

Spiritual Healing in the Torah

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha

Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelech

How Will the Process of Circumcising our Hearts Unblock our Childhood Wounds

It is only the Blocks that Conceal the Essential Goodness of the Jewish Soul

The main work of EmunaHealing is to identify the blocks that make us stuck and impede us from moving forward in life and remove them through directed prayer. This is based on the central belief that whenever a person is unable to heal a certain area of her life or reach her goals, it is due to spiritual, emotional, or physical blocks, most commonly, emotional blocks. These blocks are caused by childhood wounds, traumas, or misguided stories that we have been telling ourselves and which have become self-fulfilling prophecies. The more we succeed in removing these blocks and rewriting our stories through guided imagery and positive affirmations, the better a person we will become. In this way EmunaHealing facilitates teshuva – return to our true selves, which have been hiding behind the various blocks that block us from being who we really are. Behind the belief that it is only the exterior blocks that prevent our light from shining forth, is the faith in the essential good of every single Jew. We are all an extension of the Divine. Once we uncover the external husks that conceal our inner soul, then the light of our divine spark is revealed in all its radiance. “Do not gaze upon me, because I am swarthy, for the sun has scorched me...” (*Song of Songs* 1:6). Rashi explains that the swarthy ugliness that a person may exude is not inherent, but only external, caused by the tanning of the sun. My darkness can easily be lifted so I will become white and pure again.

This principle of EmunaHealing is based on Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook’s optimistic perspective on the nature of a Jew: “The essence of the desire to be good to all, without any limitation at all in the world, whether in terms of the quantity of those benefiting nor the quality of the good bestowed – this is the inner core of the essence of the soul of *Knesset Yisrael* (Community of Israel)” (*Orot*, p. 139). This is its inheritance and the legacy from its ancestors, and this is the secret of the nation’s longing for redemption which gives it strength to live and exist, to the wonderment of every thinking person” (Rav Kook, *Orot Yisra’el*, 1:4).

Shedding the External Layers and Returning to the Essence of Who and What We Are

Teshuva – is not so much about what we are returning from –but more about what we are returning to. During the month of Elul, my students and I sing the famous Carlebach tune, “Return Again” with the help of [The B’erot Bat Ayin Songbook with Guitar Chords & Torah Tidbits](#). The words, “Return to who you are, return to what you are!” reverberate over and over in my head. As I lead my students with my guitar, I pray to unblock all the negative character traits and return to my essential beautiful self. I yearn to return to my naked soul without the exterior blocks that conceal its light. As Rav Kook puts it: “In order to remove every partition that separates between the general Divine good and the soul who thirst for it, we need to separate from every ethical blemish, which impedes the refinement of all our character traits... To also remove that which inhibits and prevents our garments of divine good, we must remove everything that prevents and inhibits the Jewish soul. This is the vital feature for complete teshuva in all its details from every kind of sin according to the written and the oral Torah, which completely reflects the divine soul linked to every Jew (Rav Kook, *Orot Hateshuva* 13:2). Now during Elul is the time for soul reflection, meditating and systematically removing the partitions and blocks that prevent us to

return to who we really are behind all the negative character-traits and actions caused by the accumulated pain and trauma we have experienced throughout our lives.

Circumcising our Hearts – Healing Emotional and Spiritual Wounds During Elul

Parashat Nitzavim brings the comfort of Hashem's promise that He will circumcise our hearts. This circumcision does not refer to an open-heart surgery but rather to removing the heart walls of resentments, hurt feelings, grudges, and any block that prevents us from accessing our soul. Even the circumcision of the male organ is not to create or build something new but rather to uncover the blocking skin to reveal the crown. These blocks are also what impedes us from being in a loving relationship with Hashem, with others, and with ourselves.

ספר דברים פרק ל פסוק ו

וּמַל הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת לִבְבְּךָ וְאֶת לִבְבֶּן אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכֹל נַפְשְׁךָ לְמַעַן חַיֶּיךָ:
 “Then Hashem, your G-d, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, [so that you may] love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul, for the sake of your life”
 (*Devarim* 30:6).

As we are moving closer to the final redemption when Hashem will circumcise our hearts, our desire for emotional health is growing, as we reckon from the popularity of numerous self-help books and courses. To bring the *geulah*, which we all await we need to first do our work of removing negative emotions, so we will be ready for Hashem to complete our efforts. This is why we are first told to circumcise our hearts by ourselves:

ספר דברים פרק י פסוק טז וּמַלְתֶּם אֶת עֲרֹלַת לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַרְפְּכֶם לֹא תִקְשׁוּ עוֹד:

“You must circumcise the *orlah* [foreskin] of your hearts, and be no longer stiff-necked” (*Devarim* 10:16).

Since no one can accomplish anything without Hashem's help, when we have tried our best to unblock our hearts, Hashem gives His promise to circumcise our hearts and open our hearts to learn to truly love. The optimal time for unblocking our hearts is during the month of Elul as the acronym of our Torah verse alludes:

וּמַל הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת לִבְבְּךָ וְאֶת לִבְבֶּן...Elul

Through Unblocking Our Own Hearts, We Can Influence Our Children to do Teshuva

When our children grow up, we may lose some of the connection we had when they were young, and certainly our ability to teach and influence them. There comes a time when they yearn to be completely independent of us, and no matter how good advice we give them, they don't want to hear it from us. If their friend tells them the exact same thing that we have said numerous times, they may excitedly follow his words as if they heard it for the very first time. Yet, through teshuva and unblocking of our hearts, we can retain the soul connection with our children and the ability to influence them for good. Rebbe Nachman asks, why does our pasuk mention that G-d will circumcise not only our heart but also the heart of our offspring? He explains that when we truly do the work of unblocking our hearts this will affect our descendants. As long as our heart is uncircumcised and sealed, it is impossible for us to truly feel. (We become numb). Yet when our hearts are unblocked, we are overcome by emotions so strong that they will spill over and affect our descendants and cause their repentance. This is the meaning of “Hashem your G-d will circumcise

your heart and the heart of your seed.” When G-d circumcises our hearts, the hearts of our offspring will become circumcised as well. Then our children will also experience thoughts of repentance and love of Hashem due to the circumcision of their parent’s heart (*Likutei Moharan, Mahadura Kama* 141). Through the various pains and traumas, we have experienced, we have learned to numb ourselves to protect ourselves from feeling distress and discomfort. However, when we close our hearts to avoid pain, we automatically also close our hearts to feel anything at all. So, we numb ourselves from feeling the love of G-d and from feeling the pleasures He bestows upon our lives. Being able to feel love is vital for truly being alive! Therefore, we await when Hashem will complete the process of circumcising our hearts “for the sake of our lives”!

EmunaHealing Exercise for Unblocking Your Life and Opening Your Heart

1. It’s the end of Elul – the time for you to take time for meditation and inner reflection. Close your eyes, turn your attention inward, and become aware of your breath. Allow your breath to be what it wants without trying to control it.
2. How are you feeling right now? Rather than quickly answering the habitual “fine,” or “Baruch Hashem!” Breathe into this question and let yourself feel what you are feeling. We all struggle with pain and discomfort. Besides physical pain, there are emotional hurts. People often don’t respond to you the way you expect. Perhaps you feel ignored and not included, or you may feel judged and disrespected by others. Whatever you feel, allow yourself to feel what you are feeling.
3. You may also harbor negative feelings about yourself. We all struggle with various versions of, “I’m not good enough.” Allow yourself to feel where you fall short. Breathe into this feeling without judgment. You are not alone in feeling this way. Tune into the spark of goodness within your feeling of inadequacy. Your spark of wanting to improve and rectify your flaws is a sign of your inherent goodness. Breathe into your goodness of always yearning to become better.
4. Recall Rav Kook’s heartening words: “The essence of the desire to be good– this is the inner core of the essence of the soul of the community of Israel.” Deep down you are really good and deserving of Hashem’s love. It is only the external blocks that prevent you from accessing this Divine goodness within you. Even if you cannot feel it yet, connect with the notion that despite your many flaws, you are essentially good and beloved.
5. There may be many layers of blocks concealing the goodness of your heart. Heartwalls may numb you and block you from feeling the love of Hashem, others, and yourself. Envision the Heartwalls as piles of rocks surrounding the most beautiful red rose. To get to the rose you need to shed layers of Heartwalls and penetrate the piles of rocks.
6. Envision breaking the rockpiles with your bare arms. If you need you can imagine wearing gloves as you disintegrate the rockpiles by removing the rocks one by one. Some are small and easy to remove, but others are big and heavy. It takes all your strength to remove them.
7. Each rock represents a hardship in life that has made you close your heart. As you imagine working through rock by rock, pay attention to which hardship each rock represents and what its message is for you. You have worked through many difficulties in life, and you have emerged to become a better person through your struggles. Although you are opening your heart the very best you can, there are still more rocks blocking it from opening completely. Do everything possible and Hashem will do the impossible!
8. Envision how the Divine hand works with you to remove the rest of the rocks that are too heavy for you to carry off by yourself. Hashem is completing your work of circumcising and opening your heart to once again truly feel what you are feeling. Notice all the love streaming through your heart

now! Allow yourself to feel your deepest love for Hashem, your Creator, Who bestows all this kindness on you. You can now open your heart and let it fill with love and gratitude for all the blessings in your life. Now you can truly love Hashem, others, and yourself!