

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Last day before Rosh Chodesh Elul - Preparing to take what we can from "me" to "He" during the next 30 days of Elul for a new year

Please as I write this it is important for me to be clear that I am not holding by the wisdom I reach for. Rebbetzin Tzipora Harris shared how valuable saying this can be, because we are all on a journey, hunting for the knowledge of Hashem and working on our unique yeud (positive mission) and tikun (what we have been sent here to fix.) The material that I write is one way that I help to integrate what I learn deeper into my mind, and it is an infinite path.

Friday night which is the 30th of Av is Rosh Chodesh Elul, the beginning of a 40 day period of creating our new individual unique world and year. It is a time when we can honestly face our faults and consider deeply and with goals and prayers, what we can do better and how.

It is said that if we could really see how immense the yetzer hara is, we would be truly overwhelmed to even try. Yet Torah tells us that the matter is in our hands and is near to us to do. The vehicle through which we can accomplish is free willed choice and hard work.

What if you woke up one morning and realized that for the last 40 years the thing you thought was the right thing to do was the wrong thing to do? Would you deny it or face it?

What if we wake up after thousands of years of human history and realize that there is a fundamental principle that we thought was good and right to take into consideration and we find out that it is self-destructive and damaging to all? Would we stop?

There is something at the root of human nature which we accept as a basic need and that is the need to survive. Perhaps this is especially apparent in the news today, with threats of attacks daily being discussed or perpetrated. Let's stop for one second to consider - what does our survival depend on?

Chazal tell us that the place of the world is in Hashem's mind. We are the product of His thoughts and speech. Nothing more. In metaphysical terms, our survival depends on how Hashem thinks us up and nothing else.

When we consider that, does it change the dynamics of what we need to do to survive and help answer the question, what does our survival depend on?

In secular thinking regarding today's world, it seems as though religion is the problem and that those who are regular secular people are suffering at the hands of those with religious agendas. If only the religious people would come to give it up and accept that religion is nonsense and just be nice like everyone else! This is a great argument from none other than the yetzer hara, who is determined to make us think that there is a world without the Creator, the King. The entire world is His Creation and that includes each person, with all our troubles, conflicts, challenges, conflicting emotions and confusion.

Hashem made a world where there is the appearance of independent beings who are really not independent from Him at all. There is nothing in the world except Hashem, in every atom throughout the universe and powering every emotion and thought and tear.

Our survival depends on Hashem Willing our survival. And when we take actions with our emotions directed toward that truth, we bring ourselves into the very best position to survive, to emulate Hashem, to bring His attributes of mercy into the darkness.

How can we sit back when we feel we have to protect our lives, our families, our country? How can we not look at thousands of years of military strategy and innovative technological ways to outsmart the enemy? How do we not spend unlimited amounts of money on Homeland Security and military intelligence?

All I can say is that however much we do, we are no match for the size and power of Hashem's will expressed in this world through His Angel, the Soton, the yetzer hara, We are miniscule in comparison to the amount of evil we wish to overcome. We cannot do it by ourselves. All that we do must be with complete knowledge that it is He behind the entire matter. We must change the way we think to recognize that Hashem is the only power in the entire world and that our role in relation to Him is what we need to focus on in order to survive.

Each of us has our own set of well worn tools that have been useful up until now in bringing us success. In Elul, let's examine them each, let's challenge ourselves to see if we can deepen our understanding of our efforts so that Hashem is brought into the picture. If our tools cannot be modified to bring Hashem into the picture, then perhaps we need to re-think the tools we are using and bring reality into our world, the reality that there is nothing in the world but the simple unity of Hashem and that He is waiting for us to remember that.

Each person is a world. We cannot change Hashem's world, but we have free will to affect our thoughts, speech and actions. We have 40 days to consider how to change for the better our unique world. May Hashem help us and redeem us!