

## Nourishment for the Neshama

<http://lvracha.com>

Friday, May 25, 2007

### Maharal Sefer Netivos HaShalom -Notes from Rebbetzin Heller class May 13 2007

Rebbetzin Heller notes of May 13, 2007 on Maharal Sefer Netivos HaShalom

"There is deceit in the hearts of those who plow evil while to those who give counsel of peace there is joy." He [the Maharal] always begins with a pasuk from Mishlei and indeed the purpose of this pasuk is to give us consciousness of what happens emotionally when people try to make peace and don't.

He begins by telling us something that is an enormous chiddush: the reason why we usually think there is controversy is that it is a response to an event that occurred. This event occurred and people are distraught, they don't like how it is being handled so they have a conflicting view of what should happen as opposed to what is happening. We would think that that is where machloket comes from. His chiddush is that there are people who want to plant controversy. Who are these people? To use his words, they are the ones who put madanim – the Gra explains this word as coming from the word din – it is the sort of person who will cause one person to judge another. And those people are called plowers of iniquity., meaning that they like to prepare the earth for something to grow. What does that mean? A plow turns the earth upside down so the seeds can be put in and the earth will be receptive. There are people who apparently want to dig and dig and look at other people with a microscope to judge them and cause others to judge them because they like the result. The result that they like is controversy. It makes them feel alive, it gives them a feeling of superiority by being on the side of the angels. But the cause is not the controversy. The result is the controversy. That means that the person has put themselves emotionally in that type of a set up so that they are like a tragedy waiting to occur. There is always deceit in their heart. Part of the mindset of a person who always like controversy is deceit, because if they are not deceitful, they can't really stir up a controversy, and I will tell you why as the Maharal says. If they had no deceit then people would see through them, people would say the reason you are doing this or that is because of the hatred you have toward this person, it is not about ideology, it is all personal. What they have to do is be deceitful to begin with , create a climate in which it is clear to the observer that it purely ideological , purely in response to controversy and nothing to do with personalities when in fact it has everything to do with personalities. That person will do everything deceitfully in order to send forth madanim, to create an atmosphere of microscopic judgment, where each person is scrutinizing the behavior of the other person. Machlochet is not a byproduct of that person's act, it is the goal of that person's act. The question is how do people get this way? What is this goal that they are so attracted to?

He tells us that there are divisions caused within the people as a consequence of the deceit, of this consistent desire to plow controversy, and the name of this maklochet (to divide) is called evil. This word evil should be used specifically with machloket. The word for sanctity is kodesh. It's opposite is chol (secular) but literally it means "sand" like on the beach. When you look at sand, it doesn't stick to itself. The individual grains go back to being individual grains. Similarly that which is holy is always unified. That doesn't mean amalgamated, that all the individuality is lost, but that something is there that binds it together. So if we look at the world, everything in the world is itself, it is what it is, but it is part of a system bigger than itself. The Maharal also talks about achdut and peirot. Achdut is commonality of goal and purpose, mutual respect and chashivos of the purpose of every individual, that we are all one, like limbs and organs in a body. The opposite is peirot where there are borders that do not relate to each other. In nature there is nothing that has no relationship to everything else . In our time, we see the world in ecology that speaks about the interrelatedness of everything. The Maharal did not know biology, but he understood the singularity of G-d in a way that we don't. He understood that what G-d brought forth is something that mirrors His singularity and unity, that everything in the world has purpose and it's contribution is defined by its borders. If we took away all earth worms, it would be a disaster. The worms aerate the soil and nothing could grow. But for the worm to contribute, it has to remain itself. Similarly borders is what makes true achdus possible, each thing has to be itself in order to contribute to the whole. Machlochet takes place

when people lose this, when they can't see how it is possible for things to have borders and boundaries and still be part of a greater whole. What he is saying is that this division, this machlokes, is called evil. What is evil? The simple meaning of good is something that does its function. A good person is a person who does what humans can do, a person that is truly human. The Maharal says a good person is someone who mirrors Hashem's image, b'tzelem Elokim. This means we have something of this achdus, the ability to rule the world, to see its' interconnectedness and to give it definition. In that sense, we are greater than any other creation. The Rambam says someone is good who actualizes their humanity, they are gifted, creative, intelligent, self-transcendant. Maharal says the angels are even more that, but that we can emulate Hashem and we can rule the world through our free choice. We can use the choices that we make because we are in this world to unify everything, to see its physical purpose and its spiritual purpose, and to make everything mirror G-d's unity. So the opposite of that from both perspectives is a person who is in-human, like Idi Amin, through their free choice totally – territorial, aggressive, whatever. From Maharal's perspective it would be that and more, it would be someone who does not see the purposefulness or underlying unity in the world and therefore has to devalue everything that is not him...everything that is not him is a threat. That is an evil person.

Maharal takes this further. On the second day of creation it doesn't say Hashem looked and saw that it was good. On the second day, Hashem made a separation (firmament) between the spiritual and the physical manifestation. There is a big empty space called free choice, see it or don't see it. There are people who never see it. It doesn't say ki tov because it was the day of separation. This is to tell us that by definition machloket is evil meaning it distorts G-d's plan and image.

It says in Navi Hashem makes peace, meaning He constantly recreates the world moment by moment which makes peace and each thing is contributive, but he also created evil out of nothing, offering us choice. Machloket is the opposite of peace. Now you could think, Why is he telling us this? We sometimes think that war is the opposite of peace. No, war is hard enough. But machloket means looking at the world as being divisive – A has nothing to do with B, I have nothing to do with her, they have nothing to do with us. That is evil. So a concrete example of this way of thinking – and to some degree we all fall victim to it – you hear of an accident, let's say it is people going up to the mountains for the summer. If the answer is it not someone we know, we feel relief because we feel that whoever was part of the accident was not part of you. This is human, but it is not machloket, disunity. A machloket is a person who wants to plow this, and magnify it and gets his vitality from it and enjoys it. Suppose upon hearing that they accident involved them, not you, you say, they always drive too fast, that is how they are, they are not respective law-abiding like we yechies. That would reveal a pre-existing agenda to judge and that is the source of evil. In the example of feeling relief in the first instance, it is not perfect, it is human and it is not evil. But judging people from that perspective because they are not like us, that is machloket and that is evil.

The pasuk goes on, to those who give counsel of peace, they deserve joy. Because peace by its nature equals wholeness, and wholeness brings a feeling of completion, joy, of seeing everything in its place. So let me give you an example. I was in Malon for Lag B'Omer where every possible kind of Jew was, old and young. Everyone was streaming towards Rashbi's tomb, in front of the kever. There were half a million people there. By the time you get to the kever passing the vendors and dancers, you eventually get in. There are two ways to look at it – who are all these people to crowd me? Why am I uncomfortable? Or they all want what I want, they all want a few minutes here. It can make the experience one of achdus and love or one of peirus and hatred. It is the same experience.

A person who loves peace will see shelamos, this is people completing themselves, and this is what Reb Shimon wanted.

Peace means making everything whole. I want you to hear this phrase again – wholeness is what gives things presence or reality. Let me explain this. Suppose I was introducing you to someone who you haven't met before, Yvette came from France and doesn't speak English and I am introducing her to you. Yvette this is Chavi, Chavi this is Yvette – you see each other as people with an identity. Suppose I were to say, Yvette this is head. Head, meet body. It means that my introduction is focusing on commonality, the real you, or on fragmentation –that is a French woman, she is 35 you are 19. You can take a fragment and turn it into the whole or you can take what is real and enduring and turn that into the person. As you mature, your core identity changes, this one's wife, that one's mother. We can't fragment based on least real things. Shelamot, seeing the total picture, gives something reality. Fragmentation makes it unreal.

It is therefore appropriate that those who pursue peace have joy. The immergent picture is beautiful. It says about Hashem that there is strength and delight in His place, the totality of His Creation with His imprint, you see something joyous emerge. The more you go and look at the edges the less you see, the less joy, the more room for criticism. A tragic thing, the way we are, we tend to see truth as being negative.

Someone would say, "I can't not see this" meaning the negative thing. Or you look at the piece of the puzzle, the less truth you have. People think that if you tell them to see the whole you are telling them not to see the parts – NO – they are telling you to see ALL the parts.

I want to share with you something that happened. I was in the States recently and after the Shabbaton with Neve girls I went to a speaking arrangement for the deaf. There were speaking people there as signers, and there were more speaking people there than deaf. After I spoke a speaking person came to me and gave me a little book called Shamati. I assumed it was about hearing. I thanked her and I looked to see it was a kabbalistic tract brought down to the level that people can understand it written by Reb Wachshlav, who lived a generation ago, believed the inner aspects of Torah have to come forth before Moshiach can come and he has dedicated his life to spreading simplified Kabbalistic teaching. I was a little surprised and it showed on my face. Instead of saying How nice, I looked confused. She said this sefer was written by his student and this student comes to America and speaks and she saw something when he spoke that moved her. There was a woman who came to the shiur who was mentally unwell and very disruptive. I understood what the shiur must have looked like. What did he do? The woman's disruptiveness was so great that the shiur couldn't take place everyone was asking her to leave and the speaker said, no, this isn't what we do, and everyone sat down including the disturbed woman, and he said, hold each other's hands and close your eyes, and ask Hashem to give everyone what they lack, everyone is lacking something, ask Hashem to give you what you are lacking. Everyone knows what they are lacking, ask Hashem for it. And they did, and the immediate effect is that the disturbed woman was serene for the rest of the shiur. The woman said she got it- that they are all really one! Each one was lacking something – but amongst them they had it all, they were one. The simcha that comes from seeing us all as one comes from seeing lack as part of our universal journey and seeing it honestly and unflinchingly. See things as whole. The opposite of simcha is mourning. Mourning is about missing something, seeing something as lacking. We think that mourning has to do with our feelings of grief, but also acknowledging the enormity of that which is lost. The word shelamot – see everything as part of the whole. Shalom is what makes you see the reality as whole as it is and nothing is lacking. It would mean after the initial grief is over, the day comes when you can celebrate the joy of the person's life, how much you got out of knowing them, and their presence still lives with you. This is why we don't mourn forever, and this will be explained further.

Especially when a person is trying to make peace, a man and his brother, he will see the good in both of them and see how they complete each other. They are both lacking. A real baal shalom will be able to see that both parties are right in a certain way and in order for there to be wholeness, one may have to pay the other, but it doesn't mean that he is invalid or his presence in the world is unnecessary. This is why when I was once in a din Torah, I got to speak on someone's behalf. The dayanim determined who should pay, and looked at the person and said you can rejoice and be happy because you have accepted din. They saw that the person was in the process of becoming shalaim. They did not invalidate him. The opposite of shalaim is loss and absence. Deceit is the opposite of peace because they don't accept reality on its own terms. We sometimes pretty-up things to make peace and that is not peace either. How do we pretty things up? You will see something that is really wrong like shoplifting, and you pretty it up by saying they are deprived and have low self esteem and it would change everything, so we can't judge them. The way a person of shalom would look – this person is lacking in honesty but we can help them become more honest. They will see the truth that this person is lacking something. They are not looking at something lacking and calling it okay, that is not making peace, that is called patronizing. There is no insult worse than telling someone I would expect nothing better. Nothing devalues a person more than that. I am still trying to figure out the hashgacha side of this, but when I traveled, the films they showed on the plane with one big screen, they were African movies, terribly violent with real footage. There are two untrue ways to look at this..this real footage shows that African's are animals, they are so destructive, where is G-d there? Another look is look what colonial heritage did to them –every white person is responsible, this is our collective guilt. A third is what a terrible human tragedy this is – people, what a terrible place that they are, and a recognition that if we were as we should be, the spiritual forces that we send up would be strong enough to effect them also somehow and when Moshiach comes there will be shelamos as well, but to look at them and say it's okay because this may be the result of colonialism is just as patronizing as saying oh what a bunch of chayas. Neither is shalaim and neither view has a future. When a person destroys them they see wholeness, and when a person pursues peace, he should feel this wholeness. Peace by its nature is wholeness.

In the world as it is, we are all on this journey together. There is no peace and there won't be peace until Moshiach comes. We are on the journey towards it. On that day (when Moshiach comes) Hashem will be one and His name One, we will be one with His Essence, we will be clearly part of what He is, and until then we are in process. Our decision is not will we be at peace, our decision is will we pursue peace within ourselves and with others, which is a much more sophisticated question.

The opposite of that is deceit, which means fooling someone, and any act of dishonesty is a lie and it has no

mitziut...all lies have no reality. Until now, when people patronize, there is also the lie to enjoy strengthening the machloket because they like it, it makes it deeper and gives it more vitality. People do this by disparaging entire groups. For example, Rav Eliashiv did not go to Meron on Lag Bomer. It was reported and the response was that people who are serious people don't go to Meron. Does Rav Eliashiv go camping? No. His place is learning and psak. That doesn't mean that no one else has a piece in the puzzle, but people who want to make machlokes empower themselves by making these statements. In this sense, things like this belong to those who plow iniquity.

People who send forth criticisms or quarrels between a man and his friends destroys the mitzeit of the world because as soon as people are polarized, it is hard to see anything. If one limb or organ is ill, it can destroy the whole body, lo aleinu. Deceit and machloket are always connected. When both people see the good in each other, they come to a place of shelamos. Machlokes wants to destroy the people who are not like them, exaggerating their claims against them by creating polarization. Reb Nachman has a story, that there was a man and people let him be their trustee. He had a safe and someone stole the money. He lost as well as those who entrusted him. He was totally distraught and went to the Rav. What am I going to do? What about the widows? The Rav said, there is something I know that I will share with you...he took out an ancient map -see this? It is an island, there is sand that has special property that can make people do teshuva. Go to this island immediately and he gave him exact longitude and latitude. Bring back the sand that causes people to do teshuva, take the sack, and put it all over the floor of the public square where people do business and the thief will walk there and he will do teshuva and return it.

The island has two sides – the north side has the teshuva side, the south side though has the property of making people mad. Be careful. Don't explore, just fill your sack and come back. He gave him a bracha and he was off. He took many sacks with him to fill. He got there, filled up the sacks. Then the yetzer hara said...life is long..maybe you will need the other sand too –maybe you will need it. He thought it through and he was very careful not to mix them up. All of the sacks for teshuva had a big tuf all over. And the other sand he put red paint for meshuga. He tied them carefully and put them on opposite ends of the boat. There was a storm at sea. All the sacks were torn open. When the storm abated, he could not differentiate. He got new sacks, swept the mixed sand back in the bags. He was so ashamed he did not tell the Rav, he sprinkled the mixed sand all over the market floor. For mincha, all of a sudden the shul is full, davening for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour and everyone is doing teshuva. The next night his money is restored. Someone returned it. Thank G-d, the sand worked. Looks like the other sand didn't work. Baruch Hashem. This continued for several weeks. Then people started arguing with each other. Your Rav is no good, mine is better. The meshuganah sand worked as well. In our era, we are all crazy.

In our times, at least we should know it is craziness, obsession with things that are not real, we must see the whole picture without being deceitful, without wanting more empowerment, without becoming more parochial and narrow. At the same time, we have to not be patronizing, we have to see everyone else with their lack as part of klal yisroel, a collective journey that leads to shelamos.

When a person plows deceit it takes them to falseness and unreality. Conversely a person who pursues peace deserves simcha because he is in the process of making things more whole (even though we won't have peace until Moshiach comes). Therefore, that person should pursue peace with the full knowledge that what they are going to get is wholeness and joy just for the pursuit, the pursuit alone, just trying, just moving in that direction is enough to give someone peace. Just trying will give a person the ability to see the beauty in everyone we encounter. We should just be worthy of this and take this seriously. Until next time then.