

This publication is a weekly dose of chizuk inspired by the Torah of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov zt"l

Part 15: Available Now at the Rebbe's Pharmacy . . . Calming Shots of Tefilah and Emunah

Retraction: I would like to retract some of the content of the previous article. The idea of coming into close physical proximity as a means of protection from the virus was grossly incorrect. Rather, each one of us should adhere to our local rabonim as to what measures to take to ensure our safety. I sincerely apologize for this mistake and may Hashem keep safe from all harm!

The Illness: My life is so crazy and out of control. I can't take it anymore!

Everything is spinning out of control. A world which we thought had some sort of order is now orderless. All of the structures of society are shutting down and our lives are completely overturned. The stock market has crashed and we've lost tons of money. The grocery stores are filled with frantic panic to stock up on essential items. Many of them have already closed. The roads are empty and desolate. Life as usual has come to a complete standstill.

In addition, our house is a complete mess with-

out any order. The schools have shut down so our home is full of children with nothing to do and nowhere to go. Since we're stuck at home for day after day with our kids screaming and complaining, we inevitably fall into arguments with our spouse. It feels like there is no place for us to go to escape the craziness. There's no way to find respite.

Worst of all, we've completely lost control over our thoughts. Our mind which was never really so clear to begin with, is now spinning around

and around like a rollercoaster that simply won't stop. We're filled with fears, anxiety and panic. It feels like we're drowning in a sea of confusion and worry, with no lifeboats or rescue helicopters.

We can't sleep at night. We can't wake up during the day. Without any peace of mind whatsoever, our lives are truly miserable. We can't settle ourselves to daven or learn Torah. Our head doesn't belong to us anymore. It is now the official property of Coronavirus, Inc.

The Rebbe's Prescription: Talk to Hashem about what you're going through, and you will regain control of your thoughts and find calm amidst the craziness.

When we lose control of our thoughts, we fall into an orderless panic.

Our minds are very powerful. We have the ability to invent incredible things like cars, computers and rocket ships. We have the ability to think very deeply about subjects in the Gemara. We have the ability to experience expanded consciousness by attaching our thoughts to Hashem in prayer.

However, all these capabilities are dependent on one thing: yishuv hadaas — awareness. Without a clear head, we fall from the status of human beings and become like animals running after our body's desires. Without a clear head, we have no control over our speech and actions. Instead of being able to direct the circus and put everything in its place, we become a part of the circus, which now has no leader or order.

In addition to the terrible physical sickness that Coronavirus has caused in the world, it has also brought mental insanity upon us. It has captured our brains and taken them into captivity. It has stolen our

thoughts and left us like chickens with their heads cut off. The entire world is filled with intense fear and panic. We're all going mad!

Whatever fears or worries enter into our heads, we must get them out by expressing them to Hashem.

What can we do to free our mind from this craziness? We must daven to Hashem.

We must turn all of our panic and stress into tefilah. Instead, of freaking out about our financial situation, we must go to Hashem and plead with Him for help. We must beg Hashem to take care of us in these difficult times. We must daven to Hashem to give us all the food and necessities that we need, and most importantly, enough toilet paper!

Instead of panicking about getting sick, we must reach out to Hashem for help. We must daven to Hashem in our own words to protect us. We must plead with Him to have pity on us and stop this virus. We must pray to Hashem to save our family and the entire Jewish people from all harm.

In addition, we must simply talk to Hashem about everything that's on our mind. Everything that we're worried about we should express it to Hashem. All of our fears about our health and our finances we must share them with Hashem. Even if we're not used to talking to Hashem about our problems, at such times there is no where else to turn. There is no one else who can help us. There is nothing else that will be able to ease our stress and calm our mind, except bringing HaKadosh Baruch Hu into our life in a real way — by creating a relationship with Him.

Even if we've been accustomed for years to getting regular paychecks which are now not coming in, we

should ask Him to help us to remember that He can give us our livelihood in countless different ways. There is no need for us to worry!

When we find our mind wandering off into terrible thoughts of panic over our health, we must stop immediately and share these thoughts with Hashem. We must plead with Hashem to help us to remember that it is He Who is making this virus in the world and He has the ability to keep us safe from all harm and heal us if we're already sick. G-d forbid. We must plead with Him to help us get rid of all of our fears and only fear Him. We must beg Hashem to save us from our fright and panic which only harm us physically and spiritually, and help us to let go and put our life completely in His hands.

The general principle is that we must avoid getting stuck in our own head. Rather, every negative thought which comes into our mind, we must share it with Hashem, either through tefilah or conversation.

We must take the garbage out of our brain and recycle it into spiritual connection.

This practice, which Rebbe Nachman calls "hisbodedus," can be compared to taking out the trash. Every day our minds get filled up with more and more garbage, both

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cause of the influences of the world around us, and more importantly because of our own thoughts, speech and actions. When day after day passes and we fail to empty the trash our brain becomes a mush of rotten waste.

But by speaking out all of our concerns with Hashem and asking for His help, we release all of our mental garbage. Not only that, but we

By speaking out all of our concerns with Hashem and asking for His help, we release all of our mental garbage. Not only that, but we recycle it and transform it into a means of connection with our Creator. Through this, we achieve two things: Firstly, Hashem hears our prayers and will give us Divine Assistance in all areas of our life. Secondly, our mind becomes clear and our thoughts return to our control. As is understood, it is good

to take out the trash on a regular, daily basis.

If we simply can't find a way to speak, we must start by screaming!

However, sometimes we're really in a rut and we simply can't get a word out. Our thoughts are so absolutely enveloped with fear and panic that we've lost all control. For these times, there is only one thing we can do: We must scream to Hashem!

This practice may seem bizarre and extreme, but this is our tradition. When we were being afflicted and abused by the Egyptians in Mitzraim, we screamed to Hashem. When we were faced with the deep waters of the Yam Suf and the Egyptians at our back, we screamed to Hashem. When we were faced with the terrible decree of Haman, we screamed to Hashem. The entire sefer tehilim is filled with passages in which Dovid HaMelech screams to Hashem to escape both his physical enemies who were trying to take his life, and his mental enemy — his yetzer hara — which was trying to take over his brain. This is what Jews do in a time of crisis. We must find a place where we can be alone, lift our arms up to the sky, and call out to Hashem with all of our strength. "Oiy!! Aba, please save us from this sickness! Please help me to regain control of my mind!! Oiy, oiy, oiy!!!"

Our scream is incredibly powerful. It has the ability to stop the entire circus which is going on in our heads and block out all of our unwanted thoughts. It is like a loud siren for Hashem blasting in our ears, which makes it impossible for us to think about anything else but Him.

In addition, just like it can awaken Hashem to come down and help us, it can also awaken a deep desire for connection within us. It can awaken within us a sense of faith which we've never felt before in our entire lives. It is a physical act of complete and utter surrender and attachment to the Almighty.

If possible, we should try to get out of the city

and go into nature for our hisbodedus.

Especially during times like these, it is incredibly beneficial to go out into nature to do our personal prayers and screams. The minute we leave civilization, we realize that Hashem is still with us. When we see the trees swaying in the wind, the rivers flowing with water, and the massive sky stretched out before us, we remember that there is Creator. Even though to us what's going on in the world seems like complete chaos, it's really not. Hashem is directing the show down to the very last detail. This greatly strengthens our emunah and gives us a feeling of calm relaxation.

Nonetheless, even if we are stuck in quarantine in our own homes, we can still find a quiet room somewhere after the kids have gone to bed, and pour our heart out to Hashem.

Even if we've never done any of these things before in our life, now is the time to start. It's a matter of physical and mental survival. Instead of constantly filling our head with frightening news reports and WhatsApp posts which destroy our sanity and cause us dangerous amounts of stress, we must shut off our phones for a period of time each day, get away from the craziness of the world around us, and reattach ourselves to our Creator through conversation and prayer.

By doing hisbodedus, we can achieve the yishuv hadaas to handle all of life's challenges.

Through this, we can find incredible calm and faith. While the whole is going insane, we can be fearless. We can see that everything is completely in order — Hashem's order. All the franticness that see around us and hear about on the news doesn't not affect us. Even though our children are crying, our spouse is stressed out, and our house is a complete disaster zone, we can relax, take a deep breathe, and remember that Hashem is right here with us. We have yishuv hadaas, so we don't get sucked into the whirlwind of panic. Then, at the right moment, we can speak with our family gently and remind them that everything is in Hashem's hands, and it's all completely for the best, even if we can't understand it at all.

With a clear mind, we can remind ourselves that Hashem will give us our livelihood, some way or another. Almost all of us have never lacked food a single day of our life. Why should tomorrow, next week, or next month be any different?

We can find joy and inspiration in our avodas Hashem.

In addition, when we remember that every mitzva that we do and word of Torah that we say is invaluable to Hashem, especially during these times right before the coming of Mashiach, we can even be happy. During times of such darkness and heresy amongst the Jews and non-Jews alike, we merit to keep the holy mitzvos of the Torah. This is incredible! This can inspire us to daven with more kavana, and learn Torah with even more consistency and focus than before. It can inspire us to begin to prepare for the month of redemption — Chodesh Nisan — and our exalted Pesach Seder with great joy.

We can see Hashem's hand in everything that's happening in the world.

True, there is a virus in the world which is causing suffering amongst Jews and non-Jews alike,

and we must daven with all our heart for their health and safety. But with a clear mind and strengthened faith, we're able to see that it is actually an incredible revelation of Hashem in the world. It is a clear sign that the Master of the Universe is truly here doing His will in this world. We can see everything that's going on around us is in order for us to come to a greater recognition of Him. It is meant to inspire us to do teshuva and attach ourselves to Him with all our strength.

We can achieve true humility and attach ourselves to Hashem's lifeboat.

Perhaps Hashem had to create this virus and cause the stock market to crash just to wake us up. In order for us to see that He is the Master of the Universe, He first had to show us that we are not. We think that we're in control. If we eat healthy and go to the doctor, then our bodies will be just fine. If we invest in the right stocks, then we'll make a nice income. Hashem's not in the picture. Therefore, with a few tiny, minuscule virus cells, Hashem must show us just how fragile we are. We are meek and feeble, and completely dependent on Him for everything. Everything!

However, we see that even now, there is freedom of choice. We can choose the path of the other billions of people in the world who's arrogance causes them to continue to refuse to recognize the hand of the Creator. Or, we can take this as an opportunity to get onboard Hashem's life-boat and escape the madness. We can take this as an opportunity to come closer to Hashem than ever before by opening up a personal dialogue with Him. Perhaps this is the beginning of the end, and we know the story has good ending. It's not something to panic about, rather it's something to be hopeful for.

In times of physical and psychological danger, who do we turn to?

Doing hisbodedus is life-changing. It transforms us from animals to human beings, from extremely constricted consciousness, to calm and expanded consciousness. It gives us faith and courage to endure whatever we're going through, no matter how intense or insane it may be. Through hisbodedus, we're reminded that our entire existence in this world is just preparation for the next world.

Everything that's happening around us and inside our own minds is just a test of our faith and attachment to Hashem. How are we going to react in the face of danger? How are we going to react in the face of our own wild and out-of-control imagination? Who will we turn to?

Do we turn to the news reporters and social media, and get sucked into a world of panic, stress, depression and loneliness? Or do we go for a nice walk in a forest, talk to Hashem, call out to Him from the depths of our heart, and find true faith, comfort, and closeness to the Master of the Universe?

(For more on hisbodedus, you may contact leventermusic@gmail.com to receive a free copy of the new book "Hashem Is Your Friend — A Guide to Hisbodedus.")

Due to the uncertainty of the availability of hard copies of these articles in the near future, anyone who would like to continue to receive them should subscribe by email.

Based on the Torah of Rebbi Nachman of Breslov zt"l and his primary talmid R' Noson zt"l, as given over by R' Nisan Dovid Kivak, Shlita. For further comments and questions, or to sign up to receive the articles by email, you may contact: leventermusic@gmail.com