



A Foundational Article on the intricacies of life, which we were privileged to hear from The Spinka Rebbe Shlita.

TESHUVA WITHOUT ILLUSIONS

1. Who is there?

Someone is knocking at the door, wanting to enter my home.

But why should I open it for him?

I don't bring anything into my house that I don't need!

Besides, who knows who it is or what he wants from me? I have no interest in opening the door for someone I don't know.

I stay inside. He stays outside.

Between us stands a door that I am absolutely unwilling to open.

It's not that I'm a bad person;

I simply don't feel the need to open it. I'm doing just fine on my own.

And *Dodi* (my Beloved),

He continues to knock.

2. Not opening — in your dreams!

There is no chance in the world that I will open the door as long as I am certain that I can manage alone.

And what can I do? That is truly what I believe.

I am certain that I am perfect, strong, a hero, and successful on my own.

I have a good self-image; I think I'm okay, that I have strength, that I am right.

To open the door means saying, in other words: I cannot manage here alone. I need the Master of all powers to enter, to help me navigate through life.

And I am not ready.

My illusions are stronger than I am.

I believe in them.

Living in a web of my own lies.

Swallowing the stories I tell myself.

3. The knocking never ends

And He knocks.

He confronts me with personal weaknesses.

It startles me, and I hurry to hide them in every way possible.

And He knocks.

Revealing within me angers and impulses I never dreamed I had.

And those, too, I cover up, painting them in beautiful colors.

And He continues to knock.

Stirring up fears and anxieties within me, but I don't reveal them to anyone — not even to myself.

Another knock: *Kinah* (envy).

Another knock: *Ga'avah* (pride).

Another knock: **failure.**

Sometimes the knocks are frequent, sometimes there is a distance between them, but they never stop. ***Dodi* (My Beloved) is stubborn. He does not give up on me.**

And I, too, am stubborn. I continue to cling to fantasies, unwilling to acknowledge that I need someone in my life. Someone specific.

4. When I go out to war

But I am no fool.

Slowly but surely, the knocking begins to unsettle me.

The illusion that I am already perfect and good, a *tzaddik*, strong, a hero, and possessed of impressive *middos* — is cracking.

The door is almost open.

No.

I am not ready for that to happen.

I have no choice but to launch a stubborn war against every piece of evidence that undermines my perfect self-image.

I have no choice, because I do not know that anything else exists. I am certain that my self-perception is the only thing protecting me, the only thing I can lean on.

To open the door is to give up the only thing that gives me a sense of stability and self-worth.

So, I fight.

And in war, as in war, all means are justified.

The military objective: To protect my image at all costs!

The methods of warfare: Diverse.

Sometimes I choose to blame. I am a calm person — why must you annoy me?! I am a good person — it is only because of you that I failed!

Sometimes I choose to play the victim. I am actually a good person, but I suffer so much — so I am allowed to give in to myself a little. Enough. How much can one overcome?

Sometimes I simply beautify reality. I explain to myself that this is not a failure or a weakness — it is actually a *mitzvah*, and I was obligated to do it.

Sometimes, my preferred method is making excuses. I find myself on a campaign of persuasion and explanation that begins with my childhood deprivations, moves through parents who didn't show me love, continues to educators who failed to see the child within me — and culminates in the cost of living and the pressure of everything happening here in this small country...

All of these, along with many other diverse methods — not all of which can be revealed... — serve one purpose: to preserve the prestigious image I have of myself. The main thing is to keep me away from a confrontation with my inner truth; the main thing is to suppress the internal pain that continues to grow.

And Dodi (my Beloved) continues to knock.

5. The Conscience Sometimes Awakens

Sometimes, it manages to break through something within me.

Sometimes, reality is stronger than any excuse, and I encounter a deficiency in myself that cannot be blurred.

And I stand before this deficiency, terrified as I have never been before.

I am terrified because my entire support system is in danger!

But do not worry; I possess mechanisms so sophisticated that they know how to react almost automatically.

I quickly translate this panic as "thoughts of teshuvah". I paint the conscience-stricken pangs over my fall in the colors of "*teshuvah me-ahavah*".

Do you think that's it? That I've opened the door for *Dodi* (my Beloved)?

Not so fast.

I see the crack in my perfection — and I rush to repair it.

Don't ask what I am willing to do to fix that crack: I am willing to fast and afflict myself, to distribute *tzedakah*, to perform *tikkunim*, even to truly work on my *middos* and rectify them — to become a calmer person, more perfect, more humble —

The main thing is that there should be no crack!

The main thing is that I won't be forced to open the door for *Dodi* (my Beloved)!

The main thing is that I won't have to give up the support of my own delusions and lies!

And then, as *Dodi* (my Beloved) continues to knock, I already have the audacity to answer Him from behind the locked door:

"What do You want from me? Look, I have refined my middos, I am already perfect, I am already a true tzaddik —

Why do You keep knocking?!

Why is it so urgent to You that I open the door for You?!

I promise to be clean, to be the best in the world; I promise never to stumble in any *cheit* or *avon* at all; I promise to stop my spiritual declines from now until eternity —

Just stop knocking on my door!"

6. Just Don't Lie

And *Dodi* (my Beloved) stands before the locked door and whispers to me:

"Why do you think, My son, that I want you to be the most perfect in the world?

Why do you believe that I expect a life of zero falls from you?

I created you; I know better than anyone — to what extent your imaginations are like vanishing smoke and drifting dust.

I know that you truly have no chance of standing against your human weaknesses.

It is only I, standing here outside, who can help you against yourself...

I am your only solution.

And I am not asking you to overcome this alone. All I ask — is that you open the door for Me.

But do you know what your problem is?

The problem is that My seal is *Emes* (Truth).

'For You are the *Elokim* of *Emes*, and Your word is *Emes*.'

And Sheker (falsehood), there is nothing to do about it, cannot meet Emes (Truth).

As long as you remain gripped by your lies and your fantasies regarding yourself,

As long as you continue to fight for the desire to succeed alone and to manage with your own strength —

There is truly no chance that you will open the door for Me.

As long as you do not recognize your own truth,

Without beautifying reality,

Without denying it,

Without running from it,

Without fighting to hide it,

As long as you do not look at the weaknesses, the fears, the failures, the falls, the jealousy, the anger, and the *ta'avos*...

As long as you do not tell yourself with total honesty — yes, all of this is my reality; not perfection, not heroism, but a weak and vulnerable humanity...

As long as that doesn't happen, the door will not open.

7. Pasachti Ani L'Dodi (I opened for my Beloved) ❧

He whispers this to me from behind the door all the time.

And all that is required of me is a bit of courage, to agree to lend an ear to this whisper.

To agree to acknowledge it. To its simple truth.

Because truly, the only thing that will cause me to open the door to Dodi (my Beloved) is to be real with myself and to stop my own self-deceptions.

And in the middle of the night, it happens.

After a year of attempted escapes, of a closed door, of a war against myself, of ears sealed shut to the sound of the knocking, I simply grasp the simple reality:

***Lecha Hashem HaTzedakah, V'Lanu Boshes HaPanim* (To You, Hashem, belongs righteousness, and to us, shame of face).**

All I have is shame.

All I truly possess is weakness, helplessness, and inability. Indeed, I stand before You like a vessel filled with shame and humiliation.

All the stories I fed myself throughout the year — about my power, about how successful and strong and capable and heroic and righteous and "okay" I am — they were all vain delusions and deceptions.

And then, with trepidation mingled with great hope, I allow myself to turn the key, to cautiously open the door, and to discover my *Dodi* there — **the King who stands in the field and searches for me. The only One who possesses the power and the will to help me in my turbulent journey of life.**

8. The Flaw Becomes a Diamond ❧

I have heard many times about authentic *Teshuvah* from love that transforms *Zedonos* (intentional sins) into *Zechuyos* (merits).

And I never understood it.

How exactly, for Heaven's sake, does one take my greatest wrongs, my most shocking falls, the lowest moments of my life — and turn them into diamonds full of merit?!

I always thought it was just another inspirational cliché.

But now, standing before *Dodi* (my Beloved), I understand.

Because suddenly, that very flaw nesting within me — which until a moment ago was a loathsome, detestable defect that kept me at a distance —

That same weakness that would repeatedly trip me into the pits of my own making, bringing me to spiritual breaking points —

It is that very thing that becomes the source of my connection!

It was the reason — the only reason — I dared to open the door, to let go of the lie of perfection, and to invite my *Dodi* into my home!

My anger is what brings me to a genuine longing for my *Dodi* to save me from myself, to protect my family and friends from my destructive outbursts.

My fears are what cause me to cling to the *Keil Shomreinu U'matzileinu*.

My pride is what revealed to me how much of a foolish child I am, certain that I run the world; it is what opened my eyes to how ridiculous that looks from the outside.

My falls — they are what brought me to open the door and beg Him to watch over me, to protect me from the next fall.

Yes, my bad *middos* and my weaknesses — they are my diamonds; they are the key to the door that separates me from my *Dodi*.

9. The Monitor of Life

And when I think about it, it is simply amazing:

All those times I stood terrified by my ups and downs — that wasn't thoughts of *teshuvah* or *yiras Shamayim*.

It was simply fear that my image might crack.

It stemmed from a lack of honesty with myself, from the fantasy that I am supposed to be a perfected, flawless angel.

But now, as I stand before my *Dodi* in sincerity and truth, I suddenly realize that on the contrary:

The ascents and descents — they are the lifeline on my monitor!

Every fall reveals to me another place where I am in need of my *Dodi*!

Every ascent reveals to me yet another moment where the Creator was watching over me!

This journey of life is the only solution that will help me detach from my dream of self-perfection, from the war over my imagination, from the need for self-justification, and from the need for excuses and blame!

If I had remained perfect — how would the door have ever opened?!

Reb Usher used to say:

The word "*Emes*" (אמת - Truth) is an acronym for "*Ani Meshaker Tamid*" (אני משקר תמיד - I am always lying).

For only when I grasp my own constant falsehood do I reach the true truth of life.

10. That I shall not forget that I am a Yetzur.

And in just a few days, when I stand there in prayer before the King of Judgment, I will plead before Him with total sincerity:

"*Mloch al kol ha'olam kulo bichvodecha... veyeda kol pa'ul ki Attah pe'alto, veyavin kol yetzur ki Attah yatzarto*" (Reign over the entire world in Your glory... and every fashioned thing shall know that You fashioned it, and every creation shall understand that You created it).

Until now, when the door was still locked and I was gripped by my own imagined perfection, I would also say these words.

I would say them and direct my heart toward the "leftists," that they should finally recognize my truth; toward the gentiles, that they should finally understand who is right in this world. Sometimes I would even go into detail and focus on all the animals, birds, and creeping things in the world, that they should recognize *Malchuso Yisborach*.

I thought of everyone. Everyone except myself.

Because what did it have to do with me?

I'm fine. Better not to focus on one individual right now — when there is an entire world that needs *tikkun*...

But now, when the lie is shattered and the truth is revealed, **and I am about to begin another year of life with Hashem's help — I am filled with apprehension.**

Who says the door will stay open moving forward?

Who says I won't be enticed by my own imaginations once again?

Ribono Shel Olam, You are the only one who can protect me in this matter.

You, who did not give up on me, who knocked and knocked and did not despair of me — have mercy on me!

You, more than anyone, know that as long as I live in this world of falsehood, my natural inclination is to believe my own delusions and refuse to let them go.

If You do not protect me, I will forget everything and lock the door once again!

Therefore, *Ribono shel Olam*, please continue to watch over me; continue to knock. Let me see throughout my life that I am merely a *pa'ul* and merely a *yetzur*, and that You are the *Po'el* and You are the *Yotzer*!

Reign over me, *Ribono shel Olam*! Reign over the small world within me, and of course, over the entire world...

Gedanken from the Spinka Rebbe Shlita.

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For suggestions and feedback or to subscribe please email sparksoflightpinka@gmail.com

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