

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Reflections Erev Yom Kippur 5771 on Teshuva

Doing teshuva on weaknesses (name them out loud) stemming from dependency needs

Our soul is pure, we are taught not to hurt each other or do damaging things, and to put the crown on Hashem, not on ourselves. We ARE permitted to defend ourselves- it is permitted to be self protective. For example, we learn that we can put distance (which is usually attributed to hatred) between someone and ourselves to be self-protective., but where do we draw the line? Does this not present a dangerous slippery slope that opens the gates of hatred and sina?

Our human nature may find self-protective or other rationals to justify not doing what we know is right because it does not give us so much control. Or, we find a justification that allows us to continue doing a comfortable behavior stemming from emotions and thoughts that have not been introspected upon and intentionally matched to Hashem's will.-- we run after our hearts into heresy – allowing our emotions to affect goals in a self-centered way instead of disciplining our bodies and minds to serve Hashem.. why leave things to “chance” when we see a way to influence and exert power? Why seek a sense of closeness with Hashem which is hard to achieve and requires mesiras nefesh? Man is intended to dominate and we can experience closeness within a small society where we exert power and influence and generate a sense of belonging and unity that is far more immediate and satisfying to our physical side! Isn't that what people and societies do? It is so much easier and even if it is a counterfeit, it sure feels real enough and anyway, everyone seems to be doing it and it runs okay...so it must be okay. Why should I not do this and, instead take something upon myself that will exclude me from all the crowd?

The answer is that Hashem is very patient but we don't live forever and our souls have no separate existence from Hashem and when we return our soul, we shall be accountable for our actions, including the harm we caused, the good we prevented from coming into the world and more, and we will pay the price for eternity. A second answer is that we want a new light in the world NOW and that this is teshuva that we can do because it concerns our own thoughts, speech and deed. For these reasons, I give mechila to every person that I have ever known, may no harm come to anyone because of infractions toward me nor may any good be withheld because of wrongdoing towards me.

To do this teshuva, we must recognize and admit to Hashem our weaknesses (flaws whose persistent role in our lives may be rationalized by us because of our natural dependency needs and desire to dominate) and ask Hashem to lift us up from it . Rebbetzin Heller says that in this way we can confuse the Soton, who no longer can point to our weakness as an aveira because we just used it as a stepping stone to connect to Hashem, by asking for His help in rising above it.

Yes, we have dependency needs, but no one can satisfy them better than Hashem. We must unblock ourselves from receiving good by giving to Hashem our teshuva (admitting and naming our weaknesses, which He already knows, but that we show Him we recognize as frailties) and regret our past mistakes, and then we make a commitment to doing things in a manner that is pleasing to Him, and finally we restore the relationship by saying we are sorry.

May my efforts at doing this teshuva for myself be a merit for all Klal Yisrael. May we all be successful in aligning our thoughts speech and deed with Hashem for the sake of connection and teshuva and may our teshuva in these regards tip the scales so that we merit redemption immediately.

The above thoughts were inspired by Rebbetzin Heller in her shiur below found at www.naaleh.com, and her Elul Workshop 5770, and by Rabbi Aryeh Nivin's zmanim segment for Yom Kippur:

