

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Building a mikvah in our hearts - a universal tool to accomplish our individual mission

This physical world in which we live is a lower expression of the spiritual realm, and encloded in every detail -whether animate or inanimate - is a thought of Hashem which He utters at every moment to maintain it.

There is nothing here that is not constantly being maintained by Hashem and under His direct control. Hashem thinks the world into existence every second!

What do we see in this world that has force? Surely nature we can understand as coming from Hashem. Where else would such an intricate and complicated system come from if not from the thought of Hashem? Besides nature, what has force in this world is mankind. People are empowered to move and transform their thoughts into a reality within this world. Where does this power originate? In thoughts that come to us. And where do the thoughts that come to us come from? There is only one Source for thought, and that is Hashem.

The delivery system for thoughts come from either His inner penimius or from the system He creates to test us, the other side. Nevertheless, every thought originates and has strength to exist because it enclodes an aspect of Hashem.

If Adom had not eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the thoughts that come from the other side would not be as confusing. The temptations we would have would not have the quality of taking on our identity, there would be no confusion between the container and the soul that fills it. But the tempting thoughts that come to us very quickly acquire strength because we identify these thoughts with what our bodies and egos feel we need, and we attach our free willed choice to pursue with our time and energy that might otherwise be devoted to higher pursuits to such things as satisfy momentarily the body and the ego.

It is our humanity. It is how we are constructed, how Hashem thought up the world. But it is very purposeful.

For 120 years, we are given the opportunity to have free will and create our eternity. What if we could see our negative emotions like a tornado headed towards us? We would get out of its way, for sure. Hidden inside the strong winds of our emotions is a strength that Hashem has given us to build ourselves into a vessel to receive abundance. Surely everyone wants abundance. The secret is to understand that abundance is falling to us constantly from above, but our negativity is blocking it! We pursue our goals not even realizing how damaging it may be to seek certain outcomes! After all, we are adults and have responsibility to maintain ourselves. Another day, another dollar. It's a dirty job but someone has to do it. And all the logical rationalizations we supply to help ourselves cope in the reality of unreality, a world that is merely the visual representation of what we are creating in the higher worlds with our thoughts, speech and deeds and emotions.

Derech Hashem by the Ramchal teaches us that Hashem has given us the power to create either positive or negative influences in the heavens, with which He then sustains the world we live in. Each of us has a unique mission, both positive as well as something to repair, regarding these influences. The difficult step is to remember this at the time of a challenge, where the obvious act [often me-centered] fails the challenge to repair what we are here to do.

What are we here to do? Tomer Devorah tells us that we are here to animate the thirteen attributes of mercy contained in the tzelem elokim that Hashem bestows upon us all day long, thereby having with Hashem the relationship for which we were created. Our soul is directly connected at all times to His Throne, receiving

an aspect of His Attributes, and we are to use this slipper called a body combined with free will to navigate in this world to shine that light, to bring out what is encloded within us. To do so, we often have to choose between serving ourselves and serving Hashem. Every day in Ashrei we say with extra concentration "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." We need that extra concentration to remember that when we facing a challenge. Bitachon means choosing to put Hashem in the center and to climb on His shoulders and know that whatever happens is good. This feels to us as our own personal akeidas Yitzchak –we have the free willed choice to bend the tremendous pain or challenging negative feelings we may experience by telling Hashem that we know it is from Him and therefore for our good, and ask that the strength of it be molded into a vessel of emunah in our hearts. And then ask Hashem to please let us use this vessel of emunah as a mikvah and cast our sins and everyone's sins in. In this way, we can use our free will to emulate Hashem, who casts our sins into the sea, Who tolerates our constant insults [e.g. lackluster davening, half-hearted mitzvahs]. And when we choose to strengthen the tzelem elokim within us in this way, we create positive influence in the heavens above. Know with certainty that the light we shine by doing so is very pleasant to Hashem.

Motzei Shabbos we will light Chanukah candles. The tradition is to sit and look at the lights, to absorb the lights from the candles. The Maccabees were moser nefesh to serve Hashem. They wanted to regain for the Jewish people a level of ein od milvado and bring the Shechina back to the temple. They did not know if they accomplished their mission simply because they won the war. It was when the one jar of oil lasted for 8 days, a supernatural occurrence, that they realized that they had gone above nature and reached ein od milvado consciousness, accomplishing the influence they hoped for. The light they created in the heavens affects us through the candles to this very day and until the time of moshiach, may it be today.

We have no calculator for the influence that we can create in the heavenly realm. But by using our free will to build a strong mikvah in our heart and cast our sins and everyone's sins into the sea INSTEAD OF ACTING OUT OUR SUBCONSCIOUSLY SELF-SERVING CONFUSION AND NEGATIVITY, whatever we overcome is a soul rectification and light that only we can bring to the world, releasing it from the golus of our bodies and egos, our mesiras nefesh, our own akeidas Yitzchak.

May this empower us to reframe our challenges as we travel through this world, seeing that we can bring great light to the heavens by properly understanding the opportunity of thought and use our free will to act with emunah and bitachon in Hashem's omniscience thereby freeing ourselves to emulate Him and bring His Will and Attributes into the world. For this is the relationship for which Hashem creates us.

Judaism

Prayer for Unity

U.S. Friends of Yad Ezra 12A

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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 help 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 darkness 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.

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