

## Nourishment for the Neshama

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#### Ahavas Yisrael deepens compassion - an insight

Ahavas Yisrael has led me to understand what compassion is and when and how I can utilize it in a new way

I was speaking with someone, who informed me that she plans to hold a grudge against another Jew, because of a certain disappointing financial matter, followed by harsh words spoken reminiscent of many years. She was sharing with me her feelings and my first reaction was "Oh no, I don't want to listen to lashon hara! How will I get out of this one?" when I remembered Yaakov's midda of compassion and I remembered to have emunah (faithfulness to Hashem) and to ask myself, "what is this and what is it for?" I thought to myself that I have an opportunity to be contributive and constructive, as long as I do not believe what she is saying, and that I do not taking sides. I had an idea on how to compassionately proceed (i.e. to alleviate her pain and hopefully help her make a good choice.).

I asked her, "If you knew for sure that tomorrow Moshiach would be here, would you still say that you intend to hold a grudge and cut this other Jew off?" She said. "No." I then asked her "So, even if Moshiach is not coming tomorrow, you will still have to answer before the Throne of Glory in 120 years why you broke the commandment of not bearing a grudge. What are you going to say?" She paused there.

At that point I had a quick moment of opportunity and B"H Hashem gave me an idea which I think is universal and crucial to every person. The idea is that we see the world we live in as physical and sensory -- what does this mean for ME!; how do I feel when she speaks that way to ME; why should I give her the time of day when she did not think about ME? ME ME ME ME. The crown is on our own head. We are the center. Everyday life is built around this, and it is normal and expected and necessary to some degree, to take adult responsibility for our lives. HOWEVER, I have learned that the world is mostly spiritual and our physicality reflects what is happening spiritually. Gd-consciousness means placing Hashem at the center. He is the King. In keeping with this learning, I have trained myself to bow my heart when thinking about ME towards thinking " how can this bring me closer to the goodness within me that is an aspect of Hashem's image, so that I may bring that aspect of Hashem's image into this matter? What does Torah tell me is Hashem's Will in such matters?"

In order to do this, I have to "dig wells," meaning I have to dig through my own internal negativity, my own reactive emotions, judgments and insecurities – what I call my ego "limitations," - I see these as limitations to my becoming more like Hashem's image, limitations to my achieving some level of holiness.

This frontier is the frontier of ego, the battle against arrogance, the comprehension of why we should not judge others (but rather give them bracha), and more. After every utterance of creation, Hashem said, "ki tov." Therefore, if I am now saying that it is, indeed, NOT good, I am not in reality. The reality is "Ki Tov" . If the reality is ki tov, then what is my negativity for? What is my judgmentalism for? Why do I suffer, Why am I in pain? Why did Hashem create the darkness?

As I looked at her, with compassion, I realized that she was in pain. This other person had done something she disapproved of and then hurt her feelings and that it had been an ongoing series of verbal abusiveness. And her personality is to cut her off without telling her why, just to cut the tie over the disappointment and keep the pain from the verbal abuse of a lifetime hold the grudge in place. In other words, she was having a test.

Will she or won't she choose Yiras Shemayim to dig her well, find the good in her that comes close to

the aspect of Hashem's image and act as one of Hashem's organs, shining His middos – forgiveness, patience, overlooking sins (we are viscerally part of Him and any time we do Hashem's will, we have the opportunity to experience a great pleasure, a shefa, directly from Him)? And if instead she goes away from His stated Will (do not bear a grudge), what might be the consequence? Might she be judged by Him in 120 years by being cut off, chas v'chalilah for any infraction she may have inadvertently or unknowingly done in a similar vein?

In today's world, we are quick to judge each other, we explore our egos and how we think and believe and we look at others and see them as lacking. This is normal society. This is normal work place. This is average every day wisdom for how to accomplish and get things done.

Yet, I believe that the message is that instead of thinking about ME, it is incumbent upon us to learn to bow our heart to Hashem, for until we do so we have not left the world of ego nor moved towards the goodness in us that is an aspect of His Image. He created the darkness first, and its purpose is so that a world can be revealed. Without the filters and barriers to His Presence, we would not have a world at all. He is the "boss" and our job is to constantly remember it, even though it is dark, and to declare with our free will that we know He is there. Instead of disagreeing with each other or cutting each other off, there is a shelamos that we can accomplish. I may not agree with someone, but I am not released from the obligation to treat people according to halacha.

What stands in my way is my own negativity. If I have Emunah, I train myself to ask, "What is it and what is it for?" in order to find Hashem in the darkness. To answer, I have to dig my well exploring my own negativity, my lower-self human reactions, and then ask Hashem to help me rise above it to instead bring out an aspect of His Image and shine light.

By doing so, the circumstances become irrelevant. Hashem sent it to get my attention "please dig your well out, it is very covered over – please come find Reality, Hashem Echad!" If indeed we can do this, we maintain our individuality while realizing the shelamos in the world. It is not too hard. In fact, it is completely doable, provided we abandon the false messages from a Me oriented society.

Take the crown and put it on Hashem. Every day. With Yiras Shemayim, may we be zocheh to grow in ahavas yisrael and deepen our connection with HKB and shine a light to dispel the created darkness.