

## The Good Stuff and The Crud

רב אמר, לא נתנו מצוות אלא לצרף בהן את הברייות

*Rav said: Mitzvahs were given in order to refine human beings.*

Leviticus Rabba 13:3 (Margoliot Edition)

“Crud” – it was one of the great versatile words of my youth. “He has the crud” and, worse, “He has the *creeping* crud” needed no further explanation. (When we were younger, “cooties” served a similar purpose, but by age 13 or 14, it was deemed too childish to use.)

Apparently, some adults continue to find the term useful. Some physicians, especially dermatologists, might tell an anxious teen-ager, “We can get rid of all this crud on your face within 10 days”. Pimpily adolescents no doubt find this particularly reassuring because the doctor speaks their language, and because it spares them the trouble of dealing with obfuscating Latinized technical terminology. “You’ve got crud” somehow sounded better and easier to understand than, “You’ve got PDU, pernicious dermatitis universalis.”

“Crud” continues to serve a purpose beyond even the medical profession. It is the all-purpose, comprehensive opposite of “The Good Stuff”. Rav’s noble Torah insight recorded above addresses the issue of “The Good Stuff” and “crud”. In English there are many terms for the refining process: purifying, filtering, distilling, winnowing, brewing, and smelting are only a few of them. Each refers to separating The Good Stuff from the Crud, the wheat from the chaff, wine from lees, silver from dross. Rav’s teaching attributes great power to Mitzvahs, among them Tikkun Olam Mitzvahs. He is speaking, of course, of the power to refine the human personality.

For this exercise, first make a list of your own “personality crud”. On the Good Stuff list, record characteristics that you would expect to become prominent once you have eliminated your personal crud. Keep in mind that, even if you remove only *a fraction of crud*, more of The Good Stuff will display itself in full glory.

Use the large sections of the table on the next page to list your personal “crud” and “good stuff”. The smaller boxes (1-10) are for a later part of this exercise.

<b>THE CRUD</b>	<b>1-10</b>	<b>THE GOOD STUFF</b>

1. Do you believe that Tikkun Olam and Mitzvahs have the power to refine your personality? Circle one.

**YES NO**

*If not, why not?*

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*If so, how and why do you think it works?*

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If you answered “Yes” to the “If so, how...” question above, proceed with the following:

2. *Next to the items in **The Crud** list, rate from 1 to 10 how much of that trait or habit you think can be refined by engaging in Tikkun Olam? (“10” = “all of it”, “1” = “just a tad”.)*
  
3. *For those negative traits – **The Crud** -- that you have rated on the lower end of the scale (1 – 5), explain why you feel some of this crud will always remain an aspect of your personality.*

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