YOM KIPPUR: WE CAN CHANGE

By Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith

We've all done wrong things. Yom Kippur is our opportunity to uproot the poor decisions from our past, as if they never happened.

How? By utilizing the following steps of teshuva, repentance:

1 CESSATION: IMMEDIATELY STOP THE HARMFUL ACTION.

The gig is up. You can't ask for forgiveness without stopping the harmful action. Get to the root of what you did wrong.

People usually have one or two key character traits (anger, laziness, arrogance etc.) that are the underlying cause of their mess-ups. Focus your energy on tackling the root cause.

2 REGRET

Stop the excuses and rationalizations. Own the problem and feel sincere regret.

Don't confuse regret with guilt. Guilt says "I am bad." It immobilizes and depresses us, and gets us to wallow in the past.

Regret is empowering. It says, "I've failed to live up to my potential and made a bad choice. I want to change and do better."

3 CONFESSION:

Admitting our mistake by articulating it verbally forms the main part of our prayers on Yom Kippur. Saying it out loud makes it real and concretizes our admission of guilt.

On a spiritual level, verbalizing our confession has the power to eliminate spiritual toxins that originate from our transgressions.

4 RESOLUTION NOT TO REPEAT:

God doesn't expect us to be angels. We can't change everything overnight but we need to commit to a realistic, long term plan of action that fosters growth.

Pick one small thing you can totally change forever and stick to it, no matter what.

5 ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

If we've wronged others, we need to sincerely apologize and make amends.

Shana tova from aish