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## Mesillas Yesharim - The General Solution To Laziness

מסילת ישרים ח"ג עמ' לה - לו

The **Mesillas Yesharim** writes: **“The general rule is, that a person always needs to strengthen himself and increase his zeal to do the mitzvos, and throw away the laziness that is preventing him.”**

What is the way in which one should go about the avodah of overcoming laziness? How indeed can a person inspire himself and overcome his laziness?

A person needs to **get used to doing things**, not because his **obligated** to do those things - but rather because he **wants to go against** his lazy nature.

For example, if a person is sitting by the table and he suddenly notices that there is a fork there instead of a spoon, he might say to himself, “Okay, so there’s a fork there instead of a spoon. What’s so bad?” But he should get up anyway and switch the fork for a spoon, specifically so he can overcome his laziness. He shouldn’t do so “because it’s a *mitzvah*.” No, it’s not a *mitzvah*. But do it anyway, because it’s worth it just to overcome laziness!

After a person begins to become aware that there are certain things he doesn’t do simply because he is lazy, he should now take this a step further and begin to do actions that counter his laziness. He should do things even when he doesn’t feel like doing them, simply because he wants to overcome his lazy nature.

Of course, it’s better if he overcomes his laziness when it comes to the area of doing *mitzvos*, but even if it the act in question is not a *mitzvah*, he should still force himself to go do an action, whenever he’d rather not do it out of laziness.

A person should get used to do this exercise, doing it for 20 times, 100 times, or even 1000 times - doing things that he doesn’t feel like doing.

Obviously, a person should only do this sensibly. A person should not derive himself from sleep for 24 hours when he feels that he’s tired. What we mean is that when it comes to things that aren’t a problem for us to do, and the only reason why we are not doing it is because of laziness, it is these things which we should go against our nature to do.

We gave the example of getting up one's seat to go change the spoon for a fork. There is no one who is physically incapable of getting from his seat to get up and change the spoon with a fork, and the only reason why a person wouldn't do it is because of laziness. It is an example like this in which a person should deliberately go against his lazy nature.

Of course, there will be some things that will be harder to do than others, and our laziness is heavier when it comes to those things. But if it's an easy thing to do, such as picking up a piece of paper from the floor, then force yourself to pick it, even though normally you don't exert yourself to bend down and pick it up. Slowly go against your nature in these kinds of scenarios which don't take up that much energy from you, and you will see that your laziness will weaken with time. You will then discover that even things you thought were difficult to do were actually not that difficult.

There are stories of our Gedolim that even on the last day of their life, when they were utterly weak, they would still exert themselves physically to do certain things, because they suspected themselves of laziness.

Understandably, it is a very subtle matter to know if the reason why we don't do something is as sign of laziness, or if we simply can't do it. For that reason, only the greatest tzaddikim were able to make this subtle reflection and sense that if it was coming from a degree of laziness. The tzaddikim were able to discern such a thing, because they had purified themselves so much from materialism that they were able to sense if they had the smallest trace of laziness left in them. But for most people, the avodah is, generally, that a person should get used to doing things that he is really capable of doing, and the only reason why he doesn't do them is because of laziness; he should go against his nature and force himself to do those things, so that he can counter his laziness.<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> See the Rav's series on [Fixing Laziness](#) <sup>[1]</sup> for a more detailed approach.

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**Source:** <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/mesillas-yesharim-general-solution-laziness>

**Links**

<sup>[1]</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/sugya/daes.laziness>