



Questions & Answers on Renewal in Elul

Q1: *How do we balance this idea of concentrating about the renewal with the work of Elul of inspecting what we did wrong and doing teshuvah?*

ANSWER: In fact there is an *avodah* of the part of the soul that sees the continuation of day after day. A person should do a *cheshbon hanefesh* with his or her lower soul for 5–10 minutes a day and it will fix what is needed, but the majority of our outlook should be of renewal. The days of *teshuvah* are also days of renewal, because if the person only does *teshuvah*, and only looks at the past, he will only go into his shortcomings of the past. Going deep, the energy that a person has to do *teshuvah* is because he is renewing himself. The Rambam says that a *ba'al teshuvah* is called a “*breiah chadashah*” (new being). This is the how deep *teshuvah* goes, if the person regrets the past. A person who doesn't regret the past cannot feel the “*mechadesh bechol yom*” ... But if someone did *teshuvah* 5–10 minutes per day, then he should try to go back to the place of renewal. This is the depth of a *ba'al teshuvah* who feels like a new being.

Q2: *I heard of the idea that a tzaddik falls seven times. I thought that this is to comfort us, that even tzaddikim can fall seven times, but could it be that we can become a tzaddik by doing this renewing work ourselves?*

ANSWER: Of course the first is true, but the main process should be the second part. From where does a *tzaddik* have the power to fall and get up and fall and get up again? A regular person, if he falls once or twice, says to himself, “I fell and tried to get up but couldn't do it, so the next time I will fall, I will not be able to get up either.” If he fell twice and couldn't get up, on the third time he will feel that now he has a *chazakah*, and for sure will not be able to get up. But a *tzaddik* believes that Hashem gives him *koach* to fix himself. With the power that Hashem gives, one can succeed in anything. If it was my own power, it is limited and I can't succeed, but if I receive every day a new power, the question is who gave me the power?. On this *Chazal* say, “Hashem li *b'ozrai* — Hashem is my helper.” Therefore even if in the past you failed, a person knows that Hashem helps him. Therefore there is never a place of despair because he knows that Hashem will help him even if he fell many times.

Q3: *Is there a specific time of a day when this is happening? Also because it is Elul, should we do this Avodah specifically now? Is there anything in Elul specifically to take advantage of?*

ANSWER: At the beginning of the day, before you start the day, is the best time. It is best if possible to get up a few minutes earlier, before others, and do this before everyone wakes up, and then the day would start from this clean and pure and internal state.

Additionally, Elul gives the *koach* for all the year, like a person who takes upon himself to do certain things on Rosh Hashanah, because it is Rosh Hashanah he has the power to sustain this throughout the year. But if he makes certain commitments and only does them on Rosh Hashanah, then they are not so helpful. Elul is the time from where this light shines through the whole year. It is the time to accept/acquire this energy and to stretch it to the whole year.

Q4: *In regards to renewal of the Creation, going to the siddur and saying Modeh Ani for returning my soul, does it mean returning us the soul as it was, is it the same soul or a new soul?*

ANSWER: Like we say, it is "*Elokai, neshamah sh'nasata bi tehorah.*" You gave it to me pure, and I dirtied it and now you give it to me clean and pure again. A person needs to feel that Hashem is in his heart, so this feeling of "*mechadesh ma'asei bereshis*" is more real and pure. If a person doesn't feel Hashem in his heart, he can't feel the *mechadesh bi ma'asei bereshis*. The more a person feels that Hashem is in his heart, the more the feeling of renewal is more internal, deeper, and purer.

Q5: *The renewal is there already there, but do we need to do an action to access it?*

ANSWER: We need to uncover it and feel it. It already is there, but one's personal *avodah* is to feel it.

Q6: *What are the different ways practically to internalize it?*

ANSWER: Most people have fantasies of the past and future; therefore, people don't live in the present state of renewal. The more we quiet our thoughts and imaginations regarding the past and the future, and we focus of the present, then the person removes most of the screens covering his thoughts. When we are in the present and a person sits quietly, we can utilize tasting a fruit or hearing a *niggun*, and sitting comfortably to try to feel Hashem; then we have the possibility to feel the place of renewal. All this must be with davening to Hashem, asking him to help him get there in a complete way.

Q7: *A question on the avodah: I understand doing it when it is quiet, and we have time and space, but then the Rav mentions also accessing it when a person gets frustrated. Does the Rav have an eitzah (advice) on how to get there even if things are chaotic?*

ANSWER: We need to be deep into it and that allows you to be able to get into it in a flash. It works faster after we are experienced with this *avodah* for a while. If reality doesn't allow, we must know that life is involved with pain, and not everything has a solution for this moment or exact second.



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