



## SEEKING SPECIFIC HONOR

### 1. Fire-of-Fire: Higher Honor

With *siyata d'shmaya*, we continue here to discuss honor, which stems from the element of fire. In this chapter, we are up to discussing the particular kind of honor which stems from **earth-of-fire-of-fire**.

Fire rises higher, and “**fire**”-of-fire refers to a **yearning to keep going higher**.

With regards to honor, it will manifest as a **desire to experience more and more honor**.

However, it is not simply a desire to receive more honor, in quantity – rather, it is a desire to keep experiencing a **higher quality kind of honor**. This is a desire in the soul to experience higher kinds of honor, as opposed to a person who simply wants to be honored on all fronts. [Fire-of-fire branches out into earth, water, wind, and fire. In this chapter we will discuss the “earth” of fire-of-fire, in relation to honor].

### 2. Earth-of-Fire-of-Fire: A Desire To Be Honored In A Particular Manner

“**Earth**”-of-fire-of-fire is when a person has **certain boundaries of how he wants to be honored, at the level that he wants it to be**. He will want more of that honor, but only if it is the kind of honor he wants.

For example, there are people who wish for others to honor them, but they will only want to receive certain, specific kinds of honor. They don't necessarily want to be honored by prestigious individuals - they just want honor in the way they want it. They have their limits of how much they want to receive honor. They will want to receive more and more of the kind of honor that they want to receive, and they will not just run after any honor, but only the “higher” kind of honor that they desire. That is the boundary of how far they will go to get honor, and they stop there. But there is also a deeper understanding of this.

### 3. Breaking Boundaries – The Essence of Honor

Honor is a force that breaks boundaries [see Chapter 7], for it is a revelation of the upper realms within the lower realms, and therefore honor by its very essence is a trait that breaks boundaries. **Fire-of-fire** is when a person wants to go higher and higher, and in doing so, he breaks boundaries. Fire's nature of **constant ascension is the root of the trait of conceit (*gaavah*)**, whereas **fire's aspect of breaking boundaries is the root of the trait of honor (*kavod*)**. The idea of breaking boundaries is therefore not a branch of being conceited, but an aspect of pursuing honor.

Thus, **fire-of-fire**, the nature to break boundaries, is at the very essence of honor. **Earth-of-fire-of-fire** provides a boundary for this fire-of-fire and limits it - but this will not stop the essence of **fire-of-fire** which seeks to break boundaries. (In the coming chapters, when we will discuss the “wind” and “fire” aspects within fire-of-fire, we will learn about an unbridled kind of fire-of-fire, which has no “earth” to stabilize it and place limits on it.)

With **earth-of-fire-of-fire** in particular, we can learn much about the nature of all the *middos* (character traits) and how the *middos* cross their proper boundaries [which is what we recognize as “bad *middos*”]. The idea of breaking boundaries is found in the very idea of pursuing honor – in particular, in honor that stems from **fire-of-fire**. In “earth”-of-fire-of-fire, the fire-of-fire is restrained on some level by an aspect of “earth”, but this will not stop the fire-of-fire from seeking to break past all bounds.

### 4. The Deep Roots of Bad Middos

Based upon the above, let's proceed to understand the following. Every person has his bad *middos*, which stay with him throughout his life. What is the root of bad *middos*?

There are several parts to this matter.

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**4a) The “Kings of Edom”** - The earliest root of bad *middos* is depicted in the words of a *Midrash* about the “kings of Edom” who ruled before the creation of this world. These “kings of Edom” are the roots of all evil, as explained in *sefarim hakedoshim*.

When Hashem had the first thought to create the Jewish people before creating the world, the bad *middos* rooted in the kings of Edom were already in place, and every Jew’s soul received some of these bad *middos* differently. Part of a person’s self-work is to uproot the bad *middos* that have become part of his soul makeup [which will be referred to here as the negative character traits that have become of one’s “soul root”], which came from the “kings of Edom” that preceded Creation, and for this reason, each person has a unique self-work when it comes to his *middos*.

**4b) The Eitz HaDaas** - In addition to this factor, every soul was once part of Adam’s soul, and once Adam sinned by eating of the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil) which was a mixture of good and evil, the bad *middos* in every soul expanded, becoming an even more complex presence in the soul.

For this reason, every soul that is reincarnated throughout several lifetimes contains these two roots of bad *middos*: the bad *middos* that it inherited since before creation, and the evil which latched onto it ever since the sin of Adam.

**4c) Previous Lifetimes** - In addition to the above two factors, for every lifetime that the soul goes through on this world, it has accumulated more and more of this evil, until its current lifetime today.

Thus, there are three general parts to the bad *middos* found in every soul. There is the evil it inherited from a point that was before Creation, the evil it inherited from the sin of Adam when he ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, and all of the evil that has piled up from each of the lifetimes that the soul has gone through.

## 5. Fire-of-Fire: The Power To Change Middos

We can now reflect about the following. Each person’s soul has a certain “boundary” placed on his particular bad *middos*, at their root. However, a person can either enlarge or lessen

this “boundary” – he can change it.

Although these are two opposite abilities, they are both rooted in the same idea: the fact that a bad *middah* can be changed. What is the root force that can change a *middah*? It is essentially the particular kind of honor which stems from **fire-of-fire**, which breaks bounds.

The word “*middos*” is from the word *medidah*, “measurement”, because the *middos* are each limited and within certain boundaries. What is the idea of breaking those boundaries?

One way how the boundaries of the *middos* are broken is through the power of “*medameh*”, the imagination, which is also related to the word “*middah*”. The *medameh*-imagination can expand the bounds of a *middah*, and that is one way of how the bounds of a *middah* are crossed. Another force which can break bounds stems from within the *middos* themselves – the trait of honor; in particular, honor that stems from fire-of-fire.

*Medameh*-imagination does not stem from within the *middos*, whereas honor (fire-of-fire) does, and it is a force that breaks the boundaries of the *middos* from within the *middos* themselves.

In honor, we can see how there is a character trait that can break its own bounds. It can ‘break’ the bounds of a character trait either through **enlarging** the boundary placed upon one’s *middos*, or it can ‘break’ the boundary of the character trait by **lessening** the boundary placed upon that particular character trait.

## 6. Using “Fire-of-Fire” – The Power To Change Limitations – As A Way To Fix Our Middos

Based upon the above, we can now proceed to understand the following.

The root of our task to improve our *middos* is not to work with the *middos* directly. This is because *middos* are not just *middos* per se. Rather, Hashem has made it that *middos* can be changed, and it is honor/fire-of-fire which is the root of this change. Thus, the root of working on our *middos* is the power we are describing here: fire-of-fire, which can change *middos*.

TO BE CONTINUED IY”H

FROM ORIGINAL HEBREW SHIUR RECENTLY IN BEIT SHEMESH 2017

דע און מידותיך הדרגה מעשית אש נבד 013  
עפר דאש דאש פריצת המידות ותיקון

*Summary: In the previous two chapters we have seen the first part of our practical work in recognizing our personal soul, which is by becoming familiar with the soul's various faculties. This comprised two parts: Writing a book about yourself, and skimming through the book at varying intervals so that we gain awareness of what we've written down about ourselves, keeping progress on our internal world.*

*In this chapter we will explain, with Hashem's help, the next two parts of this work: Listing our soul's abilities (in order of strongest to weakest), and then identifying our strongest ability. We can only progress to these stages if we have done the work of the first stage – writing the book about ourselves and periodically skimming through it. This might take a lifetime! But we cannot progress to the next stages before we have done the first part. If we don't have intellectual and emotional recognition of our souls, our self-recognition will only be superficial, and sometimes it even be off-mark and mistaken. If we're mistaken about our personal soul, we cannot know which of our abilities are stronger or weaker and we won't be able to find our strongest ability.*

If a person has already become clear about many abilities of the soul, there is a good chance that he will be able to identify his strongest point. But if a person is only clear about some of them, it is very possible that he won't mark down his strongest point, because his list will be very limited. It is not likely that he will find his strongest point when he is only aware of a few abilities of his soul. Therefore, the sensible approach is to work at the first stage (the previous chapter) for some time, and afterwards, when we are willing<sup>1</sup>, we can then progress to the next stage, of identifying our abilities and listing them in order of strongest to weakest, with the goal of identifying our strongest ability (along with keeping our progress in the book we are writing about ourselves, and skimming through it occasionally to review it).<sup>2</sup>

## LISTING YOUR CAPABILITIES AND IDENTIFYING YOUR STRONGEST POINT

Before we explain the work of listing your capabilities and identifying your strongest power, first we must explain an important point. Although these will be two different stages, in actuality they are really two parts that comprise one stage. It's not that you first have to list all your capabilities

<sup>1</sup> That is, if we put in the effort of trying to become clearer about many different abilities of our soul (preferably, 20 or 30 of them) as much as we were able to.

<sup>2</sup> If we have gotten to point and there are still any abilities we have identified in ourselves but which we did not write about them in Part One of our personal notebook, it is very recommended that we should do so now, and only after that should we progress to the current stage.

in order of their dominance, and then find your strongest point after that - rather, these two stages both come at the same time. **We find our strongest ability as we are in the midst of listing our capabilities.**

To be able to list our capabilities in order of strongest to weakest, we first need to figure out what our strongest ability is, what our second-to-strongest ability is, etc. But we need to have the awareness that our work here essentially contains two parts – knowing our **capabilities**, and knowing our **strongest point**. This is because the way we need to relate to our strongest ability must be very different than the way we relate to the rest of our abilities. **Our strongest point is the root of our soul<sup>3</sup>**, and through it we can build our inner world. In contrast, the rest of our soul's abilities are meant to “serve” our strongest ability and help it be realized.

Thus, in actuality we will be doing one kind of work here – to list our capabilities in order of strongest to weakest. But we should be aware that there is really another stage we are trying to get to within this work, and it is the goal: **To be able to identify our strongest power.**

**THE NECESSITY TO LIST OUR CAPABILITIES IN ORDER OF DOMINANCE** Writing our personal notebook and perusing it every so often is part of the way of recognizing our personal soul, but our work doesn't finish with this. There is still much more room for us to progress in order to reach clear self-recognition and live in an internal world.

Clarity about our soul [namely, our rich emotional world inside us] makes it possible for us to understand things about ourselves and to connect properly to our different parts. After we are recognizing our soul-capabilities – both being intellectually and emotionally aware of them – the next step is to **list them in order of their dominance**, thereby creating a certain **clarity and order** to them. Through this, we can reach a clear recognition of our personal soul.

Just as we can already see results from merely writing and perusing our personal notebook way before we finish it, so can we see results from merely listing our soul-capabilities in order of their dominance, even before we get to the end [of this learning process]. With each step that we implement, we can reach greater subtlety and depth, and in turn, we will become clearer about our personal soul.

<sup>3</sup> On some level, our strongest ability is on the level of Yechidah within the Nefesh (the point of your unique individuality).

# FINDING YOUR QUALITIES

## SELF-RECOGNITION & SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Furthermore, by listing our soul-capabilities in order of their dominance, there will be an increase in our ability to become **connected** to those abilities in us, and to actualize them from their dormant state, using them as needed. Seeing our inner “world” with “clarity” is the key of entry for us. Through this, the gains and purposes of recognizing our personal soul<sup>4</sup> become more realistic to attain.

Besides for this, though, there is also a great necessity to **recognize our strongest ability**. We must **recognize** it well and **work with it**.<sup>5</sup> For this, we need to list all of our different soul-capabilities, in order of their dominance.

**YOUR PERSONAL NOTEBOOK: PART TWO** In the previous two chapters, we have been explaining how to keep a notebook about ourselves – in which we divide the notebook according to alphabetical topics, and writing down our intellectual definitions and our feelings about each faculty of the soul that we choose to learn about (and then perusing our notes every so often).

That was all “Part One” of our personal notebook. **Now we will begin to write Part Two of our notebook. This part will be about listing our different capabilities, in order of their dominance – first listing the stronger capabilities and then the weaker capabilities.** The best time to do write this is after we have perused our notebook. First we need to set aside time to peruse Part One of our notebook, and after we have done so, we should then add on to that some additional time to write down our different abilities, listing them in order of strongest to weakest.<sup>6</sup>

To review so far the steps that we need to set aside time for: (1) Set aside time to write in your notebook, for example by writing in it for a half-hour, for once a day (pick which time of the day will work for you). (2) Set aside time when you can skim through the notebook. This can be done once a month (for a half-hour), or few a few days as needed, to review through the entire notebook. (3) After skimming through and reviewing the notes, write down your different capabilities, in order of strongest to weakest.

<sup>4</sup> These goals were explained in Chapter 1

<sup>5</sup> The work is being explained at length here in chapters 11-14.

<sup>6</sup> There is no need to do both steps on the same day, because it's possible that each step can take a few days (if we are doing it in 30-minute increments a day as recommended). In any case, this stage of listing our abilities in order of their dominance should be done relatively close to reviewing our notebook, so that one's mind is still fresh with the conclusions and impressions he has picked up on, as a resulting from reading through the notebook.

### THE PROCESS OF LEARNING ABOUT OURSELVES: EACH STEP IS IMPORTANT-

When we list our capabilities, creating an organized “map” of ourselves, we can then see a clear picture even during the very first steps of this process.

One should not think that he or she will be able to immediately list their abilities in order of their dominance with such precision. At the initial step of listing our abilities, we usually aren't clear enough about what our abilities are. We therefore should not assume that any of the conclusions that we have reached about ourselves is 100% accurate. It is obvious that a person can think a certain way and later change his perspective completely about something, and certainly when it comes to our soul-capabilities, we will first have a certain understanding and after some time we may change our mind about it.

For example, when one is younger, he might think that if a person is usually yelling and screaming at others, and people are afraid of him, he thinks that this person must have a very strong personality. After all, people are afraid of the person. When one gets older and matures, he realizes that a person who is usually yelling and screaming is most likely feeling insecure and unable to deal with life, whereas the quieter and calmer person who doesn't yell at others is the one with the truly strong personality (and he comes to realize the teaching of Chazal that “Those who are insulted and don't insult back, those who hear their disgrace and don't respond...of them it says *“And His beloved ones are like the sun going out in its zenith.”*)

By the same token, a person might think that he has already succeeded in identifying his strongest ability, but after thinking it through again, he discovers that really he was very good at something only because there was some underlying motivation that was pushing him to perform. For example, a person might think that his strongest ability is *zerizus* - to get things done quickly and not push things off. But after some time, he discovers that really he's acting out of a fear that he might lost out on something. He was not in fact being motivated by *zerizus*, instead, he was being motivated by fear. And therefore, his fear is stronger than his ability of *zerizus*.

**NEXT WEEK CONTINUING: FINDING YOUR QUALITIES**