

## Nourishment for the Neshama

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Wednesday, March 07, 2012

### Free Will - use it to stop hating, stop negative thoughts and build Jewish utopia

We have free will. In fact, we can have as much free will as we want. It is free. Because Hashem creates free will, and because He gives us real free will, there is no limit to the amount of will power that we can access – we just have to ask Him.

The question is, what are we using this will power for? Are we creating? Are we destroying? Are we using it to attach our souls to Hashem for all eternity?

Our basic will is operating at all times. It can be quite subconscious. Our basic will power is the strongest aspect of the personality that Hashem gives us. Hashem does not stand in the way of our determined will and allows us to make mistakes, to use that will without necessarily having clarity of thought. In fact, Hashem gives us the yetzer hara and adversity in order to provide opportunity to develop clarity of thought.

Clarity of thought. What does that mean?

Clarity means comprehending clearly what Hashem wants from us at a particular moment. But what is clarity of thought?

The word for heart and thought are equivalents, according to Rabbi Rietti. Laiv and machshava are the same thing. Having clarity of thought then means having clarity of heart – that our emotions and thoughts are harmonized with Torah, Hashem's will and the aspect of the Divine within us.

How can anyone sincerely say that their thoughts and emotions are harmonized with Hashem, especially in light of the yetzer hara? This is hard work. This is the area where we have to examine our middos, do cheshbon hanefesh, ask Hashem in hisbodidus to help us see ourselves through His eyes and try to clean out our hearts. It is a lifelong process. It starts with gratitude to Hashem.

It is a Torah prohibition to hate your brother in your heart. This means also it is a Torah prohibition to hate your brother with your thoughts or even have a negative thought about another Jew. Somehow, we must change our thoughts and our emotions or we are creating destructive beings in the spiritual world and possibly committing aveiras in our actions or speech that follow after negative thoughts as well.

Why do we experience negativity? Hashem created a world of adversity and gave us free choice exactly so that we can remember to NOT have negativity, to realize that it is ALL from Hashem. If there is a nice new \$20 bill on the table and a crumpled muddied \$20 bill on the table, they both have the same buying power. It is the same with the positive and negative experiences that Hashem sends through us. Both have the potential, if we peel back the outer covering of the emotional "package" that Hashem send to us, and if we remember to use our free will to connect us in relationship with Hashem in a way that we will be able to bring His attributes and light into the world. We can shine Him through us to the situation at hand, if we simply comprehend what it happening to us in a fundamentally different way – that our entire existence is dependent on Hashem and our free willed choice to serve and honor Him.

Hashem is doing everything except He gives me free willed choice to recognize that or not. I don't own any aspect of who I am – Hashem creates me, He gives us the world. But I DO own my choices. Those are what I create with the raw materials, the soul, the characteristics, and the time that Hashem gives me. Thus, the reason that I feel good about myself is because I choose at every opportunity I can to bring Hashem's will and light into the matter rather than the desiring positive or negative emotions that package the apparent matter – regardless whether the matter comes like a crisp or crumpled \$20 bill, I can utilize it to build true self-esteem by reflecting into the matter an aspect of the Divine image within me. Hashem sends the ability to open a channel and the emotion is sent for me to direct back to Him to sweeten it and then into the world. The result is that I need not feel lack due to what others say to me – if they are being hurtful, (and there seems to be an epidemic of this!) it is because they don't have clarity of thought!

But there is no need for me to feel lack or damage to my self esteem because whatever emotion is generated in me, I can take off the cover, extract the power Hashem is sending and ask Him to help me use that same energy and reflect His Will and loving kindness back into the matter. And I walk away feeling connected to Hashem and loving toward the person and with good self-esteem because I chose soul over body!

And you know what? Hashem creates us so that when the heart of one man is sincerely kind to a second man, the second man reflects kindness back to the first. This is the same as looking at a reflection in the water. One heart to another is like water, the souls of people. Our thoughts are our hearts and our hearts are our thoughts. And the people we address know it as if they are looking into waters.

Hand in hand with loving Gd with all our thoughts – a constant mitzvah – is seeing everything Hashem does as intrinsically good. Gd is far beyond our puny analytical minds. We cannot contain an understanding of Gd, and we certainly can't generate a certain way to harness Gd's power. Nor should we want to, for Gd is supreme. If we get right a certain percentage of our opportunities to be in harmony with Him, hopefully we earn eternal reward. We are puny containers who have the ability to use this world to attach ourselves for all eternity to Perfection. Clarity of thought. I want to experience the pleasure of knowing what it is that You Hashem wish me to bring to this moment and reflecting it into this world. That is how I desire to use free will, for that is what builds the only real self-esteem there is.

And at the time of the final redemption, whatever happens, at least I will have chosen with the free will Hashem gives me consistent with clarity of thought, weaving my soul to Hashem and praying for salvation.

May Hashem protect us and redeem us speedily!