

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Blind Spots

There are some questions that seem so impossible to answer. For example, how can I know what my blind spots are when they are blind spots?

Surely after Hashem finds circumstances to bring my limitations into focus and I may begin to apply behira (free willed choice, either successfully or with failure), I begin to get a glimpse of my blind spot. Hopefully, with devotion to correcting myself and help from Hashem, the blind spot becomes more visible and after repeated attempts to respond in a manner that is pleasing to Hashem, the matter is no longer a blind spot but incorporated within my consciousness.

Now what? Perhaps I see someone with the same blind spot. OR, perhaps someone sees one of my blind spots (someone who has already brought that matter into their consciousness.).

No one wants to be judged. Is the purpose of vision and comprehension so that we can chastise each other? Obviously not. So what is the natural tendency to compare and contrast good for?

Take the circumstance of a young child who does not wish to go to bed. After all, the siblings are up and having fun and the child feels left out and unfaired against. The child makes these arguments, that it isn't fair, that the child feels badly. Yet the parent knows that the child is exhausted and needs more sleep than the older children. The value that the parent is operating on for the good of the child is a different, higher awareness of the needs of the child. The child cannot comprehend the awareness of the parent and complains and rebels.

Now what if all of the children join together to defend the right of the younger child to join them in the activity and stay up late? The parent is faced with a whole group, and the group argument takes on a new strength, because there are more things to consider. Nevertheless, the parent stands firm, the youngest must go to bed and the others must cooperate as well and stop spiraling the younger one. Parents have that authority and the ability to lovingly and gently give motivation to all.

Transfer that scene to a society of adults, where some have sought a knowledge of Gd with more learning than others have sought. In this world, Hashem is hidden, there is no outward apparent authority enforcing what is truly good and real. Yet with pursuit of the knowledge of Gd, a person can inwardly find this authority and see that it is real, eternal, loving and the only power that there is.

Is it fair to say that one who pursues and begins to find knowledge of Gd by learning about loving Hashem, fearing Hashem and emulating Hashem is aware of certain concepts on a certain level (i.e that there is a spiritual authority administering reward and punishment, responding to us in relation to our level of emunah and observance of Torah and mitzvahs). more than they were before they began pursuing that knowledge?

I think back to before I began learning Duties of the Heart, Mesillas Yesharim, Tomer Devorah as well as Chumash and Baruch Hashem I see some growth in my understanding of my nature and how best I can fulfill my mission. What should my reaction be to the time I was blind to this? Surely it is not one of disdain or displeasure. Imagine if at the time I began this journey I could see into the future and think, hey I want to make myself into someone who will be someone who dislikes my roots! That would never have been much of a motivator.

It is for this reason that I am so grateful that Hashem opened my eyes and has allowed me moments of closeness with Him, that I can look back at who I was and appreciate the goodness inside of me and what drew me toward learning – the light of certain inspiring people and their love for all Jewish people, their concern for connection, their kindness and understanding and warmth. With what these wise and loving people knew, they did not turn their backs or their warmth away seeing how stuck I was in “the other side” but saw within me the good, what was pure and attached to Hashem, and THAT is what nurtures the curiosity and the ability to pursue a knowledge of Hashem. I believe that even if they knew for certain, with a guarantee, that I would never move an inch on the path of knowledge of Hashem, the character traits within these people would not have allowed them to treat me differently from the manner they did. It was who they chose to be.

Spiritual accomplishment is not a social grouping. It is development of a vertical relationship with Hashem to bring consciousness in harmony with His Will and the continued deeper choosing to come more and more along that infinite path. Yet the farther along the path, the closer and warmer we can be to every Jew! For in the spiritual reality, Hashem is close to every Jew, intimately, whether a person is aware or blind to that reality. And He loves every one of us, no matter what. His purpose is for us to open our eyes and find Him. As a person travels along the infinite path of seeking knowledge of Gd, love for our fellow Jew increases. One Jew’s survival can never be threatened by another Jew. One candle does not put out another. Together we shine light.

May our red flags wave at us when we feel negativity toward any Jew, for this is a signal that we may have taken a step toward the other side, the side that says there is more than just the simple unity of Hashem – there is no other force or power. Hashem is One. It is He who awaits our recognition of this simple but hard to comprehend reality. Let us start by considering that it could be true. No matter what level of observance, from secular to holy, we can bring into our views of each other a knowledge of Gd and His love for us – manifested by our very souls being within our bodies, our very brains being able to function, our very hearts continuing to beat. No matter where we are, we can attract and view each other with favorable sentiments that can strengthen our people. Warmth, understanding, curiosity, patience, and respect.

May we be zocheh to comprehend that wherever we are, and no matter who we align ourselves with, at all times seeking knowledge of the One who beats our heart can bring us upon an infinite path of joy and fulfillment far beyond any other path.