



# Mussar Pathways

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

## PSUKIM

A pasuk (plural, *psukim*) is a scriptural verse. It is a good practice to find a *pasuk* that reminds you of your middah and repeat it (or sing it, if possible) to help in cultivating that character trait. Here are some possible *psukim* for our middot.

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### Orderliness | *Seder* | סֵדֶר

*All of your actions and possessions should be orderly - each and every one in a set place and at a set time. Let your thoughts always be free to deal with that which lies ahead of you.*

The word *seder* occurs only once in the *Tanach*, and then in the plural as a negative when Job eludes to death as "the land of utter darkness, like the deepest darkness, and the deepest shadow and disorder (לֹא סֵדְרִים), where even the light is like darkness" (*Job* 10:22).

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### Equanimity | *Menuchat Ha-nefesh* | מְנוּחַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ

*Rise above events that are inconsequential—both bad and good—for they are not worth disturbing your composure.*

*Al-mei menuchot yenhaleini.*  
He leads me beside the still waters (*Psalms*  
23:2).

על-מי מְנוּחֹת יִנְהַלֵּנִי.

*Shuvi nafshi, limnuchaichi*  
Return O my soul, to your rest  
(*Psalms* 116:7).

שׁוּבֵי נַפְשִׁי, לְמְנוּחָיִכִי.

*Gam zu l'tovah*  
This, too, is for the good  
(*Taanit* 21a).

גַּם זֶה לְטוֹב.

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### Patience | *Salvanut* | סְבִלְנוּת

*When something bad happens to you and you did not have the power to avoid it, do not aggravate the situation even more through wasted grief.*

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;  
do not fret-it leads only to evil (*Psalms 37:8*).

הָרַף מֵאַף, וְעִזַּב חֲמָה;  
אַל-תִּתְחַר, אֶדְ-לְהִרַע.

Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart  
and wait for the LORD (*Psalms 27:14*).

קִוְיָה, אֶל-יְהוָה : חֲזֹק, וַיִּאֲמַץ לְבָבִי;  
וְקִוְיָה, אֶל-יְהוָה.

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### Decisiveness | *Harizut* | חֲרִיצוּת

*All of your acts should be preceded by deliberation; when you have reached a decision, act without hesitating.*

[Ben Heh-Heh used to say:] According to the  
effort is the reward. (*Avot 5:26*)

[בן האהא אומר,] לפום צערא אגרא.

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### Cleanliness | *Nekiyut* | נְקִיּוּת

*Let not stain or ugliness be found in your possessions or in your home, and surely not on your body or clothes.*

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever  
(*Psalms 19:10*).

יִרְאַת יְהוָה, טְהוֹרָה--עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד.

Create in me a clean heart, O God (*Psalms*  
*51:12*).

לֵב טְהוֹר, בְּרָא-לִי אֱלֹהִים.

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### Humility | *Anavah* | עֲנָוָה

*Always seek to learn wisdom from everyone, to recognize your failings and correct them. In doing so you will learn to stop thinking about your virtues and you will take your mind off your friend's faults.*

*Lifnay hokmah anavah*  
Before honor comes humility.  
(This phrase is found both at *Proverbs 15:33*  
and *18:12*.)

לִפְנֵי כְבוֹד עֲנָוָה.

May He guide the humble in to justice;  
may he teach the humble His ways  
(*Psalms 25:9*).

יְדַרְךָ עֲנָוִים, בְּמִשְׁפָּט;  
וּלְלַמֵּד עֲנָוִים דְּרָכֶיךָ.

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## Righteousness | *Tzedek* | צְדָקָה

*What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.*

Justice, justice shall you pursue.  
(Deuteronomy 16:20)

צְדָקָה צְדָקָה, תִּרְדְּדוּ.

Lord, lead me in your righteousness.  
(Psalms 5:9)

יְהוָה, נַחֲנֵי בְצִדְקֹתֶיךָ.

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## Frugality | *Keemutz* | קְמוּצָה

*Be careful with your money. Do not spend even a penny needlessly.*

Why spend your hard-earned money on something that will not satisfy? (Isaiah 55:2)

לָמָּה תִשְׁקֹלוּ-כֶסֶף בְּלוּא-לְחֵם, וַיִּגְיַעְכֶם  
בְּלוּא לְשִׁבְעָה.

There is desirable treasure and olive oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish person devours all he has. (Proverbs 20:21)

אוֹצֵר, נִחְמַד וְשֶׁמֶן--בְּנוֹה חָכָם; וְכֹסִיל  
אָדָם יִבְלַעֲנוּ.

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## Diligence/Zeal | *Zirizut* | זְרִיזוּת

*Always find something to do - for yourself or for a friend, and don't allow a moment of your life to be wasted.*

Wears zeal like a robe (Isaiah 59:17).

וַיַּעַט כְּמַעֲיֵל, קִנְיָהּ.

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## Silence | *Shtikah* | שְׁתִּיקָה

*Before you open your mouth, be silent and reflect: "What benefit will my speech bring me or others?"*

The Hebrew word for silence, *shtikah* (שְׁתִּיקָה), though found in the Talmud, does not appear in scripture. Here are some three other words from scripture that mean silence.

דָּמָם in Amos 5:13 –  
Whoever is prudent keeps quiet.

הַמְשַׁכֵּיל בְּעֵת הַהֵיא—דָּמָם.

הִרְשָׁה in Job 33:33 –  
Be silent, and I will teach you wisdom.

הַחֲרִשׁ, וְאֶאֱלָפְךָ חֲכָמָה.

הסח in Zechariah 2:13 –  
Be silent all flesh before the Lord.

הס כל-בִּשָׂר, מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה.

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### Calmness | *Nichutah* | נִיחוּתָא

*The words of the wise are stated gently. In being good, do not be called evil.*

The Hebrew word for calmness, *nichutah* (נִיחוּתָא), though found in the Talmud, does not appear in scripture. Here are some other words from scripture that mean Calmness.

דממה – whisper, calm ; וַיִּחַשּׁוּ, גְּלִיהֶם .  
He calmed the storm, and the waves grew  
silent. (*Psalms* 107:29)

שקט – to be quiet, be tranquil, be at peace ; וְלֹא אֶכְעַס עוֹד .  
I will calm down and no longer be angry.  
(*Ezekiel* 16:42)

קר – cool, calm, self-possessed ; וְקָר- (וְקָר-) רוּחַ, אִישׁ תְּבוּנָה .  
The one who stays calm is discerning.  
(*Proverbs* 17:27)

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### Truth | *Emet* | נִיחוּתָא

*Do not allow anything to pass your lips that you are not certain is completely true.*

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### Separation | *Prishut* | פְּרִישוּת

*Strengthen yourself so that you can stop lewd thoughts. Draw close to your spouse only when your mind is free, occupied only with thoughts of fulfilling your conjugal duties and procreating.*

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (Ramchal) outlines a wider view of Separation. In chapter 13 of *Mesillat Yesharim* than Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Satanov in *Chesbon HaNefesh*. Ramchal writes, “Separation is the beginning of Saintliness.” He explains that the first step in Separation is to cease doing evil. The second is to do good. The purpose of the first step “is to keep oneself from that which is forbidden, the understanding being that a person should withdraw and separate oneself from anything which might give rise to something that could bring about evil, even though it does not bring it about at the moment and even though it is not evil in itself.”

Separate the children of Israel from their  
uncleanness. (*Leviticus* 15:31)

וְהִזְרַתֶם אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִטְּמֵאתָם.