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## TESHUVAH IN ELUL THROUGH RENEWAL

### QUESTION

**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.

## FALLING OF A REGULAR PERSON

### QUESTION:

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.

## WHY DAVEN?

### QUESTION:

**Why** do we daven throughout the year, if everything that will happen this was anyways decreed on Rosh HaShanah and sealed on Yom Kippur? When I daven, I always tell myself, "What will this help? It was already decreed on me what will happen, so nothing will help."

### ANSWER

**The** Gemara says that a person is judged on Rosh HaShanah, and according to one view, one is judged every

day of the year. Even more so, a person is judged every moment.

**This** means that any good decreed on Rosh HaShanah can be held back from a person due to sins. We find this concept by Yaakov Avinu, who was concerned that his sins will hold him back from receiving Hashem's blessings of protection. It is the same vice versa: The Gemara teaches that if anything harsh was decreed on a person chas v'shalom that Rosh HaShanah, the decree can be removed, when a lot of people daven for that person.

**The** tefillah of an individual can also remove a bad decree on a person, when one's prayers are accompanied with complete teshuvah. This access the spiritual light of Yom Kippur [which removes any harsh decrees from Rosh HaShanah]. This is especially the case when a person davens with tears, which has the power to tear up any harsh decree. This is even more effective when a person davens at special opportune times of the year (*an eis ratzon*). That is why our tefillos can always help eliminate any harsh decrees on a person and merit us to receive our due portion.

**Even** more so, if a person is close to Hashem and has an earnest relationship with Him, his tefillos can enable him to receive any blessing that wasn't decreed on him on Rosh HaShanah, because such a person is above the dimension of time.

## DESTROYED THROUGH THE INTERNET

### QUESTION:

**The** Rav said in a response that "Many souls have already been burnt because of the Internet, Rachmana Litzlan. Does this mean that these souls have become truly lost and that they cannot be repaired? Why should it be different

than when Nadav and Avihu's souls became "burnt" after they sinned, who certainly didn't lost their share in the World To Come and who certainly didn't cease to exist chas v'shalom? Is there really such a concept that a person's soul can become lost or "burnt up"? How does a soul become burnt up and destroyed?! Does it mean the person no longer exists?! And what about the "Yechidah" level of the soul which is indestructible? And doesn't Rebbi Nachman of Breslev teach that "There is no such as despair in the world", which means that a person can always get a tikkun for his soul? I'll also ask this question on a simple level: Are those who fell into the tumah and pitfalls of the Internet and smartphones truly hopeless, because their souls became "burnt up" through this? Isn't a person always able to do teshuvah....?

### ANSWER:

**There** are two ways for a soul to become "burnt up" – in the side of devastation, and in the side of repair.

**About** the side of devastation, we find that the Gemara (*Talmud Bavli Rosh HaShanah 17a*) says that in the future, the wicked [those who remained wicked and didn't do teshuvah] will be become "ash" under the foot of the tzaddikim. They become spread apart like individual pieces of ash. This is a fallen, ruined state of "individuality".

**In** contrast to this the "repaired" level of being "burnt" is what the Gemara describes as "death by the kiss of Hashem", also known as *hiskalelus*, becoming integrated with Hashem, which Nadav and Avihu merited in their deaths.

**As** long as a person is alive, he can do teshuvah, and transform his ruined state of being "ash" [die to his sins], into a repaired state of "ash", as implied by the verse, "And I am dust and ash."



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