

Nourishment for the Neshama

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If only someone had told me! Reflections on what I wish I had known earlier shared in the hope they are a benefit.

One of the beautiful illusions we have is that of being independent beings with separate existence, that there is a way to be independently self-preserving, an illusion that Hashem bestows upon us as a gift because He desires for us to choose relationship, and to relate to Him from a place where we have a real choice.

It may seem to us to be a real choice. When we look at the world today, do we see that we have the ability to be self-preserving or that we can only take some measures and that our survival is not really in our hands? Ultimately neither our heart beat nor our breathing is in our control, but we often choose to believe that we are self-sustaining and self-preserving. It is because of this illusion that we become interested in the confusing and magnetically attractive suggestions of the yetzer hara, who dominates our subconscious and gives us advice on surviving a world where there is independent existence that is up to us to compete for. Even if we have Torah values, built into our subconscious thoughts are these tests, coming from the lower self, giving the higher self the opportunity bring the lower self into avodas Hashem. But what if we are not successful? How much of our thinking is above our free will point, operating subconsciously without our even having an inkling that we are not doing something good? Hashem does not hold us accountable for what we do from that place, but He does shepherd us back if we go too far astray.

There is a built in safety net though for our souls, and that is hashgacha pratis, the detailed supervision of our lives by our Creator. If we go too far astray with our free will, Hashem shepherds us back, often in ways we find distasteful. At that point, we develop the ability to have choice, for our incorrect thinking surfaces from the subconscious for consideration of the matter at hand and at that point we are able to apply Jewish values as best we can. If we still fail to find our way back, heaven forbid, all is not lost. For even within the boundaries Hashem has established, He is completely just, for He alone knows what He has put into us and the challenges He has put before us.

The importance of understanding how we are constructed is urgent. Hashem sustains the world with input from the emotions that WE create! If our emotions come from our thoughts, and our thoughts are affected by self-preservation which is laced with messages from the yetzer hara, what is pouring into the world through are emotions and actions? Just as the oil poured into the gulf of Mexico spewing filth all over the beaches and coral reefs, so do our human emotions cloud over the abundance that Hashem is sending to us every day. Hashem has given us a beautiful word in which to live and has created us to partner with Him in how He sustains it, and our emotions have ripple effects beyond what we can comprehend. We have been created to relate to Hashem from this world and through the downward pulls, when we acknowledge Him and mobilize our higher soul instead of the lower soul, we accomplish the mission for which we are here. If you received an email that the difficulty before you is an opportunity to clean off of the soul of Klal Yisrael certain tuma and that yes it seems painful but it really is something that if we fix it will bring great pleasure for now and all eternity, would that change the way you look at it?

Anyone who suffers from negative thoughts is told a simple thing. Be positive, think positive. Yet it can seem to a person convinced of the negativity that such thinking is Pollyannish, naive, and even incorrect and unsafe, leading a person to not be self-preserving, for a person has to be vigilant to not lose money or not lose time or not be taken advantage of! How many people hold by that? Thinking positive requires a bit of trust in the ultimate goodness of the world, to come in from out of the cold. That is the very first step in emunah, in trust in Gd. When we take that step, even if we don't fully comprehend that there is Gd and Who He is, we embark on an infinite journey of moving our consciousness from subjective negativity to trust in eternal truths.

And that is why we have been created, Our purpose is to energize the strength of our higher, pure soul and have its messages through thought be the source of our emotions and actions, bringing Hashem's attributes and will into the world. To do so, the lower soul, the conflicted soul, the part of us that suffers, that experiences negativity, has to come to a place of accepting that our survival is not in our own hands but in Hashem's hands.

When we have a relaxing inspiring moment of clarity, of calmness, where we feel one with Hashem and with our

higher soul, inevitably a challenging thought from the lower soul filters in, and we move toward it. That friction point is very often based on self-preservation, giving us thoughts about what we need to do to manage, to maneuver, to be powerful and successful. The lower soul is definitely here to take actions in this world, but we must constantly at every moment give our actions the basic test of "Is this precious in the eyes of Hashem?" Just keeping that one question as our Pillar of Fire through our day can make all the difference.

The next thing is that we must comprehend what is and is not pleasing in the eyes of Hashem, which is what Torah learning is all about.

It isn't the people in front of us who are causing us pain. It isn't the governments of other countries that are endangering us. In all the world, there is nothing but the simple unity of Hashem. Thoughts come to us but we must sort them out before emoting and acting, based on "is this precious in the eyes of Hashem?"

Understanding the spiritual reality of the world we are in is crucial because even though the world appears to us and has physical reality of matter, in fact it is a spiritual creation emanating from the thought and word of Hashem alone. Every moment is only how Hashem thinks it up. And He listens to US! But in the end, only His will is done. When we do His will, our lower souls benefit with the abundance that He wishes for us, which is far and beyond whatever we think we can take for ourselves.

So today, right now, begin asking at every moment, "Is this precious in the eyes of Hashem?" Serving Hashem is the very best thing anyone can do to create the comfort and safety that the lower soul craves. Once the lower soul is clear on this, and willingly submits, then the emotions we are flowing into the world will change everything, may it be today.

Below is a Prayer for Unity as well as a toolbox to help inspire and give practical hisbodidus tools to accomplish the above.

May we take this to heart in Elul and turn over our lower selves to the higher soul and merit redemption speedily.

A Prayer for Unity - Rabbi Usher Freund published by US Friends of Yad Ezra

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 heal 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.

Toolbox

Updated August 17, 2012 29 Menachem Av 5772

Daily Hisbodidus – Torah Basis

(Concept of the Baal Shem Tov: Submission – breaking what grips us to our bad traits, along with Rav Dessler's terminology, nullification of the lower world due to emunah in Hashem and His goodness)

Thank you Hashem for the flow of thought, emotion, and consciousness to this otherwise inanimate body that houses it, may Your name be praised, and deeply may I focus that my survival depends on Your Will alone.

(Concept of the Baal Shem Tov: Separation – the use of daas to discern - along with Rav Dessler's terminology, total just and good Divine Providence and control of nature)

and for the ability to perceive, experience and learn, for the gift of free willed choice, and for the capacity to discern and integrate that there is nothing but Your simple unity in all the world.

(Deeper with the work of breaking the hold that our attachment to negativity has on us by applying behira, free willed choice – uses Rabbi Shapira's method to access unlimited free will)

Please flow through me unlimited will power to direct the recipe of personality, circumstance and emotional flow You send through my heart each day so that through the use of conscious choice which You bestow upon me, I can release the innate natural gift of strong subconscious deep emotional bonding from imperfection (unreality, basic human nature including my very survival) to perfection (reality of the Divine mind, connection to Divine attributes and ein od milvado consciousness),

(Concept of Rabbi Dessler to sanctify Hashem's name by attaching our hearts in loving service to a place that our limited self cannot go, expressing emunah and strengthening Yiras Shemayim)

with the desiring result being that all of my emotions are directed first to loving and fearing and emulating You, Who controls our ultimate survival and destiny along with everything else in the world

(Concept of Baal Shem Tov – Sweetening – seeing oneself as a pure good neshama and a healthier relationship between soul and body - see www.bilvavi.org)

May Your Will and Attributes as expressed in Torah be fully conscious within me and grant me success in bringing Your Attributes and Will to visibility in my actions, my relationships, my thoughts, and my emotions. May I be strengthened with unlimited conscious free will to approach my day from loving awareness of choosing what is pleasing to You and thereby redeem the Elokus in golus within the "body-partnered-with-yetzer-hara" veil over it, affirming to You love for and Yira of Hashem; may I strengthen the ship of emunah through which I choose my body and soul to travel through this world, thus forming a vessel through which to receive abundance and act upon Your Will

Occupy our Emotions - the Process

"I recognize that when afraid, I emotionally bond to the yetzer hara's message of lack implanted in my subconscious that open the doorway out of the world of neshama and connection and into the world of falsehood based on pursuit of jealousy, desire, or ambition and I see that it is unpleasant. In this case the strong unhealthy magnetic bond is to _____(name the pattern/thought/experience/programming/ nature)

. Hashem please grant success to the choice I declare to shift my emotional bonding from imperfection to love, fear and emulation of You. Please see my determination and give me the will power, to the very depths of this emotion, and help me to match the negatively charged emotion (which is a result of my tzelem elokim connecting with falsehood) with will power to calm my subconscious clinging to this self-destructive illusion. (I am awaiting the will power), I sincerely want to no longer have the strength of my neshama emotionally bonded with this thought/experience/memory. [once the emotion is calm and the feeling of will power there, say:]

"Hashem I choose that the strength of my neshama that is bonding to negatively charged emotions of jealousy, desire or ambition of honor – specifically _____ - shift (Please shift the strength of my neshama which is subconsciously attracted like a magnet to falsehood and which has been above my behira and out of my ability to control). Right now the strength of my neshama is bonded to a pattern/thought/experience/programming/ nature that is unpleasant and unreal. I recognize that this has been above my behira and You have shepherded me and guided me to take accountability for my actions(through suffering consequences of the emotional pain of separation of the strength of my neshama from connection to You). Please give direction of this orphaned strength of my neshama into my hand. I beseech You to listen to my free willed choice. I direct this strength of my neshama and its emotional bonding affecting my actions to detach from pattern/thought/experience/programming/ nature and re-attach to love and fear and emulation of Hashem alone. Please take the very same strength with which it was

subconsciously attached to falsehood and build that strength into the volume and density of my emunah in my heart so that I may with that strength create in my heart a mikvah and place my sins and everyone's sins in for forgiveness and love. Please lead me in the path that I wish to go, for the unification and sanctification of Your name, for now I realize that this has been sent for me to responsibly bring the strength of my neshama that You give me back into harmony with Your Will thereby releasing it from the golus of my subconscious as it reconnects with Your Will and attributes. That is my sincere choice and desire, for there is nothing but Your simple unity in all the world. Please grant success to my free willed choice to direct this strength of my neshama and emotional bonding to love and fear and emulating Hashem and please destroy all negative spiritual entities which I may have created by misuse in the past of the strength of my neshama attached to negative emotion. I regret it and ask that this negativity and any destructive beings related to it be taken out of the world and that my teshuva be a zechus and benefit for all Klal Yisrael."