

Nourishment for the Neshama

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What is a soul?

What is a soul? How can we understand something that is made in the Image of Hashem, is pure and untainted, eternal and is neither measurable, visible, or tangible? And how can we come to change our understanding of who we are for all eternity to something that at best we can only have a sense of if we spiritually develop a faith in Gd and Torah? And how much more interested in this topic would we be if we really understood that we are created to have the pleasure of our soul's connection with Gd, and that such a pleasure is the greatest pleasure a human being can experience, far greater than any pleasure of the world of time and space?

Have you ever gotten very quiet, so quiet that thought itself is unnecessary? If we experience a state of being, of awareness, it is an awareness that is totally from the neck up. Yet it can be without even a thought. It may seem like a place of nothingness, but in that place, we know that we are alive, that we exist, and that we are conscious, in a body, here for a purpose in that very moment, even if we do not know what that purpose may be.

What is animating us? How do we have any energy at all? We are not plugged in! Is the food that brings nutrition to the body what is energizing us? A pintele yid. A neshama. The simplest way to think of a soul is as a light, a light from a higher world, that has come through a series of contractions into this world.

As soon as the light comes to us, as it enlivens us, it comes in contact with a human mind and body, and it becomes tattooed with fears of abandonment and annihilation, and senses bombarding it from eyes, ears, nose, mouth and a nervous system. How can we acquire a perspective of ourselves as eternal beings who are the light and the choices we make while alive to be true to the Source of the light, and not as the fears and sensations we experience because we are in a body?

The object we are speaking of is neither a solid, liquid, gas or unstable/radioactive element. It does not have a weight. It does not have a color. It does not have a texture. Yet when we choose its desire to serve the Source of all vitality over the natural human bodily and egotistical drives, we experience a pleasure of connection with Hashem, called *devekus*, that is the greatest pleasure a person can experience in this world.

That is hard work, to choose a soul response over all the winds of human nature. We have to strain our intellect to do so and only if we have solid belief do we have a chance of experiencing a flow of pleasure from giving expression to the light that is our soul, that is connected to the Source of all vitality, in time and space.

The topic is soul. The challenge is to see what animates us as eternal. The opportunity is to experience the pleasure for which we are created. And the time is now. Why now? Because when we do the work of choosing the soul's agenda over natural drives, we are fueling and enhancing the light that we shine into the

heavens and into our lives with the sacrifice of what is human nature. And that is the light that we need in the world today.

Each one of us has a bit of light. Each one of us as free will. Each one of us can propel the light of our soul through choosing its agenda over the natural urges.

What is the agenda of the soul? It is to fulfill Hashem's will, to emulate His attributes of mercy here in time and space by tolerating insult, overlooking faults, bearing the burden of all of us who are struggling with being souls in bodies that are confused by natural drives, and casting sins into the sea.

May we proceed into 5774 with the express intent to strain our intellect and make choices that bring Hashem's middos of mercy into the world. And may Hashem see our effort and be merciful to us.