

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Loving Hashem

How do we bring ourselves to grow in the mitzvah of ahavas Hashem? Gratitude is a huge way to do so. We have so much to appreciate that He gives freely to us, so many reminders of His Mercy.

But what about when it gets tough, like when we have to be mesiras nefesh? Most of us don't want the restrictions involved in not doing what we want – we find the rules that justify that what we want to do is acceptable.

For example, I grew up at the beach and I love the beach. I have come to observe levels of tznius that no longer allow my family to go to the beach in season. Part of me wants so much to go to the beach! I miss it so much! How easy would it be for me to say, "Hashem wants me to be happy and I want to go to the beach so maybe I am not yet holding by not going to the beach. It won't hurt really, will it? After all, a swim in the ocean is very good for everyone! I love swimming!" What such thinking reflects is that "I" is a separate entity from Hashem. Hashem gives us this free will. We are permitted to choose. So, it makes sense even more that I might say to myself, "I need this for me to be happy, how can I give it up? It is too much to ask." Or "We aren't supposed to withdraw from the world or give things up and live a stern life." Many people would agree with all of that, including me! Except for one small point which turns the entire picture around.

I have no separate existence from Hashem. And, being in rapport with Hashem through that concept is the most pleasurable experience a person can ever hope to attain and the very greatest life a person can be blessed with. From that place, everything else is irrelevant, nullified and unattractive.

How did I discover this?

The first step was that it became clearly apparent to me that there is a spiritual reality to the world not some far off, "spiritual" talk, but a moment by moment spiritual reality, where every word is recorded as something that builds or destroys, where we have siyata deshemaya, that we are in a world attached to another world that is happening at the same time as we are here, and WE are playing out the scene on a stage set there. Through our words and deeds, we move heavenly realms, like a keyboard to a piano creates music. Have you ever had the experience of knowing absolutely that Gd exists and that every word of our Torah is true? If not, see "Seal of Truth" the video on this blog or at http://lazerbrody.typepad.com/lazer_beams/2008/07/the-seal-of-truth.html

Listen to people who have had life after death experiences. People, these confirmations of the absolute truth of Torah are urgent for us to comprehend on a deep level and are the first step to enhancing Ahavas Hashem. Now, the first feeling may be Yiras Hashem, as it should be. Why? Because if Torah is absolute truth, how do I measure up? Yikes! That is absolutely terrifying! Rebbetzin Heller in one of her shiurs says that sometimes she imagines after 120 years coming to heaven and being greeted by all the angels that she created – some crippled, some deformed – because of the way she conducted herself here. Absolutely terrifying. What is at stake? ETERNITY! If we don't like sacrifice, embarrassment and pain here, are we going to like it any better there? This is Yiras Hashem.

But look! Hashem didn't create us to punish us! He created us to give us benefit, both here and there! All He asks is that we choose to fear Him. Fear HIM. FEAR HIM!!

The emphasis on the word fear – here in this frame of reference, we see how easily we are influenced by those we fear. Are we afraid that our money will be reduced by our boss? We fear his power. Are we afraid that someone will reject us? We fear the loss of love. How do people gain support for their ideologies? It took many years of protests and verbal messages but governments relented to the "pressure" of same-sex couples, despite the moral statements we know about this from the Torah. Human sympathies are aroused

when people cry out "UNFAIR". We seem to be built this way – who can listen to a baby crying without responding?

Understanding our construct, take this a step further for the thicker skinned and -- TERROR. How has terror, the fear of being destroyed by those holding an ideology different from ours, affected our thinking about that ideology? Many have adopted it! Many find it important to try to appease those who deliver terror. Why? The answer is because we think we have a separate identity from Hashem and that WE are in charge of our existence and seeing to it that we survive on the course we chart for ourselves.

We ARE in charge of our existence and seeing to it that we survive on the course we chart for ourselves, BUT we have no separate existence. Surviving on the course we chart for ourselves includes both this world and the next. Realizing that what we do here matters for eternity is crucial. It is far better to fear Hashem than to fear any person or people or ideology because HASHEM LOVES US! He wants us to be happy AND he can provide absolutely everything that we need to make our lives here fantastic as well as giving us a blissful eternity. When we fear anything or anyone else, we are succumbing to emotions that are testing us simply to give us the opportunity to rise above our nature and find Hashem. Wow. We can master ourselves with Hashem's help!

Imagine if you were employed as a consultant to go to a city 500 miles away to repair a small hole in the fence. You are given a bank account, a trailer home/car, the telephone numbers of people to take care of you while you are away and more. You arrive. Everything is so comfortable and nice! You are enjoying yourself day after day, the city is interesting, and each day, you don't quite get to fixing that small hole in the fence. Finally, your oompany calls you back and they ask you about the small hole in the fence and you, embarrassed, say, "Oh yeah. I forgot."

So how do we remember every day? We must realize every day that our soul is connected to Hashem and that He has provided us with a means of accomplishing our mission and repairing our souls by placing us in these bodies in this world. At no point should we overlook this. Instead, we should be communicating with Hashem the roadblocks, the questions, the issues – discuss it with the home office! And as He provides the answers, we begin to experience how HUGE Hashem really is. He can solve every problem we have (and every problem every person on earth has at the same time!) He asks for us to fear and love and appreciate Him.

When we place the idea of our soul being connected to Hashem at the pinnacle of our guiding thoughts during the day, our minds and bodies fall into line. When we communicate with Hashem throughout the day, we are speaking to the most loving, the kindest, the most intelligent, the most everything Being that anyone could EVER hope to relate with. THIS is the greatest pleasure imaginable, beyond anything anyone could otherwise experience.

We are built to fear – let us fear the One who loves us and see ourselves as inseparable. Let us love Hashem and then all of our relationships and dealings become a subset of that loving relationship.

May Hashem bless us with forgiveness, love, mercy and peace as we struggle through these concepts.