

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Wednesday, April 09, 2008

A Prayer for Unity - Rabbi Usher Freund published by US Friends of Yad Ezra

Hashem, who is merciful and compassionate: Please inspire us to come close to You, to strive to overlook one another's faults and unite with each other, and to endeavor to help one another, as it says: "Let each man assist his fellow, and say to his brother, "Be Strong!" May we manage to overlook personal considerations and honors, and in merit of this, say the Sages, we will be forgiven all our sins. We must understand that should we suffer, it is because G-d wants to arouse us to Teshuva through the medium of our friends' actions against us. This is meant to heal us improve ourselves through submission in silence, and to prompt us to recognize that our friends; short comings are but a mirror of our own faults.

Self-involvement makes us so insensitive to the realities of our existence, that we overlook our complete dependency on Divine mercy, which empowers our every action and supports our every achievement. We even forget that our very existence is only by His mercy, for left to ourselves, what are we but an embodiment of nothingness! So Hashem must arouse us through suffering to make us aware of who and what we are. He wants only to bring us closer to Him, so we merit release from the bitter exile we are currently suffering.

If we but refrain from responding to our friends' taunts, instead cry out to our Creator, then all the pain and difficulties we endure will achieve their intended results by bringing us closer to Him. This inner strength can only grow from humility, as King David said: "Hashem is lofty and takes note of the humble." Should we fail in these efforts, it would only be because we are not whole-hearted in our efforts to be humble. Unfortunately, our true goal is usually grandiosity, and our attempts at serving Hashem are illusory. And when Hashem prods us through the acts of a friend who annoys us, or depresses us or lords over us, we become angry with the friend for daring to impinge on our glory.

True submission to G-d is only achieved through suffering, as King David said: "It was good for me that I was afflicted, so that I could learn Your decrees." The greatest benefit man can achieve is being close to Hashem, as it says in Tehillim: "For me closeness to G-d is my goodness." And as Rabbeinu Moshe Cordevero wrote in Tomer Devorah: "If a person would but know the degree to which humiliation and suffering caused by others cleanse him from sin, elevate him and bring him close to his Creator, he would run in the street and chase after humiliations in order to attain perfection of his soul."

May it be His will that we merit to be silent to a friend - not silence out of anger and hatred, but silence out of submission to Hashem, for it is He who strikes us: the friend is but His staff. Let us forgo our anger and accept everything with love and joy. May Hashem Yisborach remove from us dispute and baseless hatred and give us forbearance, the desire and the strength to walk in His ways, and to emulate His attributes. As the Sages said, "Just as He is merciful, so should you be merciful..." And let us merit true and complete unity. May we arise from darness and pain, and at long last, merit true salvation, as it is written, "May light shine in the darkness."

As the Tzaddikim have assured us, if we will be united and there will be no hatred among us, we will remove from ourselves all the accusers regarding our sins. In this merit, may Hashem's mercy exceed the limits of Law, and may He speedily bring the Moshiach and our complete redemption.