

## **Nourishment for the Neshama**

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**Friday, October 15, 2010**

### **Cheshvan 5771 – Beginning the year toward personal inner objectives for healing**

Cheshvan 5771 – Beginning the year in the direction I wish to grow

Somewhere along the line I developed the corrupted thought that if I ask for what I want, it means that the one I ask will feel crushed, over-run, nullified, controlled/dominated, and feel hatred toward me for it. This is because the way I saw people asking for what they want produced these feelings in those asked. The people who showed this to me were chastising, determined, and only able to see what they want, not the impact they had on others, showing me also that others are not going to willingly give to a person - to get what you want you have to use this type of approach. I thus developed the attitude that I don't want anything! That I only can expect to receive what I can do for myself, nothing from other people, that depending on other people is a complete disappointment and to be avoided at all costs, that I have to be self-focused and goal oriented to take proper care of myself.

Parallel in the same time frame has been the women's movement from the sixties, where women who lovingly and with mesiras nefesh gave to their husbands and families were now taught that their spouses were male chauvinist pigs (notice the intrinsic chastisement of men, who were left stunned and speechless with this attack) and that women needed to see their "rights", their equal rights, to work and opportunity in order to "free" them from becoming dependent and trapped inside marriages where the men exploited the women! Look at that language! So full of direct and implied chastisements, especially chastising of women who were not able to articulate their sense of closeness with Gd for being nurturers, that they felt they were His way of bringing love to their families. Instead, the role of nurturer became more secularized and unisexed. Women don't need men. Remember the tee-shirt, a woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle? How concretizing of a move toward self-focus is that! Perhaps at the crux of this movement could even be the sad reality that men raised by mothers who were as described in paragraph one, developed in a similar fashion and therefore were emotionally negligent to their wives. Could it be that the women's movement and the sense it made to so many was a validation of the brokenness inflicted on sons by the mothers who crushed others to get what they want? And did the women who became liberated go in the direction of nurturers and healthy relationships, or was the damage done so intense as to prevail upon our psyches to continue protecting our boundaries at all costs, negotiating hard, being assertive in order to avoid being exploited or taken advantage of?

Are we, today, going deeper into the darkness of self-focus and disbelief? Or are we able to bring Gd back into the picture and if so, what does that mean? What does that look like?

What if we bring Gd back into the picture? There is so much more to understand in interactions beyond the surface, externalities! Let me give an example.

A friend of mine greeted someone she worked for, another woman, who had just returned to the office after a vacation and my friend gave her a hug. The woman who had just returned took it upon herself to privately tell my friend that she might want to wash her sweater, that it had a slight smell. My friend thanked her, said she didn't realize it, and that was that, until she left the office and started to feel badly a little, because the sweater didn't smell to her. My friend formed the idea that perhaps this woman found her to be distasteful for some reason, and she began to

muse what to do. Perhaps she should say something, perhaps she should find another job, etc. Some of these thoughts started to make her agitated. And then she remembered – do not stray after the thoughts of your heart! ...the message came from Gd through this woman. She was planning to wear this sweater for an important occasion and it needed to be cleaned first and she had not planned that out! Oh yes, and a friend of hers the night before had asked her what she was wearing and she ignored and neglected thinking about it! Gd had sent this woman to tell her what she needed to do! There is no need to respond at all to this event except to clean the sweater! And also, my friend realized she has no separate existence from Hashem so there is no insult..she is not her sweater or any of the wrong conclusions anyone might draw from the fact that the sweater might need cleaning! All of those judgments belong to the work of the one making the judgments. We are not here to judge each other, although if we do, the messages we give to others serve Gd's purpose, as in this case where my friend had not properly planned.

Now what if Gd had not been put in the picture and my friend would have felt the need to "not be spoken to that way" or "not to be disrespected." There would have been a sharp retort designed to cause the woman to back off and to mind her own business. Perhaps it would have gotten nasty. Perhaps it would have resulted in a change of employment. The value acted out would have been that this type of comment from an employer to an employee is not okay and that my friend knows how to "take care of herself."

I imagine there are those reading this who might find the latter response important. Please forgive me if my words cause you pain. I do not mean to do that. Instead, I wish to show that the message comes from Gd and that if we have a close relationship with Gd and He is trying to tell us something, we have to see it for what it is and not be troubled by how it comes. It is an opportunity to divest ourselves of our naïve and imperfect understanding of this world and what we are here for (we are here to attain merits by doing mitzvahs, thinking positively about each other, caring about each other, emulating Hashem's attributes, guarding our eyes, bowing our hearts, watching our speech, seeking out Hashem at all times and more.)

This week we are reading about Sodom and Gomorrah, how it had to be destroyed because the corruption was so great that people could not find for themselves what is good in Gd's eyes – the societal values obscured beyond recovery by concretizing corruption what might have been discovered by people with only Gd's natural hiddenness in this world. We are meant to discern Gd despite His hiddenness, not concretize the accusations and offerings of the yetzer hara into societal norms that make our emotions so strong toward a different value that we have no chance of discovering His presence

We can no longer afford to defend our ego-boundaries by crushing others instead of yearning for healing and redemption and behaving in loving and gentle ways! It is not getting us anywhere but further into darkness and disbelief!

Avraham Aveinu discovered Hashem in His concealment and brought Him to the world! Let us once again desire to "kiss" Hashem with our love so that we not confused even if we fall down. We need to bring Hashem to this world through bringing His light, love and will through our actions.