How Can You Tell That You Are Awake?

MARATHON

Today is the second day of the month of Elul. In a little over a month we will be in Yom Kippur, the day of forgiveness. Yom Kippur is a marathon day, 24 hours totally devoted to "Teshuba": repenting, asking forgiveness, confessing our faults and making decisions to improve the course of our lives.

In order to get well prepared to this transcendental day we begin with the Teshuba process 40 days before Yom Kippur.

Among Ashkenazi Jews, this preparation consists of listening to the Shofar every day, from today until Yom Kippur, to be inspired by its sound, and begin the process of introspection.

Among Sepharadic Jews, to achieve the mental state necessary for Yom Kippur, we also recite from today the prayers known as "Selihot." These prayers are recited one hour before the morning prayers.

The heart of the Selihot is the *viduy* or confession, and the recitation of the 13 Attributes of Divine Forgiveness or Middot. These are also the two most important prayers of Yom Kippur.

ESCAPING and SLEEPING

In the Selihot prayers we also recite religious poems, that inspire us to repent and return to HaShem. The first poem we recite in the morning begins with the words: *ben adam ma lekha nirdam,* «Son of man, why are you asleep? Wake up, call and pray to your God ».

These words, in Hebrew, □□□□□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□ □□□ □□□□ "Why are

you asleep?" are found in the book of Yona 1: 6. The famous prophet was summoned by God for an important mission. But Yona rejected his Divine mission and tried to flee from God. For that he escapes in a boat. But God sends a storm that threatens to destroy the ship. The captain of the ship summons the crew to do everything possible to calm the storm, among other things, praying. Everyone is there with the exception of Yona. The prophet had fallen asleep, deliberately, ignoring all the dangers around him. Biblical commentators explain that Yona was in a psychological state of "denial" trying to ignore the urgency of the reality in front of him. In this case, the possibility of his own death. The captain finds Yona and yelled at him saying: "ma lekha nirdam, why are you asleep? Wake up, invoke and pray to your God ».

HOW CAN I KNOW IF I AM AWAKE?

These words, "Why are you sleeping?" They were chosen by our rabbis to start the Selijot in order to warn us about the risk of denial or escapism. Like Yoná, many times we also choose to ignore our impending mortality and go to sleep. Selijot's initial lesson is a call to "wake up." First of all to remind us that during the month of Elul we will sacrifice an hour of sleep. But mainly to invite us to identify our sleeping consciences.

Now, how can we realize if we are spiritually asleep or awake? What indicates the condition of our consciousness is the depth or superficiality of our deep thoughts.

There are 3 fundamental questions,

1. To what extent do I know and care about what God wants and expects from me?

2. How solid and fluid is my relationship with God?

3. Am I directing my life towards the right goals, with the right values □□and the right priorities?

If we do NOT spend a significant part of our time thinking

about these three points, our consciences are probably “asleep.”

Spiritual awakening consists in refreshing these questions in our mind.

We are spiritually “awake” when these questions take our sleep away.