

Nourishment for the Neshama

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The dark pit of negativity and how to use Torah to climb out

All thoughts and feelings are not created equal!!

Very often throughout our day, we are faced with events that "push our buttons." By this I mean, events or occurrences that trigger a reaction within our basic self that causes us pain, distress, negative emotions and more. We experience a sense of lack and have a reaction, whether or not we express it outwardly. Call it stress, or distress, or whatever you care to call it. It is our own personal "operating system", the way we process things. When we rise above it, we establish a better society for all of us while creating protection for our inner being.

Here is an example that reveals a negative wiring and how we can strengthen ourselves against falling into a pit of darkness. (hypothetical only, not based on actual experience):

You bring your engagement ring to get cleaned and the jeweler tells you that it is not a diamond, but rather zircon. You know that your husband spent a great deal of money on the ring because you picked it out together many years ago! What happened? You search your mind. You had it appraised several years ago by another jeweler for insurance purposes. Either you bought a false diamond originally, or the appraiser switched the diamond, or this jeweler switched the diamond. In any event, what can a person do? It has to be reported to the insurance company, investigated properly and then replaced. But the emotions are going wild! I can't trust anyone! Someone took advantage of ME! I can't let that happen! I have to do something to make sure that he regrets doing this! He picked the wrong one, I am no victim! This jeweler is a _____! Look at this terrible thing that he did to ME! I want revenge!

Positive constructive way of thinking about it:

" I am grateful that Hashem chose to take the diamond and not someone's health! This is a kaparah, may it be a complete spiritual cleansing for my sins and may Hashem heal whatever damage I may have caused!"

(It is good to think of a specific thing to apply this loss to, and a specific characteristic you would like to improve.)

Negative reactions to avoid acting on because that are destructive to your inner being and inconsistent with emunah and bitachon. Tehillim 44 Verse 21 Have we forgotten the Name of our Gd and stretched out our hands to a strange gd? Would Gd not have searched this out, for He knows the secrets of the heart.

"I can't trust jewelers" "Hashem is punishing me and I can't change, it is no use, Hashem has given up on me" OR "Aha! I am going to do everything I can to make this jeweler sorry he did this to ME!"

Here are a series of questions to help filter negative impulses so as to reach some peacefulness:

1 Is it now my mission to watch over your diamond? To oppress this jeweler beyond returning or replacing the diamond? Are we not looking into a fearful dark tunnel? Our mission is to learn and grow and make ourself in Hashem's image, not to check up on your diamond at all times or fret about losing it or use this as a way to sharpen our claws (is it the yetzer hara is trying to derail you from your focus?)

2 Am I giving the the benefit of the doubt as Gd wants us to, thereby trusting in Torah principles, especially those instructing us to be more like our Creator? Without a Torah frame of reference, how can we field our emotions properly? For example, we are not to listen to our emotions regarding the impulses to bearing a grudge or take revenge, for what could be more natural and emotional than that? We are supposed to do what is good and right in Gd's eyes, to find a positive mitzvah or midda to bring out. To harbor ill thoughts towards another is bad for our inner being! So, in this situation, how can we protect our boundaries in a loving way that will be respectful and consistent with Torah yet rrepresent an appropriate effort?

3 Who runs the world? Hishtadlus takes us away from emunah. Hashem sent this loss, We can do a certain amount to bring the matter properly to the attention of the parties, but in the end, once done, the negativity of the experience is best left behind, rather than etched in our hearts (and in the heart of the jeweler) with pain and grief.

We need to shine light on our fears and hurtful reactions, and to do so we may have to rely on the light of knowledge we may not personally have – once the insurance company is alerted and an investigation begun, we must consider that we are looking into a dark negative pit, and that pit IS the more damaging issue itself, not the diamond, because it repeats over and over again in a central way that affects us every time we experience loss.

May we all be able to use our negative moments as opportunities that give us a healthy way of seeing our yetzer hara's cleverness and may we have a success with each occurrence will "teach" us when faced with similar, parallel fearful thoughts how to act appropriately and side-step bringing harm into the world through our despair.