

## Nourishment for the Neshama

<http://lvracha.com>

**Sunday, September 15, 2013**

### **Interrupting an ego reaction at inception - it takes an understanding of pleasure and of choice**

The order of Hashem's attributes of mercy begins with He tolerates insults. This is something we are instructed to emulate. The challenges come at the level of nefesh. Such challenges are hurled at us almost all day long. Because we all want to have pleasant days, let's take a closer look at pleasure and the best way to reach our goals.

Let's start by understanding a basic principle of pleasure. The way for our body/ego to experience pleasure is in relation to another. For example I have more than someone else or not, or I look better or not. The competitive, comparative self is of time and space and is calculating and measuring and trying to draw from its calculations a rating of how good to feel about oneself. Basing our self esteem in such a way limits the amount of pleasure that a person can experience because the field of comparing to 7 billion people on earth is bound to cause limitations to our pleasure.

Torah's principle that we are made in the image of Gd and that there is a part of us that cannot be diminished or damaged or destroyed becomes a far better choice for basing our self-esteem. Because I did nothing to acquire the soul that I have, I can't claim any credit for just the reality of having one, although that is the source of human dignity as well as the basis for treating others respectfully and with dignity. I can, however, base my self esteem on my choice and effort to give voice to Torah values and to the characteristics that reflect the image of Gd. Whether or not I am successful, the choice to try to emulate Hashem is totally in my control and I can, at the end of the day, feel good about trying and know that I did with my strength what I could and can feel good about myself, regardless of the outcome.

Thus we have two systems within us, and towards us is hurled an insult, an affront to our ego. It is inevitable that this will happen because Hashem sends us these curve balls, designed to give us the choice of where we derive our pleasure so that we may strengthen our image of ourselves in emulating His attributes and bringing these to the world.

But we have free will and we have to choose.

The most natural and common and normal reaction is to have an ego reaction, with the emotions involved, that can result in negativity on one or both parts. What happens is that we think we will derive pleasure from pursuing that avenue. This is because of two erroneous beliefs. The first erroneous belief is that of what pleasure is. We are familiar with the pleasures of this world and that seems to be the only pleasure we know. But that is not true. Torah teaches us that we are designed to experience the greatest pleasure a person can know, here in time and space, and that is a taste of touching the perfection of Hashem which we experience when we emulate Him. Unfortunately, to experience this spiritual pleasure takes effort and it strains our intellect. However, the good news is that it is totally free. It is not addictive or bad for your health. All we have to do is shift the focus of our choice to one simple question: what is it this moment that Hashem requires of me?

To Interrupt an ego reaction, just consider. Why should I rebel against Hashem and do something other than what Hashem wants from me In the moment to satisfy my ego just because something is coming to me from Hashem through someone who is not succeeding with the curve ball Hashem threw them? This helps us begin to see that we can shift our focus and become Gd centered rather than me centered.

Shifting our focus is the subject of Rabbi NivIn's personal development chaburas. He lovingly and gently guides us to seeing ourselves as able to shift our identity to our soul. He has just started a new chabura [www.newchabura.com](http://www.newchabura.com) and it is not too late to join.

May we all have a year of healing, forgiveness, renewal and redemption.