

# SELF MASTERY THE KEY TO GOOD MIDDOS

## Background

**H**ASHEM alone is perfect. Any measurement of perfection is in comparison to HASHEM. And the way that we relate to HASHEM is via the *middos* that He chooses to act with. The measure of man's perfection is how much he has made himself like HASHEM in his conquest over his *middos*.

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת תענית דף כה/ב

מעשה ברבי אליעזר שירד לפני התיבה ואמר עשרים וארבע ברכות ולא נענה ירד רבי עקיבא אחריו ואמר אבינו מלכנו אין לנו מלך אלא אתה אבינו מלכנו למענך רחם עלינו וירדו גשמים הווי מרנני רבנן יצתה בת קול ואמרה לא מפני שזה גדול מזה אלא שזה מעביר על מדותיו וזה אינו מעביר על מדותיו

*During a time of drought, Rebbe Eliezer stood in front of the congregation, said twenty-four blessings, and wasn't answered. Rebbe Akiva rose after him and said, "Our Father, our King, we have no one other than You," and it began raining.*

*The Rabbonon began murmuring (for this implied that Rebbe Akiva was greater than Rebbe Eliezer). A heavenly voice came out and proclaimed, "It is not because this one is greater than that one. Rather, it is because this one overcomes his character traits and that one doesn't."*

## Questions

**R**eb Yisroel Salanter, in *Ohr Yisroel*, Letter 28, asks the following: The *bas kol* told us that Rebbe Akiva overcame his *middos*. That itself is the very indication that he was superior to Rebbe Eliezer. So how could the *bas kol* say that he was no greater than Rebbe Eliezer?