

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 Chayei Sarah

Sarah Imenu teaches us how to get younger as we get older.

(Based on Likutei Halachos, Tefillin 5:38, and Likutei Mohoran I, 56:3)

We all want to feel truly alive.

One thing that all human beings have in common is that we want to live. Deeply embedded in our nature is the desire to sustain ourselves. Not only that, but we're also looking for ways to increase our chiyus (strength/liveliness). We yearn to feel as "alive" as possible.

There are many different ways in which we try to achieve that chiyus. Some of us get chiyus from eating certain foods that we like. When we taste the sweetness of Ben and Jerry's ice cream we feel very excited and happy.

Some of us get chiyus from buying new things. When we sit in the driver's seat of our new car and hit the gas -- what a thrill! When we buy fancy new clothes and wear them out for the first time, we feel like we're flying in the sky.

Some of us get chiyus from multiple cups of coffee or red bull drinks. The feeling of the caffeine entering our blood stream is a blissful reawakening.

Some of us get chiyus from the importance of our job or position -- such as an owner of a company or a rosh yeshiva. When we get to our office each morning and all of our workers/students come to us with their questions and ask us for advice, we feel like a king on his throne -- ah, what a chiyus!

Some of us get chiyus from watching sports games or following politics. It is an unbelievable thrill to watch our team or politician be victorious.

When we look for chiyus in the wrong places, we end up crashing into despair.

The only problem is that these sources of chiyus and all others similar to them don't really satisfy us for very

long. As sweet as Ben and Jerry's is, after a little while our blood sugar crashes and we pass out in the middle of work or kollel. The same is true for coffee.

As geshmak as it is to zoom down the freeway in our new BMW, after a while the excitement starts to wear off, especially when our neighbor buys the new upgraded version which goes much faster.

Even though the many people underneath us make us feel so important, our kavod is constantly getting abused by people in the grocery store who go in front of us in line, other drivers who cut us off in the street, and sometimes even by our own family at home who fail to give us proper respect.

As exciting as it is to watch our team win, we feel absolutely destroyed when they inevitably lose. And even if they are always victorious, what do we do during the off-season?

Thus, most of the time we feel extremely empty with no real chiyus. We have to check our pulse to make sure that we're still alive. We try to chase after our imagined sources of chiyus and get our "fix" as frequently as we can, but no matter what we do, the highs are completely obliterated by the overwhelming length and bitterness of the lows.

We feel weak and old. By the time we reach thirty, we feel like we're fifty. By the time we reach fifty we feel like we're eighty. All of this is due to our poor choices of chiyus.

By attaching ourselves to Hashem's Torah and mitzvos, we receive a wellspring of everlasting spiritual strength.

Therefore, we must try to connect ourselves to the true Source of all chiyus, the true Source of all Life — The Master of the Universe! The Creator of all the Worlds is the only One Who can truly sustain us and give us the powerful and lasting physical and spiritual strength that we so deeply yearn for.

But how can we as finite beings attach ourselves to the vast, infinite light of Hashem to receive our chiyus? The answer is through Torah and mitzvos. The greatest act of kindness and compassion that Hashem has ever done since the creation of the world was that He gave us the Torah. He took the Eternal Light which was far beyond our reach and bottled it up inside each and every one of His mitz-

vos.

Thus, by learning and practicing the Torah we can attach our-

selves to the Source of all chiyus — like the verse says, "[The Torah] is our life [source] and it lengthens our days." Each and every mitzvah that we perform is an opportunity for us to find true strength by connecting us to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Not only that, but Hashem also constricted His presence, so to speak, and put it into holy names through which we can communicate with Him in prayer — such as Havaya, Elokim, Avinu, Malkenu, Ribono Shel Olam, etc. These names make it possible for us to attach ourselves to our Creator by saying brachos and tefilos. Every time we daven we have an amazing opportunity to draw down true chiyus and inspiration from the Source of all Life, like Dovid HaMelech says, "Prayer to G-d [gives me] life!"

Since these real sources of chiyus connect us to the Life of all the Worlds, they have the ability to constantly sustain us and give us continual physical and spiritual strength. Just like the Eternal Light of Hashem never diminishes and dies away, G-d forbid, so too, by attaching ourselves to that light through the vessels of Torah and tefillah, we can find a wellspring of true chiyus which never dries up.

Every mitzvah and brachah is an opportunity to renew our chiyus and grow younger each day.

When we truly contemplate this teaching and take it to heart, every single day and even every single moment become opportunities for us to grow younger and younger. Through this, we can find the inspiration to wake up each day and make a new start in avodas Hashem. We can find great joy and excitement when we put on our talis and tefillin. We can draw incredible chiyus by putting our whole being into the words of shacharis. By connecting to the unbelievably powerful sechel of the Torah, we can awaken our mind better than ten cups of coffee. With every brachah that we say through-out the day we can make a



new attempt to attach ourselves to the King of all Kings and find a new chiyus.

Although our physical bodies may decline, since we are constantly renewing ourselves and becoming more alive through our practice of Torah and mitzvos, we actually become younger and younger. Our spirit grows stronger with each and every day that we live.

Sarah Imenu teaches us the secret to having a good life.

Just like the Eternal Light of Hashem never diminishes, so too, by attaching ourselves to that light through the vessels of Torah and tefillah, we can find a wellspring of true chiyus which never dries up.

This is the meaning of the verse, “And the life of Sarah was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years, the years of the life of Sarah.” Rashi explains that the reason it says the word “years” after each one of the three numbers (instead of just one time at the end) is to teach us that when she was one

hundred it was as if she was twenty, and when she was twenty it was as if she was seven.

This is the greatness of Sarah Imenu — she was constantly renewing herself by connecting to the Source of all Life. Through this, the older that she got, the younger she grew inside. Indeed, she even merited the incredible miracle that her physical form grew young, and at the ripe old age of ninety she was able to have a child.

Therefore, the verse uses the language “chayei Sarah” twice, to show that she was always achieving greater chiyus (from the same root word as ‘chayei’), and even when she was one hundred years old, it was as if she was only twenty.

In addition, Rashi explains that the end of the verse — “the years of the life of Sarah” — teaches us that they were “all equally good.” In other words, since she was connected to the true Source of all chiyus, she didn’t have drastic swings and ups and downs in her strength and livelihood. Rather, she was able to maintain a constant connection and feel truly alive at all times.

When we are entrenched in the temptations of this world, we struggle to connect our

mitzvos to the Source of all Life.

However, when we try to attach ourselves to avodas Hashem and receive real chiyus, many of us feel like we get quite the opposite. Learning Torah works almost as well as a sleeping pill to knock us out. After we do a mitzvah we feel like our strength is completely depleted. We feel like we have to drink multiple cups of coffee just to make it through davening.

This is because the Other Side — our yetzer harah — has cut the cord of connection between us and Hashem. He causes us to be deeply attached to our physical bodies and desires, and this prevents us from truly connecting our Torah and mitzvos to their Source. We are so accustomed to trying to find chiyus from the temptations of this world, that when we try to awaken ourselves to receive true chiyus from the Life of all Life, we come away completely empty-handed.

We are like a woman who has gotten lost from her husband for so many years that no matter how hard she tries, she fails to find her way back to him. We are like the holy Rivka Imenu who is trapped in the hands of Lavan, but longs to be united with her true husband, Yitzchak (and in our case, Hashem).

So what can help us reunite? Just like with any other match we need a shadchan/marriage counselor to bring us together. This is the role of a tzaddik in our lives.

Our daas has the ability to be a shadchan between the physical and spiritual worlds, between us and Hashem.

Rebbe Nachman explains (Likutei Mohoran II, 89) that man and woman — which represent chesed (lovingkindness) and gevurah (strength) — can only be united through daas (awareness). This is due to the fact that they are inherently two complete opposites. A man is the spiritual soul that gives light, and a woman is the physical vessel that receives light. Although in truth, man and woman are two halves of one whole — the giver and receiver need one another to perform their necessary roles — nonetheless, since at the end of the day the aspect of man and the aspect of woman are complete opposites, we struggle to connect with one another and we need a shadchan to bring us together.

The same is true with us and Hashem. We are physical creatures with a yetzer hara that drags into the filth of this world. We are overpowered by the immense strength of the desires of our body. On the other hand, Hashem is completely spiritual without any shape or form. Therefore, we need shadchan to bring us together.

This shadchan is our daas (awareness) which is the essence of our neshama. It is a piece of G-dliness which is beyond the limitations of the physical world. The true wonder of Hashem’s

creation of man is that He is able to combine our body which is purely physical, with our neshama/daas which is purely spiritual. This gives us the amazing ability to attach our mind to the awareness of Hashem and connect the physical and spiritual worlds — i.e. man and woman — together.

However, there is another force in our mind called “koach hamedameh — the power of illusion” which constantly tries to make us forget about the awareness of Hashem and focus only on the desires of our body. This is the part of our brain that is similar to that of an animal which prevents us from connecting the physical and spiritual worlds. Because of this, our shadchan is unemployed and cannot help us.

By attaching ourselves to the teachings of the holiest tzaddikim, we can awaken our mind and acquire real chiyus in this world and in the next.

Thus, the only way for us to acquire true daas is by attaching ourselves to the tzaddikim who have overcome their koach hamedameh and purified themselves completely of their physical desires. They are the only ones who can step in as the shadchan between us and Hashem and teach us how to awaken our awareness of the Creator. They are the only ones who have the unbelievably profound chidushei Torah which can help us to achieve higher levels of daas. They are the only ones who have the extraordinarily simple and yet incredibly effective pieces of advice which can free our mind of its slavery to the physical world.

Therefore, in order to truly come close to Hashem and receive real chiyus from the Source of all Life, we must do our best to learn and practice their teachings. Through this, we will be able to lift our mind out of the trash and slowly but surely increase our awareness of Hashem in everything that we do.

Then, with this heightened level of daas, davening shacharis will give us more strength and focus than all the coffee in the world! Keeping Shabbos will give us more chiyus than buying a new Porsche! We will feel more alive after we say birkas HaMazon than we do after unlimited scoops of ice cream! We will feel more excitement after we learn a daf gemara than we do watching our team win the SuperBowl!

Not only that, but the chiyus that we get will be real and won’t die away. Our spirit will grow constantly younger and stronger with each mitzvah that we do. Like Sarah Imenu, all of our days will be equally good and productive. Instead of feeling old and dead inside, we will feel alive and motivated to do avodas Hashem. This is the true chiyus that we’re looking for. This is the key for us to live a good life in this world and in the next world, G-d willing!

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