



Published on [www.bilvavi.net](http://www.bilvavi.net)

[Home](#) > Droshos - Mussar and/or Chassidus

---

## Droshos - Mussar and/or Chassidus

### ***Yiras Hashem vs. Ahavas Hashem***

*Rosh HaShanah* is both a day of *Yiras Hashem* and *Ahavas Hashem*. It is a day of *Yiras Hashem* because it is the *Yom HaDin*, but it is also a day of *Ahavas Hashem* - as it is written, "Seek Hashem where He is found."

It is well-known that *mussar sefarim* deal mainly with *Yiras Hashem*, while the teachings of Chassidim deal with *Ahavas Hashem*, with the closeness to Hashem that lays in something. Of course, it is not possible to have one without the other. We cannot have *Yiras Hashem* without *Ahavas Hashem*, nor can we have *Ahavas Hashem* without *Yiras Hashem*. So what is *mussar*, and what is *Chassidus*?

It is written, "*Sur mera (Stay away from evil), v'aseh tov (And do good)*". *Mussar* focuses on avoiding evil. *Chassidus*, though, focuses on how we can come to the good. "*Stay away from evil*" personifies *Mussar*. *Chassidus*, though, personifies what is written, "*Do good.*"

*Mussar* focuses on divesting ourselves from evil, while *Chassidus* focuses on actually arriving at the good that we are striving for.

With *Chassidus*, a person focuses on "doing good" (focusing on one's closeness to Hashem), and that itself removes a person from evil. The *Baal Shem Tov* said that although "*Stay away from evil*" seems to come before "*do good,*" really, a person has to remove evil by doing good.

For example, let's say a person has *gaavah* (haughtiness). How does he work on this bad *middah* (or any bad *middah*)? With *Mussar*, a person focuses on how bad it is to be haughty. But with *Chassidus*, a person is able to remove his haughtiness by thinking about how it distances him from being close to Hashem.

### ***Yiras HaOnesh Vs. Yiras HaRomemus***

On *Yom HaDin*, there are two kinds of *yirah*: *yiras haonesh* (fear of punishment) and *yiras haromemus* (fear of Hashem's greatness). The first kind of fear is possible even from a human king, but the second kind of *yirah* is only possible toward Hashem. On *Rosh HaShanah*, the kind of *yirah* to have - the way of *Chassidus* - is to have *yiras haromememus*, fear of Hashem's greatness; that *Yom HaDin* is not simply to fear punishment, but to be afraid of being distanced from closeness to Hashem. With *Chassidus*, the person isn't being afraid of the judgment of *Yom HaDin*, but of the fear of not being close to Hashem.

The closeness to Hashem on *Rosh HaShanah* that everyone can grasp is that Hashem exists. All of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* are days of closeness to Hashem, but *Rosh HaShanah* is the climax of this closeness – because now, a person is standing before the King in judgment; not because the person is afraid of the judgment, but because a person feels such a closeness to Hashem during judgment.

The Arizal said that when a person cries suddenly on *Rosh HaShanah* and he doesn't know why, it is a sign that he is being judged at that time. What does this mean? Does it mean that he is scared of being judged, or does it mean that he is having *yiras haromemus* – being afraid of distanced from closeness to Hashem?

When a person cries suddenly feels himself crying on *Rosh HaShanah*, it is a fear of not being close to Hashem. This is the way of *Chassidus* – it is not a fear of punishment, but a fear of being distanced from the King. It is a *yiras haromemus*.

But the way of *Mussar* is different. *Mussar* is *yiras haonesh* – that the more a person thinks about judgment, the more afraid he grows of the punishment, because he is aware of the reality of sin.

### ***Avodah Vs. Emunah***

These are two general, root ways to serve Hashem – *Mussar* and *Chassidus*. On *Rosh HaShanah*, these two ways of *Avodas Hashem* take on an even more detailed meaning. Let us explain the difference between these two ways.

With *Mussar*, a person sees himself on this world, and he wants to become connected to Hashem in Heaven. He has things which are holding him back, and he needs to remove these obstacles to get there. *Chassidus*, however, is a different viewpoint: a person comes from above, from Heaven – but he has something dividing him from Hashem. With *Chassidus*, the person is already connected to Heaven – he only needs to stay away from things that will take away his connection.

With *Chassidus*, a person doesn't have to come up with a new relationship to Hashem – all he has to do is protect it, by avoiding sin. It's like two friends who are loyal to each other – it's not that they have to renew their friendship; they just have to protect their friendship by not betraying each other. But the view of *Mussar* is to renew the friendship when it gets shaky.

The depth behind these two ways is that *Mussar* is based on *Avodah*, and *Chassidus* is based on *Emunah*. We will explain this.

The view of *Chassidus* is that there is already a relationship with Hashem, but the person has to reveal it more. Of course, even with *Chassidus* a person has to know that *Avodah* has to come before *Emunah* -- but the person knows that he is already connected to Hashem, and he merely has to protect this relationship and reveal it more.

But the view of *Mussar* is that a person isn't yet close to Hashem, so he has to acquire a relationship with Hashem by working to get there. He has to build this relationship. *Mussar* focuses on the "reality" – that he has many sins and shortcomings which he must remove, in order to build up a closeness to Hashem.

### ***The Dangers in Each Way***

Each way has its dangers. The danger in *Chassidus* is that a person might come to imagine that he's already at a high level, and the danger with *Mussar* is that he can lose his aspirations to go higher, since he deals with "reality."

## ***The Goal Is Always The Same***

So *Mussar* and *Chassidus* have the same goal: to reach closeness to Hashem. The goal is always the same, but the only difference is how to begin: With *Mussar*, a person must feel that he isn't yet close to Hashem and he must build up a relationship with Him, and with *Chassidus*, a person already feels close to Hashem, but he must reveal it more and protect it.

The *Baal Shem Tov* was *niftar* on Shavuot, while the *Vilna Gaon* was *niftar* on Sukkos. There were those who asked that it should've been the other way around: the *Baal Shem Tov*, who fought for *Ahavas Hashem*, should have been *niftar* on Sukkos, which is the happiest time of the year – and the *Vilna Gaon*, who fought against *Chassidus*, should have died on Shavuot, the time of mainly learning Torah! But the answer to this is a deep point: both of them had both *Yiras Hashem* and *Ahavas Hashem*! The *Baal Shem Tov* and the *Vilna Gaon* only differed in where a person should **start** in his *Avodas Hashem*.

The difference between *Mussar* and *Chassidus* is not about **what** to do in *Avodas Hashem*. It is only a question of where to **start** with and **how** to get there.

## ***Body Viewpoint Vs. Soul Viewpoint***

The Maharal says that when a person sins, it is only *mikreh* – a “coincidence”. What this means is that a person is a soul, but he is covered with a body. When a person sins, the body of the person has become dirtied; with sin, the person's soul is covered in dirty garments, but the soul itself always remains pure.

With the viewpoint of *Mussar*, the person **is** his free will. When a person chooses to sin, he has become dirtied – his **essence** has become dirtied and he must fix himself. But *Chassidus* has the viewpoint of the soul – that when a person sins, his soul still remains pure; only his power of free will has become damaged, and he must fix this, but the person himself still remains pure even after sin.

## ***Closeness Vs. Fear***

On *Rosh HaShanah* by davening, we say, “*Hayom haras olam, hayom yaamid bamishpat*” – “*Today is the birth of the world, today is the day we stand in judgment.*” These are two different aspects of *Rosh HaShanah* to focus on.

*Chassidus* focuses on *Hayom haras olam* – the fact that *Rosh HaShanah* is the birth of the world, and that Hashem is nearby and we must be afraid of being distanced from our closeness with Him. *Mussar* focuses on *Hayom yaamid bamishpat* – the judgment itself, fear of actual punishment for the reality of our sins.

## ***Each person has his own way***

It is not an issue of which way is more truthful. Each person must serve Hashem according to the way he is supposed to, to serve Hashem from his *shoresh haneshamah* – the root of his soul.

Hashem should merit all of us that each person should find the way that is suitable to his *shoresh haneshamah*, so that each of us can reach the *Yom HaDin* the way we are supposed to – each to his own.

---

**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/droshos-mussar-andor-chassidus>