

Nourishment for the Neshama

<http://lvracha.com>

Friday, January 21, 2011

Intelligence, where does it come from and what is it for?

Have you ever tried to sew something? The first thing to do is to thread the needle. As my eyes age, this has become the most troubling part. I can poke and push the thread this way and that, and I can pull the needle in and out, but if I have not been able to put the thread through the eye of the needle, my motions will not sew one single stitch.

Let's call the thread the intelligence that Gd has given to me, my faculty of mind. And let's call the eye of the needle the present, this minute reality. When I am able to focus my intelligence on the present moment, making choices that will be pleasing to Gd, I feel alive, worthwhile and productive. Unfortunately, what all too often happens is that as I try to thread the needle, an image from the past invades and seemingly pushes my thoughts to the left. Or, I scan the future to see what harm could be out there if I do what I think is right, and it seems as though the thread is now pushed to the right. In either instance, I have failed to apply my intelligence toward doing what is good and right in Gd's eyes to the present moment, causing me to lose an opportunity to connect with the greatest pleasure that there is. Rather, I nurtured ideas formed in my mind and brought them into the present re-living them instead of what is actually occurring, or anticipating pain in the future based on the reactions of others in the past.

Sit back a moment and just put down whatever is on our minds. Look at the beautiful scenery, feel the warmth of our homes, the comfort of our cars or wherever we are. Take a deep breath and just live for a moment. Do we feel a special joyous appreciation? Isn't that wonderful? Why can't we do this every second?

Welcome to the present. Let me emphasize that what I am describing is NOT to be misconstrued as exalting hedonistic ideas such as to eat drink and be merry. Rather, what I am describing is a training of our mind to choose to live in the present, a sophisticated state of mastering our thought processes so that our Gd-given intelligence is used to bring out the aspect of Gd's image within us....we can shine light!

There are only two mitzvahs that we do with our mind alone.....loving Gd and fearing Gd. The other mitzvahs involve our bodies and objects as well as our concentration (kavanna). We read volumes on how to properly do the mitzvahs – mezuzos, tefillin, challah, Shabbos and more. Where are the volumes on how to utilize the precious gift of our intelligence so that we are performing the mitzvahs of loving and fearing Gd? Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto's Path of the Just discusses this in detail.

When we are able to focus our intelligence in the present with Gd's Will in mind, there is an added energy that we feel, like a tailwind lifting us up. We connect our mind with the Divine mind. This shows us how small we are, but also how much Gd loves us because He gave us this way of knowing Him. In Psalms King David says Gd is like a shadow on our right side, always there. It is our consciousness diverted to negativity that obscures Gd, Edging Gd Out (E-G-O).

What type of mistakes have I made with my mind? Number one for me is thinking that I know what someone else is really doing. We learn from the Baal Shem Tov that is totally impossible for one person to know with 100% certainty from Gd's perspective what another person is really doing. And why do we need to know? For myself, I like to think that if I can predict then I can control and thereby have a sense of self-determination. Great for planning a trip, for making a train, or for getting homework done. But when it comes to people politics, we enter the arena of the unknown and the mistakes that happen are that we project and see in others things that may be within us. We fall into the mirror. We make too many calculations. Yes, to a certain degree we can predict people's behaviors – the study of

psychology and sociology both show this. However, when it comes to how I apply my faculty of mind, when I think I can see the root of another person, chances are very great that I am looking deeply into a mirror and seeing my own faults.

Thus, coming up with ways to corral our thoughts when they turn negative becomes a major point in good mental health. The actual reality is known only to Gd. However, we have the ability to turn what could be mud and grime in the four inches between our ears into light and love. And yes, this has a huge impact on those in our immediate space, on our own lives and on the world in general. Don't underestimate it! And when we use something correctly (i.e. to bring love and light into the world with our intelligence), we are sending Gd a message that we know He loves us and we love Him.

Here is a short story to illustrate:

A king once announced that whoever would reach the top of a very high tower by his deadline would succeed him. Many lined up to try. The bell sounded and they raced to climb the seemingly endless tower.

Hours passed and most of the people lost hope of making it to the top in time. Two men were still climbing when one said, "I've had it! Look, there's only 10 minutes to go and we are no where near the top! This king is mocking us! I have no more strength for this, I'm done!" and he left.

The last man was also exhausted but he declared,

"My king is a loving king and I trust that he did not set us up to fail. I'm going to keep on going and even though I have no idea how, I am totally open to the possibility that I can get to where I need to go in time."

Just as he finished speaking he got to the next level and found a door with a sign: "Express elevator to the top." He took it and reached the king who was waiting for him with open arms. "I am SO happy that you didn't give up! Now you can receive my blessings!"

This is a little clarity reminder that G-d has infinite ways to get you an express elevator to where you most need to go as long as you don't give up. G-d has the greatest blessings waiting for you. He is waiting for you to trust in His infinite love.

If you like this story, you may like [The Clarity Seminar](#)