

The Rebbe's Pharmacy

Pills of Chizuk for Today's Spiritual Illnesses—Part 21

The Illness: I would like to purify myself and serve Hashem like a tzadik, but every time I try it feels like Hashem is pushing me further away.

Sometimes, we have dreams of what it would be like to be a tzadik. We imagine the incredible feeling of constant attachment to the Master of the Universe. We imagine being able to have complete control over our thoughts and having no desires for this world at all. We imagine tasting the sweetness of davening with perfect kavana and learning Torah all day and night.

We get inspired to try to lift ourselves out of the trash and come closer to the Creator. We try to overcome our animalistic desires and put our

mind through the car wash. We try to devote ourselves to avodas Hashem in a deeper way.

However, we're often met with an unbelievable negative counterforce which pushes us exactly in the opposite direction. It seems that every time we try to take one step forward, we get knocked ten steps back. Right after we come out of the car wash, we run into a deep pool of mud and feces.

So we give up. We think that the tzadikim must

have been born with such holy neshamos that they didn't have to go through any of this. They came from families with impeccable yichus and were conceived with the ultimate kedusha. Of course they also worked hard to reach such exalted levels, but they didn't have to go through the challenges that we're faced with.

To us, it seems like we could never climb out of our garbage dump, let alone achieve true deveikus in Hashem

The Rebbe's Prescription: The main difference between a tzadik and an average Jew is that a tzadik never gives up! (Based on LM II 48)

The greatness of a tzadik is not due to his yichus, rather the stubbornness of his ratzon for Hashem.

Although it may seem to us like the tzadikim were born with the "DNA" which gave them the natural ability to achieve high spiritual levels without having to struggle with their physical desires and bad midos, Rebbi Nachman teaches us that this is simply not true. Every single Jew must go through trials and tribulations before he can come close to Hashem. Every single Jew must go through incredible struggles with his desire for women. Every single Jew must overcome his obsession for wealth, and break his animalistic passion for food. Every single Jew must overcome his need for kavod and recognition, and work hard to develop true humility.

No one is simply born on such a level that they don't have to be tested. No matter how great someone's ancestors were and no matter how inspiring their chinuch was, they still have a yetzer hara and the complete freedom to choose to do right or wrong. Each and every one of us was given a holy Jewish neshama which was taken directly from Hashem's thrown of glory, and cast down into the darkness of this physical world. Each and

every one of us has a piece of Hashem Himself inside of us, and a hungry cow on the outside.

If so, what makes the difference between us and the tzaddikim? The answer is simple: the tzaddikim never give up. The tzaddikim never despair. The tzaddikim never stop trying to overcome their obstacles. The tzaddikim never let go of their ratzon for Hashem. It is only through their unbelievable stubbornness to succeed, that they are able to rise above all of their difficulties and reach lofty heights in avodas Hashem.

Rebbi Nachman shares with us his own life's struggles, for us to see how he was able to succeed.

Rebbi Nachman zt"l explains this by sharing with us his own life's story in the sefer "Shivchei HaRan," which was written down by Reb Noson zt"l. He was born into one of the holiest families in all of Klal Yisroel. He was a great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov zt"l, who was himself a descendent of Dovid HaMelech, may he rest in peace. He was named after his grandfather, Reb Nachman Haradenker, one of the primary talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov, and it is well known through numerous firsthand witnesses that both his mother, Faiga, and grandmother, Odle, had high levels of ruach hakodesh.

Nonetheless, Rebbi Nachman describes in detail the multitude of trials and tribulations he had to overcome when he was young. He describes how heavy avodas Hashem was for him, and the unbelievable effort he had to exert in order to do anything in kedusha. For example, he struggled greatly with his learning. It was very hard for him to understand the Talmud, so he studied Mishnayos. But even then he had difficulty. So he cried to Hashem in prayer until he was able to understand his Mishnayos. Then he did the same for the Talmud and other sefarim, having to put in an incredible amount of effort just to get the basic pshat.

He tells of the countless ups

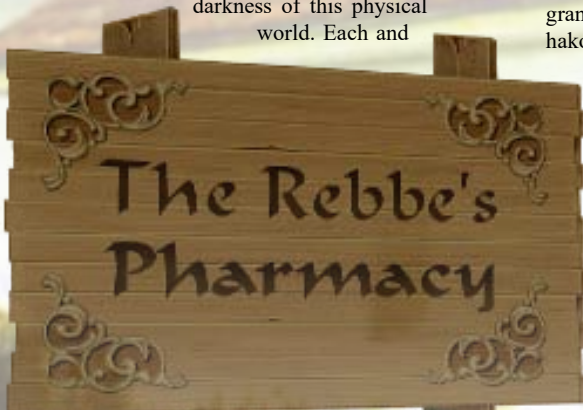
and downs that he went through. He would make up his mind to make a new start in his avodas Hashem and would daven with kavana and learn with consistency for a few days. But then he would fall away from his avoda for a while, until he made another attempt. This happened over and over again countless times, until one day he made up his mind to hold his ground and not fall away from his avoda.

Rebbi Nachman says that it seemed to him like Hashem was pushing away, and after years of trying to come closer to Him, he still hadn't changed at all. Sometimes, he would even question Hashem's ways and feel bitter about his lack of success. But then he would remind himself that Hashem acts only with compassion, and he wouldn't give up.

He went through a number of incredible tests with his desire for women in which he had the opportunity to fulfill his desire and almost gave in, but instead he screamed and called out to Hashem for help and was able to escape. He had to go through countless battles with this desire until after an unbelievable amount of effort he was able to break it completely.

Then, he had to work extremely hard to overcome his desire for food. It seemed to him that he could overcome everything else, but this desire he simply couldn't manage and it would have to remain. Nevertheless, he didn't give up until he was able to break this desire as well.

The same



was true with his midos. At first, he was easy to anger and was very strict with other people. However, he knew that this was not the will of Hashem, so he worked hard to overcome his anger.

At the end of “Shivchei HaRan,” Reb Noson writes that even though it is disgraceful to mention all these struggles that Rebbi Nachman went through— since he later reached such

Even if we're getting knocked around and losing round after round of the match, and we go year after year without being able to daven even one shmona esrei with kavana, we must listen to the advice of our boxing coach — Rebbi Nachman — and stay in the game. We must understand that even if we lost the first 15 rounds, with one good punch — one inspired tefilah — we can destroy our yetzer and win the entire match, and then all of our previous tefilos will go up to Shamayim.

exalted levels in kedusha and avodas Hashem that none of us can even imagine— nonetheless, Rebbi Nachman wanted to share these stories with the public, in order for us to understand where he started out and the incredible amount of effort he had to make until he became a true tzadik. Rebbi Nachman says that we shouldn't think for one second that it was due to his yichus that he achieved such high levels. Rather, he worked very hard and never gave up. Throughout all

of his trials and tribulations he cried countless tears and davened countless prayers and supplications until he was able to succeed. He constantly poured out his heart over the verses of Tehilim and other tefilos. He strengthened his ratzon for Hashem time after time. Nothing came easy to him, but he kept trying.

When we see the end result it is very hard for us to believe. When we see how he managed to completely rid himself of any trace of physical desire to the ultimate perfection, reach the highest levels in avodas Hashem and deveikus in the Or HaEin Sof, and bring down the unbelievable chidushei Torah which have the ability to help each and every Jew to do teshuva and bring the final redemption, it seems impossible that he had to go through anything that even resembles our life's struggles. But he did.

Despite all the impossible challenges we're faced with, we must never despair!

From this, we must take incredible chizuk. We are all going through what we're going through. Many of us are struggling to pay our bills and falling deep into debt. We are stuck in a pit of mud with no way to escape.

Many of us have health problems which are very debilitating. Others have children or other family members who are suffering through serious illnesses, and we can't possibly afford the medical expenses.

Many of us are having a very hard time in our marriages and we can't find any solutions which seem to work. Many of us are suffering greatly in trying to raise our children to follow in Hash-

em's ways.

However, even more importantly, we are having unfathomable difficulty in serving Hashem. We have absolutely no desire to daven. We'd probably rather go to the dentist for a root canal, if we could get out of davening shacharis.

Many of us can hardly sit for more than a few minutes over a gemara before we start to bug out and have to check our smart phone. For many of us it is almost impossible to give away our hard-earned money to tzadaka.

We feel lost in a goyishe world of physical temptation and we commit sin after sin. We feel completely broken and disconnected from Hashem. We feel swallowed up by darkness.

With all of this and much more, it seems to us like we simply can't handle our life. It's too hard!

It feels so overwhelming. The whole world is crashing down on top of us. So we give up.

But Rebbi Nachman says “there is no [reason to] despair in the world!” We have to be strong. We have to hold our ground. We have to keep trying. We have to believe that we have the ability to overcome the physical and spiritual challenges that are before us. We have to believe that we can get out of our darkness and reach higher levels in avodas Hashem.

We can't let go of our ratzon. We have to be incredibly stubborn in the face of all of our struggles. We have to constantly remind ourselves that what we're going through — no matter how crazy it may seem — is completely normal. No one gets off easy in this world, so the choice is up to us how we are going to react to life's physical and spiritual challenges. We have the ability to bring out the tzadik within us and be strong. The verse says, “and your nation (Yisroel) are all tzadikim.” From here we see the true potential which is embedded in our soul to withstand and overcome even the most impossible challenges.

Prayer is our greatest weapon to overcome our yetzer.

So how do we do it? In addition to having a stubborn ratzon to succeed, we must follow Rebbi Nachman's example and use our greatest weapon: tefilah. We must express our desires in words. We must beg and plead with Hashem to help us. We must entreat Him to get us out of our physical desires and give us the strength and focus to learn and daven. We must call out to Hashem and even scream to Him to give us the courage to keep going. We cry out our eyes to Hashem to help us hold our ground and not despair. If we are stubborn enough with our ratzon and our tefilos, we will eventually succeed, just like all the tzadikim who testify that this is the only way to overcome our obstacles in avodas Hashem.

Even if we lose round after round, with one good blow we can be victorious.

In addition, we must understand that the nature of our existence is that the harder we try to succeed in coming closer to Hashem, the more opposition we will face. It is simply a law of (Hashem's) nature that there has to be a fair fight between us and our yetzer. Therefore, every time we give him a blow and try to daven with the deepest kavana, we have to know that our yetzer is going to come back at us with a counter attack of insane thoughts and confusion. Nonetheless, each time we must strengthen ourselves more and more to overcome him.

And even if we're getting knocked around and losing round after round of the match, and we go day after day, and year after year without being able to daven even one shmona esrei with kavana, we must listen to the advice of our boxing coach — Rebbi Nachman — and stay in the game. We must understand that even if we lost the first 15 rounds, with one good punch — one inspired tefilah — we can destroy our yetzer and win the entire match, and then all of our previous tefilos will go up to Shamayim.

Just when we think we've fallen, we've really achieved a higher level.

The next day, however, it may seem like we're back to square one. We may once again find ourselves struggling with the same challenges as before and it may seem to us like we lost any progress that we thought we had made. However, Rebbi Nachman reveals to us that, in truth, we haven't fallen at all. Rather, we have risen to a new level in our avoda, and with that new level comes a new enemy who is even stronger and bigger than before. Thus, it appears like we are much weaker than we really are. Nonetheless, with time and a stubborn ratzon, we will be able to defeat him as well. (Note: Although it is not recommended, those of you who are already familiar with video games should be able to understand this concept very well.)

Giving up is not an escape.

Although the struggle to continue fighting may be very difficult and the temptation to despair and just completely give in to our yetzer may seem extremely appealing, this only causes us greater suffering. When we let go and forfeit, a cold and dark bitterness enters inside our mind and soul. Our life becomes black with depression and utterly unbearable. In short, we die on the inside. This is not an option!

Rather, we must hold on to our hope and belief that Hashem really wants us to close to Him. He cherishes our ratzon to serve Him, and therefore He gives us more challenges to build that ratzon even more.

Just one more push . . .

In addition, we must know that when we're very close breaking through the wall of obstacles, at the very last moment before he falls, the yetzer hara is going to do everything possible knock us down. He is going to put all of his strength into his one last effort to prevent us from succeeding.

This can be very disheartening. After yearning and trying for so long to break through, it seems to us like things are getting much worse! All of a sudden, it seems to us that we've fallen further away from our goal than ever before. Unfortunately, after being a hairs-breadth away from success, many of us concede to our yetzer hara at this point, and fall into his trap. He is able to weaken our ratzon, and we fall into a dark pit of despair.

We must not be fooled! We must never give up. We must have hope. We must believe that it is only because we're so close to the finish line, that the obstacles are so great. We must believe that we have the ability to hold on to our desire and overcome this final test. Regardless of what we're going through, we must close our eyes, and say, “all I want is You, Hashem, all I want is You!”

Then, after days, months or maybe years have passed, we will look back at where we started and be amazed by the strength of the tzadik inside of us.

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