

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Reflections on why to make the effort to rise above negativity

Chazal tell us that we have no separate existence from Hashem and that everything that Hashem sends is good, for our ultimate growth, development and benefit. The corollary of this idea is that there is simply no place in Judaism for negativity. Yet, when we look at our daily lives, most of our day is involved with struggling with negativity – from the outside, from the inside, all high blood pressure inducing. This thought process IS what we are here to work on – overcoming our negativity and becoming holy. What does this mean in a practical sense that will HELP us with our negativity? How does this reality lighten our burden?

When we see how hard we struggle on a daily basis with negativity, and we make the effort to rise above, then we can realize that if someone is doing harm to us, they are probably in the same type of struggle as we. The key is to remember our own effort with our own struggles. Should we choose to tackle our own struggles and make a conscious decision to make ourselves in Hashem's image, our struggle becomes taking actions that are pleasing to Hashem in the situations we find ourselves. Meeting our test means to find a mitzvah to do or a middah of Hashem's to emulate. The external circumstances may or may not be relieved, but our decision at our free will point is HUGE and is the test we face. When we make an effort to emulate Hashem's attributes of mercy or follow the morality of the Torah, we catapult ourselves to a new plane of existence – we can have a new perspective on that quality of our lower nature, and on human nature in general. Once we see that we have choice, and we see how much work it is to train ourselves to make the right choice, we have acquired many things – self-control builds self respect. And we have acquired perspective. By seeing the work it takes to overcome, we can bring peace to the world - after all, the negativity is not about us – for we, by rising above, show that we are above it, can choose the high road. Instead, we can see that the negativity is a product of people being trapped in the sub-conscious space of human nature. By instilling G-d Consciousness within us, we uproot the most gripping negativity that we have to face – uncertainty, fear, anger, unknown, and hate. We can insulate ourselves from actions that OTHERS direct toward us when they fall victim to these same gripping negative energies - by showing Hashem that we choose to rise above human nature, that we strive to be holy, we make it possible for Hashem to treat us above nature and protect us from the harmful actions directed toward us.

Rebbetzin Heller says:

"If one can imagine another person's struggle with themselves and remember our own struggles, it will surely bring us to profound compassion, which will in turn overcome all hatred."