

*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 VaYigash

Spider webs can seem very intimidating, but we can't let them stop us from davening with inspiration and deveikus. (Based on Likutei Halachos, Hodaah 6:47)

#### **The obstacles that prevent us from davening with kavana seem insurmountable.**

Rebbe Nachman tells a parable (Sichos Ha-Ran 232): A person is going to fight a war and conquer a city. He prepares himself mentally for the battle, gathers all of his weapons and heads towards his enemy. However, when he reaches the entrance of the city he sees a spider web wrapped around the gate. He is so afraid of the web that he gives up and returns home.

The message is that every moment of our lives we're coming to fight a war with our yetzer harah. The Other Side is constantly renewing its strength against us and we have to find a way to overcome it (see Kedushin, 30). Our primary weapon in the war is our tefillah. When Yaakov went to battle with Esav he took his "sword and bow (Bereishis 48:22)," which Rashi explains refers to his tefillah and supplication. It is through prayer that Mashiach is going to conquer the entire world and destroy all of the forces of evil (see Likutei Mohoran I, 2). So too, it is our own individual prayers that have the unbelievable power to break down all of our bad midos and physical desires.

However, very often when we come to daven it is difficult for us to express the words of tefillah with the strength and enthusiasm that is necessary in order for us to break down the barriers of our yetzer hara that separate us from Hashem. We don't feel inspired to daven. We're tired. We feel lazy. We have so many other things on our mind – such as paying our bills or an important business meeting later in the day. Perhaps everyone else in shul is davening

very quietly without any inspiration and we feel awkward being the only one to say the words out loud. Or perhaps we're just really hungry and we can't wait until breakfast.

Thus, it seems as though there is no hope. It is not really possible for us to overcome the monumental obstacles that are preventing us from having a good davening and defeating our new yetzer harah. So, we throw in the towel and run away from the battlefield. We mumble a few words of pesukei dezimrah, eek out krias shema with the brachos, speed through our shemonah esre, and escape from shul through the nearest exit after the chazan finishes kedusha.

#### **With one strong burst of powerful tefillah, we can break down the cobwebs of our mind and re-energize our body and soul.**

What Rebbe Nachman teaches us with this parable, however, is that all of these obstacles are really just like a spider web – in our mind they seem incredibly powerful, scary, and truly insurmountable, but in reality we have the ability to completely destroy them with one swipe of our hand. We must not let the illusion of fear and difficulty of the "spider web" cause us to give up completely on having a strong davening and conquering the Other Side.

Therefore, we must simply open our mouths and start saying the words of tefillah out loud with strength. We must fake it until we make it (see Sichos Haran, 74). By saying the words of tefillah with enthusiasm, even if it seems artificial at first, we awaken our mind and tear down all of the cobwebs of sleep covering over head, like the Sages say, "Kol me'orer hakavana – the voice [of prayer] awakens our concentration." Then, once we're able to focus we naturally connect to the awesome ruach hakodesh that is in the words of tefillah, and find true inspiration in our davening.

Thus, no matter how weak and tired we feel, we must know that a strong tefillah has the ability to reenergize us more than ten cups of coffee (see Likutei Mohoran I, 9). We must know that by davening in a lively way we can recharge our entire body and find incredible physical and spiritual strength.

We must remind ourselves that davening out loud is a tradition of our ancestors, and we should never feel ashamed to do so even if it makes us

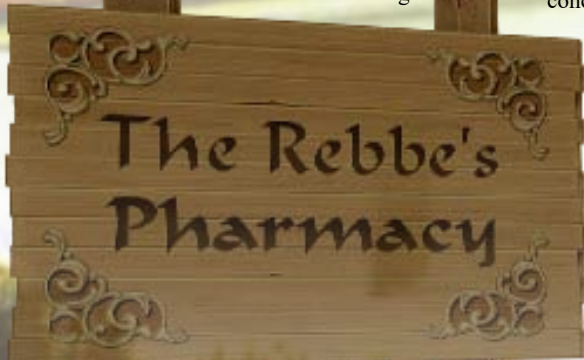
stand out in shul. In fact, it could be that if we show the courage to daven with strength, we might inspire others to do so as well, and we will have the additional merit of helping others to pray with kavana. [Note: Of course the volume of our tefillah should be within reason and we should not make a scene in shul.]

We must remind ourselves that by putting our energy into the words of davening we can attach ourselves deeply to Hashem and experience incredible deveikus in our tefillah. Even the best pancakes with powdered sugar and syrup can't compare to the pleasure that we can get from davening with all our heart and soul.

#### **We can't stop even for a second to pay attention to the "logical" claims of our yetzer harah.**

What we shouldn't do is stop to think. We can't let ourselves begin to analyze our situation and make logical explanations as to why we're unable to have a good davening. These excuses are purely the trick of our yetzer hara who is trying to convince us that there is a concrete reality to what we're feeling. He tells us, "You are not inspired to daven. You have never really been inspired to daven. Perhaps on Shabbos, Yom Tov, or at kivrei tzadikim you occasionally have a spark, but not on a regular Monday morning." He makes similar claims with other obstacles as well. His claims seem very logical, so we fall for his trap and remain stuck in the mud. But in truth, there is nothing but a thin spider web in between us and davening with incredible deveikus!

Therefore, we can't pay any attention to these false claims and must simply start davening out loud, whether we're feeling it or not. Just like we are able to make ourselves angry or sad, we also have the ability to make our



selves excited and enthusiastic for avodas Hashem. We have the ability to flip the switch and turn on the engine. We just have to gather the courage to forget about how we feel and what other people may think, and sing the words of tefillah with a strong voice.

We must realize that we don't have to be slaves to our physical and emotional struggles. We don't have to let them dictate the quality of our avodas Hashem. Rather, we have the ability to very quickly and easily rise above these imaginary limitations and not only transform our state of mind, but also renew our physical strength.

***We must pay no attention to all the layers of depression and frustration that completely hide the brilliant light of our inspiration. Instead, we must be brave like Yehuda and take a deep breath, open our mouths and call out to Hashem with joy, "Baruch she'amar vehaya ha'olam!"***

break through all of the imaginary obstacles and achieve true inspiration and deveikus in our tefillah. In a few moments we can easily tear down the spider web and bravely enter the city and conquer our yetzer hara.

**Through the strong prayers of Yehuda, we can awaken the awesome inspiration of Yosef.**

When we look deeply at the beginning of this week's parsha we find this amazing piece of advice. Reb Noson explains (Likutei Halachos, Hodaah 6:47) that Yosef HaTzaddik represents the fire of inspiration that burns within each one of our hearts, like the verse says, "And the house of Yosef is a flame." Even though our heart may feel completely dead and numb to kedusha and avodas Hashem, nevertheless, each one of us has an awesome spark of G-dliness that yearns to be attached to the Creator. Each one of us has a place in our heart which is completely righteous, like the verse says, "And Your people are all tzaddikim (see Likutei Mohoran I, 34)."

The only reason that we don't feel that flame burning inside of us is because it's covered over with the ash and dirt of our physical desires and emotional struggles (see Likutei Mohoran II, 9). When these things enslave us

day after day, and year after year, it seems to us like there couldn't possibly be a spark of inspiration in our heart.

For this, we need Yehuda. Yehuda's name comes from the word hodaah -- praise. Thus, the primary descendant of Yehuda was Dovid HaMelech who composed sefer Tehillim -- the most incredible book of praises to Hashem in all of history. This is our greatest strength: the power of our words. This is why the Jewish people are called Yehudim, since through our speech and praise of Hashem we have the ability to be like kings and rule over our physical and emotional challenges. By saying the words of tefillah out loud we can blow all of the dust off of the spark of inspiration that is hidden deep inside our heart and attach ourselves to Hashem with pure deveikus and joy.

This is the meaning of the first verse of the parsha, "And Yehuda approached [Yosef] and said, 'please, my lord, may your servant speak a word in my lord's ears.'" The Zohar Hakadosh explains (Tikun 58 and 92) that the ears which are the tools for hearing are directly correlated with the heart. In addition, the word for hearing -- shemiah -- can also mean the "understanding" of the heart (see Rashi, Bereshis 41:15).

Thus, Yehuda -- who represents the power of tefillah and praise -- approaches Yosef -- who represents the spark of inspiration -- and requests that his words should enter into Yosef's heart and awaken his passion for Hashem. The result of this is that all of the anger, depression, and laziness that is covering over our true deveikus in our heart simply melts away. This is the meaning of the end of the same verse, "And don't be angry with your servant."

From here we learn an amazing secret on how to daven with kavana and inspiration, and how to utilize the powerful sword of tefillah to destroy all of our negative emotions and desires. Even when it seems as if our heart is a stone wall that won't let us enter -- much like the way that Yosef very harshly confronted Yehuda -- nevertheless, we must believe that we have the ability to break down that wall by courageously davening with all of our strength. We must remember that, similar to Yosef with his brothers, the obstacles between us and true deveikus in tefillah don't really exist. They are just a figment of our imagination. Although Yosef -- the inspiration of our heart -- appears to us like some foreign king who simply won't let us in, we all know that in truth, he is actually very close to us. He is our own flesh and blood!

Therefore, we must be extremely brave like Yehuda and pay no attention to all the layers of depression and frustration which completely hide the brilliant light of our inspiration to daven. We must be incredibly courageous and tear down the spider web with one quick blow. We must take a deep breath, open our mouths and call out to Hashem, "Baruch she'amar vehaya ha'olam!"

**In our personal prayer we must use our speech and deep yearning for Hashem to blow away the ash that covers over our**

**spark of inspiration.**

This advice is especially important when it comes to doing hisbodedus. One of the main reasons that many of us think that we can't talk to Hashem is simply because we don't know what to say. We don't know how to just start talking. Or perhaps, even if we're able to start speaking, we don't feel any inspiration in our words and personal tefillos. We feel tired, lazy, and numb to life. We feel like we're unable to awaken our heart and attach ourselves to Hashem. Thus, we think that hisbodedus is not for us, rather it's for those who are already connected to their heart's inspiration.

However, we're making a big mistake. As crazy as it may seem, true deveikus through personal prayer is not so far away. We must simply start talking out loud to Hashem. We can begin by thanking Hashem for the incredible things that He's done for us that day or week. We can ask Hashem for help with our struggles in avodas Hashem and our bad midos. Rebbe Nachman says we can even start a conversation with Hashem by expressing to Him how difficult it is for us to talk to Him. We can plead with Hashem to help us find the sincere prayers that we are really looking for (see Likutei Mohoran I, 25).

By simply forcing ourselves to open up a dialogue with the Creator, no matter how superficial it may feel at first, we can slowly but surely break down the walls of our heart and find a wellspring of inspired tefillos. This is because deep down inside we have an incredible desire and longing to open up to Him. If not, why would we be doing hisbodedus at all?! Therefore, by using our speech to blow off the dust covering our spark of deveikus, it is only a matter of time before we find the fire that is burning for Hashem inside our heart.

However, it may take a little bit more time to reveal the spark in our hisbodedus than it will with the prescribed prayers. This is because through hisbodedus we create an extremely personal relationship with Hashem which goes much deeper than the prayers that we recite from a siddur. Therefore, we must be a little more patient and just keep talking and yearning to Hashem until we're able to connect to the spark of Yosef that is within each one of us.

Sometimes, it is even helpful to bring ourselves to scream to Hashem with all of our strength. This can be an extraordinarily powerful way to awaken our inspiration and open our heart. We can also try singing a slow song of yearning for Hashem, or even getting up and dancing to a lively niggun. Whatever we think at that moment will be able to break us out of our cloud of negative emotions and physical discomforts we should do.

Through this, we will find true inner strength that we never imagined we had inside of us. Instead of being bullied around by our yetzer harah and all of suffering, we will be able to rule over them even in their territory, much like Yosef in Egypt. By "faking it" at first, we will "make it" in the end. We will destroy the spider web of our imagination, and easily conquer all of our spiritual enemies.

*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*