

The Rebbe's Pharmacy

Pills of Chizuk for Today's Spiritual Illnesses—Part 18

The Illness: My heart is so twisted with questions and doubts about Hashem and His ways.

There is one word which causes many of us incredible suffering: why. We go through our life with our heart and mind continuously filled with questions against Hashem: "Why me? Why is my life so hard? Why can't I make a decent living and afford all the things that all of my neighbors can afford? Why do I have to take care of such a sick child? Why do I have to deal with such an angry spouse? Why are my children going of the derech? It's just not fair. Why me?!"

We are so accustomed to questioning Hashem that most of the time we don't even realize that we're doing it. It's just second nature. And because of this we're always very bitter about our life, and sour to other people.

Sometimes, when our life gets so difficult that we simply cannot handle it any more, our questions even go beyond our physical and emotional suffering. We fall into serious doubts about the existence of Hashem, G-d

forbid. Because of our countless questions about our lot in this world, we lead ourselves into much deeper questions which attack the very existence of Hashem and the legitimacy of His Torah, G-d forbid.

This is the path of destruction that countless Jews have stumbled down and been lost completely to the secular world, may Hashem have compassion on their souls, and save us from such things.

The Rebbe's Prescription: Deep inside your heart there is a computer chip of faith, through which you can fly over all of your questions and come close to Hashem. (Based on LMI 64)

In the beginning, Hashem created an empty space, which wasn't really empty.

In order for us to be able to overcome all of our questions and attach ourselves to Hashem with a full heart, we must first understand where are questions come from. We must first understand what is the spiritual source of all of our kashes and doubts.

The sefer Etz HaChaim explains that before Hashem created anything, all that existed was the Eternal Light of Hashem. Since this light was perfect in its Oneness, there was no place for Hashem to create anything else. In a place of complete unity, it was not possible for Him to create distinct and differentiated worlds.

Therefore, Hashem moved the light to the sides and made an empty space in the middle which was void of light. It was within this space which was distinct from the Eternal Light of Hashem, that Hashem created all of the spiritual and physical worlds. This is how all of existence came to be.

However, there is one big question which arises

from this teaching. The cornerstone of Judaism as passed down through all the generations beginning with Avraham Avinu, is that we believe that there is only one G-d. Hashem is One and there is no other. He fills all the worlds and surrounds all the worlds, and there is no place which is vacant of His Presence. If so, how is possible for an "empty space" to exist? How is it possible for there to be a place which is void of Hashem's light?!

Based on this, we're force to say that Hashem's light exists even in the empty space. However, once we say that Hashem's light really is in the empty space, then the empty space is no longer empty. If so, once again there wouldn't be any place for Hashem to create the worlds, because everything is all the Oneness of the Eternal Light of Hashem.

The more we try to tackle this question, the more we see that there is simply no answer. It is a complete contradiction which cannot be resolved according to human logic.

The source of our questions and bitterness is this inexplicable "empty space."

This "empty space" is the source of most of our questions and difficulties with Hashem. In general, we believe that Hashem is One and there is no other. In fact, we proclaim this faith explicitly multiple times a day through the mitzva of krias shema. If anyone were to ask us, we would certainly say that we're monotheistic without question.

However, when things go really wrong in our lives, we very easily fall into completely heretical beliefs as to the Oneness of Hashem. When all of a sudden, we lose our job and we find ourselves deep into debt. Then a family member gets really sick, G-d forbid. Not only are we

struggling to take care of them and the rest of our family, but we're no longer insured and the medical expenses are piling up. Our marriage starts to really suffer. Then, our only car breaks down on the way to a crucial medical appointment. So we're sitting there on the side of the highway thinking, "How is it possible for Hashem to exist in all of this? I'm suffering so much. I thought that Hashem was a compassionate G-d? Why do I have to go through all of this?!"

When we're filled with these questions and frustrations, we must know that all of our difficulties and suffering are coming from the "empty space." They're all coming from a place which is, so to speak, void of Hashem's Presence. This is explained by the teachings of kabbala and chasidus, which say that the empty space is the source of all "din" — judgement — in the world, since it is, so to speak, a place without the light of Hashem's compassion. It is from this place of din, that all seemingly "bad" things and suffering originate, since they are also apparently void of the Eternal Light of Hashem which is pure compassion.

In the empty space we can't find Hashem — understand why we're suffering.

This is why

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we struggle so much — since we can't find Hashem there at all. If we were to see absolutely clearly that it was Hashem's hand which was directly creating all of our suffering, then we wouldn't have any questions at all. We would know that everything we're going through is what's best for us, since the Master of the Universe is showing that this is His will. We would be able to accept it lovingly and not get destroyed by it.

However, the source of our suffering doesn't come from a place where Hashem is revealed. Rather, it comes from a place which is apparently completely void of His Presence. Because of this, when we go through intense physical and/or spiritual suffering we get filled with doubts about Hashem's existence.

By attaching ourselves to our faith we can fly over and escape the "empty space" of our suffering. There is no way for us to understand it, but we don't need to. We have amazing wings which can carry us over all of our pain

We fall into a place in which we simply cannot find Him. No matter where we look, He's not there.

There is a big black hole in the middle of the Oneness of Hashem, and we get sucked into it. We grope around in the darkness and emptiness, unable to see the light of Hashem, and we slip into heretical thoughts, G-d forbid. Perhaps we still say krias shema, but we're not able to unify Hashem's name in relation to what we're going through. Hashem is One everywhere else, except in our life.

At these times, we must remember that Hashem really is with us in our suffering. Hashem is living with us in our "empty space," because if not, how could that space exist at all? Hashem's Presence fills all of the worlds and surrounds all of worlds. Certainly, even in our most difficult pain and most desperate situations, Hashem has to be there.

However, we can't understand this at all. The empty space that we're in seems to us to be really empty. We can't understand why Hashem wants us to go through so many difficulties. We can't understand why we have to struggle so much to make a living. We can't understand why we have to have a family member with such a serious illness. We can't understand why we have to have such a difficult marriage. We can't understand how Hashem could be the One Who is causing us so much suffering. It doesn't make sense to us.

This is all because the "empty space" from which all of our suffering comes, is a place that is completely beyond our understanding. On the one hand, it has to be empty. On the other hand, Hashem has to be there. Therefore, the more that we ask questions and try to understand such a place, the more we fall

into deeper doubts about Hashem's existence. In the empty space there are no answers, and the harder we look for them, the more we difficulties we have with Hashem.

The only way to attach ourselves to Hashem from the empty space is to look to our ancestors and connect to the root of our tradition: faith.

Therefore, we must attach ourselves to the essence of our soul which is within every single one of us. We must look deeply inside ourselves, beyond all of our physical, emotional and psychological characteristics, and see who we truly are. What is a Jew? How could we describe our spiritual d.n.a.? The answer is simple: A people of faith.

Avraham Avinu, the first Jew, is called the "first of the believers." In a world of compete heresy and idol worship, Avraham put his entire life on the line to believe in One G-d. His father wanted to kill him and so did Nimrod, the most powerful man on earth. Nevertheless, Avraham wouldn't let go of his faith. Hashem told him to leave his home and go to the land of Yisroel, and Avraham did so on pure faith.

When Avraham arrived there, all of a sudden there was a famine, and he was forced to go to Egypt. Avraham didn't question Hashem, and he went there with pure faith. Hashem told Avraham that he would have a son when he was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. Avraham believed Hashem with pure faith. Then, after telling him that his descendants would be as Nonetheless great as the stars of the sky, Hashem told him to sacrifice his only son on an altar. Nonetheless, Avraham didn't question Hashem and followed Him with pure faith.

Avraham was the first to be called "Ivri/Hebrew." Rebbe Nachman explains that this was because he was able to "pass over" all of these questions against Hashem. The word "Ivri" in Hebrew has the same root as the word "Ohver" which means to pass over. Through unbelievable strength of his faith, Avraham was able to overcome all of his doubts about the Oneness of Hashem.

It certainly didn't stop with Avraham. When we look at the lives of the other six "shepherds of Yisroel" — Yitzchak, Yaakov, Yosef, Moshe, Aaron, and Dovid — we see that it was the strength of their faith that allowed them to come so close to Hashem, despite incredible difficulty and suffering. The verse in Tehilim says, "All of Your mitzvos are emuna!" In addition, the Sages say that the prophet Chabakuk came and placed the entire Torah on one principle, "a tzadik lives through his emunah."

Hashem created the world in order for us to believe in His existence.

In fact, faith is the entire purpose of all creation: to recognize Hashem's existence. We cannot see Hashem. There is no way for us to prove that we "experience" Hashem. There may be wondrous theories which prove the

existence of Hashem, but there are just as elaborate theories which disprove it as well.

Faith, however, begins where understanding ends. Something that we can see with our own eyes and/or explain logically does not require any faith. It is only when we're encountered by something which is entirely beyond our understanding that we must have faith. Therefore, as finite creatures, our greatest accomplishment in this world is to believe with our entire heart in that which is beyond our understanding: the existence of the Infinite. This is why Hashem created us. This is why we have to suffer and go through the "empty space" which is void of all understanding. It is all to bring us to be able to recognize the Oneness of Hashem through our faith.

This faith is our greatest inheritance from our ancestors. It still what keeps us alive today. Indeed, how is it that the Jews have survived such a long, bitter, and brutal exile since the destruction of the second Temple more than 2000 years ago? After everything that we've gone through as a people there is absolutely no logical explanation as to why we're still here. The only answer is once again very simple: faith, faith, and faith!

Through finding this spark of emunah within us, we can fly over all of our suffering.

Therefore, even if we feel so completely distant from believing that Hashem is One and everything that happens to us coming only from Him, we have to know that deep, deep, deep down inside of our being there has to be a spark of pure faith. It has to exist! Without it, we wouldn't be a Jew at all.

Although, we don't always feel like Jews, at the end of the day we know that we have neshama. The essence of our neshama is emunah. This is who we truly are at our core, and through this we can pass over all of our doubts and questions.

By attaching ourselves to our faith we can fly over and escape the "empty space" of our suffering. There is no way for us to understand it, but we don't need to. We have amazing wings which can carry us over all of our pain. We have wings which can lift us above all of our problems. We don't need to know why we're going through what we're going through, since we believe with 100% certainty that Hashem is with us in the darkness. Everything is completely for our best. There is nothing but Hashem. There is nothing but Hashem! Ein ode milvado!

Through our faith we can see that everything that's happening to us is complete Divine Providence. Through our faith we can find the strength to endure even the most difficult challenges with a smile on our face. Through our faith we can find Hashem in our suffering. Through our faith we can connect ourselves to Hashem even from our empty space.

(To be continued next week, b'ezer Hashem!)