

Generosity | *Nedivut* | נְדִיבוּת

Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh

Accustom yourself to finding satisfaction in acting kindly towards others and in seeing the meanness of being stingy. Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Satanov, *Cheshbon ha-Nefesh*.

In *Pirket Avot* 3:15 we read, “All is according to the abundance of deed.” This pasuk teaches us that giving once is okay but it is not enough. Generosity is about opening up our hearts to always give. This is the first type of giving mentioned in the Torah and it is called *t’rumah*. *Nedivut* is giving with full heart, without judgment. When we give to someone in this way, we are giving not only from our heart, but a piece of our heart. This giving adds to us rather than detracts from us. In fact, the more we give, the more we get. This type of giving is giving from the soul and it is here that we experience the presence of God.

In *Orchot Tzaddikim*, *Nedivut* is translated as magnanimity and it can also be defined as being very generous or forgiving. This helps us understand that *Nedivut* is so much more than giving someone money or material items. It also means giving of our time and energy. Even more so, it is about jumping at the opportunity to give—about looking for opportunities to give. It is about giving to many people many times.

The *yetzer hara* can trick us into rationalizing why we cannot afford to give. Some of these reasons might sound very legitimate such as currently feeling deprived or having a deprived childhood. Take the time to recognize this rationalization as a fear you have the opportunity to challenge, to push your comfort zone. Engaging in *Nedivut*, giving to another, even if it is uncomfortable at first, enables us to rewire ourselves internally so that ultimately giving will be second nature to us and something we will wake up each morning waiting to do.

Rabbi’s Shiur

When we are free from worry for ourselves, when we are prepared to act for the other in satisfaction of our own desire, we are able to understand the profound meaning of *Nedivut*. The paradox of *Nedivut* is that we generally understand it as a free-will offering, a voluntary gift; however, it is a voluntariness of a particular and surprising type.

In conventional discourse, it is usually understood that ordinary acts of “charity” are voluntary. Most of us are also aware that in Jewish tradition “*tzedakah*” is not considered voluntary. We are commanded to provide for the material well-being of others. *Nedivut*, on the other hand, implies a gift above and beyond that which is required; a gift that is given freely from the heart.

But the key to understanding this middah begins with the description from Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh. The operative phrase is: “finding satisfaction.” When we find satisfaction from an act it is generally because it fulfills our desires. The *hiddush* (חידוש) or new insight that *Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh* provides here is that it is possible to find our satisfaction in the satisfaction of the desires of others. This introduces a more profound way of understanding the very concept of “voluntariness.” In Mussar, voluntary precisely defines those acts that satisfy our desires in so far as our desires are the desires of our fellow.

To be more precise, *tzedakah* is commanded, and *Nedivut* occurs after the commandment has been so thoroughly internalized as to become voluntary. Can we say that that which is voluntary is hyper-commanded? There is no adequate way to express in English the aspect of *Nedivut* that is appropriately voluntary and also expresses the commanding nature of this voluntary act.

The nature of *Nedivut* is better approached when we consider it in the context of the process of transforming a self into a soul. *Tzedakah* is a tool aimed at the self to assist its transformation into a soul. Like many of the mitzvot, it is an instrumentality sanctified by the Jewish people in response to the voice of Sinai and the obligations taken on at Sinai to bear the burden of others at all times extended infinitely.

Nedivut is the form that *tzedakah* takes when it is an expression of transformation. *Nedivut* symbolizes the very epitome of this pathway that we have traveled. It is the accomplishment of *tikkun*, the name process of transforming the self into a soul. The achievement of such a transformation brings us to the spiritual level of *Hasidut*.

Meditation

Make yourself comfortable. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Imagine yourself breathing in clean pure air, breath out anything you want to let go of from this past week. Take another deep breath and relax your shoulders, rolling them forward and backwards. Relax your feet, wiggle your ankles and toes to settle them. Adjust yourself in your seat, if you need to. Take another deep breath. The *middah* of *Nedivut*—generosity—is defined as: *Accustom yourself to finding satisfaction in acting kindly towards others and in seeing the meanness of being stingy.*

- Scan the past 24 hours and settle on an encounter with another where you had the opportunity to act kindly.
- Did you?
- What was the opportunity and what did you do?
- Was this a stretch for you?
- Was this easy for you?
- Could you have done more?

Take a few more moments and when you are ready bring your focus back to the room and open your eyes.

In Real Life

Scenario 1. Ellen goes to the gym every Wednesday at 3:00 PM. She looks forward to this gym time as she likes to see her friends and enjoys the yoga class. To add to her exercise she has decided to now walk to the gym, rather than drive. Today, her first day of walking, she passes by her neighbor Lee. She actually really likes Lee but is focused on her own needs. She remembers that Lee is going through a hard time because he lost his job and his ill father is now living with him. Ellen really does not want to talk to him because she does not want to be late for her class and does not feel like being around his feelings. When she and Lee lock eyes, she smiles and says, “Running late, talk with you later when I get back.” Lee was looking forward to the

connection. When she gets back, she does not follow up with him and then forgets about the encounter.

Scenario 2. Ellen goes to the gym every Wednesday at 3:00 PM. She looks forward to this gym time as she likes to see her friends and enjoys the yoga class. To add to her exercise she has decided to now walk to the gym, rather than drive. In light of the extra time it will take to walk to the gym and any other encounter that might happen on the way, Ellen leaves extra early. Today, her first day of walking, she passes by her neighbor Lee. She remembers that Lee is going through a hard time because he lost his job and his ill father is now living with him. Ellen was glad she started out early so she could spend a few minutes talking with Lee. Lee tells her how his job hunt is going and how his dad is feeling today. Ellen listened, said a few heartfelt and encouraging words. She then told Lee she was walking to the gym for her class and would he like to join her for the walk. He was delighted for the company. Ellen was glad she could be there for him in that way.

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 *Nedivut*.

He who has a generous eye will be blessed,
for he gives of his bread to the poor.
(Proverbs 22:9)

טוב-עין, הוא יברך: כי-נתן מלחמו לדל.

The generous soul will be made rich, and
he who waters will also be watered
himself. (Proverbs 11:25)

נפש-ברכה תדשן; ומרה, גם-הוא ירה.

The wicked borrows and does not pay
back, but the righteous is gracious and
gives. (Psalms 37:21)

לנה רשע, ולא ישלם; וצדיק, חונן ונותן.

Since you get more joy out of giving joy to others, you should put a good deal of thought into the happiness that you are able to give. (Eleanor Roosevelt)

Cheshbon

Nedivut is necessary to remind us that we have plenty and that part of living a spiritually fulfilling life is to habitually and joyfully give to others.

In your *cheshbon*/journaling consider the following:

1. How did your work on *Nedivut* help you make space for another?
2. How did your encounter with *Nedivut* affect another?

3. How did your working to perfect *Nedivut* 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?
4. Think of a situation in which not being able to exercise *Nedivut* made you aware of the presence of your own *yetzer hara*. What did you learn about your *yetzer hara*?
5. Think of a situation in which being able to exercise *Nedivut* made you aware of the presence of your own *yetzer hatov*. What did you learn about your *yetzer hatov*?
6. What other *middot* came into play in your attempt to perfect the *middah* of *Nedivut*?

Date:

This week's middah is:	Tzniut Modesty צניעות
This middah is about:	"Distance yourself from all that is ugly and unseemly, from lust and from anything which leads people to be suspicious of you, and you will find favor in the eyes of God and man." Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Satanov, <i>Cheshbon ha-Nefesh</i> .
My mussar phrase (<i>pasuk</i>) is:	
My cheshbon time is:	
My chevruta 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> daily and keep a cheshbon 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 daily .	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)	סדר	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Emet</i> (truthfulness)	אמת
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Menuchat ha-nefesh</i> (equanimity)	מנוחת הנפש	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Kimutz</i> (frugality)	קמוץ
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Savlanut</i> (patience)	סבלנות	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Nichutah</i> (calmness)	ניחותא
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Nikiut</i> (cleanliness)	נקיות	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Prishut</i> (separation)	פרישות
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Charizut</i> (decisiveness)	חריצות	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Histapkut</i> (temperance)	הסתפקות
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Zerizut</i> (diligence/zeal)	זריזות	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Metinut</i> (deliberation)	מתינות
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Anavah</i> (humility)	ענוה	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Tzniut</i> (modesty)	צניעות
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Shtika</i> (silence)	שתיקה	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Bitachon</i> (trust)	בטחון
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Tzedek</i> (righteousness)	צדק	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Nedivut</i> (generosity)	נדבות

This middah is about: *“Distance yourself from all that is ugly and unseemly, from lust and from anything which leads people to be suspicious of you, and you will find favor in the eyes of God and man.”* Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Satanov, *Cheshbon ha-Nefesh*.

My mussar phrase is:

My mussar moment is:

My chevruta is:

My mitzvah is:

My account of this week's mussar work:				
	Cheshbon/Journal	Chevruta	Mitzvah	Torah Study
Sunday	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Monday	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Tuesday	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Thursday	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Friday	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Saturday	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Middot 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)	סְבִלְנוּת	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Nichutah</i> (calmness)	נִיחּוּתָא
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Nikiyut</i> (cleanliness)	נִקְיֻת	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Prishut</i> (separation)	פְּרִישׁוּת
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Haritzut</i> (decisiveness)	הַרְיָצוּת	<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)	עֲנָוָה	<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)	נְדִבוּת