

הרב משולם זלמן חייא הכהן שחטר-שלומי
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בס"ד

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Dr. Eugene Gendlin, my dear friend and colleague, lebn !שלום

I read your well articulated response to the person who wanted to know about focusing in relation to Judaism. It is clear to me that all work of **Kavanah** depends on the ability to do focusing. Focusing is the gate to Kavanah. I will never know any clarity about my intention if I do not check those things inside of my psyche which prevent me from being here and now and in clarity. Then I can proceed with the other levels of Kavanah.

Focusing should be a requirement of the spirit when we are about to begin to pray. The words of prayer that go “purify our hearts that we might serve you sincerely” point in that direction. When feeling issues around the heart and the guts cloud awareness one couldn’t possibly be in the attitude required by “Know before Whom you are standing”

People often say ‘I try to pray that my prayers aren’t answered’; no wonder, are we talking about mere verbal utterances lifted in a hurry from the prayerbook or what is going on in the heart? Or what comes from the deep longings and the demands of the life problems in relationships? All of these when ignored create barriers to answered prayer.

When the High Holy Days come—who can blame the people for their boredom with services that have no relationship to the inner being. But it is not only the synagogue and the rabbi that failed them, most people are not in the position that even the best messages from the rabbi and the strongest devotion from the cantor could touch them if they have not experienced what it is to go down and have the **felt sense of the moment**. There can’t be any real examination of conscience if it is only on the surface.

If I could—I surely would—demand that rabbis and cantors would learn about focusing in their seminaries and then introduce it to the members of the congregations, to take their prayer life seriously. How much more alive and vibrant would Judaism be!

Here’s how I tell people about Focusing:

How do you know when you are hungry? When you're tired? You receive messages from the body. Most of the people have learned how to read the signals that the body sends them. (There are some people who will mistake the signal of tiredness for sadness, depression, melancholia, hunger and reach for things that will not address the problem that the body is trying to mediate to us.

Hunger, fatigue, sexual arousal and boredom are more easily identified. The subtler proprioceptive signals from the body are nevertheless exerting their influence on the entire consciousness matrix of a person. The more sophisticated we become in paying attention to the signals the body sends us the better are we able to make the right decisions and to respond in a wise way to what we are facing.

Fortunately we can learn how to pay attention to the subtle signals that determine so much of how we are and what we do. It was this ability which is not something that is given from birth on, that focusing can be learned.

In the parlance of Yiddish when we want to speak of whatever is roiling in the deeper levels of our being we speak of the "kishkes". It is so when you ask someone how are you? How are you feeling? We are not so much interested in what's going on in their head or the immediately accessible feelings, but what is happening on the deep subtle level for which, alas, we have very little vocabulary.

When one trains in focusing one learns how to make oneself present to those deep subtle feelings. Once one is present to them and knows to honor them and to recognize and deal with them one can make oneself fully present to what everyone is facing.

As part of the regular preparations for real and productive meditation, prayer and worship, in a way that is not merely spacing-out and for being present to the ritual one is conducting one recites the following formula: " HIN'NI MUCHAN UM'ZUMMAN L'KAYEM MITZVAT--- **behold, I am prepared and I have invited myself to fulfill...**".

Many people who find themselves spinning their wheels without experiencing any movement in prayer and worship would be greatly helped by learning through focusing how to make oneself invited and then prepared to what is happening in the synagogue.

I can't imagine which conscious and deliberate act would not be improved by the preparation afforded to one who has become a focuser.

I share this with you and would hope that you would share this with others who are wondering about the relationship between **Focusing** and the **inner life of Judaism**.

Be blessed Dear Friend for the work you did and still do.

