

The Rebbe's Pharmacy

Pills of Chizuk for Today's Spiritual Illnesses—Part 23

This week's article is a continuation from last week. The Illness: It seems like there is no way for me to overcome my physical desires. The Rebbe's Prescription: Through simcha, you can build iron walls in your mind and block out your immoral thoughts. (Based on LM II 8). For a copy, you may email leventermusic@gmail.com.

By praising Hashem in the words of tehilim and personal prayer, we can break free of our constricted consciousness and sin.

The second thing that Rebbe Nachman recommends is to recite ten chapters of tehilim on the same day when we fall into sin. Through this we can fix our transgression and overcome our physical desires.

The power of tehilim is truly incredible. As it is clear from the verses, Dovid HaMelech, may he rest in peace, was not writing tehilim only for great tzadikim who have already conquered their desires and reached high levels in kedusha. Rather, he was speaking to us as well. Even in today's world, after several thousand years, sefer tehilim is unbelievably relatable. It describes our everyday struggles with our yetzer hara. It describes all of our emotional ups and downs. It goes with us to the lowest places which we could ever find ourselves in and lifts us up.

Dovid HaMelech was constantly being tested by his yetzer hara and having to fight to overcome him. What was his strategy? We see throughout tehilim that, no matter what difficult challenge Dovid was going through, he was constantly praising Hashem. Even in the most dire physical and spiritual situations, he never stopped singing and thanking his Creator. There are some chapters which consist almost completely of his countless battles with his physical and spiritual enemies and the suffering they caused him. Nonetheless, without fail, Dovid HaMelech finishes off each chapter with an uplifting verse of praise and hope. Thus, his sefer is called "tehilim — praises," even though it really contains many other forms of prayer as well.

Dovid HaMelech shows us that through song and praise of

Hashem we can achieve true simcha and escape our physical desires. This is expressed in chapter 92: "Upon a ten stringed instrument and upon a lyre, with singing accompanied by a kinor. For You have made me happy, Hashem . . . When the wicked bloom like grass, and all of the evil doers blossom, it is to destroy them for all eternity." From here we see that by praising and singing to Hashem we can win all of the internal battles with the Other Side.

Rebbe Nachman explains how this works. As we said before, what causes us to fall into our animal desires is our confused mind and lack of daas. Without any awareness, we sink to the mind state of an animal. However, simply by recognizing the greatness of Hashem and praising Him, we can free our mind from its constricted consciousness and regain awareness.

When we stop and take a moment to remember the incredible wonders of Hashem's creation, we can reawaken our mind and lift our thoughts out of the darkness. Each and every day we should accustom ourselves to look up at the sky. It sounds very easy, but many of us don't actually do it. We are so lost in this world that all we're looking for is the next physical satisfaction. However, with one look up at the Heavens to see the fantastically blue sky, the unbelievably complex and extraordinary cloud formations, and especially the exquisite colors of dawn and dusk, we can escape our animal nature and regain our human consciousness.

When we take a second to listen to the beautiful songs of the birds, smell the sweet pleasantness of flowers, and appreciate the sunlight shining through the leaves as they sway in the wind, we can get ourselves out of our obsession for this world and remember our Creator. When we go out at night and see the slender moon shining, or the myriad of stars in the sky, we can come to an awe of Hashem, which will save us from all sin. By recognizing and admiring the greatness of the Master of the Universe, we reconnect with the Source of our neshama and attach ourselves to its kedusha.

This is especially true when, like Dovid HaMelech, we express our feelings in words of praise. This is because when our thoughts are stuck in our heads they only exist in the realm of "potential." Thoughts are metaphysical and they can very easily be erased and replaced by other ones. However, when we speak out our praises for Hashem, we bring our thoughts into a physical form (sound

waves). Once they are in a physical form, they cannot ever be destroyed or erased. Thus, they have a much more profound effect on us.

Therefore, by saying our praises out loud, we can truly change our state of mind. We can lift ourselves out of our depression and bring ourselves to feel incredible happiness and contentment. Then, as mentioned before, we can fortify the walls and filters of our brain, and keep out all of our animal desires.

Through reciting the "tikun haklali" we can repair all the damage of our transgressions.

Rebbe Nachman explains further that not only does tehilim have the ability to help get us out of our immoral thoughts, it also has the ability to fix all of the previous times when we fell and sinned. He explains that there are ten different aspects of contamination associated with physical desire. For example, looking at improper things, inappropriate speech, falling into depression, etc. However, opposite each one of these aspects of contamination, there is an aspect — an expression of song and praise — which is the tikun for that contamination. Opposite inappropriate glances — expressed by the word "shur" — there is the expression of "ashrei — praiseworthy" which can fix the blemish. Opposite depression — expressed by the word "yallala" — there is the word "hallaluka (the same Hebrew letters as yallala just backwards) — thank Hashem" which can rectify it.

Altogether there are ten expressions of praise and simcha which collectively can fix all of the sins we've committed in our physical desires. Therefore, Rebbe Nachman prescribed for us ten specific chapters of tehilim to recite whenever we fall into contamination, each one of them containing one of the ten expressions of song and praise. (Chapter 16 — bracha, 32 — ashrei, 41 — maskil, 42 — shir, 59 — nitzuach, 77 — nigun, 90 — tefilah, 105 — hodu, 137 — mizmor, and 150 — halleluka)

Through
this
"ti-



kun haklali — all-encompassing rectification” we can fix our previous transgressions, and make a new start through increasing our happiness and building strong partitions to protect us. By reciting these ten chapters of tehilim we can find a way out of our sins and become pure.

We should try to say the “tikun” with kavana and joy.

This is true even if we don’t recite them with so much kavana, since the holy words of Dovid HaMelech are incredibly powerful. However, to truly find joy and expanded consciousness and make an even more powerful rectification, we must strengthen ourselves to focus on the meaning of the verses. The more we can attach

Each and every day we should accustom ourselves to look up at the sky. With one look up at the Heavens to see the fantastically blue sky, the unbelievably complex and extraordinary cloud formations, and especially the exquisite colors of dawn and dusk, we can escape our animal nature and regain our human consciousness.

our mind to the words of tehilim, the more it will go into our heart and soul and lift us up.

Therefore, we should try not to rush our recitation. We may have a lot of things to do during the day, but when we put everything into perspective, fixing our covenant with Hashem should be at the top of

the list. The Zohar HaKadosh says this desire is the main thing which is exacerbating this brutally long and bitter exile. It is this desire which is continuously destroying the possibility for a new Beis HaMikdash in each generation, and preventing the coming of Mashiach. The severity of this sin is well documented in all the sefarim, from the Talmud all the way to the Mishna Berurah.

However, we shouldn’t get depressed about ourselves because of our mistakes. Depression is what caused us to sin in the first place, so we shouldn’t add any more fuel to our yetzer hara’s fire. Rather, we must strengthen ourselves with the hope that there is an incredibly easy way for us to rectify everything and bring the redemption — by saying the ten chapters of tehilim.

Therefore, we should try to say it joyfully and taste the sweetness of the words. We should take the time to say it slowly and with kavana. Through these songs of Dovid HaMelech, we can come to true deveikus in Hashem, and repair the damage that we caused through our sins,

which will greatly benefit us both in this world and in the next.

Nonetheless, if we really don’t have the time or capability to recite the tikun haklali with kavana and song, it’s certainly not all or nothing.

We should still say it, even if we must go quickly and lifelessly through it. The power of the words of tehilim can always help to lift us out of our sins and bring us closer to Hashem. In fact, just the fact that we take some time to show Hashem our desire to rectify our transgressions is incredibly invaluable.

Our primary mistake in the battle with our yetzer is despair.

We must know that we’re up against a frighteningly fierce enemy and it’s not going to be easy. We must have incredible courage and faith that we can win the war. The primary power of this desire is that it can cause us to fall into depression and despair, when we see that, despite all of our efforts, we can’t make any progress whatsoever. Then, through our depression and despair we strengthen the Other Side even more, as explained above.

This was the tactic of Amalek. The verse says that when we were tired and worn-out, Amalek came and caused us to sin and break our covenant. This is talking about a physical exhaustion, but even more so, it’s referring to a spiritual despair and emptiness. Amalek’s strategy is to break us when we’re already down and cause us to lose all hope. In this generation, almost all of us are incredibly spiritually weak and frail. We are living outside the “clouds of glory,” so to speak, where we are very susceptible to Amalek’s powers. We are on the edge of despair, and Amalek is about to celebrate his victory.

Thus, the biggest sin we can commit is to give up. We must not lose our ratzon. We must yearn and long to be pure and holy. We must believe that somehow there is a way for us to win the war. Just because we lost countless battles, and maybe we’ve lost them all up until now, nevertheless, this time can be different. This time we can change. Even though it seems like our countless sins have caused us to lose all freedom of choice, this is simply not true. Right now, we can strengthen ourselves and do the right thing. Right now, we say tikun haklali and start over completely. Right now, we can get out of our exile of sin, and begin to live with the awareness of Hashem and the ability to serve Him with all of our being.

When we fall into darkness and confusion we must scream to Hashem to help us escape.

However, in order to succeed, there is another tool we must use in addition to tikun haklali: we must scream to Hashem. Although reciting tehilim and expressing our own tefilos to Hashem like Dovid HaMelech are incredible ways to come to true simcha and repair the partitions in our mind, nonetheless, sometimes we fall into such dark and constricted places, that we can’t bring ourselves to actually follow this advice. We’re so confused, anxious, frustrated, and depressed, that we can’t sit down and say ten chapters of tehilim, let alone with any kavana or song.

For these times, Rebbi Nachman gives another

piece of advice. He teaches us to do exactly what Jews did in Mitzraim and at the Yam Suf. He teaches us to do what Yona HaNavi from inside of the whale, and what Mordechai HaTzadik did in the face of Haman’s decree. He teaches us to scream to Hashem with all of our strength for help.

When we’re completely overwhelmed by our yetzer hara and there seems to be absolutely no way to escape, then there is only one thing to do: lift our eyes to the Heavens and cry out to Hashem from the depths of our heart and soul.

The effect of this is remarkable. First of all, Hashem certainly hears our cries for help just like He has for the Jews of all time. He sees our struggles and our strong desire to do His ratzon, and He will have compassion on us and help us to overcome.

Secondly, our scream itself has the ability to completely change us. Our scream can awaken our mind from all of its craziness, much like an extremely loud alarm clock. It has the power to break open all of the layers of confusion and depression which have been weighing down our thoughts for so long and causing us to sin. It has the power to disconnect us from physical desires and gives us an opportunity to begin again, like the Sages say, “A scream breaks the body of a man.”

Therefore, when we find ourselves completely in the hands of Amalek, we must go immediately to a secluded place — a private room, inside a parked car, or out in nature, etc. — and call out to Hashem with everything we’ve got.

Through this practice, we will almost always see immediate results. We will feel much more settled. Our mind will be much clearer. Amalek’s voice will be nothing more than a whimper in the back of our head. This is an incredibly powerful weapon.

Indeed, Dovid HaMelech himself used this practice of screaming to escape his internal and external enemies. We see this specifically in chapter 107, in which Dovid Melech faced life-threatening dangers one after the other. He describes being lost in an abandoned desert, being chained up in jail, becoming very sick, and finally passing through a tremendous storm at sea. In each situation, Dovid HaMelech showed how one must scream to Hashem and then he will be saved. And immediately following each and every scream, is a verse of exalted praise and thanks for Hashem. From here we see a clear path for us to succeed in defeating our worst enemy — Amalek — and overcoming our physical desires.

We must call out to Hashem and free our mind from its slavery. Then, we can find the patience and courage to talk to Hashem and praise Him for all of His wondrous deeds. With our head out of the darkness, we can recognize the greatness of Hashem and sing to Him. We can open a sefer tehilim and pour out our heart to Him.

(To be continued . . .)

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