

The Rebbe's Pharmacy

Pills of Chizuk for Today's Spiritual Illnesses—Part 28

The Illness: Day after day passes me by and I'm not able to accomplish anything in my learning.

For many of us, it seems like we're frozen in time. We have our routine — we go to shul and daven every day, we work and spend time with our families — however, we find that we're unable to attach ourselves to learning on a regular basis. When we look back at the previous week, month, or year, it seems like we're stuck in one place and we haven't progressed at all in our Torah studies.

Similarly, even for those of us who are learning in kollel or yeshiva every day, we often feel like time is slipping through our fingers. We end up spending much of our seder taking coffee or cigarette breaks, playing with or talking on our phones, or just shmoozing with our chevrusa. And when our chevrusa doesn't show up, then it's time for a long morning or afternoon nap. We count down the minutes until kollel is over

and we can be free from our obligation to learn. All the more so do we get excited when the zman is finally over and we can take a vacation.

Thus, whether we're working or sitting in the beis medrash, time flies and the years pass by before our eyes, and it seems like we're unable to move forward and accomplish anything.

The Rebbe's Prescription: By focusing on one day at a time and learning small daily portions, you will see incredible progress.

Because of all of our problems and distractions, it seems like today is not a day for learning.

When it comes to attaching ourselves to learning and avodas Hashem with a constant deveikus, there are two obstacles which we face. The first one is that each and every day— almost without fail — we are confronted with difficulties which distract us and take us away from serving Hashem. One day it's too hot in shul. Another day our back hurts and we can't sit comfortably. The next day, we get a call from our debt collector and our wife is screaming at us to get a better job. Another day, we have to take our kid to a doctor's appointment and we get stuck in traffic.

In addition, we have our own internal distractions which take us away from avodas Hashem. Sometimes, we spend an entire day worrying about paying rent the next day, or we're anxious about a new important business deal. Some days, we wake up feeling depressed and we can't get out of bed. Other days, we can't stop thinking about a mistake we made the day before and we're drowning in guilt.

Because of all of these
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lems and distractions it appears to us like today is just not a day for avodas Hashem. Maybe tomorrow we won't have such problems to deal with and we'll be able to sit and focus on our learning, but right now it is simply not possible for us to put our head into a gemara. So we spend today trying to alleviate ourselves of our suffering with the hope that the next day everything will go smoothly and we'll have the yishuv hadaas to serve Hashem. However, the next day we're still confronted with the same problem or a new unforeseen one, and we once again lose a day of learning trying to resolve our life's difficulties. This is the first obstacle.

We feel overwhelmed by the length and difficulty of a sefer to even begin studying it.

The second obstacle is that when we want to start learning a new sefer or mesechta, we sometimes feel so overwhelmed by its length, depth, and difficulty. We feel like we have to commit hours to learning it each day in order to ever finish it. It feels like a heavy burden over our heads which we will never be able to carry, so we give up immediately and completely despair of ever being able to achieve anything challenging in our learning and avodas Hashem.

We must remind ourselves that today we have a chance to make millions!

Rebbe Nachman teaches us that there is one solution to both of these issues: Hayom — today! For the first obstacle, we must tell ourselves that *today* will never come again. If we don't take the opportunity that we have to serve Hashem right now in this moment, we will never be able to get it back. Tomorrow we will have more opportunities, but there is no way to replace what we missed today.

In other words, time is extremely precious! Time is spiritual money, which is worth infinitely more than all the wealth of this world. Money, at best, is only good for us while we're alive on earth. But Torah and

mitzvos are invaluable for us in this world and all the more so in the next world. They give our lives a purpose and bring us true happiness, and needless to say, they are the only wealth which remains with us after we pass away.

Thus, every single moment of our lives we have a chance to open up a sefer and make millions, even billions of dollars. How do we respond? "My back hurts. It's too hot in here. How can I pay off my debt?" Does this make any sense at all?!

If Donald Trump came knocking on our door with a suitcase full of \$100 bills, would we tell him the same thing? What if he came every single day? What if he was constantly chasing us down with a check for the value of his entire net worth?

Certainly, all of our obstacles would pale in comparison to the benefit we could get by simply letting him in. It would not be difficult for us to put all of our problems and distractions on hold for a while in order to acquire the entire Trump estate.

This is what we have in our hands and at the tips of our tongues each and every day of our lives and so much more.

Therefore, we must put all of our problems on hold. Nothing can get in our way of making today a productive day in learning and avodas Hashem.



can't let any of the distractions of this world prevent us from getting to the next one. We must say to ourselves, "Today is going to be a productive day"— meaning that we're not going to let it slip away from us and pass us by without doing whatever we can to serve Hashem.

The Zohar HaKadosh says that each and every day has "good" hidden inside of it. However, this good is surrounded on all sides by a wall of snakes, scorpions and other frightening creatures. Nonetheless, if we ourselves are good, then the creatures must open up the gates for us to enter and receive the goodness of that day. Rebbi Nachman explains that the "good" that we're looking for is the Torah. Every

day we have an opportunity to attach ourselves to learning and taste the sweetness of avodas Hashem. However, there is a barrier of distracting thoughts and feelings — i.e. harmful creatures — which is keeping us out. Nevertheless, if we really want to get to the good and we build our desire to reach it, we will be able to pass over all the obstacles and have a good day full of learning.

Therefore, no matter what challenges we're being faced with both from the outside world and our own emotional and psychological struggles, we must remind ourselves that, nonetheless, we have the ability to break through them all and make today a productive day of avodas Hashem.

By focusing on one day at a time, we can easily accomplish great things.

In addition, the concept of "hayom — today" helps us to overcome the second obstacle as well. When we think about how many days or years it is going to take us to finish learning a sefer, our learning becomes a very heavy burden which we simply cannot carry and so we quickly burn out and give up. Therefore, what we must do is make a realistic goal which we can accomplish in one day. Instead of thinking about time in the long term, we should focus just on today, and take a small amount of the sefer which we can handle. Then, when the next day comes, we do the same thing and just learn the next small portion of the sefer, according to whatever amount we prescribed for ourselves to do.

The classic example of this is the daf hayomi. If we were to think that it would take us seven and half years to finish the Talmud Bavli, we would almost immediately give up. How could we keep up with the daf for so long? What will we do on Erev Shabos, Shabos, and Yom Tov

when we have hardly any time at all? Clearly, this train of thought will prevent us from ever starting.

However, when we take it one day at a time, it's not so bad. When we're able to focus only on today, we can relieve ourselves of the heavy burden of seven and a half years. All that we have to do right now is one daf and that is manageable for us. Sure, we're all very busy, juggling numerous spiritual and physical obligations each day. Nonetheless, certainly just for one day we could find some time to do a daf. Then, when the next day comes, we focus only on that day and "squeeze in" another daf. On Erev Shabos and Shabos, even though many of us have less time, if we look hard enough we will find that we still have opportunities here and there to do the daf.

And even on days when we have other mitzvos and really important things to do, and it may seem to us that it's just not possible to sit down and learn, nonetheless, we cannot use this as an excuse. Rather, we must try to grab every moment we can in between our other mitzvos and pressing obligations to open a sefer and do what we can. If we strengthen our ratzon to not pay attention to all of our unnecessary distractions, we can still fit in a lot of time here and there.

Nonetheless, if we have a day in which we were so overwhelmed that we couldn't find time to learn, or perhaps we fell into depression for a day, week, or month, and we missed the daf, even so, we should never give up! Rather, we should forget about our disappointments and jump right back in the next day and keep going. Then eventually, we will be able to find the extra time to make up the pages that we missed.

Before we know it, two months have passed and we're already making a siyum. A year later we've already finished a number of mesechtas. Pretty soon, time flies and it's seven and a half years later and we've finished all of Shas!

Was it hard? For sure, there were some days when it was really challenging. But overall, it wasn't "seven and a half years." It was "one day." Today, then the next day, and then the next.

Through this, we come to truly enjoy learning.

In addition to accomplishing a lot in our Torah study, there is another incredible benefit to focusing on one day at a time: we enjoy and look forward to learning and avodas Hashem! For many of us, learning and davening feel like obligations that we must fulfill before we can do the other things that we really enjoy. When we're in yeshiva or kollel we count down the minutes until morning seder is finally over and the days until bein hazmanim. All the more so is it hard for us to look forward to learning when our main occupation is working, and we have to wake up early or stay up late to make time for avodas Hashem.

This is because our relationship to Torah is somewhat unstable. Some days

we're on, and some days we're off. Some of the time we're less distracted and we're able to focus on our studies, and other days our mind is wandering, we're falling asleep, or perhaps we don't even show up to shul.

If we were to propose such an agreement to our spouse, it is clear that with such a weak commitment, our relationship would not be enjoyable and probably wouldn't last very long at all. So too with our attachment to Torah — which the Sages compare to husband's engagement to his wife — if we are inconsistent, we will almost never feel true inspiration and joy in our learning.

However, by making a commitment to learn even a small portion of a sefer every day, we become "married" to that sefer. We're in it for good — seven days a week, 365 days a year. Through this, our learning truly becomes a part of us. We begin to think about our sefer even during other parts of the day. We begin to find hints to what we're learning through the events which take place around us.

Just like a good marriage, it doesn't feel like an obligation. Rather, it's an integral part of our daily life which we couldn't live without. Just like we eat breakfast, lunch and dinner every day, so too, we eat some gemarra, halacha, and chasidus.

In addition, the more we're able to commit ourselves to daily learning and focus only on today's avoda, the more we achieve true yishuv hadaas. By having a regular limud, we accustom ourselves to forget about all of our worries about tomorrow and our guilt over yesterday, and just sit and learn. The result of this is incredible. Not only are we able to accomplish so much more than we thought we ever could, rather we're even able to taste the true sweetness of the Torah on a regular basis.

Every single sefer has a specific aspect of Hashem's *seichel*, which is ment to engage our mind in a unique and enjoyable way. However, when our mind is mixed up with distracting thoughts, there is no way for us to attach our mind to that seichel and experience its brilliance. But once we have a clear head, just by opening a book and reading the words, we naturally experience the sweetness of our seichel being connected to the mind of the Master of the Universe. Thus, our learning becomes more and more enjoyable, as we attach ourselves to it day after day.

We must remember that each one of us has a neshama that is dying of thirst for the Torah. Even if we don't experience such a strong desire to learn, we must know that the source of our soul is a letter in Torah, and underneath all our problems and distractions, that letter is yearning deeply to be attached to its source. The more that we accustom ourselves to learning on a regular basis, the more that we feel that connection to our source and truly enjoy our studies.

(To be continued . . .)

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