

Nourishment for the Neshama

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From Shavuos to Tisha B'Av - 63 Days of Danger - What Can We Do?

With our wedding day as a nation to Hashem, Shavuos, behind us by just one week, is the honeymoon over? Now we begin the work of bringing the vows to fruition, to keep the Torah, to love Hashem with all our heart, all our soul and all our might.

According to the Leshem obm, the grandfather of Rabbi Elyashiv, Shlita, The 63 days from the 7th of Sivan through the 9th of Av, Tisha B'Av, have a distinction as a time of danger. We see this in Jewish history traditionally as the time of the Spanish Inquisition, the destruction of the two temples and more. How could summer be spiritually such a threat to us?

Rabbi Aryeh Nivin (www.newchabura.com) explains that the spiritual cycle for the year includes this last leg as an opportunity to take the creativity that comes along with light, expansion and warm weather and channel it towards concretizing the work we have been doing all year to reach our spiritual goals, to put these into action, to really build upon the freedom from slavery that Hashem granted to us through the Pesach to Shavuos process. Those days, from the three weeks before Pesach until Shavuos, are termed the 72 days of chesed, a time of judgment where if we are introspective and seek to improve ourselves, Hashem matches our efforts with abundant success. We bring our spiritual goals, mere seeds at Tishrei, to a full harvest. On Shavuos, we harvest the planting of spiritual growth meaning that instead of relying on chesed from Hashem to help us improve ourselves internally and flourish in ruchnius, we must now rely on chesed from Hashem in granting success to actions that reflect the gift of Torah and spiritual growth Hashem gave us. It is up to us during the summer to bring that ruchnius into the world of doing in creative and passionate ways and NOT to lose what we have gained in connection to Hashem, not to fall downward into the natural pulls of the body, ego and analytical mind from which we worked so hard all year to break free.

One thing that everyone has in common because of human nature, the way Hashem has constructed us, is that when we experience challenge, we experience pain, negative emotions, judgments, anger, and more. On the internet, we see a collection of the thoughts of mankind, as written and expressed with pictures, videos and writings. There is editing that is done and even so, the overall content contains quite a bit that should never be read or even looked at. It is safe to say that behind all of that is a layer of thought that was edited out, that never made it onto the internet. However, that layer of thought, Hashem knows every intention and feeling and root of it.

Somewhere in the cosmos is another "spiritual internet" added to by the nature of mankind and the choices we make regarding which thoughts to harbor. I doubt if anyone had access to the "spiritual internet" that anyone would spend anytime there, being that it must be the darkest of the darkest, the angriest, the most painful, the most judgmental and hurtfully oriented part of the cosmos. Although it is invisible to us, the Ramchal tells us that Hashem sustains the world based on our choices, including the choices we make regarding our thoughts, speech and actions.

Notice that our choices regarding our thoughts is included in that.

Choices regarding thoughts. How can we control our thoughts? We don't control the thought that comes into our mind at all. However, we do control whether we attach emotion to it, whether we "rubberneck" it to comprehend it,

whether we dream about it and more. Any time we use consciousness in connection to something, we become responsible for creating something that goes into the "spiritual internet."

No matter what the challenges are, it is incumbent upon us to do what we can so that our consciousness is adding only loving, forgiving, overlooking, positive thoughts to the "spiritual internet," for in this way we vote that Hashem sustain us in a loving, forgiving, overlooking positive manner! Hashem listens to us! To a certain degree, we bring about how He sustains us.

And the matter of being responsible for our thoughts, speech and actions is within our hands. It may not be the best of circumstances, but the challenge is there solely as an opportunity for us to love Hashem and bring out His Attributes and Torah.

How can we really love Hashem so much as to keep this in the forefront of our minds?

Imagine that each day we open the door and there is \$10,000 on the step. We look around, we don't see anyone, we take the money. Day after day, \$10,000 delivered to the door. No face, no way to know where it came from. One day, as we go to the car, an older man is going to the car next to us. He gets in and he waits patiently for us to back up before he gets out, so we notice the car and the driver. The next day, \$10,000 only when we look up, we happen to see that same car all the way down the block. We don't know this man at all, we shrug and continue our day. Later in the week, we are visiting someone in the hospital and coincidentally we see the same old man in the elevator. He holds the door so we can get in. He seems to be very near all the time, always patient, in the background, helping out.

The next day we get up very very early and wait by the window of the house. Sure enough that old man gets out of his car, puts \$10,000 on our step and goes back to his car before we can get to the door! Who is this old man?

Then it is PTA night at the school and in the auditorium, behind the stage, we see this old man smiling at the crowd very lovingly to all.

The next day instead of standing by the window, we stand at the door and as soon as we hear anything we open up the door and there is the old man, with the \$10,000. "Hi" we say. "I am glad to meet you! May I ask why you are doing this?" He answers, "I love you. I believe in you. You have great potential to bring goodness to the world." "What do you want from me?" is our likely response. He answers, "Only that you bring out the very best that is in you. I am absolutely crazy about you and believe in your potential and it gives me great pleasure to provide for you, even if you make mistakes."

How would you feel toward this old man? You don't know him. You have no idea of his history, his background, what he did for a living that he could shower you with all this wealth and well-being. But the chances are that you would, at that moment, fall in love with him, for his kindness, his generosity, his goodness, his belief in you and his unconditional love.

If we hunt for the knowledge of Hashem in this world, it is easy to come to love Him. Loving Hashem should become our pre-occupation, for when we come up with the proper understanding that the entire world is contained within the Divine mind and He is giving to us everything including opportunity to earn eternal reward, our souls will attach love to Him and we will yearn to be connected at all times.

May our hearts, our souls, and our might be used to love Hashem every moment from now until Tisha B'Av and may we tell Hashem at last that we wish for the 'spiritual internet' to be flooded with love and positivity, and may our free willed choice to become spiritually mature through Torah render us redeemable in His eyes.

May we be zocheh to see the coming of the Moshiach in a manner that is peaceful with no harm to anyone so that the whole world can know Hashem's Greatness and the pleasure of connection.