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## Tefillah - 011 Giving Myself Up For Hashem's Will

### ***Each Of Us Has A Different Middah From The Avos***

In the beginning of the first blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, we say **אלוקי אברהם, ואלוקי יצחק, ואלוקי יעקב** – that Hashem is the G-d of our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov.

Each of our *Avos* (forefathers) possessed a special quality. Avraham was the epitome of the trait of *chessed* \ kindness, which is also known as *ahavah* \ love. Yitzchok personified *gevurah* \ strength, which is also known as *yirah* \ restraint. Yaakov personified *rachamim* \ compassion.

We received these good traits as an inheritance from each of the *Avos*. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, we also received traits from the *Imahos*, and this is hinted to when we say **אלוקי אבותינו**.

We all possess the traits of our *Avos* and *Imahos*, but each person tends to be drawn towards a particular *middah* more than the other *middos*. There are people who are more drawn towards *chessed*, the *middah* of Avraham Avinu. Others excel more in the area of *dikduk hadin* (being careful with *Halachah*), the trait of *yirah*. Others are drawn towards taking pity on Creation, which is Yaakov's *middah* of *rachamim*.

When we only have a superficial perspective towards things – the perspective from our body's viewpoint – then we disdain the *middah* which we aren't drawn towards. For example, if someone is very drawn towards *chessed*, he will tend to look down on others who are very exacting when it comes to keeping *Halacha*; he sees *chessed* as the most important thing in the world, and that *dikduk hadin* shouldn't be as important. He looks at someone who is drawn towards *dikduk hadin* as someone who lacks love, due to the emphasis on strictness over love that the person with *dikduk hadin* is placing.

When a person disdains people who are drawn towards *middos* that are opposite his personality, he considers those other people to be missing the point of life.

Haman complained to Achashveirosh that “there is a nation which is spread out and apart from the nations”, that we do things differently than the other nations. We are all directed towards the same goal, following the *Shulchan Aruch*. Yet, a person has a nature to disdain others who are not like his personality and to give them the bad eye, even though we are all keeping the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Chazal say that the *Avos* all looked similar. But that was only physically. Spiritually, the *Avos* were all different from each other. They had different soul roots, and in fact, the *avodah* of Yitzchok Avinu,

which is *yirah*, was a completely different perspective on things than the *avodah* of his father, Avraham Avinu, who personified *ahavah*. We have in ourselves the *middos* of all our Avos, so we are able to harmonize them together.

Each of the *middos* which the Avos personified was only a tool to a greater end. For example, the *middah* of *ahavah* which Avraham had – “*Avraham is My beloved*” – existed for a greater goal, which is: to use love for Hashem as a way to become attached with Hashem. The purpose of *yirah* was also not a purpose unto itself, but as a way to reach Hashem.

Haman saw us a nation that is apart from the other nations, but he made a mistake. He didn't see how all that we do is really to be united in one goal, which is to come close to Hashem.

### ***Our Ability To Have Mesirus Nefesh***

Although each of the Avos personified a different quality, there was one trait which they all possessed: the ability of *mesirus nefesh*, to be self-sacrificing.

Avraham Avinu once had to give up his own life and be thrown into a fire. Later on in his life, he was tested with even greater *mesirus nefesh*, that he has to kill his son. Yitzchok Avinu as well was prepared to give up his life for Hashem.

After Avraham passed the test with the *Akeidah*, Hashem said, “*Now I know that you fear G-d.*” Avraham Avinu is praised for his “fear” of Hashem; this needs explanation, because Avraham personifies *ahavah*, not *yirah*. But the answer is, the *middah* of *ahavah* that Avraham Avinu had was not just to have *ahavas Hashem*. It led to a greater purpose, which was to have *yiras Hashem* – to fear Hashem. His *ahavah* was like a garment over his *yirah*. It was all because he understood that his life was a life of *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem.

Through the ability of *mesirus nefesh*, we reveal how all qualities are but a ‘garment’ of a greater goal.

Indeed, all people are different; Chazal say, “Just as all faces are not equal, so are all opinions not equal.” But we all have a common denominator – we all possess the ability of *mesirus nefesh*.

Avraham Avinu had to exercise *mesirus nefesh* twice in his life – once with his body, when he was willing to get thrown into the fiery furnace, and once again with his *middos*, in which he was tested to overcome his love for his son in order to fear Hashem. We are not faced with the test of *mesirus nefesh* on our bodies; only Rabbi Akiva awaited the day in his life in which he can get killed *al kiddush Hashem*. Most of us cannot be on this level. But each day, we face a test of *mesirus nefesh*: with our *middos*. Our *middos* are always being tested.

Each of us possesses a certain outstanding quality. As we know, there are four elements in our soul – earth, water, wind and fire. Each of these elements are the roots of our various *middos* [earth is the root of sadness and laziness; water is the root of desires and jealousy; wind is the root of forbidden speech, flattery, lying, and mockery; fire is the root of conceit, anger, seeking control, seeking honor and bearing grudges]. Each of us possesses one element that is particularly dominant over the other, so each of us excels in certain *middos* more than in other *middos*, as well as being weaker when it comes to certain *middos*.

But if we have *mesirus nefesh*, we can **give up our very will** to be drawn towards certain *middos* that we are naturally drawn towards, and we can then understand that our good *middos* serve a greater goal. Through uncovering our ability of *mesirus nefesh*, we can realize that we must ultimately do things because it is the will of Hashem, whether we are drawn towards doing it or not.

We can give up our very *ratzon* to Hashem, and surrender ourselves to Hashem's Will.

When we have *mesirus nefesh* to do Hashem's will - whether we want to do it or not - it's not because we should want to do this, but rather, because **Hashem** wants us to do it - regardless of whether "I want" to do it or not. (If Hashem doesn't want something to be done, then there is no concept of having *mesirus nefesh* for it).

The elementary level of this concept is to give up our desires that are meaningless, but the concept of *mesirus nefesh* applies as well to even our spiritual desires. Even our spiritual desires we have to be prepared to give up, if Hashem would want us to do so.

To illustrate the concept, there are people who act very spiritual, but they act brazenly with all their spiritual desires, and Hashem does not desire their actions at all. These "spiritual" hotheads are not interested in doing the *ratzon Hashem* - they are only interested in doing their own *ratzon*...

The secret in all our *Avodas Hashem* is for us to realize that all our *middos* are only a tool to be used for what Hashem wants from us. If Hashem doesn't want us to use a certain *middah*, that is what we must be prepared for. We must be prepared to give up our will, and this is how we exercise *mesirus nefesh*. All of our *middos* are a tool to reveal one single goal - to "stand before Hashem."

### ***Many Ways, One Goal***

Chazal say that in the future, each *tzaddik* will point to Hashem and say, "*This is my G-d.*" The depth behind this is that each *tzaddik* will have his own unique recognition of Hashem, "My G-d", because each *tzaddik* utilized a different way to get to Hashem. This will connect us all together, because it will show us how we are united in one goal, although we each had our own way of getting there.

### ***In Conclusion***

If a person has aspirations for holiness, and he wants to grow in Torah, in holiness, in prayer, etc. - but he's steeped in pursuing his own potential as an individual - this alone is not enough. One must connect himself to the collective whole of the Jewish people, and this is reflected in that *Tefillah* must be prayed together with a *minyan*.

Of course, each person needs to find what his unique path of how he can serve the Creator, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* says that one must find our "his" obligation on this world; but along with this as well, a person needs to connect himself to the Jewish people.

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