

A Short Essay

written by Yossi Katz

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The following is a series of short essays based on the popular book, Meshivas Nefesh, of which parts of have already been translated by BRI under the title Restore My Soul.

The essays are not meant to be translations; rather, their style differs depending on their content. They seek to convey the messages of Meshivas Nefesh in a practical, contemporary manner.

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Whoever wants to return to Hashem... return to Hashem... to do Teshuvah...?

Do I want to stop all the nonsense? Do I want to leave all my bad habits?

Do I want to start accomplishing, to start actually come close to Hashem?

What do I need to do?

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I need to be an expert, to be proficient. In what do I need to be proficient?

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I must be an expert in the knowledge that I can never let anything throw me down. Nothing should be able to distance me from Hashem.

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I shouldn't think that there may be something which I might allow to throw me down or distance me. I shouldn't let anything in the world do that.

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Sometimes I find myself on a high. Things are going good. But

being successful can also knock me down, and distance me. I have to be careful not to let my highs distance me.

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And even if I know how to be cautious during good times, I have to be especially careful when I'm on a low. I have to make sure not to allow my down days knock me down.

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No matter what I may ever encounter, I must never let anything weaken me.

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I must always be strong. I must always hold on. I can never lose my resolve.

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Hashem is everywhere. Hashem is even in the lowest places. Wherever I may have fallen, Hashem is also there. Therefore, I can always come close to Him, even here, even now. I don't have to wait until I "get out". I don't have to brush myself off. I just have to turn to Him, with simplicity and with faith. All I have to know is, "You are here."

And then I am close to him.

Even here.

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When a person wants to go in the ways of Teshuvah and repentance... do I fit into that category?

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I need to be an expert in running and returning. I need to know how to run, and I need to know how to come back.

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Running and returning are an aspect of entering and exiting. I

need to know what to do when I'm "in" and when I'm "out".

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When I'm flying high I've got to remember that Hashem is there too. When I'm low I have to know that He's right here.

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If I want to return to Hashem, I need to accept upon myself, I need resolve ...

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I need to be firm in my path...

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Always. There's no moment when I can let up.

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I shouldn't think I can soften up when it's going good.

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Even when I'm on a low, I can't let up.

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No matter what I've already accomplished, whether I've achieved big things, or even just small things...

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I can't stay where I am. I can't be satisfied with what I have. I must realize that there's still so much more that I can do, there are still so many heights which I can reach.

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I have to be proficient in this, very proficient in this...

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It takes great skill to know this, to know and to believe that no matter what, I must keep on going, to keep on growing.

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The opposite is also true. Even if I fall wherever I might fall to...

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Even if I fall so low that it seems as if I've reached rock bottom, I've reached the worst. And of course if I realize that however low my fall may be, I'm still not the worse it can be...

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Even there, I can't give up.

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I can't say that there's a limit to how long I can hold on for. I must resolve that I will never give up.

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I can't think that that's only in a somewhat normal situation, but of course there are some circumstances which may warrant giving up. There is no such situation.

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No way can I ever give up, no matter what.

So if I'm not being successful, and I also can't give up, what can I do?

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The only thing I can do is to search for Hashem...

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...and to be strong and hold on. No matter where I am now, I can't consider that over here I'm unable to hold on. No matter what situation I'm in, I can't think that in this case it's not possible to hold on...

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And I've got to be strong and hold on with whatever I can, grab onto anything, just don't let go...

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Even in the worst possible places, Hashem is there, for He is everywhere. I can come close to Him, to attach myself to Him, dveykus, even at my lowest. There's no such thing as saying that I can't be close to Him the way I am now, that I just have to wait until I get a little better. It's not true that I can't have dveykus in the place I am now. I can be close to Him here and now.

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It's impossible to achieve Teshuvah without being an expert in all this. These concepts are the basic tools which I have to acquire in order to be successful in my Teshuvah.

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I shouldn't fool myself. These really are very difficult concepts to internalize. But I must still realize that my life is dependent on putting in the time and effort in learning them.

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I've got to internalize this. I must know and believe that I must put all my effort into my Avodas Hashem. I need to plug away in Avodas Hashem...

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Always. That means never to think that I only have to put that extra exertion in when I think that the situation calls for it. No. Everything I do in Avodas Hashem must be with all my strength.

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And at all times I've got to be eager and hoping to reach higher levels. To always have that feeling that I wish and hope to reach a higher level than I am on now.

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Here comes the hard part. Even though I'm always putting in

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Don't even think that this situation is so bad that maybe I can feel bad just a little... no, I can't feel bad at all!

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When I will be proficient in these skills, then I'll be on the path of Teshuvah, and Hashem will lovingly accept my Teshuvah. This will bring true honor to Him. Ashreinu!

Written by Efrayim Portnoy

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