

Re- e- n

Elul - Renewal

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Hashem Recreates the World Continuously

Hashem created the world on the 25th of Elul. On the surface, it seems that Hashem created the world one time, 5,779 years ago.

But, Hashem also re-creates the world every single day, as is explained in the *Gemara*.¹ “*Hamechadesh betuvo b’chol yom tamid ma’asei bereshis.*” (He renews, in His goodness, every day constantly, the act of creation.) Not only did this happen the first time on the 25th of Elul, 5779 years ago, but in fact, every single day, Hashem re-creates His world and renews it.

What difference does it make to us whether the world was created only one time 5,779 years ago, or if Hashem keeps re-creating his world every day anew?

With Hashem’s help, we will try to answer this question and explain how the fact that the world is constantly being re-created is relevant and has practical implications for every one of us. We will look into the immense repercussions of the fact that Hashem keeps re-creating the world. Hashem created the world, on the first day, on the second, third, fourth, fifth, and on the sixth day he created Adam.

On each day of Creation, it was said to be “*ki tov*,”² that it is good, and when Hashem completed the Creation, He testified that it was all very good. “*Vayar Elokim es kol asher asah, v’hinei tov me’od.*”³

But after Hashem had created the Creation, which was **all very good**, Adam and Chavah did not listen to Hashem, Who commanded them not to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* (*Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*). By eating from it, they not only damaged themselves, but they also damaged the entire world.

If a person would not have the energy he needed for each day’s spiritual work, then every morning he would start it from an imperfect, unclean, contaminated place.

But because Hashem continuously re-creates the world every day, He gives each person the opportunity to start each day from the depths of his soul, from a place that is totally innocent, totally pure and totally holy [thus providing perfect conditions for his spiritual growth].

Continuation vs. Renewal

There are two frames of reference that Hashem gives us in order to observe the world. One view is that there was only one Creation, that Hashem created the world once 5,773 years ago and, ever since, the Creation continues every day from the previous day, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Just about every

1 *U’mechadesh bechol yom ma’asei bereishis* – “Who renews the Creation every day” (*Chagiga* 12:2). Also in the morning prayers, just before *Kriyat Shema*.

2 After each day, Hashem saw that it “*ki tov* – was good” (*Bereishis* 1)

3 Hashem saw that “*v’hinei tov me’od* – and it was very good” (*Bereishis* 1:31)

one of us has been reincarnated many times during the 5,773 years since the “first” Creation. Sometimes we did good deeds, and sometimes, G-d-forbid, we did not-so-good deeds, sometimes we were good and holy and sometimes, *chas ve’shalom*, we were not so holy. If a person lived with only this perception, then they would live their life with all their past, which was sometimes good and sometime less good.

The second view is that Hashem planted in the world a force of re-creation continuously every day, every hour, every minute, every instant. Hashem re-creates and gives a person energy to always start with a new beginning that is not affected by the defects of the past— not affected from all the transformations the person has gone through in all the years since the world was created.

Knowing Our Strengths and Weaknesses

Each and every one of us knows their own soul to some degree. We all have our own weaknesses, which are expressed differently by different people. In some people, it is expressed by a tendency for sadness – some people get stressed easily while others get overwhelmed. For other people, it is expressed by fears. In other people, it is expressed by a tendency to be suspicious and in other people it is expressed in low self-esteem.

There are many other predispositions that people have, depending on their particular history. A great many of these tendencies are the results of the many situations that the person went through during his life in childhood, in adolescence, or at various other times in their life.

If a person would try to remember where certain difficulties stem from, he may be able to recall and sort through all kinds of adverse situations that he went through, along with the particular situation when this mishap was implanted in his soul.

Sometimes these situations happened in this life, but very often, these emotional difficulties do not stem from this lifetime, but from the many other lives that the person lived during his various incarnations (*gilgulim*) since the start of Creation.

Getting Rid of Our Emotional Blocks

Our soul, which is now clothed in our current body, went through thousands of years in This World, in *Gan Eden* or even in, *chas veshalom*, *Gehinnom*. We have a lot of baggage that has accumulated in our soul— we are an accumulation of a lot of scars and many emotional disturbances. And these disturbances can combine generating whole new disturbances!

If each one of us had only one disturbance, or even a couple, it would have been much easier to deal with. But usually each one of us has at least a few disturbances, and many times dozens and even hundreds.

How can a person get rid of all these emotional blocks? Here we arrive to the special power we spoke about that is imbedded in the month of *Elul*.⁴

⁴ How do we balance this idea of concentrating on renewal with the avodah of Elul which is focusing on what we did wrong and doing teshuvah?

In response to this question, the Rav answered: “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 their lower soul for 5–10 minutes a day and it will fix what is needed, but the majority of our outlook should be on renewal.

The advice seems to be to deal with one problem— to try to figure out how it started, what is its reason, and by finding its root reason, it would be possible to try to remove the source of that disturbance. Sometimes we can find the reason for a disturbance if we could track down its source. Sometimes, however, it is more hidden, especially if the reason for the disturbance was not in this life, but was in a previous incarnation. It is almost impossible to get to the bottom of any disturbance using the mind alone.

So, if it is difficult to solve one disturbance, how much more difficult is it to solve them all. Therefore, it is impossible to accomplish fixing everything. Of course, if we could clearly see the reason for the disturbance, we should go through it and fix it.

But for everything else, either because the reason is hidden or because there are too many disturbances, we have the power of renewal of “*Mechadesh betuvo bechol yom tamid ma’asei bereshis*”.

The *koach* (strength) that Hashem uses to renew the Creation every day gives us a new, tremendous and amazing ability to deal with the tribulations of our *nefesh* in order to attain a more *pnimi* (internal) and pleasant life.

The Renewal Within

This force of renewal is found in the inner recesses of everyone’s soul.

In the parts of the soul that a person is aware of which are closer to the physical, a person feels that every day is a continuation of the previous day. But in the very depths of everyone’s soul, is the place of “*Asher yatzar es ha’adam b’chochmah* – That He created man with wisdom.”⁵ Iyov asked “*Chochmah mei’ayin timatza?* – Wisdom, from where is it found?”⁶ The answer is that in the root of the creation of a Jew is the place that is known exclusively only to Jewish souls – Hashem is constantly re-creating continuously.

This phenomenon, that Hashem re-creates the world continuously (and one’s private soul in particular) means that the soul is re-created without any defects, impressions, or disturbances imprinted from the beginning of Creation.

“*Chadashim labekarim, rabbah emunasecha*” – “They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness,”⁷; “*Briyah chadashah mamash*” – “In actuality, a new creation”.⁸

As such, a person is like a newborn baby or like a new convert. He starts anew in that place in the soul, where there are no imprints. The *Mishna* in *Avos* explains, “*Kotev al neyar chalak v’lo kotev al niyyar machuk*”, that we can

The Ten Days of Teshuvah are also days of renewal, because if a person only does teshuvah, and only looks at the past, he will only focus on his shortcomings of the past.

The Rambam says that a ba’al teshuvah is called a breiah chadashah (new being).

If a person doesn’t regret the past they cannot feel the renewal of mechadesh bechol yom ... If someone does cheshbon hanefesh 5–10 minutes per day, then they should try to go back to the place of renewal also. This is the depth of a ba’al teshuvah who feels like a new being.”

5 *Gamara Brachos 80b*

6 *Iyov, 28:12*

7 *Rashi, Eichah 3:23*

8 “*Briyah chadashah mamash*” (*Chesed l’Avraham 3:22*).

“write on a clean slate and not on an erased piece of paper”.⁹ There, a person can start anew; there he has a future that starts growing from a new beginning.

A person first must know that there is such a place in the soul, and then reach that place. He needs to understand that there is such a place in the soul where he could start anew, every day, every hour, and any time.

[When *bnei Yisrael* were in the desert for forty years, Hashem gave them *manna* from Heaven every single day for their sustenance.] What was the necessity for the *manna* to descend daily? Hashem could have brought it down once a week or once a month so that it would stay fresh. Hashem gave them the *manna* every day so that they will feel “*Chadashim labkarim rabbah emunasecha*.”¹⁰

Every morning when the *manna* fell, they felt that there was new food in the world, because it was a new world. This *manna* was white, and whitened their sins, and clearly allowed them to start every day from this new, white, blank page in their soul.

Believe In Renewal, Then See It

First of all, as we explained, a person must know that the inner strength in his soul experiences a new beginning every day.

It is only the external part of our soul that feels the world as if it is merely continuous; a day follows from the previous day, from the previous week, from the previous month, from the previous year. But in the depths of our soul, we can access the power of renewal.

After a person knows and believes the fact, that the world is always being re-created, a person should try to observe the world and see all the things that are renewed each day.

Chazal say that a chicken lays an egg every single day.¹¹ *Chazal* also say that in the future a woman will be able to give birth every day instead of after nine months. This is simply because the world is constantly being re-created!

We need to observe this in order to silence the external noises in our soul in order to listen to the deepest internal place in us. If we do that, we can access the place of the inner wellsprings in the soul, where the soul is continually renewed. In the language of the *Mishnah* in *Avos*, it was said, “*Na’aseh k’ma’ayan hamisgaber*”. A person becomes like a flowing wellspring,¹² which keeps renewing.

A person who does not quiet his soul is only aware of things that happen externally, so he only sees the world as a continuation of the past.

9 “Teaching a child is like ink on a new page, and teaching an old man is like ink written on an erased piece of paper” (*Pirkei Avos* 4:25).

10 “*Chachmah mei’ayin timatz* – Wisdom where is its root?” (*Iyov*, 28:12)

11 “*Asida ida sheteled b’chol yom*.” *The Gemara* compares it to a chicken laying eggs every day (*Shabbos* 30).

12 *Mishlei*, 18:14

Internal Quiet

A person has to quiet his soul, either by listening to a *niggun*, or nibbling on something tasty, or by relaxing in a comfortable position. All these are tools to reach the place of internal quiet where he can quiet their heavy feelings and thoughts.

When he is in a place of quiet, he can then dwell on this simple thought: **“I am being renewed. Hashem is in my heart, and is renewing me every moment.”**

Repeat this sentence dozens of times. This should only happen when you are in this quiet place – the deepest place in the soul. Try to repeat this from total awareness and slowly try to experience them as deep as possible in your soul.¹³

Each one of us should try to do this “quieting” every morning for a few minutes, and feel the reality of Hashem in the heart, and then try to believe and try to experience that “Hashem infuses in me every day new *koach*, renewing me from the start.” We can realize that “Hashem gives me a new *koach* to succeed. Even though I couldn’t succeed in the past, I was given new energies to succeed and if today I will not succeed, tomorrow I will be given again new energy so that I will succeed then.”

If a person starts each day with this process of internal observation it will fill him with mighty power. The whole day will be built from this great infusion from Hashem that resides in each of us and gives us power every day.

Also, during the day, especially after a person fell in *emunah*, or did something inappropriate, or expressed something that had disappointed him, the advice is to go back to the place where we were at, and to believe that “Hashem is planting in me new power, which is not affected by all the failures of the past.”

If a person works on this correctly, with patience and clarity, from a stable place with the understanding that on one the hand the world continues forward to the next day, but that the world is also re-created every day, then he will receive great powers of strength and purity, beauty and liveliness.

The ones who work on this will merit, with Hashem’s help, that their obstacles will become smaller so that they will be able to overcome them. But even more so, the person will live an uplifted and happier life.

¹³ In response to a question, the Rav explained that the best time to try this is at the very beginning of the day, before you start your daily routine. It’s best to get up a few minutes earlier, and do this before everyone else wakes up. Then you would start your day from this clean, pure and internal state.

Questions & Answers with the Rav

Q1: 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.

Q2: 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.

Q3: Is there a specific time of a day when this is happening? Also because it is Elul, should we do this *Avodah* specifically now? Is there anything in Elul specifically to take advantage of?

ANSWER: At the beginning of the day, before you start the day, is the best time. It is best if possible to get up a few minutes earlier, before others, and do this before everyone wakes up, and then the day would start from this clean and pure and internal state.

Additionally, Elul gives the *koach* for all the year, like a person who takes upon himself to do certain things on Rosh Hashanah, because it is Rosh Hashanah he has the power to sustain this throughout the year. But if he makes certain commitments and only does them on Rosh Hashanah, then they are not so helpful. Elul is the time from where this light shines through the whole year. It is the time to accept/acquire this energy and to stretch it to the whole year.

Q4: In regards to renewal of the Creation, going to the *siddur* and saying *Modeh Ani* for returning my soul, does it mean returning us the soul as it was, is it the same soul or a new soul?

ANSWER: Like we say, it is “*Elokai, neshamah sh'nasata bi tehorah.*” You gave it to me pure, and I dirtied it and now you give it to me clean and pure again. A person needs to feel that Hashem is in his heart, so this feeling of “*mechadesh ma'asei bereshis*” is more real and pure. If a person doesn't feel Hashem in his heart, he can't feel the

mechadesh bi ma'asei bereshis. The more a person feels that Hashem is in his heart, the more the feeling of renewal is more internal, deeper, and purer.

Q5: *The renewal is there already there, but do we need to do an action to access it?*

ANSWER: We need to uncover it and feel it. It already is there, but one's personal *avodah* is to feel it.

Q6: *What are the different ways practically to internalize it?*

ANSWER: Most people have fantasies of the past and future; therefore, people don't live in the present state of renewal. The more we quiet our thoughts and imaginations regarding the past and the future, and we focus of the present, then the person removes most of the screens covering his thoughts. When we are in the present and a person sits quietly, we can utilize tasting a fruit or hearing a *niggun*, and sitting comfortably to try to feel Hashem; then we have the possibility to feel the place of renewal. All this must be with davening to Hashem, asking him to help him get there in a complete way.

Q7: *A question on the avodah: I understand doing it when it is quiet, and we have time and space, but then the Rav mentions also accessing it when a person gets frustrated. Does the Rav have an eitzah (advice) on how to get there even if things are chaotic?*

ANSWER: We need to be deep into it and that allows you to be able to get into it in a flash. It works faster after we are experienced with this *avodah* for a while. If reality doesn't allow, we must know that life is involved with pain, and not everything has a solution for this moment or exact second.