



*IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR FATHERS*  
**KEYNOTE TO FEELING THE IMMORTAL CONNECTION**  
*Pirkei Avos*

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Lichen Planus. Hopefully you have never heard of this condition. Let me explain it in the words of an eminent dermatologist: Lichen Planus is a chronic condition. Can last up to 2 to 3 years. The itching is intense and unrelenting.

Some patients can develop ulcerations (it looks like he has it). I would treat with strong topical cortisone creams, One can add a short course of oral cortisone to get over the crisis stage.

The patient in parentheses is yours truly, and besides the itching there is a constant burning sensation. It's not contagious but to the sufferer it quickly becomes all consuming. It presents itself in a number of ways and there is no known cause or cure. Hashem has seen fit that I should suffer with it. Why am I burdening you, my loyal readership, with this? Because I know nothing is for naught and I must learn from this situation and perhaps share some of my thoughts. After all I write a column named A Rabbis Journal so I guess this should find a place in it.

It is also close to Rosh Hashonoh so what better time to do so?

One thing is certain: the rash on my hands doesn't stop burning and the cuts it has caused make even typing these few words a painful experience. I will not be able to blow shofar this year, something I have done for more than four decades because my lips are also included in this spiral of discomfort. So I hope that through these words I can awaken hearts to the message that the shofar entails.

Since this skin eruption started I have been very tired. I asked a consultant if this has anything to do with Lichen Planus, and he explained that the constant pain keeps nagging on one's brain, drawing away energy that wears you down, It's subliminal, but always there.

Chazal explain that we are all gifted with neshomas that are pure and holy. The challenge we all face is that our body is the garment that carries this precious light and its makeup often obscures the

needs of our holy core. Like anything painful, material aspirations and yearnings gnaw away at our being, obscuring what is real. We can often seem to be going through life never hearing our souls cry because our material drives create so much noise that we don't even realize our innate kedusha.

Some will go into these holy days seeking forgiveness and support at merely a material level, whilst never really discovering their true need. The neshoma, which is pure and holy, lays under all the detritus of our everyday existence and so is silenced by the fog of the routine battle for life. Our goal at this time of year should be directed at touching that inner core of good through silencing the noise and sidelining the extraneous thoughts that keep us from being connected to Hashem through our neshoma.

We have been learning Avos in this column throughout the summer months. Its richness lays in the extraordinary kaleidoscope of lessons that it holds for us. It speaks of the daily challenges that are the stuff of human existence. After each week's lessons the custom is to recite the following:

*Rabbi Chananiah ben Akashiah said: "The Holy One, blessed be He, wished to make the people of Israel meritorious; therefore he gave them Torah and mitzvos in an abundant measure -- as it is written ([Isaiah 42:21](#)): 'G-d desired, for the sake of [Israel's] righteousness, to make the Torah great and glorious.'"*

We all have certain human weaknesses and shortcomings. But our soul is called a cheilek Eloka mima'al, "a portion of Hashem". This is the gift that lays at the centre of our existence. Hashem gave us the Torah and mitzvos so that if done with a fullness in our heart we can cut through the static and connect ourselves with the pure and good that is our soul. Our task in this life is to find that unique place and allow its voice to connect us with Hashem. This connection is called *deveikus* and it is what our *tikun* is about. How to get to this connection is different for each of us; we all have different trials and tribulations, but we also have the ability to find the focus needed to reach our truthful goal. Separating the noise and finding the core is no easy matter; total *deveikus* with Hashem is to be in a position of perfection, but Hashem gave us this soul, and doing His Will can guide us to this special place.

Rosh Hashonoh is a gateway to restoring the energy of the first day of man's creation. Before any sin, Adam stood with no blemish, illuminated by the total kedusha that was his perfection. We must focus on our innate goodness, on that neshoma which is pure. This can allow us to feel that *deveikus*, and facilitate a clarity. We can turn away from the dross that plagues us and touch our real self, reaffirming the state of that original man's first appearance.

Yes, we may seem worn down from the cacophony of our mundane existence, but the shofar can blast through it all and allow us clarity. Yieden are holy; they carry a neshoma straight from Hashem. The Eibishter reaches out to us with the sound of the shofar that was first heard at Har Sinai. It is His mitzvos, His Torah, which will bring us to where we want to be.

So my hands continue to burn and itch. In truth, we are all carrying some form of irritation. Just push it aside if you can, listen to the whine from your soul, and feel the immortal connection.

May we all see a Kesiva Vechasima Tova, with yeshuos and gezunt.