



Published on www.bilvavi.net

[Home](#) > Rosh Chodesh Avodah - 010 Teves: Overcoming Fear and Trauma

Rosh Chodesh Avodah - 010 Teves: Overcoming Fear and Trauma

Our Soul Feels Scared During The Scary Months Of The Year

The month of *Teves* is one of the difficult months of the year. Our Sages explain that the three difficult months of the year are *Teves*, *Tamuz*, and *Av*, due to the difficult events that took place in these months. The month of *Teves* is considered to be the most difficult!

Just like when a person enters a dangerous place he feels scared, so does our soul inside of us become scared when it senses the danger manifest in this time of the year. Let us learn about how we can deal with those fears of our soul.

There are several kinds of fears we experience. Some people have more fears than others, but all of us have fears. One kind of fear is a fear of something that we know of. Another kind of fear is fear of the unknown. There are also more kinds of fears other than these which we will discuss later.

First, we will explain how we can deal with fears of what we are sure of.

Fear of Something Happening To Us - Based On A Previous Fearful Event

When a person knows clearly why he is afraid - let's say it's because he is afraid of something bad happening to him in the future - it is really because previously, he must have went through some previous experience that was traumatizing. The old fear he once went through is triggered again, every time he has the new fear.

Therefore, a fear of something happening to you in the future is actually based on something that happened the past. You fear that thing from happening again. Since you went through it and you know what it is, and you don't want to experience it, and naturally, you fear it from happening again. So any time that we feel towards something in the future that didn't happen yet, it is actually being fed from our fear of the past.

Although it seems to us as a fear of the future and not as a fear of the past, a fear of something happening to you in the future is actually a fear of the past - you are afraid that the event of the past will happen again to you, because you are still traumatized from it.

Fear of The Unknown

There is also another kind of fear: when a person is afraid of something happening in the future, even though he has no idea what the future will bring. A person may be scared that something bad will happen to him even though he doesn't seem to remember having ever gone through that event in his life before.

We would simply say this second kind of fear has nothing to do with a previous trauma, because if he has never gone through that fear before, why would he fear it from "happening again" if it never happened to him in the first place? Fear of the unknown seems to be unrelated to fear of the past. But upon deeper analysis, we can see that even fear of the unknown is based on some kind of previous trauma.

How can this be? It could be that the person once witnessed a tragedy or something painful happening to someone, or he has simply heard or read about something that happened to another person, and he fears it from happening to him. Subconsciously, he absorbed the fear that what happened to others might happen to him.

Locating the Source of the Past Fear

Once we find the source of the fear, we can deal with it so that we won't be afraid of it again. In most cases, a person can find out what is causing his fear. A person can sit with himself and reflect, and try to trace the event that is causing him to have the fear. He can then realize that his fear of something happening in the future is really linked with something he has experienced in the past [and this calms the fear].

There are a few cases where a person cannot trace the source of the fear. However, in most cases, we *can* trace the source of the fear and then eliminate it from continuing to haunt us.

As we said, there are things we experienced which we are afraid of from happening again, and there are also things which we did not personally experience, but we subconsciously absorbed it into ourselves because of something that we either saw, heard, or read about in relation to others, and we are afraid that those things will happen to us as well. In either case, we discover that the fear of the future event is really based on something we went through in the past.

Thus, there is a subtle and deep definition of most fears of the future, which are really based on the past. These fears are really because we have experienced something in the past that was traumatizing to us, and we fear it from happening again. If so, the problem that is fueling the fear is because *we haven't gone through the experience in the proper way*. That is why we are scared of it happening again. That being the case, we need to go back and re-experience the event in the proper way.

This is understandably true when it comes to our fears based upon what we have gone through in the past, but as we will see, it is also true about fears which we are afraid that will happen which we have never even gone through in the past, so that we can re-shape our thought patterns about the event; then we have no more reason to fear this event, and in turn, it will no longer continue to haunt us that it may happen again in the future.

How indeed can we view the situations in life which were difficult for us of which we are afraid of? How do we deal these fears? With the help of Hashem, we will try to explain.

Reliving the Past In The Right Way

The basic idea is, that if a person went through a traumatizing experience without sufficient *emunah* (faith) that was this difficult event was really Heaven-sent from Hashem for his own good, if he did not

feel Hashem's love for him as he went through it, then he did not experience that situation in the right way. As a result, he is left with a fear of this event, and naturally, he will fear it from happening again. But if a person were to have gone through the difficult situation or predicament with *emunah*, knowing that the situation was for his own good and that it came from Hashem's love, he would have no reason why he should fear it from happening again.

Let's say we have gone through something that was difficult\bad\scary, and we didn't have *emunah* when it happened to us; we did not feel Hashem's love for us as it was happening to us. We never dealt with it in the right way, because we had no *emunah* with us and we didn't feel Hashem next to us and taking care of us, as we went through the painful ordeal. Now, we are afraid of that ordeal from happening again. What can we do to get over it?

One of the ways brought in *sefarim hakedoshim* to fix our past fears is actually by using the power of **imagination**, to *relive* the event that causes the fear. We will be going back into the past experience which was painful and traumatizing to think about, and we should imagine it vividly as possible. Let your imagination picture the entire event again – go back into the past, using your imagination. But this time, you're going back into your past experience with a new weapon in your arsenal: *emunah*.

Let us explain what we are trying to do over here. We need to look back at our past experiences and see Hashem loving us in those very situations. When we first went through the ordeal, we did not feel Hashem next to us when it happened. We did not feel His love for us. Therefore, we did not experience that difficulty in the right way. What we need to do is to go back into that past experience, using our imagination, and then re-experience it this time, *in the right way*.

We need to return to those past experiences with our imagination – but with *emunah*. As you picture yourself going through it again as it happened, you can think to yourself: "Who caused this situation to happen to me? It wasn't by chance. Hashem made it happen, and Hashem loves me, and He was doing the best thing for me, because He only does good things for me out of His endless love for me. So I really had no reason to be afraid then."

Go step-by-step through the entire painful scenario of the past, and remember how in each step of the way, Hashem was with you throughout and loving you. Let the thought penetrate into you, more and more: "Hashem only made me go through this, out of His love for me!" You can keep repeating the exercise, and slowly you get rid of the past fears. Instead, you now emerge from it with a stronger heart.

This is both applicable to fears of our own previous experiences, or with our fears when we heard about what others went through. If we heard someone else go through something bad, and we reacted negatively, we need to use our imagination and also relive that experience with *emunah*. Let us imagine ourselves returning to that time in which we heard the devastating news, but this time, we are not afraid, and that we instead have *emunah* and feel Hashem's love for us as we imagine ourselves hearing about the disturbing news.

In this way, a person can erase the fears of the past that he has created, whether they are fears of something that happened to him or fears of something that he heard which happened to others; he removes a very large amount of fear in his heart – the kind of fear that is very commonplace in today's generation.

Fear of the Unknown

Until now we explained, with *siyata d'shmaya*, of how to remove fears of the known; when we know clearly what event in the past is causing us to be afraid. But how do we deal with fears in when we

have no idea of what is causing the fear? When we aren't sure of why we are afraid, we do not know the source of our fears, and if we can't trace the source of our fears, how do we deal with the fear?

We can again use the same idea of the above solution, but a little differently. With fear of the unknown, ask yourself *why* exactly you are afraid of the future event you fear from happening; then, imagine what exactly you are afraid of from happening. See yourself going through that possible scary situation - but this time, apply *emunah*: think to yourself that even if it happens, it's for your own good, since everything is from Hashem and therefore anything that happens to us is for our own good; and also, Hashem is always with us and He loves us in every situation that we go through.

Understandably, there are some fears we may have which are very frightening to even think about, and we won't even want to imagine them from happening. But in most cases, our fears of the future are not that intense, and we should be able to use this method to get rid of the fear. Either it will totally remove the fear, or if it doesn't totally remove the fear, it will still greatly weaken the intensity of how much we fear the future.

In summary, of the kinds of fears that we discussed so far - fears that stem from a previous trauma we experienced, or fears based upon hearing of what happened to others, or fears of the unknown - can all be dealt with, using this solution: by using our power of imagination to fully relive the situation (whether we are reliving the past event or whether we are imagining the future event), with *emunah* and with feeling Hashem's love for us, as we explained.

Unexplainable Fears

Now we will explain another kind of fear. There are fears in which a person does not know why he is afraid, and he cannot express what is causing the fear. He can't express with words why he is afraid, and even his mind is not sure of what is causing the fear. He feels uneasy inside about something; he just knows that he is not calm, and he feels fear.

Many people experience fear, and there are essentially two groups of people in this category. Until now we have been addressing one kind of fear, where a person knows why he is afraid. A second category of people, however, are those who have fears, but they do not know what they are afraid of; and they are consciously aware of the fear. Sometimes this person will go to a professional to help explain to him his fears, and sometimes this kind of person will be put on pills, in order to calm his anxieties about the fears.

There is also a third group of people: people who are not even consciously aware that they are afraid. They experience sudden "explosions" of impatience and general uneasiness, where they feel very anxious. This is really being caused by a fear they have deep down in themselves. This kind of person is not even aware of the fear; all he is aware of are the *results* of the fear - the nervousness, the lack of calmness, the lack of patience, and other symptoms, where he just cannot remain tranquil. This is a very common scenario, especially in our generation, where people have fears yet they do not even know that they are afraid.

Altogether, we have discussed four kinds of fear. **(1)** A person who knows he is afraid, and he is also aware of the source of the fear, which is something he went through in the past. **(2)** A person who knows he is afraid but he cannot trace its source in the past, but he can identify what he is afraid of from happening in the future. **(3)** A person who is aware that he is afraid but he does not know why he is afraid. **(4)** A person who experiences sudden anxiousness and uneasiness about something, but he is not aware that this is really stemming from a fear that he has deep down.

We have already explained what to do in the first two scenarios. Now we will tackle the third and

fourth scenarios: When a person knows he is afraid but he doesn't know why, and when a person is anxious about something but he does not even consciously register that he is really afraid.

Two Sources of Subconscious Fears

When a person knows that he is afraid but he does not know the reason for the fear, there are general rules for how to deal with this kind of fear. The Gemara brings of a student who was afraid and he didn't know where the fears were coming from. He asked his *rebbe*, and his *rebbe* told him, "You sinned." His sins were causing the fears. When a person sins, his *neshamah* become afraid of the consequences; it looks from its lofty perch and it sees the lower section of the soul where sin can take hold, and the *neshamah* is worried about what will happen now to the lower part of the soul. This is one possible source of fear: fears that result from sin.

Thus, whenever a person is afraid and he has no idea why, he should do *teshuvah* (repentance), from the depths of his heart. The more a person is regularly doing *teshuvah* every time he experiences fear, he will find that he is calmed afterwards. Of course, we always need to do *teshuvah*, but all the more so when we are seized with fears of the unknown, which awakens us to do more soul-searching.

Fears Stemming From Mystical Sources

There is also another kind of fear, which are of a more specific nature. It is brought in *halachah* that if one places his fingernails into a place where people walk, this will cause him to have fears. Another kind of carelessness which can cause fear is when one isn't careful to wash *netilas yadayim*. There are also additional matters brought in *Halacha* in which laxity in these matters can cause a person to have fears. [These fears are solved and prevented by being careful in these areas].

The Inner Fear of the Soul

Here we will focus more on the source of our more inner fears (when we don't know why we are afraid, and when we feel general uneasiness but we aren't consciously aware of the fear), and the solution to these inner fears.

The source of our inner fears, deep down, stems from a fear of our soul - it fears that it is not going towards the proper direction; it fears that it will not arrive at its proper destination. On a deeper understanding, it is really afraid that it will be left alone and cut off from its Source, Hashem, as it journeys on this world. Hashem created us with a nature that we do not like to be alone; that is why people are afraid of being alone.

Thus, our soul deep down is afraid that it will not reach its goal, that it will not reach its perfection, and that it will not end up in the proper destination, *chas v'shalom*. But on a deeper level, it is afraid of becoming alone, apart from its Source.

This is the deep source of all fear. We have a simple way of understanding it: anyone can attest to being afraid of a dark, lonely road at night. We are afraid when we feel alone. If someone is walking with us, we are much less afraid. Why are we less afraid of a dark road at night when someone is walking with us? If *chas v'shalom* we encounter danger, will that person be able to help us? Probably not. So why are we more calmed when someone is walking with us? It is because we feel that we are not alone.

The Questions About Suffering and Tragedy That People Grapple With

Let's discuss here an important point which people ask about. Earlier, we mentioned the solution to fears where we know the source of the fears, which is to relive the past experience with *emunah* and

with Hashem's love for us. When we relive the past and we try to approach it with *emunah*, many people grapple with a disturbance. They wonder: "How will it help me if I just have *emunah* that everything is from Hashem and that Hashem loves me? Are there not *tzaros* (painful events) that happen to people??"

After all, we see that even the greatest *tzaddikim* had lives that were filled with *tzaros*. In these *parshiyos*, we are learning about Yaakov Avinu, who went through so many difficult circumstances. He had to flee from Esav and later he had to meet with him again, where he feared for his life. He also had to deal with his tricky father-in-law, Lavan, who caused many problems for him. Then his daughter Dinah is kidnapped. Then his beloved son Yosef is gone. Then his son Shimon is imprisoned, and then Binyamin is imprisoned. Yaakov Avinu definitely believed that all of this was from Hashem and that Hashem loved him throughout; he is called the "choicest of the *Avos*", the most righteous of all the forefathers, yet even so, all of these *tzaros* happened to him.

So people ask: "What does it help to have *emunah*? If I increase my love for Hashem does that mean that bad things won't happen to me? Even our greatest *Gedolim* had *tzaros*, in spite of all of their *emunah* and love for Hashem. So what will it help me to work on my *emunah* and on feeling Hashem's love for me? In the end of the day, bad things happen to people, and when these bad things happen, they are painful!"

If we think about it, it's a burning question. Even more so, all of us have contact with people and with the world, and we read and hear and see about how much suffering is taking place in the world. We have all heard of people who were living very happy and calm lives, until suddenly one day their entire life changed, plunged into tragedy or misfortune. So many people are suffering in the world! How can we not be afraid of it not happening to us too?

Of course, if someone has a very carefree and very easygoing nature, he isn't bothered by all that he reads and hears about, and he just continues to live his life as he pleases. He can easily calm himself and get over it very quickly, because he doesn't think too much about it. But when someone seriously contemplates what takes place in the world today, and his heart goes out to the suffering of the Jewish people, he is seeing and feeling so much of the *tzaros* that take place. How can he *not* be afraid, from all of the many *tzaros* that he hears about?

It is a very strong question to deal with, a burning issue, for anyone who reflects into the situation of the world and is aware of the many *tzaros* taking place. The answer to this gnawing question is a very deep and subtle answer.

Above The Questions

These questions that people have are questions that stem from our *seichel* - our logical, thinking, rational mind. There is no "answer" to this "question" - from the perspective of our intellectual mind, that is. But there is a more inner place in ourselves - our inner soul - which has the answer to this question. When a person is deeply connected to Hashem in his life, when he feels Hashem's Presence in his heart, he can go above his logical thinking, and he will be above this question.

In a deep place in our soul, we are able to feel that we close with Hashem. When we feel the closeness to Hashem, that secure feeling of being connected to Hashem will help us go above all of our natural fears and questions. This is also known as the point of "*temimus*" (simplicity, or earnestness) in the soul - where we feel pure and genuine faith in Hashem.

When a person remains outside of this inner place in the soul, he has questions: "Do you think that if I become close to Hashem, then I won't have *tzaros*, that I will no longer have any suffering?! I might

“know” in my mind that “everything is for the good”, but it is still very frightening to me that I may go through it, and it will still feel very painful if it happens to me.”

But when one enters the inner place in his soul, there, his feelings will be connected to a higher place. His heart will recognize a higher dimension, which is above the perception of the human intellect. It is there that a person draws forth *bitachon* (trust in Hashem), which is above the place of fear in the soul.

We might still grapple with the question, for we see that our *Gedolim* did go through many *tzaros*, such as what we see with the life of Yaakov Avinu (and he had certainly had pain. He was consumed with agony over the loss of his son Yosef, that the *Shechinah* left him, for all those 22 years). Our *Gedolim* had high levels of *emunah* in Hashem and in feeling Hashem’s love for them, yet they still had pain from all of their suffering. If we see that even our *Gedolim* had pain from their suffering, then what are we to say? What will it help for us to increase our *emunah* in Hashem? Surely having *emunah* can definitely weaken the extent of the pain, but it will not remove the pain totally; there will still be a lot of pain left over.

So there is no logical answer to the questions that we may have. Our *seichel* (intellect) cannot provide us with the answer. The ‘answer’ can only come to us through a deep place in our heart, the part that is intrinsically connected with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. In a deep place in the soul, a person is connected to Hashem, and there is no room there to feel alone in any way.

We explained earlier that the root of all fears stems from the soul’s fear of becoming alone. Thus when we are in a place where we do not feel alone, there is no fear. When a person feels that he is not with Hashem, when he is unaware that Hashem’s Presence can be felt deep in his heart, he will have fears, and indeed, he will have many things to be afraid of. He will be afraid of all kinds of painful circumstances, but the root of all his fear is because he is afraid of feeling so alone. But when a person connects to Hashem deep in his soul, the reasons for the fear fall away.

Although he will still find it possible to fear all kinds of things, if he has removed the source of the fear, he will not have that much reason to fear; his feeling of fear will only be minimal.

Why Our Current Generation Experiences Much Fear

The reason why so many people in this generation have fears is not simply because there are many *tzaros* (difficulties and hardships) in people’s lives. The inner reason is because most souls feel deep down as if they have no Father to be close to – we are a “generation of orphans.” When a person feels that he is so far from Hashem, it is a truly frightening feeling for him, and this is the source of most fears taking place in this generation.

There is an inner place in our soul which is so closely attached with Hashem and feels His presence, where there is no place for fear there. But we are not consciously aware of this place in ourselves, because we have usually not revealed it outward from its hidden state, and that is why we don’t often feel it on a conscious level.

It appears to many people that they are afraid of certain things, or of certain trying circumstances that have happened in the past which they are afraid of from happening again. But if we look at all this from a truthful lens, the many difficulties and trying events which we see in our generation are not the actual cause for fear, but a symptom of a deeper kind of fear. The deep root of the fears is because deep down, there is a loneliness, from feeling so apart from Hashem. When that fear exists, all the fears in the world can take hold of a person.

The deep advice we can use to solve our fears, as we said, is not simply to remove the outer

symptoms of the fear. Sometimes there is a possibility to deal with fears in a superficial way, which we spoke about earlier; but although this is helpful, the main thing we need to is to get to solve the fear at its root. For this, we need to dig deep into ourselves. The inner solution to fear is: to understand that we are never “alone” on this world, and to connect ourselves to the One who has made this world come into existence. This is the true solution to all fears.

Practically Speaking

All that was described here is essentially an inner solution, a more truthful solution, to deal with our fears. However, practically speaking, since this is a very deep and inner approach, which we cannot reach in one day alone, in the end of the day, we may have to use physical remedies available in order to soothe fear.

People might have to take certain pills to relieve them of the anxiety they have from their fears, while simultaneously trying to get to the inner method described here. The outer layers of the soul which are closer to physicality cannot relate to the inner solution to fears described here, so they will need to be calmed with various physical means.

The physical aspects involved treating our fear may involve confiding in someone who can advise us; it should be someone who can listen to us attentively, who understands us, who feels us. Many people, when they feel that they have the support of others, become calmed from this feeling, and on a more subtle note, it is because they feel like they feel that they are no longer facing their fear alone.

Also, sometimes we can help a person with fears by showing him that it's all in his imagination, and that it is not happening in reality; this can also soothe a person. However, many times a person is well aware that his fear is only in his imagination, yet even so, he continues to have the fear. When this is the case, he should then make use of the inner solution to fears, described here.

Therefore, our intention here is not to invalidate the physical methods of alleviating fear. There are times where indeed a person needs to take pills in order to remove his fears.

Here we only meant to present a more inner solution that exists [that there is a deep place in our soul, where we can feel closeness to Hashem, where we can truly feel that we are “with” Hashem, and there are no fears there in that place].

Practically speaking, when we want to solve our fears, as a temporary basis we may make use of the various physical methods of treating fear; but our point is that this should not become a fundamental approach towards how we deal with life.

We are saying here that in order to *fully* treat our fears, we will need to dig deep into our soul, to bring out the fear from its root, so that we can remove the root of our fears and all of the ‘branches’ of the fear that come along with it.

In Conclusion

May we merit from Hashem to eliminate our fears, by feeling the great closeness with Him in the depth of our souls; and may we merit to reach holy fear, which is called “*pachad Yitzchok*” (the fear which Yitzchok Avinu had), in which our entire fear is solely about a fear of becoming disconnected from Hashem, *chas v’shalom*. This returns all of our fears to their holy root. Through this, we will become attached to Hashem from the depths of our heart, and then we will see no more reason to ever be afraid.

Questions & Answers With The Rav

Q1: Is fear ever a good thing? For example, I live in a place in Eretz Yisrael where we need to protect our cars from rocks that Arabs sometimes throw at our cars, and sometimes there are life-endangering situations here which cause us to have real fear. Is this a constructive kind of fear to have?

ANSWER: *The only thing a person must ever be afraid of is the fact that he fears anything besides Hashem.* That is something to be truly afraid of, and it is the only pure fear which exists. Either we fear Hashem Himself, or we fear anything that is besides for Hashem – which essentially causes us to have the fears. Whenever we experience a fear, like when we feel fear from the Arabs, we should view it as an awakening to remind us that we are not afraid enough of Hashem, and that is why we have become afraid of something. It is an awakening to us that we are not close enough to Hashem; because if we would really feel close with Hashem, there would be no reason to fear anything.

Again, let me emphasize that this is not a mere intellectual definition. If a person would really believe that Hashem is close to him, he would not be afraid. When you are found with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, there is no fear there. So if a person experiences a fear, it is a reminder to the person that he needs to be afraid of the fact that he is not close enough to Hashem. That is why a person becomes afraid of the Arabs!

Q2: So if it is not a good kind of fear to have, is the fear showing us that something in ourselves needs to be fixed?

ANSWER: Correct. Every situation can be used for good. When someone is afraid and he needs to be calmed, either we can tell him, “Don’t be afraid” [which is a superficial approach], or, we can tell him, “This fear that you are having – use it to awaken in yourself a holy kind of fear, the fact that you don’t feel close enough to Hashem.” However, this only calms a person when he is in fact upset at the fact that he is not close to Hashem. If he doesn’t care, then telling him to be afraid of his lack of closeness to Hashem will not do anything for him, because he doesn’t fear it. Only if a person is afraid of not feeling close to Hashem, can he be calmed when he is afraid of the Arabs, that the source of his fear is just a reminder to him, that he is not close enough to Hashem.

Q3: When using the power of imagination to relive the past fearful experience, won’t this cause the fear to happen? Isn’t there a concept that thinking and imagining about the fear cause the fear to actually happen in reality?

ANSWER: That is a very good question! Indeed, it is possible for a person to “cause” bad things to happen when he imagines about them; the Sages say that if a person worries obsessively about poverty or other forms of suffering, the poverty or the suffering will chase after him. Therefore, we don’t try to deliberately imagine bad things.

Our intention here is that if a person is in any case experiencing fears in his imagination, we need to face this imaginary fear by bringing out into the open and then uprooting it with thoughts of *emunah* in Hashem and Hashem’s love for us. If a person is not having a problem with fears, we are not encouraging him to use these ideas; we are only discussing here a person who is afraid of something in his imagination, and since this is the case, we need to get him to redirect his thoughts. When a

person is afraid, he is suffering from his imagination, which means that he is lacking in *emunah* and in a feeling of Hashem's love, and it is the kind of person who needs to attack the imagination in the way we have described here.

So we are not encouraging a person to deliberately imagine something fearful and to increase his *emunah*. Why should he, if he doesn't have the fears? We are only addressing here someone who already has fears and we want to help such a person face those fears that he is in any case having. So you have asked a very good question.

Q4: We see that when the people were making the Golden Calf, they came to Aharon HaKohen about what they should do, and he was afraid of what would happen, so he gave them the idea of bringing together all the jewelry and make the Calf, to stall for time, because he feared for his life. So even Aharon HaKohen had fears of possibly getting killed. Why didn't he just use the method of dealing with fears, as described in this class?

ANSWER: Aharon HaKohen was afraid because he saw them kill Chur for opposing them, and he feared that they would do the same to him. Are you asking how it is possible that even our *Gedolim* and the biggest *tzaddikim* can become afraid? Is that what you mean to ask?

Q5: What I mean to ask is, why didn't Aharon HaKohen just use the method that the Rav has explained here, in order to solve his fear of getting killed.

ANSWER: The answer to this is because even the greatest *tzaddik* is not always completely attached to Hashem in total *d'veykus*, and for this reason, there is room for fear even in the biggest *tzaddikim*. This is known as the concept of "*tzeil haguf*" ("body shadow") – since even the greatest *tzaddikim* ultimately have physical body, there is always some part of a *tzaddik* that is not attached completely to Hashem, and this is why there is no *tzaddik* who is perfect.

Yet it is always possible for a person to *minimize* his fears, using the method described here in this class. Although we can never totally uproot all of our fears, there is a very big difference between someone who has is consumed by fears with someone who has greatly minimized his fears.

There is also one more kind of fear which we did not speak about in this class: fears caused by sinning. We find that Yaakov Avinu was afraid of Esav, even though Hashem promised him that he would not be harmed, because he was afraid that perhaps he had sinned in the interim and that he was no longer worthy of Hashem's protection. However, in order for this kind of fear to be holy, a person needs to be balanced out with feeling Hashem's closeness. If one feels that Hashem is close by, then it is valid for him to fear the effects of sin. But if one does not feel this closeness, then fearing the effects of the sin is not a holy kind of fear.

Q6: So is this something else we need to fear (to fear the effects of sin)?

ANSWER: Yaakov Avinu had this fear, of being afraid of the effects of a possible sin. But even this fear that he had was ultimately stemming from the "*tzeil haguf*" ("body shadow"), from the physical body of a *tzaddik*, the part which is not completely and perfectly attached with Hashem. But Yaakov Avinu had a balance between the inner layer of the soul (which contains no fear, for it is part and parcel with Hashem), and the outer layers of the soul, which fears sin. If a person does not feel enough

closeness with Hashem, he will be dominated by more fears, fear of sin included. If a person becomes more connected to Hashem and he feels closer to Him, he is calmed on the inside, and the outer part of the self which feels the effects of fear will stay in balanced proportion. This is the kind of fear which our *tzaddikim* had. They had a fear of sin, which was equally balanced with a great feeling of closeness to Hashem.

Q7: When a person fears the effects of a sin, does this fear exist even in the inner part of the soul which only feels closeness to Hashem? Or does it exist only on the outer layers of the soul that experiences fear?

ANSWER: The inner part of the soul feels a complete closeness with Hashem, so it is not possible in that point to feel any fear of sin, because the inner part of the soul is above the point of sin. Therefore, when a person feels this part of the soul where he is completely attached with Hashem, there is no fear of sin, because there is no possibility of sin there....

Q8: So whenever a person feels a fear, it is a sign that something is wrong and that he needs to improve in some area? Does it mean that he has sinned, or that he is not close enough yet to Hashem? Fear is thus entirely a symptom that something is wrong?

ANSWER: You have defined it correctly. If a person is feeling a very intense fear, it is a sign that something is amiss. But if you keep feeling an alternation between fear and feeling close to Hashem – in other words, at the same time that you feel calmed by the knowledge that Hashem is near you, you are stilling experiencing a fear – this is called *pachad d'kedushah*, “holy fear”. If you do not feel that you are moving back and forth between these two feelings, it is a sign though that something is wrong [and that you need to work on your relationship with Hashem].

Q9: Is it possible for one to have fears that come from his previous gilgul (soul reincarnation)? And if it is possible, is a person allowed to take away his fears by going to a hypnotizer?

ANSWER: Yes, it is possible that one's fears come from a previous *gilgul*. Rav Chaim Vital said that his Rebbi, the Arizal, said that some of his fears came from his previous lifetime. Whenever the Arizal heard that someone had been killed, he felt fear, and he said that this was because in a previous *gilgul*, he had been one of the Ten Martyrs who were killed by the Romans.

As for going to a hypnotizer, this is not the ideal solution to solve our fears. First of all, you have to do your research on the hypnotizer in question and find out if he is a real *ben Torah*, who genuinely observes Torah and mitzvos. But even if he is a *frum* hypnotizer, there is a more inner issue involved with turning to hypnosis in order to deal with our fears: it would only be removing the outer garments of our fears, and it would not be uprooting the fear at its root. We want to get to the root of the fear and uproot it totally, as opposed to just removing its symptoms. The inner solution to fears which we have said here, which gets to the root of fear, is: that there is a deep place in our soul where we can feel close to Hashem and that we are with Him. This soothes our soul from all fears.