

The Rebbe's Pharmacy

Pills of Chizuk for Today's Spiritual Illnesses—Part 30

The Illness: It feels like I have to work very hard to do mitzvos, and I'm always falling short.

For many of us, avodas Hashem feels like a huge mountain which is very difficult to climb. We learn all of the halachos pertaining to a certain mitzvah, but then when it comes to performing that mitzvah, we struggle greatly to carry it out correctly with all of its details.

In addition, even when we manage to climb the mountain and do a mitzvah, we often fall into doubt if we really fulfilled our obligation or not. Perhaps the way that we did it was slightly incorrect and the small error we made caused the entire mitzvah to

be disqualified. This causes us to be very nervous when we perform mitzvos and makes it impossible for us to connect to Hashem and feel inspired in our avoda.

The Rebbe's Prescription: By strengthening your faith in yourself, serving Hashem becomes easy and enjoyable.

We must believe in our capability to give Hashem nachas through our mitzvos, despite their imperfections.

In order to find inspiration and joy in our avodas Hashem, we must acquire three aspects of faith. Firstly, we must believe that Hashem exists. We must believe that there is one G-d who created the heavens and the earth, and chose to give His Torah and mitzvos to the Jewish people. This is a given.

The second aspect is that we must have faith in the prophets, sages and tzadikim of all time who have carried the oral tradition all the way from Har Sinai until today. Without them, we wouldn't have any idea how to perform the

mitzvos which are written in the Torah. It is only through their teachings that we know what is Hashem's will. For any religious Jew, this aspect is also a given.

However, there is a third aspect of faith that many of us struggle with, which is equally important and integral to our connection to avodas Hashem: we must believe in ourselves!

We must believe that even if we fall to the lowest spiritual depths, we still have the ability to serve Hashem and give Him nachas. We must believe that whatever we're able to do for Hashem, even if it is full of mistakes and far from perfect, is a priceless treasure in His eyes.

No matter how strongly we believe in Hashem and the tzadikim, if we lack faith in ourselves, avodas Hashem will always feel very difficult and burdensome. We can know with 100% certainty that Hashem exists and precisely how we're supposed to serve Him, but nevertheless, because of a lack of faith in ourselves, it seems like we're unable to do anything to please Him. We try our hardest to do mitzvos with a level of perfection

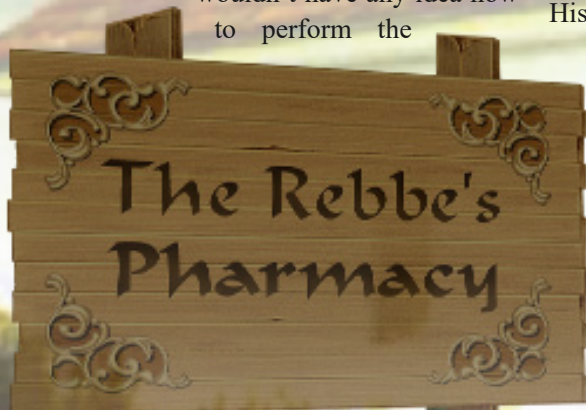
beyond our capability, and we constantly fall short. This causes us great frustration and turns our mitzvos into lifeless vessels which are void of any inspiration.

Hashem is not expecting us to be angels!

Therefore, we must remember what the Sages teach us: the Torah was not given to the ministering angels! This means that Hashem is not expecting us to be perfect. He's not expecting us to perform each mitzvah with all of its stringencies.

Hashem loves us just the way that we are, with all of our blemishes and imperfections. He loves every single attempt that we make to serve Him, even if can't perform a mitzvah in its ideal fashion. Our "bediyevod" is precious gold to Hashem.

In



fact, if we made a true effort to do a mitzvah, even though we didn't fulfill our obligation at all, nonetheless, Hashem treasures our effort and considers it as if we succeeded.

In Hashem's eyes, our mitzvah is the most precious jewel. Even if we didn't meet all of the requirements, nonetheless, we don't need to dwell on our doubts and insecurities. Rather, we can be confident that what we did was good enough, knowing that it's OK to be imperfect in our avoda.

Most of the time, the uncertainty we have is just a product of our fear of failure. We're worried that perhaps what we did was not good enough and we must try to reach a higher level of perfection.

However, there is nothing to be afraid of! In Hashem's eyes, our mitzvah is the most precious jewel. Even if we didn't meet the requirements, nonetheless, we don't need to dwell on our doubts and insecurities. Rather, we can be confident that what we did was good enough, knowing that it's OK to be imperfect in our avoda.

(Note: This obviously excludes cases where it seems very likely that we didn't fulfill our basic obligation, and we still have an opportunity to fix it or do it again. In such cases, we should follow the halacha and make another attempt.)

The Sages say that Hashem doesn't come with a plot against His creations. This means that Hashem knows the strength of our yetzer hara and He un-

derstands how much we're struggling to overcome him. In light of this, He doesn't expect us to do more than we can in any given moment. If we sincerely try to do our best, He doesn't judge us for not fulfilling all of the details of a particular mitzvah.

Hashem believes in us. He believes in our ability to rectify the entire world, even if we can't serve Him like the true tzadikim. If so, we should also believe in our ability to serve Hashem just the way we are and we shouldn't have lofty, unrealistic expectations. Rather, we should see that by simply trying to keep the basic halacha, we are sustaining the entire universe!

Chumros are often an incredibly mischievous disguise for our yetzer hara.

In addition, not only are extra stringencies (chumros) not necessary to give Hashem nachas, they are often very harmful to our avodas Hashem. Even though we may have very good, altruistic intentions for keeping them, these chumros can actually be a clever disguise for our yetzer hara.

Since each and every mitzvah that we do is fulfilling the purpose of all creation, the Other Side must do whatever they can to stop us. Amongst many other tactics, one of the most common ones is to try to convince us to do too much. The yetzer hara tells us that in order to do the mitzvah properly we must first climb a mountain of chumros. His argument is very convincing, since after all, the chumros are stated in the books of halacha.

So we fall for his trick and we set to work climbing. Most of us, however, don't have the spiritual strength to make it to the top of the mountain. So after a while we fall to the bottom and give up on doing the mitzva altogether. Or perhaps, we are so overwhelmed

that we never even start climbing. And so the yetzer hara wins.

However, little did we know that we can accomplish the mitzvah without having to work so hard. We don't have to make it all the way to the top of the mountain. Rather, if we can just make it a little ways up, we're already there. By simply following the basic halacha to the best of our ability we've achieved an incredible feat.

It was her stringencies that caused Chava to sin.

In fact, being too strict is the same mistake that Chava made in Gan Eden. When the snake asked her if there was any tree which was forbidden, she replied that Hashem had forbid them from touching the Tree of Knowledge, when in fact the prohibition was only not to eat from it. The snake then pushed her into the tree, showing her that there was no punishment for touching it. After that, he convinced her that just like there was no punishment for touching the tree, so too, it was OK to eat its fruit. Thus, Chava transgressed Hashem's word and committed the most grievous sin of all time.

From here we see that we must be careful not to be too stringent. We must try not to do too much. Rather, we must focus on the incredible value of the basic halacha, and not expect to achieve perfection.

The verse says, "Lo bashamayim hi ve'lo me'ever hayam — the Torah is not in Heaven and it's not on the other side of the sea!" Rather, it's very close to us. It's mamash in our hands and ability to do it. We don't need to be stringent in our observance of mitzvos in order to please Hashem and fulfill our purpose in this world.

(To be continued . . .)