

Nourishment for the Neshama

<http://lvracha.com>

Friday, July 15, 2011

Struggling and fixing - some relief

Perhaps at least one good thing will be attributed to the horrific murder of Leiby Kletzky this week, and that is the metaphor I saw which is helping me gain trust in the expanded consciousness, the Gd-consciousness, that I struggle to maintain in every day life.

Look what happened. A young boy goes down the wrong path, gets lost, asks a seemingly trustworthy Yid for help, and gets murdered horrifically. The metaphor strikes home to me, as all day long I make choices - I head down the wrong way, either then resisting the downward pulls or having to do teshuva quickly, so that instead I expend energy to make choices that are pleasing to Hashem. Perhaps before this week it seemed like I was sacrificing something more pleasurable just for the sake of doing the "right thing." Perhaps before it was fear that if I didn't do the right thing, that Hashem would give me a potch. Perhaps both are true.

But today, things are in a new order. Hashem delivered Leiby Kletzky into the hands of evil. The trail of videos, the super-human efforts of detective work that led to Leiby being found, reveal that Hashem Himself sent us a message, a terrible tragedy, to shake us up, to wake us up. We are too comfortable, too complacent with our avoda, too ready to dance with your yetzer hara all day long. I recognize that it is time to commit to repairing what we each have to repair, to see our struggles as manifestations of Hashem's gifts to us sent so that we, by reaching out to Hashem and asking and talking and praising and beseeching can come to recognize that the flow of energy comes from Him to us, that our will is powered by Hashem alone -yes, we do not have our own power source! There is only one Power in the world, and that is Hashem, Who continually creates our free will and gives it to us. Our positive attributes along with our negative ones and challenges provide opportunities for us. We expend our energy utilizing our positive attributes, bringing light to the world in deeds. Likewise, we expend our energy overcoming our negative tendencies or rising above our challenges, bringing at least behira energy, if not also light by being good role models, to the world.

Our basic choice is simple. Will we go with what comes naturally or will we expend energy to do what is good and right in His eyes? That is our basic, constant moral choice. Key to remember is that Hashem continues to exist in every atom of every molecule, in every occurrence, in every thought or emotion - He is the Source, the Creator of it. He is the only Constant there is and everything else is subject to His Will.

Confusion arises when we fall into believing that our self-esteem depends on actualizing our natural talents and our negative emotions or judgments, no matter how true or appropriate they may seem. Yes, there may be a need to respond, but nothing in this world can affect our self-esteem! Our self-esteem is connected eternally to the Constant, an aspect of the Divine Image.

Something may be an ego victory, but ego and self-esteem are two different topics, for self-esteem is really awareness of the aspect of the Divine Image within us and our free will ability to bring it out from inwardness to action. I want to compare self-esteem to Hashem's chochma - it may be unknowable to us - for the Divine Mind cannot be known to us, but it exists anyway. Our worth is because we are made in the Divine Image and can choose to bring it out, whether or not we ever bring it out.

To have a healthy ego, we must then become a manifestation of malchus. Malchus requires us to perfect chesed -kindness, gevurah-strength, tiferes-balance and truth, hod-humility, and netzach-eternity and then utilize those to establish yesod (bonding with other people), and once we have that worked through, we can realize malchus-kingship, the nullification of ego for the sake of serving Hashem. Ego anywhere along the line continues to need purification if a person is seeking to achieve malchus. If not,

if a person chooses to keep ego within the natural world, unbounded, feeling good when we have victories and take, it may be a manifestation of fallen emunah and it even could be a failure to overcome the Amalek within us, for we would be living for ourselves under the illusion that we have separate existence from Hashem, that we have separate power from Hashem. Where does following natural tendencies without boundaries take us? My good guess is it takes us to nothingness, to destruction.

The circumstances of Leiby's death and being found triggered the metaphor for me - all day long Hashem is renewing the world, second by second. If He would not, the world's natural tendency according to entropy is to revert to nothingness, the state before He created it. Hashem is exerting and creating the world every second, every letter that I type here is because He is expending energy to renew His creation. The least I can do if I want to emulate Him is to comprehend that I must internally expend energy to resist the messages that our natural side screams to us - that isn't a fair price, give him rebuke, don't be a doormat, speak back, stand up for yourself, etc. and instead think of ourselves as what light we can bring to the situation, why did Hashem place us in this spot and bring out the unique qualities that we have to repair and fix up ourselves. The energy we create when we see ourselves as placed in a situation to bring a positive Gd-given quality to it is huge. Yes, we need to comprehend human nature to deal with our circumstances, but shall we draw from natural tactics appearing powerful or from tactics reflecting service to the only Power in the world? And when we stand before the kise Hakavod in 120 years, will we be able to say that we expended effort to remain on the side of service and not even a hairsbreadth off (for all it takes is a hairsbreadth off for the yetzer hara to capture our energy and we experience fallen emunah, serving ourselves instead of the Creator)?

May we be zocheh to comprehend the Creation, the Creator, and ourselves well enough to begin our mission and tikun, and may Hashem have mercy on us, forgive us and send the Moshiach speedily.