

## **Nourishment for the Neshama**

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### **Reflections on electricity in Elul 5770**

The electrical power was knocked out early by torrential downpours accompanied by severe thunderstorms. Thursday, the day many of us prepare for Shabbos, is not a great day to be without electrical power. By noon the power came back on, for about one hour and then boom, another tree fell across the entire street and the wires are below it and we sit again in the dark.

What happened in my personal reality? Imagine all the benefit that we get from electrical power. Our modern lives are totally dependent on it. Without power, cash registers don't work, computer systems, air conditioning, refrigeration and gasoline stations cannot operate. A drop of electricity which we learned to harness from the example of lightening has changed the world. Even though it comes and goes, its benefits are so great that we have said YES, we choose to live our lives dependent on this utility, because it is such a huge contributor to quality of life.

As I came back in my house when the power was briefly on, I felt in awe of Hashem, Who gave us the intelligence to be able to utilize electrical power in so many ways. Yet it is He Who is behind every current and every electron that flows.

Why do I mention this? How is this relevant?

Before I knew whether I had electrical power or not at home, I made a plan for Shabbos in a nearby area that has electrical power. "Hi, if we don't get our power back, can we come for Shabbos? I don't think I can make Shabbos without electricity." Of course my friend invited us graciously. As I reflected on that, I realized what I just said..I can't make Shabbos without electricity? How could that be? All the thousands of years that people lived without electricity not having it was not an obstacle to having Shabbos. And what is more, we are not supposed to turn electricity on and off on Shabbos – is it really true that I cannot make Shabbos without electricity? The truth is that I cannot make the comfortable, enjoyable Shabbos that we enjoy in our modern homes.

Rabbi Tatz tells a story about several prisoners in a jail. Imagine that there are three and two manage to dig a tunnel and escape. The jailer comes in and beats the one who remains. How does this make sense, Rabbi Tatz asks? He explains that the two who left knew it was a jail and although they broke out, the jail in a sense was still a jail. The one who could have left but stayed totally destroyed the jail in its conceptual sense – it isn't a jail if a person thinks of it as the reality and that there is nothing more.

If a tiny amount of electrical current provided from Hashem's Infinite storehouse of power can improve our lives so very much, I began to think, what would it be like if Hashem, Who loves us, gave us access to even more of Himself?

The Nefesh HaChayim tells us that there is only Hashem in this world, that the entire world rests on Hashem and cannot exist if He did not will it to exist at every moment. There simply is no other power! He is all powerful and everything in the universe including the universe itself is contained within Hashem and filled with Hashem so that Hashem is literally everywhere and in everything. Is it possible that we are so content with a little electricity that we don't even realize that we may not be yearning and seeking for His Sovereignty to be known? Have our modern lives made us content with this world enough that we have forgotten to yearn?

Yes, we live in our separate realities and electrical power is very important and urgent. But the moshel is that it is a mere glimpse of what is being done for us at every moment in every system, from our bodily functions to the solar system to nature. Our lives with electricity take us to a world where we, in our comfort, could forget that we are in a world where yearning for Hashem to show His sovereignty is imperative...it is one of the thirteen principles of faith that we wait for the Moshiach. Without electricity, we think of this. With it, we move into our blessed Shabbos with the comforts and modern technological cooking tools and utensils to make Shabbos like we know it. Could I really not make Shabbos without it? It would be Shabbos with challah, grape juice, salt, and cold cuts on ice and fruit. We could sit in the dark, with no air conditioning, and have three day candles on the table for light. It would still be Shabbos and understanding what makes it Shabbos is the eternal idea. It might even be the best Shabbos we would ever have, because we would be far closer to comprehending the rest that Hashem enjoys when we refrain from work.

Hashem in His love gave us electricity to make our Shabbosim so comfortable and beautiful! Perhaps we might remember to yearn to see His sovereignty in the world as if we were not so comfortable! After all, the world that we are in that is so full of bloodshed, brutality, and disaster is hardly a world of comfort. Let us see our world for what it is without feeling that the happiness of this world is what we are here for – rather, let us make ourselves happy knowing that it continues only for our benefit, until such time as Hashem chooses to redeem us, may it be before the end of 5770 and may we be prepared so that, when the redemption arrives, we are not utterly shamed by hearing that, as evidenced by our not really yearning for Hashem's sovereignty, we did not properly recognize "the jail" .