

## Nourishment for the Neshama

<http://lvracha.com>

**Tuesday, July 24, 2012**

### **Repairing the cause of the destruction of the temple - stop sinas chinum TODAY!**

Love your neighbor as yourself. It is a two part process. Love yourself. Then love your fellow the same way (i.e with the same understanding and thereby with action - giving)

#### How do we love ourselves?

What loving ourself is NOT:

1. indulging ourselves
2. being selfish
3. demanding things of others

What loving ourself IS:

1. Understanding WHO we are
2. Understanding WHERE our value comes from
3. Understanding HOW we are wired to experience pleasure

#### Who are we?

We are neshamas in a garment called a body (Rabbi Schwartz, Da Es Atzmecha see [www.bilvavi.net](http://www.bilvavi.net)) created to derive pleasure from connecting to Hashem in Olam Haze.

Our tzelem elokim is the power source that enlivens us for 120 years. Our tzelem elokim has Hashem's attributes of mercy in it and desires expression in this world. Our tzelem elokim is pure and cannot be diminished or damaged in any way other than the 36 ways Rambam tells us our souls can be lost in this world. In other words, if someone insults us, we cannot be diminished in our essence. Our tzelem elokim can neither be abandoned nor annihilated by other people or by our experiences.

The garment, our body, is the tool we have to build ourselves into a spiritual vessel that carries body and soul through Olam Haze. When we choose to emulate Hashem, our soul receives pleasure. We are beings that are designed to experience that pleasure. But it is not a natural pleasure because it is covered over by our bodies and nisayons. Traversing these in a world of adversity is how we tell Hashem that we know He is all there is in the world and that we love and appreciate Him. That is who we are, beings with free willed choice hunting for the knowledge of Hashem and asking ourselves at every moment, what is my next step in expressing Hashem's attributes or doing Hashem's will.

#### Where does our value come from?

The more we identify ourselves with our tzelem elokim, emulating Hashem, the more we experience the pleasure

for which we are created. Our value comes from being a representation of Hashem here in Olam Haze, even if we never feel that pleasure, and even if we disregard the directions He gives us in Torah. Our value as a tzelem elokim cannot be diminished. Hashem is very patient with us.

Our sense of self-esteem is enhanced when we use our free willed choice to love Hashem, fear Hashem or emulate Hashem. This is true because we are expending effort through rational free willed choice, which bonds our unique self to our eternal tzelem elokim. The unique self can come to experience pleasure in this world beyond any sensory pleasure of this world. Choices consistent with this are fully within our control and therefore it is safe to place our opinion about our self-esteem on this criteria: Am I loving, fearing or emulating Hashem, taking my next incremental step in serving Hashem?

#### How are we wired to experience pleasure?

When Adom sinned, Hashem attached the yetzer hara into the flow of soul that goes to us, making its deceptive seductions seem like part of the natural will of man. Man has a need to survive, to experience pleasure, have a desire for the crown of a good name, and feel close to Hashem. When we do these consistent with Torah, we are connected to Hashem. The yetzer hara takes us away from connection to Hashem and out of the world of the tzelem elokim through jealousy, passionate desires and ambition. Any negative emotions that we have, when analyzed, have at their root a thought that does not come from Torah. This is absolutely true because it is a Divine promise that Torah restores the soul. If we are feeling negative or disempowered, by definition we have been drawn away from the world of the tzelem elokim by the yetzer hara into a subjective and false reality. At that moment, it is an opportunity to use free will to choose instead true pleasure, the pleasure of reconnecting to Hashem through loving, fearing or emulating Him or doing His Will. Immediately upon doing so, we are wired to experience relief, clarity and a dissipation of the false reality that we almost attached the strength of our tzelem elokim to. NO NEED! Torah instructs us!

How do we love ourselves? We love ourselves by understanding that we are bodies with free will that carry a tzelem elokim which wants expression in this world through connection to Hashem. The tzelem elokim needs our bodies and minds to fulfill this connection. That is how we love ourselves.

#### How do we love our fellow the same way we love ourselves?

We love our fellow the same way we love ourselves when we extend the same understanding that we have toward ourselves to another person. That is, when we understand that the other person is a tzelem elokim undergoing nisayons and conflicting emotions, we are prepared to experience that person differently.

Most of the time, it feels like other people's emotions come at us like tornadoes, and we want to head to the basement and hide until it passes. We feel devastated by their comments, pained, hurt, unloved and a host of other whirlwinds of negativity that we are sucked into when our own weak grip on understanding that we are tzelem elokim and cannot be diminished is released and we find ourselves tempted by the yetzer hara's deceptions and we attach the strength of our neshamas to the tornado and get caught up in it.

When we truly love ourselves as tzelem elokim and see that another person CANNOT TAKE ANYTHING AWAY FROM US BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO POWER AT ALL, then we comprehend that in all the world there is only the simple unity of Hashem Who runs everything and sends us opportunities to connect to Him and experience that pleasure. Amazing, isn't it? That tornado of emotion is designed specifically for us to comprehend that the other person has been drawn out of their tzelem elokim and is whirling emotion towards us so that we can shine light by doing our positive mission or by rectifying what we came here to fix – by taking steps that actively show Hashem's attributes within us or by refraining from being drawn out of the world of the tzelem elokim.

The Slonimer Rebbe teaches us about finding our mission and Rabbi Aryeh Nivin, [www.newchabura.com](http://www.newchabura.com) has a personal development program designed to follow the Jewish year and bring more and more attachment to our tzelem elokim and connection to Hashem.

May our interest and pursuit of this interest be a zechus for all Klal Yisrael and may we be zocheh to see a Yom Tov within the week!