

RECTIFICATION

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Ya'akov finished instructing his sons. He gathered his feet onto the bed and expired. He was gathered to his people. (Bereishis 49:33)

I CAN'T SAY IT ENOUGH TIMES: this world is about tikun-rectification. And, obviously, there is no better way to bring about tikun than Torah and mitzvos. Well, actually, it depends upon which level you are talking, and how high up a rectification you want to cause. Because, if you want to cause an ultimate rectification, you should hear what the Leshem has to say about the matter:

Any tikun of separation that we accomplish on a level that is fitting for Atzilus will not be the result of the physical act we perform, but the result of ratzon and teshukah-will and yearning-alone. For, all ratzon and teshukah from us to The Holy One, Blessed is He, from an action or mitzvah, whether it be prayer or the learning of Torah with heart and soul, with will and yearning for Him, may His Name be blessed, is what ascends to Atzilus itself. This is the ratzon hapashut-simple will that is without any thought, just yearning alone, b'sod "I am for my Beloved and my Beloved is for me" (Shir HaShirim 6:3), and "I am for my Beloved and His yearning is upon me" (Shir HaShirim 7:11). This is the cleaving of soul to soul, b'sod "May He kiss me with the kisses of His mouth" (Shir HaShirim 1:2), and it was the level of Moshe Rabbeinu, regarding whom it says, "Mouth to mouth I speak with him" (Bamidbar 12:8). (Drushei Olam HaTohu 2:3:22:4:1)

As I have mentioned in the past, there are five worlds, or levels of spiritual consciousness, that span all of Creation. The lowest one is called Asiyah, which means "action," because it is the realm of the physical world in which we live, and all physical action occurs. Our physical universe, as vast as it appears to our eyes, doesn't even fill up this entire level, at least as it presently exists. It corresponds to the sefirah of Malchus, and our lowest level of soul, Nefesh.

The next level up is called Yetzirah, or "formation," because it corresponds to the six sefiros of Chesed through Yesod, which were the basis of the six days of Creation, and the six millennia of history that are rooted in those six days. At this stage of creation, everything was formed from existing matter, or yaish m'yaish-something from something. This level corresponds to the level of soul called Ruach.

Above Yetzirah is the level of Beriyah, which means "creation," as in yaish m'ayin-something from nothing. It corresponds to the sefirah of Binah, and our level of soul, Neshamah. It was the direct

product of Atzilus above it, which is so spiritual that, in comparison to Beriyah, it as if it does not exist, and hence the phrase, yaish m'ayin.

Atzilus, or "emanations," corresponds to the sefirah of Chochmah, and the level of soul, Chiyah. It is a purely spiritual world, one which evil cannot access, and therefore, one which the actions of man cannot affect, either for good or for bad. Unlike the three worlds below it, Atzilus is perfect and without need for any tikun, at least along the lines of that which is necessary for Asiyah, Yetzirah, or even Beriyah.

Therefore, as the Leshem explains, mitzvos, as holy as they are, and no matter how precisely they are performed, or how much intention is involved in their performance, cannot separate out and cause to ascend Holy Sparks to the level of Atzilus, only to the levels of Asiyah, Yetzirah, and Beriyah. Therefore, any rectification that a mitzvah, technically-speaking, will affect, is only on these levels.

However, there is something that man can do that is powerful enough to ascend beyond these three levels, and actually reach Atzilus, causing Atzilus to emanate tremendous amounts of Divine light to the lower worlds, greatly enhancing their tikun. It is called Ratzon Pashut, teshukah for God, a primordial deep and total yearning, a love sickness for the Creator that is without any thought or calculation. This was the level of Ya'akov Avinu, and all of the Avos, for that matter.

In other words, there are two aspects to the performance of mitzvos, and the tikun they can cause to us and the world. There is the technical performance of a mitzvah, which means that you make a point of doing the mitzvah for its own sake, what is called lishmah, and making sure that the mitzvah is performed as expected by the Torah.

This earns a person reward in the World-to-Come, the extent to which is based upon how well he fulfills both conditions. It also impacts Creation by separating out Holy Sparks from the Klipos, the realm of spiritual impurity, and uses them in a holy way, freeing them to ascend, spiritually, back to their origin in the upper worlds-to a limit.

The other aspect has a name: hislavus, a word that means to become inflamed, spiritually-speaking. It refers to the passion for God that one is supposed to exhibit when doing mitzvos, or anything in life for that matter. It doesn't necessarily mean that a person has to jump up and down in excitement while praying, or anything else in life. It means putting one's heart and soul into his service of God, which, depending upon the circumstances, can be done loudly or quietly.

Everything in life has technical steps. A person who has fallen in love with someone still has to call the flower shop to order some flowers and to pay for them if he wants to send them to the object of his love. He may even have to drive there and pick them up before he can deliver them, ring the door bell, and hand them over.

But, if he gives them by simply saying, "Hi. I bought you some flowers. Thought you might like them,"

and then leaves, the point might be lost. When he calls for his next date and is rejected, he might say something like, "What, it wasn't enough that I just bought you the flowers?" to which he may hear something like, "No. It's not the flowers that I want. It is your heart."

But, if he gives the flowers to his wife, let's say, and adds, "Beautiful flowers for a beautiful person," and smiles sincerely while saying it, all of a sudden, the flowers are a more powerful gift. Indeed, done in just the right way, the flowers become a vehicle to express one's love, to reveal it, and to project it. If people have become estranged from one another, it can close the gap. If they are trying to form a relationship, it can bond them together forever.

But, when it comes to the performance of mitzvos, the building and rectification becomes even more important, because it affects not just two people, but the entire universe, the physical one and the spiritual one. And, though almost anyone can fulfill a mitzvah according to the strict, technical details of the law, not a lot of people do so with a good amount of ratzon and teshukah for God, and that means everything.

The reason is simple, and addressed by the Rambam in his Yad Chazakah, when explaining the mitzvah of ahavas Hashem-love of God. There he asks a simple question: How does one come to love God? And, he provides a simple answer: by contemplating His awesomeness, and all that He has done for man and Creation.

In other words, anyone who is not driven to love God is simply someone who is out of touch with reality. If they really understood and appreciated the gift of life, and what God does for the world and each individual, they would be lovesick for God, even with their problems. It may be hard to see this or feel this when the chips are down, but it is true nevertheless, and some people, in spite of disaster, have been able to live up to this reality just the same.

This is really the mean of the words:

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. (Tehillim 51:17)

This does not mean that God prefers broken and desperate people as His loyal servants. It means that God prefers when people do not let things like ego and selfishness interfere with our relationship to Him, as they so often do. The moment a child believes that his parent owes him a living because he gave birth to him is the moment that parent and child will no longer be able to enjoy a love bond, and it is the same between man and God as well.

This was Ya'akov Avinu. He was a man who felt that God owed him nothing, and that everything he received was gift for which he ought to be grateful, and was. He had no sense of entitlement, and the one time that he acted as if he did, when he complained to Pharaoh in last week's parshah that he looked older than his years because of what he went through, he paid for it with life itself, dying one year earlier for each word of complaint he uttered.

On one hand, it seems like a simple thing to do. But, if we look at our own lives, we can see that we tend to love those people who give us what we want, when we want it. How many children have yelled back at their parents, "I HATE YOU!" all because the parent was trying to do what was best for his or her child, out of love for the child and belief in his or her future.

Quoting someone I know well, he said:

"It took me about 18 years to wake up before I realized how much I owe my parents, and my love for them increased tremendously once I did. It took me a little longer to do the same with God, and each and everyday, as my appreciation for Him increases, so too does my love. On Yom Kippur, I cry like a baby out of my intense desire to bond with God and never let go. I literally feel lovesick!"

I envy this person. Likewise, I envy the person, in a good kind of way, who, when praying to God, is with Him 100 percent, pouring his heart out to His Creator, or who, when doing a mitzvah, puts his heart and soul into it, as much as he can, each time. The connection to God he must merit and feel is something we should all be striving to achieve.

It is our history.

It is our legacy.

It is our way to reach up to the highest heights and bring tikun to Ma'aseh Bereishis, and to become the partner with God we are meant to be in the rectification of this world, and our portion in Eternity.

Chazak!

Text

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