

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Amalek - An Insider Solution

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In a world of nuclear threat from a modern day Haman, after the Holocaust, we face every day the descendants of Amalek. Amalek was a grandson of Esav, who hated the children of Yaakov because of the matter of the birthright and pain of Esav in not receiving the brachos he wanted from Yitzchok. There is a pasuk in the Torah to remember what Amalek did to us when we left Egypt and to remember to eradicate him.

Each one of us has a portion within our psyches that is identifiably Amalek. It is not as far away from us as we think, and surely it is something that is crucial for us to remove for it has subconscious control over our actions.

Here is a simple example. It is time to get up for a responsibility to Hashem, something that would serve Him alone. The alarm goes off, but the body says, "Oh I want to sleep a little more." Inside us, we say Hashem please understand, I am just so sleepy, I love you and will do it another time, please forgive me." The body is getting its way! And now creeps in a little voice – "Is Hashem really there anyway? " That is the voice of Amalek within us, it is the lowest part of the yetzer hara, which is already the lowest part of the lower self!

Every day we see how this works.

I have a choice to do something pleasing to Hashem or something where my own goals are the focus. Lishma or shelo lishma. I want to do what I want! This is pretty average. It is our challenge to be more Gd-centered. But this is not necessarily Amalek. It is average lower self thinking, unenlightened that it is being nearsighted and that the pleasure being sought may not be what the whole self really wants. Now what happens?

Perhaps our conscience tries to lead us toward doing the lishma thing. We now resort to feeling like something is being taken from us! What? I can't have what I want? And, like a two year old who thinks if he gives away one of two cookies he won't have that cookie and sees no gain in sharing, we have a tinge of the thought as we try to take back from this spiritual possibility the right to take what we want...maybe there is nothing more, chas v'chalaila!!! Where is Hashem anyway? I have to help myself. And then we become ensconced in our jealousies, desires and pursuit of honor, falling totally into the hands and control of the yetzer hara. All because of ONE THING – our inability to say NO to ourselves on something we want, something that feels good to the body or looks good to the ego rather than giving something that Hashem tells us as a way to connect to Him.

When we are not Gd-conscious, or if we are Gd-conscious but not disciplined, saying no to our bodies and emotions feels like a death experience. It is a sacrifice beyond what anyone else seems to be doing and it seems far more reasonable to pursue effective tactics in taking than to consider forfeiting for Hashem. Yet saying no to ourselves and placing our bodily and egotistical desires on the altar in mesiras nefesh is exactly what we are here to do, with goal of taking the pasuk of eliminating Amalek sincerely.

The strength to approach such service of Gd comes from stepping up into the bleachers a little and comprehending the geshtalt of human existence a little differently from the natural way it appears. Books such as Derech Hashem and Mesillas Yesharim, as well as Duties of the Heart (www.dutiesoftheheart.net) allow us to gain a perspective on our lives from the world of the higher self, the soul, and the Divinely given gift, free will.

When we study any ecosystem and we see damage, we try to repair it – oil spills, tsunamis, hurricanes – all

wreak havoc on ecosystems and man-made structures. We see the damage and expend money and energy to restore the ecosystem.

In today's world, the spiritual ecosystem is very damaged. There is too much spiritual darkness and life and the pursuit of happiness are bumping up against forces that there are no solutions that man can devise – economies are failing, countries are falling, people are behaving in massively wild and unhealthy activities and more. With our free will, we are being drawn into things that the lower self mistakenly sees as feeling or looking good, at least momentarily, and hoping that it will bring success and change.

The problems that we are running up against are not just cause and effect in a physical realm. We are experiencing darkness because of cause and effect in the spiritual realms. By our not being able to say "NO" and by our questioning if there is a Creator [Who is 100% in control 100% of the time], our spiritual energy from our soul forms destructive spiritual beings that are creating spiritual darkness for the entire world. And we are being shown this, in IMAX three D surround sound proportion, through the images of threat of nuclear attack and devastation and destruction of countries and economies.

The good news is that we can prevent disaster. We just have to wake up. WAKE UP without being angry and feeling disrespected, wake up knowing that Hashem is stirring us to SAVE US, not to harm us, wake up knowing that we can say no and find a world of pleasure and truth that far exceeds any pleasure we sacrifice.

Rabbi Noah Weinberg said

"The essence of free will is to choose to be a soul, not a body. The battle is to do what your soul wants, not what your body feels like doing."

And more, our self-esteem can come from our knowledge that we are choosing soul over body. We are not our pain or our experiences, we are the strength we exert to choose soul over body. When we say "B'Ezras Hashem" before we do something we must comprehend that as the proper acknowledgment of reality. And when we pick up a sefer Tehillim and before we embark upon each activity of our day, we say a short perek just to let Hashem know that WE KNOW the true spiritual reality, that success is up to Him, that we are doing what we think is good and right in His eyes and if so please give us the pleasure of experiencing the success that He may elect to attach to our efforts.

Here are some steps that appear to be giving breakthroughs in helping me be more open to resolving the pains and experiences that we mistakenly think "are me". The steps are based on realizing the relationship between Gd (100% in control 100% of the time), free will (a Divine gift whereby Hashem gives us true self-determination!), and the duality of a person (lower and higher soul).

1. Learn and gain confidence in the ideas in Derech Hashem (that Hashem creates us to choose to serve and emulate, that free will is real and that we are self-determining, that there is NO OTHER POWER as well as the other six constant mitzvahs) -
2. Experiences of lack that before got captured by the limited analytical mind (which is so easily subjugated and dominated by the yetzer Hara) can be viewed instead as an opportunity to accept the feeling, separate out what is true from false, and then
3. Take the feeling that is true, the reality (pain, lack, error, limitation) ,
4. Remember the Torah that Hashem tells us regarding the matter, and
5. Ask Hashem for what we know He wants from us and choose it! Ask for His help, ask to be glued to Him instead of to what is not true..

What I am finding is the sense that freedom comes from shifting who I am from the experience itself to the choice, to being a chooser! I am not the pain or the experience. Growth lies within the process of choosing - that is where self-esteem is housed because inevitably we shine Torah, Hashem's attributes, or Hashem's ethical laws.

Rabbi Yaakov Zalman Labinsky has a website www.becomingdivine.com. He is a Talmid of Rabbi Weinberg and the Torah there will build anyone interested in being strengthened in their choice to pursue self-esteem based on being a chooser of soul over body.

At the core of Becoming Divine is relationship, to self, to others and to Hashem. A crucial tool for relationship are the halachos and integrated understanding of loving your neighbor as yourself. For details on this, please see the Jewish Women's Project for Ahavas Yisrael www.ayproject.com

The Clarity Seminar www.clarityseminar.com has wonderful tools for achieving awareness of being a soul in a body and choosing to transcend.

Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller gives a daily video through www.dutiesoftheheart.net to help gain a proper sense of how to serve Hashem.