

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Monday, April 23, 2012

Rav Brevda shiur Rosh Chodesh Iyar - What we have not been taught is crucial for our times. Rav Moshe Weinberger article says same

This inspiring shiur reveals what focus is important in Iyar 5772, choosing soul over body, paralleling to the time before the exodus from Egypt. www.ravbrevda.org Enter shiur 752 and the shiur will come up. It costs \$4

Here is a [clip from the end](#) so that you understand the urgency of listening to the Rav.

<http://www.moment-of-prayer.com/lvracha/ravbrevdaiyarclip.mp3>

May the insights you receive be a merit for Rav Brevda, who Rav Brevda asks that people continue to say tehillim for him for his pain in suffering a life threatening condition
HaRav Shlomo Leib ben Miriam

Addendum: from <http://klalperspectives.org/rabbi-moshe-weinberger/>

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger

by Editor on April 19, 2012

“Just One Thing is Missing: The Soul”

THE REBBE OF PIACEZNA, R' Klonymous Kalman Shapiro, z"ya, was approaching his fortieth birthday:

“My heart pounds from my impending fortieth birthday, my entire body shakes from my oncoming declining years. Still, I will try to muster all my strength to commit myself and my life to G-d. Perhaps, perhaps, something will remain. But to what shall I commit myself? To learn more? I think that as far as possible, I don't waste any time. To abstain from physical pleasures? If my own desires are not fooling me, thank G-d, I am not so attached to them. So what am I missing? Simply to be a Jew. I see myself as a self-portrait that shows all colors and features real to life. Just one thing is missing: the soul.” (Tzav V'ziruz, To Heal the Soul, page 45)

I have often reflected upon these searing words penned by the Aish Kodesh a decade before his holy body was consumed by the inferno of the Holocaust. The post-Holocaust generation has come of age. We have prospered financially and religiously. The self-portrait of our Torah community “shows all colors and features real to life.” Soon, the Siyum HaShas will take place before an anticipated audience of 90,000 people. Our institutions are bursting at the seams. We have a formidable array of daily and weekly publications filled with our own current events and advertisements for the latest, non-*gebrochts*, Pesach getaways. Many neighborhoods take pride in their “minyan factories” where a Maariv can be caught until the wee hours of the night. We have morning kollels and evening kollels and *gemachs* for everything under the sun. “Just one thing is missing: the Soul.”

R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev once called all the Jews of the city to a massive “*asifa*” (gathering) in the main shul. A hush fell over the “*oilam*” (crowd) as the Tzaddik climbed to the top of the *bimah* and cried out, “Yidden (Jews), don't forget! You must always remember that the *Ribbono Shel Olam* (G-d) exists! He really exists!!” The Kedushas Levi was appealing to a shul filled with strictly observant Jews. Apparently, he felt that despite all the “colors and features” of Yiddishkeit, something very precious was slipping away. Real davening cannot be manufactured in a “minyan factory;” it longs for a soul. True *tznius* (modesty) is not just a matter of stockings and sleeves. It has a *neshama*, a soul. Torah learning that does not lead to a meaningful Torah life filled with sincere joy, authentic *yiras shomayim* and simple human decency, is without a soul.

In the *seforim hakedoshim* (holy books), this intangible ingredient, this soul, is often referred to as “*ohr*,” light. A

couple might enjoy the security that comes with a marriage in which mutual responsibilities are taken seriously. But if that is all the marriage consists of, it is a dark and dismal home they share. When a relationship is "*lichtig*" ("lit up"), when it has a *neshama*, even the "C minor" of everyday life is illuminated by the light that binds them together.

The Noam Elimelech (Yisro) teaches that when Hashem gave us the Torah, He gave us infinitely more than the actual words and commandments. "And Hashem spoke all these words saying, 'I am Hashem your G-d...'" (Shemos 20: 1). "*All these words*" means not only the actual words, but all their implications, as well – even from the white space of the parchment surrounding them. According to Chazal, "I am" – in Hebrew "*anochi*" – is an acronym for *ana nafshi kesavis, yehavis* – "I have inscribed My very soul [in this Torah] that I'm giving you!"

In davening, we say, "with the light of Your face, You have given us a Torah of life." It is impossible to define this light, but when it's missing from a marriage, a family, a friendship, or from one's Yiddishkeit, it is painfully obvious. Some might admit to remembering the lyrics of an old song, "Something inside has died, and I can't hide it, and I just can't fake it."

Our communities – spanning the entire spectrum of Orthodoxy – are swarming with Jews of all ages and backgrounds who feel little, if any, connection to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* (G-d). This is not a conclusion reached by way of scientific study or formal assessment, and it cannot be proved in a laboratory. It is, I believe, glaringly apparent to anyone who has taken a peak outside the *bais medrash*.

It is obvious to anyone who is not fooled by the billboard brand of *frumkeit* that is as shallow and empty as the so-called "Jewish" music blasting at our simchos. Forget about data. The "defectors" who simply couldn't go on hiding and faking have shed the external uniforms of Yiddishkeit to become the object of our latest outreach efforts. These individuals comprise but a fraction of those who are simply unable, or who are afraid, to disengage, who listlessly drag their feet through the motions of *avodas Hashem* (service of G-d), while waiting desperately for the next "*bain hazmanim*" (intercession), "break in davening," or any other distraction from the monotony of the charade.

This type of "disengagement" or "disconnection" has little to do with the intellect or with matters of theology. Thus, enjoying a fascinating *shiur* provides little assurance that one will find meaning in davening, or even behave in shul. It does not even prove that he believes in anything at all. Attending a seminar on the meaning of davening and the structure of the siddur, while important, has little to do with passionate *tefilah*. Many of our grandparents knew much less about davening than we do. They, however, knew G-d, cared deeply about Him and lived in an ongoing dialogue with Him.

This void is wreaking havoc upon the spiritual integrity of our communities. Yet, this very same void is itself responsible for a resurgence of spiritual longing among those who are honest enough to admit that something is so terribly wrong and broken that something must be done about it.

We are all familiar with a number of wonderful kiruv initiatives that were initially established as a means of reaching out to the assimilated and unaffiliated. While these are still the populations officially being targeted by kiruv seminars and shabbatons, a large percentage of attendees are actually (forgive me) FFB's of all stripes and colors. Last year, I was asked to speak at such a convention and prepared a drasha geared for the uninitiated and newly observant. Upon arriving, it became quite apparent to me that the great bulk of those attending were Chassidish, Yeshivish, Heimish and Modern Orthodox. Their common denominator? The intense longing they had to connect to Hashem and the sincere need they had to understand why they were keeping mitzvos and making sacrifices for Yiddishkeit.

Many shared with me a sense of "*lamah nigara*" – why should we be kept back and denied the rich spirituality and the open and honest discussions about *emunah* typically offered to our secular brothers and sisters? Mind you, these were intelligent, observant individuals – most graduates of our finest yeshivos and seminaries. Why do so many of our fold flock to Carlebach minyanim on Friday night, or try valiantly to introduce some of the song and spirit into their shul's davening? And these are not a fringe element of "holy hippies." To dismiss or misinterpret these and many other phenomena of this genre would be both wrong and dangerous. Jews – healthy, learned, and sincere Jews – are aching for meaning and inspiration. They are not, G-d forbid, rejecting traditional Torah learning and halacha, nor do they seek to stir some revolution against the old guard. They are simply searching for the soul and light they are missing.

These various trends and behaviors should cause us to wonder whether or not the latest technology is truly the greatest problem facing Klal Yisroel. Judging by the number of proclamations, as well as their content and tone, one might conclude that our world would simply be perfect but for the Internet and all of the accompanying gadgetry that comes along with it. Life would return to the simpler and more civilized sixties and seventies. It is quite obvious that technology creates a serious threat to all that we've worked so hard to achieve, and we must support every effort to combat this malady. Yet, there is something I find profoundly pathetic in the great search for the perfect filter.

The Nesivos Sholom (Tzav) cites a *mashal* (parable) in which a certain fellow would like to build a housing development on a huge piece of property that he owns. The property, however, is covered by a forest, so he grabs an axe and begins to chop away. After falling a tree or two, he realizes that even if he were to have a whole crew of lumberjacks, this effort would take many years. It dawns on him that what he needs is a fire – a powerful, controlled conflagration that can destroy the forest in a matter of minutes. The Nesivos Sholom explains that it takes a fiery, passionate, and soulful Yiddishkeit to overcome the vast forests of filth and confusion that dominate our environment.

In every generation, the outside world stands as a tempting alternative to Yiddishkeit. History and common sense prove repeatedly that wielding the axe can never provide more than a short-term, superficial respite from the onslaught of secularism. Hashem sent the Baal Shem Tov and R' Yisroel Salanter to set Klal Yisroel on fire! Only a deep, introspective, passionate Yiddishkeit bursting with a tangible consciousness of Hashem's presence can expose the emptiness of any alternative.

Let's face it: if on Monday the anti-Internet convention takes a powerful swipe at the latest technology, by Tuesday the kids (and the "young at heart") will discover something better and faster. Many express shock upon hearing about the latest fad of Shabbos text messaging. But was this not inevitable? What exactly does Shabbos mean for these kids? In fact, what does Shabbos mean for many of their parents? Aside from some fuzzy familiarity with the do's and don'ts, what is it about Shabbos that would make the pastime of Friday night texting abhorrent in their eyes? The shock is usually followed by a shaking of the head and the comment "but he (or she) is learning in a fine yeshiva!" It is true. The yeshivos are wonderful, and they are filled with many talented and sincere rabbeim and teachers. But there is Torah and there is Torah.

The *navi* (prophet) Amos said (8:11), "Behold days are coming, says Hashem, when I will send a famine in the land – not a famine for bread nor thirst for water, but for hearing the word of Hashem."

One of Ramchal's greatest disciples, R' Moshe Dovid Valli, zt"l, in his commentary Mashmiya Yeshua, explains that, in Tanach, Torah is often referred to as bread and water. During our long *galus* (exile), there have been an astonishing number of *seforim* written and an incredible amount of Torah taught. Is it really accurate to describe our present state as a famine or drought? Whoever is hungry for Torah and thirsting for its wisdom can simply dive into the infinite resources at his fingertips! R' Moshe Dovid answers that the key lies in the final words of the verse; "but for hearing the words of Hashem":

ומ"ש: "לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים" וגו', הטעם הוא, שהרי בזמן הגלות והסיתום אין שום רעב וצמא ממימיה ולחמה של תורה, כי אדרבא לא נתחברו ספרים כל כך ארוכים ורבים כמו בזמן הגלות שרבו הדרשנים בהם ועשו ספרים הרבה אין קץ. אלא שיש בהם פטומי מל"ן הרבה מאד, והאמת שהוא הנקרא ממש "דברי ה'" הנה היא מעט מזער בכל ספר וספר. וזהו הטעם שישראל שהם זרע אמת אינם מוצאים קורת רוח ברוב הספרים שכתבו המחברים שלהם לפי סברתם ורובי המחלקות ותהיה האמת נעדרת בהם, מפני הקליפה הסותמת שלא הניחה לעבור אורות האמת בעת שליטתה. וזהו שגורם: לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כמ"ש, אלא רעב וצמא לשמוע את "דברי ה'", שהוא סוד האמת ממש

Yes, never before have as many Jews had the privilege to learn Torah. Neither a famine nor drought has befallen us. Our generation is starving for "*divrei Hashem*" – the clear, deep, penetrating and powerful *divrei Hashem*.

The kids "off the derech" or "on the fringe" are not running away from Yiddishkeit. They have never met it. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov once told an atheist: "I also don't believe in the God you don't believe in!" Look into the eyes and hearts of the kids on the streets and in the clubs. You will see the hunger and thirst for the "*divrei Hashem*" – for the truth and nothing but the truth. Rav Kook wrote of the "chutzpah," the insolence, that Chazal predicted would be rampant before the arrival of Moshiach. The time has come when many are simply refusing to settle for merely bits and pieces of the truth. If this demand is not satisfied, if our schools and homes ignore or misinterpret this hungry chutzpah as rejection, it will claim countless more victims.

"The human soul relishes sensation, not only if it is a pleasant feeling but for the very experience of stimulation. Sooner sadness or some deep pain rather than the boredom of no stimulation. People will watch distressing scenes and listen to heartrending stories just to get stimulation. Such is human nature. So he who is clever will fulfill this need with passionate prayer and Torah learning. But the soul whose divine service is without emotion will have to find stimulation elsewhere. It will either be driven to cheap – even forbidden – sensation or it will become emotionally ill from lack of stimulation." (*Tzav V'Zeruz, To Heal the Soul*, page 23)

It is easy to blame the Internet for all our problems. It is much more difficult and painful to consider the possibility that we have failed to communicate the true inner joy and light of Yiddishkeit to a generation that is anxious and ready to hear it.

Recently, a serious, G-d-fearing young man, who teaches math in a yeshiva high school, told me that his students shared with him (though not with their Rebbe) their skepticism about G-d's existence and the truth of Torah. Many simply admitted that they do not really believe in anything. Mind you, this is an afternoon, secular class. The boys had spent the entire morning engaged in sophisticated "*lomdus*," (Talmudic analysis) and by four o'clock in the afternoon they are candidly sharing with a teacher their doubts in Torah MeSinai (divinity of the Torah). The teacher, a *Baal Teshuva* who fought long and hard to become who he is, shared with his class some of the thoughts and

insights that inspired him on his journey to Yiddishkeit. The boys were very inspired, and asked to continue the discussion after school hours. The teacher told me that he went to the administrator but was told that these are issues that are best left to the home. Unlike him, he was told, these boys come from frum homes and have a "*mesorah*" (tradition) about these matters (i.e., they can be presumed to have each picked up the correct beliefs they need). Those who are intimately familiar with the situation know that this is far from an isolated or extreme incident.

What is to be done? As the question is posed: "Are there any proven methods to inspire observant Jews experiencing a gap in religious enthusiasm?" The answer, I believe, is a resounding YES! We must pursue two approaches in meeting this challenge: one experiential and one educational.

Rav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik zt"l, often agonized over what he felt was his inability to impart the emotional world of Yiddishkeit to his students. In a lecture delivered in 1968, he said,

"In the past, this great experience of the tradition was not handed down from generation to generation through the medium of words. It was absorbed through osmosis; somehow, through silence. We used to observe. Today in America, however, and in the Western world, this is completely lost. The father cannot pass it on to his son. The father does not possess these emotions, because he never observed and experienced them. He cannot expect his son to receive something he himself does not possess. Therefore, it is up to the Yeshiva and the teacher to open up the emotional world of Judaism to the student..."

In this lecture, Rav Soloveitchik insisted that the only way to inspire the observant is by having them actually observe inspired Yiddishkeit in the parents, rabbis, teachers, and mentors of the generation.

"...I do not believe that we can afford to be as reluctant, modest, and shy today as we were in the past about describing our relationship with the Almighty. If I want to transmit my experiences, I have to transmit myself, my own heart. How can I merge my soul and personality with the students? It is very difficult. Yet it is exactly what is lacking on the American scene" (*The Rav*. R' Aaron Rakefet, Vol. 2, pages 168-169).

In essence, there needs to be a fundamental reconstruction of the traditional model of the teacher/rabbi.

On another occasion, the Rav explained that, "the disconnection of modern man from living examples of religious experience has made self-revelation an educational necessity." It is fascinating that the most sought-after speakers and teachers generally are not known for their scholarship. Their effectiveness is in their ability to inspire – not by dazzling their audiences with brilliant insights, but by sharing their own experiences and struggles in Yiddishkeit. Self-revelation has become an absolute educational necessity.

Obviously, this is difficult to implement. How can a rebbe or rabbi transform himself into such a person? There are no guidelines for this; it is usually a matter of one's personal charisma. Nevertheless, there must be constant encouragement in this area. Again, it would be helpful to make use of the methods commonly used in Jewish outreach: storytelling, music, shabbatons or other such venues of inspiration. All of these have proven to be astonishingly effective in the world of kiruv, and the observant are desperately in need of this warm, exciting brand of experiential Yiddishkeit.

On the educational front, our institutions must begin to bring the Infinite into the four Amos (cubits) of the classroom and of the shul. Rebbeim, morahs, and rabbonim must be trained to impart the heart and soul of Yiddishkeit in a lucid and inspiring way. There are many extraordinary *mashpiim* and *mashpios* (influential role models) whose talents have been mostly tapped by the world of Jewish outreach. We (the "FFB's") must admit that many of our rabbis and educators are simply unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the language of *emunah*. There seems to be an expectation that *emunah* will be miraculously conveyed to *baalei batim* and students by means of some mysterious osmosis that is perhaps complemented by an occasional shabbaton or seminar. But, it ain't happening.

The thirteen fundamental principles of faith must become a basic part of the curriculum in all schools and shuls. G-d must be brought back into our institutions and into our homes. It makes no difference if one place prefers a Litvishe G-d and the other a Chassidische G-d. Open and frank discussions about faith and doubt must be encouraged – not feared and stymied. To ignore these critical dimensions of religious growth by claiming that it would supplant the traditional format of *chinuch* is, I submit, a grave error. All the regular Torah learning must surely continue. If anything, such learning will be energized and uplifted when taught to individuals who are struggling to get to the bottom of what this whole undertaking known as Yiddishkeit is about.

It would be wonderful if *seforim* such as Nesivos Sholom, Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh (Rav Itamar Schwartz) and those of R' Shimshon Pincus, zt"l, would be adapted as a means of developing a curriculum to teach *emunah*, beginning even with young children.

I have often been asked whether it is really possible to teach *emunah* as a subject. The answer is no. A rabbi, rebbe, teacher, and parent must begin with the belief that *emunah* is inherent to the Jewish Soul. The child/student /congregant is already a *maamin* (believer). Rather than actually being taught, faith already lies in the *neshama*,

but must be nurtured and drawn out through Torah, *tefilah*, and *kiyum hamitzvos*. There is a great thirst for *pnimiyus* HaTorah (the inner light of Torah) that cannot be ignored. It is a healthy sign of revival that must be used as a tool of inspiration in classrooms and congregations. We must begin.

I conclude with a story that my daughter, Suri, shared with me. It is apocryphal, but it hits the mark. Years ago in London, a poetry recital was taking place in a large auditorium. The finalists in the competition were given one last poem to recite – the twenty third Psalm. The obvious winner was a young gentleman whose rendition of the Psalm was perfect. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want... He restores my soul... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” The audience responded with thunderous applause.

Suddenly, an elderly, Eastern European Jew called out, “Judges! Would it be alright if I had a chance to say the Psalm?” The judges were amused and invited him up to the stage. In his heavy accent, the gentleman made his way through the *kapitel* (chapter). A reverent hush fell over the crowd, and many people were moved to tears. The winner received his prize but followed the old man out to the street. “Rabbi, you know that you really deserve the prize.” “Not at all,” he responded. “I wasn’t competing. You did a fine job and it belongs to you.” The young man continued: “But rabbi, perhaps you could explain to me why it is that when I concluded the Psalm the audience cheered, but when you concluded many people were crying?” The alter Yid replied: “The difference between you and me is that I know the Shepherd.”

Hopefully, the recitation of our Yiddishkeit will soon be accompanied by an honest – if somewhat accented and imperfect – outpouring of the soul. The *Ribbono Shel Olam* is waiting for us, and the prize is redemption, waiting right there in His outstretched hand.

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