**Tools to Improve Concentration during Tefillah (Part 1)**

**A Pre-Tefillah Exercise**

**Mishnah (B’rachos 30b):** *The Chasidim Harishonim used to wait an hour before davening, daven for an hour, and wait for an hour after davening.*

1. Relax. Breath. Let go of stress.
2. Become mindful and present. “Observe your thoughts”. Allow external thoughts to pass.
   1. *From a letter printed in the Chassidic classic Derech Hamelech (The Book of the Royal Path), by Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira of Piacetzna (1889-1943), also known as the “Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto.”:*

The ego constitutes a barrier to the heavenly influx. Thus, if one's thoughts and intellect are active, it is difficult for the heavenly flow to penetrate… Thus our goal is to come to a sleep-consciousness while we are awake. That is to say, we wish to stem the flow of thoughts and impulses that is endemic to the working of the mind. This flow of thoughts is highly associative, and it is very difficult for a man to extricate himself from it… First **one must simply watch for a set period of time, observing his thoughts.** He eventually will notice that the mind is emptying, his thoughts are slowing a bit from their habitual flow. **He then must repeat a single verse or phrase, such as “Hashem Elokeichem Emes,” in order to insert a thought of holiness into his now open mind.**

* 1. *From “The Happiness Trap”:*

ACT (Acceptance and Commitment) Therapy teaches a concept called “diffusion.” In diffusion you bring up a thought that bothers you or upsets you. Then, you take that thought and rephrase it by adding in from of it “I am having the thought that….” Or “I notice that I am having the thought that…” Or sing it to yourself in a happy song. Or giving it a name. Or talking to the thought, saying Thank you to it, or Is that right? Or imagine it in a silly voice like Mickey Mouse, Shrek or Homer Simpson. You probably found that by inserting those phrases you instantly felt some distance from the thought, as if you “stepped back” from it.

1. Think about your relationship with Hashem and how much He loves you.
2. Take a minute to think about what you are davening for. What is weighing on your heart?

**Tools to Improve Concentration during Tefillah (Part 2)**

**During Tefillah**

1. Find lines in tefillah that inspire you. How and why do they speak to you? Spend time on those lines. Create your Tefillah highlight reel.
2. Raise your voice. Use singing and chanting.
3. Use your body. Sometimes it helps to be completely still. Sometimes swaying. Sometimes dancing. Always high energy.
   1. **Mesilat Yesharim (Chapter 7):** One whose soul burns in the service of his Creator will surely not idle in the performance of His mitzvoth, but his movements will be like the quick movements of a fire; he will not rest or be still until the deed has been completed. *Furthermore, just as zeal can result from an inner burning so can it create one.* That is, one who perceives a quickening of his outer movements in the performance of a mitzvah conditions himself to experience a flaming inner movement, through which longing and desire will continually grow. If, however, he is sluggish in the movement of his limbs, the movement of his spirit will die down and be extinguished.
4. Use imagery and visualizations.
   1. What images come to you when you think of these words?
   2. Visualize what it will be like when your Tefillos are answered. Remember that *Emunah* attracts *Shefa*!
   3. Visualize that you are standing in the Beis HaMikdash.
5. Try different things depending on your mood and change it up according to the need:
   1. How you hold your hands?
   2. Siddur or by heart?
   3. Fast or slow?
   4. More or less?
6. When you feel that you are losing steam, go back to the “Pre-Tefillah Exercise.”