

Dvar Torah for Elul

Based on *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #239*

The Rebbe said, “God's ways are not like those of man. When a man makes a garment, he cherishes it most when it is brand new. As it then becomes worn and damaged, its preciousness is reduced.

“But God began by creating a damaged world. Gradually the world improved and became more precious to God. First there were the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and then Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses our teacher). Tzaddikim constantly came to the world and fixed it more and more. As a result the world became more and more precious to God.

“Ultimately the Mashiach (Messiah) will come - speedily, in our lifetime—and the *tikun haolam* (repair of the world) will be complete.”

I.

One of my teachers, Reb Tzvi Cheshin, taught me that Rebbe Nachman's analogies are not approximate—they are exact. The Rebbe compares the world to a garment. How does a person feel when he wears something nice and new? The Rebbe once told Reb Noson:

“Anytime a person puts on a nice, new garment, his face changes. Even if the person is the greatest genius, even if he is a multi-billionaire, so that the garment is not that important to him—even if he is a king!—nonetheless, anytime one puts on a new garment, automatically he changes. His face changes and his conduct changes” (*Tzaddik #523*).

Kaviyakhol (to the extent we can say it)—because in fact God does not change at all, in any way—God, Who knows all, owns all and is King of all kings, will someday—pray, soon—put on His “new garment.” We will then see and experience Him in a totally different, more beautiful way.

II.

If you're like most people, the year 5761 started out with a lot of promise. You were cherishing the opportunity for a new start, for a chance to begin anew and set things right in every possible way.

Now, you probably can't wait till it's over.

(I don't mean because of the ugly situation in our beautiful homeland. Notice that in this section Rebbe Nachman is not talking about what **God** is doing for *tikun haolam*. The Rebbe is talking about what each **individual** can contribute to *tikun haolam*.)

You thought some nasty thoughts and some vicious thoughts; said a few unkind words—on purpose; read John Grisham's new novel instead of learning Torah, went to a movie instead of a Torah class. How many times did you spend the whole *davening* (prayer) thinking about something so important that you didn't pay any attention to what you were saying? And then when you closed the *siddur* (prayer book), you didn't think about that “important something” for the rest of the day!

So this old year 5761 may not be so precious to you, at first glance. Let's look at it from God's perspective. You did think about how you could help some others, simply because it's a mitzvah and not because you wanted your name "in lights." You did spend some time desiring to be a better Jew and thinking about how you could actually accomplish this. You said something to make someone smile and cheer her up. And all those bad things mentioned in the previous paragraph? Well, you surely chided yourself for doing them.

"And your people are all tzaddikim" (*Isaiah 60:21*). So, the world's **improved** thanks to you. That's how God looks at it.

As 5761 comes to its end, let's try to squeeze a little more *tikun haolam* out of it and into it. As we anticipate 5762, let's remember God's growing enthusiasm for His world, so that our new-year enthusiasm for *tikun* stays fresh all year long.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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