

Open Journal

Posted by Tomim2B - 23 Sep 2009 20:00

In an attempt to add to the luster I'm opening up this thread where we can all contribute our thoughts, ideas, perspectives and attitudes in a setting carrying the tone of more serious discussion.

This is an open journal, and everyone is invited to post in this thread; no exceptions!

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Re: Open Journal

Posted by Tomim2B - 23 Sep 2009 20:11

It's Considered Complete Mesiras Nefesh When One Forgoes Even A Single Thing.

I'm reminded of a vort from the Tzemach Tzedek (the 3rd Lubavitcher Rebbe) in regard to *bittul*: Once, at a *farbrengen* that took place in the Rebbe's sukkah shortly before his *Histalkus*, the Tzemach Tzedek stood up on a bench and said: "Regarding damages incurred on a vessel, the Gemara states '*mah li kotloh plagah , mah li kotloh kulah*'".

"When Reuven damages the vessel belonging to Shimon, Shimon comes before him with the complaint 'What do I care if you partially damaged it [‘[i]kotloh/[i]’ literally means killed], or if you fully damaged it!? You’re responsible for the whole thing!’" When even a small hole is punctured in the bottom of a cup, it has to be considered as if the entire cup is destroyed, regardless of the size of the damage!

"The same is so with regard to mesiras nefesh" said the Tzemach Tzedek. "When a Yid forgoes his will on a single thing (which *mesiras nefesh* is synonymous with the giving up of the will, as explained at length in Chassidus) and surrenders it to Hashem, it is considered as if he

has entirely given up his life to Hashem.”

It is true that there are levels of *mesiras nefesh* which require that the individual surrender his entire being – total disintegration, but at the same time *bittul* and *mesirus nefesh* are accomplished **even** by the small things that we forgo just for the sake of *avoidas Hashem*. Every want and desire that we give up for Hashem's sake is huge *mesiras nefesh* on our part!

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Re: Open Journal

Posted by Tomim2B - 23 Sep 2009 20:22

The Art Of Letting Go - A Story.

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This story has been taken from the bestseller book titled “The Secret of Letting Go” and there is a lot we can learn from it about the art of letting go: “A young boy was about to take his first lesson in water-skiing. He was bobbing up and down in the water, ski tops pointed up and forward. His father was in the speedboat, calling out some last-minute instructions. Then, with a roar, the boat took off. The tow rope went taut.”

“At first it didn’t look like the young boy would make it up. But slowly, like some kind of glistening phoenix, he emerged from the water. He was up. He was smiling. Then, in almost the reverse motion of how the boy had risen above the water, he disappeared back into it. It wasn’t a bad spill.”

“The speedboat raced back around to pick him up. His father waited and watched to see his small head pop up above the waves set off by his first nosedive, but the boy didn’t appear. He was still holding on to the tow rope! He was being dragged behind the very boat that was trying to speed up to his rescue. Assessing the situation in a glance, his father immediately cut the engine. A second later, the young boy’s soaked but smiling face raised itself out of the water and looked up to his father for the next instruction. His father smiled back and said, “Son, I forgot to tell you one very important point about water-skiing. When you fall, you must remember to let go of the rope!” They both laughed out loud at this light-hearted lesson because the need to let go was so obvious.”

“I know that the reason the boy didn’t let go of the tow rope wasn’t that he wanted to hold on to it. No, he held on because he didn’t know what else to do during those frightening moments he was being dragged through the water. For him, the thought of letting go wasn’t an option at that moment. Instead, his mind was completely crowded with other competing thoughts and feelings: ‘I hope no one else saw me make a fool of myself! What could have gone wrong? Is Dad gonna be mad at me? Will he let me try again? How could I be so stupid?’ The instinctive and naturally intelligent thought that was telling him to let go couldn’t get through all of this inner clamor. It was being blocked by a flood of misplaced and dangerous false self-concern.”

One of the biggest life fundamentals is that when we fall, we must let go. It’s instinctual and natural. Just like a tree lets go of fruit which is overly ripe and it no longer needs, same thing, we let go of anything that drags us through unpleasant relationships and events; letting go of those painful thoughts and feelings that sink our spirits with weary, false self-concerns which pin us down. Letting go is what enables us to live in emotional and mental equilibrium regardless of our past. It means that we no longer occupy our minds with unpleasant pasts, constantly trying to confront them, deal with them, and cope with them. Instead we accept that they are weighing us down and we just let go. It means that we stop living with heartache filled dreams about what might have been.

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Re: Open Journal
Posted by yechidah - 23 Sep 2009 20:46

Thank you Tomim

in many cases the refusal to let go comes from arrogance.

In yechidas's case,yechida let go of unhealthy thoughts and beliefs and behaviors,when yechida realized that he was weak,and not strong enough to do anything by himself.

yechida thought he could handle certain things himself and he was wrong.

he couldn't.

and it was a very hard pill to swallow.

It hurt.

but when yechida finally let go, and accepted his nothingness, it was then that yechida was able to do things that he thought he couldn't do.

because yechida finally heard Hashem telling him that he cannot do anything unless I let you.

So let go.

Yiras Shomaim is in your hands.

That is where yechida is given a choice

With everything else, just let go

Hashem says "Let me handle this"

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Re: Open Journal

Posted by Tomim2B - 23 Sep 2009 20:49

Group Support - Unite for A Sure Win!

The Lubavitcher Rebbe wrote in Hayom Yom (a compilation of daily sayings from him father in-law the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe - otherwise known as "From Day to Day") for the 21st of Teves: "The Mittler Rebbe [the second in the dynasty of Chabad Rebbeim] answered someone at a private audience: 'When two discuss a subject in *avoida* and they study together, there are two divine souls against one natural soul.'"

The Rebbe explained that each divine soul (*neshomah*) not only desires that the person *himself* fulfill G-d's will (to serve Him in active *avoida*) but also desires that *another* do so. Selfless concern for another's spiritual welfare is after all one of the basic "goodness" and character of the *neshomah*. By contrast, the hedonistic animal soul is basically self-centered; it is not driven by the desire that *another* should enjoy physical pleasures etc. So, when two jews work together the natural soul within each of them attempts to hinder *that person alone*. The G-dly soul however, since it also desires the other's welfare, joins forces with his *neshomah*, so that there are essentially two divine souls against one natural soul.

When we unite in group support, not only do we pull ourselves out of our own self-centeredness (the control of the animalistic soul and y"h), but we also unite with other Jews to tip the match when our *neshomah* connects with them to help in the fight. In a 2 against 1, it's a sure win!

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Re: Open Journal

Posted by Tomim2B - 23 Sep 2009 22:40

The Heights One Can Reach After Hitting Rock Bottom.

While hitting rock bottom is not something we would wish on anybody, there is a certain advantage that the person who's hit rock bottom has over someone who hasn't. You see, the top and the bottom are very much connected in the sense that they are both infinitely great.

Because of his neshamah, a Yid's pleasure capacity is infinite. It's like a giant vacuum, or a hole that can't be filled. Indulging in worldly things has never been able to fill this hole and all the pleasures in the world can't satisfy him. The more one feeds, the more he needs. As a matter of fact, nothing can really fill that hole – it's un-fillable. Only connecting to Hashem, connecting to "The infinite" can really satisfy an emptiness he feels within himself. When he draws G-dliness into his life he will experience ultimate pleasure - infinite pleasure.

As long as he indulges in worldly pleasures, the greater the emptiness he feels. In this respect, the deeper one goes - the more he's distanced himself from Hashem, the greater the vacuum, and the greater he's able to fill himself with *kedusha* with the climb that follows. Hashem appreciates the *baal teshuva* who comes from a great distance. Just when he feels he's hit the point of no return (*-teshuvah*), that's when he can accomplish the greatest *teshuva* possible!

The Gemara (Avoida Zara 17a) relates the story of Elazar Ben Dordaya who did not bypass the opportunity to visit any harlot in the world. One day he heard that there was a certain prostitute who lived near the sea who had put herself up for hire. He went to great lengths on a journey crossing seven rivers to meet her. During the act, the harlot blew forth breath and said "as this blown breath will not return to its place, so will Elazar Ben Dordaya never be received in repentance." With a crushed and broken spirit went to sit in the hills where he begged the hills and mountain, heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, and all stars and constellations, to pray on his behalf that he should be accepted. After being turned away again and again he said "this depends on me alone", placed his head between his knees and wept out loud till his soul departed. Right then, a heavenly voice proclaimed "Rebbi Elazar Ben Dordaya is destined for the life of the world to come!" When this story was told over in the Gemara, it was noted that not only was his *teshuvah* accepted, but he had also earned the title "Rebbi" - a title which is reserved for a select few.

The Rebbe (during a visit with doctors) once brought an example from a hypodermic needle used to draw blood for the purpose of diagnosis and treatment. "It is not the needle which draws the blood from the veins" said the Rebbe. "Rather it is the vacuum in the syringe. The lesson of the value of a vacuum can be extremely relevant to a person who considers himself "empty," unworthy to be successful in his G-dly service. An empty vessel can draw in with greater intensity than one which is full. So too can the person who is aware of his own inadequacy be more strongly motivated to study and to do positive things. Similarly, when one finds oneself in a situation where an absence or loss is deeply felt, one need not be despondent. We can rather use the emptiness itself as an impetus for even greater achievement."

(The above post is based primarily on the concepts found in Derech Chaim ch. 3.)

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Re: Open Journal

Posted by Tomim2B - 24 Sep 2009 03:26

How Can I Win If I Don't Fight?

Powerlessness is the: Sensation of being out of control with no apparent solution to help you to regain control. Complete lack of control, authority, or status to affect how others will treat or act towards you. Lack of capability to affect the realities of life out of your control. (James J. Messina, Ph.D., & Constance M. Messina, Ph.D.)

The power of powerlessness sounds a bit absurd. Surrender to win? Where's the power in that!? Which general in his right mind would tell his army to surrender in order to win the battle!? Yet, the truth, historically this has happened.

If you look into the stories recorded in *Nach*, you will find a fascinating story (Divrei Hayomim, *perek chof*): Many years ago, during the time that Yehoishofot was king over *shevet* Yehudah, the surrounding nations began to wage a war. Word was quickly spread that great armies with multitudes of soldiers were approaching and they were already near. Yehoishofot was terrified! He knew that if he had made the wrong decisions, his kingdom would be destroyed and the enemy would kill every living creature in the village. He also knew his army was not capable enough, strong enough or armed well enough to defeat this mighty group of wild warriors.

What did he do? He began to pray. In fact, the whole nation began to pray. He called out to Hashem and said "O Hashem, G-d of our fathers! Behold, You are the G-d in Heaven, and you rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. *In Your hand are power and might*, and no-one can stand up against You. Surely, You are our G-d." Yohoishofot went on with his *tefillah*: "... Will You not perform justice against them? For *we are powerless before this great multitude that is invading us.*" There - he did it! He just admit powerlessness!

Okay. Now what? Someone in one of the camps gets a prophecy directed to King Yehishofot. "Do not fear and do not be intimidated by the great multitude *for the battle is not yours but it is G-ds*" he is told. The prophecy continues: "*It is not for you to do battle in this matter! Stand and watch the salavation of Hashem for you...*" Yehoishofot now prepares his men for battle and arranges a choirs of men to sing and praise Hashem for the victory He is about to bring. By the time the people of Yehuda reached the wilderness battleground they found all their enemies dead. They had all attacked each-other and not a single one was left alive.

The important fact is King Yehishofot realized this battle was just too big for him. The king actually had to surrender in order to win this battle. He had to accept his power was actually in his powerlessness. Then, after Yehoishofot realized his powerlessness and defeated with no place to run, he turned to a power that had never failed him. He turned to *Hakodoish Boruch Hu* and He did for him what the king could not do for himself. The war was won without a single shot fired!

(I encourage anyone who has a *Nach* handy to look up the story in full detail. Unbelievable!)

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Re: Open Journal
Posted by Tomim2B - 24 Sep 2009 03:49

My visits with the Rebbe are most memorable. If you'd like to hear some of my impressions, private message me. I can easily be identified by the details, so I prefer not to speak of them in the public forum.

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Re: Open Journal
Posted by TrYiNg - 24 Sep 2009 06:00

It was really interesting to see that the concept of 'letting go' isn't new, and can be seen in tanach.

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Re: Open Journal

Posted by Tomim2B - 24 Sep 2009 10:33

Hasgocha Protis Even In Our Falls.

It says in Tehillim (37:23) "By Hashem are a man's footsteps established, and He shall favor his way". The Rebbe writes that each step a man takes, even though he feels that it is according to *his* will, really his steps are guided by Hashem as it is Hashem who guides the will of man. Nothing in this world can occur without Hashem willing it. In this sense, even when we sin it is guided by the will of Hashem. It is also true that even when we are actively sinning we are still heading upward in our spiritual ascent, because really it isn't a true descent, but only the start of the ascent (that follows). All this requires further elucidation:

It's known in Kabbalah and Chassidus that the inner intent in Yosef's being sent down to Mitzrayim was so that he should gather together all the holy sparks as well as all the wealth. This was to make the future *golus* easier for the Jews to bear. Only on an external level was Yosef's being sent to Mitzrayim the actual cause of the *golus*. According to what we find in *p'sukim* (Lech-Lecha 15:13), the *golus* was meant to last for 400 years. In actuality though, it only lasted, 210 years (Rashi *ibid.* & Mikeitz 42:2). The reason for this, it is explained, that since Yosef had been in Mitzrayim years before the others had arrived, a bulk of the work was already able to have been done prior to the *golus*.

"From the above it is understood" says the Rebbe "that the selling of Yosef was not against Hashem's will, rather that was Hashem's will. Hashem wanted Yosef to be sent down to Mitzrayim to make the *golus* easier. Only since the *shvotim* were not aware of Hashem's inner intent, for them, the sale of their brother was considered a sin."

Our sins are clearly are not what Hashem desires and wants. Yet, like the *shvotim*, there is an inner intent in the fact that we are brought (and come) to sin - the inner intent being *teshuva* (which can take a person to great heights). The reason the we are punished for our sins is, just as the *shvotim* did not know the inner intent and had only wished to sell him focusing on their own personal wishes (and not inner intent and outcome of making the *golus* easier), similarly, when we sin we have no true grasp of Hashem's inner intent. Our sins are self-centered, only

thinking about ourselves, our personal desires. This is the reason we are punished. Well you see, we aren't really punished for the sake of punishment either. The pain that the *neshomah* must endure is because it is going through a painful cleaning process, only so that it can ascend to higher levels. If you stain your shirt, you'll need to throw it in the wash before wearing it to a banquet.

(In regard to the question of "where does *b'chira* come into all of this?" and "how can it be said that we are acting independently (with our own *b'chira chofshis*) if everything we do is guided by Hashem?" In essence our *bechira* comes from the fact that we have a Jewish soul (gentiles don't have *bechira chofshis*). In this respect, we have limited *b'chira*. You see, it's not really our body which does the choosing. Our soul, which is a part of Hashem, is the part which is given the power of choice. Had our *b'chira* been separate from G-dliness the question would apply. But since our *b'chira* comes from the G-dliness within us, there really is no contradiction.)

A summary of the main points: When we sin we are being guided by Hashem's will. If He hadn't wanted us to fall, we wouldn't. The reason we fell is because he has a deeper intent in mind - that being to get back up and do *teshuva*. In the fall itself, without the *teshuva*, there is no purpose. But because the inner intent of our sinning (which only Hashem truly knows) is the heights it can bring us to when we follow it with *teshuva*, in the deeper scheme of things we've always been moving upward and in the right direction. In lieu of the above, a person is never to give up hope even if he finds that he has come to a state where he has "chosen evil". There is no such thing as a lost case. Hashem, who has our best interest in mind wishes us to do *teshuva*, turning our sins into merits.

(This post is based on writings from the Lubavitcher Rebbe - Likutei Sichos vol. 5 Lech-Lecha (a) & a Chassidic discourse printed in vol. 5721 (2) pg. 284)

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Re: Open Journal
Posted by Tomim2B - 24 Sep 2009 11:21

A Baal Teshuva Of Any Level Stands Higher Than A Complete Tzaddik

In the Gemara (Brachios 34b) it is written: "In the place where Baalei Teshuvah stand, even the

completely righteous are not able to stand".

The Rambam mentions this in Hilchois Teshuva and he brings the reason (7:4): "A Baal-Teshuvah should not consider himself distant from the level of the righteous because of the sins and transgressions that he committed. This is not true. He is beloved and desirable before the Creator as if he never sinned. Furthermore, he has a great reward for he has tasted sin and yet, separated himself from it, conquering his [evil] inclination. Our Sages declared: 'In the place where Baalei Teshuvah stand, even the completely righteous are not able to stand.' The level of Baalei Teshuvah transcends the level of those who never sinned at all, for they overcome their [evil] inclination more."

The Rebbe once indicated that based on the reason given by the Rambam ("for they overcome their [evil] inclination more") one can deduce that the saying of the Gemara refers not to a *baal teshuva* who has attained great levels of teshuva, but really to a *baal teshuva* at any level. According to the way the Tanya describes the nature of the *tzaddik gomur*, he is one who has defeated his y"ח and is no longer bothered by it. Thus, any *baal teshuva* who actively engages in defeating his y"ח, automatically fits the description of the Rambam as a person who "overcomes his inclination more", and stands at a higher level than the complete *tzaddik*.

(Based on a Chassidic discourse printed in vol. 5721 (2) pg. 284)

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Re: Open Journal

Posted by Tomim2B - 25 Sep 2009 01:25

Confrontation - A Story.

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A young man once arrived in his hometown *shtetle* to visit his father. Since the young man was not as religiously observant as his father had expected, the young man explained his conduct saying: "What's the big deal to sit closeted in the *shtetle* and remain religious? For someone to walk the streets of St. Petersburg and remain religious - that's something! Even more so, someone who attends the theatre in St. Petersburg and closes his eyes to guard him from sin,

he is really religious! If he can keep his eyes open and still not sin, then this is truly special!"

"But even this is not the ultimate level," continued the son. "Someone who watches the theatre and stands very close to the performing stage and still does not sin - this is an exceptional Jew!" The young man continued in this vein for some time until he reached horrendous conclusions.

There are many points that a person can take from this story, and I'm sure each person can see the points which are more relative to them. One that most stands out for me: A person need not knock on the y'h's door only to prove that he can make confrontation and still prevail. That's simply foolish thinking! An individual who is in any way concerned about his spiritual well-being doesn't put himself in a place of risk. Instead, he creates fences for himself to help avoid meeting up with him in the first place. This way he defeats him!

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Re: Open Journal

Posted by Rage AT Machine - 25 Sep 2009 16:59

Addicts have righteous intentions by RATM

An idea that I am toying with in my head:

A poor as dirt boy falls in love with the Uptown Girl. She's from a rich home and has all the luxuries of the world available to her at a single kiss on daddy's cheek. She has everything. But she loves him and he loves her and the love is ridunkulous (thats a step above ridiculous, for those keeping score at home). Daddy, of course, doesn't even notice little dirty poor boy at first, then he thinks its just another toy his daughter will get bored with soon and by the time he pulled his head out of his tuchus two horrible thoughts dawn upon him: (1) they're in love and (2) he HATES little poor boy...

He tells his daughter she can pick: either all the luxuries in the world or dirty little poor boy. The girl (having read Wuthering Heights and saddened by the ending) decides to go with love. She leaves it all and runs off to live a life of love as Downtown Girl.

Poor boy loves her. He really does a lot. And since his love is real its not about consumption its about making her happy (he loved her the way people love dogs not the way people love hot dogs)...he wanted to make her happy and decides to leave home for long stretches of time to look for work...so poor boy is out doing all kinds of horrible jobs employed in the most menial positions to scrap up some cash...he is never home, he never sees Downtown Girl but he manages to put together a couple of pesos...he goes to the local walmart supercenter and gets his girl a nice dress...he goes home to his babe and gives her the nice dress from Walmart...he then says, ok hunny, im off to get some cash to get you some nice shoes to go with that dress...see you in two weeks...

She says, stop...i left ALL THE MATERIALISTIC GOODS IN THE WORLD just to be with you...i don't need a dress from walmart nor one from Bergdorf Goodman, i just need your love...

The soul in heaven had every pleasure of this world times a thousand...times a hundred thousand...it left that world to join us here for something other than pleasure...i guess, it came here to be fed torah...this materialistic world, ironically enough, is the only place in the universe where you can acquire torah and mitzvot...we keep feeding it pleasure because we think that is how we make the neshama happy, but alas, it is not...our intentions are good (but, see, road to hell) we simply need to do it differently....

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Re: Open Journal
Posted by the.guard - 26 Sep 2009 17:19

Tomim and RATM, keep up these inspiring and beautiful posts!

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Re: Open Journal
Posted by 7yipol - 26 Sep 2009 18:36

Thank you both Tomim and RATM.

Tomim; Im impressed but not surprised.

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RATM, Im impressed and *shocked!*