



קונטרס

The Ways of My Heart



נתיבות לבי

Adapted from the shiurim of

R' Dovid Steiman shlit"א

Why We Begin From Scratch



Parshas Bereishis · Shabbos Mevarchim Cheshvan



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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" A

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" a in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R' Dovid Steiman shlit" a teaches emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*, and for nearly two decades has shared his Torah — in English and Russian — with talmidim and readers around the world. He taught at Ohr Somayach and today teaches at Yeshiva Toras Dovid, both in Monsey, New York. He is the author of the sefer *The Ways of My Heart* / נתיבות לבי.



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Why We Begin From Scratch

Before the Torah gives us a single mitzvah, it teaches us middos — and why a Yid cannot say "this is just who I am"

Nobody wants to hear mussar and feel embarrassed. Not late at night, not after a long day, not ever, really.

And yet Dovid HaMelech kept a man beside him whose job, a lot of the time, was to embarrass him. Chazal tell us his name was Mefiboshes, and they explain

the name: he would put Dovid to shame in halachah. Dovid would come to him with every ruling — did I judge correctly? did I rule rightly? — and was not ashamed to ask.

Dovid HaMelech. The king of Klal Yisrael, a tzaddik. Why did he need somebody to shame him?

..... The pain he put into Tehillim

We have just come out of Sukkos, and part of Sukkos is the Ushpizin. Every guest who comes into the sukkah brings a middah with him: Avraham Avinu brings chesed, Yitzchak brings gevurah — holding yourself back from what you want — and so on, down to the last of them. Dovid HaMelech brings malchus.

How did Dovid come to malchus? He became the melech because he understood the pain of every Yid, and he was able to take the pain of Klal Yisrael and put it into Tehillim. Think how deeply a

person has to understand another person to do that. And it is still there. To this day we say Tehillim, and it still helps, and it is still the way we find our way out of our troubles.

The Klausenburger Rebbe once asked about the hoshanos. Of the four minim, the esrog is the heart, the lulav is the body, the hadassim are the eyes. But after Hoshana Rabbah, which one do we throw onto the aron kodesh? And why by the aron kodesh at all — it is not written anywhere to put anything there.

The aravos — the hoshanos we have just beaten against the floor. Because one who has been beaten, said the Rebbe, belongs by the aron kodesh. He said it as someone who had been through the war himself.

Dovid was beaten many times, in many ways. He went through it, he kept be-

lieving in Hashem, and he put Klal Yisrael's pain into the Tehillim. That is how he came to malchus. And Klal Yisroel too has been beaten, and is still in Golus, trying to keep its Emuna and Bitochon in Hashem — *V'atem ... mamleches kohanim.*

..... **There are no chiddushim in mussar**

Mussar has no new chiddushim. It is all about middos, the same as it always was. But it cannot be ignored.

The trouble is that today people would rather not talk about middos. People

will talk about anything else — sports, games, a new kind of food, a new phone, a new program. Character traits? It's a hard one. And now we are starting Bereishis.

..... **Why the Torah begins with Bereishis**

We finished the Torah, and we started again from scratch. Why does the Torah begin here?

Rabbeinu Chaim Vital teaches that a person cannot take the Torah into himself unless he works on his middos. There is no way around it. So before the Torah gives us a single mitzvah, it teaches us middos.

Look at Bereishis. The world is created, and then comes the nachash, and it begins with looking — look at this fruit —

and once she looks, and then he looks, it is over. Desire...

Then come the korbanos of Kayin and Hevel. Kayin decided that the best thing to bring Hashem was the least of his fruit. Hevel brought the best of his flock. Hashem accepted Hevel's and did not accept Kayin's. And Kayin — who was close enough that Hashem spoke to him directly — could not bear it. The jealousy he had for his brother became hatred, and the hatred became murder.

We have not even come to the Torah yet. We are still on middos. This is the wake-

up call: look what bad middos can bring a person to.

..... **What Hevel should have done**

Hevel knew what to bring Hashem — the very best. But in the end Hevel was killed, and that too came from Hashem. Kayin had a choice whether to kill or not, but it was still hashgachah pratis that Hevel died. A close friend of mine asked — and answered — the following question: so what did Hevel do wrong?

When his own brother came to him and said my korban was not accepted — what was Hevel supposed to do?

Give him chizuk. *Don't worry, my brother. Don't give up. Try this. You will get there.*

That is a middah too, and the Torah is teaching it to us. We are not meant to live each in our own box — he does his, we do ours, and if he is suffering, what can anyone do? That is not how we are supposed to live. When you see someone in pain, it is your job to help him. It is not an organization that will see to his needs, and it is not the system that will save him.

A real melech is not what he wears. A real melech is how he cares. We are

meant to connect to Tehillim — to Dovid HaMelech — as he said it himself. How is that possible? By going deep into the thought of how he cared for everyone, and that I need to as well. I am going through hard times because I need to be rachum on others — *mah Hu rachum, af atah rachum*. And if I have rachmones on others, it will bring rachamim on me. By caring, I become like Dovid HaMelech — malchus — and then the Tehillim we say will be as if Dovid HaMelech said it himself.

You do not know whether your words will help. Say a good word anyway. Pick him up. Tell him he will get there — and if he believes in himself and works on himself, he will.

Today everyone is talking about the flight from Dubai to Eretz Yisroel. It is an unbelievable miracle. Think about every hashgocho protis that happened on that flight. Everyone had to make every decision in a split second. It was not only taking responsibility — it was caring enough, for themselves and for everyone. They put their fears to the

side and cared! This is not ordinary. Hashem is telling us what real caring for

others can do.

..... **"I can handle it"**

Then comes Noach, and the mabul — and it came because of the taavos, because of looking where a person should not look. Today we think we are immune to all that — that it is simply the world we live in.

A talmid once came to Rav Eliyahu Dessler and asked permission to go to the chasunah of some relatives who were only a little religious. A more modern chasunah, he said: there will be no

mechitzah. But I am fine with that, he said. I can handle it.

Rav Dessler turned around, took a Tehillim from the shelf, sat down and began to say Tehillim.

What did I say wrong? asked the talmid.

You do not understand, said Rav Dessler. If you are fine with it — if it does not bother you at all — then something is wrong, and you need help. So I am saying Tehillim for you.

..... **"This is just who I am"**

So why are middos so important? A person says: this is who I am, this is how I was born — and if you do not like it, move somewhere else.

But middos are not only about who we are. They are what connects us to the Ribbono shel Olam, and that is why we are here. A person who does not work

on himself is not getting closer to Hashem. He can live ninety, a hundred, a hundred and twenty years, and arrive in Shamayim to hear: *I gave you all that time to come close to Me, and you wasted it.* That is why we are sitting in this world, in this galus — to work on ourselves.

..... **Where the father slept**

Hashem we call *Avinu*, our Father. And the Shechinah is spoken of in the sefarim as a mother — and a Yiddishe

mother feels the pain of every child. When he cries, she cries. She would give herself away for that child.

There was a Rav who was very involved in kiruv, and one Shabbos he had a house full of guests. One of them was a young Russian man named Arik. Nobody noticed how late it had become. Arik lived very far away, a long walk late at night. The Rav would not let him go. You will sleep here, he said.

But it was a small apartment. The Rav's son, Chaim, asked: where exactly is he going to sleep? On your bed, said his father. Go and make it up for him.

The boy made up the bed and came back. And where am I sleeping? On the floor, said his father. The boy had no choice, and he lay down on the floor. His mother came out and said, come, take my bed, I will sleep on the floor — and from the bedroom his father called out: no. He sleeps on the floor.

Years later, the father lay dying, and he called his son in and said: whatever I did to you, whatever I taught you, I did it out of love. Remember that.

The son did not understand what he meant, and he asked. And it was ex-

plained to him: do you remember the night Arik slept here, and you slept on the floor? Do you know where your father slept that night? On the floor. If you had been on the bed, he would have been on the bed. Because you were on the floor, he was on the floor.

He was teaching his son chesed — that you give your bed to a guest. But he would not let his son lie on the floor alone while he lay in comfort. He went down onto the floor with him, in the next room.

That is the Shechinah. Whatever we go through, the Shechinah goes through with us.

So think what happens when we let our middos run wild — the anger that explodes at people, the jealousy that eats at us because he has and I do not. Do we want the Shechinah to feel that pain with us?

That is why we begin from scratch, with Bereishis, with the middos. Because we care — and without caring, we will never come close to the Shechinah at all.