

## Nourishment for the Neshama

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### time to remove the trace of rebellion inherent in standing up for truth

This clip details from Rabbi Soloveitchik stemming back to the Nefesh HaChalm how the Alter Rebbe and Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditichiv approached the Vilna Gaon, who saw their holiness and chose to remain loyal to the emes of Torah that Hashem gave him. The Gra had the greatest understanding of Torah that a person can have. What he saw in Chassidus was its beauty. What happened?

We don't have further insight into the matter, except that we know there was tremendous disagreement that was well-founded and justifiable. The Tanya, which is the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov brought down by the great grandson of the Maharal of Prague, contain essential necessities distilled from the Zohar for every Jew, necessities to help us comprehend our lives and how we are to serve Hashem by unifying and sanctifying His Name

Whatever good reasons the Vilna Gaon had in his view of chassidus, two hundred years later we have the benefit of perspective. Based solely on human nature, if something appearing valuable comes into Judaism without a history within the mesorah, there is a healthy reason to consider it as invalid, because it has not been part of the talmudic discussions for thousands of years. Ironically, it is the Torah personality who is developed that holds tightly to traditional sources, trusting that doing so keeps us within the absolute truth. These absolute truths were known to the Vilna Gaon and can be found in Torah and traditional sources. The objection appears to have been coming from something unknown about the chassidic pathway.

The writings of the Vilna Gaon's student, Chaim Volozhin, refer to many of the topics emphasized in Chassidus. Rabbi Tzadok Cable gives a class on the Nefesh HaChalm where he explains the teachings from the Gra regarding our soul, its role in producing positive or negative influence, our connection to the higher worlds and more. These unfamiliar realities of the soul are crucial to our having a proper sense of esteem so that in the moment we know what it is that Hashem wants from us.

The teachings of Chassidus, as detailed in Tanya, explain not only the mechanics of the soul and how this positive or negative influence is created, but reveal the hands-on details needed to give us the tools to take on our lives in a transformed way, in a way that permits us to fulfill the goals that the Nefesh HaChalm details as the goals of a Jewish person.

We need both. Without the details, we are left with a mussar system that points out the flaws and expects a person to be able to make changes to satisfy the goal. With the details, we have an understanding of how to exercise free will based on spiritual truths, rung by rung, through which we can truly have confidence that we are souls and that our service to Hashem is what He has sent our unique and individual soul here to do. Each one of us is here to take the engine of our emotions and harness it for bringing into this world Hashem's attributes of mercy. In order to do that, we must in a moment of distress, stretch like a rubber band to its breaking point in order to connect ourselves back to His Attributes of mercy, tolerating insult, overlooking faults, bearing the burden of the confusion of mind that resulted from Adam's sin, and casting sins into the sea. When our engine is harnessed for the purpose of bringing Hashem's attributes into the world, we stop spinning and rise to a level of clarity and peace and joy, and that is the purpose for which we are created.

When our mental engines are squeaking with negativity and pain, remember that it is purposeful so that we dedicate all that trapped elokus from the kelipas to be harnessed instead by middos harachamim. Ask Hashem to bring into the desert of our spinning wheels His attributes. Let us conquer that space for Hashem. That is what we are here to do, to be that vessel He desires to be in time and space.

We have only to gain by adding to our understanding both the theory and practice of the writings of the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe's Tanya. Without them, we are stuck with a system of thinking that is

knowable only through analytical means, through natural brain reactions that get triggered by lack. With them, we are empowered with our free will to utilize the spiritual structures Torah teaches from the zohar to unify and sanctify Hashem's Name.

May the realization of this be a teshuva that is pleasing to Hashem and may we be zocheh to joining together not only the immanent and transcendent lights but also the groups of Jews, creating shelamos as we let go of human fears and replace them with love of Hashem and yiras shemayim, in order to bring into being emes, absolute truth.

May this machlokes quickly end and Hashem have mercy upon us and redeem us b'ahava very soon!