



# Mussar Pathways

A Mussar Leadership Program  
*Contemporary Practice for a Responsible Life*

## Cheshbon/Accounting

**Goal.** The purpose of Mussar Cheshbon is to strengthen our ability to respond in more and more *Mussardik* ways — in the sense that one shouldn't break a vessel, but transform it. The Cheshbon helps us focus our reflections on a middah with specific attention to the relationship between the middah, the other, our *Yetzer Hatov* and our *Yetzer Hara*.

**Instructions.** The literal translation of *cheshbon hanefesh* is “an accounting of the soul” though we commonly refer to it as “journaling.” *Cheshbon* calls on us to give a good account of ourselves through explaining what we've done in a way that does justice to our abilities or character. Our *cheshbon* does not have to be recorded in complete sentences. It can be a list, a few short notes, or any other way that helps us reflect on how we acted in a particular situation with the others in our lives.

Use the following steps as a guide to your practice. It should take 10 minutes.

1. Reflect on the faces of others you came into contact with during the previous 24-hours. Choose one moment. The moment can be either a Winning Mussar Moment (a winning Mussar moment is just what it sounds like, a moment when you responded by bearing the burden of the other) or one you'd like to do better on next time.
2. Describe the moment in 1-2 sentences.
3. Who are the others and which one is closest to you?
4. What was the burden of the other?
5. On what middah were you working at that moment?
  - a. If you were able to apply it, what helped?
  - b. If you missed applying the middah, how did your *Yetzer Hara* prevent you from accessing the middah?
    - i. What was the legitimate concern of the *Yetzer Hara*?
    - ii. The *Yetzer Hara* had some real concerns. They are legitimate and affirmed, and in the context of those concerns, what range of solutions would have honored those and allowed you to access your *Yetzer Hatov* for this middah?
6. Conclusion. Thinking about the other and the middah, what new understandings and/or intentions do you want to bring to your day's mussar practice?