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Chambers of Light

Parshas
Mattos-Massei
5784

// Where are you now?

"On the way, I told a story..." - thus the Rebbe began the holy sefer, Sippurei Ma'asiyot, this alludes to the idea that a person's entire life, from their first breath in this world until they return to their source, is indeed a journey - a voyage through life. One needs many sorts of teachings to navigate this path successfully, to merit living a good and joyous life here.

"Man was created solely to bask in the light of Hashem, and enjoy his presence" (Mesillas Yesharim, beginning of Chapter 1). This is our ultimate goal. True, sometimes we encounter experiences in life that leave us utterly perplexed as to the purpose of all these tribulations and confusions. But if our tzaddikim have declared it so, we believe with perfect emunah that this is indeed the reality! Surely there must be a way to live a good life, even if we are still far from achieving it. This remains our goal!

It stands to reason that if the tzaddikim have said so, they must have also revealed the path - how one can take all of life's experiences and transform them into a good life. The way to feel Hashem's presence with us, among us, and within us in every situation and place we find ourselves - such a life is called good and joyous.

We are told that during these three weeks, "the King is in the field." It is easy to draw near and connect to the King. Undoubtedly, one who merits this now is approaching the wondrous goal of "basking in the light of Hashem", a life of joy and contentment.

but how?

Your Great Power

The Rebbe revealed to us the great power that each and every one of us possesses - the power of speech. One who merits to acquire this wondrous thing - to speak to Hashem - how fortunate is he! What a good life he can attain! The Rebbe desired that we should do "hisbodedus all day long" (Chayei Moharan 438). Does this mean we should sit in the field all day, unconcerned with anything else? Surely not, for the Rebbe explicitly states, "We don't need to be negligent." One must be a productive member of society. Rather, this is a simple lesson: From the moment you rise in the morning until night, everything you do and everything you desire, you should request from Hashem and thank him. Always, in every place, you are in conversation with Hashem.

Whatever situation you find yourself in right now - financial pressure, a need for renewal in shalom bayis, a struggling child, you needn't wait until you get to Shul, trying to remember everything you need. Here, in the very place where Hashem has arranged for you to be at this

continued on page 3 >

Gemstone

"They traveled from the desert of Si'in and encamped in the locale of Kivros HaTa'aveh (literally 'Graves of the Desire')". A person who is weak in his study of Torah immediately will be overcome by evil desires that wish to "bury" (ref. Kivros) him, as one who merits to establish a firmly fixed period of Torah study every day will merit the strength to overcome all of his desires.

Zos HaTorah Massei 5

Questions and Answers

How can one thank Hashem when going through difficult times?

Q Dear Rabbi Lesser shlita.

Yasher koach for the wonderful words about Chanukah. I have just one question: The Rav often speaks about thanking Hashem Yisborach for everything, but a person goes through many difficult things that make it hard to be thankful. I would be happy to receive an answer. Yasher koach for all the wonderful, life-giving responses.

A B'ezras Hashem, Thursday Parshas Miketz, 2 Teves, 7th day of Chanukah 5781

החיים והשלום וכל טוב סלה.

Dear ... נ"י

I have received your letter with the question about how not to let the difficult things a person goes through interfere with thanking Hashem Yisborach.

You should know, my dear friend, that your question is addressed in several places in the teachings of our holy Rebbe z"l, who taught us the way of "אֲזַמְּרָה לֵאלֹקַי בְּעוֹדִי" (Likutei Moharan I:282), and the way of "בַּצָּר הִרְחַבְתָּ לִי" - You have relieved me in my distress (Likutei Moharan I:195). This means to focus on the good things, even the tiniest ones, and to find them even within the most difficult things a person experiences. We should separate the positive from the negative and not mix them up. True, what I'm going through is difficult, but how much does Hakadosh Baruch Hu expand things for me and bestow kindness upon me! After all, I'm healthy Boruch Hashem, I have a wife and children, etc. We can't thank Hashem enough. Certainly, things are hard for us in many ways, but we shouldn't let difficult things cover up and hide all the good we have, which surely outweighs the bad if we were to put them on opposite sides of a scale.

Even when troubles accumulate, Rachmana litzlan, R' Nosson z"l taught us (Likutei Halachos, Kilayim 4:8) the way of "וְרָוַח תָּשִׂימוּ בֵּין עֵדֶר וּבֵין עֵדֶר"- Put a space between each herd, meaning not to mix troubles together, but to separate each one individually and deal with each problem in its place and time. We shouldn't make them into one big lump that causes weakness of mind and despair, chas v'shalom. Take a look in the words of R' Nosson z"l and it will sweeten up your life forever.

Therefore, my dear friend, choose a new path in life. Start thanking Hashem Yisborach for small things, and in detail: "Ribbono Shel Olam, how thankful I am to You for all the kindness You've done for me, and especially for this and that." For a moment, forget about all your troubles and sufferings and focus only on this matter. Then you will begin to see a new light in your life, and feel that Hashem's kindness is with you at all times, until you merit to always rejoice in the joy of His G-dliness.

Wishing you blessing and success in all your endeavors and a bright and joyous Chanukah.

continued from page 1 >

moment, open your mouth. Thank Hashem for what you have, and pour out your heart in all manner of pleas, requests, and appeasements. Speak to your father.

Hashem has imbued tefillah with tremendous power. If a person davens for something, eventually they will reach their goal. Exactly how long it will take - that's not our calculation. We do our part, if we don't despair and stubbornly continue to speak to Hashem, we will ultimately succeed.

// Journeys

Had Klal Yisroel not sinned with the עגל, they would have entered Eretz Yisrael immediately. But because of the חטא העגל, the meraglim, and Korach's rebellion, they needed to journey to various places to rectify what they had damaged (see Likutei Moharan I:40 and II:62). Every person experiences these journeys in their lifetime, as many tzaddikim have taught. Sometimes one is in "Mitkah" (sweetness), where everything is beautiful and in its proper place, and sometimes one feels truly in "Tachas" (depths), in the lowest depths. Don't be confused! In this place, where only Hashem knows why you are here, you need to rectify something! Speak to Hashem from here: "Hashem, I am in the deepest depths, such a low place, help me rectify what I need to rectify here!"

Thus, we can try to interpret everything according to our understanding. Are desires overwhelming you? threatening to bury you like "Kivros HaTaavah" (the graves of lust)? Do hisbodedus and cry out to Hashem from this place: "I want to reach 'Chatzeros' (courtyards), to the courtyard of Hashem's house, to overcome all taavos."

In each such journey, in every situation you find yourself throughout your life, you can accomplish wondrous achievements if you are smart, and utilize the amazing ability Hashem has given you: to speak to him!

Sparks

What Foolishness!

When the decree was issued to conscript young yiddishe children into the Russian army, forcing them to abandon their Emunah, Rachmono litzlan, there was a woman with an only son, who went to the cemetery, to her parents' graves, and wouldn't leave. She cried and wept with such bitter anguish that she passed away there.

When this tale was recounted to R' Nosson, he exclaimed, "What a foolish woman! What did she accomplish with her bitterness? She perished, and her son simply remained unsaved. Had she instead gone daily to her parents' graves for an hour or so, to daven and plea with Hashem, she would not have perished, and her son would have been saved. Moreover, through her prayers, she could have saved many other yidden."

Through this narrative, R' Nosson sought to instruct us in the way we daven, one must not be stubborn, but rather dedicate a specific time to daven, and afterwards, strengthen himself, this is the path of the Rebbe. To live in bitterness and despair, as if all hope is lost, is not the yiddishe way. On the contrary, we must ask Hashem from time to time, shedding tears like water over our tzoros. Afterwards, we must strengthen ourselves to be b'simcha and confident that the outcome will surely be good, doing all kinds of actions to be b'simcha and have strong bitachon.

This is the way of the heiliger Tzadikim - to pour out one's heart to Hashem, yet not to sink into the swamp of despair, rather, we must rise with renewed passion and enthusiasm, assured of Hashems' hashgacha pratis, and continue our avodas Hashem with gladness and devotion.

(Asher BaNachal, Letter 14,995)

story for the Shabbos table

Kaddish by the Furnace

Before the Great War, the Jews of Russia lived in very trying times. In the wake of the revolution that transformed the government, the fear of authority was vanishing, and gangs of murderers gathered together. They marched from city to city, village to village, and settlement to settlement, slaying the wealthy and plundering their riches.

In those times in the city of Uman lived a Jew, a coarse wagon driver, named Moshe Tzadok. Upon seeing these terrible murderers, he sadly decided to join their gang, slaying several Jews, may Heaven forbid. Yet, as every Jew, he too was born with some good in himself. Moshe Tzadok would occasionally awaken to thoughts of repentance, regretting his wicked deeds. However, he did not know how to return and get onto the right path in life. Particularly as his wicked deeds had become known throughout the city, no one wished to have any association with him. Thus, he found it exceedingly difficult to truly repent and remained entrenched in his bad ways.

One day he was informed of his father's passing. True to his unrefined nature - and being a murderer no less - he did not partake in his father's funeral. Afterwards, however, his heart stirred with repentance. Regretting his actions he desired to enter a shul to recite Kaddish for his father. Alas, no shul would admit him, for his awful actions were widely known. Yet he - as a Jew with a holy soul - burned with desire to return and repent and recite Kaddish for his father. Seeing that he was expelled from all other shuls in Uman, he decided to approach the Shul of the Breslov Chasidim...

Moshe Tzadok entered the Shul at Shachris. Overwhelmed by great shame, he positioned himself at the back of the shul, near the furnace. He did not even have tefillin, yet he stood there determined to recite Kaddish... He was gripped by immense fear that he might be expelled, unaware that he had arrived at the right place... For it is the way of true Breslov Chasidim not to expel or distance anyone. And indeed, this is what transpired:

Amidst his recitation of Kaddish, one of the Chasidim - R' Yaakov from the city of Zhitomir - observed him. Noting that he was saying Kaddish without tallis or tefillin. R' Yaakov approached him immediately after he finished and offered him his own tallis and tefillin, saying: "Moshe Tzadok, since you are already here, why not don tallis and tefillin?"...

Moshe Tzadok accepted the tallis and tefillin, wrapping it around himself with indescribable joy. Until then, he had been filled with dread, assuming this man had come to expel him - as he had been expelled from all other shuls. Yet here, not only was he not thrown out, but he was offered tallis and tefillin... Thus, he fulfilled these mitzvahs with tremendous eagerness and joy.

Thereafter, R' Yaakov of Zhitomir began to share with him the teachings of our holy Rebbe, greatly strengthening and encouraging him to continue to repent. In time, Moshe Tzadok transformed into a great Bal Teshuva, growing a beard and peyos, and coming regularly to pray among Breslov Chasidim. His prayers were accompanied by profound weeping, so much so that over time, his eyes became swollen from excessive crying, and his face was constantly washed with tears! Not only did Moshe Tzadok leave his evil ways, but he further increased in doing good, dedicating himself to our brethren. When the Communists arrived and closed all shuls and mikvahs, Moshe Tzadok constructed a secret mikvah in his horse stable, ensuring that Breslov Chasidim had access to a mikvah, thus risking his life to make a Kiddush Hashem - a sanctification of His Blessed Name.

From this awe-inspiring tale, we realize the immense power of our holy Rebbe. Even such a coarse murderer merited to a complete repentance, becoming a great person. Moreover, we learn how careful one must be not to distance or repel any Jew, for each one possesses a unique quality that only he has. It is not for us to dismiss or distance anyone, for who knows what may become of him, what wondrous and holy deeds he may still accomplish in life - both for himself and for others.