

*D'var Rav: Words from the Rabbi*

## SPRING FORWARD

*More than riches, honor, or [even] life itself, the reward of humility is spiritual growth.*  
(Proverbs 22:4)

Spring is a time of rebirth, revitalization, and release. We see that in the Jewish festival of Purim just as much as in the secular celebration of Mardi Gras. It is our time to let go, and to let *grow*, to blow off some steam from the winter months and to recharge our inner batteries with new energy and vitality.

Letting go can be a very good, healthy human activity. We all have so much stuff inside us, especially in these busy and complicated times, and every once and a while we should all practice an internal “spring cleaning” and clear our pipes. Our clutter could be baggage from the past, fears about the future, or anxiety about the present.

In the Jewish spiritual context, the process of letting go can occur anytime, and it is one of the primary mechanisms by which we connect with that which is best in ourselves—and with God. We can let go of a lot of things, but Judaism argues that it is our ego that, more often than not, is the single biggest obstacle to spiritual growth.

When we learn how to let go of our egos, we can learn how to truly live, and to purge ourselves of the pollutants that prevent us from realizing our greatest potentials as Jews and as partners with the divine.

What does this mean? It means *humility*. It means acknowledging our mistakes and asking forgiveness for our transgressions. It means viewing these actions not as signs of weakness, but of strength. It means transcending our insecurities and making ourselves vulnerable.

It ain't an easy task. Few of us—spouses, siblings, friends, colleagues, ourselves—are secure or strong enough to admit our errors to others. Even our current national administration seems incapable of the humility necessary for growth. We want to preserve that mask we've constructed that sends the message to the outside world that we are never wrong.

“Mistakes were made” is a radically different statement from “I made a mistake.” One is a way of passing the buck while the other is a mark of maturity and wisdom.

So let's learn the spirituality of letting go—not as a form of catharsis, but as a means toward self-improvement and, paradoxically, self-transcendence. And we don't need to wait around until next spring. We simply need to spring forward and act. NOW.

*B'shalom, Niles*