

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Friday, November 02, 2012

The pleasure of choosing to serve Hashem and getting started on a lifelong journey

Rabbi Nivin www.newchabura.com teaches in one of the personal development chaburas important writings from the Slonimer Rebbe. Rabbi Nivin teaches us that if we walk through life asking in the moment, "is this precious in the eyes of Hashem?" and adjusting ourselves accordingly, then we prepare ourselves in proper service to Hashem and in so doing we fix up our bad character traits without focusing directly on them. Even if we don't have a clear understanding of what it is that is at the root of our bad habits!

With consistent effort over time, using our natural limited analytical mind to discern if what we are doing is pleasing or not to Hashem, and by using choice and effort, we can gradually draw closer and closer in serving Hashem.

Why do we want to serve Hashem? It is the greatest pleasure that a person can experience, it is why we were created, and it is the way we accomplish the purpose for which Hashem gave us life.

How do I know it is the greatest pleasure? It seems that many people are pleasuring themselves and having a great time with power and money – not paths that ask is this precious to Hashem or not. How do we know that the path being suggested will bring us pleasure - it seems like it is quite effortful, sacrificing and boring! And not only that, let's get practical here, we all need money to live!

The pleasure that is referred to is something we can experience in verbal introspection. When we pour out our hearts to Hashem, telling Him about our struggles, our frustrations, our pain, our challenges, and we ask Him to please lead us in a path to do what is precious in His eyes, we create the spiritual entities that lead us there. And because we asked Hashem sincerely to do what is precious to Him (or to help us stop doing what is NOT precious to Him), He immediately helps because He is our Father. The way of the help is a moment of calmness, of peacefulness, of clarity. And that peacefulness is a greater pleasure than anything money can buy because it is deeper and more joyous and higher and completely available to us through our choice and effort. It is a peace of mind that cannot be purchased or manipulated from another person. It is true pleasure.

What if I don't feel that pleasure or calmness? What if I am just as upset after the talking to Hashem as before? That should become the topic of the next round of conversation with Hashem – it might be that instead of talking about ourselves in Hashem's presence, that we were just ranting and getting ourselves worked up, feeding our negative thinking rather than exposing it and yearning to be lifted out. If we truly yearn for Hashem to lift us out, He will. He is very accessible. We are the ones who put the roadblocks up.

Why should we begin doing something so strange as to speak about my difficulties in Hashem's presence? It sounds time consuming and odd! People are hundred story buildings. If we look at ourselves as only the first floor of the building, and solidify our focus there, we miss out on 99 levels! In the package that Hashem has given each of us is a body, a personality, and a spark of His attributes. We feel our body, we

become familiar with our personality, but how do we consider the spark of His attributes that is within us? We may even not believe in Him, chas v'chalila! That atheistic and disbelieving place is the gift He gives us with free will. It is an egotistical illusion of separate existence. It belongs to the reality of unreality, in a world that is so filtered that we cannot see that all there is in the world is Hashem. To be alerted to this should be enough for us to say, "Aha! I am having a moment of disbelief, better talk to Hashem and reconnect before this goes too far!" If we had the vision of a higher world that can see how dark it is here, we would understand this much better.

The feedback loop of the pleasure of asking for Hashem to lead us to do what is precious to Him and receiving calmness is how we know we are not just the first story of a 100 story building. We can consider that there are higher levels to who we are and seek to reach them.

How? Every moment understand that there is a pleasure that is far greater than the pleasure our egocentric self is telling us to pursue and discern, is this precious to Hashem? If not, tell Hashem, Hashem I only wish to do what is precious to You please help me. With concerted effort over time, our own issues slowly melt away as we gain insight and understanding. We can come to a place of clarity, and unravel the onion of our negative traits in bite size pieces – a lifelong task.

Rabbi Nivin lovingly and gently encourages us to begin the journey! May we be zocheh to soon see the Moshiach as we gently correct ourselves out of love for Hashem.