



PNIMIYUS OF YOSEF & YEHUDAH

QUESTION

The Rav explains that Yehudah (who came from Leah) received the “temimus” (emunah, tefillah) aspect of Yaakov Avinu, whereas Yosef (who came from Rochel) received the daas/chochmah (wisdom, Torah) of Yaakov.

Why then did Yehudah sell Yosef? Isn't that the opposite of temimus? It would have made more sense for daas/chochmah (Yosef) to feel threatened from temimus (Yehudah) since the logic of daas cannot handle the earnestness of temimus.

ANSWER

Yehudah [in his temimus, sold Yosef because he] thought he was saving the brothers from Yosef [whom he perceived as a danger].

QUESTION

It is known that Esav will be defeated in the future through the power of Yosef, and as it is written, “And the house of Yosef will be a flame, and the house of Esav will be like straw.” According to one view in the Midrash, Esav was killed by Yehudah [and according to the Gemara, Esav was killed by Chushim son of Don]. Why was Esav killed by Yehudah (according to the Midrash) and not by Yosef?

ANSWER

Rashi says that the name of Esav implies asuy v'gomer, “made and complete”, meaning that Esav represents the evil completion, the evil that counters the complete havayah.

Yehudah was the holy havayah to counter the evil, pseudo-havayah of Esav. And Esav is also countered by Yosef, who is called the tosefes, the addition, and the “addition” of Yosef reveals that Esav is not made and complete.

PHYSICAL SUFFERING

QUESTION

I don't understand what the purpose of [all my] physical suffering is. What is the reason for it? I am trying to learn Torah and do teshuvah. How can it be that I didn't get a kaparah (atonement) by now?? Chazal state that “There is no suffering without sin” [but I have suffered enough by now, so why are my previous sins still causing me to deserve any further suffering]?

ANSWER

One needs a tikkun (soul repair) for sins of his current lifetime, as well as for sins of a previous lifetime. One also needs a tikkun for some of the evils that have been committed since the beginning of history, and each soul has a specific role in this universal tikkun. In addition to this factor, there is also the suffering of tzaddikim (the righteous), the higher and more elevated souls who suffer from simply being on This World and enduring all that it entails, which contains both external and internal suffering. These higher souls are a “spark of the Shechinah” and their pain is part of the “pain of the Shechinah”, and an example of this was the suffering of the sage Rabbi Akiva [at the hands of the Romans].

REACTING TO OTHER'S SUFFERING

QUESTION

In shul, there are people who come from all over the world (mostly Eretz Yisrael) who, after davening is over, they will give a bang on the bimah and start pouring out all of their troubles. We keep hearing story after story, of all the different tzaros (tribulations) that people have. There are so many different illnesses, Rachmana Litzlan, that people are suffering from. People are also beset by crushing debts, with no means of livelihood. Others are going through many years of treatment in fertility issues

and they need a lot of money to cover the expenses. Others had a fire in their homes. There are, Rachmana Lit-zlan, all kinds of tragic circumstances. Each story that we hear breaks our hearts! Each story is worse than the one before it. Nothing more needs to be said, because the details are too much to go into. It's simply heavy on our hearts and it is difficult to hear of all these tragic circumstances that so many people are going through. Even to hear these stories on a very superficial level, without becoming too emotionally connected, is too much for the mind and heart to bear. The stories also come in the mail to my house, and each story is followed by a more tragic story.

I have alternating reactions to this. Sometimes, I react with indifference, because I feel like I will go crazy if I become too emotionally connected to the stories. At other times, I become very emotionally connected to the stories that I hear or read about, and then my heart breaks. I become sort of "frozen" for a while afterwards. I feel so pained from these stories I am hearing about that I eventually feel kind of paralyzed, sad, and uncommu-nicative. I can't learn properly for some time. It becomes hard for me to be focused in my thoughts during my Torah learning session, and my chavrusa wonders what's wrong with me.

When I tell him what's bothering me, he will usually say to me something like "What's with you? Just stop thinking about all of this and just learn. Learning Torah brings all salvation. You need to get a grip in yourself. It's the yetzer hora to get so emotional like this." Intellectu-ally, I know he's right, but my heart isn't at peace with it. In the meantime, I can't think straight, and my emotions overtake me.

I am aware that the Rav explains in "Getting To Know Your Feelings" that a person can control his emotions through the ability of daas. But how exactly do I acquire this power of daas and prevent myself from getting scat-tered through my emotions? I will be very happy to receive help from the Rav about this.

ANSWER

On the superficial level, one should avoid hearing or reading about tragic circumstances as much as he can, and only to the extent that he can handle emotionally. On one's own level, one should join with another's pain

and also with the pain of the Shechinah. Anything that a person cannot handle emotionally is beyond his current level, and it can only be comprehended by him intellec-tually. Alternatively, one can temporarily allow himself to remain callous to all of the stories that he hears, until he eventually develops his inner world, and after that, he should try hard to repair this callousness. However, ide-ally, one should still try to avoid hearing or reading about these things in the first place. This is what the Chofetz Chaim did [in order to avoid becoming callous].

On a more inner level, the more that one's inner world becomes opened to the person, the ability [to remain balanced] is not simply a kind of thought or a feeling to have, but an internal "place" in oneself. Just as a person is in a noisy place can enter into a room inside a building and he hears less noise, and the further he enters into the rooms inside, the more he is separated from the noise on the outside, so can a person enter into a "room" inside the soul, where one can be "alone", separated from every-thing that is taking place outside.

One needs to keep alternating back and forth, between being "alone" versus being involved with the outside world. One needs to be involved with others [which is outside of himself] when there is a need for it, and to the extent that he can handle, based on his current level.

In addition, a person also needs to develop a mind that is clear and strong. Through this, one can attain a balance between his emotions and his thoughts. Just as one's emotions can be greatly opened, so can the mind be greatly opened. The mind and the emotions each bal-ance the other out. After this [developing the mind and attaining a balance between the mind and the emotions], one acquires the ability to "enter into" the mind as well, as the ability to "exit" the mind and thereby enter into the emotions.

But this should be done with conscious awareness [of either entering the mind in order to leave one's emotion-al state, or to exit the mind and enter into an emotional state]. But in order to reach this ability, one needs to develop the power of the mind, as mentioned above.

Correspondingly, one also needs to develop the ability of "quieting" [to quiet the mind or the emotions], and this can done through emptying out the thoughts [as discussed in "Getting To Know Your Soul"]. One there-

by acquires the ability to enter into his mind [to be in an intellectual, objective state, as opposed to an emotional state] and to exit his mind [to be in his emotional state, as opposed to his intellectual, objective state].

"MILD" COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR

QUESTION

How can a religious Jewish woman deal with the problem of O.C.D (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), from a practical Torah perspective? This is concerning a case where the compulsive behaviors are not that extreme, but which are bothersome to live with. The person in question has tried different approaches and there has been some improvement. I am looking for a complete solution to the issue, even if it involves a long-term process.

ANSWER

The root of this issue is due to an imbalance in one's element of earth. When "earth" is left unfixed, it can cause a person to act with compulsion and to feel forced to do certain things many times, over and over again.

The root of repairing the issue is for one to become aware that an external force outside of oneself is causing the person to feel obligated to do certain actions, and that the person himself doesn't actually want to do this particular action or think of these particular thoughts.

Practically speaking, in order to repair the issue: Besides for davening from one's heart to Hashem, and besides for thinking how it is not the will of Hashem to act this way, and that it is nothing but a bother to the person -

1. Whenever a person wants to do something several times over and over again, he should not do it right away, but wait a little.
2. He should engage in the act slowly, whether he's doing this act for the first time, second time, third time, etc.
3. Before engaging in whatever he wants to do, he should first do something else.
4. Before engaging in the act he wants to do, he should walk away and then return to his place.

5. One can create "opposite movement" in his soul, by engaging in the act very quickly, again and again, and consecutively, until one grows disgusted with acting this way.

6. Sometimes a person should use the method of acting very slowly in order to counter his compulsory thoughts, and at other times, a person should use the method of acting extremely quickly.

7. One should try doing whatever he feels a compulsion to do with funny, crazy moves, so that he can learn how to make jest out of what he is doing. In this way, he should reflect on the fact that not only is he performing in a laughable manner, but that the very act which he wants to engage in [i.e. excessively washing his hands or excessively counting and rearranging items] is laughable itself.

8. A person should try doing a little less of what he wants to do. Or, a person should do a lot than what he wanted to, but he should make sure not to exactly what he wanted.

9. One should engage in the act only partially, without completing it.

10. One should do the opposite of what he wanted to do. For example, instead of cleaning, he should make something dirty. Instead of closing [a window or door], he should open it.

WAY TOO ORGANIZED

QUESTION

I have a question about the element of earth. Let's say a person always needs to have everything organized and precise and symmetrical, but he's in an extreme way – he is very demanding of himself in terms of always being exact and organized. Which particular element within "earth" does this nature come from? Also, what should a person like this to, in order to become more balanced? Also, can it be that he also has a problem of being very demanding that that everything has to go exactly the way he wants it, which would be the element of "fire"?

ANSWER

It may either be coming from the nature of being exact

and organized, which comes from “earth”-of-earth, or it is coming from being demanding that it has to be exactly the way he wants it, which is “fire” of earth.

Whenever one sees that he is very uptight about having something to be totally organized and exactly the way he wants it to be, he should make sure to allow one detail to be left unorganized, and he should also do so with the awareness that he’s trying to weaken the extremity of his nature.

UNCONTROLLABLE TEMPER

QUESTION

In the series of Fixing Your Fire-Anger, where the Rav discusses the uncontrollable temper that results from “fire-of-fire”, the Rav explains how the main remedy for it is to acquire the serenity that comes from learning Torah in-depth. What then should women do about this, since women don’t learn Torah in-depth?

ANSWER

(1) By getting busy with very minute details in order to do something practical and worthwhile. Focusing on details minimizes the element of fire and calms it. (2) Moving, and doing things, slowly and patiently. (3) Talking slowly, and with thought beforehand. As the Ramban says, “Think of your words before they come out of your mouth.” (4) By learning halacha l’maaseh (practical halachah), with all their nuances and details.

ESP & FORTUNE TELLERS

QUESTION

There are people who can perceive private details about another person’s life, simply by reading the person’s name, date of birth. They can also tell the person’s future. I know personally of a Rav who has a radio program who told a woman how many children she will have, and how many of them will be boys and girls – and everything he said came true. Where are these people able to draw their knowledge from? It also seems that the person doesn’t necessarily have to be a great person in order to do this...

ANSWER

If someone is not genuinely and internally connected to holiness, usually such information is coming from the kelipas noga (an impure source which is a mixture of holiness and impurity together), which is sometimes attached to holiness [hence enabling the person who connects to it to receive any kind of genuine or holy information about the person].

SORCERY & EVIL SPIRITUALITY

QUESTION

If sorcery/witchcraft is something spiritual, why isn’t it holy? If spirituality is anything that’s beyond the physical and material world, then why is magic, a spiritual power, an impure force which is separated from holiness?

ANSWER

Sorcery is spirituality that’s disparate from holiness. The Other Side (the side of evil) begins with unifying forces together and it ends with separation. That is why sorcery is “disparate” from holiness, because by its very concept it is all about disparity.

IS THERE ENDLESS GEHINNOM?

QUESTION

Does every Jew get into Olam HaBa in the end, after everything is over? If a Jew needs to go through tikkunim (repair) through being the suffering in Gehinnom (Hell), will he always get into Olam HaBa (World To Come) in the end?

Or are there some Jews who don’t get into Olam HaBa even after suffering in Gehinnom?

Are there Jews who suffer endlessly in Gehinnom? And if there is, how are we to understand such a thing, why would Hashem allow a person to suffer endlessly?

ANSWER

Yes, there is an eventual end to the suffering. And afterwards, there is an awesome bliss that follows!