

Reality Check

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What is reality? Most of us are convinced that what we see with our very own eyes is absolutely real and genuine. But is this really so?

We are now a few weeks removed from the spiritual heights of the year – Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Simchat Torah. We have made resolutions; we have promised ourselves that “this year will certainly be different.” And we have even started off the new year by implementing these changes and trying to live a more spiritual and fulfilling life.

But we are stuck. We thought that we could rise above our bad character defects and crude physical temptations, but they seem to be cycling back at us at full force. What have we done

wrong? Are we powerless? Has God abandoned us?

“He (Abraham) was *yoshev* (sitting) at the entrance to the tent during the hottest part of the day” (Genesis 18:1).

Reb Noson interprets the word *yoshev* to mean that Abraham was not just physically sitting – he was waiting and waiting for a spiritual entranceway. “During the hottest part of the day” – his physical desires were burning in him as he waited and waited to be allowed in to new spiritual dimensions (*Alim LiTerufah*, Letter #25).

Rebbe Nachman explains, “For such is the way of the Other Side. When it sees that a person is close, really close, to the gates of holiness and is about to enter, it mounts a very, very powerful assault against him, may the Merciful One spare us. Accordingly, one needs great encouragement to counter it” (*Likutey Moharan* II, 48:2).

First, we need to understand that Rebbe Nachman teaches that this process happens to even tremendous tzaddikim. Therefore we shouldn’t view ourselves in a negative light for having to withstand thoughts and desires that we thought we had previously purged ourselves from. Second, we need to realize that we are standing at the gates of a new spiritual existence; if we can hold off just a bit longer, we will have gained eternally. But if we let go, we will end up so far from holiness.

Yet what if while we are waiting, we feel that we are being deficient in our service of God, or even sinning? How then can we still hold on?

Rebbe Nachman explains that if you take a sphere and mark off a starting-point, and then mark off another point even a hairsbreadth away, if you then draw lines from these two points, the further they extend from the point, the further apart from each other they get (see “The Melancholy Saint,” *Rabbi Nachman’s Stories* #16).

To us, if we detach ourselves just a bit from materialism, it may look like we have accomplished nothing at all. But in the upper worlds, a small shift is equivalent to a passage through thousands of universes and thousands of miles, which is great and precious indeed. Can you see straight?

A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat ShaLom!