

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Have a heart at Chanukah - for Hashem!

As we are about to light the Chanukah candles, the desire for the Moshiach and the lighting of the real menorah yearns within us.

Today in reading Shmuel II about King David's desire to build a House for Hashem, the prophet Natan is told by Hashem that King Dovid is not the one to build it, that it would be his son. Chazal tell us that Dovid interpreted the reason as all the killing that he had to do. Even though it was all necessary, the apparent result is that the House of Gd should not be built with lead which is used for weapons, that it should not be a conquering symbol. It is a House of Gd, a spiritual haven, where Hashem's Shechina dwells. Thus the task of building it is left for Shlomo HaMelech.

Metaphorically, what does this reveal to us about where our sense of self should be housed? To me, it reinforces the idea that our sense of self is best placed within our neshama, the part of us that truly desires to serve Hashem, and not in our ego, the part of us that wants to look good. Taking this analogy a step further, where shall my actions concentrate? On actions that bring me to look good (i.e. winning, being right, conquering, achieving) or on actions that expend energy to doing what is truly good and right in Hashem's eyes (i.e. mitzvahs, learning, growing closer to the Divine by bringing out the aspect of the Divine within us)? For me, the answer is the latter. But how do we acquire a taste of this as being emotionally pleasurable, for in truth we operate from our hearts.

If our hearts are not in it, how will we be fortified to emotionally continue each day toward goals that may seem like a necessary obligation, a temporary diversion from what we experience as pleasure? How do we change our hearts? We have role models! Mattisyahu ben Yochanan, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, Yosef HaTzaddik and Rachel Imeinu - their stories illustrate how their hearts were purified to serve Hashem, with love, hearts that emotionally and passionately recognized the simple unity of Hashem.

The first step is to intellectually realize why we WANT to change our hearts, to realize where we may be clutching to ourselves with the precious resource of consciousness things that ultimately are futile. Sara Rigler refers to this category of pleasure as "Chandeliers on the Titanic."

Torah of Hashem is pure and it restores the soul. Exactly what does that mean?

Please see
Rabbi Yaakov Zalman Labinsky [Becoming Divine](#)
Rebbetzin Heller's [Duties of the Heart](#)