

The Rebbe's Pharmacy

Pills of Chizuk for Today's Spiritual Illnesses—Part 17

The Illness: It seems like everything in my life is going wrong, and I never get a break.

Very often, it appears to us like nothing ever goes our way. We feel like life is just one long and bitter process of suffering. We never have the money that we need, and some of us fall deep into debt. We look for a better-paying job, but somehow we never manage to get one. Then our boss says that he's letting us go. He says that we do good work, but the company is downsizing. Sorry.

Then, one of our kids gets really sick, G-d forbid.

So we have to shlep him around from doctor to doctor to try to help him. The problem is, that we are no longer insured, so the medical bills start piling up.

With all the stress at home, our marriage starts to fall apart. It feels like we're constantly at war with our spouse over every little thing. We can't even stand to be at home.

Then our oldest son starts failing out of yeshiva.

He has no interest in learning and so he takes every chance he can get to hang out with kids outside of yeshiva. We don't want to know what they're doing.

It seems like things couldn't get any worse. We feel like Hashem must really dislike us, G-d forbid. Our life is only pain and suffering and we lose all hope for the future. We think that this is it, and there is simply no way out.

The Rebbe's Prescription: Even the midst of the worst suffering, you can find moments of relief and glimmers of hope, which will carry you to salvation.

Even though can't understand Hashem's ways, we must believe that everything He does is completely good.

It is human nature to want to live a good life. We want our family to be healthy. We want to get the greatest yiddishe nachas from our children. We want to make a good living in order to acquire the possessions we need.

Of course, Hashem also wants us to have everything good in our lives. He wants to take care of every single one of our needs. He wants to open up the Heavens and rain down all of His blessings upon us. He wants to give us His bounty not only in the next world, rather even in this world as well.

However, the reality is that in order for us to do teshuva, or in order to purify us of our sins from this incarnation or a previous one, or for a number of other reasons which we cannot understand, Hashem doesn't allow our lives to go so smoothly. Perhaps the only way for us to come to recognize Him and attach ourselves to Him is that we must be poor and have to constantly daven for His assistance. Perhaps the only way to atone for certain sins that we've committed is that we have to go through physical suffering, G-d forbid. Whatever the reason is, we can never know for sure. But there is a reason!

Even though it is very difficult, we can't question His ways, and we have to believe that somehow

every thing is for the best. We have to believe that what we're going through is 100% Divine Providence from Hashem in order to help us get closer to Him in some way. The main purpose of our existence on this earth is to grow and deepen this faith in Hashem.

Our happiness and suffering are dependent on the level of our faith.

The truth is, the more that we strengthen this belief, the more we're able to escape our suffering, since we're able to see and to know that everything that's happening to us is completely good. The clearer our emunah is in the pure loving-kindness of Hashem, the more we will be able to find true happiness in this world, no matter what we're going through. So we must continually strive to strengthen this faith and receive what Hashem gives us with love.

However, for most of us whose emunah is not so strong, especially when we're really being tested, it feels like it is nearly impossible for us to find real comfort. At the end of the day, we still feel the sickness in our body, and we still feel hopeless when we look at our enormous credit card bills. We may know and even try to remind ourselves that everything is for the best and somehow Hashem will help, but it is so hard for us to really "live" with this reality, that we continue to suffer without any respite or relief. We remain bitter towards Hashem and we give up on serving Him. We're waiting for the day that Mashiach will knock on the door with a million dollars and medicine for all of our illnesses, but the days pass and we're still waiting.

By finding the relief amidst his troubles, Dovid HaMelech was able to constantly praise Hashem.

Therefore, until Mashiach does come—speedily and in our days, amen!—to bring us complete relief from all of our suffering, Rebbi Nachman gives us way to repair and strengthen our faith in order to find hope and contentment with our lives. He explains that, although it may seem to us like everything that happens to us is bad without exception and our lives are one long thread of pain and despair, this is not really true. Even in

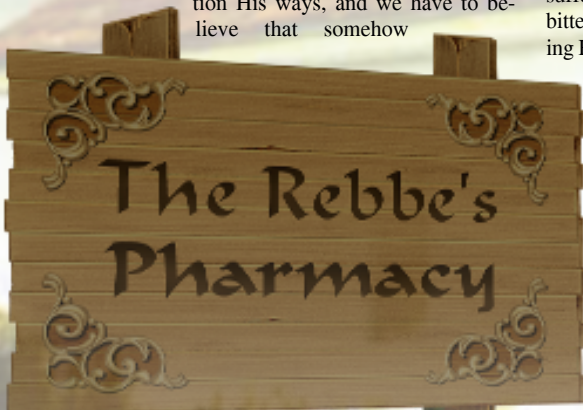
the most difficult situations, it is possible to find moments of respite and glimmers of hope.

When we look at the life of Dovid HaMelech, we can find a way for us to escape our own personal darkness. Dovid HaMelech suffered perhaps more than any other person in the history of time. He was a complete reject in his family, and considered by all an illegitimate child. Shaul Hamelech himself chased him down and tried to kill him. Throughout his life, he was threatened to death, even by his own son, Avshalom. His life was constantly hanging on a hairsbreadth. If we were to examine all of his trials and tribulations, we would certainly find that he had absolutely no reason to be happy and praise Hashem.

And yet, it was Dovid Hamelech who composed Sefer Tehilim, the greatest book of praise and thanks to Hashem in all of history! How did he do it? The answer is that even in the most impossibly difficult situations, he was able to find and focus on the moments of respite and relief, and give thanks to Hashem.

For example, the verse in Tehilim says, "In the midst of my suffering, You gave me relief." It doesn't say that You "removed my suffering." Rather, even though things were still not going well and he was surrounded by darkness on all sides, Dovid was able to find Hashem's relief.

The Sages show another example of this from Sefer Tehilim. The verse says, "A song for Dovid, as he fled from Avshalom, his son." The Sages ask how could Dovid Hamelech sing a song about how he was chased by his own son who was trying to kill him? "A lam- enta- tion for



Dovid” would have been more appropriate. The Sages answer that since it was Dovid’s own son who was chasing him, Dovid knew that Avshalom would have more compassion for him than if it were any other person.

These are just two examples. However, this is a constant theme throughout the entire Sefer Tehilim. And even when Dovid Hamelech thanks Hashem for giving him salvation, we all know from the account of his life in Sefer Shmuel, as well as the midrashim of the Sages, that he never

Through finding moments of relief and respite, we’re able to be happy with every little bit of good that we have, and hopeful to Hashem for the future. We’re able to strengthen our faith and live with Hashem throughout our suffering. We’re able to find a deep strength and patience to endure life’s greatest challenges.

had a moment of peace during his 70 years on this earth.

We too, must see the unbelievable yeshuos all around us!

From here we can also find a way to strengthen our faith, and be hopeful and even happy in the midst of our own suffering.

Even though it may seem to us like we have no

money, not only that but we are deep into debt, we must remember that we’re not living in a cardboard box in Bombay with torrential monsoon rains pouring down on top of us. Thank G-d we have a roof over our head! Even though our apartment may feel much too small and cramped for our large family, nonetheless, we have a home. We’re not homeless and sleeping on the streets of New York City.

Although we can’t pay off our entire debt at once, we must see that every time we are able to pay off a little bit is an incredible yeshuah from Hashem. Instead of being unsatisfied with our job since it’s not paying the bills, we should thank Hashem that we’re making some money and we’re not unemployed. Every time we make a bracha and eat some food, we have to recognize the amazing miracle Hashem performed for us to be able to survive. Thank G-d we and our children are not starving to death in Africa.

We should do the same when it comes to our health. Even though our family may be suffering from a flu which is getting passed around from one member to the next, we can find relief that at least we’re not all sick at the same time and the healthy ones are there to take care of the sick. And even if our whole family is sick, we can find relief in that it’s not a serious illness and it will soon pass.

And even if we or one of our children or parents are suffering from a terminal illness, G-d forbid, we can thank Hashem for every moment that we’re alive. Although we may not have so much strength to daven and serve Hashem, we can find respite in each word of tefilah and every mitzva that we’re still able to do. Because of our physical suffering, we should see that every little thing we do in avodas Hashem is so much more precious to Him

And even if we lose a family member, G-d forbid and may we all live to 120, we can find relief that at least we have faith in the next world, where we know that they will live for eternity in the light of Hashem.

So too, we must look at our children. Although our young children seem like their constantly complaining, whining, and screaming in our ears to the point of insanity, we have to see that there are moments of peace and quiet. There are even times when our children act respectfully towards us and say thank you. Even though it may be incredibly difficult to raise them, we should be grateful to Hashem for every time they say a bracha, put on tzitzis or a kipa, or learn one mishna.

Even if our children are not doing well in yeshiva or seminary, we can find respite in the fact that they’re still keeping Shabos and following halacha. And even if, G-d forbid, they leave the Torah completely, we can still find relief that they are Jews, and in some way there are still giving nachas to Hashem, like the Sages say, “Even the sinners of Yisroel are full of mitzvos like a pomegranate.” Maybe they still wear a kipa, no matter what color, shape or size it maybe. Maybe they still won’t eat shrimp or bacon. Even though these things seem completely insignificant in relation to all of their transgressions, we must believe that they are incredibly important to Hashem.

The greatest relief is the simple fact that we follow Hashem’s Torah.

At the end of the day, no matter what is happening to us and no matter what insanely difficult challenges we’re going through, we can always find relief in the fact that we’re from Jews. In today’s day and age, in which the infectious disease of Atheism has almost completely devoured the entire world — non-Jews and Jews alike, we merit to be some of the last few who are hanging on to our faith. Amazing!

In a world more greedy for money than any other idol worship in all of history, we merit to keep Shabos and break ourselves away from this obsession for wealth. Even if we feel like we’re also chasing the god of money, at least for one day a week we don’t go to work, our phone is off, and we recognize the Creator of the universe. Amazing!

In a world where most people recite the disgusting lyrics to rap and pop songs, we’re reciting the unbelievably holy lashon of shmone esre three times a day. We say brachos over everything we put into our mouth. We say krias shema and unify Hashem’s name. We proclaim, “Blessed are You Who spoke and the world came into existence!” Incredible!

In a world where people eat the most despicable creatures and dress in the most immodest clothing, we sanctify bodies with kosher food and respectful attire. In a world where marriage has nearly ceased to exist and gender is a matter of opinion, we keep the holy laws pure in our homes and do our best to raise children. Unfathomable!

These are real yeshuos. No matter what we’re going through both physically and spiritually, if we focus on these things and thank Hashem for each and every one of them, we will find true relief from all of our suffering.

Through this, we can strengthen our faith and open our heart in prayer.

The result of this is truly astonishing. We find the courage to hope and believe that Hashem is good. We see that, even though things are very hard, there are sparks of salvation all around us. We don’t feel like our life is completely bad and Hashem doesn’t care, G-d forbid. Rather, we recognize that Hashem really is helping us.

This greatly strengthens our emuna in all of the

things that we simply cannot understand. When we see before our eyes the miracles that Hashem has done for us, day in and day out, then we can let go of all of our questions and problems, and simply believe in Him. We can close our eyes from the apparent darkness which is all around us and simply believe in the light which is hidden inside of it. There is nothing but Hashem! He is completely One, and His Oneness is completely good!

This faith gives us the strength to daven. We realize that, although it may seem nearly impossible, Hashem can save us. Even though things may be very, very dark, we don’t fall into complete despair. Rather, we open our hearts to Hashem in prayer and pour out our deepest desire to escape our physical and spiritual suffering. We beg Hashem to help us pay off all our debts and to be able to support our family. We plead with Hashem over and over again to bring our children home from whatever distant places they have strayed. We daven to Hashem to heal us from all of our worst sicknesses, and give us strength to serve Him.

When we say these prayers from a place of gratitude for Hashem’s constant kindness and hope for our ultimate salvation, they have unbelievable spiritual power. When we daven with a pure belief in Hashem’s ability to help us, then nothing can stop our tefilos from reaching His Throne of Glory.

By strengthening our faith, we rekindle our relationship with Hashem and create a new channel for Him to bestow upon us all of His blessings. Thus, we begin to see our prayers being answered and this strengthens us even more in our davening. Even though in the past it seemed to us that there was no way that davening would ever help us, now our faith is renewed, and we begin to see that tefillah really works!

The small yeshuos start coming more and more frequently, and we even find big ones coming in from all sides. Perhaps, after a while, we’re able to completely pay off our credit cards. Perhaps, we witness a family member completely recover from a terminal illness and clearly see the hand of Hashem in our life.

Although we may never see a complete salvation from all of our problems, that is simply the nature of this world. We’re not here for vacation. We’re here to rectify our souls and all of Hashem’s creation. It’s never just going to be a walk in the park.

However, through the practice of finding the respite amidst our suffering, we’re no longer just trying to survive this world and all of its bitterness. We’re no longer so in despair of our situation that we can hardly serve Hashem. We’re no longer trying to run away from the burden of our responsibilities.

Rather, through finding these moments of relief and respite, we’re able to be happy with every little bit of good that we have, and hopeful to Hashem for the future. We’re able to strengthen our faith and live with Hashem throughout our suffering. Since we know that Hashem really cares about us and is taking care of us, we’re able to escape our worries and fears, and open our heart to Him in prayer. With a clear mind, we’re able to enjoy serving Hashem. We’re able to find a deep strength and patience to endure life’s greatest challenges. Even when everything around us seems like it’s falling apart, we’re not falling. Instead, we’re praising Hashem for every moment of relief and spark of hope, and attaching ourselves to Him with true joy.

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