

## Nourishment for the Neshama

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### **Elul is for Teshuva and Forgiveness - a chart to help with growth after doing cheshbon hanefesh**

Elul is for teshuva and forgiveness. Teshuva means to return to the state we were in before we were born, to be righteous, and not wicked. We can take the circumstances of our life (do a cheshbon hanefesh to review each decade – what happened during this period, how did I respond – without blame or judgment – and then what did I do in response), Then look at where we want to be in life, and what has gotten me further. Identify where the choices we made brought us. Then analyze by asking, What was I thinking and feeling when I made good choices? And when I made bad choices? We will see patterns. Our feelings and thoughts reveal our middos, our motivators, deep within. Then we can begin to deal with the middos that cause the problems. Teshuva is about middos, not about deeds, because changing deeds alone is like cutting weeds without uprooting them. When we see Hashem's interventions over the course of our lives, we want more closeness. This is teshuva me'ahava. We want to develop the parts of us – the middos - that draw us closer to Him.

We want our soul to be in charge of the body. But often, the neshama can be put into golus by the conscious-self taking over and making a partition in order to challenge us. The forces of evil are sitras achra, the challenge is to reach Hashem. We want to come to Hashem from our innocence, from our idealistic side before we got corrupted, stripped of everything. It will take a whole year or more to change our middos, but we can identify where we need to work in Elul. And we can ask for another year in order to be able to improve ourselves in our service to Hashem. In Gemorah 16B Rabbi Yitzchok says "Every year that is poor in its opening, becomes rich in its end."

On Rosh Hashana, all of our needs in the New Year are decreed on us. At the moment of Rosh Hashana, we have nothing, and we have to get everything as new. Rosh Hashana creates our potential for the whole year. What we had last year is only because of Hashem's will. Rosh Hashana is the creation of man and we are all starting from scratch. We pray that Hashem rules over the whole world, us and the details of our life. We are to understand and commit to the greatest truth in the world, that Hashem is King. Our goal is to return making Hashem the center of our life. If we need health, ask for health in order that I can serve you and sanctify your name.

Underlying being able to crown Hashem king is to truly know that the essence of Judaism is based on love, that a relationship with Hashem is pleasurable, more than any pleasure we can imagine from this world. The yesod of all teshuva is to believe we are beloved to Hashem. Rosh Hashana is about us having a King to rule over us in a pleasurable, meaningful way based on Judaism.

So how do we get there, when our will seems so far away from wanting Hashem to be King over us? We can start with inspiration from Tomer Devorah (see left two columns from Tashlich service in the Rosh Hashana Artscroll siddur) - which tells us that these are the 13 attributes by which man can imitate the Creator. If he does so on earth, he will cause the Divine quality of mercy to shine upon the world. therefore tomer devorah says repeat and remember these attributes so that they may be a constant reminder to follow in Gd's ways.

the first two columns are summary of notes from Rebbetzin Heller's elul workshop, itemizing the viduy. by putting the viduy and the 13 attributes side by side, the intention is to facilitate identifying our short-comings and finding a substitute from the attributes of Hashem.

viduy

what it means

Thirteen attribute

what it means

		of Hashem- choose one for correction	
ashamnu we have become guilty	desolation of what the soul can be; doing things that are destructive that make our seeking Hashem not work. We create blockages, a mechitza between the soul and the body.	Hashem Hashem, Who Oh Gd is Like You	there is no one but Hashem Who alone is Gd. every time someone sins, an accusing angel comes into being. Gd compassionately sustains the evil force so that the sinner may continue to live and have the opportunity to repent Gd Himself grants forgiveness. He does not delegate this important function to a deputy, "for with You is the forgiveness". Since every wrong is an affront to Gd, we must strive to correct it, no matter who committed it. Would we hesitate to save our neighbor's house from fire because we did not set the blaze? the remnant of Israel which survived the long exile - Gd cannot bear Israel's pain for it is His remnant, all that He has in His universe. From Gd's love for us, a Jew learns how to love his fellow man. All Jews are related to each other. In each soul, there is a portion of all the others. it follows, therefore, that when a Jew sins, his wrong
bagadnu, betrayal	this means repaying good with bad or having forbidden relationships. It can mean wasting time too or saying a bracha in vain or without proper intention.	Who pardons iniquity, Merciful	
gezalnu, we have stolen	these are taking from our patents, crimes against our Father Hashem and our mother, the Shechina. It means stealing time, privacy, sleep - a disregard of borders. The sin is the implication that Hashem is not giving us sufficiently. Included here is being a baal gaiva, which is the motivation for theft.	and overlooks transgression, compassionate	
divarnu, speaking falsely	this means being phony, saying what is not in your heart in order to come across as a nice person, but there is a gap. The horse is the body and the rider is the soul, and we don't take control of ourselves and speak lashon hara, flattery or talk of work on Shabbos.	for the remnant of His heritage?, slow	

<p>heeveinym causing perversion</p>	<p>This means knowing it would bring a response and you did it anyway. Or it could be giving wrong halachic information. Or seeking to know what you don't have to know.</p>	<p>who has not retained His wrath eternally, to anger</p>	<p>affects not only his own soul, but also the portion that all the others possess in him. Even though Israel does not make itself worthy of redemption, Gd does not retain His wrath against them eternally. In dealing with his neighbors, man should end his wrath as soon as possible even when he has a just grievance.</p>
<p>veharshanu, causing wickedness</p>	<p>this means causing others to do evil, so if someone is in a bad place doing an aveira, this would mean encouraging them to while they are at it add another aveira as they have no beauty or choice.</p>	<p>for He desires kindness! , kindness</p>	<p>The Torah states And He is abundant in kindness. When the time arrives for the redemption of Israel, Gd's kindness will overwhelm their sins. When man is hurt or provoked, let him look at the offender's qualities (especially his kindness to others), and say, "It is enough that he is kind or has some other fine trait."</p>
<p>Zadnu, sinned willfully</p>	<p>this means within our heart we plan evil, referring to our emotions and passions that take us toward what is evil. For example if you treat Shabbos or the holidays lightly, this is an example. Shabbos is the penimius of all time and if we take the kavod of Shabbos and not relate it to Shabbos, this is willful sinning. The same holds true with learning Torah, not seeing its absolute nature.</p>	<p>He will again be merciful to us;; abundant in truth</p>	<p>In Gd's eyes, the repentant sinner enjoys a lofty status. As the Talmud teaches: In the place where the penitent stands, the perfectly righteous cannot stand. Thus if someone's neighbor offended him but afterwards sought reconciliation, he should show him a greater degree of friendliness than he did previously</p>
<p>Hamasnu, we have extorted</p>	<p>This means violence, doing anything with force, even pressing someone into selling something they don't want to sell or using</p>	<p>He will suppress our iniquities, preserver of kindness</p>	<p>Gd does not permit a person's sins to offset the reward due him for his good deeds. Thus although</p>

psychological force.  
Pressure is a form of violence, making it look like Hashem is not part of the picture.

sins will result in punishment in the proper time and manner, they are not permitted to detract from the reward for mitzvahs. Similarly, instead of dwelling on the evil that may have been done him, one should keep good deeds uppermost in his mind, so that he may sincerely appreciate them. A Jew's essence does not become evil despite his having sinned. Therefore, when a good man repents, the evil departs from him leaving only his intrinsic goodness. Tashlich is derived from this phrase. The wicked are like the raging sea, as the prophet said, the wicked are like the troubled sea, for it cannot rest; its waters cast up mire and dirt. Thus the prophet Micah says in effect, "You will cast all of Israel's sins upon the wicked, who are likened to the muddy depths of the sea." A man can emulate this attribute. If he notices that his neighbor is crushed by suffering, he should realize that suffering cleanses sin and causes the evil to depart and to return to its source. People who do not go beyond the letter of the law are called Jacob, who was a symbol of exact honesty. Toward those who conduct themselves with precise truth as defined by the

Tafalnu sheker, accused falsely

This means we have attached lies, we create false image of ourselves or others. It is a desecration of the reality that Hashem creates us with.

and cast into the depths of the sea all their sins, for thousands of generations

Yaaznu rah, given evil counsel

This means giving someone advice that is bad, or even giving ourselves bad advice because it seems good to us because we want it.

Grant truth to Jacob, forgiver of iniquity

kizanu, we have been deceitful	This means lying whether for a good reason or not. It also is disappointing others by being late for frivolous reasons. It means you don't respect the truth and its value	kindness to Abraham, Forgiver of transgression	halachah, Gd exercises compassion, in accordance with His rigid standards of truth. Man should treat his neighbor with truth, thus even average people will be perfected in accordance with the quality of truth. This refers to the righteous people who go beyond the letter of the law, as did the Patriarch Abraham. Gd reciprocates and behaves towards these people with kindness beyond the letter of the law. When someone comes in contact with people whose devotion to Gd is outstanding, he too should exceed the requirements of the law. Such people should be most beloved to him. Gd shows mercy even to the undeserving because he swore to their forefathers that he would care for their descendants. He has a special storehouse of grace, as it were, for the unworthy, they receive this grace as an unearned gift. Similarly, one should be gracious even to evildoers, saying, "This man remains the son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If I were to disgrace him, I would bring disgrace upon the fathers, and I have no desire to have the holy Patriarchs humiliated through me
latzanu, we have scorned	This means saying something that seems humorous that shows the foolishness or vulnerability of the person being spoken about. By showing someone's frailty, it reduces the person's status, which makes them smaller than life. We should make each other bigger, not smaller. No one can bring their status back, it is something that is really gone. This applies to ideas too, like thinking we are descendent from monkeys. The damage is irreparable. Don't destroy people. It is a very important thing.	As You swore to our forefathers, forgiver of sin	

These means tow things.  
One is that we rebel to do what we think we need to do to preserve our identity, which takes the part of us that naturally wants to rebel against evil but brings us to think we are separate from Hashem. If we make the mistake of thinking we are separate from Hashem, our higher self gets trapped into the idea of rebellion that is negative. It comes from not wanting to be repressed. Instead we must adapt the ego to Hashem at that moment. We must do what is right, not what asserts us with expression in the negative that takes us away from Hashem. The motivation of rebellion is self-preservation, a falsified sense of self preservation, thinking this is what will make me alive, safe emotionally - this is the cause of rebellion.

Moradnu, we have rebelled

Materially we feel more alive when we go against what Hashem wants of us and this is considered to be of the utmost spiritual danger.

from ancient times, and who cleanses

This means we cause anger, an anger that is generated by showing that we sporn what Hashem wants of us. Hashem is anger with us because we "kick" the mitzvahs, being unhappy in doing them with love. An example is swearing unnecessarily or falsely. We think our word is reality. Reality is Hashem's will, are we accepting reality or not? We don't see reality as non-negotiable. When we do not see Hashem's providence and we become angry, it distorts our vision and Hashem responds to us by not un-distorting our vision or He makes it worse so that it becomes impossible to ignore so that

Naaznu, we have provoked

Even if the merit of the forefathers were to be exhausted, Gd would be merciful because of the good deeds that Israel performed from the day of its inception. Similarly, when encountering a person who seems to lack virtue, one should say, "Surely, in his early youth, this person performed some good deeds." Thus, no one will be found unworthy of goodness and mercy.

we can't miss out on our tikun. His response to us changes in relation to who we are.

This means our heart has turned away from Hashem, that we don't want to make the connections to do the achievements that He says is the real connection. That is why a positive mitzvah sometimes has zero priority to us and we don't want to do it. Hashem has been displaced from our heart. Our capacity for emunah has turned into something else. Instead of emunah in Hashem, the need to be faithful has attached to something else because we have a need to be dedicated to something. If we are dedicated to something else, it is hard to be dedicated to Hashem.

Sorarnu, we have turned away

This means we are crooked, doing a sin done out of desire. It means we intentionally did something wrong to fill an appetite that we created. We want things that we develop into appetites and then we fall for it, having an appetite we didn't necessarily have to begin with.

Aveinu, we have been perverse

Again this is rebellion. We sometimes feel choked by Torah, I just can't do it, I must say this lashon hara, I can't repress myself. We are defending ourselves against Torah or its goodness. On some level it reflects a lack of belief in Hashem's goodness or the goodness of Torah as a way of life. The issue is bitachon. Bitachon feeds on emunah, it is a practical expression of emunah. We trust Hashem because the emunah is in place. We

Pashanu, we have acted wantonly

have to see everything that comes from Hashem as good even if it doesn't feel good to us. Emunah is above seichel. If it is good on our terms alone then our choices would be very constrained.

We have caused suffering. It is only healthy to cause suffering if it is necessary for someone to feel the strength of your disapproval for their own sake, like a parent teaching a child. Once you say more than you have to and are venting, to release your feelings, it is causing suffering. The listener believes what you are saying and they believe that is who they are, and this is why they suffer from insult and humiliation. We have hurt people unnecessarily, like making trouble for someone within a group of friends.

Tzaranu, we have persecuted

This means being stiff necked. The neck connects the head to the body so the body can listen. We should not try to change our deeds because of a falsehood that has become our belief, like a false idea from Sodom and Gemara that being kind or serving Hashem makes us a shmata. The most common symptom of stiff-neckedness and obstinacy is not liking to hear rebuke. We like to hold onto I am OK. Some people do not have a sense of being integrally worthy. If we know we have inherent value, that Hashem believes in us and wants us to move to our highest potential, then we won't hate tochacha. We don't know why Hashem is sending the suffering but Hashem wants our heart and wants us to connect to Him from a place of will.

Kishanu oref , we have been obstinate

Examine the suffering and  
see what doors are  
opening. Try to get past  
this is just what happened  
and try to get yourself  
closer to Hashem.