

## Deliberation | *Metinut* | מְתִינּוּת

### Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh

“Let your heart not be precipitate nor your mouth be hasty. Rather, pause several times while speaking or acting so as to deliberate and calm yourself.” Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Satanov, *Cheshbon ha-Nefesh*.

The word *metinut*—deliberation, consideration—does not appear in the Torah. Searching for a conceptual correlative or for a cognate Hebrew word, which suggests ‘deliberation,’ can be seen in the two frequent biblical phrases for one speaking to oneself: “said to his heart” and “said in his heart.” In the Torah, the heart is considered the seat of the intellect. Therefore, the heart is the site of deliberation. The quality of deliberation is determined by the kind of interaction between one and one’s heart.

The following quotations are given as examples in *Genesis Rabbah 67*.

“**To** his heart” occurs with righteous people.

And David said **to** his heart [לְבוֹ-אֵל], “Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul.” (*I Samuel 27: 1*)

And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved **to** His heart [לְבוֹ-אֵל]. (*Genesis 6:6*)

Now Hannah spoke **to** her heart [לְבָה-עַל]. Her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. (*I Samuel 1: 13*)

“**In** his heart” occurs with the wicked.

Now Haman thought **in** his heart [בְּלִבּוֹ], “Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?” (*Esther 6:6*)

Jeroboam said **in** his heart [בְּלִבּוֹ], “Now the kingdom may return to the house of David” (*I Kings 12:26*)

Esau said **in** his heart [בְּלִבּוֹ], “The days of mourning for my father are at hand and then I will kill my brother Jacob.” (*Genesis 27:41*)

In reference to this last verse, Rabbi Judah is quoted as saying, “Esau acted with deliberation [מְתִינּוּת], saying, ‘Why should I grieve my father? Rather, the days of mourning for my father are at hand, and then will I slay him [Jacob].’” (*Genesis Rabbah 67*)

Rabbi Eleazar ben Jose points out that the righteous confront their desires, that is, they speak to their hearts. They have a conversation with their hearts; they deliberate. The wicked, on the other hand, are engulfed by their desires. They speak in their hearts. Their hearts being empty, there is no conversation. There is only an echo.

In terms of Rabbi Stone’s theology, those who have not developed their egos into souls are driven by their *yetzer hara*. Their hearts are solitary places where they go to brood. Those who have been able to contract (*tzimtzum*) their egos to allow room for another, are able **to** speak to

their hearts. These are the people who can rein in their *yetzer hara* and let their *yetzer hatov* take the lead. Esau is not able to find room in his heart for Jacob. He is prepared to kill Jacob to keep him out.

A Hebrew cognate in scripture for *metinut* might possibly be *הַצָּדָה* found in *I Chronicles* 12:19: “They did not help them, for the lords of the Philistines, after deliberation [הַצָּדָה], sent him away.” The root the Hebrew word *הַצָּדָה* is *צָדַד* meaning to advise, consult, and give counsel.

From looking at conceptual correlatives and cognates for *metinut*, it is clear the deliberation is not a solitary act. The object of deliberation is always action. Because it is about deciding what to do, others are involved. Our actions are never taken in a vacuum. They always impact on others. Therefore, our perfection of the *middah* of *metinut* always involves the other. Through *metinut*, one may seek the advice of the other. One must also strive to be empathetic with the other.

### **Rabbi's Ira F. Stone's Shiur on the Middah of *Metinut***

*Metinut* literally means: “to stretch out” in the sense of letting time elapse. It is a *middah* profoundly concerned with time, specifically taking time or being mindful of the elapse of time in relation to all of our actions.

The example in *Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh* is given in terms of speech, but it should not be confused with *shtikah*, which we learned is precisely measuring our speech—thinking before we speak to determine if our words contribute to bearing the burden of the other. *Metinut* is a more radical *middah* and, as we saw with *histapkut*, presumes to be a *middah* applicable only to a soul rather than to a self.

We have spoken before about the role of time in *Mussar* theory. We have taught that time is a function of our relationship with others. We have relegated what we conventionally call “the present” to the experience of time of the self. The self perpetually finds itself in the present because it is continually concerned with itself *at that moment*. That moment, as it were, never ends. The present is thus an entrapment in self-absorption. We have explained that this experience of time, not to be confused with the scientific measurement of time by way of the clock, is expressed in the tradition as the experience of *olam hazeh*. Thus, to lack *metinut* is to be chained to the present, to “live” as it were, in *olam hazeh*.

The possibility of the future, we have also taught, is precipitated by our encounter with the other. The appearance of another interrupting the self-absorption of our world of self opens for us the possibility of the future in so far as the other's demands on us are unpredictable; they are outside of our control, and we experience the future as this ever unfolding surprise.

To possess *metinut* is to possess the spiritual strength to await the other. Unlike the thinking before we speak described regarding *shtikah*, *metinut* involves preparing the soul in the course of all of our activities to await the other. In fact, this waiting is actually a longing to serve the other. We have now oriented our idea of personal identity to include the other always. We await the other, we are aware and available to the other, at every moment. We have called this, in our studies, insomnia or wakefulness and *metinut* is the *middah* of wakefulness *par excellence*.

This requires a qualitative change in our consciousness that internalizes our awareness of carrying the burden of the other until that weight is experienced as necessary for our own survival. Our very instinct to survive demands that we serve the other.

Thus, *metinut* might better be translated and understood as “awaiting the other.” While this emerges in the course of our spiritual work at the point where the soul has not only been established by our practice but where we have habituated the choice between our self and our soul, nonetheless, as with all the *middot* it is essential that we use *metinut* as one of the tools of our practice. In fact, meditating on *metinut* is a strategy for gauging the progress of our transformation from selves to souls.

When we engage in our *cheshbon* and find that we have acted precipitously, be it in a spoken response or in a precipitous action—from slamming a door to turning quickly away as a person approaches us—we are given an opportunity to explore the neediness of the self that caused such precipitous actions as well as to explore the possibilities for simply learning to *await* the other. The act of *awaiting* is an invitation and an embrace by which the other’s burden becomes a part of our identity and, therefore, our response is no longer as an “I,” but approaches being a “we.”

## **Middah Meditation**

Take a deep breath. Feel your breath, moving in and moving out. Focus purely on your breath.

Move more deeply into the space where you feel deeply connected as one with the heartbeat of the world. As your heart beats, so are the hearts of other beings around you, so is the very heart of the earth, the heart of the cosmos.

Breathe and feel your heartbeat connecting you and all that is around you.

Look at yourself as though you are in a dream. See yourself from the distance. As you approach yourself, visualize yourself in a situation with someone who you did not take into consideration when deliberating. Look at yourself up, down, front and back.

Think of how you deliberate on what action to take, and ask yourself:

- *How did my inability to take the other into consideration when deliberating separate me from another?*

When you have finished viewing yourself, allow a vision of the other who was in the situation with you to enter your mind. See that person from a distance. Approach that person and look at him or her up, down, front and back. Look at the face of the other person involved in this event. See it clearly. And ask yourself this question:

- *How did my inability to effectively deliberate affect that other person?*
- *Did I cause that other person harm because of my lack of deliberation?*

Stay in that space for as long as you want. Answer the question and see how you could have changed your behavior to be more loving, supportive and considerate of that person.

When you have finished viewing yourself, allow a vision of a close other to enter your mind. See that person from a distance. Approach that person and look at him or her up, down, front and back.

And ask of yourself this question:

- *Did my lack of adequate deliberation create a separation between me and that person?*

Stay in that space for a few more moments. Answer the question and see how you can change your vantage point to allow you to be more welcoming and open to that person.

Bring your consciousness back to the present time and when you are ready bring your focus into the room.

## In Real Life

**Scenario 1:** Sarina had been working to perfect the *middah* of *metinut* (deliberation). She was aware of her tendency to procrastinate when faced with important decisions. She did this because whenever she made a decision, she regretted missing the other opportunities that her choice closed off. She wanted to have it all. Sarina was aware that *metinut* had two steps—deliberating and deciding. She thought that the first step in deliberation was gathering information on which to reflect in making her choice. Sarina knew that her deliberative process was going to be driven by two considerations:

- What choice will give me the most satisfaction?
- What will others think of me because of the choice I make?

Sarina lived some distance from where she worked. Several of her co-workers who lived in her neighborhood suggested that Sarina could carpool with them. Sarina considered whether or not she wanted to join the carpool. She thought that carpooling would be economical. She also could relax most days because she would not be driving. On the other hand, she would have to participate in the conversation of the group rather than being in her own reverie. She would not have the freedom to come and go as she pleased, but would have to be on the group's schedule. This would include not taking side trips on the way home. She would have to go home first and go out again in her own car. Finally, since she did not know the carpool members well and did not socialize with them outside of work, she did not worry about what they thought of her if she decided not to participate.

Sarina told the group that she did not want to join the carpool.

**Scenario 2:** That evening, when Sarina did her *cheshbon*/journaling for the day, she reflected on her decision making process. She reflected on the *middah* of *metinut*. She realized that from the perspective of *metinut* there were other factors she could have considered.

- Who is the other who will be affected by my decision?
- What am I afraid of (*pachad*) in making this decision?
- What are my obligations to the other and his/her burden that I accept by making this decision?
- What sources of joy am I choking off when I turn from the future (*olam haba*) of the other to the present (*olam hazeh*) of myself?

Sarina set about reconsidering her decision not to join the carpool based on these questions.

## Pesukim

Pesukim can serve as a reminder of the work you are doing on a particular *middah*. They are words repeated over and over again and can be used as leverage to stop negative action. Review these traditional pesukim as well as the secular saying to use (fully or partially) as interruptives between an ‘unmussar like’ thought and the actual action. Repeat the following *pesukim* to help in cultivating *metinut*.

“Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.”  
*Proverbs 1:5*

“Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.”  
*Proverbs 19:20*

“Make plans by seeking advice” *Proverbs 20:18*

## Cheshbon

It is easy to lose ourselves in the decision making process and never get to the decision, almost regardless of the level of the decision we are trying to make. *Metinut* charges us to use the right amount of time in our deliberation, to always include our responsibility to the others and to commit our energies to considering them in our decision.

In your *cheshbon*/journaling practice, consider the following:

- How did your work on *metinut* help you make space for another?
- How did your encounter with *metinut* affect another?
- How did your working to perfect *metinut* help you to recognize when a person is acting out of his or her own burden? Did you help bear it or add to it?
- Think of a situation in which not being able to exercise *metinut* made you aware of the presence of your own *yetzer hara*. What did you learn about your *yetzer hara*?
- Think of a situation in which being able to exercise *metinut* made you aware of the presence of your own *yetzer hatov*. What did you learn about your *yetzer hatov*?
- What other middot came into play in your attempt to perfect the *middah* of *metinut*?

## Mussar Worksheet—Deliberation | Metinut | מְתִינּוּת

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This week's <i>middah</i> is:	Deliberation   <i>Metinut</i>   מְתִינּוּת
This <i>middah</i> is about:	<i>“Let your heart not be precipitate nor your mouth be hasty. Rather, pause several times while speaking or acting so as to deliberate and calm yourself.”</i> Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Satanov, <i>Cheshbon ha-Nefesh</i> .
My mussar phrase ( <i>pasuk</i> ) is:	_____
My <i>cheshbon</i> time is:	_____
My <i>chevruta</i> is:	_____
My mitzvah is:	_____

My account of this week's <i>mussar</i> work: (See <i>The 10 Steps of Mussar Practice</i> for a fuller explanation.)		
1.	I am committed to the study of Mussar for at least thirteen weeks.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
2.	On awakening every morning, I remember the <i>middah</i> on which I am currently working.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I have set a specific time and place for daily Mussar work.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I use this checklist to keep track of my work on the week's <i>middah</i> .	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	I have a mussar phrase (a <i>pasuk</i> ) that reminds me of my <i>middah</i> and repeat it to help me in cultivating that character trait.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
6.	I practice mussar <i>cheshbon</i> <b>daily</b> and keep a <i>cheshbon</i> journal.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
7.	I keep a “commonplace book.”	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I study Torah <b>daily</b> .	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
9.	I engage in <i>chevruta</i> at least weekly.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
10.	I have added one <i>interruptive mitzvah</i> to my daily practice.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

The <i>middot</i> I worked on this week:			
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Seder</i> (orderliness)	סֵדֶר	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Emet</i> (truthfulness)	אֱמֶת
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Menuchat ha-nefesh</i> (equanimity)	מְנוּחַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Kimutz</i> (frugality)	קִמּוּץ
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Savlanut</i> (patience)	סְבֻלָּנוּת	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nichutah</i> (calmness)	נִיחוּתָא
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nikiut</i> (cleanliness)	נִקְיוּת	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Prishut</i> (separation)	פְּרִישׁוּת
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Charizut</i> (decisiveness)	חֲרִיצוּת	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Histapkut</i> (temperance)	הִסְתַּפְּקוּת
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Zerizut</i> (diligence/zeal)	זְרִיזוּת	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Metinut</i> (deliberation)	מְתִינּוּת
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Anavah</i> (humility)	עֲנוּוָה	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Tzniut</i> (modesty)	צְנִיעוּת
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Shtika</i> (silence)	שְׁתִּיקָה	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Bitachon</i> (trust)	בְּטָחוֹן
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Tzedek</i> (righteousness)	צְדָקָה	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nedivut</i> (generosity)	נְדִיבוּת

## Original Mussar Worksheet—Deliberation | Metinut | מְתִינּוּת

The <i>middah</i> I am working on is:	<b>Deliberation</b>	<b>Metinut</b>	מְתִינּוּת
This <i>middah</i> is about:	<p>“Before taking food into your mouth, consider what benefit it has for your personal health or for the fulfillment of a mitzvah.”                  Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Satanov, <i>Cheshbon ha-Nefesh</i>.</p>		
My mussar phrase is:	_____		
My mussar moment is:	_____		
My hevruta is:	_____		
My mitzvah is:	_____		

My account of this week's Mussar work:				
	<b>Cheshbon/Journal</b>	<b>Torah</b>	<b>Mitzvah</b>	<b>Hevruta</b>
Sunday				
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

Middot I worked on this week:							
<input type="checkbox"/>	Equanimity	<i>Menuchat ha-nefesh</i>	מְנוּחַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ	<input type="checkbox"/>	Frugality	<i>Kimmutz</i>	קִמּוּץ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Patience	<i>Savlanut</i>	סְבִלְנוּת	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diligence/Zeal	<i>Zerizut</i>	זְרִיזוּת
<input type="checkbox"/>	Order	<i>Seder</i>	סֵדֶר	<input type="checkbox"/>	Silence	<i>Shtikah</i>	שְׁתִּיקָה
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decisiveness	<i>Harizut</i>	חֲרִיצוּת	<input type="checkbox"/>	Calmness	<i>Nichutah</i>	נִיחוּתָא
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cleanliness	<i>Nekiyut</i>	נְקִיּוּת	<input type="checkbox"/>	Truth	<i>Emet</i>	אֱמֶת
<input type="checkbox"/>	Humility	<i>Anavah</i>	עֲנָוָה	<input type="checkbox"/>	Separation	<i>Prishut</i>	פְּרִישׁוּת
<input type="checkbox"/>	Righteousness	<i>Tzedek</i>	צְדָקָה	<input type="checkbox"/>	Temperance	<i>Histapkut</i>	הִסְתַּפְּקוּת
<input type="checkbox"/>	Deliberation	<i>Metinut</i>	מְתִינּוּת	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tzniut	<i>Modesty</i>	צְנִיעוּת
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trust	<i>Bitachon</i>	בְּטָחוֹן	<input type="checkbox"/>	Generosity	<i>Nedivut</i>	נְדָבוּת