks people, one sees that the experience of people is not that they win in the fights, but they don't have any fights. In other words, he already wants this way. In other words, he has already become accustomed this way. In other words, he already likes this way.

How Does One Become Such a Person?

How does one become such a person who likes? What? That is what I'm speaking about self control, that there are things, everyone likes to eat, there is no one who hates to eat. But there are people who they don't like more than how much one needs. He has, this is controlled.

That is, one cannot describe a middah, this is something that was also spoken about, one cannot describe a middah without the da'as, which is called the derech ha'memutzah, which tells you how much to eat.

Overcoming and Education: Three False Paths and the Path of Imitation

Continuation: Why I Claim That Hisgabrus Doesn't Work

Instructor: Through doing it, but I will explain to you, I will explain to you. Why I claim, I think that this is the experience, I can't say that it's so, but I would claim that there are many people who because they struggle so much with their yetzer hara (evil inclination) never become better.

It looks like I'm criticizing people who struggle with their yetzer hara as if, but I'm just saying... why? I understand that I'm explaining. Very consistently, and usually, sometimes one becomes less. You know, there were Jews who said that when you break one middah (character trait) it becomes two midos. You break one bad middah, you get two bad midos. Do you know what the two bad midos are called? Kinah (jealousy) and ga'avah (pride). Now one has both these midos, and also when one goes again to break these midos.

No, the point that this is a remarkable thing is that when one struggles, one doesn't learn.

The Parable of Chinuch: The First False Path - Coercion with a Stick

Like let's use the parable of chinuch (education). A person who hits, he says, yes, one must go with the Torah approach to chinuch to hit, not nothing, not be nice. It's true, one must be margil (habituate). I want to be margil, which I use the example of chinuch, which is very important.

Not be nice, it doesn't say in the Torah, he hits and he hits, until the boy is afraid and he obeys. Okay, the boy is rational, one will hit him, he'll go learn. Afterwards, the moment that the father is not ba'al habayis (in charge), he is no longer tachas (under), as the Gemara says, tachas yadcha yad (under your hand), he no longer lives at the father's home, he does what he wants. Because he was forced, poor thing, that means on his own he didn't want to.

The Second False Path - "Let Him Be"

Now come the other people from the side of niceness, and therefore you shouldn't force him, you should let him go at his pace, what is that? Wait until he himself will find the beauty of being a good person. That's also very weird. Why is it very weird? Because he's a child, what do you want from him? So he'll be bad because he should just do what his yetzer hara tells him?

Because a child only has the yetzer hara, it just means the yetzer hara doesn't mean he's bad, it means he has no seichel (intellect), right? So there must be something that's called chinuch, right?

So I'm explaining to you that the thing called chinuch is not just, let everyone be, as if he's an adult, as if he's at all a ba'al bechirah (one with free will), as if he can figure out himself what is good and bad and do it himself, and also not what is it called?

The Third False Path - Emotional Manipulation

Also not force, as if such a mechanical thing that one must force him, because that doesn't help, that actually doesn't work. You're right, it works a little, because it even makes it

worse sometimes, because you relate to him in this way, he becomes so, you're actually teaching him that this is bad.

But one must swing him, sometimes one talks too much with sachar v'onesh (reward and punishment), one teaches people, I've noticed many times in my shiur, I struggle with people, all the people who come to me, and I say, I hold that most people are good. But the people who come to the Rav, not other people. And, no, I know to say, good people. There are, we go to Honduras, I don't know if all people are good, what do I know? I'm talking about our heimishe Jews.

The Problem: We Teach People That They Are Bad

But what? We say so many times that the body is roshei teivos (acronym), the body wants to gorge, the body wants to grab, the body wants other things with arayos (forbidden relations). So one talks so much about this, until you actually think that if not that the Torah stands over you with a stick and says machleh mos yumas (he shall surely be put to death) and so on, you would do kol mah shelibo chafetz (whatever his heart desires).

The answer is that it's not so, it doesn't start, you wouldn't. No, you would be a normal person, you were raised to be a normal person, something had to happen the whole chinuch, true. But because one said this so much, you know that a non-Jew, true, a non-Jew who has no chinuch at all, would actually be so, he is an ir peri adam yulad (a wild donkey of a man is born), but a person who does have chinuch, there are reasons for the chinuch.

I'm not saying, I'm not going now into the philosophy of why one should be a good person and so forth. I'm telling you that a person who has chinuch, doesn't remain with the desire that he would have wanted if not for his training, he's not a wild horse that when not... even a horse, yes, even a horse that you train well, afterwards he doesn't need to be, what's it called, be, be, be, so he's already trained, he already wants himself, he doesn't even run away, he doesn't want to run away.

Sometimes, one talks so much about this milchemes hayetzer (war with the evil inclination), one tells people that they want to run away, it is not true, he doesn't want to run away at all, and he is very happy. Why is he happy? Because he was taught. I don't want that he's happy, because I'm not talking about deeper things. No, I'm already explaining why. I'm already explaining why something is good and belongs to seichel.

The Verse "Chanoch Lana'ar Al Pi Darko"

I'm telling you, I can tell you that instead of forcing, and still, I'm telling you now, I went out a bit from the topic, I just said that sometimes when one says so much the drashos (sermons) of hisgabrus (self-strengthening/overcoming), one teaches the person, one tells him that he wants bad things which he actually wants.

Yes, it still says, what is the middah? Midos that one wants. When one has the middah one already wants. This is a very long time around. No, it's not a long time around. No, it's... okay, soon I'll say how long time it should take. That's still part of my shiur, friends. It doesn't take so long.

But what I want to say is that... so therefore... so what are you asking a question? What does one do? Not force with a stick. Not just that, because if one says that one doesn't make the person should ever become good, he never gets good midos, he always remains one who must be forced with a stick, which is not good.

Like the horse you should teach him to push, but when one stands over him with a stick. Even a horse one doesn't teach, right? It says explicitly, chinuch is supposed to last the whole life, right? "Chanoch lana'ar al pi darko, gam ki yazkin lo yasur mimenah" (Train a child in his way, and even when he is old he will not depart from it). If you will give him chinuch, he will become older even when you don't stand with a stick. That's the translation of this verse, right?

"Al pi darko" means to say in a childish way, in derech hachinuch (the way of education). Later he won't need chinuch anymore, he'll be a good person himself, right? Yes, "al pi darko" doesn't mean every child will be different, I already spoke about that now. But that's the translation, that chinuch is such a kind of thing.

The Question: What Is the Right Way?

Now, you'll ask, okay, so what is the other option? That one should teach him? One can't teach him, he's a baby, he didn't want to be taught the seichel, that's why he's a baby, because one doesn't teach with him. And what will you say? Ah, should we wait for him to learn himself? You're still not mechanech (educating). You're like... you make the mistake of Dovid HaMelech with Avshalom (King David with Absalom). And one doesn't teach him. One thinks he'll teach himself. He doesn't teach himself. Right?

So what is the other option? Ah, there's another option that people have, manipulation, emotional manipulation. Let's love you so much, and you will really like it. That's just manipulation. I'm not talking about that. It works. Just like everything works. What works? All things that people do work. The question is how well it works.

Ah, but the manipulation somehow is fake, because it means, when the second person that I mentioned, he truly believes, he thinks that the child can figure out everything on their own, he lets them, okay, it's a mistake, because people don't figure things out on their own. The one who goes with love, the people who say you need to educate with love, they're saying no, I don't trust you, right? Truly, when I let you do what you want, you'll become a wild beast [chayah ra'ah]. But I can't train you like a normal person, saying this is good, that's not good.

So I pretend, pretend that it's all love bombing, it's called in the cult people, right? I make you love so much that you want to make me happy, things like that. That's what I think happens with most people who give these sermons about love, and I'm not a fan of that, not of these sermons either.

Discussion About Love in Education

But what yes? Do I think one should be bad? Yes, that's what you're asking. Of course, everything is from mere love. That's not the question. No grandfather, no father has ever hated his children, I mean.

Student: Yes, yes, yes, I think that is too much. I don't like that so much. When it's a father, you want your kid to learn because you love... I don't know. It feels weird to me. My father didn't do that, at least. I don't know. And I try not to do that with my child.

The Right Way: Imitation (Nachmaachen)

Instructor: So what yes? I'll tell you what yes. I'll try to show you what yes, okay? What yes is like this. What yes is

something that people have a great aversion to this thing, but this is the way.

What yes is imitation, nachmaachen. What do I mean nachmaachen? Nachmaachen is different, very different from forcing. What do I mean to say? And now I can speak about a person themselves, not about education, but with the education of children you get to the same thing.

Parable: The Father Who Yells at His Family

There is a person who knows, for example, that he needs to be, I'll tell you a parable, he knows that he needs to be pleasant to his wife and his children, and not yell at them. Just, that's the trait of the father. Now I'm not talking about being, it's not a mitzvah. All the times when people yell at their children is not about their education, he's just nervous, truly.

So, he knows that he needs to be pleasant, he needs to smile at them. This is something where his children have for the most part done nothing wrong, and even if yes, let's be real, they're three years old, what do you want from them? He knows that. But he doesn't hold by that, he feels angry, he feels tense, he had a hard day. Normal, I'm trying to give a very normal example, so people understand what we're talking about.

Two Strategies: Getting Angry or Holding Back

Now there are two strategies that you want to deal with him. Okay, the first strategy is to get angry. Okay, that's not good.

The second strategy is, I'll overcome myself. He'll learn Mesilas Yesharim [Path of the Just], midas haka'as [the trait of anger], it doesn't talk about anger, whatever, a book Orchos Tzaddikim [Ways of the Righteous], and he'll come home and he'll be like, not get angry! Okay, it works sometimes, I'm not saying. That's a second way. Usually it doesn't work so well, it bursts out in the end.

It's interesting, you'll notice. When I overcome myself, I'm only speaking from experience that I know, you'll see differently you'll tell me. If I hold myself back from getting angry, I can hold myself back for a few hours, and in the end, you catch, you see, that one doesn't know, poor thing. You see already that I've been holding myself back today from yelling for a few hours? You haven't yet understood that I need already... hello, at this point nismalah se'asah [the measure is full], yes? Hello!

Student: With strength, Kelly. One minute, I could have told you, I understand that it's a problem. I just want to tell you why it's a problem. With strength, yes? I'm holding myself back. Ah, one minute, very good.

Instructor: I want that the children relax is already when I actually have da'as. Let's take, wait, I'm assuming that I'm angry. When I'm not angry, I can chill. If I have a mind, I hold that sort of level of control, Kelly, I can completely, I'm misach da'as, I'm thinking now of him. Okay, I'm not talking about that level. I'm talking about, I am yes angry, there's what to be angry about. I'm even right, I don't want to speak. Wouldn't he be right enough that he'll yell at him, right?

Student: So you catch around thanks?

Instructor: No, this is interesting, because you could do this your whole life. There's a catch here, right? We were told that when you reveal something, you become that way. Now, that worked on a small scale. So, I mean myself in the same way, I sat by the Shabbos table for two hours and held myself back from yelling at my wife, and in the end it burst out. Where's the gain? It didn't work, it worked opposite.

People do this already for seventy. You know that there are people who are seventy years old who have held themselves back from yelling at their wife? They became seventy, the whole thing broke out. That's my condition, but can't recognize. No, so... ah, listen. Very good, very good.

So, that's my proof. That's... no, that's a parable. I'm telling you that this is when one holds themselves back.

Playing and Imitation: The Way to True Personal Transformation

The Difference Between Holding Back and Playing

The Weakness of Only Holding Back

Instructor: It's not. It's the opposite. It's you love it. Sometimes one needs that. I'm not saying, a person is a person. If you have a bad passion, he has anger, and his wife is not guilty, hold yourself back. Certainly you should hold yourself back. That's what the Rambam [Maimonides] calls overcoming... a debt. Not a chasid [pious person], but a debt to one's soul. One must do that. A person has no choice, must sometimes do it.

The Better Advice: Playing Instead of Holding Back

But what is better advice? And one thing that this advice works on a small-scale also. The better advice is something else.

Student: You're saying that one should completely chill?

Instructor: That's already too great a madreigah [spiritual level] for me. I have different advice. Maybe you mean what I'm saying. There's different advice that actually works.

The different advice is... instead of getting angry, holding yourself back from getting angry, the different advice is pretending that I'm terribly in love with this person now. I'm terribly happy with him. Pretend. Pretending. Play acting.

Student: Wait pretending was a good play acting. Acting. You mean acting?

Instructor: I act, ke'ilu [as if], I'm... truly I feel terribly close with my wife, who has already for the third day forgotten to... whatever. In short, well, I don't have such that she forgot. She doesn't hold by that. Whatever.

How This Works: The Mechanism of Playing

Pretend that I love her terribly, I'm very good with her today. There are such days when I'm very good, I know how it feels a day when I'm very good with her, true? I'm not talking about any person who has never experienced this, he's never been pleasant to anyone. I know how it looks when you do love each other, when you're happy with one another. And I also know how to act that way, it's not... and which tone one speaks, and which things one does.

Pretend, I play that way. And I play that way, I've already tried many times. You play that way after a few minutes, I actually want that way. And then it doesn't come back anymore. It can start again this cycle, don't tell me it stays forever.

The Contrast: When One Only Holds Back

He didn't do that, he held himself back, he didn't play. He held himself back in the chair and held himself back. That proves my theory. He held himself back. He got angry, he held himself back. No, didn't play. That's what I mean.

The Great Difference: Playing Versus Holding Back

There are two words. I need here... I'm saying something from my life, I'm trying to explain. I think that there's a great difference from playing, understand what I mean? There's a great difference from playing and holding back.

Playing means that I... kivyachol [so to speak], I'm using the model. I have in my head a model of how it looks a couple that is terribly satisfied with each other that day, and I'm that. I pretend. I'm not talking so long... again, we're talking that there's a good basis. I'm not talking about two people just strangers going to play. It's actually truly so, but when I play that way, then it becomes that way.

Application to Education: Playing with Children

Playing Works on Education Too

And derech agav [by the way], this playing works on education too. People who play with their children that they are tzaddikim [righteous people], the children become tzaddikim, did you know?

Reb Nachman [Rabbi Nachman of Breslov] said that when you judge favorably [dan l'chaf zechus], that person actually becomes good. It works just as well as that other education mehalech [approach]. Okay, I think it works quite well.

Why It Works: The Deeper Principle

Why? Because... and it's partly what I'm trying to bring out, this is my idea. There's a great difference from not... pretending.

In other words, look, for this it's very important for a Jew to know tzaddikim, right? We always say that the only way to become a good person is to know other good people. Why? Because otherwise, you think that it's all hisgabrus [self-overcoming]. If you know someone that actually likes doing the good things, looks like they enjoy it, yes?

Example: Davening

I can tell you, we don't usually talk here about such sort of things, but if you want to talk about davening, right?

Student: No, that's another topic.

Instructor: So what are you talking about here?

Student: L'gabei [regarding] loving?

Instructor: Loving is even feeling loving, not I love and I don't want to give you a get [divorce]. I'm talking about the... today is a good day, right? Act like it's a good day.

Student: Yes, I'm not... actually today, when you love each other terribly, you're moichel [forgiving] on the things that you're... that's the reality, right? He's moichel.

Instructor: Yes, actually, that's done, and you're moichel. That's how it goes, right? I'll have a detail how it works.

The Same Principle in All Things

I think that the same thing, in every thing it's so, right? Mashal [parable/example], I'll say, it's very weird, I'll say a sharp thing.

Student: Yes, sure.

Instructor: Regarding your kushya [question], in the Or Shirah it's only machloikes [dispute]. I need to think that it's good, I need to think that I can make a play thing that it's good, I need to think that way.

Student: Yes, in other words, it's different... every word is over back has held back. You think, I...

Example: The Skulener Rebbe

Instructor: Yes, that I'm the Skulener Rebbe. The Skulener Rebbe never got angry. I don't know how. He was always happy. He didn't hold himself back. I know, maybe yes, but he didn't give, right? He made himself. Okay, he lived complaints, he really was happy with everyone.

I'm the Skulener Rebbe. I don't want to, but I pretend. I do so, I want him. Do you understand that way? The giving theory is very high, you know what it can be? That's what I'm pretending.

Student: No problem.

Instructor: The Skulener Rebbe understood higher things why it's so. I don't understand, I pretend.

Application to Davening: Imitation Is Not Faking

A Sharp Thing About Davening

I say, I want to tell you, I want to say a sharp thing. Today is Erev Rosh Hashanah [eve of the Jewish New Year], the world goes to daven in shul, and very many people, especially young people, don't know how to daven. What does everyone do? Most people who want to daven, they imitate someone else who davens.

Example: Shuckling During Davening

It looks, it's so funny, I've already said this many times, you can go into a beis hamedrash [study hall], and if there's a shul like the shul where I daven, where there are people from different circles and chassiduses [Hasidic groups], you can see exactly there how each one shuckles who his rebbe is. Because it's a signature, that's a gait detection? That's a Bobover guy, I see, he shuckles. That's according to the custom of Bobov [k'minhag Bobov]. He doesn't need anything. Very good. He does by the payos [sidelocks] to daven that way.

The Gemara [Talmud] tells me to a different discussion that I want to say, but I want to bring out today the topic of pretending, which I want to say. It's very interesting.

What Do Normal Young People Do?

What do normal people who are young do? That's what something. He imitates to the level of how he turns his payos, how he stands, when he does this and when he does that, v'chadomeh [and so forth].

The Claim Against Imitation

We bnei Torah chachamim [Torah scholars], all chachamim, all my friends, hold that this is childish, it's true. It's just an imitator. It's not a real person.

Student: Have you never fallen into a new way to shuckel?

Why Does One Shuckel?

Instructor: Why does one shuckel during davening? Because one is so... I don't know. Why? I have a theory that one shuckels because one doesn't feel comfortable. It's cold fidgeting. Because davening is a crazy thing. Okay, at least he shuckels.

Anyway, there are other theories, and the Kuzari has a theory for why he shuckels. B'kitzur [in short], whatever the explanation is... he will shuckel with davening.

Student: Okay, no, it's very old, it's very old, Jews have always shuckled because of davening. It's not a new thing from today. From the first references it's mentioned for this, why did he actually mention for this?

Instructor: No, the non-Jews don't shuckel. Davka [specifically] the non-Jews don't. They should stand on their

heads.

Student: Yes, but there is a reason. There is also a meaning.

Instructor: Okay.

A Hafsaka [Break]

When it writes, when it writes, when it writes. No problem. You can, it's fine. Just in, I just want to bring out something.

The Claim: It's Just Imitation

So we can be mezalzel [belittle] this. It's just an imitator. Like you say, do you have something to daven about? Okay, he cries. Just to cry because the rebbe cries here. What is that?

Student: But I think... what? Crying [kein boichem].

Instructor: Yes, exactly, I'm pro crying. That's the shiur [lesson]. It says, by the way, it's already asked you.

Student: Every week?

Instructor: Yes, the rebbe. The world would?

Student: No, the rebbe. It seems one doesn't cry on, well, he cries?

Instructor: It will be the tachlis [purpose/goal].

Student: Okay.

The Answer: Imitation Is Legitimate

Instructor: B'kitzur, what did I want to say? So I claim so, I claim so. Certainly, after a person has his own, like you say, he already knows only what he davens, and what it says in Shulchan Aruch [Code of Jewish Law] that a person has children, sits, well, his house, it says in the Mishnah in Taanis, that one sends as a shaliach tzibbur [prayer leader] who has a house with children and doesn't have to support them, he has what to need first [rishonah], and another person doesn't know what they do. Okay, very good. But, metapel v'ein lo [takes care but has nothing], yes? It's a lashon [expression]. So, very good.

One Needs to Learn What Davening Means

Okay, but still, one needs to learn what davening means. What is this thing? It's very hard to describe. What does davening mean? Davening means asking from the Almighty. Anyway, it's not enough. There are many more things, a list of a certain Jewish davener, much more than that.

So how am I mesbir [explaining] to you? And how, let's say, I understand already yes, all people ask, okay, but how, I need to inspire myself, I need to feel this? How do I feel it?

The Answer: Imitate the One Who Feels It

He explains, you pursue someone who already feels it. That's the answer. And it turns out, of course, but in one day, gradually you learn. Yes, it's a klal gadol baTorah [great principle in Torah].

Student: You never imitated.

Instructor: I think it works on that too. Okay, that's why I had to say this, because you didn't want to agree, you didn't want to be maskim [agree].

It Works on Older People Too

I think it works more... of course it's... who wants to daven? When you're seventy you don't want to daven? Certainly you want to daven. On the contrary, but when you're seventy. Okay, when you're seventy you're already over. From eighty, I don't know. Certainly people become better, they daven too.

I see yes, I see yes. I go into a plain beis medrash, I mean small, whatever, there's no such thing as a plain beis medrash, but they don't consider themselves such tremendous geonim [geniuses] or ovdim [servants of God]. And the older ones...

Student: He doesn't have any tzaros [troubles]?

Instructor: Yes, kodem kol [first of all], everyone who is older has tzaros. That's kodem kol. There's no such thing that someone is sixty and he doesn't have any tzaros, he thinks. He has something. That's kodem kol.

But even not the tzaros, of course, what are you talking about? The older people are much more, and not everyone has his style with his thing, but he is much more real in what he does.

The Beginning Doesn't Go Real

But I think that the beginning, it doesn't go real. I see that the older Jews aren't ashamed to cry, and the young men, if they cry it's fake, because he's imitating some bachur. But somewhere that bachur started, and it begins with imitation.

The Chiddush: Imitation Doesn't Mean Faking

And imitation, I want to say a chiddush [novel insight], that imitation doesn't mean faking. People are confused. People think, I said a long, a few years ago, okay.

Imitation and Authenticity: External Awakens the Internal

Older People and Young Men: The Beginning of Authenticity

The older people are much more... not everyone, everyone has his style with his thing, but he is much more real in what he does. But I think that the beginning, it doesn't work out, it looks like the older Jews aren't ashamed to cry, and the young men if they cry it's fake, he's imitating some bachur. But somewhere it started with that bachur, and it begins with imitation.

And imitation, I want to say a chiddush, that imitation doesn't mean faking. People are confused, people think... I said a long... a few years ago I said... okay, it doesn't make sense. I'm telling you a fact, you can go back regarding middos [character traits], you'll see that it fits better. Middos is a funny thing that it works. A good thing that it works. It works on me in this place. I think it works in other places too, because of the same theory, because a middah is the kind of thing that's how you learn it.

The Parable of the Rebbe Who Prepares for Yom Tov

If someone told me, he made a chizuk from some rebbe, that he says he prepares for Yom Tov with the niggun, he calls the chazzanim, whatever, they should daven with him, and he cries already then, already at the... what's it called, at the... what? Of course, at the practice, right? You daven before the amud, you have to practice. So that person said. I hold that he's right.

How then will he know when to cry? Kodem kol, he's saying the same words, I think it's not such a big difference, that's number one. But he shouldn't hold back. He says now in his strength, it's very sad, "mi yichyeh umi yamus" [who will live and who will die], and he cries. It's sad, it's emotional.

The Dispute Between the Arizal and the Vilna Gaon About Crying

I would say even more than that. It doesn't say you should cry. It's a dispute, the Arizal [Rabbi Isaac Luria, 16th century Kabbalist] said you should cry, and the Vilna Gaon [Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna, 18th century Torah scholar] says you shouldn't cry. So both say you should, right? He doesn't say...

if a person wants to cry, it's not relevant to say he should or he shouldn't, or yes, whatever, it happened, it happened. What do you learn to do? Do teshuvah [repentance], I mean, what's relevant? That's the real question of how to do it.

Feelings Come Through Middos and Habits

And some people and some communities and some people, their style is to daven when they cry, and some people, the Vilna Gaon said you shouldn't. Very good. From this it's necessary, very good, from this it's necessary to acknowledge that feelings... what does a feeling mean? What is a feeling? A feeling comes from heaven? Everything comes from heaven. A feeling is a thing... what? Yes, no problem. I'm not talking about that. If it comes from heaven, it comes straight from heaven.

I'm talking, even when it comes from heaven, it comes through a person's middos. I mean, that's real, except for a miracle in the way of a miracle. Even what comes from heaven, so to speak, as the Arizal sometimes says, it happens, whatever. But it comes through the habits, the feelings, the middos that a person has. A person whose middah is for example... that means, if a person whose middah is that he never cries, he won't cry even when it comes from heaven. He'll do something else, he'll express it in his way, whatever his way is.

External Awakens the Internal: The Hat Parable

And therefore, everything. There's a concept of hispa'alus. People among us are all Kotzker Chassidim, we're all sort of Kotzker. I heard from my father, and he was also a Kotzker Chassid, my father told me, he said this many times, he said, in our house, people come to shul and they don't put on their hat for davening, or whatever. What's the difference? I daven as I am.

He says, what do you mean? As you are you remain as you are. If you'll put on your hat, you'll daven more seriously. That's still, it's itself a... I'm not talking about the halachos that you should daven with a hat, I'm only talking about the idea. Putting on a hat is itself, it's not fake, that's how you respect the gartel, that's how you respect the standing of davening, you put on a hat with a jacket. It's not fake, it's external, it's not... perhaps the more important is preparation of the heart etc., but it's itself a thing.

Crying Is Also External

The same thing, one minute, the crying is also, just as the hat is on your clothes, the crying is in your body, what's the difference? It's also the external, the inner internal, I'm not talking about your heart and your head. But the... yes? Ah, certainly, the shiur is one hundred percent external awakens the internal. That's... there are other shiurim that go in other directions. This shiur is entirely on the path of the Chinuch and so on, yes, certainly, everyone knows, from external awakens the internal. But that's what I'm emphasizing. Okay, I think that on the next level it's not. I think there's a different, and according to the approach, it depends which level.

Acting Is Not Lying

That means, but let me finish an important thing. Doing, pretending, acting, is not the same as lying. People are terribly confused. People say, he's an actor, therefore he's a liar. No, he's a good actor. There's a whole school, an acting school, you learn how to act. An actor is a liar? No. Ah, how do you say? An actor is not a liar. He's an actor, he knows how to put himself into the situation. It's a place.

A Real Actor Cries Real

A real actor, when he plays a play and he cries, he cries real. The whole story didn't happen. What's the difference? If it would have happened, would he have been an actor? There's a dispute in the acting methods whether you have to cry real or not, but actually, that's all one approach. There's nothing wrong with it. There's nothing false about it.

That means, false is only, what does falsehood mean? Falsehood is when you represent it as something it's not. People think, like when a person cries, it means that then something happened that second. It doesn't mean that, it means that I now put myself into that situation intentionally, and I cried, really. Understand? It's not pretending, that's what I'm saying, that someone says, people, that's just, I'm going back.

Imitation Is the First Way

Imitation is the first way, that's what I'm pretending. How do you put yourself in? When I see what someone else does, I don't know exactly what he does, I start to do what he does, whatever he learns. One hundred percent, that's the next step, one minute. You actually have to learn the books that person learns, and think the thoughts that person thinks. Yes, I have to start somewhere.

Yes, I think that the imitation starts, of course. I don't know what to tell you. Almost every serious person I know imitates someone. Almost everyone, not everyone, but almost everyone. I'll explain to you the next stage in a minute, but I want to stop and finish with this.

The Problem with "Authenticity"

Certainly with this it works, and I think that people, us, us, us, in all his, in all his, in all his, I want to be an authentic scoundrel, okay? A fake ehrliche Jew is better than an authentic scoundrel. He also used to say, for your father-in-law you'll be real, okay? I don't know any sense. Bachurim, you know, he fights with his friend, because he's an ish emes. Yes yes, ish emes together with your kallah. Let's see. Ah, just a low life, truth.

In short, my point is that we have this, we have the training, we have the conditioning of our culture, even though there's like a good middah in it, certainly, the ultimate mitzvah of standing, that we feel that making yourself is always falsehood. Making yourself is not falsehood, I make myself for a... a person can do both. Now, you can do both sincerely and unsincerely. Yes, I make myself lishmah. He doesn't hold yet meanwhile. When he would hold he actually wouldn't need to make himself. But until meanwhile he needs to make himself.

"Fake it until you make it"

"You fake it until you make it". We hold by "fake it until you make it".

So, let's think... do you understand what I'm saying? I feel that people have a great tendency against this, because the "idea of authenticity", which is "I think a fake idea". I think that "human beings" don't work that way. And that's what makes people not know how to teach their children. Because either you force him... okay, forcing is always there. Like someone said? He doesn't go with force, he goes with more force. That's always. But teaching is almost impossible for these levels. Why? What are you left with? You're left with nothing.

Most People Need to Become Accustomed

You have to understand that there are most people at most times who don't yet hold at the real level of their own understanding, not a great person yet, still a small one, or your level is still small. You have to accustom him. How do you accustom? You show him. Look, in short, that's my speech, pro-imitation. Not pro-imitation, I mean that imitation is "necessary". Now, that's only the first step. That's certainly important. It's certainly only the first step. As we say in chinuch, the Zohar [foundational work of Kabbalah] says that ol malchus shamayim [the yoke of the kingdom of heaven]...

"With His Lips He Honors Me But His Heart Is Far From Me": A New Definition of Authenticity

No, to hold that it's good, certainly, because your intellect holds. Certainly he holds that it's good, it's true. No, because you don't know how to do it. Your heart doesn't yet know how. I hold that it would be good to daven with expansion of the heart. But how do you do that? I have no idea. I imagine that it's good. "By the way", how do I know that it's good also? Because I saw someone else do it, and he looks to me like a good person.

The Foundation of Authenticity

I want to say that this itself, just to understand on the topic of authentic, this itself can be true. When you say such a person, I want to say an important foundation, I've never said it at this shiur, I'll say it again. That we are so like "emes emes tafsa lei gavra", are so "into" the topic of being authentic and "authentic", and I think it's a certain mistake in understanding at all what it means.

The Verse "With His Lips He Honors Me But His Heart Is Far From Me"

There are many books, in the verse it says, what's the verse? "Bisfasav kib'duni v'libo rachak mimeni" [with his lips he honors Me, but his heart is far from Me]. Yes, people think that means that... yes, it's built on that verse. People think that means that... that he says "I love you Hashem", but he doesn't feel ahavas Hashem at the moment.

I already told you, that's approximately like that Kotzker Chassid who came, his wife came, his wife asked him, "Do you love me?" He said, "One minute, I have to contemplate whether I feel the love now or not. Come back in two hours." Are you a normal person?

The Parable of the Wife Who Asks "Do you love me?"

When the wife asks you "Do you love me?", certainly you shouldn't say a lie. There's a thing that someone is "two-faced", he actually loves someone else and he says he loves her. That's "his mouth and heart are not equal". He's a total bluffer, he doesn't love her at all, and he says he loves her because he wants to convince her, he wants to "manipulate" her or the like. But if you don't feel it now, what's the difference? It's an even greater lie to say I don't love you than to say I do love you. Do you understand what I'm saying?

The Mistake in Understanding "His Mouth and Heart Are Not Equal"

We often "identify" the "his mouth and heart are not equal" with the "funny" person, who you all agree is not a normal person. "I can't daven yet because I don't feel yet." Okay, so you hold that there's no God? "No problem", then he's right. But you do hold, usually, I mean you're a Jew, "right"? So you are a Jew. You hold of the topic of Rosh Hashanah [the Jewish New Year], "whatever" it means to you.

You want to learn in depth what it means, it's a topic that every person... you want to understand what love between man and woman means, there's a lot to learn about that and to improve etc. "But you can't be blocked by that." If he's "blocked" by that, and he thinks that's what the verse means that says you can't say "mitzvos anashim melumadah" [commandments performed by rote], it's simply a mistake from the start. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Love Means Conducting Yourself in the Ways of Love

If a person loves his wife, "part" of that means to say he loves her and conduct himself in the ways of love. Not necessarily has nothing to do with what he feels. He'll feel too, "of course". "If it's a mitzvah" to feel, I don't know if it's a mitzvah or not, he'll feel it too. There are times for that, there's an order, "how it works". "You know", you can "figure" out the whole process, "how people work" and "all of that".

But when the claim that someone is a "hypocrite" is not that he doesn't feel it at the moment. It's that he doesn't mean it seriously, he's "faking". Understand? If a person, the wife asks him, "Do you love me?" He says, "Of course I love you", and meanwhile he loves someone else, then he's a "faker". But someone says "I love you" and he doesn't feel it at all now, what does he know what he feels? I said, what does that Kotzker Chassid know? The husband comes and he asks, the wife asked him, "Do you love me?"

Imitation, Independence, and the Rambam's Mitzvah of Middos

The Difference Between Faking and Not Feeling at the Moment

Translation

There are times for this, there's a seder [order, system], how it works, you know, you could figure out the whole mahalach [process, progression], how people work, and all of that. But when the claim that's made that someone is a hypocrite, it's not that he doesn't feel it at the moment. It's bichlal [in general, fundamentally] that he doesn't mean it seriously, he's faking, you understand?

If a person, his wife asks him, "You love me?", he says, "Of course I love you", and meanwhile he loves someone else, then he's a faker. But someone says he loves you, and he doesn't feel it at all now. Does he know what he feels? I said, you know that Kotzker chassid? The heimish guy comes and asks, the wife asked him, "Do you love me?" He says, "I don't know, I'm hungry, that's what I feel now." You understand? Truth, now I feel hungry, I don't feel love. Because that wasn't the question. When I say love, the lie is truth. Because it's proper, he's not fooling anyone with this. He's saying the thing that's true. Truth doesn't mean what I feel now, truth doesn't mean what I feel now. Truth doesn't mean what is bifrat [specifically] klali [general] truth.

Application to Kabolas Ol Malchus Shamayim

The same thing when a person says, kabolas ol malchus shamayim [acceptance of the yoke of Heaven's sovereignty], people say, if you're saying a lie when you say krias shema [the Shema prayer] because you're not truthful. What does that mean? You don't have kabolas ol malchus shamayim? When you go into a store don't you look at the hechsher [kosher certification]? And you do look, okay, you're one hundred percent a kabolas ol malchus shamayim. Are there more

levels? Can one be more deep? No problem, but it's not a lie. The whole claim that it's a lie doesn't begin.

So that's, and the same thing when one makes himself, and the same thing he says, I want to daven. I don't want to just daven. Let's say he wants to just daven, he was yotzei [fulfilled the obligation] in Ofrom. I want to daven the way the Rebbe davens. I see that the Rebbe does something, he enjoyed his davening more than I do. Something makes something better, I want to do it. I don't know what he does. You're right, one can do the long way, and ask what he thinks, and learn everything, whatever. But the way, the pe'ulah ma'asiyos [practical actions], I'm going to do what he does. He shuckles, shuckles. The same way, he shuckles right, shuckles right, shuckles left, shuckles left. I see that this is the... how most people learn to daven, and it's fine, it's legitimate.

Imitation as a Legitimate First Step

Just like this it's not a lie that a person wants to know how to love his wife, he looks. How is he different, I don't know, he goes to a shiur, because he looks at how his father loved his mother, and he does that. Most people do that anyway, right? Does he know what the other one feels? He doesn't know what the other one feels? Yes, one must daven. If one wants, one doesn't have to do anything, I don't know, I don't have a chiyuv [obligation] to shuckle during davening, but one must daven with tachiyos [vitality, liveliness], and one wants to daven with tachiyos. One sees what other people who daven with tachiyos do, and one wants to make the next step.

How Imitation Leads to Authenticity

You're very worried that one won't reach the next step, I'll tell you what the next step is. The same thing with midos [character traits] also, as was said. After a person gets the habit, he becomes that sort of person, then, like I said, it works, I think it works pretty fast, and I'll soon say how long I mean to take for a minimum if I'll have time. I don't need so long, certain things take literally a minute. If you already know how it works, how it feels when it's real, how it works when it's real.

A person can not be in the mood for davening, but he does what he does, right? I don't like at all that I'm talking about davening, I can talk about my wife, same more the same way. He does what he does when he is in the mood, after ten minutes he becomes in the mood.

Not so complicated, right? But if he would have been miskabel [resigned, accepting], he would never have become in the mood. That's what I'm bringing out.

The Next Step: Independence from the Training

Now, after he's in the mood, then he doesn't need to do anymore, he doesn't need to shuckle the way the Rebbe shuckled, because now he already feels himself. Sometimes he wants to shuckle this way, sometimes he wants to shuckle differently. He doesn't have to imitate. There's gonna be something off pace, something fake. Fake I mean to say not meduyak [precise], not fake. There's going to be something not exactly the way he does it in the first ten minutes. Because the first ten minutes, okay, I don't have nerves now, but I can make myself, I can act like the person who does have nerves. How? I do it after, I play some film in my head and I do it after.

Gibor HaMidah and Independence from Rules

Okay, but imitating and remembering that truly gibor hamidah [master of one's character traits] also means knowing how it's chal [applies] to every situation. There are never any klalim [rules], right? One can't make... You know all those jokes about the bachur [young man] who was told how to talk to a girl, and he was mechayeh [revived, brought to life] pickles that were written on the note. That's not how you talk to a girl, right? But it doesn't mean that all those notes don't work. That's it. A conversation opens up, you already know yourself, because you're a normal person, you figure out how to go further. But the first piece does need to be. There's nothing wrong with someone that he buys the card games that say date what he calls, whatever, and he starts with that, and afterwards he must throw it away. If he doesn't throw it away in the end, then nothing became a conversation at all.

So that's the next step. The next step is going to be independent of the training, but that's exactly it with with with and the same way as with davening, and the same way with all midos.

The Zohar's Mashal of the Ox with the Yoke

The Zohar [the foundational work of Kabbalah] says that kabolas ol malchus shamayim, as the Zohar says the mashal [parable], it's like a shor [ox] that one places on him an ol [yoke] bis'chilah [initially], kedei [in order that] when he becomes bigger one shouldn't need a yoke. People think that kabolas ol malchus shamayim one must always have. No, kabolas ol malchus shamayim, in the sense that we're talking, is the first madreigah [level], as one always learns, yiras tis'eh [lower-level fear], whatever you want, yiras takol [fear of punishment], yiras tis'eh, it's the first step, it makes the person have such pe'ulos, such hanhagos [behaviors, practices], such natures.

Afterwards he doesn't need the kabolas ol anymore, that doesn't mean because he becomes a porek ol [one who throws off the yoke], right? But he becomes a person who understands himself what he does. He's going to do certain things differently, he's actually going to change. There are certain things, therefore it says in many Chassidic sefarim, it says in Sefer HaMa'amarim [Book of Discourses], in other sefarim, I've already seen it before, I've already forgotten where, and it says in Tanya [foundational work of Chabad Chasidus] also, that when a person is young, when he's a maskhil [beginner], he needs to be much more frum than an advanced person.

The Practical Application

When you're a beginner, you need to grab hold, you need to make many hagdarim [protective boundaries], much kabolas ol, because nothing remains. He won't put on his gartel, he won't know where davening begins. After he already knows, he doesn't always have to go with the gartel, because he already knows, he already knows himself what to daven, he doesn't have to arrive, he's already trained, like the cow that doesn't need to go with the yoke every time anymore, he already knows himself, he already understands himself, he's already yodei'a shoro vekoneihu [knows his ox and his master - a reference to Isaiah 1:3].

The Rambam's Mitzvah of Midos

That's the next step, and that's what happens naturally. Now, I want to tell you like this, this is what was a shiur for Rosh Chodesh Elul [the first day of the month of Elul], I want to tell you like this. They thought like this, and they learned, it comes

out that the Rambam [Maimonides] says that it's literally a mitzvah. It's very interesting, the Rambam made a very strange mitzvah. Because what's a strange mitzvah? The mitzvah of teshuvah [repentance] is also be'erech [approximately] such a mitzvah. I mean, it also says in Hilchos Sefer HaMada [Laws from the Book of Knowledge], the entire Sefer HaMada is more or less such sorts of mitzvos.

The Difference Between Ma'aseh and Midah

There are most mitzvos, as the Rambam himself said in perek beis [chapter 2], we're learning the Shemonah Perakim [Eight Chapters - Rambam's introduction to Pirkei Avos], we haven't looked in for a long time, but we're still learning it. We'll still come back to look in, we're still in the middle of perek daled [chapter 4], but we're still in the middle. The Rambam already said in perek beis that mitzvos are, most mitzvos are on pe'ulos, right? It's simple, when one learns Shulchan Aruch [Code of Jewish Law], one sees that all mitzvos be'etzem [essentially], all mitzvos stand in Shulchan Aruch, not all mitzvos stand in Rambam, right?

Student: Someone said that it seems that Hilchos Teshuvah is not nogei'a bizman hazeh [relevant in our time], because it says in Rambam, it doesn't say in Shulchan Aruch.

Instructor: But it says a bit in Shulchan Aruch Hilchos Teshuvah, and he said Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement] says a few se'ifim [sections] about Hilchos Teshuvah. But otherwise then it doesn't say. It seems that it's not incorporated. What? Yes yes, mashehu [something].

Al kol panim [in any case], there are mitzvos, most mitzvos are ma'asim [actions]. Remember, ma'asim is the lowest level thing in our structure of the soul, right? Ma'asim is a thing that you do.

How Long Can a Ma'aseh Be?

Now, I want to say such a distinction. Ma'asim is a thing that one does, how long can that be a ma'aseh? What's the longest ma'aseh that a person can do. Not too long, it will become too many ma'asim, I mean. A ma'aseh is a thing that you do in a moment, lay tefillin [phylacteries], you want to lay, you were yotzei the mitzvah, right? I mean that there's a shi'ur [measure], chatash [even] forty minutes. Okay, it's a long one, no problem, not like a day, you know what I mean? Not more than a day, do you agree?

Fasting Yom Kippur is a ma'aseh? It takes a whole day to do the ma'aseh, let's say, I don't know the lamdanim [Talmudic scholars] who have a chakirah [analytical inquiry] whether every minute is the mitzvah of fasting, yes? You understand what I'm asking? If someone fasted half a day, was he mekayeim [fulfilled] half a mitzvah or nothing? Ask some lamdan, he'll tell you such a chakirah about this.

Let's already say that there's a whole day ma'aseh, there's a ma'aseh of doing with a whole day, most mitzvos ma'asiyos, or aveiros [transgressions] ma'asiyos, the same thing, most mitzvos and aveiros that are bema'aseh [in action] don't take more than a minute to do, or at least to be yotzei the ikar [essence], right? You pick up a lulav [palm branch used on Sukkos], you were already yotzei, that's all, be'eiruv bilkichah [through the combination of taking], already, bedog bah yatza [through touching it one fulfills], already. A ma'aseh is a thing that takes a moment, because it's the lowest level thing, it's that you've done, you do it with your eivarim [limbs].

How Long Does It Take to Have a Midah?

Ah, how long does it take to have a midah? The Rambam says that there's a mitzvah to have good midos, not just a mitzvah to do good ma'asim, there's a mitzvah to have good midos, true? Mitzvas asei [positive commandment], vehalakhta bidrachav [and you shall walk in His ways]. Teshuvah. Teshuvah, okay, one must know what teshuvah is, it's like I said, it seems like it's a kind of midah, I don't know what exactly. Teshuvah is midos. Yes, yes, one must do teshuvah vadai [certainly], in perek zayin [chapter 7] one must do teshuvah, it's part of the ikar, it could be that the ikar teshuvah is on midos, I'll explain you why.

Yes, the Rambam says shema tomar [lest you say] that it's only, when someone says, there's a klal gadol [great principle], whenever someone comes and tells you something, but something else, what he truly means is the second thing, true? Klal gadol in people's speech, you know what I mean? Sometimes a person comes to talk, I want to talk about four things, okay, tell me already the last thing, because that's what you want to say.

So the same thing, the Rambam says in perek zayin that you shouldn't think that teshuvah is only from ma'asim, but it's also from midos, one could say that it's be'ikar [primarily] from midos, certainly one must do teshuvah from ma'asim, but from ma'asim there's nothing to do teshuvah, you stopped doing, good day, say vidui [confession], there's a question, one must say vidui, whatever, the whole ikar teshuvah, it's avodas hateshuvah [the work of repentance], but aliyas midos [elevation of character traits], it's certain that the mitzvah, from the Rambam of midos, from Hilchos Dei'os [Laws of Character Traits], is not to do certain things, right?

The Difference Between Midos and Ma'asim in Education

It's interesting, because by us, how one learns in cheder lema'aseh [in practice], one doesn't learn this. In school there's such a thing midos tovos [good character traits]. Midos tovos means helping another Jew usually, right? That's a thing that you do, right? In the girls' school there's midos week. That week one must go to the nursing home, because it's a mitzvah of chesed [kindness], it's a midos. But by us it's only a pe'ulah, right? But the Rambam learns, how the Rambam lays it down. What? Not to become in ka'as [anger]. And a midah is not a thing that one does, right? A midah is the thing that makes you do, right? It takes longer, right? It takes longer to have a midah.

The Time It Takes to Have a Midah

A midah is not a thing that a person has in a minute. You can see from how he conducts himself in a minute, perhaps in truth one can't even see. You need to look at how he conducts himself for a few weeks, at least, to see that he has the midah. Because a person does something once, okay, he was misgabeir [overcame], doesn't yet mean that he has the midah, right? To have the midah is a thing that takes time. In other words, it's a ma'aseh, it's a sipurei tzadikim [stories of righteous people] that one says in Yiddish, one must know the person. You can't hear a ma'aseh that he did once, you need to know that this is such a sort of person. That's a thing that takes more time, and that's hard for people to grasp, because people, most people, especially whoever thinks only halachically, his seichel [intellect] can only grasp one minute at a time, or so, let's say a whole day at a time, he can only understand that there's a pe'ulah, it's one pe'ulah, it's davar echad [one thing], it's one mitzvah, yes, one thing, and it takes a minute, or it

takes a day. Usually it really wants to take a minute, because that one can see, well, I did it. A bit longer, let's already say.

But a pe'ulah, a thing that a person does, a midah thing that a person does, not talking about a thing that happens to a person, it's a thing that a person does, but it takes half a year, for that people don't have the attention span, he says, to be able to see half a year at once.

Repentance and Character Traits: Forty Days as the Minimum Measure of a Middah

A Person Can Only Understand Short Actions

He can only understand that there is an action, it's one action, it's davar echad [one thing], it's one mitzvah [commandment], yes, one thing, and it takes a minute, or it takes a day. Usually he'll want it to really take a minute, because that you can see, I did it. A bit longer, let's say.

But an action, a thing that a person does, a middah thing that a person does – I'm not talking about something that happens to a person, a thing that a person does – but it takes half a year. Most people don't have the attention span, right, to be able to see half a year at once. It's a bit more abstract. One of the ways of saying things that are abstract is saying things that take a long time to understand or to have or to be or to see.

The Heavenly Court Judges the Whole Person – At the Time of Death

So, there are for example things that take a whole lifetime, right? And we learned, there is such a thing that is said, I mean the Rambam [Maimonides] says in Hilchos Teshuvah perek gimmel [Laws of Repentance, Chapter 3], that one judges a person on his whole life, whether he did more mitzvos than aveiros [sins], whether he is a tzaddik [righteous person] or a rasha [wicked person].

When is he judged? Bishas misah [at the time of death], right? Why at the time of death? Because if one wants to judge on the whole person at once, the beis din shel maalah [Heavenly court] judges on a person, it doesn't judge on maasim [actions]. It looks at the whole person at once, one must wait for him to die in order to be able to judge him. "Ve'ein HaKadosh Baruch Hu meyached shemo al hachayim" [And the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not attach His name to the living]. A living person, let's say he's now doing a good action, but I don't yet know if he's a good adam [person], I don't know if he's a good person.

"Is There Such a Thing as a Person?" – The Deeper Perspective

Now, is there such a thing as a person? A person who can't see a long time at once, he says there's no such thing as a person. There's a day, a day, a day, maybe a week, I don't know, a person? I've never seen such a thing as a person, I've seen a person in the minute.

But one who understands more deeply, he understands that there is such a thing as a person. The Almighty can understand even humanity, "ki elef shanim be'einecha ke'yom eshmol ki yaavor" [for a thousand years in Your eyes are like yesterday that has passed – Psalms 90:4], He can look at everything at once. With this one can do teshuvah [repentance]. This is the continuation of the lecture, I don't have the koach [strength].

A Middah is a Mitzvah in Continuity

My point is, it turns out that a middah [character trait] is such a kind of thing that takes time to have. It's a mitzvah in hemshachos [continuity]. It's a funny kind of mitzvah in this sense. The Rambam says clearly that it's a mitzvah to have middos tovos [good character traits].

Questions and Answers: Is a Middah a Mitzvah Every Minute?

Other voice: So have I sinned every minute?

First voice: No, every minute you're doing every minute extra. It's one big mitzvah for the whole thing.

Other voice: So have I sinned every minute.

First voice: Well, you can say every minute, yes, exactly in every minute. No, the mitzvah is the actions when one works on it.

Other voice: A mitzvah is a mitzvah.

First voice: No, the mitzvah doesn't have to be actions. The Rambam says, a mitzvah doesn't have to be actions or feelings, or in the chelek hamis'orer [the part that is aroused – the emotional/impulsive side] there can be mitzvos, says the Rambam meforash [explicitly].

If I have rachmanus [compassion] on a person, you have bechirah [free will] in this. The tnai [condition] is, gradually you become a baal rachamim [one who has compassion], and to be a baal rachamim is a mitzvah, mitzvah d'Oraisa [Biblical commandment], "lihiyos rachaman" [to be compassionate].

No, they already spoke about this that middos and compassion doesn't mean to feel for, it means to do. Okay, but to be a thing that does, whatever. To be a thing that does when he feels for the other, the feeling for is just one small feel. But that's another thing, another conversation.

The point is, to have, to be such a kind of person that when he hears a tzarah [trouble, suffering] he does, is a mitzvah. That itself is the mitzvah. That is the mitzvah of "mah hu rachum af atah rachum" [as He is compassionate, so too should you be compassionate].

The Measure of a Middah: Forty Days

How long does it take to do such a mitzvah? Both. To be such a kind of person that he does. I say it's both definitions, not something that can be done in a minute. Because when you do it in a minute, you have an action, you don't have a middah. A middah can only be had over a long time.

Yes, he has it the whole time, but also, I don't know because he has it the whole time, because he has it, when you say the whole time, it lives, I need to explain this much deeper and more physically, it lives in a tekufas zman [period of time] that is longer, in a whole part of a life story of a person, but about this I thought like this, how long do I mean it the minimum, approximately a shiur [measure] of a middah?

So I say, there is a thing that is a whole life, I know... No, a chodesh [month] is not enough. It's forty days, how do I know? It's written explicitly in Tzetl Katan [The Small Note – a work by Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk]. I think it's so anyway, I heard from Yudel Melber who said that there's research that says this. I don't know.

Yes, no, therefore let me see why. Yes, certainly, certainly means a minimum, it's not major. Rebbe Meile [Rabbi Elimelech], I don't mean major. No, first of all, one doesn't break middos, one learns out middos. The Rebbe Meile indeed says that one breaks, but he certainly doesn't mean break, he means learn out.

Why Specifically Forty Days? Proofs from the Torah

And for forty days, what he says forty days, I thought, in the Torah there is a number forty days. Forty days he didn't think up himself, a number of this appears in the Torah many times on certain things. You'll see, on what does forty days appear in the Torah? On a thing that isn't in one minute.

The mabul [flood] took forty days, or one of the periods of the flood. Forty days and forty nights. It always says, almost always it says forty days, it says forty nights. Arbaim yom ve'arbaim lailah [forty days and forty nights].

I don't know a month, there is a musag [concept] of forty days. It indeed takes forty days, but it's a concept. Forty days means, Moshe Rabbeinu [Moses our teacher] learned the Torah forty days and forty and about this we have Elul [the month of Elul] and so on.

What is forty days? Why is the number forty days? Why is it thirty-five days or six hundred days? I mean, forty days, it has a meaning. All numbers in the Torah have a meaning. The meaning of forty days is the minimum period of saying about a person that he is such a kind of person.

It's Also Practical

It's also practical. I mean, what Rebbe R' Elimelech says, it's also true. In other words, I'll tell you like this: if you see a person for two weeks he's a masmid [one who studies constantly]. Okay, two weeks he's a masmid. Three weeks, forty days he's a masmid, he's a masmid. Over time, it will remain forever. I don't know, he already has the middah. 40 days is the number.

How did I accept it? So it says, Rebbe Meilech accepted it. Well, it makes a lot of sense. Again, one would ask why 40 and not 35? It's certainly more than a month. A month is still like, okay, this month he did so. I am mekabel al atzmi [accept upon myself] a month. A month is too small an amount. A month is only four weeks. This month he did so.

40 days is already more than a month. It's already a whole 40 days. It's already a bit of a part of his life. Also the tahoras hayoledes [purity of the woman who gave birth] is 40 days. 40 days means like a period of time of life. It's a life storm.

Yes yes, so it has to do with it. Certainly, because one must teach him also. Malkus [lashes] is chinuch [education], chanoch lana'ar [educate the youth], chosech shivto [he who withholds his rod], one must give him 40 lashes.

The Idea of Time Periods

So, the idea, I'm telling you an idea, when I say the numbers, seven days is a week. What is if it takes a bit more? A month is 30 days, sometimes it's 29 and 31 days. It's the idea of... No, I mean practically it takes 40 days. No, I'm not making any mistakes. Okay? I make mistakes, but not on 40 days. Yes, yes.

I mean that one is a bit different. That one is more like kevius [fixedness] of a thing that he does, but it's one such kind of person for 40 days. So I think, I don't know.

Why Not 30 Days?

There are many things that halachos [laws] are shloshim yom [thirty days], but I mean for other business. I have a sevara [logical argument] for that, not for that. There is a sevara why shloshim yom is the normal, because it's the easiest period of time that one can see, like a regular halva'ah [loan] thirty days, because a week you need to watch the lights. A Jew who keeps Shabbos [the Sabbath] knows that it's a week, but 30 days is a very obvious thing, the levanah [moon] comes back. From this most things are 30 days.

But about this it's not, for a person to become a person is not enough, because for us it's only one. This is that it must be more than a whole moon, more than a month. So it argues. You see that Rabbi Elimelech thought so, and I will find more ra'ayos [proofs].

Teshuvah Requires Forty Days

Well, he says exactly that, he says that it takes 40 days to have a middah, because that, of course, by the way it's yes true, one doesn't mean that it will remain forever, first of all, one doesn't need to be misgaber [overcome], one needs to learn, but I mean that it's yes true, and I heard from people that even here one can see that it works, the sense that you do something for 40 days, already begins, certainly, it's only enough, you have your whole life, but it already begins to be such a kind of thing that is a middah, not just an action.

About this there is such a thing that one must do teshuvah for forty days, you understand? Yonah [the prophet Jonah] said that one must do teshuvah for forty days, in Sefer Yonah [the Book of Jonah]. Yonah warned him in this chiddush [novel idea] that he did teshuvah for forty days.

And I mean that this is about this, have you ever thought about this? There are many mitzvos in the Torah, right? There are many middos tovos, ahavah [love], yirah [fear], I know what. Right? Not one of these mitzvos has a period, a whole week, or a whole ten days, or a whole forty days in the year, which is a minhag [custom] to do the mitzvah, except for teshuvah.

Miderabanan [from the Rabbis] is ten days, and from the custom, already a very old custom, from zman haGeonim [the time of the Geonim], from the Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer [Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer], forty days. Forty days is the minimum to do teshuvah.

If one does teshuvah less than forty days, one has not yet done teshuvah. One has only done teshuvah bema'aseh [in actions], not bemiddos [in character traits]. But the Rambam says that ikar teshuvah [the essence of teshuvah] is in middos. In middos takes forty days. This is my Torah.

Well, there's certainly a custom. I mean that... Okay, one can speak more and more about this. But anyway, this is my drashah [sermon]. From this one must do teshuvah for forty days, and that's it.