

From Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, Executive Vice President of The Rabbinical Assembly [Conservative]

"When we feel that we have been wronged, the impulse to distance ourselves...from the source of that insult is great, because the insult wounded our sense of self-worth. We wish to "write those people off," in order to rid our lives of the suggestion that we were not worthy of greater respect. In flight from a challenge to our self-esteem, we distance ourselves, mistakenly, from our own power. At that point, we are in the greatest danger of becoming an agent of hurt and suffering in the lives of others.

If we cannot recognize our own power, then we cannot measure the impact of our words and deeds on others. We become desensitized to our ability to inflict the very sort of wound from which we struggle to recover. Our empathy, that quality which brings us closest to the Divine, is hobbled.

Intrinsic to the process of forgiving others is the renewal of our sense of agency. In forgiving one who has harmed us, we connect our personal power to that of God and Torah. In doing so, a downward spiral reverses to ascent and we not only recover the personhood we sought to preserve through flight, but we set in motion a far-reaching process that has the power to affect many lives and to soothe many sorrows."

I hope you have found the thoughts and meditations that I have been sharing with you throughout the month of Elul meaningful. I am looking forward to seeing you on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur and throughout the year. Here's hoping it will be a new year of health and happiness. Shanah Tova!!