

SELF CANCELLATION

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Today is September 5, 2002, almost exactly one year since the Twin Towers and the Pentagon were attacked by terrorists, and about 3,000 people were ruthlessly murdered just like that.

In truth, it seems like the hijacking of the commercial jets and the atrocity against humanity happened about TWO years ago. So much has happened since then, especially for the Jewish people, and one wonders, if so much occurred in 5762, what is in store in 5763? Will things improve, or get worse?

It is a question that becomes intensely important at this time of year, as we step before the Heavenly Court for judgment on Rosh Hashanah, because it is with THEM that the answer lies. It is They (really God), who will decide the events of the entire upcoming year, based upon the presentation of ourselves on Rosh Hashanah, and over the next ten days.

What does He, the King of Kings, want from us? What is He looking for? What is expected from us, as we take our seats behind the defense table?

In Hebrew, the word is 'hisbatlus,' which translates, conceptually, into 'self-cancellation.' What it means is, surrendering to the need to be part of the whole, not just for the world's sake, but for our own sake as well.

Though our yetzer hara - our evil inclination - tries to convince us that hisbatlus is a form of suicide, in reality it is the farthest thing from it. For, selfishness never ever accomplished anything constructive or long term. We all know that thinking of one's own self when one could be thinking of others lowers our self-esteem, no matter how much we justify it. We know that, even though selfishness can supply some instantaneous gratification, in the end, we are left with less than that with which we started.

That's the system, and you can't beat it, because God made the world that way, because that is the way HE is too.

Evil can damage in the short run, but it can never, NEVER win. It never has in the long run, and it never will, because this is God's world, His creation, and He is completely good. Therefore, we fool no one by being absorbed in our own worlds but ourselves, and Rosh Hashanah is the time that we show Heaven how much we believe it is true. It is the time that we reveal (to ourselves), how much we know that the joke is on us, and no one else, for even the evil that results from selfishness is used

by God in the end to do good, to accomplish the ultimate goals of creation, at the perpetrator's expense.

Take a look for yourself through the portals of the past. Every evil ever executed has always resulted in two things, if not in the short term at least in the long run. It has led to the end of the ones who carried it out, and it resulted in the very good the evil came to prevent from occurring. Most recently, it was the Nazi's attempt at the complete annihilation of the Jewish people, with the complicity of so many other, so-called 'friendly' nations, that resulted in the very homeland for the Jewish people they sought to block.

Nevertheless, they continue to try to be self-absorbed and win, like a gambler who keeps losing, believing that at some point in time he will have to win, if only because he has lost so often already. That's because he believes in 'luck,' and not God. That's because he believes in 'fate,' and not Divine Providence. The former is random; the latter is pre-meditative and purposeful.

So why fight the system? What can come from rebelling against the spiritual undercurrent of creation, if not self-destruction, albeit over a lifetime (or even many if you factor in reincarnations)? Rosh Hashanah is coming, and that means the King is coming, and that means sovereignty over creation, omniscience and omnipotence, and perhaps most important of all, a master plan for creation.

The only question to ask, therefore, is where do I fit in? HOW do I fit in?

These are not always questions that can be answered on paper or on a computer screen. Heaven does not have a Manpower office that we can simply walk into and fill out a questionnaire. Rather, the answers come to us through messages, sometimes in the form of insights, often in the form of Hashgochah Pratis - personal Divine Providence - that we might not even appreciate until after the fact, if at all.

As a result of our hisbatlus, and with our permission and blessing, God 'manipulates' the world in which we live to allow us to find our spot on His team, and our role within His master plan. The trick is to be open to the helping hand of Heaven, and not to resist it, either consciously or unconsciously. That was part of the greatness of our Forefathers: they knew how to work WITH Divine Providence, and not against it.

The question is, what does it take to be that way?

Well, that brings us back to the hisbatlus idea again. The willingness, no, the DESIRE to be a team member in the master plan for creation, to know Ultimate Truth in order to rise above the everyday mundane reality of Western life. It is that very spiritual and intellectual openness that clears the way for the light of God to enter the person, in order to elevate and enwise him. It is hisbatlus that leaves us spiritually flexible to the gentle and loving 'bumps' that Heaven gives us to help us on our way to true self-fulfillment.

None of this should be novel, though judging from almost 6,000 years of history, it is creation's best-kept secret. Even many who already uphold Torah and performs mitzvos don't necessarily understand that the end-goal of this system of life is hisbatlus, abandonment to the ultimate goals of the Jewish people and creation.

Too bad too, because that is precisely what they take out on Rosh Hashanah: the hisbatlus scale. One-by-one, we step onto the scale and are measured for our level of hisbatlus and commitment to the goals of creation. Then, based upon the reading, Heaven metes out Its response in the upcoming year, may it come upon us for good.

5762 was a tumultuous year, and, there are storm clouds on the horizon of 5763. Rosh Hashanah and the Asseres Yemai Teshuvah are one day away. The King is coming, and the court is about to be in session. It is time to move from only figuring out how to spell 'hisbatlus,' to knowing how to implement it. "K'siva u'chasimah tovah, l'shanah tovah u'mesuka" - it's all a matter of hisbatlus.

L'shanah tovah u'mesuka,

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