

The Rebbe's Pharmacy

Pills of Chizuk for Today's Spiritual Illnesses—Part 20

The Illness: I've fallen so deep into physical desire, that I can't feel the kedusha of my neshama at all.

In this day and age, we are being tested more than ever before by the physical desires of the non-Jewish world. Although there may have been periods of time in past when the goyim were flagrantly immodest, lewd, greedy, and animalistic like they are today, nonetheless, in the past we could always find respite and kedusha in the seclusion of our own homes and separate communities. It was much easier for us to keep to ourselves and protect the sanctity of our tradition.

Today, however, it is extremely challenging to isolate ourselves from the influence of the non-Jewish world. Many of us, for a number of reasons, have no choice but to live in cities and

communities that are mixed with or immediately adjacent to goyim. Therefore, we are surrounded by screens, billboards, magazines, and advertisements which convince us that the pleasures of this world are really what it's all about.

In addition, even if we are some of the lucky few who live in secluded, religious areas, due to the necessity of having the internet, our lives are deeply infiltrated by the goyish world. Our smart phones, computers and other devices are filled with filthy garbage which makes our neshama want to escape and hide. Because of this, even in the privacy of our own home we are not safe. This is unprecedented!

The secular world drives us to dedicate every

moment we have to fulfill our temptations for food, drink, wealth and women. We are constantly reminded that we are, as Darwin — yimach shmo vezichro — says, no different than monkeys and other species of the animal kingdom. Thus, we follow along and become entrenched in a life of physical desire.

We fall to such low places that we no longer see any difference whatsoever between us and the goyim. We become so deeply assimilated into their culture of temptation that we don't feel the kedusha of our neshama whatsoever. Sometimes, after eating six pieces of pizza and pint of ice cream, it's hard for us to believe that we have a neshama at all.

The Rebbe's Prescription: By comparing ourselves to a goy, we can see that our soul is still shining very brightly and attach ourselves to its kedusha. (Based on Likutei Halachos, Reishis Hagez 4)

The main reason we fall is because we're comparing ourselves to the extraordinary kedusha of our neshama.

Reb Noson of Breslov zt"l explains that, even though the influence of the non-Jewish culture greatly affects our lives, our main mistake is *not* that we're comparing ourselves to the goyim. Rather, on the contrary, the primary reason that we fall into their trap is because we're comparing ourselves to the kedusha of a yid.

The holiness of a Jewish neshamah is incredibly great. Our soul is a piece of Hashem Himself. We are Hashem's beloved children. He gave us His most precious gift. He chose us above all the nations of the world and even the angels of heaven and blessed us with the Torah. In fact, the entire world was created just for Jewish souls to come into this world and keep the Torah. This is quite a tall order.

It is an

amazing opportunity, but also a daunting responsibility. What if we mess it up? There is so much riding on our freedom of choice, that it can become very heavy and difficult at times. The bar is set so high that it seems simply unattainable for us to reach.

We try to pull ourselves away from our physicality and attach ourselves to avodas Hashem, but no matter what we do, it seems like we're constantly falling short of who we should be and what we can achieve. Our potential is so great, that when we look at ourselves honestly, it seems like we're always extremely far away from the exalted purity of a Jew. It seems like we'll never be able to reach the level of kedusha which we know is appropriate for the children of Avraham, Itzhak, and Yaakov, may they rest in peace.

Because of this, we fall in our mind. We give up all hope of being able to overcome our yetzer hara. We despair completely of achieving any attachment to the kedusha of our neshama and we let go of the little bit of connection that we had to avodas Hashem. We feel like we tried many times to be a Jew, but the goal is just too lofty for us to attain.

However, we're making a huge mistake. While it is true that when we measure ourselves by the standard of the holiness of a Jewish neshama, most of us fall very short. Nonetheless, this is only a part of the truth—the part that our yetzer hara wants us to see. The flip side is that when we compare ourselves to a goy, we see quite a different picture.

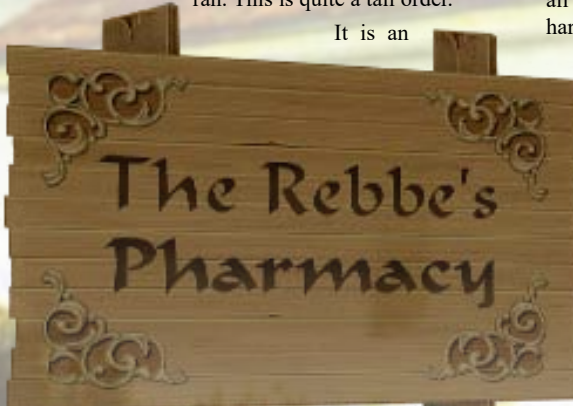
Even if we've done very terrible sins and transgressed the Torah countless times to satisfy our desires, G-d forbid, we are still worlds away from the contamination of the goyim. Although it may seem to us that we act like animals just like the goyim do, when we actually line things up, this is very far from the truth.

For example, we have a bris mila. Even though we didn't do anything to merit such an awesome and holy mitzva, nonetheless, Hashem had incredible compassion for us and brought us into His sacred covenant. Through this mitzva alone we are elevated light years above the animalistic nature of the goyim.

In addition, if we've kept Shabos even once in our life, this too greatly distinguishes us from the goyim. For 24 hours of our life, we turned off our smart phones, stopped smoking cigarettes and other substances, and we didn't buy any fancy clothes or jewelry from the store. This is amazing! In such a world of physical darkness, we detached ourselves even a little bit from our desires for the sake of a mitzva. All the more so if we keep Shabos every single week!

Every
time
we

We must recognize vast the differences between a Jew and a goy, and treasure every little bit of yiddishkeit.



put on a talis (even a talis katan) we are wrapping ourselves in the light of chesed of Hashem. Every time we put on tefilin we are placing Hashem's crown itself upon our head. Every time we say shema—even if we missed the zman and we don't get the mitzva, G-d forbid—we're unifying Hashem's name and proclaiming His oneness to the entire world. Even if we

Even if we sit and watch the super bowl with our chips and salsa, juicy chicken wings, and cold Bud Light, nevertheless, when it's all over and we open our sidur to daven maariv (or shacharis in Eretz Yisroel), we've completely separated ourselves from our non-Jewish football fans. With just that one krias shema, we show to the entire world and to ourselves that there is something more important in life than football.

we've completely separated ourselves from them. All the more so when we take even a little bit of our hard-earned money and give it to tzedaka.

Even if we can't help ourselves from eating a 16oz steak or downing a bottle of vodka, when we say a bracha before and after we've completely separated ourselves from our non-Jewish counterparts. Even if we can't help ourselves from buying the most extravagant suit, when we wear it honor of Yom Tov—even if our main intent is to show off—that suit is not the same as the one worn by our non-Jewish co-worker. Even if we can't help ourselves from buying the fastest sports car, when we use it to go to shul or a wedding, it is not the same as the one our non-Jewish neighbor drives.

Even if we sit and watch the super bowl with our chips and salsa, juicy chicken wings, and cold Bud Light; even if we enjoy watching the cheerleaders, the half-time show, and most of all, a bunch of grown men smashing into each other as hard as they can, nevertheless, when it's all over and we open our sidur to daven maariv, we've completely separated ourselves from our non-Jewish football fans. With just that one krias shema, we show to the entire world and to ourselves that there is something more important in life than football. All the more so this is true for those of us living in Eretz Yisroel who, after staying up all night to watch the game, put

have barely any strength to daven and all we can do is recite the shmona esrei without any feeling or kavanna whatsoever, nonetheless we should be extremely happy. At least we're mumbling the holy words of the Sages, and not some lyrics to a disgusting rap song.

Even though we work all day with goyim in the same office with the same materialistic goals, when we stop during our lunch break to daven mincha,

on our talis and tefilin and go to daven shacharis at netz hachama. This is nothing short of mesiras nefesh!

Through this comparison, we're able to find the light of our neshama burning inside of us.

When we compare ourselves to a goy, each and every one of these mitzvos stands out and shines incredibly brightly. We see a completely different picture. We really aren't such bad people at all. We really are good servants of Hashem. We are covered from head to toe with the brilliant light of our Torah and mitzvos, like the Sages say, "Even the sinners of Yisroel are full of mitzvos like a pomegranate."

In addition, since the tests that we go through in this day and age are much greater than they ever have been before, we should take even more pride in every small thing that we do for Hashem. Because the darkness is so great, even the tiniest flicker of light is stands out remarkably.

Through comparing ourselves to the standards of a goy, we begin to believe that we really do have a holy neshama. We begin to see that there is something inherently different about us, like the Sages say, "even a sinner of Yisroel, is still called Yisroel." Even after everything that we've done, we're still Hashem's children. We begin to see that there is a fundamental part of us which has no desire for this world. There is a piece of G-dliness inside of us which only wants Hashem.

Hashem did the greatest act of love and compassion for us, and planted inside of us a brilliant diamond. Even though it can be covered over with all kinds of disgusting waste and excrement, on the inside it is still completely clean and pure. There is a holy place inside of us which can never be uprooted.

The more that we strengthen ourselves through this comparison, the more we begin to actually feel our neshama inside of us. We begin to taste the sweetness of Shabos. We begin to taste the sweetness of saying nishamas kol chai and ahava raba. We begin to feel just how precious our little bit of learning really is.

Through this, we begin to identify with our neshama, and not with our animalistic self. We begin to have hope that we can lift ourselves out of our physical temptations. We begin to try to detach ourselves from our desires and connect ourselves to avodas Hashem.

Even if we don't see any external changes, internally we've transformed greatly.

Although we may not see any change in our ability to overcome our yetzer hara, since we've spent so long running after him, nonetheless, we're not the same as before. If we indulge in our desires, it is not without a fight. Even as we're drinking beer after beer, deep down inside we know this is not who we really are. This is not what we really want. We're not like some goyim at a fraternity.

If we look at inappropriate images on our phones, we actually hear a voice inside of us telling us to turn it off. We realize that what

we're doing is wrong, and underneath it all, we have a strong yearning to be able to stop. We know that this is not what we're here in this world to do. We are so far beyond this. We are holy Jews.

What's changed? Instead of constantly seeing our shortcomings and getting down on ourselves, we begin to focus on the good that's within every one of us, no matter how what we've done. Although we may be still very far from our ultimate goals and potential, we have achieved incredible accomplishments through our desire for Hashem and all of the seemingly "little" things that we do for Hashem.

No matter what we do, we can't mess up the fact that we're Jews!

And even if we think that through our countless transgressions we've completely extinguished any spark of kedusha which may have existed inside of us, we must remember that, no matter what sins we've done and how much we've messed up, G-d forbid, there is a place within us that we can never destroy. It's simply not in our hands to mess it up. Hashem chose us, and gave us a neshama which is a pure holy fire that can never be put out, no matter what we do.

Even if we don't know what we ever did to deserve such a gift from Hashem, and we feel utterly unworthy of having a Jewish soul, nonetheless, that is the reality, and we can't change it, even if we transgress the entire Torah, G-d forbid and may Hashem have mercy.

Therefore, every morning when we say the bracha "shelo asani goy," we should be filled with such incredible joy. Through no merit of our own, we were blessed to be one of Hashem's beloved children and, like a loving, compassionate Father, He will never give up on us. There is and always will be a piece of pure goodness inside of us, and at any moment, even from the lowest physical and spiritual places, we can connect ourselves to that piece of holy G-dliness and remove ourselves from our darkness and be close to Hashem.

If we stick with this path and continue to strengthen ourselves with each and every thing which distinguishes us from the goyim, without question we will eventually succeed in transforming ourselves completely. If we don't give up on recognizing the vast differences between us and the other nations, and we try even in the smallest ways to separate ourselves from their physical desires, Hashem will have compassion on us and help us out, like the Sages say, "One who comes to purify himself, receives assistance [from Heaven.]"

Slowly but surely, we will be able to attach ourselves more and more to our neshama and break ourselves from our physicality. Then we can see that we really have an incredible desire for Hashem and His mitzvos. And if we fall back into our temptations, we know just how to pick ourselves back up—by comparing ourselves to a goy and finding the extraordinary beauty of each and every mitzva we do.

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