

Yom Kippur

Historically Yom Kippur is a day when we actually received the Torah. Although we celebrate the giving of the Torah on Shavuot and he indicated a willingness to receive and to abide by it by the time Moshe Rabbenu brought down the tablets to us we had already worship the golden calf. So Moshe had to intercede for us for 40 days so we might be forgiven and you need another 40 days -- from the first day of Ellul to Yom Kippur when he brought down the second tablets with the words -- I have forgiven salachti Kid'varecha --. So the Torah that we actually receive it came with a willingness on the divine attribute of justice to be lenient and to forgive. This understanding is pivotal in our attitude to Torah and her Commandments. When many people think of Torah and mitzvot in terms of an unforgiving strictness here we are saying in our view of history that the Torah comes with forgiveness.

So we're dealing with two obstacles: one we think that we will never be forgiven and the other everything that we don't need to do anything in order to be forgiven, i.e. that Yom Kippur will do it all for us. We need to do teshuvah in order for forgiveness to work is often overlooked. So when we go this year to celebrate Yom Kippur we have to see in it the celebration of reconciliation with God. And that reconciliation is the product of our recalibrating the course of our life to be in greater harmony with the purpose for which we were created as well as the divine willingness to receive our Tshuvah.

On the Eve of Yom Kippur will be reciting the Kol Nidre. Behind the rabbinic formula that intends to abrogate the vows we are bound to make in the coming year and to declare them to be null and void there is a deeper significance: habits are the vows we have made and live by name by day. Part of Tshuvah is the work of scrutinizing our habit patterns. Another part of Tshuvah is to examine the texture of our relationship with other people and ourselves. The sacred moment of Kol Nidre is our opportunity to delete habitual programs that we would be better off if we were rid of them.

As in the Rosh Hashanah message I raised the issue that the duty and the work solo is very difficult. It's for this reason that we need to reach out to special friends we have with whom we can examine the habit patterns and relationships that we have and become clearer about which habits serve us in fulfilling our deployment tasks for which we were created. Concerning the issue of relationships the high holy days in the process of Tshuvah afford us with the opportunity to recalibrate them in a way that will make for greater harmony and holiness.

The opportunity that comes with the fasting allows us again to listen to the voice off our own body, the pangs of hunger and thirst give us a chance to hear what the body actually saying to us without at being interrupted by our fulfilling the cry of the body without paying real attention to it. And also prepares us for the teaching that comes in the teachings the prophet Isaiah (58:7) which we read in the Haftarah. Being hungry ourselves we can more deeply hear the words: "share your bread with the hungry and the down and out poor bring into your home"

The teachings of Hasidism teach us that each year on Yom Kippur a new "name" emanated by God. The envelope of divine Providence is that name. Each year a new one is issued to contain and sustain the universe. Whenever we live in harmony with that name, the Hebrew words are kiddush Hashem, we sanctify, honor and add energy to the good sustenance of the universe. Whenever we act in a position to damage the name it is called in Hebrew Chillul Hashem, the desecration of the name. Literally this means to pierce and damage to name so that the divine energy is diverted to energize the forces of evil.

Toward the end of the day of Yom Kippur we come to the prayer of Ne'ilah, the closing prayer. Imagine you have been working on a program on your computer. In order that the program might not be lost you have to save it and pushed the "enter" button. So while the service is going on a good thing would be to review the work done from Ellul to Ne'ilah. If you can sit with a friend and share what it is that has been your sacred work during the Days of Awe. In this way you can remind each other during the following holy day times of Sukot and celebrate enjoy and then dancing on Simchat Torah what you have undertaken to do for Tikkun Olam.