



*Tzippy  
Remembers  
When...*



# TO BE LIBERATED FROM FEAR

TZIPPY CLAPMAN

**T**his time of the year, on 12-13 Tammuz, we celebrate the liberation of the Frierdiker Rebbe from imprisonment! It was truly a miracle that the Rebbe was freed, and he and his son-in-law and successor were able to grow Chabad-Lubavitch to the heights that we have so successfully reached; and we are still soaring to the greatest heights in bringing our lost *neshamos* back to Yiddishkeit, ready to greet Moshiach Now.

In life there are all kinds of imprisonments. Imprisonment is generally seen as limiting our physical movements, as something which keeps a person confined to one place, taking away their freedom and their choices in life and leaving them in a world where they don't want to be.

Sometimes we are imprisoned by our own bodies that try to talk us into delving into physical pleasures, abusing ourselves with abnormal consumption of foods, and living life for self-gratification with expensive materialism, which can burden our lives with the same imprisonments that a jail sentence would.

During my childhood I had a close friend who lost her

father as a baby. Her mother, a young widow and mother of four children, was suffering from a mental disorder. This was over 70 years ago and the medical field knew very little about agoraphobia. Her mother sat by her window giving her older children errands because she would not step out of her door.

Luckily, she had a very kind brother-in-law who was the landlord of her house and he supported his brother's widow as best as he could. These children never had a mommy come to their school plays, or PTA meetings. Doctors made house calls and supermarkets delivered. But being good friends with the daughter, I saw the tragedy of their situation.

The mom was given some kind of mild tranquilizer to get her to attend her children's weddings, but that was about it for her outings. This poor *almanah* was truly imprisoned by her panic attacks and fears.

I would like to share my own personal liberation from a psychological imprisonment that I have gone through in my past.

It all started during one of my pregnancies, around the

second trimester. I did not feel well—to put it mildly—and I became very short of breath and this caused me to panic during my daily routines. I found it hard to eat or digest my meals, and if I would step outside of my home, the panic would greatly intensify, so I spent most of my time during that pregnancy at home.

I was sent to all the specialists including a cardiologist and all my testing came out negative, but I couldn't shake the fear and the sense of doom.

My obstetrician diagnosed me with a hormonal imbalance due to my pregnancy which happens occasionally to some women, and he assured me that it usually goes away after delivery. I was relieved that it would only be temporary and, just as the doctor had said, *baruch Hashem* it went away after my baby was born.

A couple of years later I was pregnant again, and again the same hormonal imbalance occurred. Having experience, I was calmer this time but again imprisoned in my home by the panic attacks that were occurring daily. I kept telling myself that this is only a temporary problem that would resolve itself and, thank Heavens, after the birth, it completely vanished.

During the pregnancy after that, miraculously the hormonal imbalance did not occur and I thought I was free and clear, but during my next pregnancy, it hit me in my second trimester with a vengeance and again I was homebound and felt imprisoned.

After this birth I found that the panic did not leave me, and I knew that drastic measures had to be taken; I had to get out of this horrible situation!

I now had lots of small children to care for and that has to include leaving home. My husband's schedule was very flexible as he works from home so he took over many of the outside chores, but I knew I had to somehow free myself from this disorder. I didn't want to be like my friend's mother...

I knew that I could not let this situation cause my children to suffer, and I was going to have to push myself with all my might to seek help. I found out about a nearby clinic for anxiety and panic disorders and decided to make an appointment. It took great effort to leave my house just to keep my appointments, but I knew I had to do it to free myself of this condition.

It was comforting to find out at the first session that this is a common disorder and that it is not life-threatening even though a panic attack can make a person feel like they are dying, *chas v'shalom*.

A panic attack usually causes shortness of breath, and one can actually hyperventilate, which can bring too much oxygen to the brain and that leads to feeling faint. So an important part of the treatment I received was to learn relaxation methods, and ways to breathe through an attack.

Another part of the work I had to do was desensitization.

This involves going on outings with a therapist or someone close to you who understands the process, and facing the things you fear, with hands-on support. Slowly, as you keep putting yourself into the feared situations, you learn to face them, get through them, and stay calm while doing so.

*Baruch Hashem*, within a short few months I was a normal, functioning mother again, going shopping with the children, riding subways and city buses—things I thought I would never do in a million years.

In my medical practice I have worked with women who have gone through major panic disorders. As someone who went through it and *b'chasdei Hashem* overcame it, I am uniquely suited to the job of giving them hope, and helping them formulate a good plan for dealing with it.

If you suspect you might have this kind of disorder, with shortness of breath, fast heartbeat, dizziness, and a feeling of doom, I recommend immediately checking it out in the emergency room or urgent care to first rule out any possible cardiac or respiratory problems, together with routine blood tests. If all is negative, it's time to move forward and treat it as a panic disorder or phobia.

Sometimes people who are suffering don't get the help they need because they worry about people finding out, and what will they think, and how will I ever marry off my children if people know...

I do not believe there is a family in the world without any mental-health issues. Everyone's got them; tragically, not everyone takes the necessary steps to solve them.

When we do *not* do all we can to be healthy and strong, *that* is when we gradually become known as "off" and the problems begin.

The fact that someone is working to get out of their prison shows common sense and good health!

We must do everything in our power to free ourselves and our loved ones from the imprisonment of fears and phobias, and to lead high-quality lives, for ourselves and our families.

I also must add that while nobody wants to take meds, sometimes it is necessary for people to do so either temporarily or permanently, to become or to stay well.

I thank Hashem for sending ways and means to help normalize our lives and keep us out of all kinds of prisons! ❧

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**TZIPPY CLAPMAN, RN, MS, FNP**, lives in Crown Heights with her husband, Rabbi Yehuda Clapman, a certified sofer. Formerly a NICU nurse and now a provider in family medicine and women's health in Parcare of Boro Park, Tzippy has written extensively for the N'shei Chabad Newsletter, always with the goal of convincing parents of the supreme importance of creating warm, happy, Yiddishe memories for their children. Tzippy's sense of humor, her sincerity, and her clarity about Yiddishe values have changed lives for the better in the gentlest way possible. This is the 49th installment of "Tzippy Remembers When..."