



RESPONDING TO INSULTS

QUESTION

If a person gets insulted by another person, though our *ne-shamah* (soul) can have *emunah* and say it's all from Hashem, our *guf* (body) can't accept it so one can respond to the other's insult as long as one stays within the proper boundaries. What exactly are these boundaries to keep to, when responding to another's insult?

ANSWER

Tell him softly, "I would be happy to hear a more positive reaction from you."

HISBODEDUS & MARRIED LIFE

QUESTION

How can I have good *shalom bayis* (marital peace) if I'm also doing *hisbodedus*? Isn't it a contradiction [to my marriage] to be "alone" in *hisbodedus* without including my wife in it? Is there any *sefer* I can learn about this?

ANSWER

It is possible to include her as much as you are able to, but it is impossible to totally include her in it, because it not possible for one to include another in all the intricate subtleties of his soul. I don't know of a *sefer* that discusses it.

FRIENDSHIP, LONELINESS AND DEPENDENCY

I am in a large *kolel* for several years already and I feel like I have no friends. Once in a while I bump into an old friend but that's it. I don't know a soul where I learn. I often wonder where my friends are, whatever happened to them, and if they're still my friends.

Lately I feel that I only have one really close friend, but I

suspect that he feels uncomfortable from me because I am hanging on to him as the one and only true friend that I have in my life. I am scared that he will sever our friendship. As a result of that fear, I feel very empty and terribly lonely, and my suffering is unbearable.

I have trouble concentrating on my learning because of this. I keep thinking of the terrible thought that I don't have any friends and that I'm in the wrong place, and that perhaps I should switch to a new *kolel*, but it would be too stressful for me to change *kolels*. Also, I think it would just be running away from my issues and it wouldn't be the solution, because it seems that my problem is that I feel dependent on having friends and I feel like I don't have even one stable friendship that I feel secure about, and therefore I think the time has come for me to let go of my need for friends and to just be "alone" with myself, a concept which the Rav often explains.

I understand very well the need to live in the state of "alone", however I also feel a legitimate need for connection with certain friends, and to a certain extent I'll admit that I do feel some kind of dependency on my friends. For example, if theoretically my friends would leave the *kolel* I am in or even if they would go out to work, I would feel way too lonely without them and feel that there's no point in me continuing to learn in a place where I don't have my friends. On the other hand, all of this makes me feel more of a need to live in the state of "alone" with my inner self, and not to feel so dependent on friends, and even more so, because I think it's time for me to form a deeper connection to my learning that goes beyond my social situation, and it's more about doing what Hashem wants from me and to totally connect my being with my learning.

Thank you to the Rav for all of the amazing guidance. Here are my questions.

QUESTION

1) Is my way of thinking correct? Is it time for me to let go of my need for friends and to feel dependent only on Hashem and no one else?

ANSWER 1) Yes – your main connection in life should be with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and also with your inner self, balanced with genuine ahavas Yisrael (*love for the Jewish people*). You can have friends “by default”, according to whatever Hashem sends your way. But you should never allow yourself to become dependent on any of your friends.

QUESTION 2) Do I need to try to make new friends? For example should I try to seek out new friends to “talk in learning” with, or just to smile and say hello to?

ANSWER (2) For now, don’t try to make new friends. This is because you are currently forming relationships of dependency with others, which is unhealthy. After you become balanced in your relationships with others [which will only happen after you gain a strong, secure connection with yourself and with HaKadosh Baruch Hu and you are not allowing yourself to become dependent on your friend], you can then make new friends whom you will not feel a dependency on, and when you reach that point, it will be proper for you to do so [to form healthy friendships with others]. The fact that you said that your “entire future lays in this question” shows that you are in an unhealthy, imbalanced situation.

QUESTION 3) If I have a friend whom I suspect is keeping a distance from me, do I need to go over to him and ask him if he’s upset with me? Should I speak to him about my insecurities about losing my friends, or is that not recommended?

ANSWER (3) Don’t go over to a friend [asking him if he’s keeping a distance from you, or if he’s upset at you]. Leave it alone.

QUESTION 4) What is the inner advice regarding all of the above?

ANSWER 4) You need to change your relationship style with others. You are looking for deep friendships with others and you are looking for someone who will always smile at you, and most of the time you will not be able to find such a friendship. That is why you are suffering from so much disappointment in others. Even if you would find such a deep friendship with another person that you’re looking for, it would be in the category of “I put in effort and I found”, and often people put in effort but they don’t always “find” what they’re trying to get.

When you become more balanced in your soul, your inner

state will improve and you will be able to connect to others and have friendships with no agendas and with no unhealthy dependency on others, and it will become easier for you, with Hashem’s help, to find healthy relationships with others. When others sense that you are dependent on them and they start ignoring you, it is usually because they have chosen to sever their friendship with you [because the intensity of the friendship felt too overbearing for them. Therefore, to the extent that you are less dependent on others and you can form healthy friendships with others, you will have lasting friendships with others].

CAN'T FOCUS IN THE BEIS MIDRASH

QUESTION

I have a certain problem focusing when I’m sitting and learning in the beis midrash. Even when I’m very focused on the sugya I’m in middle of learning, I keep trying to discern the level that other people on, like trying to tell how much yiras shomayim they have or if I sense kedushah or not from them. Because of this I find that I learn better in a room where there are no people or at least where there are less people in the room. How can I become more focused when I’m learning and stop looking at other people? I have heard the Rav’s entire series on “Focus” but I didn’t find my problem there, so I suspect that this is not an issue with focusing but a deeper issue. What does the Rav suggest?

ANSWER

There can be many reasons for this. But it seems that in your case, your focusing problems are coming from having a very emotional personality, which isn’t balanced enough by the mind. The imbalances in your emotions are awakening you to feel a sense of love and connection with other people, and this makes you constantly “leave” yourself and to try entering into other people. This makes you want to discern their nature and their level. The more you balance your emotions with your intellect, to that extent you will become a more inward person, and you will be able to avoid going outward from yourself and trying to always connect to what’s going on by other people. This will help you stay more focused on your studies and on your responsibilities.