

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Friday, January 31, 2014

A long message simply to inspire us to emunah in Chodesh Adar, the sister to Elul - Know Hashem and Who is Nishmas Am Yisrael

We were fortunate to hear besoros tovos in two recent missing persons stories. The amazing response that helped law enforcement officials locate and return the missing people was a tremendous Kiddush Hashem. And we feel that our tefillos were answered with yes.

A missing child strikes a chord in every parent. There is no rest until the child is located. It is a form of suffering that we never wish to know, more intense than money or many health issues. Watching a parent suffer regarding a child wrenches our heart like nothing else. All we want to do is something that will help find the child and relieve their pain.

And this appears to be true regardless of which branch of Judaism we associate. If a child is missing, a part of us is missing, no matter what.

And that is the emes, the absolute truth.

Imagine now if the child is located and the child is asked if it is the child of the parent and the child has no recollection of the parent, perhaps it was so long ago, perhaps the child has been drugged, perhaps the child has been damaged. The horror of the parent is not relieved when the child comes home, for the child that they had known is someone who does not recognize them or realize how much they love the child, no matter what. The parent lovingly cares for the child, year after year, taking care of the child's needs, and yet the original memory of the child does not return. The child has some appreciation of the parent for all that the parent does, but does not necessarily relate to the parent as the child should, and it breaks the heart of the parent. It is as if they are not really a family. The parent bemoans this loss to friends and family, searching for ways for the child to once again regain that connection, the feeling of being adored and beloved, to the parent. Yet no suggestions of the family or friends succeed. The child seems happy, but the parent knows that the child could be so much happier. Why happier? The reason is that the child, in regaining the connection with the parent, will fulfill a role within the family that will generate for the child the greatest pleasure possible, for the parent is none other than the King of the Universe, whose first born child, Nishmas Am Yisrael, is given a limited role that brings the greatest pleasure a person can experience in life. But the child does not remember, does not find the topic interesting more than on a superficial level, and although tries to have a relationship with the parent, does not dig a well deep enough to tap into the waters that would be the source for all vitality and joy. In fact, the child's friends and teachers tell the child that it really is too hard, that it is far easier to be happy with the pleasures that the parent gives to sustain the child without bothering to search to fulfill the important role that the parent has in mind for the child.

As the child grows older, external pleasures, such as ego, honor, money, intimacy or heaven forbid drugs become ways for the child to feel that pleasure is in the child's ability to seek and receive by the child's own hand. The parent, who adores the child, indulges the child and continually maintains the child believing endlessly that the child will soon return to the position that the parent has in mind.

One day, the parent realizes that the child's vital signs are fading. Whatever else the child is doing, they are neglecting to nourish a relationship with the parent that has to do with basic survival. Because the child does not realize that it has inherent value and power, its neglect in relating causes damage not only to the relationship but to the parent's ability to continue to give to the child what it needs to survive. The child begins to see its vitality decline and thinks that the parent is being cruel or arbitrary, or demanding. The child does not understand that its decline is due to the destructive influence that is formed when the child chooses to disbelieve that its neglect of the role the parent designs for it is causing the child's own suffering. Instead, the child begins to disbelieve that there is a parent at all and drifts more and more into pleasures that the child can choose to gratify itself with. No more are the internal pleasures of fulfilling the role that the parent had created so that the child would have an inherently healthy way to feel pleasure for the child's choices.

Soon the child becomes captivated by a group of people who the child associates with, and that begins to take the place of the parent altogether. The child stops thinking about the parent. But the parent NEVER stops thinking about the child.

Thus far, this has been a story seemingly about two different people, a parent and a child. Let us look at this instead as a relationship between our intellect, our body and our soul. The intellect has been captured by the pleasure-driven body as a result of our having ingested from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Before that time, the intellect understood quite clearly to attach itself to Hashem's will. The opening through which we fell is confusion about glory – the truth of glory is that all glory belongs to Hashem. Adam believed that ingesting from that tree would help him bring more glory to Hashem, even though Hashem told him that it would not. In his love for Hashem, Adam wanted to prove to Hashem his loyalty and in the process, removed himself from Gan Eden.

Notice that I said removed himself. This is the consequence Hashem set for having ingested from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – man became mortal, annihilated, and was sent into a lower world, the world of asya, thereby apparently abandoned by Hashem, left on a footstool of a distant world in the hopes that we would once again be able to ascend to the level of Adam before the sin.

Yet Hashem as the Creator sent us here for a purpose. And that purpose is to bring His mercy from the highest world, a world of wisdom and total love, from within us here in the lowest world, a world of doing where self-interested goals are considered inviolate, where coalitions of people join together in order to assert their common goals more successfully, and work out a way to bring these attributes of mercy into the creation, as a delicious fruit or a fragrant spice, something pleasing to Hashem. The more we see success in the teaming together of strong-willed people, the more we forget the original pleasure for which we are designed, which is to relate in this low world to Hashem in a manner that will provide Hashem with a dwelling place in this world and bring Him delight.

How do we give Hashem back His beloved first-born child, Nishmas Am Yisrael? It is very simple. Each one of us experiences animalistic instincts and urges. Torah teaches us how to indulge in these. Yet part of those animalistic urges include reactions that are nothing more than basic savage desires, like revenge for example or for more perverted desires that lead to unconscionable acts that violate express Torah mandates regarding with whom we may be intimate. We have forgotten that the source of all vitality is Hashem because we believe that any gratification we experience due to our efforts is coming as a consequence of our initiative and not as a gift from Hashem.

All glory is Hashem's, our Father, the Creator of the world. Please forgive us for every thing that anything we do reflects anything that is other than Your glory, for in all the world, there is only Hashem, Who utters everything into existence in all its intricacies every second. The place of the world is Hashem Who creates this world so that we can relate to His name.

May we comprehend fully that we are in the lowest of the worlds where the best we can hope for is to unscramble the world of yetzira, the world where the battle between the yetzr hara and the yetzer tov is waged to see who will dominate our speech and deeds; and after we unscramble, we forge through to bring the koach, the strength from the kelpas and ask Hashem to move that koach to strengthen what is holy, that part of us that is capable of bringing to a higher world a demonstration of mercy, prayer and kindness.

Hashem wants us to relate to the place inside of us that is yearning to bring His mercy into action out of love and awe of Hashem, with understanding that there is no other power, and with emotional clarity of the pleasure of doing so.

It is Rosh Chodesh Adar aleph. Can we imagine the joy in the world if we were able to find within ourselves a way to return the part of our soul that is lost in our human bodies to its function of bringing Hashem's mercy into the world because we have awe and love of Hashem and wish to elevate this world back to the world of Creation, of Beria, of understanding, of bina? We can make choices that feed the world, or we can become a child on life support where it appears that despite all attempts to resuscitate, the body remains unresponsive and the soul remains trapped in its kelpas, dead in this world while alive, heaven forbid.

Emanah is something we can all deepen. From the parts of our subconscious where we have doubts, from the parts of our subconscious where we unknowingly rebel against Torah and Hashem's will, we can strategize using verbal introspection to unify more of the koach ingrained in our nature from this lower hay world of asiya, to the side of rectification and sanctification of Hashem's name in the world of creation. We may fall over and over because we are in the lowest world, but each time we can use free will to land the koach on the side of kedusha, holiness, meaning we bring Torah, prayer and kindness into the world. Doing so eliminates more and more the garments of taiva and galva.

One step in emanah is to at all times understand that no matter how much it seems that there is a whole world with so many independent looking things, there is only Hashem. In all the world, there is only Hashem who brings creation into existence with the 10 utterances at every moment. And may that empower us when we feel confused or conflicted to step back, look upward, thank Hashem for the opportunity and tell Him that we know it is Him and Him alone, that we with our free will desire to unify His Name and to please lead us in a path to use the koach to sanctify His Name and please forgive us and have mercy on us and redeem us.

So the next time you find yourself stewing over something of self-interest, stop the stewing, discard the false ideas and projections, and stir into the koach of that stewing awe and love of Hashem and send a bracha, either in private or public way.