

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Place of the World is Hashem - how to succeed against the arguments of the yetzer hara

If there is one gift to share to help a person at behira, it is reading and re-reading Nefesh haChayim Shaar Gimmel by Rabbi Chaim Veloshin. Chapter 1 Hamakom, Gd is the Place of the World. That chapter starts with

"Mishnah in Avos 2:18 which says: When you pray, do not make yhour prayer a set routine, but rather beg for compassion and favor before haMakom (the Omnipresent, literally 'the Place.'" The Geara asks: Why is the Holy One, blessed be he, given the byname of makom (Place)? Because He is the Makom (Place) of the world, but the world is not His place...

...Hashem the Place supports and sustains the worlds and all creations...Just as the Holy One, blessed be he, nourishes the whole world, so does the soul nourish the body. This is the simple meaning of the concept of Hashem being the "Place of the world."

This understanding is the counter-argument to the downward pulls of the bodily desires, the nagging of the yetzer hara to draw us away from service deeper into physicality, which is nearer and full of temptation. Devoid of Torah wisdom, human nature does not have a barometer for the suffering of the soul when we deviate from Torah. Yes our bodies and our minds need whatever the yetzer hara is telling us, that is the grain of truth with which the yetzer hara grabs us into random emotional bonding with destructive action. With knowledge of service of Hashem, knowing that the place of the world is Hashem soothes the lower soul in order that the lower soul comprehend that there is no better choice it can make for its desires and pleasures than to conform with Torah.

"Hashem is the soul of the world. Hashem, in His awesome power, withdrew into Himself, making room so to speak for the worlds and creations to emerge into separate existence, in different places, some holy and pure, others impure and soiled. We, from the human point of view, perceive with our senses what appears to be the real world. The laws governing our conduct commanded by Hashem are based on this perception of ours, and with this perception, the Sages compared Hashem's relationship with the world to the relationship of the soul to the body. Indeed, the Zohar says: Hashem is the soul of the world. With his sense, man perceives only his body, whereas the soul, although it pervades the entire body, is invisible to the human eye, and is evident only to the intellect. Similarly, we perceive the physical world and its creatures with our senses, whereas Hashem, Who is present in all the limbs and organs confined His glory, making room for the physical world to come into existence with its forces and new creaturs. Therefore, it is our duty to know and firmly etch in our consciousness the reality of Creation as it relates to the halachah. This is the foundation of our faith and the basis of the Torah and all the mitzvohs."