



DEALING WITH TRAUMA

Q: There are people who have developed all kinds of mental/emotional issues because they went through traumatic events. Is this coming from one of the soul faculties, or is it fear from something external?

A: Trauma is an outside event which gave birth to inner turmoil inside the soul's faculties. Many people went through all kinds of events of something scary, and most people who went through such events were able to gradually return the inner stability which they had before they experienced the event.

But there are those who are still shaking from an event that happened many years ago. They haven't yet freed themselves from it. They felt such strong fear when the event happened that it jolted their soul – and even though the danger has long passed, they remain with the dysfunction that was wreaked on their soul, which they didn't heal from yet. This causes them to re-experience the fear, again and again.

A simple example is anyone who has lived in Eretz Yisrael when the wars broke out - unless he has complete bitachon, or unless he was not mentally stable, anyone felt heightened fear during that period. But the fear was only temporary. When the war ended, most people went back to routine and continued to live healthy, stable lives. But there were a few who became so afraid then that it jolted them at their core, disrupting all of their emotional balance. Long after the war was over and the danger passed, they remained with the tremors of fear from it. Sometimes this trauma causes a person to imagine fearful events that don't exist. He might wake up in middle of the night from a bad dream that a war has broken out – reliving the event that happened in the past but which is no longer in our world or in our time. The imagination makes him relive all these events which are long gone, and it also tweaks the details by piecing together all the scary images in his mind, all a product of his impaired imagination. Sometimes the fear is generated from an

outer factor. For example, if he becomes aware of a new threat to his security and he becomes a bit afraid about this. Although it is just a small fear, it is enough to upset his emotional balance and create a severe reaction of fear, more than double the amount of fear than normal people have.

Q: The Rav spoke about going to an “inner chamber in the soul”, for respite. The Rav brought an example from Gedolei Yisrael (the Chazon Ish, and the Sfas Emes). This is a “room of the heart” where one can find great emunah in Hashem – but is this accessible to people who are weak in their emunah – people like us? Do we have access to such a ‘room’ in ourselves?

A: Just like anything else, the inner world of our soul has levels to it. There are different levels of depth and internal expansiveness. It is true that the holy tzaddikim had a vast and deep internal world of the soul inside them, which peaked at their room of “emunah” that they had on their inside – for the room of “emunah” is the innermost room in the soul. But what's relevant for us to know is that we do not have to be on that great level of emunah which they had, in order to access this space. Before the innermost room in the soul, there are many rooms that come before that – and we can live in those “rooms” and be above all the experiences of pain on this world. It is enough for one to reveal the ability to enter deeply into himself and become disconnected from all outer stimuli. Such a room can be discovered by any of us – within ourselves – if we truly want to reach it.

When it comes to emunah, there are many levels to it – it has rooms within rooms. Many people have a space of emunah in them, but the level and depth of emunah is not equal in every person. Gan Eden is full of souls who do not have complete emunah. Understandably, there are no souls in Gan Eden who deny the basic 13 principles of emunah. There are many good souls in Gan Eden who learned Torah and kept most of the mitzvos, and each of them receives his reward in Gan Eden according to the level that he served his Creator - but those souls who are

far from complete emunah are not able to enjoy the radiance of emunah. There are souls who have some level of emunah, and that is enough for them to enter into the root of emunah in their souls and to be disconnected from the world. But it's possible for people to all have the same level of emunah, yet they can't find the way to enter into themselves.

Even though they have emunah, they live "outside" of themselves. In contrast to this, there are people who have a lesser degree of emunah, but they have more of an ability to enter into their souls and separate from the experiences of this world, to separate from the outer "rooms", in comparison to the rooms of emunah which they reveal inside their souls.

The general rule is that just as in the physical world there are levels (valleys, mountains, trenches), and just as there are different chambers in Gan Eden for each tzadik according to the level and greatness that he reached, so does a person's soul have places and rooms to it. Before a person reaches the deeper rooms in his soul, he can still enter into other rooms of his soul, and when he finds himself in them and lives in them, he won't be found as much on the external world outside of him, and there, he will be protected from all the pain and fears of this world. It is not possible to explain it more clearly than this - any person whose soul is already opened and who experiences an inner place in himself is well-aware of what we are describing here.

SCARY DREAMS

Q: I had a very scary dream in which....[details omitted]. I wanted to know what the meaning of it is.

A: It is not worth it to be involved with this. In order to figure out our dreams, we need to sort out our fantasies. Besides for that factor, most dreams are coming from different foods eaten that day, which become combined with the impaired faculty of imagination.

RECOVERING FROM ABUSE

Q: In my past, I was terribly molested.... I developed many phobias because of it.... I had gone through so much therapy, but still have so many issues.... What should I do?

A: Return to emunah and t'mimus (faith and whole-

heartedness) with Him (Hashem). Feel that He is your Father, Who loves you very much. Feel this absolutely, inside you, and deeply. It is the greatest love and trust, more than any other love and trust on this world. It is the true solution to all phobias. Because by feeling that you are found in Hashem's trusty Hands, Who protects you from all harm, and nothing can harm you unless He wills it. It is good to review the Nefesh HaChaim's words about Ain Od Milvado, which protects a person from all harm [see Nefesh HaChaim III, 12]. This is the inner solution to any painful situations in life!

Since you have already gone through much therapy and it didn't help you that much, you should now turn to the solution that is the most fundamental and genuine.

I CAN'T DEAL WITH LIFE

Q: On Yom Kippur I cried from the depths of my heart to Hashem as I uttered the 13 middos harachamim, begging Hashem that troubles should not befall me, and I cried so much. I didn't even have kavanah at all for what I was davening for, I just kept crying. Is it possible that just by crying alone, I was able to circumvent any nisyonos (difficulties) from coming to me? I simply do not have the strength for any more nisyonos. I have no desire or will to just accept any more nisyonos by trying to have more emunah.

I just want to see the light already, in all that has been happening to me from the last couple of years.

A: Whenever your davening is accompanied by tears, especially during the Yomim Noraim and especially on Yom Kippur, there is special power of such tefillos to tear up any harsh decrees, as Chazal taught. It is not guaranteed to erase the decree entirely [but your tears during davening always have a significantly good effect for you].

You will always need to live a life of emunah (faith in G-d), whether you are in a more pleasant situation or a less pleasant situation. Build a life of pure, unquestioning trust in Hashem, and it should not matter to what your life is looking like, whether you are experiencing a lot of nisyonos or not as much. You want to see the "light" already, but the main thing you really need to experience is the light of emunah!

COMPILED FROM THE BILVAVI ARCHIVE OF Q&A