

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 Toldos

When it seems as though the light of day is fading away and the darkness of night is setting in over our life and our mind, we must not lose hope. Instead, we should go to shul and daven mincha.

(Based on Likutei Mohoran I, 74)

When we suffer and things don't go our way, we fall into mochin dekatnus --constricted consciousness.

Although we aspire to clear our mind and experience the joy and deveikus in Hashem of „mochin degadlus – expanded consciousness,“ many of us find that we very often get caught in „mochin dekatnus – constricted consciousness.“ This is due to the fact that our life is very hard and it seems like nothing is going as we planned.

We had wanted to get a certain degree, job, or raise in our salary, and it fell through. We see our debt piling up without any prospect for paying it off. We had wanted our children to go to a certain cheder or yeshiva, but they didn't get in, or after they were already accepted, they misbehaved and were asked to leave. We had wanted to go on vacation, but then we got sick and had to cancel.

Even on a daily basis we constantly suffer from all the little things that don't go our way: the coffee wasn't strong enough in the morning, the eggs were too salty, we got stuck in heavy, unexpected traffic on the way to work or kollel, our office or beis medrash was too cold or too hot, etc.

Worst of all, are all of the obstacles which prevent us from achieving what we want in avodas Hashem. We had wanted to wake up earlier and have time to learn before starting our day, but our alarm didn't go off, or maybe we slept right through it. We had wanted to daven with kavanah, but then we got stuck worrying about paying our rent or mortgage for the entire Shemonei Esrei. We had wanted to find time to have a personal prayer with Hashem (hisbodedus), but then

our child got sick and we had to take him to the doctor. Or perhaps we did hisbodedus, but we felt like we weren't able to connect to Hashem.

All of these obstacles cause us to fall into mochin dekatnus. We try so hard to resolve the physical and spiritual problems that we face that our mind gets lost in a cloud of confusion. Our thoughts race out of our control and we're unable to focus on one thing for more than a split second. We struggle to think clearly and make good decisions.

It appears to us as if the only way that we could ever really be able to attach ourselves to avodas Hashem would be if we had a 10 million dollars and a team of personal assistants who could take care of all our needs. Then, we wouldn't have to deal with all of these obstacles and suffering and we could truly devote our life to learning and davening. If only . . .

Hashem loves our mochin dekatnus!

However, we're missing the point. As much as Hashem loves the tzaddikim who attach themselves to Him with the utmost deveikus and expanded consciousness, He also loves us simple Jews who have about two functioning brain cells and yet we still manage to put on our extraordinarily holy talis and tefillin and unify Hashem's name in krias shemah. As much as Hashem loves the exalted inspiration that the tzaddikim experience on Shabbos Kodesh, He also loves us simple Jews sitting and eating bowls of cholent.

What we don't realize is that Hashem gave us the obstacles and put us into mochin dekatnus for a reason: He wants us to fix it. He wants us to go down into these dark and constricted spiritual places and lift up the amazing sparks of kedusha that have been lost.

By recognizing that Hashem's rebuke is coming from pure love, and by doing whatever avodah that we can, we can make great tikkunim.

How do we do so? Firstly, we have to stop fighting with Hashem. We have to accept our obstacles and suffering and remember that what we're going through is coming from a place of pure love and goodness, like the verse says, „that which Hashem loves, He rebukes.“ Hashem wants us to fall into mochin dekatnus not as a punishment, rather in order for us to strengthen ourselves to serve Him even with such adversity. He pushes us away only in order for us to come closer to Him.

Secondly, even though our mind is a scrambled egg, we must try to do whatever we can in avodas Hashem. If we can't learn gemarra, we should try to learn mishnayos or mishna brurah, or listen to a shiur. If we can't even do that, then we should take out a sefer tehillim and recite the holy words of Dovid HaMelech.

If we can't daven an entire shemona esrei with kavanah, we should try to focus our mind for the first bracha. Even if we can barely have any kavana at all during shacharis, we should find one phrase or verse and say it with all our heart. If we feel too impatient to sit and do hisbodedus, we should try to talk to Hashem while we're walking or driving to work.

These seemingly small and unimportant avodos are, in fact, incredibly enormous! Since we are lost in such places of constricted consciousness, every little thing that we do for Hashem is that much more important to Him. Even in the depths of darkness, we are doing our best to serve the Master of the Universe. This lifts up brilliant sparks of kedusha that have been lost in these places since the sin of Adam. Amazing!

The main thing is that we can't get stuck. We can't sit around arrogantly waiting for Hashem to give us back the mochin degadlus that we feel we deserve. We can't let ourselves feel like our avodas Hashem is worthless and we might as well give up, G-d forbid. We can let ourselves fall into bitter sadness and depression because it feels as if Hashem is pushing us away.

No! Rather, we must „chop arayin“ and grasp whatever Torah, tefillah, and/or mitzvos that we can.

From this week's parsha we learn how to attach ourselves to kedusha during times of difficulty.

This concept of fixing the mochin dekatnus is expressed in the first verse of this week's parsha: „These are the generations of Yitzchak the son of



Even though he had just almost lost his life at the Akeidah, his mother had just passed away, and he was 37 years old with no prospects for a shidduch, Yitzchak didn't give up. Rather, shared his heart with the Creator and asked for His help.

Avraham; Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak. “The end of the verse „Avraham gave birth to Yitzchak“ is clearly unnecessary. Therefore, Rashi explains that it is coming to teach us that in order that we shouldn't think that Yitzchak Avinu was really the son of Avimelech who took Sarah Imenu captive, Hashem made Yitzchak's facial features similar to those of Avraham Avinu to prove that he was his true father.

Rebbe Nachman helps understand all of this on a deeper level. He explains that Avraham Avinu is the aspect of lovingkindness, like the verse

says, „Avraham, the one who loved Me (Hashem).“ Avraham's love for Hashem was so great that he never questioned Him, even though Hashem gave him ten extraordinarily challenging tests.

Yitzchak represents din -- judgement, therefore his name comes from the verse, „Tzchok assah li Elokim.“ Elokim is a name which represents judgement (See Rashi, Bereishis 1:1).

The sefarim hakedoshim explain that mochin dekatnus is an aspect of din—judgement which is represented by Yitzchak.

However, within the aspect of din, there are two categories. There is a din of holiness and there is a din of contamination. The difference between them is very simple: when we believe that the din is really coming from love and we do whatever we can to serve Hashem with simplicity at this very moment, then we are attaching ourselves to the din of kedushah. Whereas if we feel like we deserve to have mochin degadlus and we wallow in our suffering and constricted consciousness, then we fall into the din of contamination.

This second aspect of din is associated with Avimelech, whose name can be understood as „Avi“ – I want, „melech“ – to rule. Therefore, his main characteristic is arrogance (See Likutei Mohoran II, 82).

Thus, the first verse of the parshah teaches us that when we find ourselves in a state of mind of din/mochin dekatnus which is an aspect of Yitzchak, we must make sure that the din is a holy din by recognizing that it is coming from Hashem's love for us -- represented by Avraham, and not be arrogant and fall into a din of contamination represented by Avimelech.

In other words, when it seems as though the light of day is fading away and the darkness of night is setting in over our life and our mind, we must not lose hope. Rather, we must go to shul and daven mincha. Although we may not

be able to have hardly any kavanah whatsoever, nevertheless, we must recite the holy words of tefillah with a pure ratzon to be close to Hashem.

When we're really struggling to hold on and it seems as if our suffering couldn't get any greater, we must follow in the footsteps of Yitzchak Avinu and go out to the field to talk to Hashem, like the verse says, "And Yitzchak went out to speak [to Hashem] in the field before evening." Even though he had just almost lost his life at the Akeidah, his mother had just passed away, and he was 37 years old with no prospects for a shidduch, Yitzchak didn't give up. Rather, shared his heart with the Creator and asked for His help. . . And, lo and behold, Rivka Imenu came to him, and all the brachos of Sarah Imenu returned to his home. This is what we must do as well.

It is also important to work on achieving higher levels of awareness – mochin degadlus.

Then, once we're able to attach ourselves to the din of holiness, we must try to sweeten the din and attain a higher level of consciousness. Although serving Hashem within the mochin dekatnus makes a great tikkun, there are two reasons why we must also try to expand our wisdom and awareness.

Firstly, the entire purpose of creation is for us to come to know Hashem. Everything that Hashem created in the world was made in order for us to recognize the G-dliness in that creation and thus connect it back to its Source. Hashem created the world in order for us to contemplate the depth of His wisdom which is embodied in every living thing. Through this elevated level of daas and awareness of Hashem – mochin degadlus – we attach ourselves to the Creator and bring ourselves truly close to Him.

Secondly, since the mochin dekatnus is a place of din, it is very easy for us to fall into the external waste that is attached to the din. This external waste is the source of the yetzer harah which convinces us to completely give up on serving Hashem and entices us with the physical temptations of this world.

Through learning Torah in depth we can awaken our expanded consciousness.

So, how do we sweeten the mochin dekatnus and expand our consciousness? Through learning Torah with depth and understanding. The sechel of the Torah is one of the main things that separates us from all the other nations of the world by helping us to reach a greater awareness of Hashem. It's pure G-dliness is beyond our ability to fathom and therefore it can be an incredible tool for us to awaken our daas and come to a higher recognition of HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

This is especially true when we focus our mind and try to work out all of the complexities of the sefer we're learning. Through this, we break out of our constricted thoughts and are able to have a clear head – mochin degadlus.

Although some of us may feel very far away from being able to truly understand the Torah, we can't give up. No matter what anyone has ever told us before, and no matter what lack of success we may have had, we must believe that each and every one of us has the ability to think deeply about the Torah. This is because the Source of our neshama – which is our sechel

– is the letters of the Torah, like the Zohar HaKadosh says, „The Torah, Yisroel, and Hashem are completely One.

The only reason why it seems beyond our capability is because we've fallen into the waste of mochin dekatnus – despair, depression, physical desire, etc. – for so long that it is difficult for us to awaken the true potential that is within us to rise above our constricted mind. Therefore, we must truly believe that we have the power in our soul to focus on the Torah and understand it deeply.

It may be that we're not able to sit down and learn for hours at a time right away. It may be even half an hour is too much for us to start. Each one of us must assess his own situation. However, by even taking a small portion of Torah and studying it in depth for twenty minutes, we can already begin to reach a higher level of mochin degadlus – clear awareness.

We must try to block out the influence of Esav HaRasha, and follow in the footsteps of Yaakov Avinu.

These two attributes – the wisdom and the waste – which are the positive and negative products of the mochin dekatnus represented by Yitzchak Avinu, are in fact, the spiritual essence of his two sons, Yaakov Avinu and Esav HaRasha. The verse says of Yaakov, „VeYaakveni zeh paamayim.“ The Targum Unkelos translates the word „Yaakveni (from the same root as Yaakov)“ as an expression of wisdom. In addition, the verse tells us that the characteristic behavior of Yaakov was that he was „yoshev be'ohelim“ – sitting in the tents of the tzaddikim learning Torah (Bereishis 25:27, see Rashi). Thus, we see that Yaakov was constantly trying to increase his wisdom and understanding of Hashem through studying Torah. Esav, on the other hand, despaired of being able to serve Hashem and attain true daas. When Yaakov told him the responsibility of being the firstborn and bringing the holy offerings to Hashem, he thought that it would be simply too hard for him. He completely gave up on the pursuit of wisdom and mochin degadlus through avodas Hashem and despised the exalted rights of the firstborn. This hopelessness caused him to fall into the dark pit of physical desire, and so he asked Yaakov to dump food down his throat like a camel (See Rashi ibid, 25:30).

Indeed, Esav's most powerful descendant was Amalek, who attacked the weakest Jews who were tired and weary and had been expelled from the kedusha of the Clouds of Glory. This is because the entire essence of Esav is to make us fall into utter despair.

Therefore, we must strengthen ourselves at all times. If we find ourselves confronted with numerous difficulties and our mind is stuck in mochin dekatnus, we must recognize that it is due to Hashem's great love for us that He is giving us an opportunity to find kedusha even amidst the din. How so? By serving Hashem with simplicity and grabbing every mitzvah, word of Torah and tefillah that we can. Then, we must strengthen ourselves further to learn some Torah in depth every day, and expand our consciousness and awareness of Hashem. Through this, we will never feel far away from Hashem and we will be able to serve Him every moment of our lives.

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