

And the one with the good heart gets back exactly what he gives. He sees good in the world, and the world has good in it for him. He sees *simchah*, and his life has *simchah* in it.

This is why it will not do for us to say: we sit and learn, we do the mitzvos, that is our part. Of

..... **It is only a way of thinking**

And now the part that makes it possible.

It is a *way of thinking*. That is all. It is a setting in the head.

So we set it. *I am a good Yid. I am trying to do my best. I am looking at the world the right way. Hashem made a beautiful world. Hashem is good, and Hashem gives — and He will give me and everyone what is needed.*

And when we live with that hope, the hope comes back to us. It's not just a nice feeling. It's something real, in this world.

course the learning is everything. But *without working on the middos there is no real closeness to Hashem*. A person can learn the whole day and not get to the goal of why he was created now. The *middos* are not the decoration on the avodah. They are the avodah.

We are standing in Elul, days when we are asking Hashem for a good year, for a sweet year, for life itself. And the pasuk has already told us where to look for it: *u'vacharta bachaim*. Choose it. Choose the good middos over the sharp word. Choose to be the one people are glad to see coming.

May Hashem give us all a *kesivah vachasimah tovah*, a year of real blessings and a real life, and bring us close to Him with the geulah, bekarov beyomeinu!

קונטרס

The Ways of My Heart

נתיבות לבי

Adapted from the shiurim of
R' Dovid Steiman shlit"א

Choose a Real Life of Blessings

Elul · Choosing Life

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THE WAYS OF MY HEART · WEEKLY SERIES

נתיבות לבי — The Ways of My Heart

A WEEKLY MAAMAR · ADAPTED FROM THE SHIURIM OF R' DOVID STEIMAN
SHLIT"א

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Nesivos Libi — The Ways of My Heart is a weekly maamar on emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem, adapted from the shiurim of R' Dovid Steiman shlit"א in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*.

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He can be learning Torah all day. He can be a genuine yerei shamayim. And whatever he looks at, whatever he puts his hand to, comes out like a knife.

He has complaints on everybody. Everything is not good — why did you do this, why did you do that, and it does not stop. He sees black; that is all the world gives him. The bitterness eats him from inside, and he carries it into every room he enters.

We all know the feeling. Nothing has even been said yet. We simply want to be somewhere else.

..... It works like a mirror

And here is the thing that should stop us.

Hashem relates to a person the way that person relates to everyone else, as the Mishnah tells us in Pirkei Avos: anyone with whom the *ruach* of other people is pleased, the *ruach* of the Omnipresent is pleased with

And the hardest line: often enough his own family cannot take it either.

The Nesivos Shalom explains where it comes from. Such a person is standing in *gevurah*, in *tzimtzum* — everything squeezed down small. He sees only what is directly in front of him and no further. And a man who cannot see past what is in front of him — **where is he going to find hope to give anybody?** He has none to give. He is not standing in the world of *rachamim*.

him. And the people around him relate to him the same way. **It comes back like a mirror.**

So a man walks around wondering why everybody is upset with him, what he did wrong. And he feels it from Above too, as though Hashem is upset with him.

and we stay quiet. Not because we have no answer. Because we are standing somewhere higher than the argument. A *baal mid-*

..... **The man everyone is glad to see**

The Nesivos Shalom draws two people, and once you have seen them you cannot unsee them.

The first is a man who lives from the side of *chesed*. His whole aim is simply to love people and to do good for them. He is looking for the good, he wants to see you, he greets you — and you can read it on his face before he opens his mouth. You want to say hello to him.

Even when life has him among difficult people and difficult situations, he still chooses to stay in that mode. Whatever comes out of his mouth is a *refuah* — a healing, something that settles on a person's heart. His whole

..... **And the other one**

And now the other man. This is the sharpest thing the Nesivos

dos does not do that. What matters is that inside it does not burn, that it does not turn into a volcano.

thinking runs on how he can help somebody else, in thought, in word and in deed. He is soft; and when the moment genuinely needs him to be firmer, he can be that too, and it is fine.

He sees the good in everything. *It will work out. Don't worry.* And why not — the Ribbono shel Olam loves him, so what is going to happen to him that is bad?

He is not angry at others and he is not angry at himself. He is at peace with Hashem, with people, and with himself. Whatever he has, he is happy with. That is a life full of taste, and it is a pleasure to stand next to.

Shalom says here, and it needs saying carefully.

Choose a Real Life of Blessings

Elul — "choose life" is not only about choosing Torah; it is about choosing our middos, and a person can learn all day and still touch everything like a knife

Let us look at a pasuk together.

Pharaoh calls in Moshe and Aharon and tells them: fine, go and bring your korban — *ba'aretz*, here, in Mitzrayim. And Moshe answers him: *lo nachon la'asos ken*. **It is not the right thing to do.** Because the animal we would be bringing is the very thing Mitzrayim bows to. We would be slaughtering their god in front of their eyes.

The Chasam Sofer stops on that word.

Lo nachon — "it is not the right thing" — is not the language you would expect here. If the concern is that Mitzrayim will see it and come and stone us, then Moshe should have said

plainly: it is **dangerous**. That is a completely different sentence. So why does he say it is not *right*?

And the answer opens the whole thing up. Moshe Rabbeinu was not afraid. A man who was not afraid of Pharaoh himself, who was not afraid of all of Mitzrayim — what is he suddenly afraid of? Everything is in Hashem's hand anyway. Fear was never the point.

What he was saying was exactly what he said. **You do not stand in front of a person and provoke him. You do not poke at someone and hurt him.** Even a Mitzri. Even an idolater. That is a Yiddishe hashkafah, and

Moshe Rabbeinu is the one who says it.

..... **The fifth Shulchan Aruch**

Somebody told me a story, and it is a little bit funny and a little bit not.

A man found a hundred dollars. He did the nice thing: he put up a sign — if you lost a hundred dollars, call this number. A day later the phone rings. *I am the one who lost it. It was in that area. It is mine.*

And the finder says: look, let me explain to you the halachah. There is no *siman* here, no identifying mark. According to the din, I do not have to give it back to you. But I do want to thank you very much for the hundred dollars.

Now — was he right? By the letter, quite possibly. He can

open a sefer and show you.

And still, everything in a person says: this is not what a Yid does.

That is what people call the **fifth Shulchan Aruch**. There are four, and then there is the one that is not written down. A person can be perfectly within the halachah and it can still simply not be the right thing to do, because a Yid does not do such things — according to the fifth Shulchan Aruch, and that too is part of the halachah.

And this is the hard part, because it takes real judgment. The halachah is often clear. But this is between the lines. What is right is the thing we have to weigh.

..... **We are living in a grab**

Sometimes we move through a day without realising it.

Call it grabbing. We see a gap and we cut the car in. Somebody at the counter is not

moving fast enough, so we slide in front of him. There might not be enough of the thing left, so we get a hand on it first.

And we have the argument ready before we need it: *I was here. I got there first. It is mine.*

..... **What "choose life" actually means**

Now to the heart of it.

The Nesivos Shalom takes up the pasuk we all know: *Re'eh nasati lefanecha hayom es hachaim v'es hatov, v'es hamaves v'es hara* — I have placed before you life and good, death and evil. *U'vacharta bachaim* — **and you shall choose life.**

We hear it and we take it to mean: choose Torah Life.

He says it is something else. *The Torah is calling good middos "the life and the good," and bad middos "the death and the evil."* Choose life means choose good middos.

This is not how our life is supposed to look?

Because underneath every one of those small moments is a judgment call about what is right, and we are making it a hundred times a day, mostly without noticing.

It is what we choose — how we decide to be, how we carry ourselves, how we treat the person in front of us.

Whoever works on his *middos* — **his** life is the one the Torah calls life. That is a happy man.

There is a story brought about the Rambam, that he said the happiest day of his life would be the day people embarrass him and it does not bother him. Think about what that means. Not that nobody shouts at him — that somebody shouts, and inside him nothing catches fire.

Because that is the whole *avodah* of a *middah*. Somebody screams his kishkes out at us,