

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Hoshana Rabba - Asking for salvation

Today a second seal is placed over the seal from Yom Kipur for our year. Today the love we have for Hashem for the beautiful abundance and salvation He sends us every day is full within our hearts. As we approach the close of the period that began Rosh Chodesh Elul that ends on Simchas Torah, we understand that we have formed the basis for our year, we have set for ourselves positive goals along with areas we wish to improve.

What is on our mind as we ask for salvation today? How can we, in 5774, understand our role in Jewish history? We await the Moshlach. We are in the birthpangs of the time of our redemption. Are we the generation that will be or precede the return of prophecy? How can that be? How can we, who are told we are the heel of Adom, who have no prophets to learn from, become a generation or a preceding generation for redemption? Yet that is our role, the role of the Jewish people at the plate of Jewish history in 5774.

It all goes back to understanding how, in today's world, we can emulate Hashem. The reason that we stand here, without prophets, is because of the utter confusion that began when Adom ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The very first thing that Torah tells us in Bereshis shows us this utter confusion quite explicitly. Adom and Chava hide from Hashem dressed in fig leaves to cover their nakedness.

Before Adom ate, he knew he was a luminescent being with a garment he could utilize called a body to put into effect Hashem's will. After Adom ate, he thought he is a body and that he needed a garment over his body and that he could hide from Hashem. He utterly shows his confusion, and he blames Chava who blames the snake, who Hashem becomes utterly disgusted with.

Confusion.

Before Adom ate, there was true and false. Adom understood emes, including the emes of Hashem as Adoshem. Hashem, Torah and the Jewish people are one. Adom was an embodiment of Hashem's attributes so that Hashem could have a place in olam haze.

After Adom ate, the portion of Adom that understood truth and falsehood so clearly was removed. Adom became a mortal being and lost a level of clarity regarding Hashem's will.

Instead of truth and falsehood, we came into a more worldly view, where there is in a subjective sense, based on a confused sense of who we are, good and evil. This confusion is the darkness. How do we regain the level of clarity that Adom had before the sin?

Regaining clarity about who Hashem creates us to be is what we are here to strive for. Before Avraham Avelnu, there were great people who tried to fix up the matter, but they did not succeed. Hashem created Avraham Avelnu knowing that it was possible for Adom to do the sin and for the purpose of fixing what Adom might (and in fact did) choose. We are the children of Avraham Avelnu and the task is falling upon us, Avraham's children, who are hewn from the heel of Adom, the alkev of Adom. It is for us to bring the yud back into the alkev, to be the compassionate children of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, uniting our people. Tomer Devorah tells us how to do this. Tolerate Insult. Set aside our egos! Overlook the hurtful things that come our way! What stands in our way from doing this is the confusion of subjective good and evil. If something upsets us, we view it as bad. If something feels comfortable and pleasant, we view it as good. Very subjective. What stands in our way is our belief that the subjective sense of good and evil is true. We who are made in Hashem's Image give to those subjective good and evil experiences their power over us. We make this mistake because we are in the dark and do not remember to search for truth versus falsehood, according to Hashem's standards which He tells us in Torah and for which He gives us free will. How can we see Hashem's guiding hand if we are blinded by our subjective evaluation of what is good and evil? How will we be able to return to Hashem's will when we veer off if we can't hear a deeper truth and remember our true identity as a soul hewn from Nishmas Yisrael to be a vessel to bring Hashem into time and space?

The answer is to have patience at all times, for ourselves and others, and understand our existence as bearing the burden of being in a world after the sin of Adom. When we have this patience for each other, we are truly emulating an attribute of Hashem's mercy. And that is a Torah value, and a truth. We submit. At the moment we submit our existence to bearing collectively the burden of being the heel of Adom after the sin, we begin to bring the yud back into alkev, we begin to become compassionate people who are all in this mess together and we become insulated from the horrific bolts that people often throw at each other when they mistakenly choose to limit themselves to the apparent sense of "me" and the Yetzer Hara's urging to follow subjective good and evil and give power to darkness, believing that the pleasures of this world are all that is available. There is by far a greater pleasure, a constant flow of pleasure from devekus in Hashem. And that is where we are today, Hoshana Rabba, with love in our hearts for having reached a level of devekus that we can understand as the true source of all vitality, Torah and Hashem.

If we waiver in this, we can set small doable goals to help us. To start, we look to our anger and galva, the usual areas where the fire, the passion of our soul, is misled by the darkness portrayed by the yetzer hara as good and evil in our eyes. We begin our rescue mission for the part of our holiness that is trapped, kidnapped, by the deception. When we are angry or feeling very loftily about who we are, we can pause and reverse the energy to burn out the deception, asking Hashem to help us so that we can burn out the lower level and utilize that same strength to serve Hashem with a purer passion. Our ability to do this depends on our ability to draw from the well of the source of vitality, of Torah, and from full knowledge that our neshama is made b'tzelem elokim.

With the water of Torah helping us contain the fire of anger and galva so that we can rise to the next level, we can re-absorb into our hearts the strength of our soul that was contained in the kelpas and untruths and move in our emotions, speech and deeds to bring Hashem's will into time and space, within our particular missions, within our spheres of influence. We can make Hashem's name known in this world in our every day lives by living with the higher zoomed out goal of reversing the confusion that was brought into the world when Adom sinned, by making the sacrifices within the world of ego. The powerful joy of living with such emunah is the joy for which we are created.

May our efforts produce positive influence and may we become the generation to be redeemed or at least become the forefathers of the generation that merits to be redeemed.