

# 18FORTY NCSU

## TRAUMA AND GOD: HOW DOES ONE CONFRONT GOD DURING SUFFERING?

### EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

#### CENTRAL IDEAS OF THE CLASS:

- 1 It is normal and understandable during suffering to feel sadness, pain, anger, etc. Allowing oneself to experience these difficult feelings does not represent a lack of emunah.
- 2 One should contextualize suffering within the larger scope of one's life. One should see life with a bigger lens.
- 3 A relationship with Hashem does not mean that Hashem will simply give us everything we want. We need to deepen our understanding of Tefillah.

#### VIDEO & INTRO: (5-10 MINUTES)

Start the class with a video clip about the 3 boys Ayal, Gilad and Naftali and the story from 2016. Give context to the story – which was a truly national story of the Jewish people – and use it to introduce Rabbanit Frankel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92p5S6JXbQc>



*Ask the class:* Do you remember this story? How would you respond in such a circumstance? How does one handle a tragedy of this magnitude?

#### PODCAST CLIP #1 & DISCUSSION (10-15 MINUTES) - צדיק ורע לו -

Once the students have shared their own responses, here is Rabbanit Frankel's response, addressing the question of צדיק ורע לו.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RF83InqjK80&t=1s>



*Ask the class:* What about her response resonated with you? What about her response maybe did not resonate with you?

She made a few points that are very important to highlight for the class:

- Widening the lens. This phraseology is very important because it is not telling someone not to feel the pain, but rather to see the bigger picture. She has a beautiful quote: "I can feel pain, I don't have to become my pain." This is something Rabbanit Frankel emphasizes a lot, and it's important that the goal isn't to negate the feelings of pain, anger, or any other emotion. The pesukim in ספר קהלת (source #1) highlight this idea. There is a time for every emotion.
- She has an amazing line about how "our life is full of blessing." It is clear this is something she really feels. It is important to realize that this moment of tragedy, pain, suffering is not the only moment in a person's life but it is part of a larger picture.

#### VIDEO: (2 MINUTES)

For the idea of widening the lens, there is a book that highlights this idea. It is called Zoom by Istvan Banyai. Here is a video of the book:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfQ-2RzrkCU>



*Ask the class:* How is this video similar to the idea of Rabbanit Frankel? How is it different?

## PODCAST CLIP #2 & DISCUSSION (10-15 MINUTES) NO ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF צדיק ורע לו

In this clip Rabbanit Frankel discusses how there really is no answer to the question of צדיק ורע לו.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xeWyQIjQ03k&t=1s>

**Ask the class:** Did her point resonate with you? Discuss the idea of being able to accept that we don't always get answers to our questions.

She made a few points that are very important to highlight for the class:

- Establishing the idea that we are not entitled to answers is extremely important; it teaches humility.
- Importance of being able to shift the questions from the unanswerable questions to a focus on how to grow and learn from our experiences. This is the reference she makes to the important piece of Rav Soloveitchik in *Kol Dodi Dofek*. ([source #2](#))



## PODCAST CLIP #3 & DISCUSSION (10-15 MINUTES) - A REAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HASHEM

In this clip, Rabbanit Frankel discusses having a real relationship with Hashem.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUnQ1DqwOAg&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUnQ1DqwOAg&feature=emb_logo)

Discuss the idea of being angry at God and how it can be healthy and if sometimes it can be unhealthy.

**Ask the class:** How can we make sure our anger at/with God remains healthy? What can we do to help a friend who is very angry with God?

She made a few points that are very important to highlight for the class:

- The analogy to a heart rate monitor is excellent. Emphasizing how living means experiencing highs and lows. No high will last forever, and neither will any low.
- The idea of not panicking in our relationship with Hashem is really important. She has a line that it is “part of a true relationship.” This is important for teens to feel, especially those who may feel this anger and hurt.



## PODCAST CLIP #4 & DISCUSSION (10-15 MINUTES) - TEFILLAH WHEN SUFFERING

Ask students before playing the clip how they relate to תפילה and if they ever really davened for someone who was sick and felt they either were or were not answered.

In this clip Rabbanit Frankel discusses how to approach tefillah, specifically related to times of suffering.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9ibyY3k6BA>

**Ask students** if this approach to Tefillah resonates with them.



## SUMMARY AND TAKEAWAY (5 MINUTES)

Important to give students clear takeaways from the class and summarize the main points of the class. Talk about the heaviness of the class and the importance of these lessons **not** just for moments of suffering, but to guide our entire lives.

Perhaps end the class with the excellent article from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ([source #3](#)) which Rabbanit Frankel quotes in the podcast (just not in the clips used). Rabbi Sacks explains in this article about how the Jewish people invented hope and how we never despair. A Jew is always able to see the larger picture. As Rabbanit Frankel said: “we can feel pain, but we can't become our pain.” Similarly, Rabbi Sacks explains that “To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope in a world serially threatened by despair.” It's a great way to close this class on a positive note.

## SOURCES

[Kohelet – 3:1-8](#) | [Kol Dodi Dofek – The Righteous Suffer](#) | [Rabbi Sacks – Future Tense](#)