

On the Middah of *Bitachon*, Trust

Trust, our Mussar quality of this past month, is one of the more difficult *middot* to strengthen in ourselves - especially in the context of the tumultuous times in which we find ourselves. Many aspects of life on which we used to be more able to rely seem tenuous these days from our jobs, our social fabric, the belief that our good efforts do make a difference, to even our basic safety.

Yet, Trust is also challenging for another reason. This is because it is intimately linked to another major *middah*, that of Faith. The separation of Trust and Faith is useful in that it allows us to explore what are essentially “two sides of the same coin” in order to better understand the whole. In truth, however, Trust does not work without Faith, and a genuine Faith leads naturally to Trust. One of our great Mussar masters, the Alter of Novorodok, puts it this way:

“A person who tries to practice trust in G-d while leaving him/herself a backup plan is like a person who tries to learn how to swim but insists on keeping one foot on the ground.” (*Everyday Holiness*, p. 209)

While Jewish spiritual teachings and practice very much encourage each of us to learn to love and trust *ourselves*, and to discern carefully who and what is trust-worthy in this world, and they help us develop ourselves into *tzaddikim*, righteous, trustworthy people, G-d and faith in G-d cannot be left out of the proposition. In its fullest meaning, *Bitachon* (Trust) implies “trust in G-d” as well.

The author of our Mussar text, *Everyday Holiness*, points out that in our very souls, *we yearn to trust*. And we yearn to be able to trust G-d; this is how we are built. He writes, “No one wants to live with anxiety and worry . . . where trust runs strong, life is manageable, and when trust has slipped away, life is a difficult, daunting struggle.” He then goes on to acknowledge that, “. . . including G-d in the definition may offer you some help, or it may bring on an additional challenge, depending on the role faith plays in your life. Growing in *Bitachon* (Trust) is a very different proposition for a person who already has a strong relationship to the Divine as opposed to someone who [does not yet have] . . . an active sense of Who/What he or she is being asked to trust.”

It is for this reason that our next Mussar challenge, beginning this coming Shabbat and leading up to Channukah, will be to examine the where we are with *Emunah* (Faith) the holy quality that is the partner middah of Trust. When these two foundational qualities are in good working order, this opens the door to all the other qualities - middot such as Hope, Lovingkindness, Patience, Equanimity, Generosity . . . the list goes on.

Please join us this coming Shabbat morning, 10am, for an in depth study and discussion of Faith.

Kol haBrachot (wishing you every blessing),

R' Shula Calmann