

The Extraordinary Energy of *Tishrei*

Jewish sages have recognized that there are different energies at play in different months, and so have taught us to take advantage of the different qualities of each month. As the Bnei Yissaschar explains, *chodesh* - month - can be understood as *chidush* - renewal.¹ Each month teems with new opportunities. And *Tishrei*, the rabbis have recognized, has exceptional potential for renewal.

There is never a time when one would be advised not to do *teshuva*, or to cry out to God for help, but some times are just better. The sages explain Isaiah's exhortation to "seek God while He can be found; Call to him when He is near"² means "the ten days between *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*".³ We are to do *teshuva*, return to God, during the *asoret yemei teshuva*, these Ten Days of Repentance. This is when we have God's ear, so to speak. The sages got it, but did not speak in terms of energy. I'll translate their wisdom into energetic language for you.

What sages are picking up on is that during *Tishrei*, especially on the first ten days the veil between the physical world and the non-physical, higher realms is thinner. There is easier access to connect with spirit, with God, to actually experience a bit of the subtle energies that will support your return. There is more ease in releasing ways in which you went off track, and returning to a new, better action plan. As my beloved teacher Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (Reb Zalman) z'l, would say, it is the universe's most generous gift, the opportunity for clearing your karma! It is that you need not suffer all of the dreadful consequences that your past might have incurred, if you are truly repentant and choose to stay a different path. But there is more.

Yes, the veil to the outer non-physical realms, perhaps where you call to God, is thinner. But so is the veil that often blocks our reaching our own deep internal selves. The Ten Days, and *Rosh HaShanah* are not only about coming back from where you missed the mark: they are also your opportunity to create a new you, one more consonant with your highest and best self. Our liturgy for *Rosh HaShanah* declares that "*HaYom Harat Olam*" - that on this day [today!] the world is conceived"! A time of conception - with all the potential to fashion yourself in ways that might be unimagined as yet, even exceptional ways. Creation of your self is no time to be small, but to imagine and then reach for your best. What is your mission? What are the critical things that you alone are called to do? And what things are so critical, of the moment, that we all should be

¹ *Bnei Yissaschar, Rosh Chodesh* 4

² Isaiah 55:6

³ *B. Rosh HaShanah* 18a

involving ourselves. We love the suggestion of Hazon, naming this to be the Year of Environmental Teshuva. All of us are surely needed to pitch in here, each to their own ability/path.

Taking full advantage of our access to our ordinarily hidden inner selves, we can go still further. We re-examine not just the action plan for our lives, but also examine the blueprint for our very essence, our way of being in the world. As Rav Kook taught, “The primary role of teshuva...is for the person to return to their true selves, to the root of their soul.”⁴

As I'll now explain, that root might just be capsulized in The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.⁵ Torah's guidance for the blueprint of our spiritual and emotional being, our essential orientation in the world, is that we should “walk in God's ways”.⁶ While we are able to derive some of God's ways from the record in *Tanakh* of God's actions, there is only one place in Torah where God describes God's ways, *derakhav*. On Mt. Sinai, Moses entreats God to tell him God's ways, so Moses will remain in God's good graces.⁷ God responds by giving Moses God's Thirteen Attributes,⁸ which are seemingly for Moses alone to follow. They are not given as *mitzvot* - commandments. But here they are, written in Torah, so that one day - today! - when we are ready for the challenge, we might learn to live within this blueprint. To be living a life true to the root of our soul is to be living according to the Thirteen Attributes, which are given to us for this purpose.⁹

While the Thirteen Attributes might lead to certain actions, they are, at their center, ways of being, states of consciousness. They are all about love. Not a human kind of love, but a higher, spiritual love, one based largely in a state of non-judgment.

Here is what I understand to be the core of each of the attributes, internal states of being for us:

Yah (God): Everything external to you. Yet this is part of our being. For example quantum physics has demonstrated our effect on the physical world: merely by observing we change an energy wave to a particle.

⁴ Rav Kook, *Orot HaTshuvah* (Lights of Return) 15:10

⁵ Exodus 34:6-7

⁶ Deut. 10:12

⁷ Exodus 33:13

⁸ Exodus 34:6-7

⁹ Maimonides, *Moreh HaNevukim* 1:53-54; 3:54 (We are told about God's ways for the purpose of acting in accordance; “It is God's purpose that the Thirteen Attributes should be our way of life.”)

Yah (God) : That piece of the All/God individuated within each one, the life energy animating each one of us.

EI (God): Creator energy. We co-create. This is the world “*asher bara Elohim la’asot*”¹⁰ - that God created, that [we continue] creating.

Rakhum (Compassion): a place of new starts, a dark womb, nurturing energy.

Hanun (grace): a state of willingness to give without judgment of worthiness or expectation of return.

Erekh Apayim (slow to anger) Holding all in equanimity. No ego or judgment. Nothing taken personally.

Rav Hesed (great loving-kindness): State of being in non-judgment. A state of kindness, which is an energy that is broadcasted and felt by others.

Emet (truth): seeing clearly, a consciousness not bound by cultural constraints. An ability to see the bigger truths.

Notzer Hesed L’alafim (keeping kindness to the thousandth generation): broadcasting a state of non-judgment through time and space.

Nosei avon v’peshah v’khateh (lifting our sins and misdeeds) If we are not in judgment, suffering from the shame of misdeed lifts. Then we are able to do *teshuva*, to make changes, to repair.

Nakeh lo yinakeh (clears, doesn’t clear sin): This attribute is more purely of the human, not an attribute of God. It alone of the 13 is action-forcing, it is not a state of being. It is a gift and a celebration of free will: we have choice. One can absolve oneself, do true *teshuva*, or not. Clear your karma, or not. The succeeding generations also have this choice. If the karma fits, they may take it on, or not.

So, that’s the primer on seeing the Thirteen Attributes as our ultimate state of being. A lot to take in. Not to accomplish in one fell swoop, for sure. But, why not try one of these attributes on for size, this season?

¹⁰ Genesis 2:3

