

Kol Nidre-2020

September 27, 2020

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THE ENDURING AND REDEMPTIVE POWER OF HUMILITY

Tonight, we continue with our 7-minute reflections. And in these 420 Seconds, I believe we can unlock the essence of Yom Kippur. We do that by emulating one key character trait that will help us to be a better Jew and a better human being.

I also believe that without this character trait we can never be a whole and complete human being. The character trait is humility.

The liturgy of Yom Kippur teaches us that in the absence of humility and in the overwhelming presence of arrogance we are so filled up with ourselves we cannot see or care about others. Without humility we cannot learn from or acknowledge others. (Why would we need to?)

Judaism cherishes and encourages humility. It despises arrogance. We see this throughout the Talmud. And make no mistake—we do not reject or diminish the importance of pride, accomplishment, validation and confidence. All of these are normal and good— but at the same time the Rabbis knew that when those feelings become excessive it becomes easy to take the next step and believe we are better and more important and more deserving than others.

You should have concern for yourself, a healthy self-image, a sense of self-esteem, but without the balance of humility you slowly move towards self-idolatry and that's when you begin to believe that the whole world was created just for you.

Do you want a great family value? Do you want to be a great role model

for your children and grandchildren? To teach something that our schools are not able or willing to teach?

Try humility. With humility you learn to be more realistic about your own limitations and imperfections, you will be more satisfied with who you are and what you have— and last but not least— if you possess humility it will be easier for people to trust you, to like you and to be with you.

As the great rabbinic sage Maimonides taught— you cannot do *teshuvah*, you cannot change, without a sense of humility. You need to be humble enough to acknowledge that you are imperfect.

Two final points. First, humility is not the opposite of arrogance. The opposite of arrogance is lack of self esteem. Humility is in the middle- and it is the norm we are to strive for every day in all facets of our life. And it is hard to do-it requires patience, restraint, and inner strength.

And point #2, my final point. A sermon on humility always has value on Yom Kippur-but in the last few years, we have seen that we live at a time where a sermon on humility is a crucial reminder that this trait is timeless and eternal.

To be candid, we live with a President who has the loudest voice in the room and who sucks the oxygen out of every space he occupies. His incessant language and behavior are, as our *Machzor* calls it, an alphabet of woe. From A B C, arrogance, being a bully and chauvinism, all the way to XYZ, his xenophobia, yelling and zealotry.

His values are not our values and I know his values are not what we want for our children.

We did not survive and endure as a people who built themselves up by denigrating and demeaning others.

We value humility even if others do not. That is a real Yom Kippur message.