



Revealing the inner beauty of the Torah in a way that touches and inspires the Jewish soul

REFRAMING YOUR LIFE

GIVE UP ... AND GET MOVING

When G-d (Hashem) wants us to change, first He gives us an opportunity to do so on our own by providing specially directed means and methods and special days throughout the year in which we can examine our deeds, choose to make amends and alter our modes of behavior. Sometimes, when we have not quite managed to make the necessary changes by ourselves, He gives us a nudge... It is how we react to that "incentive" that determines success or r'l failure. When we see the "nudge" as a positive force directed towards us for our good and our growth then we are "reframing."

For most of us, reframing actually begins after we have given up. Until that point, we see the problem as being outside of ourselves and are busy trying to fix it. It is only when we realize that we cannot fix it, that we are able to look inside ourselves and find a deeper and far more lasting source of healing (refuah). If we "reframe" an experience that had plunged us into anxiety or despair, we become the beneficiaries of a most powerful source of enlightenment, a source capable of guiding us up the ladder to the next step in spiritually (ruchnius), lighting the way for us in our spiritual journey.

BECAUSE WE ARE NOT IN CONTROL...

The first step in the reframing process is fundamental. It requires our staunch and unyielding determination to accept the fact that we are not in control of what happens to us. The only aspect of our lives over which we are given control is the freedom to try to make the right choices, however final outcomes are out of our control. Why is this outlook a fundamental first step? Because as long as we believe that we have control over a given situation, we will struggle with trying to fix the circumstances instead of working to accept them. Learning to reframe our negative thoughts and replace them with a positive view comes about by realizing that it is our attitude that we have the ability to modify and not necessarily the situation. Unfortunately, as long as we are stuck in a mindset that tells us that we have to change the circumstances, we will have no incentive to change ourselves. Of course, we must be mindful of the fact that there are situations that do require our effort, and claims of trust (bitachon) and faith (emuna) do not give a license to sit back and wait for change to happen on its own; however, here we are considering only those things that we can not alter.

READING THE MESSAGE

The second step calls for us to treat the experience as a message or the person who has just insulted us as a messenger. For example, the depth of sorrow we feel when we learn that someone near to us has a serious problem, illness or passing can be seen as a reflective moment to help us put things into perspective and be mindful of what values in life are truly important. Through this we can re-strengthen our interpersonal relationship with others as well as our personal obligations with Hashem.

Life's trials are as individualistic and unique as we are, however to a certain extent each of us can attempt to decipher the inner meaning within difficult experiences by asking ourselves - in a form of a prayer, not a complaint: What can I learn and how can I grow from this test?

As long as we understand that the events in our lives are perfectly designed, sent to us from Hashem and given to us for our good, we can begin to use these challenges to help change our lives. Once the taxing situation becomes reframed it becomes a positive tool for growth.

THE NEW VIEW

Reframing trains us to see the will of the Creator in all of the events in our lives, and thus enables us to appeal directly to Hashem as the Source of Everything. It is like the man who is speeding through red lights. When he is stopped, he



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explains to the officer that he is bringing his wife, who is in labor, to the hospital. He is likely to get a police escort instead of a ticket. However, those who see events as "acts of nature" have nowhere to turn. They are like the man caught driving through a red light by a traffic surveillance camera that cannot respond to explanations.

The Creator runs the physical world in the same way He runs the spiritual realm - in order to allow us to understand His ways without having to become mystics or seers. If a person chooses to believe that events such as disease, famine, flood and accidents are dictated by the laws of nature and are as immutable as the traffic surveillance camera in our earlier example, then for that person any effort at prayer and supplication to G-d will appear to be unavailing and the person will not seek and thus will not find any means for avoiding the consequence. Indeed, that person is perhaps worse off than the man who ran the red light. The driver at least knows that he was ticketed because he was caught on a camera.

The person who does not see G-d's omnipotence in nature, will not see the connection between his actions and the events that flow from those actions and will not know where to turn to try and exonerate himself. When a person offers no defense at all in the Heavenly Court, the evidence is considered without his testimony and a harsher judgment is pronounced that might have been ameliorated with a sincere statement from the defendant.

On the other hand, when we recognize that it is G-d who is directing nature and all events that occur are for the purpose of guiding us toward a more complete recognition of His presence in this world, then we will be able to act as our own advocates, turning directly to the benevolent Creator in times of need. When this happens, we arouse the attribute of mercy from on High and elicit consideration by the Heavenly Court of the extenuating circumstances that motivated our choices.

IS THIS DIALOGUE NECESSARY?

We could well ask, "Why is this dialogue necessary?" Doesn't the Infinite Creator consider our unspoken justification when entering judgment? G-d does not deny our unspoken rationale but it is we who create a barrier between ourselves and G-d by refusing to acknowledge the fact that He transcends the laws of "nature." It is we who refuse to recognize that He can, under appropriate circumstances, vindicate us.

The one condition for Heavenly reprieve is to admit our errors, and resolve to do better in the future. When we turn sincerely to the Creator, acknowledge His omnipotence and ask for His help and guidance when we have drifted beyond the permissible boundaries, we will be directed toward a G-dly way of life which will get us where we need to go, when we need to get there without adverse results.

This is not to suggest that the Creator, in all circumstances, will accept our plea bargains, but, at the very least, our outlooks will broaden, and we will be able to take a more holistic approach toward understanding and accepting our particular circumstances. The deeper our understanding of the fact that G-d tailors every circumstance in our lives in order to teach, guide and help us to grow spiritually, the more we will be filled with sincere gratitude for our allotted portions. As we progress through our lives in this manner, following the Torah, Hashem will provide us with the opportunity to enjoy a new, elevated state of awareness.

This intimate relationship with Hashem is available to all, regardless of age, intelligence or skills. The main criteria are belief in G-d, willingness to follow His will and a sincere humility. With these foundational principles in place, the Creator will bestow upon us blessings of health, joy and peace. May we merit to re-enter the Palace of the King soon in our days.

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