

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Economics of Spirituality

In this world, societies are built on economies, and economies are built on money. Poverty and joblessness abound and money is the way that people move through the world. Our ability to acquire goods for food and housing and comfort and recreation all depend on our ability to offer goods or services for which we can be compensated. Money matters.

The difficulty is that our focus on acquiring money can cause us to not only push to the back burner where our true self-esteem comes from, it can reject and trivialize it to the point of irrelevancy. There is a story about a woman who brought her husband to come see Rebbetzin Jaeger. The man had been very wealthy, giving a great deal of charity and sitting on prestigious boards and he lost all his money, and he became so depressed that he would not get out of bed. His wife begged him to come to the Rebbetzin for counsel. The Rebbetzin told him the following story, which was heard again this past Tisha B'av in the CCHF programming. In that sub-story, a man was afraid to go into the community mikvah because his clothes were his identity and he was afraid that if he took off his clothes, he would not know who he is. But he wanted to go so he tied a red string around his toe and that way, he could look at the string and remember who he is. He got into the mikvah and when he came out, the red string was no longer there. Instead it was on the toe of another man, who came out of the mikvah. The first man said to him, "I know who you are, but who am I?" Rebbetzin Jaeger told this story to the formerly rich man and he said that is an idiotic story, why are you telling me such a tale of a brainless man? Rebbetzin Jaeger kindly told him that he is that man and his money is the red string. He said tell that to my former Board members and philanthropist colleagues with whom I no longer have a reason to relate! She said that even poor people have love in their lives, and that the basis of our lives is not money. What matters is to have as the basis of our lives loving relationships. We cannot overlook the importance of this in our busy lives! It is our essence.

Why do I mention this here? Because of the financial pressures that are on every person, are we making ourselves into this man with the red string? I think that the answer is that we are, even if our first instinct is to deny it. Let me ask you, how many of your relationships are based on your truly enjoying the presence of the other person, of wanting to know what they think about matters of ethical concern to you? Do you respect their morality? Or are we just doing business with our friends and acquaintances, friendships of convenience, for power, for influence? Would we blink an eye if they were, heaven forbid, no longer on earth or would we just easily replace them with someone who can fill the gap? Are there people in your life that you give to simply because of who they are – who you love for who they are – or is your giving impersonal?

Obviously we need people in all categories - our close circle, our acquaintances and business relationships, impersonal giving (anonymous) as well as emotional giving. The point that I am trying to make is that it is important that our close circle bring out within us our inner penimius, that it be supportive and nurturing of our morals and desire to grow to be like Hashem, lovingkind, forgiving, and overlooking of human defects yet just.

Reducing our relationships to economic terms, reducing society to economic terms, is a dehumanization that is costing us our inner beauty. It makes relationship with Hashem seem like a nice hobby but unnecessary.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

We know that our parnassa is determined on Rosh Hashana for the upcoming year. That is when Hashem decides how much money we will have. Hashem is all there is in the world and He is the treasury. Hashem controls the stock market too! The stock market falls this past week, if you add up all the digits for each, coincidentally all add up to 26, the gematria of Hashem's name.

Monday close - 634.76 = 26

Tuesday close - 429.92 = 26

Wednesday close - 591.83 = 26

Wake up! Stop being so overly focused on our hishtadlus that we obscure and trivialize the Source. Bring

Hashem into the picture. He is the simple reality of every thought, emotion, and atomic matter in the Universe. We are in a free-fall away from this idea - Chazal predict that we will fall to the 50th level of tuma, that this is necessary in order for the Moshiach to come. Are we there yet? Is it time to make a U-turn?

Here is how to make the Uturn

Viktor Frankl <http://lvracha.com/2011/07/18/disagreement-between-drsigmund-freud-and-dr-victor-frankl---a-testament-to-free-will-and-purposefulness-of-life.aspx> saw in the Holocaust that people have free will, a Divine creation, where they could give away their last piece of bread, that there was meaning in the suffering, that people bring meaning to life. This is beyond any animalistic instinct. It is proof positive of the aspect of the Divine image within us, in scientific terms.

We have free will. Free will is a Divine creation. It does not cost us any money. Not one cent. Free will is free. It is Divinely given.

With our free will, we can choose or not choose to believe in Hashem. Hashem leaves that totally up to us! We have to power to exercise our free will in either direction and Hashem does not stop us, although He may frustrate our efforts if our goals are inconsistent with His Will. The responsibility for the energy that we expend in reaching for our goals is 100% totally in our control and we are held accountable. Please understand that the soul that we are invested with is constantly creating either positive or negative spiritual beings, based on our choices, and those spiritual beings stand at our trial after 120 years. Hashem says, "Who created you?" and the answer is us. There is absolutely no defense. We are face to face with the spiritual reality of what we create with our choices while on earth.

All of the energy that we expend, that is trapped in constriction, fear, over-work, temporal things can be attached to Hashem by bringing Him into the picture. He wants us to talk to Him. He wants us to call home and include Him in our lives. Each day, we can use our free will to confess our failures and problematic characteristics to Him - He knows because He created them and put them into us - and ask Him to help us rise above and thrive.

We must clean out the sewer of negativity built into our fearful and angry reactions by remembering that our reactions are merely an opportunity to tell Hashem "I do not wish for my energy to form any destructive negative spiritual beings. Please help me re-connect the emotional charge I am feeling to You and help me to respond in a manner that is pleasing to Hashem!" (Hear Dr. David Lieberman explain that our emotions are totally our responsibility and are dependent on the meaning we ascribe to events by listening to his CCHF Program B lecture posted at <http://lvracha.com/2011/08/09/dr-david-lieberman-explains-ego-and-self-esteem-and-more.aspx>) He who comes to be purified will be helped! And, if we indeed take on this work, then we would have more wisdom when we see those who are emotionally in a whirlpool with their negativity – and not get sucked into the vortex. If we are confused by our compassion for ourselves when we feel negative, if heaven forbid we don't strive to be higher and ask Hashem to help us purify our hearts, it explains why we have so much misplaced compassion for those who act violently and negatively thereby breaching moral boundaries in the name of Gd. None of it is understood unless we exert our free will to improve our own inner beings, to rescue the kidnapped portion of our soul trapped by the yetzer hara in our egotistical hearts in negative emotional whirlpools back into a positive connection with Hashem .

Bring Hashem into your inner life and ask Him for help in doing what is good and right in His eyes - it is what He is awaiting from us. And don't worry. He gives ample parnassa to those who "bring home the (spiritual) deals!"