

Nourishment for the Neshama

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How in Elul to upgrade our operating system from Windows ME to Windows GE (Gan Eden)

Without exception, we see with our own eyes that in this world, there is loss and suffering that are accompanied by a full range of human emotions. The root of our suffering is from the time when Adom and Chava were expelled from Gan Eden. Hashem put them out to survive within the forces of the natural world, and He made them mortal beings. What would it have been like to have remained in Gan Eden, forever, we will not know until the resurrection of the dead. But it falls upon each and every one of us to understand that there is in every life something that stems back to their sin, something that our life choices can repair and hopefully bring closer the redemption.

When we are faced with painful circumstances, when we feel inwardly pained and are suffering, very often it is at these times that we turn to Hashem in prayer, asking for rachamim, for help.

Too often we ask ourselves that painful question, Hashem why are you punishing me? Why are You giving me this challenge? Sometimes it seems too much to bear. Sometimes we listen to that inner voice of Amalek who tries to convince us that either we are bad or that Hashem doesn't really exist and that is why this is happening, that nature or people or bad luck is running things. Chas v'shalom, we accept the darkness and look to just make the best of it rather than seeking out Hashem's light.

If we are able to maintain our faith through the test, we are still confronted with many questions regarding what Hashem wants from us, asking why me? Despite our emunah and understanding of ourselves, it is only human to see our lives with our families and ourselves in the center. Such is a normal value within the western world, the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness.

We forget that we are in a partnership. Although we have adult responsibilities within a natural world, we have a bond that is outside of time and space, and that is our connection to Hashem. We desire that Hashem illuminate His face toward us, meaning that we turn our inward heartfelt pleas toward Him and ask Him to shower us with yud gimei middos

The innermost will of Hashem is Knesses Yisrael, which is the reason He creates the world. The thirteen middos of mercy are a great revelation of Hashem's love. Forgiveness and atonement come from the thirteen attributes. A person who needs forgiveness needs Hashem's rachamim because he has fallen.

And we all fall, because we are human, because we are in a fallen world. And we, the generation that is the heel of Adom, may be the ones who although apparently are fallen to Adom's lowest point, are told that we can be the ones to change everything. And that is what we need to remember when we are deeply pained. We need to remember that at all times, in the life of every Jew, we are being called upon to turn towards Hashem's attributes of mercy and rectify what Adom and Chava internalized - jealousy,

longing for honor and desire - by eating the apple.

Internalized are these deserts, jealousy, longing for honor, and lustful desires. Yet surrounding us are Hashem's attributes. Chesed kayl kol hayom is aleph lamed, the general name for Hashem's love and kindness and the whole of all yud gimel middos. When we remember to turn to Him, to His inner love for Knesset Yisrael, by arousing within our hearts His yud gimel middos, His kindness and mercy, we open up our internal darkneses, our personal desert within, to being filled with His light. Instead of animating Windows ME, acting out our pain, we can animate Windows GE, animating yud gimel middos.

All we have to do is understand this as every Jew's primal purpose within every other purpose.

It is Elul. Let us confess to Hashem our internal deserts and invite in His attributes of mercy and may that arousal from below create an arousal above, and may the light we shine create a truly light 5774