



Yom Kippur



English version

THINKING about ME.org

A LIFE AT FULL THROTTLE

Are you going through life at the speed limits you set for yourself? Or are you at full throttle?

This question has been going through my head over the last two months. And I am so grateful that it has. This is the "charged" life, where you question all of your limitations. Your limited beliefs. Your limited relationships. Your limited perspective of yourself, of who you can be, of how much you can forgive, and how much love of G-d you can bring to your family and to your world.

The question you need to ask yourself is this: *What do I dare myself to do?* I.e. Who do I dare myself to forgive? How low am I willing to lower my ego, to be the best father/husband/ Rebbi/ brother/ brother-in-law/ son-in-law/ employer/ employee/ Jew, I can be?

This "dare-question" is the trillion-dollar question. If you do not dare, you are not putting your greatness on the other side of the seesaw of your inflated ego. Only when you dare yourself, do you bring endless energy into your life. Where does that energy come from? G-d gives it to you. How so?

We know of only one prayer that G-d prays. And His prayer is that He behave with His children with a full throttle of mercy, with no limits of judgement. From where do we know that G-d prays? " וְהִבִּיאֹתִים אֵל הָר קִדְשִׁי וְשִׂמְחָתִים בְּבֵית תְּפִלָּתִי " (ישעיה נ"ז) *And I will bring them to My holy mountain. And I will make them happy in the house of My prayer...* (Yeshayah 56,7) *G-d's prayer.*

What does He pray? May it be the will before Me, that my Mercy overcome My anger. This is the underlying prayer of Yom Kippur, that the Kohen Gadol asks in the Holy of Holies. (Berachot 7a) This is the main work that we need to work on for the great Yom Kippur ahead of us.

G-d loves it when we challenge ourselves and when we do, His Attribute of Mercy overpowers His Judgement. This is what it means when we say, כְּרַחֵם אֵב עַל בְּנִים כֵּן תְּרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ (Selichot Shiva Assar Btamuz) G-d has mercy on us, like the greatest mercy in the world, the mercy of a father to his son. (See Tehillim 103;13) Our Rabbis tell us which Av, which father's mercy, is meant in the passuk. *Like Avraham Avinu had on Yishmael. Like David had on Avshalom.* The greater that you have mercy for those that don't deserve it, the greater the mercy G-d will have on you. As Mama Rachel, Rachel our Matriarch's mercy, "challenged" G-d's Mercy, in Yaakov Shwekey's classic:

*When her plaintive cry gained divine consent
 A challenge to her Maker
 Can the mercy of mere flesh and blood
 Run deeper than Yours, our Creator?*

How low are you willing to lower your ego for the sake of your relationships? Rachel was willing to give up her relationship with her husband, her Matriarch ID, even her life, just so that her sister Leah wouldn't cry anymore. And with this conquering of her natural impulses, she was able to confront G-d's Mercy. And G-d accepted this confrontation, and displayed how great His Mercy



is, as he promised to heed her call, and bring back His Children to their land.

Your ability to put your ego aside for the sake of something greater is what G-d loves about you most. הַבֵּן יִקְרֶה לִּי אֶפְרַיִם אִם יִלְדֶּה שְׂעִשְׁעִים כִּי־מִדֵּי דְבָרֵי בּוֹ. זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ עוֹד עַל־כֵּן הִקְמוּ מֵעַי לֹא רַחֵם אֶרְחַמְנּוּ נְאֻם־יְהוָה: (Yirmiyahu 31, 19) *Is Ephrayim dear to me? Is he a darling child, for whenever I speak of him, I remember him even more intensely? That is why My innards are moved because of him; I will surely have mercy on him. The word of G-d.*

Who is this Ephraim, that G-d is willing to be so nice to? The Rokeach has a brilliant explanation. We are all Efraim, for we all come from Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov, who were all humble as Efer, as ashes. What does it mean, humility, like ashes? Ashes come from a powerful tree, from a powerful past. Now, they are ashes. We all have it in our genes the ability to be like ashes, the ability to put our inflated ego aside, our limitations of pride, of honor, of fear of shame, for a greater purpose. That is how G-d perceives us; this is why G-d loves us, for we are His people of "full-throttle humility", for we are willing to make ourselves as insignificant as ashes.

As I wrote this article, I got tapped on the shoulder. It was my son who came back from school. "Abba, do you know that your son stole from you?" No. It is not fair for me to hear you say this about your brother, if he is not here. So we walked over to his brother, the "thief", who was sitting on the floor in his room, playing Playmobil. "Abba, he took, the playmobil sword that was part of a set that you bought for the whole family, not just for him, which means, theoretically, that he stole from *you*. I want it too, but he is not letting me play with it, because *he* is playing with it.

I stepped down to the son who called the other son a thief. "Tzaddik! I do not remember where that sword is from. And your brother claims that it is from a playmobil that I bought for him. I dare you to ask him nicely to let you play with it! Do you think you could be strong enough to ask him nicely? I am sure, then, that he could find in his

heart the strength to let you play with it, even though he thinks it is his, once he sees how strong you are in being able to ask nicely for what you think belongs to you."

I do not know if, at my age, I am much better than my child. At that young age, we fight about Playmobil type stuff. And at older ages, as we get bigger, the stuff we fight about also gets bigger, like positions of honor, rights, pride. I do not know if you or I will be able to do full Teshuva before Yom Kippur. It doesn't really matter. The main thing is that you did *some* Teshuva, because that means that you humbled yourself, which means you realized that you could have been more, and you have much more to go, and you have much more to let go of. Humility, Efer, is what Teshuva is all about, and the more you become Efer, the higher level of Teshuva you have reached. (Kad Hakemach Rosh Hashana A)

Every year at the Mikveh before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur I have this crazy thought. We all start from nothing; we are all created the same. I do not deserve to have more, or be more, than anybody else in the Mikveh. Whatever "more" I was given by G-d means that I am held "to give more". (Iggeret Haramban) I could have been born into that other person's shoes, that other person's clothes, that other person's family, Yetzer Hara, facial features, that other person's horoscope, and only G-d knows what else that person is dealing with. How haughty to think otherwise, and to be judgmental! And when you strip yourself of your inflated ego, you can literally be disconnected from your sins, as your faulty behavior was just part of your inflated ego that you took off before immersing. Now you can come to Yom Kippur with your sins in your hands and say to G-d, I did it! I lived life full-throttle! Now, G-d! Show the world how great You are, and let your mercy go full throttle!

I dare you. I dare you to respect the person who is different, to speak nicely to the person you think stole your Playmobil, pride, or is a clash to your personality. I dare you to stop being judgmental. I dare you to accept all that G-d gave you, and



accept all that G-d did not give you. I dare you to dare yourself every day, to live your life to its fullest. And I promise you. Once you do, G-d in

His endless Mercy will bestow you with such energy, you will not believe that you are actually you.

How do I live life full throttle?

Here are the Selfie Steps. The self-help steps that will give you endless energy.

1. Every day of your life, dare yourself to do something you never thought you could do before, in every area of life. Spiritual goals. Business goals. Family quality time goals. Health Goals. Relationship goals.
2. Ask yourself – what do you gain by not living life full throttle? What type of an amazing life are you losing out by not pushing through your self-imposed limitations? In spiritual. Business. Family. Health. Relationships.
3. Pray to G-d. Ask Him that His endless mercy outweigh His judgement. Ask Him to grant you the courage and strength to change the things that you *can* change in life.

KEEPING TO YOUR SCRIPT

One of the biggest problems facing the Orthodox is not being able to feel closeness with G-d. “Rabbi, I want to feel the Yomim Tovim more, I want my Shabbat table to be more spiritual, I want my prayers to have more fire in them...”

We are talking about good, Orthodox Jews who are trying. People who really *are* close to G-d, who really *are* trying to be good Jews, but not *feeling* closeness, not feeling connected. It seems that feeling closer is obviously much deeper than doing something different. It seems to be more about *being* something different.

I would like to look at our role of serving G-d from a fresh perspective. I will call it “the Yom Kippur perspective”. There is a mitzvah to do teshuva every day of the year. What is special about the Teshuva of the Yomim Noraim, of the High Holidays?

The Teshuva that is to be made in these days is not just about what you have done. But about who you have become, and all that is a result. Yom Kippur is about doing Teshuva because you are not doing your Tafkid.

In the Viduy of Yom Kippur, we say something interesting. עד שלא נוצרתי איני כדאי. *Before I was born, I had no worth.* What? We are saying Viduy for how we were before our birth? What could we have possibly done wrong before we were born?

Before I was born, for almost 6000 years, my soul was waiting for this generation to be sent down by G-d. To be born into *my* family, with *my* parents and *my* siblings, into *my* community, and to be created the exact time I was created. At the precise, predetermined second. Your Neshama was destined to enter the world in exactly the minute it came, to exactly the parents you have and into the story that is specifically yours. *Before I was born, I wasn't ready to be born, for my destiny had not yet begun.*

And this is what we say Viduy about. ועכשיו שנוצרתי כאלו לא נוצרתי. *And now that I have been born, it is as if I had not been born.* I was not worthy of being created by G-d until now, because before, I was not able to fulfill my tafkid. I could not bring G-dliness to the world, in my unique way, until today. And now that I have been created, I am looking around at everyone else, copying others'



ways of serving G-d, trying to be everyone else except myself! I waited so long to get on my unique stage for G-dliness, and I forgot the script!!! *And now that I have been created, it is as if I have not been created.*

This is the message of the story of Yonah, in its metaphoric version. (Vilna Gaon; Mishna Berurah 622 Sh. Tzi. 6) Each Jew comes down for a purpose; each soul is here on a mission. And sometimes, we try to run away from what we are supposed to be doing. And, when one runs away, G-d keeps sending the person back until the Tafkid is done.

How do we know what our soul's mission is about? The Arizal taught his students that those things that you are having difficulty with are the reason you are here. And your Tefkid is for those things that you are needed for. We need to dedicate our lives to where we are needed most. We need to dedicate our energies to those areas in which we can make our unique contribution.

Sometimes, your "lot" is to be a "holy being", something like the goat that is brought as a Korban for Hashem. And sometimes, your lot is to be like the "LaAzaze" goat. To bring out G-dliness in what does not appear to be a G-dly way. I will explain.

Yom Kippur is the day that is like Purim. Purim is about Esther: a righteous woman who needed to be in the most impure places. To defile herself. That was her mission. That was what she was needed for, in order to save the Jewish Nation. And that is what her Rabbi told her to do. Purim is about Mordechai, a great Torah Scholar, one of the Gedolei Hador, from the head of Sanhedrin, who needed to sacrifice his high level of learning in order to save Klal Yisrael. Esther and Mordechai are the ultimate example of living your Tefkid. And sometimes in life, you think that you are being a tzaddik, but by not living up to your soul's purpose, you can be this "passive-aggressive Haman". עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי.

Rabbi YY Jacobson said, in the name of his Rebbi, something very powerful. We know that Reuven saved Yosef from his brothers, by putting him in the pit. Then, the brothers sat down to eat lunch, and during lunch, Shimon and Levi decided to kill Yosef. Yehuda saved Yosef by selling him. Reuven came back to the pit, and Yosef was gone. Reuven tore his clothes, and asked his brothers what they had done. *And, now, how was he to face his father?*

Rashi asks, where was Reuven at the time of the sale? Why did he disappear, when his brothers sat down for lunch? Because Reuven went to do his fasting, to clothe himself in sackcloth and ashes, for his hasty act of moving his father's bed next to his mother, Leah's, so many years earlier. He was doing his holy thing.

But, Reuven! You could have saved us all from 210 years of slavery in Egypt, had you just stayed there at the pit and watched over your brother! Had you not been busy doing Teshuva, but instead, had kept your eyes on your brother in the pit, you could have gotten forgiveness for your mistake from your father, just by being responsible and saving your brother Yosef's life!! How many times do we not notice our "brother in the pit", because we are too busy with our own lofty levels of spirituality?

What do Reuven and the brothers have to do with Yom Kippur? EVERYTHING! What are the words in Yom Kippur Mahzor, immediately before the words mentioned about the fact that we are not doing our Tefkid? כי אתה סולחן לישראל ומוחלן לשבטי ישרון For You are the One who forgives Yisrael, and You forgive the Tribes! Why are we mentioning the Tribes on Yom Kippur? Because we bring the sacrifice of a goat to remind us that the reason why we suffer so much is for not taking responsibility for each other and atone for that sin. The Tribes dipped Yosef's striped coat in goat's blood and brought it to their father Yaakov.

How can a person who is being so frum, so holy, be like a Haman? Well, I can't think of something as aggressive as a Haman. But I can think of what would have happened if Esther had stayed away from Achashverosh. She could have let Haman do

what he wanted to do. Because she was being holy. And the same could have happened if Mordechai would not stop his high level of continuous Torah study to guide Esther and take control of the situation.

So, how do we feel close to G-d? The Baal Shem Tov would say that if you want to speak to G-d, speak to the person who you have a hard time being nice to. Because G-d is right over his shoulder. Because G-d is right over his shoulder. *ישויהי יקוק לנגדי תמיד I will place Hashem opposite me always.* The word לנגדי , the BSHT would say, is referring to the one opposite me, *my opposition*. But I would like to change that a drop, in line with the Arizal's way of discovering our Tafkaid. *G-d is there wherever you have opposition in life.* To fix the Middah that is hardest for you to fix. Jealousy. Self Centeredness. Lust. Anger. Our soul was sent to this world to fix that Middah that is hardest to fix, and if we do not, the Middah takes over our life. The Shofar is the acronym of the

THE SECRET INGREDIENT TO TRULY FORGIVE

On our way back from Tashlich, a yeshiva student approached me with a touchy subject. I asked him if he believes in this Tashlich thing, that you can get rid of sin, do Teshuvah and become a new person. He said he did not believe that G-d lets us just throw away our sins, especially if there are high stakes that the sins might be repeated. "I am not going to really change anyway. I am the same guy as last year and two years ago, and I know that there will be another Yom Kippur that I will have to change again anyway. So, why should I invest my efforts into something that will fail, to begin with? "

I asked him, "What would happen if you tried a bit harder to learn, to pray, to be a better you... What would happen then?" His answer was, "It's nice. But then, sometime soon, when I catch myself doing what I am not supposed to do, seeing what I am not supposed to see, *then I view myself as if all the good that I did was*

words שורש פורה ראש ולענה. The root of bad that is inside each and every one of us that if we do not uproot it it only gets worse. The Shofar blast is meant to wake us up and have us notice what we need to correct. No matter how many years we have been working on it, that is what we are here for. That is our Tafkaid.

When you experience or encounter a difficulty in life, G-d is so close. He gave you that Tafkaid. When you are facing a seemingly insurmountable difficulty, that is what G-d put us here for. Until you accept the fact that if you have no options, if you have difficulty, that is your Tafkaid, the mission of your soul, until you humble yourself to the array of options that G-d puts in front of you, **YOU WILL NEVER FEEL CLOSE.** You might be very close to G-d, but you will not feel it, until you accept that your whole circumstance is part of your mission. And it is from that situation that G-d wants you to connect.

all a fake! Why should I aspire to spiritual greatness, put my mind and heart towards that when I am, anyway, a *spiritual shrimp*? " Good question.

And this is how I responded. The main theme in the Amidah of Mussaf Rosh Hashana is Malchuyot, Zichronot and Shofarot. Zichronot are about how G-d reminds Himself of actions or situations that caused Him to be merciful, and put into action His attribute of mercy. The first on the list is how G-d remembered Noah in the Ark and saved him. This year, I bought a new R. H. Machzor, and what it said in the footnote brought me to tears... "Even though we do not have deeds that make us deserving of being remembered for the good in judgment, when we measure these deeds against ourselves , (- for most of our good actions are tainted with emptiness -) even so, compared to others that are on yet a lower level than ours, we are worthy of Your love



and compassion. For, just as You remembered Noah with love when You judged him, Your love to him was not determined by the greatness of Noah's acts (as R Yochanan said, Noah lacked Emunah. He lacked faith in G-d and did not enter the Ark until the water reached his ankles, for he did not believe that there would really be a flood). Still, You remembered Noah with love, *when You compared him to the people of his generation.* נה איש צדיק תמים היה בדרתיו

There are endless perspectives from which G-d can view us in judgment. By and large, the way we judge ourselves, the way we judge others, is in accordance with our expectations of them and our view of how they are supposed to act. Who says our expectations are realistic, and that this is the way G-d sees things? Who says that someone who tries and fails is a *spiritual shrimp*, or a *faker*?

I asked the yeshiva student, "What is the first name of the most serious, most studious boy in Yeshiva? You know, the one who prays and learns with fire?" "Shimon", he replied. "And if you caught Shimon when he was overtaken by his temptations, looking where he is not supposed to, or not living up to his standards, what would your opinion of him be?" "Shimon is one big faker!" was his quick reply.

Why do we judge Shimon like that? Why is Shimon, who learns the whole day with fire, prays with fire most of the time, considered the fake Shimon, while the Shimon that we caught when his Yetzer Hara caught him, is the real Shimon? Maybe it is the other way around!!! Maybe Shimon who was caught by his Yetzer Hara was the fake Shimon, the Shimon who is *faking it*, while the real Shimon is the one we know in the Study Hall!!

This is the core element of all forgiveness. The art of reframing. Reframing the context. "In light of ...," things are different. This is how we can forgive ourselves and others, and this is how G-d forgives us. G-d does not just let things go. That is not what forgiveness is about. Forgiveness is powered by G-d's Mercy, Rachamim. The root of the word Rachamim is Rechem, a womb. A womb makes place within itself for something else, even though there is, ostensibly, no more room. Rachamim is making room for another perspective. Looking at yourself, at others, in a way that will give room for justification.

The all-time master of reframing perspectives was R' Levi Yitzhak from Berdichev, who would always find a way to judge a Jew in the most positive light, even the greatest sinner. His Hassid noticed that when he was invited to attend a Brit Milah, his Rebbe always asked, if there would be a proper Seudah. Otherwise, he did not attend. The Hassid asked R' Levi Yitzchak why he wanted to make sure that a proper Seuda had been planned.

"My greatest defense for the sinners of the Jewish Nation to the prosecuting angels is the Seudah of a Mitzvah. Even the greatest sinner in Klal Yisrael does not throw a party when he "sins big". Most sins are committed in private. But for a Mitzvah, we make a Seudah, we make a whole *ta-ra-rum*. This merit cries out to the Heavens that we are happy to perform mitzvot, and we are not happy about our sins! A proper Seudat Mitzvah is prime time for presenting this claim to the Heavens!!"

It is hard to forgive others, even though it is something we all want to do before Yom Kippur. And it is even harder for us to forgive ourselves. But, if you cannot respect others for the good things they do, finding a perspective from which you can forgive them, you will



continue on for another year holding the same emotional pain in your heart. And, if you can't respect *yourself* for the "little spiritual things"

you do, like wearing a Yarmulke, then you can never believe that you are worthy of investing energy in your spiritual goals.

24 HOURS AT MACY'S

My five year old daughter came back from kindergarten and sang me a song. The song spoke about a mother that saw a cute dress for her daughter in the store window. 50% off. She passed the store for ten days, every day reminding herself that she wanted the dress; she just needed to find the time to go in and buy it. *When she finally found time to stop in*, she asked for the dress. "Sorry, the sale is over." "*But I was so busy, I did not have time to come in...*" "Sorry, ma'am. The sale has expired."

It was a **מצויאה**, a find, a good deal. But it slipped through her fingers. She felt bad; the dress would have been so cute on her daughter. And then, my daughter sang, **דרשו ה' בהמצאו**— *Seek out G-d when He is to be found*—this refers to (doing teshuva in) the ten days of teshuva, from the beginning of Rosh Hashanah till the end of Yom Kippur. The words of the song were a great lesson. When Hashem is *to be found* means a time when you can get close to Hashem "at half price." You can do Teshuva at half price. It is a *find*, a **מצויאה**. All year long, Teshuva can be done, but only with a longer procedure. During these days, there is a *ten days' blowout clearance sale*: all you have to do is *seek*. Seek G-d. And how is this done? How do we seek G-d? For that, we need to *seek time*. Time to spend alone and go into our hearts. Time to review the busy daily schedule and see what can be done differently that will make us a drop better and give more quality to life.

Why did my daughter's nursery rhyme call it a *bargain*? All year long, teshuva means changing your ways, becoming somewhat of a different person. Now, teshuva is half price, because all you've got to do is *decide that you want to be better, you want to be closer to G-d, and then G-d will consider it as if you have made the change, as if you have already changed. Just in time for judgment.*

This reminds me of an episode that I laugh about each time it comes to mind. Living in Israel, it is hard to find nice, quality clothes for good prices, so my wife and I decided to do some serious shopping when we went to America for my brother's wedding. On the day of the wedding, we went to Macy's. Many items were on sale, with really significant reductions. We were not sure if we really needed everything we had chosen. We had to be on time for picture taking. Time was short. It's difficult to make decisions under pressure, so I asked the newly trained cashier if he would be able to put part of the clothing on hold for us for two or three days. Right away, he called the manager, and relayed his message. "Sir, our policy is to hold your items for 24 hours." I knew that we would not be back, the day after the wedding, in 24 hours from that moment. It was 12 noon. Half jokingly, I asked the cashier, "Does the 24 hours begin immediately from now, or from the end of the business day?" I just wanted to see if there was any way that the clothes my wife had worked so hard to choose could be left on the side for a few more hours the next day. Again, a call to the manager. "The 24



hours begin right now.” And then, partially out of frustration, partially out of wanting to add a little comic relief, I asked him, as if wondering out loud, “Sir, is it possible that the 24 hours can be split up? A couple of hours today, a couple of hours tomorrow, spreading out the hours until next week?” He took me seriously . He picked up the phone and called the manager. “A gentleman, here, wants to know if he can put some items on hold for a couple of hours today, a couple of hours tomorrow, or even next week. Is that under the 24-hour policy of putting things on hold in Macys?” It looked as if it was going to take the manager 24 hours to understand. So, I left the store and the rookie cashier, who was, in all earnestness trying to explain his question to the manager. He must have felt that he had better know the store policy, just in case someone *else* might want to split the “24 hours on hold” store policy.

In those ten days of teshuva that we have, there are 240 hours = 14,400 minutes= 864,000

seconds. That’s it. You can’t put time on hold. You can’t take some time from today, a little time from tomorrow... it is the store policy. Manager’s orders. Take it or leave it. Take it, *or lose it*.

People spend hours seeking out brand names and good quality at discount prices. For the Teshuva bargain this week, you do not even need to spend time and money getting out to the shopping mall, filling up with gas, paying for tolls or parking. You do not even need internet or a credit card. Just park right there on a chair in a quiet spot. Away from internet, Amazon , eBay or anything else in which people immerse themselves in for untold hours. Take out a pen and paper. And start writing whatever you think you may be able to do better this year. And there – you got it! 50 % off. Your earnings are already in your Heavenly Bank Account. And you’ve gotten a better *quality* life. *Same second delivery...*

GMAR HATIMAH TOVAH TO ALL OF AM YISRAEL!

**To support this publication, or receive it by e-mail, please email me at
rabbiyoseffarhi@gmail.com.**

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A”H

