



## Week 1

### זריזות

This guided learning sheet explores the *middah* of *zerizut*—alacrity. Each source is accompanied by explanation and discussion questions to facilitate personal reflection and group dialogue.

The first box of questions in color below are general questions about participants' experience of working on *middot* and remain the same from week to week. These questions are a helpful tool to check in and reflect on growth over time, in a consistent manner. Though the questions remain the same each week, the answers will naturally change depending on which *middah* is being explored. You may choose to start or end your learning session with these questions. The rest of questions are specifically related to the *middah* of the week and are interspersed throughout the session to deepen the conversation.

### **General questions when reflecting on the *middah* of the week:**

General questions remain the same from week to week and are helpful tools to reflect on growth over time. The answers will vastly change depending on the *middah* of the week.

1. What did I learn about myself this week?
2. What felt difficult when working on this *middah*?
3. What felt natural or easy when working on this *middah*?
4. How has practicing this *middah* improved your life or how does it have the potential to impact your life?
5. Does anyone in the group have a story of how this *middah* came up in a real situation (this week or beyond)? How did you respond?
6. Does anyone in the group have insights, advice or tips to keep in mind when working on this *middah* going forward?

### Source 1

*Before we can understand how to serve Hashem with zerizut, we must first acknowledge the nature of mankind:*

#### מדרש רבה יז:

ויצַר ה' אֱלֹהִים מִן הָאֲדָמָה (בראשית ב, יט), אָמַר רַבִּי אֶחָא בְּשַׁעַה שְׂבָא הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְבְרָאֵת אֶת הָאָדָם, נִמְלֵךְ בְּמִלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרָת, אָמַר לֵהֵן (בראשית א, כו): נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם, אָמְרוּ לוֹ אָדָם זֶה מֵה טִיבוֹ, אָמַר לֵהֵן חֲכָמְתוֹ מִרַבָּה מִשְׁלָכֶם, הִבִּיא לִפְנֵיהֶם אֶת הַבְּהֵמָה וְאֶת הַחַיָּה וְאֶת הָעוֹף, אָמַר לֵהֶם זֶה מֵה שְׁמוֹ וְלֹא הָיוּ יוֹדְעִין, הִעֲבִירָן לִפְנֵי אָדָם, אָמַר לוֹ זֶה מֵה שְׁמוֹ, אָמַר זֶה שׂוֹר, זֶה חֲמוֹר, זֶה סוּס וְזֶה גַמֶּל, וְאֶתָּה מֵה שְׁמִי, אָמַר לוֹ אֲנִי נֹאֵה לְהִקְרָא אָדָם שְׁנִבְרָאתִי מִן הָאֲדָמָה

“The Lord G-d formed from the ground [every beast of the field]” – Rabbi Aḥa said: When the Holy One blessed be He came to create man, He consulted with the ministering angels. He said to them: “Let us make man” (Genesis 1:26). They said to Him: “This man, what is his nature?” He said to them: ‘His wisdom is greater than yours.’ He brought the animals, the beasts, and the birds before them and said to them: ‘What is its name of this one?’ And they did not know. He passed them before Adam and said to him: ‘What is the name of this one?’ He said: ‘This is an ox; this is a donkey; this is a horse; this is a camel.’ [He then asked:] ‘And you, what is your name?’ He said to Him: ‘It is appropriate that I be called Adam, as I was created from the ground [adama].’

**Takeaway:** *Man is formed from the earth (adama). This grounds us (quite literally) in the physical and material world. We are deeply physical beings, pulled toward comfort, heaviness, and inertia.*

#### **Discuss:**

1. In what areas of your life do you notice the 'heaviness of the earth' (i.e, the pull of physical comfort or heaviness of movement) most strongly?
2. When during your day or week do you feel the most inertia? Is there a pattern?
3. If our human nature is Divinely designed, how does this transform shame or negative feelings about laziness into more strategic self-awareness?

### Source 2

*The Mesilat Yesharim takes this one step further, explaining exactly how this nature holds us back and what we must do about it:*

#### מסילת ישרים

וְתִרְאֶה כִּי טָבַע הָאָדָם כְּבֵד מְאֹד, כִּי עֲפָרִיּוֹת הַחֲמָרִיּוֹת גַּס, עַל כֵּן לֹא יִחַפֵּץ הָאָדָם בְּטִרְח וּמְלָאכָה. וּמִי שְׂרוּצָה לְזָכוֹת לַעֲבוֹדַת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ, צָרִיךְ שִׁיתְגַּבֵּר נֶגֶד טָבְעוֹ עֲצָמוֹ וְיִתְגַּבֵּר וְיִזְדַּרֵּז.

You can observe that man's nature weighs very heavily upon him. For the earthiness of the physical is coarse. Therefore a man does not want to exert himself and labor. But he who wants to merit to the service of the Creator must strengthen himself against his own nature, mustering strength and zeal.

ענינו של הזריזות מבאר, שהוא ההקדמה למצוות ולהשלמת ענינם. וכלשון הזה אמרו זכרונם לברכה (פסחים ד): זריזים מקדימים למצוות.

The nature of *zerizut* is explained as the eagerness to begin mitzvot promptly and ensuring their fulfillment is completed as it says “the swift are prompt to do mitzvot”(Pesachim 4a).

כללו של דבר, חזיק גדול צריה האדם להתחזק ולהתגבר בזריזות לעשות המצוות, בהשליכו מעליו כבד העצלה המעכבת על ידו.

The summary of the matter: man must greatly strengthen himself and fortify himself with alacrity in doing the mitzvot by casting off himself the weight of laziness which impedes him.

**Takeaway:** *Zerizut is defined in two dimensions: being early/prompt in starting mitzvot, and completing them fully. One who wants to serve Hashem must act with alacrity. This is a conscious choice.*

**Discuss:**

1. Do you experience inner resistance more in *starting* something or in *following through* to completion?
2. Where does being early or acting promptly make a big difference in your life and in doing mitzvot?
3. What are the subtle ways laziness or inertia disguises itself as something more acceptable or even justified?
4. What might be underneath a lack of alacrity in yourself or others when you encounter it? For example: lack of motivation, perfectionism, time management, etc.

**Source 3**

*Even with all the desire in the world to do the right thing, we often fail to do mitzvot or act because of one moment — the pause:*

**מסילת ישרים**

אלא בהגיע זמנה או בהזדמנה לפניו או בעלותה במחשבתו, ימהר יחיש מעשהו לאחז בה ולעשות אותה ולא יניח זמן לזמן שיתרבה בינתים. כי אין סכנה כסכנתו, אשר הנה כל רגע שמתחדש, יוכל להתחדש אינה עכוב למעשה הטוב.

Rather when the time of its performance comes, or when an opportunity happens to present itself to him, or when the thought of performing it enters his mind, he should hurry and hasten to seize hold of it and perform it, and not allow time to go by in between. For there is no danger like its danger. Since, behold each new second that arises can bring with it a new impediment to the good deed.

על פן הזהירו זכרונם לברכה (מכילתא שמות י"ב:ז): ושמרתם את המצוות, מצוה הבאה לידי אל תחמיצנה

Therefore, the sages of blessed memory exhorted us: "And you shall watch over the matzot"— if a mitzvah comes to your hand, do not delay its performance (lit. allow it to become chametz)' (Mechilta Shemot 12:17).

**Takeaway:** *Matzah and chametz are made of the same ingredients; the difference between the two is a very short but significant moment. It only takes one extra minute for matzah to become chametz. A mitzvah delayed too long can 'ferment' into something missed entirely. The*

'pause' or short delay we have in acting is not neutral and is identified as perhaps the greatest single threat to our Avodat Hashem.

**Discuss:**

1. Have you ever allowed a mitzvah to become 'chametz'? Can you think of a time when a pause/delay caused a good intention to simply evaporate? What happened?
2. Is there an area of your life when pausing shows up more frequently?
3. What excuses or distractions tend to show up in that pause? When you pause, what story do you tell yourself in that moment?
4. Have you ever found a way to work through this pause moment that you can share with the group?
5. What systems or habits could you put in place to shorten the pause in your daily life?

**Source 4**

*Giving something too much time to "ferment" isn't just a struggle with starting but completing things as well:*

**מסילת ישרים**

מלמד שכל מעשיהם של צדיקים במהירות, אשר לא יתנו הפסק זמן לא אל התחלת המצוה ולא אל השלמתה  
It teaches that all the actions of the righteous are done with swiftness—they allow no lapse of time, neither in beginning a mitzvah nor in bringing it to completion.

ואמרו (שם): אין המצוה נקראת אלא על שם גומרה.

And it is said: "a mitzvah is attributed only to the one who completed it" (ibid).

**Takeaway:** *Zerizut is not a moment in time but a middah that impacts the entire act. Starting with zeal and seeing it to completion is the full expression of this trait.*

**Discuss:**

1. Why do people potentially struggle more with finishing than starting?
2. Why do you think the mitzvah is attributed to the one who completed it? How does this change the way you think about beginning projects or mitzvot?
3. What is something unfinished in your life and what's one step you can take to complete it?

**Sources 5,6,7,8**

*Now that we understand the danger of the pause, we look to our great role models in Tanach who demonstrated the antidote: swift action:*

**5. Avraham welcoming guests/angels**

**בראשית יח:ו**

וימהר אברהם האהלה אל-שרה ויאמר מהרי שלש סאים קמח סלת לוישי ועשי עגות:

Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quick, three seahs of choice flour! Knead and make cakes!"

## 6 & 7. Avraham at the Akeidah

### בראשית כב:ג

וַיִּשְׁפֹּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ אֶת־חֲמֹרוֹ וַיִּלָּח אֶת־שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֵת יִצְחָק בְּנֹו וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עֲלֶיהָ וַיִּקֶּם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים:

So early next morning, Abraham saddled his donkey and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him.

### רשי

וישכם. נזדרז למצוה (פסחים ד'):

He acted with alacrity to do the mitzvah

## 8. Rivka doing chessed

### בראשית כד:מו

וּתְמָהָר וּתְוָרֵד כַּדָּהּ מֵעֲלִיָּהּ וּתֹאמֶר שְׂתֵהּ וְגַם־גִּמְלִיךָ אֲשָׁקֶה וְאֲשִׁית וְגַם־הַגְּמְלִים הַשִּׁקְתָּהּ:

She quickly lowered her jar and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels.

**Takeaway:** *Swiftness or alacrity is a signature of righteous individuals.*

### **Discuss:**

1. Do you find it easier to act quickly to do good things (ex: Avraham welcoming guests) or difficult things (ex: Avraham going to sacrifice his son)?
2. What is the difference between rushing/being hasty and acting swiftly with alacrity?
3. Who in your own life embodies *zerizut*? What do they do differently?

## Source 9

*We have role models in Tanach and in our present day lives for acting swiftly — but what are we to do we do when we simply do not feel the inner fire or motivation to act at all?*

### מסילת ישרים

וְאִמְנָם, הַתְּבוּנָה עוֹד, שְׁכֵמוֹ שֶׁהִזְרִיזוֹת הוּא תוֹלְדָת הַהִתְלַהֲטוּת הַפְּנִימִי, כִּן מִן הַזְרִיזוֹת יוֹלֵד הַהִתְלַהֲטוּת. וְהִינּוּ, כִּי מִי שֶׁמְרַגֵּשׁ עֲצָמוֹ בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּצְוָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא מְמַהֵר תְּנוּעָתוֹ הַחִיצוֹנָה, כִּן הֵנָּה הוּא גוֹרֵם שֶׁתְּבַעֵר בּוֹ תְנוּעָתוֹ הַפְּנִימִית כְּמוֹ כֵּן, וְהַחֲשֵׁק וְהַחֲפִיץ יִתְגַּבֵּר בּוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ. אֲךָ אִם יִתְנַהֵג בְּכַבְדוֹת בְּתְנוּעַת אֵיבָרָיו, גַּם תְּנוּעַת רוּחוֹ תִשְׁקַע וְתִכָּבֵה. וְזֶה דְבַר שֶׁהַנְּסִיחַ יַעֲיִדְהוּ.

Reflect further that just like an inner fieriness of soul leads one to act with alacrity, so too the opposite, outwardly acting with alacrity leads to an inner fieriness of the soul. Namely, when one feels himself performing a mitzvah with great swiftiness this will move his inner being to kindle aflame also, and the desire and want will increasingly intensify within him. But if he acts in a sluggish manner in the movement of his limbs, so too the movement of his spirit will die down and extinguish. This is something experience can testify to.

הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר אֵין הַחֲמִידָה הַזֹּאת לֹוֹהֶטֶת בּוֹ כְּרָאוּי, עֲצָה טוֹבָה הִיא לּוֹ שִׁיזְדַּרְזוּ בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ, כִּדִּי שִׁימְשֵׁךְ מִזֶּה שֶׁתִּנְלָד בּוֹ הַחֲמִידָה בְּטַבֵּעַ, כִּי הַתְּנוּעָה הַחִיצוֹנָה מְעוֹרְרַת הַפְּנִימִית, וּבְדוֹאֵי שִׁיּוֹתֵר מְסוּרָה בְּיָדוֹ הִיא הַחִיצוֹנָה מִהַפְּנִימִית. אֲךָ אִם

ישתמש ממה שבידו, יקנה גם מה שאינו בידו בהמשך, כי תולד בו השמחה הפנימית והחפץ וההמדה מכח מה שהיא מתלהט בתנועתו ברגזון.

A man in whom this longing does not burn as it should, a good advice for him is to act with swiftness by force of will in order that this will bring an inner awakening of this longing in his inner nature. For the external movement rouses the inner ones and certainly the external movement is more in his power than the inner ones. Thus, if he exercises what is in his power to do, this will lead him to also attain what is not in his power. For an inner joy will awaken within him and a desire and longing through the power of acting fiery, externally, by the force of will.

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**Takeaway:** *Outer action creates inner motivation. Sluggish movement of our limbs dulls the spirit. Conversely, energetic action kindles it.*

**Discuss:**

1. How does physical movement (walking faster, speaking with energy, starting quickly) impact your emotional or spiritual state?
2. Have you ever felt more motivated *after* taking action? Has acting enthusiastically on the outside led to genuine inner motivation or connection? What happened?
3. Is there a danger in waiting to feel inspired before acting? What might that cost or has that costed over time?
4. What is one area in your life right now where you're "waiting to feel it"? What would it look like to act anyway?

**Source 10**

*Zerizut is not a middah that stands alone but has ripple effects in all areas of our life:*

**אורחות צדיקים:שער הזריזות**

מדת הזריזות היא תכשיט לכל המצוות, והיא מתקנת כולם.

The quality of *zerizut* is an ornament to all other qualities, and it corrects all other qualities.

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**Takeaway:** *Zerizut is not just a 'nice' character trait. It both beautifies mitzvot and improves all other traits as well.*

**Discuss:**

1. Based on all that has been discussed, how or why do you think *zerizut* beautifies mitzvot and changes the quality of our performing good deeds?
2. How can you channel the *middah* of *zerizut* in any specific mitzvah that you perform?
3. Based on all that has been discussed, why do you think *zerizut* is such a foundational character trait that it corrects other character traits/*middot*?
4. What is a different character trait you struggle with and how may working on *zerizut* cause improvement in that other character trait as well?