

## **Nourishment for the Neshama**

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### **Shame is fallen healthy guilt and PROVES we have a soul as described by the Ramchal in Derech Hashem**

May all insights be a zechus for the neshama of my mother Rota Devorah bat Gavriel Leib

In a world of digital photography, a fact of film that is quite relevant as a spiritual metaphor may become lost. Do you know that if you scan in the negative of a photo into Picasa, a free program on Google for editing photos, and then reverse the colors you come to see the picture with its colors?

What is the torment that every single person feels, starting from childhood into adult life? A child complains to her Mommy that a sibling said she was a pest! As adults we see how negative campaigning positively affects the election - the candidate slung mud at the other candidate. There is damage! Negative emotions are aroused.

This negative reality is proof positive that G.d exists.

Intelligence comes from the soul, not the brain. An integral part of intelligence, and the reason Hashem bestows it upon us, is so that we can make discernments – are we or are we not thinking, speaking, and doing what is precious to Hashem? If yes, good. If not, we have the wonderful opportunity in time and space to refer back to what Hashem's attributes are and with our free will choose instead to align our thoughts speech and deeds to reflect into time and space something that He does find precious. That is healthy guilt.

When our intellect with its property of discernment is constantly referring back to Hashem we are making the effort for which He created us. Hashem wishes to bestow upon us a pleasure in the next world for making this effort, and it will be the pleasure of our own discerning intellect that we made the effort while in time and space in a physical world where Hashem is totally hidden. To the extent we do not make this effort will be, in the world to come, a pain that will come from no other place than our very own discernment. We could have done better! We will be connected with Hashem but without the feeling of having earned it because we will continue having our intelligence with discernment and there will be only the truth of what effort we made and did not make in our own assessment. No rationalizations. No ifs or ands. No buts. Did we or did we not TRY to remember that all there is in the world is Hashem and attempt to refer back to Him while we had free will in time and space? Whether we succeeded or not does not matter. It will be our own intellectual discernment that gives us a feeling of pleasure or not based on our sincere effort.

Our self-esteem for eternity comes from our effort to constantly refer back to Hashem.

The Ramchal in Derech Hashem teaches that Hashem has given us real free will in order that our souls can avoid this bread of shame. Bread of shame is terminology that conveys the following. In order to avoid subjecting the built in discernment of our intellect to feeling the pleasure of touching perfection when in our own estimation we know we did not earn it, Hashem creates a world with real free choice. He gives us the ability to earn the pleasure of being connected to His perfection by making the choice while alive to refer back to Him and bring Him into time and space through our thoughts speech and deeds. When this healthy guilt falls, it becomes shame, trapped without Hashem and captured by our imagination and ego. Shame is a deep pain from the disconnected soul. It is not an emotion like anger or fear, although it triggers negative emotions and much worse.

A child has not yet learned how to refer intelligent discernment to Hashem – a child has not yet learned to understand intellect and discernment as the tools through which we refer back to Hashem in order to emulate His attributes. But the soul is still in the child and the disconnected soul feels fallen healthy guilt as pain - built into the soul is intellect with discernment that is either healthfully referred back to Hashem or

becomes fallen into the grips of ego and imagination generating gripping shame!

When two children disagree and each makes a true point, each feels as though their view is the right view and that the other view is simply wrong and needs adjustment! Each child can learn to refer back to Hashem and lovingly tether themselves internally to Torah values. Absent that, our soul feels "I am BAD" at the suggestion of a correction by another person! Some people may call this sensitive. I am suggesting that it is a sign of an intelligent high soul that is seeking to refer back to Hashem and has not yet been taught how.

The point here is to comprehend from this every day source of negative emotion is that negative emotion stemming from shame is proof that we have a soul and that G.d exists.

Being criticized or told that we did not meet someone's standards triggers negative emotion because our G.d given intelligent discernment reacts as if that person has the authority intended by our spiritual construction. Our G.d given intelligent discernment and healthy guilt referring back to Hashem falls. What issues from the soul because of fallen healthy guilt is a deep pain called shame. The body and ego find shame unbearable and develop tactics to avoid it. The most reactive one is blame.

Shame that is the result of being criticized, or insulted, or one upped (or any of the many ways intelligent discernment is used to judge others) PROVES there is G.d! The negative emotion that issues forth reveals the source – intelligent discernment. Why do we feel shame?

We feel shame when we are being told we are wrong and bad. And often the one sending the message is not doing it in a loving gentle way for our own growth and development! Mostly people tend to criticize to make themselves feel higher.

a. Just think - How many of us are guilty of telling others off when we feel they have been offensive. How many of us condemn in our minds when we see others not referring back to Hashem? Whether with thought or speech, these are IMPROPER uses of our own intelligent discernments. When we discern shortcomings in others, it is being shown to us because WE are guilty of it. At that moment it is for us to use that same intelligent discernment to refer back to Hashem – shall I be more loving, more patient, more overlooking, shall I cast my and their sins into the sea? We can create in our hearts a huge mikvah when our intelligent discernment referred back to Hashem.

b. And when we are on the receiving end of judgment? We experience the humiliation with gratitude. That shame negates our own guilt in being sometimes destructive with thought speech and deed. And as we recognize that pain and humiliation as part of the way Hashem cleans us, we begin the process of moving away from the cycle of shame and blame.

The crucial understanding is that just like a "knee jerk" reaction, intelligence with discernment is proof of our G.dly soul – proof that G.d created us in order to feel with that discernment the greatest pleasure when we judge our effort to refer back to Him.

And thus, with all the judging and shame in the world, and all the submission to those wielding the chastisements, let us remember that we can REVERSE the colors and instead of submitting to those wielding the chastisements and suffering under oppressive abuse we can uplift our pain to healthy guilt and use our intelligent discernment to refer back to Hashem and bring His attributes of mercy into the world, doing mitzvahs and learning Torah. For shame is the cruel negative in time and space that proves the positive true existence of the One King Who designs us with a two world picture in mind basing our eternal self-esteem on our choice and effort to refer back to Him while we are here in time and space.

May we be zocheh to the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu speedily.