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The Mixture of Good and Evil That Has Entered Our Psyche

In the *Nusach Sefard* version of the blessing of **כי א-ל טוב ומיטיב אתה, מברך השנים** עלינו we say – “For You are An Almighty G-d, One who is Good and Bestows Good, He who blesses the year.” Earlier in this blessing we also ask Hashem that we be given a good year.

Hashem’s *middos* are channeled down to us, thus, we have an avodah to cleave to the *middos* of Hashem.

In addition to this aspect of our *middos*, our *middos* are also a mixture of good and evil, for even since Adam sinned, the world has become a mix of good and evil. When Hashem placed Adam in Gan Eden, He said to him, “Remember not to destroy My world.” When Adam sinned, the pure state of the world was destroyed; good and evil became mixed together, as a result of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas* which contained both good and evil.

This mixture of good and evil spread to our entire psyche; thus, all of our *middos* are mixed with good and evil. Therefore, even when a person acts good to another, there is good and evil contained in the act. By contrast, the *middos* of Hashem are entirely good and pure. This is the first and fundamental difference between the *middos* of Hashem with the *middos* of man.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* (in ‘*Shaar Avodas Elokim*’) writes that there are five general reasons why people are good to others. The first category is the parent who gives to child. The second category is when a master is good to his slave. A third category is when one is good to others because he wants reward in the World To Come. The fourth category is when a person is good to others because he wants honor and to be known as a good man. The fifth category is people that are kind to others because they feel compassion on others.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* writes (concerning gratitude) that in all these cases, a person does not give for pure motivations. His giving is lacking awareness of why we need to really give. These are very harsh words, but that is what he writes: all acts of giving are naturally being done for selfish motivations. Even when a father gives to his child, he gives to the child so that the child will reciprocate the love. A master might be very kind to his servant, but he looks at him as if he’s feeding one of his animals. When a person is kind to others because he wants future reward, he’s doing it all for himself. When a person gives for honor, he’s clearly doing it for himself. Even when a person is compassionate on others, it’s really because he can’t stand to see someone else in pain, so he is kind to the other person in order to alleviate his own feeling of guilt.

These are very sharp words: all reasons of why we give – any of the above five categories – are all for our own self-serving purposes. Of course, we need to give regardless, because we must act merciful and resemble Hashem. But the point of knowing about this concept is to be aware that our own *rachamim* is not the same *middah* of *rachamim* that Hashem has. Hashem's *middah* of *rachamim* is not for any self-serving purposes, while the *middah* of *rachamim* which mankind exercises is always for some self-serving purpose.

Connecting To Hashem's Middos

There are different ways of how we deeply connect with Hashem. One way is to palpably feel Him. Another way is to constantly be connected with the concept of doing His will. Another way is to connect to the Torah, which is connected with Hashem's Will, since Hashem and the Torah are one. Another way to connect to Hashem is by doing actions that reflect Hashem's will. And another way to connect to Hashem is by cleaving to His *middos*.

How are we able to connect to Hashem through the *middos*? Aren't our *middos* mixed with good and evil, and thus self-serving?

If someone tries to connect to Hashem's *middos*, such as by trying to resemble Hashem's trait of compassion, he will find this way too difficult. He might lose his *emunah* in the process by becoming so frustrated from trying to do an *avodah* like this, which is impossible.

Rather, the way to approach the *avodah* of cleaving to Hashem's *middos* is by recognizing that our human *middos* are ego-oriented, and they are not the same *middos* as Hashem's *middos*. We must be very self-aware and feel the contradiction between Hashem's *middos*, which are completely altruistic, with our own *middos*, which are not altruistic, in spite of the fact that all of our *middos* are channeled down from Hashem.

We need to feel Hashem's goodness that He bestows upon mankind; this is the *avodah* called *hakaras hatov* – gratitude to Hashem for all His goodness - which the *Chovos HaLevovos* describe (in *Shaar Avodas Elokim*), and it takes a lot of effort to acquire. This is the first part of our *avodah* in cleaving to Hashem's goodness. The second part of how we cleave to Hashem's goodness is as follows.

Mixed Up On The Outside, Pure On The Inside

How indeed do we connect with Hashem, Who does only good, when we are all a mixture of good and evil?

There is a great fundamental which we should know that our earlier Rabbis wrote about. On one hand, the sin of Adam caused us to become a mixture of good and evil. Our actions and our *middos* are mixed with good and evil. However, there is an inner point in our soul which is unaffected by the sin. It is like the flask of olive oil that remained pure during the time of the Chashmonaim. There is always a point of purity that remains. It is hidden deep inside us because it is covered over by so many layers.

If a person is totally disconnected from self-awareness yet he thinks of himself as entirely good being, this does not come from recognizing the inner point of purity in the soul. It is ego-oriented and it stems from a lack of self-awareness.

The true healthy self-awareness of a Jew is to realize that there is a point of complete purity within the soul, and it is reached with the more and more a person purifies himself internally, where he can keep penetrating all the layers until he gets to the innermost point that is completely refined. The outer layers of our soul contain a mixture of good and evil, while the innermost layer of the soul is

completely good.

If a person is delusional, he is full of arrogance that he's not aware of. He convinces himself that he does everything for pure reasons. He gives *tzedakah* on Purim and convinces himself that he does it entirely *lishmah* (for pure motivations), and he eats *matzah* on Pesach and thinks that he's eating it purely *lishmah*. He is so delusional that he doesn't even realize how much he fools himself into thinking that he always acts entirely pure. He thinks of himself as pure, but this kind of approach is evil and egotistical.

The inner method to attain healthy self-awareness is that a person believes, using the power of *emunah* in his soul, that deep down there is a point in him that is entirely pure. Our *emunah* that is inside us demands the awareness that there is a Creator, but our *emunah* also demands from us something else. It demands from us that we realize that deep down, a Jew is entirely pure and holy. (This is not the same concept as *gaavah d'kedushah* \holy arrogance, to be arrogant in a healthy and holy way. It is rather a completely different point). It is the point in the soul that did not get affected by the sin of Adam.

Daas Vs. Emunah

Ever since Adam sinned, we perceive everything through our *daas*, and since our *daas* became mixed with good and evil, our *daas* cannot help us reach our inner point of purity. Our *daas*, as long as it hasn't been sifted out properly, is not the pure level of *daas*, and thus it becomes *medameh* \imagination. But if we sift out our *daas*, if we constantly seek to purify ourselves internally, we can penetrate to the innermost point of our soul. That is one way to reach the soul.

But the other way to reach the soul is through *emunah*. We can believe that just as Hashem is entirely good, so is there a point in the Jew's soul that is entirely good, for the Jewish soul is really part and parcel with Hashem; "Hashem and Yisrael are one."

If a person believes that only Hashem is entire good but that he is merely a mixture of good and evil, he has *emunah* in the Creator, but he doesn't use the *emunah* in his soul. *Emunah* is not just limited to having *emunah* in the Creator. It is to believe that deep down, there is a point in our soul which is completely pure.

Our senses deny this, and our *daas* as well denies this, because our *daas* is not yet cleansed from the evil that is mixed in with it, and therefore it rationalizes with us that it's impossible for us to get past all the soul's layers. (Our *daas* is more and more purified with the more we purify our *middos*, but as much as work to purify our *middos*, we aren't perfect, and thus our *daas* is never perfect either, so it cannot help us for this purpose).

The only power which can help us get through to our inner point of purity and to completely connect with Hashem as a result – is to use the power of *emunah* in our own soul, to believe that there is a point of purity that is deep down in our soul.

We can have *emunah* in the Creator, who is Good, and in the Torah, which is a creation of complete good; and in the Jew's soul as well, there is an inner point that is entirely good, the point of inner *emunah*. Although there is a mix of good and evil inside us, that is only on the outer layers of our soul, but deep down we have an inner point in the soul which is completely good.

As long as a person hasn't yet accessed this *emunah*, he won't be able to fully connect to the Torah and with Hashem.

In Search Of A Good Place To Run To

We must realize that the inner point in our soul of *emunah* (*emunah* in Hashem, together with *emunah* in the fact that we are intrinsically pure) is also the point which we can use to run away to from this world of falsity.

Anyone who seeks to live a life of holiness, who has even a little aspirations for truth and purity, will naturally seek purity on this world. However, we need to know how use this desire of our soul.

Sometimes the soul's desire to find a good place is expressed in looking for a good *chavrusa*; Chazal say that "either a friend or death." Or, a person might seek to connect himself to a certain community, or a certain *Beis Midrash* or a certain shul that he connects with. Or, a person might seek a particular *sefer* that he runs away to.

The common denominator between all of these cases, though, is that a person is still trying to seek the purity *on this world*, which is the "world of falsity", for we live in a world that is a mixture of good and evil; and there is no place you can find on this world which is completely good and truthful.

People will search for a certain kind of friend who shares the same aspirations, or a certain shul or beis midrash, or to connect himself to a certain Rav, etc. - and he might feel wonderful at the beginning, feeling like he has discovered the light in his life. But as time goes on, he can discover that wherever he is, there is always good and evil going on at once. The truth begins to dawn on him that he still hasn't found the perfect friends or place to connect himself with.

There is a mixture of good and evil wherever we turn, and the only question, is how much. That's what a person comes to realize.

Even if a person doesn't leave the place where he is and he doesn't seek a different place, and he stays where he is and tries to make the best of the situation, his soul inside is cringing, feeling like he still hasn't yet found the true place where he needs to connect to. The soul continues to yearn for something deeper, and its voice cannot be silenced.

Where indeed can we find a place of truth that we can run to?

The Only Refuge

There really is one place of refuge to run away to where you can find only good: to go inward into your soul. The Rambam says that all pleasure and happiness is found inside your own soul.

But it is not referring to entering the outer parts of the soul; it is referring exclusively to the innermost point of the soul, which contains complete inner pleasure. There is no pain or suffering there, because it is totally clean and pure. In the inner point of the soul, we will find nothing but good.

Dwelling In Your Inner Point of Purity

Sometimes a person is aware of the inner point of the soul, but he feels like he can't get there. Or it can happen that he knows how to get to the inner point, but he is lacking the *emunah* that he can indeed get there.

So a person needs to first reflect and **establish** in his mind (*daas*) of this concept, and then **believe**, in the inner point of his soul. Believe that you always have a *nekuda tovah* (good point) in your soul which always remains good, and believe in this totally.

Of course, don't get carried away with this "*nekuda tova*" concept and think that you have to see everything as a *nekuda tova*. You will only confuse yourself. It doesn't mean to become full of yourself

and think that all your actions and *middos* are always good. We must know our soul well and become aware of its abilities, and to know well the proper time and place that each soul ability needs to be used in.

But if you firmly believe with your *emunah* that the inner point of purity in your soul exists and you dwell on it with your mind, the more you do this, the more it will begin to shine its light outward and become revealed in your life.

Silence your soul so you can feel this purity, and the more you connect yourself with this point by dwelling on it, you will get closer and closer to connecting with Hashem. It will change your whole life too. It will calm your soul from all the impurity in the world outside.

Chadrei HaLev - The Chambers of the Heart

We need to run away from all the impurity of the world; we need to run to a place where we can be concealed, where all the doors to the world are closed.

We need to retreat into the *chadrei halev*, the “rooms of the heart” – not just into our *yetzer tov*, which is on the outer chambers of our heart, but into the innermost chamber of our heart, the ‘50th Gate of Holiness’ - which resides in the deepest chamber of our heart.

In the ‘50th Gate of Holiness’ in our soul, we can reach a point of complete purity, where no evil will be able to penetrate.

The Public Redemption and Your Private Redemption

In the future redemption, the “50th Gate of Holiness” will be revealed onto the entire world. It was revealed when we left Egypt, and it was revealed when we stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, where we redeemed from the lowest impurity, and we entered into complete purity. In the future redemption which we await, it will once again be revealed, and this will be the depth of the redemption that all the generations awaited – the revelation of perfect holiness.

There is a redemption that the public will experience, and there is a personal redemption as well that each person can experience in his soul. What is the private redemption? It is when we reach the depth of our soul.

Understandably, the light of that revelation of *emunah* which we can reach must be eventually shined onto the rest of our soul as well, because ultimately, we need to purify all the layers of our soul.

When we believe, with *emunah*, in the inner point of purity of our soul, we reveal its light more and more. It can take us out of the greatest darkness and instead recognize a great light – to recognize Hashem. This is the meaning of what is written, “*My soul is close to her redemption.*”

There is a redemption for the entire Jewish people, and there is a redemption as well that you can experience in your own soul. The Ramchal describes the private redemption of the soul as revealing the “light of Moshiach” in your own soul.

In Conclusion

May Hashem merit us to the meaning of a blessed year, to realize how Hashem is good to all – that each of should merit to reveal our inner point of purity, the point of total good in the Jew’s soul. Through this, may we merit to connect ourselves completely with Hashem, and when the light of our souls fills the entire world, we will then see the complete redemption.

May we merit to see it, speedily in our days, Amen.

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