

The Weekly Farbrenge



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705 • למען ישמעו • שמות תשפ"ג
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CHARACTER CHANGE (II)

HOW TO CHANGE

In the year תרצ"ו (1936), someone asked the Frierdiker Rebbe: "How should I go about correcting my *middos*?"

He replied that the first step is to make an honest assessment of oneself, without exaggerating to either extreme. This skill, he explained, can be learned from the way a craftsman repairs a broken object. Before he starts he checks it carefully: some of its parts need cleaning and strengthening, some must be replaced. He then prepares his tools and begins to work. First, he removes the parts that are to be replaced, then busies himself with the cleaning and strengthening of the other parts, and finally, he shapes the new parts, gradually creating a strong and solid product.

Similarly, with regard to the *avoda* of correcting one's *middos*, a person must remove the negative traits and replace them with good ones. He must first analyze himself well, ridding himself of any undesirable traits, and then cleaning and strengthening those that are good.

The first task, removing whatever is bad, does not require special tools; anyone can do it. Similarly, the evil traits of anger and pride can be removed by anyone who has come to understand their evil nature, by learning *sifrei mussar*. The next step, producing strong, positive *middos*, requires the tools of *Chassidus*: one studies concepts that he can understand and that will arouse his heart (*farshandike inyonim un hartzike inyonim*).

(אג"ק אדהר"צ ח"ג ע' תנ"ו - עיי"ש בארוכה)

The Frierdiker Rebbe said: *Chassidus* must make one into a chossid with *chassidische middos*; otherwise, it can be called *chochmah*, but not *Chassidus*. The path of *Chassidus* is broad and paved; it is the fault of those young chassidim who study *Chassidus* in selfmade ways that the clear path of *Chassidus* is blocked. This is the result of studying without *avoda*.

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 48 ואילך)

TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

One day, after having stayed in Mezritch for a

while, the Alter Rebbe planned to return home. He had intended to go by foot, but the Maggid directed that a wagon be hired to take him. When his *chavrusa* - the Maggid's son, Reb Avrohom HaMaloch - accompanied him to his wagon, he told the wagon driver loudly, "Whip the horses until they stop being horses."

Hearing this, the Alter Rebbe understood why the Maggid had arranged for the wagon. For the Alter Rebbe, those brief words opened up a new challenge in *avoda* - transforming the bad *middos* into good ones. And in order to internalize that message, he decided to extend his stay in Mezritch.

On this incident the Rebbe commented: Until one reaches this level of **transforming** one's *middos*, he must at least keep them under control, for he cannot wait until then...

(רשימת היגיון ע' רמו. תר"מ ח"ח ע' 137)

CONSIDER

How does one learn *Chassidus* so that it should change his character?

How does one transform his *middos*? And how is it actually different than controlling them?

The Frierdiker Rebbe related:

My uncle Reb Zalman Aharon, the Razah, was a *baal middos tovos*, a person of refined character. Despite his many troubles, he was always smiling and never shed a tear over his situation. Yet when he encountered a fellow Yid in trouble, his smile would disappear and he would cry - though of course he would also do all he could to help the sufferer.

Once, during a *farbrenge*, the Razah said that the only way to correct one's *middos* is to use one's mind - just as one can safely walk across a narrow beam lying in a pool of mud, by using one's head to

keep balance.

The Rebbe Rashab commented, "Why does controlling one's *middos* with the mind resemble walking across a narrow beam? Because safety is only insured when the **head** is keeping balance, preventing the *middos* from making one fall.

"This approach requires constant watchfulness of the mind so that the *middos* that have not yet been corrected will not return to their natural, wild ways. True correction of character requires transforming the *middos* themselves, by using the mind together with *avoda* of the heart."

The Frierdiker Rebbe noted: *Chassidim* of earlier times were more devoted, and they corrected their *middos* on an entirely different level, both in quality and quantity. They were able to walk with slippers and white socks, and their socks would remain clean, for they knew how to sidestep the mud. Nowadays, we go across with boots and even our clothes get dirty.

(סד"ש ת"ש ע' 39)

When the elder chossid, Reb Zalman Zezmer, wanted to arouse his own heart, he would tell the following story:

In his town lived a great *lamdan* who had outstanding *middos*, but he was not acquainted with *Chassidus*, and Reb Zalman tried to explain to him the effect that *Chassidus* has on a person's *middos*. Later on, this man traveled to the Alter Rebbe and asked about this, and the Alter Rebbe answered, "Animals also have *middos*, but they are instinctive, part of their nature: the raven is mean and the eagle is kind. By contrast, when *HaShem* created people, He made their *middos* keep step with their intellect and not merely be dictated by nature - in order to give them the merit of doing *avoda* and working on themselves."

Hearing this, the man realized that all the good *middos* that he had developed were only instinctive, and he fell faint. When he came to, the Alter Rebbe showed him how to reach the superior *middos tovos* of *Chassidus*.

(ספר המאמרים תש"ע ע' 88)

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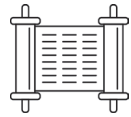


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CAST IRON COOKWARE

I bought a cast iron skillet smeared with oil. Must I kasher it before use?

Heavy-duty cookware made of cast iron is used for its heat retention, durability, and ability to maintain high temperatures for a longer time. Most cast iron cookware is pre-seasoned by the manufacturer to prevent rusting and to make it non-stick. The seasoning process involves coating the surface with an oil or fat, and heating to high temperatures (600° F) until the coating turns black.

While in the US the oils are generally not from animal sources, in remote countries they will sometimes use whichever type of oil is cheaper and available. The fats used in the manufacturing process are often already non-edible, and therefore the cookware would need not be *kashered*.¹ Yet others hold that one should be *machmir* in case the fats were edible.²

Although 24 hours since the utensil's use and the absorbed non-kosher taste is *pagum* ("stale"), nonetheless, one may not use such a utensil *l'chatchila* without *kashering*. Additionally, cooking sharp food – e.g. onions – can rejuvenate the *pagum* taste and render the cooked food non-kosher.

Kashering removes the taste from a utensil in the same way it was absorbed (*kebolo kach polto*). When non-kosher taste was absorbed directly into the utensil without any liquid in between, *libun gamur* is required to burn out the taste. This is accomplished by heating the metal until it turns red hot (i.e. sparking) or the top level shaves off.³

If **non-kosher liquid** was absorbed in a utensil, most *poskim* equate this to having been absorbed **through** liquid and it's sufficient to do *hagala* (placing in boiling water) or *libun kal* (heating the metal so that a piece of paper touching the other side would get burned, which can be achieved by going over the entire surface with a blow torch). Some argue that since the non-kosher liquid was absorbed **directly** into the utensil, *libun gamur* is necessary.⁴

While *kashering* helps for the oil absorbed in the utensil, it doesn't help for the oil substance on the surface. Yet, the oil on the surface is *pagum* from being burned in the factory and is not an issue.

In practice, *libun kal* is sufficient. It is best to *kasher* from both sides, but if needed one can suffice by boiling it with water from inside.⁵ If the utensil was heated in the factory after the oil was smeared, they are considered to already have had a *libun kal* and are kosher. One who wants to be *mehader* and do *libun gamur* can place it in a self-clean oven and run the cycle.

1. אתר כשרות בשם הרב לבנון שליט"א.
2. פס"ד מהרב וואזנער ע"ה קובץ המועדים ע' 396.
3. שוע"ר סי' תנ"א סי"ג (שיטת האג"מ).
4. ש"ך יו"ד סי' קכ"א ס"ק ח' מחמיר יו"ד סי' מ"ד ס"ד מיקל.
5. שערי תורת הבית ספ"ה.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

Our Heroes



R. SHIMSHON VITEBSKER

R. Shimshon Milner of Vitebsk (5650-5673) was a *talmid* in Tomchei Temimim who was known as a sincere *oved Hashem* and very spiritual person. He tragically passed away in his youth, but he left a deep impression on his fellow *temimim*. When the news of his passing reached the Rebbe Rashab, he said, "It seems that they need good ones in heaven too..."

After having spent several years in Lubavitch and making great progress in learning and *avoda*, Shimshon returned to his hometown of Vitebsk. When asked whether he had learned *nigleh* or *Chassidus*, he replied, "I learned that I'm a Yid!"

(מעשה חשב ע' 92)

On one of the days before Pesach, the Rebbe Rashab would go out to draw the *mayim shelanu*, accompanied by the *mashpi'im*, *mashgichim* and the *bochurim* of Tomchei Temimim. They would return with the water to the *chotzer*, the courtyard of the Rebbe's house and the *yeshiva*, where they would break out in a joyous dance.

On that occasion, Shimshon Vitebsker danced with exceptional fervor, and his face shone so brightly that one could barely gaze at it. The Rebbe Rashab, who was watching the dancing from his room, said, "I saw Shimshon Vitebsker dancing and his *yechida shebanefesh* shined!"

(לקו"ם פרלוב ע' רט"ו)

R. Yisroel Jacobson related:

In 5673, Asara B'Teves fell out on Friday. After *Kabolas Shabbos*, we were told that the Rebbe would say the *maamar* after eating. I hurried to my host and returned within ten minutes, but the doors were already locked. Apparently, the Rebbetzin brought out *mezonos* for those who remained, and the Rebbe began straight away. Thankfully, the window shutters were open, and the Rebbe spoke loudly, and so we stood in the snow listening to the *maamar*.

Shimshon Vitebsker had also come late, but because of his poor health, he could not possibly stand outside. He knocked on the house door, and to our disbelief, Rebbetzin Shterna Sara allowed him to walk through the entire house to the room where the Rebbe sat.

At 11 pm, after *chazara*, we sat in the Zal and expressed our remorse at having gone to eat before the *maamar*. Shimshon noted that when he was healthy, he would never leave to eat, except for once when his head began to spin and his eyesight became dark. "Never go away," Shimshon told his friends, "you'll be okay/survive!"

(זכרון לבני ישראל ע' לט)

Shimshon once shared a tradition he received from an old Yid:

Every year, during the height of the winter, the frost breaks and it rains, to show that nature is in the hands of Hashem. This was observed for over one hundred years, even in the cold regions of Russia.

(זכרון לבני ישראל ע' לט)

A Moment with The Rebbe



WHEN I ASK TO LEARN SOMETHING...

The longtime *chassidische shochet* of Montreal Reb Leibel Volovik relates:

In the early 5720s (1960s), there was a time when the Rebbe encouraged a number of *bochurim* and *yungeleit* at their birthday *yechidus* to study *hilchos birkas hanehenin*. I also merited this directive.

The following year, the Rebbe asked me whether I had studied it. When I responded that I had learned it in depth, the Rebbe seemed surprised. "But there is no *kuntres acharon* on these *halachos*?" the Rebbe asked. When I answered that I had used the *Ketzos Hashulchan* as a structure for in-depth study,

the Rebbe seemed satisfied.

Another *yungerman*, who was given the same directive the previous year, was asked in *yechidus* whether he is proficient in the *halachos*.

"I learned them," he replied.

"Do you know them?" the Rebbe asked again. After the *yungerman* responded that he had learned them, the Rebbe repeated his question a third time.

"When I ask to learn something, the intention is to be proficient in it!" the Rebbe concluded.

(As heard from Reb Avremel Volovik)