



FORGIVENESS IN ELUL - 5777 INTO 5778

The great Kabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria, who lived in 16th century Safed, told this account of how the world was created and our role in it: When G-d wanted to create the world, G-d's first action was not one of moving forward, but one of withdrawal, a movement of *Hod*, a stepping back and making space for the universe. Only after withdrawing and making space, did the Holy One move forward with a beam of light – forward with *Netzach* energy, but also with *Chesed*, lovingkindness as our very existence is an expression of pure *Chesed*. And the holy light was to be contained in the vessels of the 10 *Sefirot* - vessels, boundaries of *Gevurah* to give the energy shape. At that time, the vessels shattered and divine sparks were trapped in the shards or *klipot*. We have been called upon to do ongoing repair. We are those vessels for the light today. How do we bring repair when our vessel has been shattered?

Over 20 years ago I belonged to a chavurah that was very dear to me. At one point, it exploded, so to speak, and I blamed one woman in particular for causing it. The beautiful couple that had led it left town and our chavurah was no more. I have been carrying deep anger toward her for over 20 years. Now was the month of Elul, a time of reckoning and of repairing relationships.

I was at a Shabbat service at a small congregation. When I saw her come into the service, I just knew that this was the opportunity to do my repair. I was aware that she felt my anger because I could always feel it returned whenever I encountered her. I got a clear message that I was to take action at the event, NOW! "Enough," shouted *Gevurah*, to me. "Carry this negative energy no longer." I waited through the service and through most of the potluck lunch, and then, I saw my opening. She was sitting away from others at a nearby table.

I called upon the humility of *Hod* to come to a place of forgiveness and then activated *Netzach* to propel me over to speak to her. *Hod and Netzach*, walking me over there on my two legs, a mingling of humility and will. I walked over and sat down next to her.

From *Tiferet*, my heart center, spoke my truth. I asked if I could talk to her. She just shrugged. I said, "I would like to ask your forgiveness." Her demeanor softened. I explained that I had been carrying anger toward her since the breakup of our chavurah and wanted to let it go, to replace it with positive feelings. Tears were streaming down her face. She put her hand on mine and I put mine over hers. I asked her again to please forgive me. Then I reached over and gave her a hug. The boundaries of *Gevurah* came down and *Chesed* entered the space. Sparks were being released from the *klipot*, the shards of the shattered vessels. Then I leaned back and took a huge breath and felt the energy of all of those years of carrying that anger come up and be released.

I had brought down the spiritual energy of *Ain Sof*, the Holy One, that comes in through the crown of *Keter* and brought it all the way down to earth in *Malchut*. I felt the help of the *Shechina*, the indwelling feminine energy of the Divine, give me strength.

I've always known that each Jewish holiday is a portal, a vessel to contain our energy, for us to gain a new awareness and do a new *tikkun* for our soul and for our community. Tikkun is an important concept in Kabbalah, to repair our soul, *tikkun hanefesh*, and to repair the world, *tikkun olam*.

I have also known that the month of Elul is the time of asking for forgiveness, but I had never done it in this way before. I could now meet the Holidays a little bit lighter and with greater peace.

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