

Religious pain

Posted by bright - 28 May 2025 03:20

Between Therapists and Rabbanim: The Missing Middle We Desperately Need

There's a pain that doesn't always have words.

A type of hurt that hides under the surface, even in the most beautiful places.

People sometimes talk about religious trauma.

But what I went through wasn't really about religion itself.

It was about emotional wounds twisting the religion into a prison.

What I went through isn't just about one person's pain — it's about what I see as an unfortunate gap in our system.

And more importantly, it's about what we can start doing to fix it. Let me share my story with you.

I grew up as a serious bochur.

I pushed myself hard.

I learned day and night.

I was a masmid.

I was successful in yeshiva.

People respected me.

I was looked at as someone who was "doing everything right."

But on the inside?

I never felt like I was good enough.

Let me explain.

Before I got married I had already spent years in therapy. I had worked through a lot - including the terribly traumatic had experienced. I made real progress. I grew. I healed. But there was an aspect to my emotional wounds that I didn't even begin to understand. Although I was accomplishing and successful, no matter how much I learned, how much I accomplished

there was a quiet voice always telling me:

“You’re a disappointment.”

“You’re faking it.”

“You’re not really wanted by Hashem.”

Every word of Torah I learned, every tefillah I said, every bracha I made —

I wasn’t doing it because I wanted to.

I was doing it because if I didn’t, I was worthless.

Not just “bad,” not just “slacking” — worthless.

If I skipped a bracha — I was garbage.

If I zoned out during Shemoneh Esrei — Hashem hated me.

I was a faker, a hypocrite, a walking Chillul Hashem.

Judaism wasn’t inspiring.

Judaism was oxygen — but oxygen mixed with poison.

Shabbos was terror.

Every halacha, every minute, was a test I was set up to fail.

One wrong move, and I was trash forever.

Learning wasn't something I loved — it was a burden I was chained to.

If I stopped learning, I was screaming inside:

“You're disgusting. You don't deserve anything good. Hashem hates you.”

I remember learning a schmooze about bitul Torah.

A healthy person might hear, “Try to make your time more meaningful.”

I heard, “You're a rasha who is killing yourself spiritually with every second you're not learning.”

The worst part?

Inside of me, buried under all the fake smiles, there was a rage building.

I would never have admitted it.

I didn't even let myself know it was there.

But deep inside, there was a part of me that hated God.

Hated Him for what He was doing to me.

For setting up a world where no matter how hard I tried, I would always lose.

For making me live in terror.

or killing me slowly, invisibly, with expectations I could never meet. And hating God made me hate myself even more.

Because who hates God? Only a monster.

Only a piece of garbage.

Only someone beyond hope.

And although I had already spent years in therapy, and had worked through my abuse and much more,

There was an aspect to my emotional wounds that I didn't even begin to understand.

I had plumbed the depths of my psyche. I worked through years of suffering with the help of top therapists and explored numerous innovative modalities. Yet I still had not touched the religious part of the pain.

I hadn't even realized it was there.

At the time when everything broke open again,

I was married.

I had beautiful children.

I was learning full-time in a prestigious kollel —

doing well, respected, trusted, admired.

On the outside, my life was a success story.

Inside, I didn't even realize there was still a volcano waiting to erupt.

But then a life-shattering event tore through everything I thought I had built.

It ripped away the thin layer of safety I had been standing on.

And underneath it, all the old wounds, all the buried rage, came flooding back.

Except now it wasn't just emotional pain.

It was spiritual pain.

It was a soul-deep scream.

I couldn't hide from it anymore.

I was furious.

I was broken.

And the truth is — I didn't want to stay anymore.

If I hadn't had a family depending on me,

I would have left Yiddishkeit completely.

Without hesitation.

Without looking back.

I wasn't held by love.

I wasn't held by faith.

I was held by responsibility.

By the brutal knowledge that if I left, I would destroy more than myself.

The pain was so deep.

Way beyond anything I had ever thought I could survive.

I was trapped in a religion I hated.

Trapped in a relationship with God that felt more like a prison sentence than a covenant.

And every step of the way, every prayer, every halacha, every mitzvah —
instead of drawing me closer to Hashem, only made me feel more rage.

I saw Him in everything that went wrong —
every little frustration, every delay, every disappointment.

It all felt like proof that Hashem was out to get me.

I could have written a reverse hashgacha pratis sefer —
not about miracles, but about all the ways I thought Hashem was trying to destroy me.

And I had no one to turn to.

Not because I didn't try.

I spoke to rabbanim — open-minded, compassionate, very chashuv rabbanim.

I reached out to organizations — big, respected ones.

They listened. They cared. But no one knew how to help.

There was no one who really dealt with this kind of pain, an emotional issue with Hashem Himself.

No one was able to get to the root of what I was going through.

And I started to feel completely hopeless.

Like maybe no one ever could help.

I didn't believe therapy could help me.

I had already tried.

So many times.

But thankfully I did.

Because this therapist was different.

He challenged me.

He pointed out how extreme my beliefs about Hashem were —

how black-and-white, how childish, how full of fear and self-hatred. And even more importantly, he introduced me to a unique Rav who is able to portray Yiddeshkeit in a beautiful, yet simple way.

At first, I doubted him completely.

He wasn't just challenging a few ideas.

He was shaking my entire identity.

Of course Hashem demands perfection.

Of course if you sin, you're a rasha.

Of course Hashem criticizes you if you fail.

But he didn't just argue with me.

He gently pushed me toward a different perspective, one that changed my life.

Through conversations, through reading, through listening —

I was exposed to a totally different picture of Hashem.

Not a distant, perfectionistic, judge.

Not a punisher or a relentless impossible--to-please master.

but an unconditional source of love.

and i began to learn how to build an entirely different kind of relationship with him and with His

Torah. A genuine connection, not one built on a divine score card, red tallies and brownie points.

These new ways of thinking and living certainly weren't easy to accept.

They didn't match what I had internalized from my years in yeshiva. (Though I now fully understand that they are in perfect harmony)

It didn't match what the fear in me believed

I fought it.

It sounded too soft, too fluffy, too fake. But over time, I realized:

The God I had hated wasn't real.

He was a projection of my pain — not the truth of Torah.

And the real Hashem — the One who had been hidden behind all that fear —

was waiting for me with love. With more love than I loved myself. Love not for some perfect version of me, but for the real broken, fighting one.

I had to rebuild everything.

My entire Yiddishkeit.

But as difficult as this was, it was the most rewarding thing I experienced. I became alive! I started understanding concepts I had always struggled with. My neurons started firing on all cylinders and I made connections and understood new deep meanings in everything I learned and did.

I stopped learning because I had to.

I started learning because I wanted to.

Because I wanted to understand and connect.

And even though I still sometimes struggle with fear and guilt —
now I know how to handle it.

The rule is that Hashem loves me.

No one dies from a question —
as long as there's a healthy foundation of emunah.

I realized how deep and beautiful the Torah really was. Simcha jumps out at me from every area of religious life. Today, my Yiddishkeit is different.

When I daven, I think:

Hashem just wants to spend time with me.

He wants a small, quiet meeting — just me and Him.

Even if I can't concentrate.

Even if my mind drifts.

He just wants me to show up.

He treasures my effort.

He treasures the fact that I'm there.

Not my performance.

Me.

Before I bench, I don't think, "I have to."

I think:

Hashem moved the entire world to get me this piece of bread.

He loves me that much.

Before every mitzvah, I try to find one point of meaning —
one spark of connection.

And slowly, I also started seeing Hashem inside the world.

When I feel a moment of love —
that's not random.
That's Hashem sending His love to me.

When I experience compassion —
that's a small reflection of Hashem's own compassion toward me.

When someone does a kindness —
that's a little glimpse of Hashem's kindness shining into the world.

The more I open my eyes,
the more I see that Hashem isn't hiding.

He's everywhere.

In the good.

In the beauty.

In the acts of love and mercy that fill this world when we're willing to look for them.

Maybe it sounds fluffy.

Maybe it sounds too soft for some people.

But this is the truth.

This is what saved me.

Not through fear.

Not through guilt.

But through love.

Real love.

Hashem's love.

And for the first time in my life,

I'm not just surviving.

I'm alive.

This is the part nobody talks about.

There are thousands of people carrying this kind of pain —

people who feel trapped inside a broken relationship with Hashem.

But there seems to be nowhere to turn.

Therapists, even the best ones, often don't have the background to fix religious wounds.

And even when they do, the pain is so tangled up with Torah and mitzvos that it's hard for a person to trust them fully — especially someone coming from years in yeshiva.

Rebbeim, on the other hand, may know Torah deeply —

but most aren't trained in emotional trauma.

Even when they recognize pain, they don't always have the tools to address what's really going on underneath.

This isn't a criticism of rabbanim.

And it's not a criticism of therapists.

It's just a reality:

There's a gap between the two.

And for someone stuck in the middle —

emotionally hurting, spiritually drowning —

that gap can feel like a black hole.

Even when someone in this situation asks an emunah question, the answer they need isn't just intellectual.

Because usually, what's underneath the question isn't just doubt —

it's fear. Shame. A belief in a terrifying, angry, impossible-to-please God.

Its not enough to answer, "Why did Hashem bring tzadikim through the camps?" with "svivav nissru meod"

The real question he is asking is:

"How can I possibly love a God who kills even His best children?"

"How will I ever be enough for Him?"

If no one helps the person rebuild their whole picture of Hashem,
then no brilliant answer will help.

This kind of healing takes time, Torah, and deep emotional insight.

And the people who can truly offer that —

who understand the Torah world and the emotional world —

are few and far between, and are so busy they don't have the time for the back and forth that is needed.

We need people who can bridge the two worlds —

people fluent in Torah and fluent in emotional healing.

People who understand what a sugya feels like,

and what trauma feels like.

Not instead of rabbanim. Not instead of therapists.

But a new middle.

Someone who knows the Torah — and also knows the wound.

There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach either as different individuals have different needs and different emotional challenges.

I don't know exactly how and what needs to change.

But I do know this: awareness is the first step.

I've spoken to well-known organizations and rabbanim.

But even they didn't have a concrete thing to do.

That's why I'm writing this.

Because until we start talking about it —
until we recognize this silent struggle —
nothing can change.

But something has to.

P.S. A special hakaras hatov to Rabbi Dovid Aaron who shared with me so much of his time, clarity, and insight which helped me get to where I am today.

If you're struggling with this kind of pain, or if you're trying to help someone who is —
and you want to talk, share, or explore ideas —
you can reach out at haragra14@gmail.com.

You're not alone.

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Re: Religious pain
Posted by alex94 - 22 Jun 2025 06:06

[bright wrote on 22 Jun 2025 05:26:](#)

I have to disagree with Alex. I think any baal middos, who cares, is mature and has grown through life's challenges, will be able to do just that. Imagine if a rebbi knew a talmid's parents were divorcing, one would think he would avoid any talks related to good marriages. With regards to mental health and anxiety, no one explained that these messages are negative, so the rebbi doesn't know how to be careful. Again, it's a huge responsibility, and mistakes happen regardless.

My experiences tell me that situations and circumstances out of the Rebbis small area of control

have greater effects that you recognize. I have also seen the way responsibility is handled and it doesnt encourage me as to talmidim really being seen. This isnt necessarily anyones fault, every system, even the best, has those that fall through the cracks. I suffered terribly through this reality, and I struggle with the effects on me almost every day. I wish it would be better, but to me it seems like the way of the world where "buyer beware", or in this case parent/talmid beware, applies in this are just as much.

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by bright - 22 Jun 2025 13:27

Yes, and we preach elusive concepts like "have a rebbi" and daas Torah so dogmatically that it creates an environment that can terrorize the student from speaking up and allow a rebbi to be apathetic without feeling guilty. I'm honestly not sure what the right balance is. Most rebbeim I know are sincere and well-meaning but I feel terrible about what you experienced

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by chaimoigen - 23 Jun 2025 14:56

[SisonYishecha wrote on 20 Jun 2025 04:11:](#)

R' Chaim Shlita

????? ?????

I'll admit that your touched upon a raw nerve, though even beyond that, I'm not completely understanding of what you wrote.

But there are many wonderful Rabbeim who shouldn't be blamed for doing their best job...

Who decided that **their** best job, is actually **the** best job??? ???"?

How many of us (and how many beyond this forum) have been crushed, destroyed, and hurt by Rebbeim who were doing **their** best, but in all truth have no place in the world of Chinuch????!!!

They should have either remained in Kollel or found a Parnassa as clerks, garbage men, or any other field that doesn't have the risk of ruining Neshamos!

Do they know what it means ????? ?????? ?' ??????

Or do they even know that they are ????? ?????? ?' at all????!!

Or did they land the Shtellar because they are the " Shpitz" " Meyuchas", or did they look for a position in Chinuch as a means of a Parnassa, without having any concept of what being a Mechanech entails??

I realize I may have gotten carried away, so I pause to apologize.

My wrath is not directed at you, rather it's frustration and pain of a gifted child and teenager that got knocked by the system, that hasn't (yet) completely healed.

speech that is appropriate for 9th graders to hear, even if perhaps a boy in the class may walk out with some wrong ideas, due to limited understanding and perspective,

This may be up for debate.

Shouldn't a Rebbe know each of his Talmidim individually and be expected to realize if a message may be, or was, misunderstood or received wrong by a Talmid?

I probably wasn't ????? ?????? ?????, ?????? ????? ??????.

With greatest respect

SY

Dear Chaver,

First of all: Ouch. I am sorry for your pain.

Although I myself was thankfully not hurt by people in the system, I have watched brothers and friends be wounded and harmed, so I know what you're talking about, unfortunately.

I don't think we are really on such different pages.

Took me a while to find time to write this post in explanation and response.

To clarify: I think there are two completely separate sugyos when discussing the those damaged by "the system".

1. There are cases where Talmidim (or Talmidos) are deeply hurt and damaged, whether religiously, psychologically, and/or emotionally by figures within the Chinuch system. There can be single traumatic encounters or more long-term damaging relationships. Such encounters are generally not excusable. Not realizing that a kid is sensitive and won't be able to handle public humiliation, for example, isn't an excuse.

And yes, I do agree that unfortunately there are individuals who are in the Chinuch system for completely the wrong reasons, and that there are also those who simply don't have the tools and/or temperament to be good Minchanchim, and this is in part what can result in the above sad and painful situations. People who are hurting others and not helping Talmidim are ????

????? ?? ????, agreed.

I think that, BH, there has been the development of greater awareness, and better training, as the years go on. People who don't belong teaching are being noticed and called out (though of course money and connections unfortunately sometimes prevail). Elementary school rabbeim, in particular, are better trained and better qualified than they ever were before. Menahalim and Mashgichim are being trained somewhat in various awareness of various psychological and emotional conditions, there are many frum therapists (not all of whom actually know what they are doing, of course), and it's become far less stigmatizing to go to therapy. There are so many people who have spoken out about their terrible experiences and I think there is greater awareness today. All this doesn't solve all the problems, of course. We have a long way to go.

I think that is what you're talking about Sison Yishecha.

This topic wasn't the focus of my above comments, at all.

I was referring to a completely different discussion.

2. Bright broached the topic of the fact that "The system" gives over Hashkafa that can lead to a person developing black-and-white thinking about Yiddishkeit that can be extremely limiting and wrong. We'd heard about how Bochorim in "Litvish" yeshiva systems can unfortunately develop into adults thinking and feeling that Hashem is a cruel, unloving referee, who is waiting to "zap" them for every infraction. We read Bright's harrowing account of his religious pain that was the result of his having developed terrible misconceptions about Yiddishkeit, and pseudo-religious thinking. I've spoken to many who have been raised in the Chassidish system who have grown up with terribly harmful misconceptions as well, that have damaged them in the deepest of ways. All this is a damn shame.

There are many people who take great relish in bashing "the system" for this, pointing out how it stifles individuality, exacerbates meaningless conformity with externals, and skips over messages of love, Achdus, and deeper nuances of Avodas Hashem. Many of the individual data points they use to bring out their points are accurate. But I think their overall message is unhelpful and often unproductive. For a many reasons. Here are some of them:

1. **"Just love them" isn't an educational system.** I knew the great Rav Dovid Trenk ztza very well (today is his Yohtzeit, BTW). He personally tempered his Ahava with yirah and discipline. And what he did in Adelphia would not have worked for all of Klal Yisroel.

The naysayers haven't created a viable alternative system that doesn't have holes for people to fall through. They can't and they **never** will. Particularly because of my second point:

2. A system, by definition, is systematic. You can't have a system that is custom made for every individual. It's impossible.

The Chazon Ish said that every yeshiva is a "Sedom Bed". He did his own thing in learning and Avodas Hashem, and he told Rav Chaim Kanievsky to do so. And they became Gedolai Hador. But the Chazon Ish didn't go and shut down Ponevzh and Slabodka. Because Klal Yisroel, as a *Rabbim*, for better and worse **needs** some type of system, which will **necessarily** have limitations.

Room needs to be made for kids who don't fit in the system, and for improving the system. There are a lot of good people within the system who are trying to do both of those important things. It doesn't always work.

It's easy to make critical podcasts about what's wrong, especially if you don't run a Yeshiva with 1000 kids. Try running a very successful Yeshiva and also try fixing all the problems at the same time and then come back and make a podcast about how to do it... I think you'll find that the people making a huge positive difference in Klal Yisroel don't have the time or inclination for podcasts. They're too busy getting important things done (Rav Yosef Elefant Shlit'a, for example, doesn't run around talking about what's wrong. He does what ever he can to make things better, Hashem bless him.)

3. It's not fair to blame a system for not being something it's not supposed to be and not trying to be.

There are a lot of aspects of this. Among them: What Yeshivos teach. Yeshivos teach young kids. So Rabbeim teach things that are appropriate to their level, according (for the most part) to a mesora. Should Bochorim stay with their high-school perspectives their whole life ? NO!!! Do they sometimes? Unfortunately yes. Is it the responsibility of their Rabbeim to plant the seed for future growth? Sure! My Rabbeim talked constantly about changing and growing in your Hasagos every single year (and day). And I stayed in touch with them and continue to do so (those who are still alive, and new Rabbeim).

But, as I wrote: Balance, perspective, nuance, and subtlety, maturity, acceptance, growth, and courage- these are precious and hard to find and develop in a Talmid. They **are the work of a lifetime**. It's not necessarily the failure of a person's rabbeim if the student cuts himself off from further growth. You can bring a horse to the farbrengen but you can't make him drink.

I teach in the system. You who know me here know that i am not one-dimensional. I can only do the best that I can within the limitations of how i can teach. there are conversations I can have here that I can't always have with my talmidim. I still won't quit my other job. .

My father, shlita, is a tremendous Mechaneich. He has years of Talmidim who call him for Hadracha on all matters, and for Chizzuk. He cares more than anyone else I know. Can it be that someone he taught has unfortunately nevertheless developed religiously wrong ideas because they didn't learn one-on-one with him in a personal setting for a few years - I think so. Is that his fault ? No! He's a Rebbe who is limited by the system he teaches in, and so am I, and that's ok. (See ps below)

4. Most importantly - if you read Bright's original post carefully he writes that the terribly wrong ideas he was living with were for the most part directly effected by the wounds of emotional trauma and abuse. That was the lens through which he heard the Shmoozin and Hashkafos he learned in yeshiva.

He did not write his original post to rail against those who caused him harm, Sison Yishecha, though Hashem knows there's plenty of that to go around. He wrote that he now sees that much of what he was taught actually fits with what he now knows, but he couldn't see it until he met a Gebentche therapist and then a unique Talmid Chochom who helped him heal and then learn to see his Yiddishkeit **through the lens of healing** and not the lens of pain.

And to be free to discover new growth.

My point is - **this problem** - which i think as a **symptom** is somewhat endemic and common in today's era - isn't necessarily the **fault** of the system. It has to do with the generation and its challenges.

Could Bright's Rabbeim who taught him have done differently, not knowing he was the victim of abuse and the pain that seared his internal world? Maybe some of them could. Should we indict the Yeshiva System for what happened to Bright? I think not.

5. Let's not attack a "straw man". Many rabbeim will tell talmidim when to buck the system and when to follow it. My Rabbeim in a Litvish Yeshiva (one of them in particular) introduced me to Chassidus.

Many will tell a boy or girl when they should do something different because it's better for them.

Believing that there should be a system doesn't mean that you believe everyone should follow it blindly. Most Mechanchim aren't as callow as the podcasters would pretend, and many, many of them are special, caring people who dedicate themselves to their students to the very furthest extent of their abilities and heart.

Can we improve? Sure. Let's do it without bashing the good people doing their best, who are dealing with an an army of broken souls, using imperfect tools as best as they can.

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PS.

After some internal debate I decided to add this.

One of my children is struggling terribly now. This child had dealt with a traumatic experience, coupled with a difficult temperament, and other stuff. The school wasn't a great fit, it was the best school for my child out of all the available options. Sometimes, in life, you just don't have great choices....

Limaaseh, the school and teachers that this child was in didn't help. Things went from bad to worse without intervention, and no one really understand what was happening until after things had gotten very bad. It's sad and frustrating.

But although I know that it's possible that different Mechanchim could maybe have made different choices, and could have helped, I still don't blame the school. It's hard to know when to sound the alarm bell and when not to, when to read deeply into warning signs and when to address them in a general way. I know a lot of people could point out how a teacher who deeply cared would have noticed. But some of them **did** deeply care and **still** didn't notice enough. Maybe no one teacher saw the whole picture, and only hindsight is 20/20. Who really knows?

A lot parents in my situation would have been calling for blood, though. That would not help anyone, would not fix my child's problems. Should I blame the school for not being different than they are? I think that would be unfair. And I saw genuine, deep pain and empathy on the faces of some of the teachers when they realized what was going on... (So I went and made a personal vow to do what I can to learn from the story as best as I can, with the people under my care, that's something productive, I think.)

Sometimes terrible things happen, and well-meaning people can lose a chance to save someone. It stinks when that happens. They often never forgive themselves. It doesn't mean that they are bad people.

Sometimes we don't have any good choices, and we are stuck picking the best of the less-than-ideal options. Life is really hard sometimes.

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by chancyhk - 23 Jun 2025 16:36

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Dear Rabbi CO,

Wow!

You nailed it! drop the mike, walk off stage.

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by bright - 23 Jun 2025 19:22

You wrote so eloquently and clarified things in a way that I feel like Yehuda veod likra. But I think you deserve a solid reply, so I'll do my best.

?? ??? ?????? ??? ??"? I was definitely affected by my own perceptions, and honestly, regardless of the validity, screaming at "the system" isn't helpful. Not even a little.

In my case, it's almost always about personal stories, things that happened to *me*. Maybe they were inexcusable, but it's not necessarily *the* system's fault. That outlook, blaming the entire system, is unhealthy and damaging. It turns into a grudge that will never find resolution. Like R' C.O. said: what system *do* I want in place? If someone is in a position to create actual change, that's a conversation for another time. But my message has always been, and will always be, about the *klal*, about what we can do to *add*, not to complain about what went wrong for *me*.

(*Taanos* are for *beis din*, not forums...)

This is an area that, to my great pain, there's *no system for*. It's outside the scope of regular therapy, and it's outside the scope of what the Yeshiva system can provide. That's why we're seeing heilige neshamos crying out in heart-wrenching pain... and no one is answering.

That said, I once had an image pop into my mind of a very chashuve Rav getting up and saying: "The system is amazing. We have a 90% success rate. What system do you know that works that well?"

Aside from being logically flawed, that's deeply invalidating. I *suffered* in your successful system. Don't parade it in front of my face.

Still, like R' C.O. said, when we're dealing with a *yachid*, we can and *must* empathize with his pain, even if that includes his hatred for the system. Because in a very real way, *it failed him on a personal level*, and that is *not* okay. (Maybe, over time, we can help him shift the blame from "the system" to the individual perpetrator, but that's a delicate matter, and one for experts.)

Objectively, we can also recognize that his story doesn't reflect everyone's story. It doesn't mean we have to burn everything down.

What *can* we do?

We can add a little more light to our world like y'all are doing, especially R CO, and hope it spreads faster than Covid.

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by chancyhk - 23 Jun 2025 20:18

[bright wrote on 23 Jun 2025 19:22:](#)

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That said, I once had an image pop into my mind of a very chashuve Rav getting up and saying: "The system is amazing. We have a 90% success rate. What system do you know that works that well?"

Aside from being logically flawed, that's deeply invalidating. I *suffered* in your successful system. Don't parade it in front of my face.

Still, like R' C.O. said, when we're dealing with a *yachid*, we can and *must* empathize with his pain, even if that includes his hatred for the system. Because in a very real way, *it failed him on a personal level*, and that is *not* okay. (Maybe, over time, we can help him shift the blame from "the system" to the individual perpetrator, but that's a delicate matter, and one for experts.)

Objectively, we can also recognize that his story doesn't reflect everyone's story. It doesn't mean we have to burn everything down.

What *can* we do?

We can add a little more light to our world like y'all are doing, especially R CO, and hope it spreads faster than Covid.

Great points.

I think place like GYE show us the way. Where Yiden from all walks of life can come and talk about a very taboo subject and have so much acceptance and love directed at them. This is how real Ahaves Yisroel should look like. Caring for another Yid, just because he is a Yid and holy.

Love him and show him the way to greatness.

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by alex94 - 23 Jun 2025 21:37

Because in a very real way, *it failed him on a personal level*, and that is *not* okay. (Maybe, over time, we can help him shift the blame from "the system" to the individual perpetrator, but that's a delicate matter

Im confused by this. Why is it not okay that someone was failed? Who is expecting the world to be perfect? If the world isnt perfect, there are going to be a certain amount of people who get hurt in many ways. It hurts terribly, but I dont see how its wrong. Hashem doest expect of anyone to be perfect. He has angels for that. This world is the last place for anything to be perfect.

Furthermore, what use is there in blaming the individual perpetrator, presuming there really is someone to blame? Why is he more to blame than the system that enabled him? Why presume he acted with malice or that his actions were not a result of his own chinuch? Blaming is a natural response. However, staying with it and not moving on perpetuates the victim perspective and makes it harder for one to slowly integrate a Emuna perspective where one tries to understand and integrate the knowledge of and belief in the Divine providence orchestrating his personal mission that included him going through that pain, however it came about.

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by parev - 23 Jun 2025 22:02

this subject really fascinates me, both on a program level and on a personal level.

In a program level, I see the aforementioned situation by many

on a personal level because of my position with countless bochurm.

the truth is that the given in SA is to have those preconceived notions and attitudes, - why I don't know.

how many people are suffering this way? how can we identify them? what went wrong in the system?

when my sponsor asked me in step 2 to describe my g-d and I told them 'he's all loving and powerful, and even when he 'punishes' me its for my best because he loves me to bits and only hs my best interest in mind' - they said that it sounds like i'm quoting some mussar sefer, and wasn't sure i relay felt that way.

I do hope that I feel that way, but irrespectively even if that it is just what I was taught and therefore parroting it, it seems that the problem isn't in the chinuch system.

Rather somewhere in our suffering brains we tell ourselves a lie of a punishing devil who hates us

Would love to be enlightened further

thank you for bringing this up

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by SisonYishecha - 24 Jun 2025 16:08

Dear R' CO,

Beautiful.

I'm speechless.

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by fighterwithfire - 26 Jun 2025 09:09

[alex94 wrote on 23 Jun 2025 21:37:](#)

Because in a very real way, *it failed him on a personal level*, and that is *not* okay. (Maybe, over time, we can help him shift the blame from "the system" to the individual perpetrator, but that's a delicate matter

Im confused by this. **Why is it not okay that someone was failed? Who is expecting the world to be perfect? If the world isnt perfect, there are going to be a certain amount of people who get hurt in many ways. It hurts terribly, but I dont see how its wrong. Hashem doest expect of anyone to be perfect.** He has angels for that. This world is the last place for anything to be perfect.

Furthermore, what use is there in blaming the individual perpetrator, presuming there really is someone to blame? Why is he more to blame than the system that enabled him? Why presume he acted with malice or that his actions were not a result of his own chinuch? Blaming is a natural response. However, staying with it and not moving on perpetuates the victim perspective and makes it harder for one to slowly integrate a Emuna perspective where one tries to understand and integrate the knowledge of and belief in the Divine providence orchestrating his personal mission that included him going through that pain, however it came about.

Important points--answering each paragraph separately, to the best of my ability:

1) 100%, there are going to be a certain amount of people who get hurt in many ways--**but that hurt shouldn't come as the result of the actions of another Yid**. There are many causes of pain and hurt, but the actions of another Jew shouldn't be one of them. That's what makes it not OK. We're in ??????. Pain is everywhere. But it should never be the result of another Yid's actions. That's exactly the point--that *nobody* expects the world to be perfect. Suffering is in so many places (?? ?????), so the least we could do is try to make sure that **we** aren't causing any of that suffering ourselves. Hashem doesn't expect anyone to be perfect, but He does expect us not to bring pain on others.

2) I understood Bright to be discussing circumstances/instances where the individual's actions were inexcusable and beyond the pale, to the point that whether his actions were the result of his own malice/cruelty or of his upbringing/Chinuch becomes irrelevant. (To clarify: This is akin to the infamous debate regarding terrorists raised by terrorists: are they evil in and of themselves? They've never had a chance to think differently, after all--from the second they were born, they were taught "Jews are the enemy, they're evil, kill as many as possible", and had a gun put in their hands at 3 years old so they could start "training". The answer: Yes, of course they're evil. You may be right that they never had a remote possibility of thinking differently. Who cares?!?! Whether it's their fault or not is an irrelevant philosophical discussion. A murderous terrorist is evil, regardless of whether it ever had a moment's exposure to thinking differently or not.)

?????? ??? ????? ?????? (obviously), there are circumstances where an individual inflicting pain on another is inexcusable, regardless of whether his actions were borne of his own malice or not. (Obviously, there are ????? for this level, but I'd like to think most have the ??? to know them.) I understood Bright to be talking about such cases.

With that in mind, to address the last point: Yes, 100%--like you said, the ??????? response is to realize that everything that happens, even a cause of pain, is from Hashem, that nothing happens in this world that is not ??????. But I think we're talking "blame" in the figurative sense--that is, directing responsibility, not holding accountability for consequences. Every person has ??????. The pain didn't have to come to that individual through them. A person is still **to blame** (not the same thing as "blaming") for their actions. Of course the individual should internalize the point Alex spoke out--this pain was best for them, even if they don't understand how. ?? ?? ????? ?????? ??? ??????. That is the core of Emunah. But the person who inflicted the pain is still responsible for his actions, to the point that the system/????/institution should ascertain that the person won't (or, depending on the instance at hand, **can't**) repeat said actions.

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by alex94 - 26 Jun 2025 10:46

[fighterwithfire wrote on 26 Jun 2025 09:09:](#)

2) I understood Bright to be discussing circumstances/instances where the individual's actions were inexcusable and beyond the pale, to the point that whether his actions were the result of his own malice/cruelty or of his upbringing/Chinuch becomes irrelevant.

a. I cant agree with this distinction existing because it would be crushingly self implicating.

b. None of these distinctions change the basic calculus of victim vs empowered perspective, regardless of emotional baggage. If I live thinking things werent ok, im stuck. If I live thinking things were painful, yet they happened for a reason, i can move forward. This is independent of the important avoda of giving emotions their space and respect.

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Re: Religious pain

Posted by fighterwithfire - 26 Jun 2025 11:16

[alex94 wrote on 26 Jun 2025 10:46:](#)

[fighterwithfire wrote on 26 Jun 2025 09:09:](#)

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b. None of these distinctions change the basic calculus of victim vs empowered perspective, regardless of emotional baggage. If I live thinking things werent ok, im stuck. If I live thinking things were painful, yet they happened for a reason, i can move forward. This is independent of the important avoda of giving emotions their space and respect.

A. I hear you. But I do feel that "horror stories" we think about when discussing abuse or trauma in the system call for this distinction.

B. Completely agreed. That's the point I was trying to make in the last paragraph (not very clearly on my part), with the added caveat that I think that should be Step 2: First see if the affected individual can agree that it wasn't the system at fault, rather an individual in the system, then move on to the next step of empowerment--yes, painful as hell, but happened for a reason, and I'm going to grow from it. (As for why not apply that second step right away: In my extremely limited experience (which should always stay that way!), it's even harder to let go of anger/blame at a system or group than it is towards an individual, as the former can lead to an anger at everything "the system" represents in the victim's mind. In this case, Yiddishkeit, ??????)

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