

This publication is a dose of chizuk based on the weekly parasha inspired by the Torah of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov zt"l

The Rebbe's Pharmacy

Chizuk and Inspiration for Today's Spiritual Illnesses

Parshas Noach

While the whole world sinks to the depths of destruction, we can enter into the words of our tefillah, and bask in the light and true closeness to our beloved Father.

(Based on Likutei Mohoran I, 9)

From the story of Noach, we can learn how to escape the modern-day mabul.

Sometimes, we find ourselves surrounded by darkness. We see the radiant sun shining on the leaves and the trees swaying gently in the wind, but our mind is covered by a greenish-black storm cloud of thoughts.

It could be that we have endless thoughts of fear for our health and the health of our family. It could be that we're extremely worried about how we're going to pay off our enormous debt. It could be that our thoughts are caught in the world of physical desires like a beautiful bird in a hunter's trap. It could be that we're lost in obsessive thoughts of planning an event or the next ten years of our life.

Whatever it is, we feel like we're drowning in a sea. Stormy waters rise higher and higher until we are completely enveloped and we can no longer breathe. The light above the water grows dimmer and dimmer as we sink to the bottom. We fall into the depths of the mabul . . . but there's still hope!

Parshas Noach teaches us an absolutely crucial piece of advice in order for us to stay afloat in the modern world and attach ourselves deeply to avodas Hashem at all times. The story of the generation of the mabul and Noach's escape from the flood is extremely relevant to what we're going through on a day to day, moment to moment basis.

Nowadays, the world around us has fallen to the bottom of the bottomless pit of physical desire and heresy, similar to the times of Noach (see Rashi, Bereishis 6:11). There's almost no sense of

morality or modesty. Most of the western society denounces the existence of G-d. In addition, comparable to times of Noach, in certain places it is socially acceptable to go around and loot other peoples stores and property (ibid).

How does this affect us? Thank G-d, with Hashem's help, most of us are able to refrain from committing any of these atrocities! However, the flood of immorality is sometimes able to creep into our mind and take over our thoughts. We struggle to keep our mind pure from the temptations of this world. Every time we lose our faith in Hashem's Divine Providence and get lost in worries about our health or parnasah, we stray after the idols of Atheism. Whenever we let ourselves get angry we are bowing down to avodah zarah. Whenever we look with jealousy at our neighbors brand new house or car, it is as if we are stealing it from him (see Likutei Mohoran I, 69).

Our daily prayers are precious opportunities for us to block out the flood of destructive thoughts.

Therefore, we must look to Noach to find a way to escape these evil waters which have flooded our thoughts. Hashem told Noach to build a teivah (ark) which was completely sealed on all sides, so that when the Mabul came, Noach could enter into the teivah and close himself off from the rest of the world.

This is what we must do: we must escape into the words — teivos (from the same Hebrew root as teivah) — of prayer. Whenever we see that our thoughts are being flooded by the darkness of this world, we must seal ourselves inside of the words of tefillah.

This is one of the reasons that the Sages obligated us to daven three times a day: to give us regular opportunities to escape the distractions and desires of this world, and renew our connection with the Creator. With their exalted wisdom, the Sages understood that the nature of man is that our minds constantly stray from our the realm of kedusha and avodas Hashem, so they instituted daily prayers to help us to build our own teivos (arks) through which we can save ourselves from falling into spiritual destruction.

When we try to overcome our enemies, they often get even stronger.

However, as we all know, blocking out our Mabul of thoughts and davening with kavana is not

so easy. For many of us, our biggest battle with our foreign thoughts and worries is specifically when we're trying to daven our daily prayers.

Rebbe Nachman explains why this happens. He says that the struggle between our good thoughts and bad thoughts can be compared to a wrestling match. When one side pushes hard to get the upper hand, the other side reacts by giving it everything it's got to retaliate. So too, when we try to strengthen our good thoughts by davening with kavanah, our flood of unwanted thoughts also strengthens itself against us to knock us down. Thus, we often find that we fall into the deepest darkness of harmful thoughts when we stand to pray.

So, how do we make a counter-attack and find our way out of the darkness?

By attaching ourselves to the truth, the Light of Hashem will illuminate our path of escape.

To begin with, we must believe that there really are exits all over the place, we just can't see them. The Sages say, "When someone comes to contaminate himself, [the angels] open the doors for him [to fall]. We see from here that there are doors to get into the dark and contaminated places. Those same doors are, in fact, available for us to escape such places. However, we're lacking a source of light in order to see them.

When Hashem told Noach to build the teivah, he commanded him to make a "tzohar" in the teivah. Rashi explains that the "tzohar" was either a window or a brilliant radiating stone. According to both explanations, the word "tzohar" refers to a source of light.

Rebbe Nachman explains that this source of light was the Eternal Light of Hashem itself, like the verse says, "Hashem is my light and my salvation." Thus, we can understand that making a tzohar in the teivah as a reference to



bringing the Light of Hashem into the words of our tefillah.

This means that even when we find that our mind is surrounded on all sides by a Mabul of fear, confusion, and temptation, even in such places we must search for the Light of Hashem, which can illuminate our path and show us the way out.

But the question still remains: how do we find such an exalted light amidst our worst contamination?

We must try to make our tefillah authentic to us. We are not just reciting the Declaration of Independence for our History teacher to show him that we've got it memorized. Rather, we're sharing our heart and soul with the Master of the Universe!

Rebbe Nachman says that we must daven the words of tefillah with truth. The verse says, "Hashem is close to all those who call out to Him, to those who call out to Him *with truth*." The Sages say that truth is the stamp of the Holy One, Blessed is He. Hashem created the entire

world just in order to for the truth of His existence to be revealed amidst the darkness of falsehood.

Therefore, by connecting ourselves to the truth at this moment and expressing it in our tefillah, we can bring the brilliant Light of Hashem into even the lowest depths of the sea and find a way to escape the Mabul.

The highest truth is our own personal tefillah.

This means that whether we're saying pesukei d'zimrah, birkas krias shema, shemoneh esreh, or any other prescribed tefillah, we must find "our truth" in the words of that tefillah. We must try to understand how the words of Dovid HaMelech relate to our own personal lives. We must search in the holy words of the Sages to see how we can connect them to what we're going through right now.

In other words, if we simply utter our prayers without connecting to them on a personal level, then our davening is far away from the truth of this moment in time. We must realize that, although the prayers that we say were written thousands of years ago, they are not telling an old, outdated story. Rather, each time we daven, the words of tefillah must take on a completely new meaning based on what's going on in our life both internally and externally. Each time we daven there is a new "truth" which we must express in our tefillah — the truth that is in our heart on that day and at that moment.

Therefore, we must try to make our tefillah authentic to us. We are not just reciting the Declaration of Independence for our History teacher

to show him that we've got it memorized. Rather, we're sharing our heart and soul with the Master of the Universe. We're praising Him for all the miracles that He's done for us specifically. We're thanking Him for splitting our own Yam Suf and helping us to reach the other side.

When we say krias shema, we're recognizing that, not only is Hashem One in all the higher and lower worlds, rather even in our life with all of our spiritual and physical ups and downs — Hashem Echad!

When we daven shemoneh esrei we're relating to each and every bracha based on our own personal needs, and asking Hashem to fulfill our requests.

Through this truth, the words of tefillah become "teivos" filled with the supreme Light of Hashem. When we're able to find our personal story in the words of prayer, we can connect to the ultimate truth of each and every moment.

Then, instead of standing outside of our prayers and watching them float by as we drown in the waters of the flood, we're jumping into the teivah and closing the door tight. Nothing else in the world matters right now. In fact, nothing else exists! While the whole world sinks to the depths of destruction, we're safe inside the words of our tefillah, basking the light and true closeness to our beloved Father and King.

By learning the deeper meaning of our prayers, we can find a unique, genuine inspiration in davening.

If it is difficult for us to understand how the words of tefillah relate to what we're going through, it can be very helpful to learn the sefarim — Likutei Halachos in particular — which expound upon the unique aspects of each section of our daily prayers, and also give extraordinarily profound explanations of every specific bracha and phrase of davening. By tapping-in to this incredible well-spring of inspirational wisdom, we attain a deeper meaning of our prayers which can open the door of the teivos of tefillah to find our own personal story.

In addition, simply by connecting to the truth of these explanations while we daven we can enter very deep into the words of tefillah and escape the mabul. This aspect of truth can illuminate our prayers and push away even the darkest thoughts of fear, worry, and desire.

Through connecting ourselves to the truth of the words of tefillah, we can find great inspiration. Our previously lifeless prayers become full of life and excitement. Instead of just trying to exempt ourselves of our obligation, we begin to relish in the sweetness of each word and phrase. Instead of quickly mumbling the words of davening, we begin to sing them out loud with an exquisite melody which changes every day. This, in turn, helps us to have even more focus on the words of prayer, like the Sages say, "Kol me'orer hakavana — davening out loud awakens our concentration."

We begin to see that through tefillah we can rise above the flood of negative thoughts and emotions. Even if we're having a really rough day

in all other aspects of our life, through davening one shemoneh esreh with truth we can escape into a teivah of light and blissful serenity.

This gives us the strength to thrive even in the worst storm. By attaching ourselves to the words of our daily prayers, we can find the courage to have hope even when we feel like everything else in our life is going wrong.

The path to the ultimate truth is through Tehillim and personal prayer.

In addition, we should realize that, although our primary obligation for prayer is to daven the set prayers of the Sages, we don't have to stop there, like the Sages say, "If only a person would daven all day!" Therefore, whenever we feel like we're getting swallowed up by the craziness of the world around us and our thoughts are running on a non-stop track to Gehinom, we can take out a Sefer Tehillim and escape into our teivah. And even if we feel fine and we're staying above water, we can use the holy words of Dovid HaMelech to reach even higher levels of kedusha and purity of thought.

Another piece of advice is to say our own personal prayer, which Rebbe Nachman referred to as "hisbodedus" (see Likutei Mohoran II, 25). In fact, for many of us who are new to trying to find the truth in our davening, this is the first step.

By speaking to Hashem in our own words, we are naturally much closer to expressing the tefillah which is in our heart at that moment. Whatever is on our mind, whether it's something that we're thankful to Hashem for, something that we feel is lacking in our life either spiritually or physically, or a confession that we have to make, we can share it with Hashem in our hisbodedus.

And if we feel like we can't find any words of our own to say to Hashem, then we should search for a verse or phrase which we feel like expresses our deepest and truest feelings, and repeat it over and over in front of Hashem. For example, "Ein od milvado, ein milvado!" This is an incredibly powerful practice in its own right, and it helps us greatly to open up our own genuine conversation with the Master of the Universe.

Through making time to talk to Hashem every day — ideally one hour, but even a little as ten minutes — we can escape the hardships of our life into the light of our own personal teivah. We can find respite and relief from our suffering by giving over all of our struggles to our loving Father and Friend. We can reconnect to the constant, eternal truth of the existence of Hashem in our lives mamash!

To summarize, in Parshas Noach, we learn that by davening with truth we can escape even the darkest internal and external storm clouds into an ark of salvation. Even when we find ourselves in the most destructive physical or spiritual places, there is always a way out. And by bringing the Light of Hashem into our words of prayer, we can enter into the teivah which will bring us safely to our desired destination, amen!

Based on the Torah of Rebbe 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