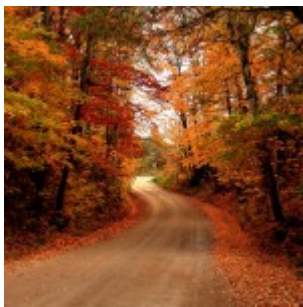


Self-Assessment, Honor, And Coming Closer To God

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Rosh Hashana is the Day of Judgment for all humanity. But despite its profound ramifications, Rosh Hashana is actually a very down-to-earth day.

On the New Year, we are judged and awarded (or not), all the 'stuff of life' in this world—life, health, wealth and sustenance for the coming year. What we're given depends not only on our actions during the past year, but also on how effectively we judge *ourselves* on this day, and open our hearts to God.

Several lessons of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov help us understand how to accurately assess ourselves and determine in which areas we need to improve. Taking stock of ourselves throughout the year, not just during the approach to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, is done by means of daily *hisbodedus*, talking to Hashem in our own words.

Depending on how strong or fragile your self-image and faith are, deep introspection into your weaker areas is possible when you also maintain an awareness of your good points. Beating yourself up can make honest self-analysis and reflection impossible—you'll be more likely to give up in the face of overwhelming pain.

Even with a daily, year-round thoughts of self-assessment, correction, and spiritual growth, in Elul, the month before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, our thoughts naturally turn to *teshuvah*, returning to God. This is the time where Hashem discreetly beckons us. He imbues this period of time with Divine Favor, and we become aware of feeling that we possess the ability to come closer to Him.

In Likutey Moharan Volume I, Lesson 6, (Torah Vav), Rebbe Nachman of Breslov addresses concepts related to *teshuvah*, through the themes of this lesson:

Honor—understanding the difference between self-serving actions and those that reveal the honor of Hashem

Humility—cultivating authentic humility (without kidding ourselves) and maintaining both a verbal and heart-felt composure in the face of humiliation and embarrassment

Spiritual Strength—developing the spiritual muscles we need to get through life's hard times

Applied *Teshuvah*—methods and meanings of *teshuvah* in

light of the mystical revelations of the Arizal.

Understanding the Correct Approach to Honor is the First Ingredient of Teshuvah

“Every person must minimize his own honor and try to increase the honor given to God. He should not pursue honor, but rather flee from it...”–Kitzur Likutey Moharan, Vol. I, Lesson 6

Not seeking our own honor is an essential ingredient of *teshuvah*. Only we know the true motivations for our actions. A thousand times a day, a person in a position of authority may have the opportunity to make a choice conducive to his honor—or the honor of Hashem.

Rebbe Nachman tells us that the honor we pursue for our own glory, called “kingly honor”, will be questioned. If we attain kingly honor, people will examine us and ask: “Who is that person, that he is given so much honor? Who does he think he is?”

Then, they’ll oppose us and say that we don’t deserve it.

However, when a person doesn’t care about his own status or prestige and even disdains it in order to give honor to Hashem, people won’t ask whether or not he deserves it.

The example is given of King David. When welcoming the Holy Ark to Jerusalem, King David danced with frenetic joy, so much so, that his limbs were exposed. His wife Michal felt his behavior wasn’t suitably dignified for a king and told him so.

King David told Michal his actions were in fact, appropriate. He didn’t care for his own honor and dignity, he even said he would dance and frolic before God more rambunctiously, not caring if it dishonored him, as long as it enhanced the honor of Hashem.

Fleeing From Honor

Another, more recent, example of someone who fled from personal honor was Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, The Chofetz Chaim, author of the famous work on the laws of proper speech, The Chofetz Chaim (Desirer of Life). He was a scholarly giant and also author of the renowned work of legal commentary, the Mishnah Berura, but is primarily known as a Tzaddik.

It's explained* that the reason we don't remember him primarily for his incredible scholarship and genius is because his modesty was so great that he prayed to God that he would not be honored for his scholarship (which was obvious to him because he was able to produce scholarly works that were lacking in the world), and that it would, in fact, be concealed. He shunned honor, even feared it.

But then why do we then remember him for his great piety*, and even refer to him as a Tzaddik, a completely righteous individual?

Because he was so modest, he did not realize that his love for Hashem and his constant devotion to Torah and good deeds were anything out of the ordinary. He reasoned that every Jew felt the same way about God and therefore didn't recognize his higher level of piety.

When we mention the Tzaddik, the Chofetz Chaim, we may be in awe of his piety, but we instinctively understand that the honor we give him belongs to God.

*[Told to Rav Kahaneman by the Brisker Rav](#)

*[Told to Rav Kahaneman by the Beis Yisroel, the Gerer Rebbe](#)

