

“That as a man will chasten his son, so does Hashem, your G-d, chasten you.” (8:5)

Some people experience *yisurim*, suffering, in greater measure than others. The *Torah* is defining for us the essence of suffering: It is a loving Father’s necessary and beneficial act toward His child. Although many of us acknowledge this notion from an intellectual perspective, when it hurts, it truly hurts. When we experience pain and suffering, our intellect does not necessarily influence our emotions. Great and righteous people throughout history have accepted Hashem’s decree with great faith and love. Indeed, countless stories detail the devotion of the great, as well as the simple, believing Jew. We have selected two narratives which lend insight into the concept of suffering.

The *Sanzer Rav, Horav Chaim Halberstam, z.l.*, lost his seven- year-old son. On the way home from the funeral, in the early morning prior to *davening Shacharis*, the *rav* remarked that his situation was similar to that of a person who was walking to *shul* one morning, when he suddenly felt a strong blow on his back. When he turned around and observed that none other than his best friend had slapped him, he was relieved. “I have received a strong blow,” said the *Sanzer*, “but as I look around I note that the source of the blow is my closest and most faithful friend – Hashem. If so, let us say *Hodu*, “Give praise to Hashem.” With these words, he commenced the morning prayers. On another occasion, when someone pressed him with questions about his troubles, he replied, “How long will you attempt to make the *Ribono Shel Olam* appear improper in my eyes?” *Rav Chaim’s* cognitive understanding affected his emotions to the point that he really felt the good within, and the love behind, his suffering.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, inspires audiences with the following remarkable and true story. A terminally ill patient lay in agony, kept alive by a respirator. His doctor, hoping to spare him his suffering, disconnected his life-support system. The man died soon afterwards. A few days later, the deceased man appeared to the “benevolent” doctor in a dream, saying the following: “I had four days left in which to live, in order that I suffer terrible agony, so that I could pass directly into *Gan Eden*, pure, cleansed of sin. Because you caused me to die four days early, I lack that measure of suffering. Now I do not know how long I will have to suffer in *Gehinnom* to be purified. Suffering in the physical world expiates much greater than suffering in *Gehinnom*. You deprived me of this.” The doctor woke up from his dream totally shaken up. He repented and became a *baal-teshuvah* out of fear of his own day of Final Judgment.

This powerful story teaches us a hidden aspect of suffering. It also demonstrates that when we take G-d’s role, we might cause irreparable damage.