

Rosh Hashanah: Do Small Changes Really Matter?

Posted by everchange - 07 Sep 2018 21:27

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With Rosh Hashanah around the corner there is a very important

question to be addressed: How do we merit a good judgement?

The first step to earning a good judgement is to realize that one

is being judged! With this realization one then needs to act.

One needs to contemplate which areas of his life, his midot,

his Torah observance, etc. require improvement and are truly

within his means to improve. This does not mean to become

the Rebbe overnight. Every individual is judged based on their own

level, life circumstances, and abilities. In order to make a true and lasting

commitment to change one needs to realize what he needs to change and

why, how he can change it, and there needs to be a motivation that will

carry him through to completion. One needs to consider these three points

so that his commitment does not end up like any other new years resolution.

But is such change truly enough to merit a good judgement

when each person has so much to fix? The Gemara (San Hedrin 108a)

states that Noach did not deserve to survive the flood and he only did

so because he found favor in God's eyes. The Midrash (Beresh\*t Rabbah 32, 6)

states that Noach did not enter the ark until the waters reached his knees.

Rashi (Beresh\*t 7:7) comments that Noach too was a person of little faith

because he was in doubt whether God will truly bring a flood to the world

or not so he did not enter the ark until the waters forced him to do so.

Yet, despite this, God viewed Noah as the most righteous individual

of his generation (Beresh\*<sup>t</sup> 6:9). Why? Because God judges each

individual's growth and development based on their circumstances

and abilities which are tailor-made by God in accordance with that

person's purpose in the world. Noah was able to overcome the influences

and standards imposed by society and he was able to grow and come

closer to God in accordance with his level. In God's eyes, Noah was

the most righteous of his generation, not because he was not lacking

in his character development and growth, but because he made the most out of

the situation that God placed him in. He recognized his potential and made it into a reality.

Back to our question. Is it possible for one to merit a good judgement

through committing to a lasting change even it appears insignificant?

Yes. If it is one's true desire to grow in Torah, mitzvot, and their

relationship with God then any change is enough to instigate God

to help him reach his true potential. As the Midrash on Song of Songs (5:2) says:

"Open up for me an opening like the eye of a needle and in turn

I will enlarge it to be an opening through which wagons can enter."

The Kotzker Rebbe notes that God will only expand the tiny hole

we make if it penetrates fully - the changes have to be sincere and lasting.

May we all merit to make true and lasting changes in our spiritual growth,

character development, and our relationships with God and others, and in this

merit may we be written and signed for a year full of joy, blessing, and peace! Amen.

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