



OUR TRUE STRENGTH LIES IN SPIRITUALITY

*Chovas Hatalmidim – Chapter Four of a new commentary by
Harav Yitzchok Reuven Rubin*

There is being lost and then there is total despair and confusion. We were travelling back from London late at night, for some reason the powers that be decided that this would be the perfect time to close the motorway for “needed repairs”. There were no lights on this stretch of road and we found ourselves being directed to roads that could only be considered worthy for two-lane traffic in a horse and cart. The most frustrating thing was that the signs were confusing, and the GPS was not working. Imagine that, living in a first world country and the GPS goes on the blink! This wasn't only our situation, we soon realised we were part of a long line of cars following one another totally lost. You could see everyone was looking at the screen of their GPS gizmos and shrugging their shoulders as we did ours. We were now somewhere that seemed to be close to the Antarctic, when suddenly a light lit up the sky, signs of life could be seen and the whole herd of lost cars and lorries followed one another back to civilization. At the darkest moment, when we were totally lost with no idea where we were going, one could feel a sense of utter stomach-churning panic. What was happening? How could such a steady rock-solid piece of technology just die? It was no longer showing us a way out, it's as if it decided to leave our whole wandering group of machines to fend for ourselves. We had no tools, we were like children, seeking solace and hope.

Our small drama only focused my mind on a much greater threat. Many of our children have created a bond with a world that offers all the answers in the guise of technological knowhow. On so many levels we have become lazy, our minds unused to really working. Set the destination and just let the voice from outer space direct you. The Chovos Hatalmidim

בס"ד



Adass Aish Kodesh

Harav Y. R. Ruben Shlita
36 Bury Old Road
Prestwich – Manchester
M25 0FT



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sees lethargy and laziness as our greatest enemy.

“Laziness is probably the most harmful and widespread ailment among young people.”

The Rebbe sees this tendency as extremely dangerous. Lazy souls become embedded with the dust of sloppy thinking. Nothing in life can be gained without effort and focus.

“The amount of effort expended in acquiring something is proportionate to the worth of that which is being acquired.”

Yiddishkeit is the lifeblood of the Jewish soul, its warmth is the source from which we flower. What is Yiddishkeit? It is that certain something, that taste of mitzvos done with a bit more energy and love. Our world has become prepackaged with everything set in stone. Our young are measured by standards set with no place for their individuality. The result is that we live sterile lives with little spiritual effort.

The young souls today are lost in very many ways. Their inner voice cries out for direction that is suited to who they are, yet we abuse them by handing them nothing more than sterile notions of what they must become. They quickly become lost in the darkness, joining a caravan of other lost souls seeking salvation from the technological toys we have created for them. They can't read the signs, it is too dark for them to decipher what is the best way forward. The truth is we all seek to come home, to the open arms of Hashem, yet we have never really needed to extend ourselves, so we have become lazy.

Our children need vibrancy beyond the box ticking existence we have created for them. Weaning them off from their lethargy won't come easily, it will take parents and yes, grandparents to show them the way forward. We can't sit glued to our smartphone and really believe the kids will be any different.

The machines will let us down, the GPS will fail, it was ever thus. Yidden are meant to live beyond all this, ours is a mesorah created without material limitations. Our true strength lies in our vibrant spirituality, that which has given us focus throughout our long golus. Our youth innately feel this, and they turn angry because their souls are frustrated.

The Rebbe tells his young readers that he wants them to become engaged in their yiddishkeit “not as a worker paid to fulfil a task without any enthusiasm”. He pleads for them to wake themselves up spiritually.

The Rebbe strove to ignite the young, to do so in a positive way that showed them a path forwards that was designed by their Creator. It is our role in the miraculous chain of Jewish history to make certain our children are not the missing links, but instead they become a vibrant connection to a future brimming with life and fervour.

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