

Nourishment for the Neshama

<http://lvracha.com>

Thursday, September 27, 2012

Insights from the Book of Jonah - doing what is right in Hashem's eyes is far different from being right

In the Book of Jonah that we read during the afternoon service of Yom Kippur, twice Hashem asks Jonah if he is right to be angry, once when Hashem forgives the people of Nineveh and the second after Hashem sends the worm to eat the kikayon. Jonah feels very right to be angry in both instances. Jonah tells Hashem he knew Hashem would forgive the people and that is why he did not wish to do his mission and now he sees he was right, that Hashem forgave them. Hashem's answer is one of expressing to Jonah how much Hashem loves His creations.

There is nothing wrong with being right except the feeling that we are somehow better for being right. The payoff for being in the right needs to be a feeling of maintaining love and fear of Hashem, not one of feeling better than those who are wrong. It is a hard difference to discern unless a person has in general a propensity to feel in harmony with Hashem's will. The idea is that the egotistical side of us needs to be deactivated in favor of choosing connection with Hashem for its own sake.

Very often when something happens and we feel angry, it is because we are right and it is a blatant violation of principles that has seemingly caused us pain and loss. We have a tendency, with our limited analytical mind, to jump to the feeling of superiority, of needing to teach a lesson, or create regret in another, and our minds may spin and process endlessly as if addicted to the idea that we are right. This can become quite an obsession, depending on how much pain and how much rightfully violated we feel. It can truly obscure everything else, sapping our emotional energy from us.

No one can take anything from us or do anything to us without Hashem's permission. The more we indulge in addictive thought processing regarding how we are right and what should happen without realizing that the source is Hashem and the solution is to ask Hashem to lead us in our next step in doing what is pleasing to Him for a resolution that is precious to Him, the more we invoke Hashem's need to enclthe our mistakenly directed spiritual energy into the circumstance and feed it until we have no choice but to turn upwards and ask Hashem to lead us in our next step in doing what is pleasing to Him for a resolution that is precious to Him. Unless we have true belief and confidence that Hashem can resolve it, the torturous matter will probably continue until we have no choice but to turn to Him and see His hand ultimately through the entire matter of circumstances.

The very best message to internalize from this is a recognition that being right is a negatively charged complaint that is costing us our relationship with Hashem, the orchestrator of our lives. When we realize the matter is a red flag to show us an area of our straying emotion that needs to be tethered to our emunah, we begin to elevate our fears from fallen yiras Hashem to a yira that is genuine. We don't need a Navi to tell us what the suffering in our lives is for when our suffering involves a situation where there is an element of our feeling of being right and attempting to take a direct rather than Gd-centered approach. Torah tells it to us in Jonah. Hashem loves us and wants to forgive us when we turn to Him and do teshuva.

May we be zocheh to redemption speedily.