

דע את ביטחונך

בב

**BILVAVI
BITACHON**
ACTUALIZING OUR FAITH IN GOD

ADAPTED FROM THE HEBREW SHIURIM OF
"דע את ביטחונך"

BY THE AUTHOR OF BILVAVI MISHKAN EVNEH
<http://www.bilvavi.net/sugya/daes.bitachon>

V3 [01-02-2021]

Editor's Introduction	2
1 Bitachon – Living A Life Of The Soul	3
2 The Higher Kind of Bitachon	9
3 What Hashem Wants	13
4 Fear Of The Unknown And Its Solution	15
5 Real Self-Confidence	20
6 Fear of Dangerous Events and the Solution	26
7 Where To Run To When You're Afraid	30
Addendum 1 Overcoming Fear & Trauma	36
Addendum 2 Understanding Suffering & Tragedy	49



ADAPTED FROM THE HEBREW SHIURIM

“דע את ביטחונך”

BY THE AUTHOR OF BILVAVI MISHKAN EVNEH

<http://www.bilvavi.net/sugya/daes.bitachon>

Editor's Introduction

It is clear to any person that we are currently living through trying times. Every day, we hear of more and more stories that rip a chord at our hearts. Life is scary, and no one knows what will be, and what lies ahead of us. We don't have to go into details about this; the current events, one after the other, are simply mind-boggling. Life has gotten to be very stressful and crazy in just the last two decades alone. The world isn't the same today as it was even ten years ago. Even as we try to be *mechazeik* (strengthen) ourselves, we are left groping for answers to our problems. We are waiting for someone to come and tell us what the real answers are to everything that's going on.

In this guide, you may find the answers you are looking for. A Jew knows that there is a G-d above, foreseeing everything. We know this, but often we have a very hard time feeling this. We have all heard of "having *emunah*" and "having *bitachon*," but how much of us are actually feeling that all is well, that we have no reason to worry? And how can we not be worried in a time such as this..?

There is a way: *bitachon* – faith in G-d. It is the answer, but it needs to be explained and understood, and then it can be implemented.

Bitachon is a vast, complex matter. There are indeed many questions about what it means to have *bitachon*. In these classes, the author has explained *bitachon* in an inner way that can prove very effective in your life.

Through the study of this *sefer*, may we be helped by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to withstand the difficulties of life, when we uncover our inner power of *bitachon*.

These classes have been adapted into English from the last seven audio files of the author's *Da Es Hargoshosecha* (Getting to Know Your Feelings). These chapters were not printed in the Hebrew version of the *sefer*, and they appear here in print for the first time. May the study of this *sefer* give us *chizuk* we need, bringing us ever closer to Hashem – and may we be *zoche* to hear His messages to us.

Note: If the reader is looking for quick relief and solace, it is recommended to first see Addendums I and II. For a more in-depth study that offers a more complete understanding, one should go in order of the chapters.

1 | Bitachon – Living A Life Of The Soul¹

Bitachon: Believing

We will discuss what is called *bitachon* – the ability of our soul to place our trust in a higher power than ourselves.

Bitachon is the power in our soul to believe and place one's trust in something. Generally speaking, there are two ways how our soul uses the power of *bitachon*.

One kind of *bitachon* is, simply put, to trust in Hashem. This needs to be explained well, because we also know that we are required to make effort (*hishtadlus*), so we need to understand how we balance our *bitachon* with our human efforts. (Later, we will explain this point).

The second kind of *bitachon* is to have *bitachon* in oneself, which in our language is called *bitachon atzmi*, “self-confidence.”

First, we will discuss the way our soul can use its power of *bitachon* to feel reliant on Hashem. What is the root of this power?

Bitachon. Nothing Opposes You

The first time in the Torah we find the word “*bitachon*” is by Shimon and Levi, when they weren't afraid of being attacked by Shechem; as it is written, “*And they came upon the city confidently (betach).*” They had “*betach.*” In other words, they were able to trust in Hashem's salvation, because they didn't see Shechem as a threat. They feared no opposition.

From here we can see that *bitachon* doesn't just mean that one simply places his trust in Hashem, but rather, that because one doesn't feel opposed, that is why he trusts in Hashem.

(There are differing opinions what *bitachon* is. The *Chovos Halevovos* says that *bitachon* is that a person should know that if it was decreed upon him by Hashem that something good will happen, then it will happen, and if it is something bad, then it will not happen, because everything is good.

¹*Editor's Note: This section, entitled “bitachon”, was a series that the Rav concluded with in the original shiurim he gave in the series, “Getting To Know Your Feelings”. This material was not included in the Hebrew sefer, but it now appears in print for the first time. It concludes the subject of feelings, as it deals with another part of our emotional world: fears. Working on our bitachon has a lot to do with overcoming fears, as we will see. The last chapter was not given as part of this series but taken from a derasha which the author gave at a different time.*

Other opinions, however, have a different approach: anything can definitely happen to a person, because everything Hashem does is for the best. Soon, we will explain these differing approaches.)

Bitachon Is Found When We Access Our Inner World

This world seems like a dangerous place full of challenges; there are constant fights, wars, and battles. But that is only in the physical world we see. We indeed cannot have *bitachon* when we simply look at this world through the lens of this physical world.

But if we look at life through the lens of our inner world, we will find only peace there. We will be able to find in ourselves a place in which nothing opposes us, and there, we can find our *bitachon*.

In the inner world within us, we can find a place of confidence and trust in Hashem. This is the meaning behind what is written, “*And you will settle the land, confidently.*” The *posuk* is saying that we were able to come into the land of Israel, conquer it, and rest assured that Hashem would help us settle it - and this is what happened.

There is a concept known in the *sefarim hekadoshim* as *Olam* (world), *Shanah* (year\time) and *Nefesh* (soul).² What this means for us is that every concept in creation takes place in the world, and in time, and in our soul. Where do we find the concept of *bitachon* in the world, in time, and in our soul?

1. In the world, the place where *bitachon* is found is in *Eretz Yisrael*. It is written, “*And you will settle it, betach (confidently).*” Until we arrived at *Eretz Yisrael*, we were not able to actualize *bitachon*, but after settling in *Eretz Yisrael*, we settled it with *betach*, which comes from the word “*bitachon*.”
2. In time, there is *bitachon* found in Shabbos, because on Shabbos we rest and we don't think about our worries. On Shabbos we have *Menuchah*, calmness that comes because we don't see any opposition to us.
3. Where is *bitachon* in our soul? In our soul, there are two layers. The outer layer feels opposition from life's challenges, but in the inner layer of our soul, there is a whole different world that exists: a place in which we do not feel any danger whatsoever, to see that things are the way they are supposed to be. When we know that things are the way they are supposed to be, we have *bitachon*.

In fact, the entire idea of feeling challenged is really all a superficial mentality that is derived from the external layer of our soul. The inner level of our soul can tell us that in reality, nothing opposes us.

² *Sefer Yetzirah, III*

Just like Hashem said “Enough” when He was finished creating the universe, so we also have the power to say, “Enough,” in our souls and be relaxed. This is an inner solution to how we deal with our challenges, setbacks and failures: that really, nothing opposes us. It is the ability to say, “Things are the way they are supposed to be.”

Even our power of *bechirah*, free will - to choose between good and evil - is only using our outer, superficial layer of our soul. Our free will seems to imply to us that everything is up to us, because we were given the power to choose. But if we access the deep, inner layer of our soul, we will be able to see that there is nothing that truly holds us back.

This is where we find *bitachon* in our soul: a place in which we are living in a whole different world than the one we know of.

Some Clarifications About “*Bitachon*”

Bitachon doesn’t simply mean for a person to superficially utter the words, “I have *bitachon*.” It is to enter into a whole new place we are used to! The Alter of Kelm said that to live with *bitachon* is to experience the kind of life that existed before Adam sinned. Before the sin, nothing was a challenge to Adam.

Now we are after the sin, and we do have challenges. But there is still a deep place in our soul which has in it the state that existed before sin. In that deep place in our soul, we can see that nothing really challenges us.

This is the depth of *bitachon* in Hashem. The true *bitachon* in Hashem is when we truly realize that nothing opposes us. It appears that we have challenges, such as making a living. A person has no choice but to have *bitachon* in Hashem, because only Hashem can provide one with a living. That is true, but it is only a superficial attitude. If we have an inner attitude with our soul, we can have *bitachon* in Hashem for a deeper reason: because since nothing opposes Hashem, it makes perfect sense to trust in Him.

Bitachon doesn’t mean, however, for a person to simply believe that “everything will work out.” This cannot be the true meaning, because maybe a person will indeed lose his job, and he won’t have a livelihood! When we believe that everything will work out, that can only be from the **result** of *bitachon*. But the **essence** of *bitachon* is to know that nothing opposes you, that everything is supposed to be that way,

A person can’t just “work” on his *bitachon*. Rather, *bitachon* is to live in one’s inner world of one’s soul. This inner kind of *bitachon* is for a person to connect one’s self to a higher power than himself, which shows a person that he cannot be opposed.

Bitachon: I'm Not Being Challenged

When a person has *bitachon*, he will also find that he doesn't hate others. On a simple level, this is because a person has to accept that whatever Hashem brings upon a person is good, so that is why it doesn't make sense to hate someone.

But it is more than that. *Bitachon* means that no one, nothing, can oppose a person. With *bitachon*, a person sees no opposition, and thus there is also no room either for hatred. He won't hate someone- hatred will not exist by him. It's not possible to hate someone when you uncover true *bitachon*.

If a person sees that no one can oppose him, he will have no reason to hate anyone, because a person who lives with *bitachon* lives in a world in which there is no opposition or enemy, and thus he doesn't feel any negativity toward others, because he has entered a perspective which is above any allowance for hatred.

This is also why we are commanded to love other Jews like our own self. This *mitzvah* of the Torah is showing us that in essence, in the true reality, there is no place for opposition between people.

This is also why a wife is called "a helpmate who opposes" her husband (*ezer k'negdo*), because even though it appears that she opposes him, really, she is helping her husband by challenging him sometimes.

Using Bitachon Enables One To Withstand Evil Temptations

From here we also see the depth of a sin, and how we can avoid sin. A person only is able to sin when one thinks that that evil is opposing them, and thus one despairs and falls into the sin. If he would view the temptation as something cannot really oppose him – because he can have *bitachon* in Hashem that He will help him- a person would then never come to sin!

After a person falls to a sin, the sin lingers in the background and continues to cause a person to think that life is full of opposition, and that there are challenges bombarding him. That is the negative effect of a sin; it warps the person's mind and convinces him that he can be opposed and defeated. If the person would gain the inner perspective of *bitachon*, he would be able to fight the resulting despondency caused by his sins.

The Cause for Fear of People

All our fears only exist whenever we feel like we are somehow being opposed. When people don't have confidence, or when they are afraid of others, it is really because they think that others can oppose them. Once a person sees that other people cannot really oppose him, he will find that he has no reason to be afraid of any person. Of course, this force in one's soul can unfortunately be used for evil as well, because a person can get carried away with this concept and then he never does *teshuvah* for his sins, since he has detached from all his fears, and then he doesn't even fear punishment. However, this is an evil use of this power, because the person acts extreme with it, and it is misguided *bitachon*; we are not speaking of this. We are simply learning about its root power, which is good in its essence. Our entire inner world is built on this ability to realize that nothing really opposes us, and in turn, all superficiality is really based on feeling like we are opposed.

All of us have the power in ourselves to be above feeling any opposition, and sometimes we succeed in revealing it - but only in a superficial manner. This ability usually remains hidden away deep in our soul, and even when we make use of it, it doesn't come from a deep place in our soul.

How can we see this? Many times, people place their blind trust in something. We do this all the time in our daily life, but we don't realize where it really comes from. For example, no one is afraid that the cup of water he is drinking contains any poison. We have a natural in-born trust in things.

Whenever we place our trust in someone or in something, really this ability comes from the G-dly spark that is in every person, the power to have *bitachon*. We end up using this ability superficially, like by placing our trust in the bank, or in our insurance. A child also has pure trust in his parents. This is also a power that stems from the soul's *bitachon*, but it is just being revealed in a superficial manner.

What we need to learn is how to use that root of this power, and in turn to reveal our real power of *bitachon*. Our task here is to remove our "garments" of this power of inborn trust - to remove our natural trust in people, and in other things - and to come to reveal our real *bitachon*. Our job is thus not to "get" *bitachon* - we already have it deep within our soul! Our job is to reveal it - to reveal its real power, which we use superficially every day (just we don't realize how).

This is also the depth of the statement, "*The victory of Yisrael does not lie.*"³ From where does one's ability to be victorious in winning his struggles against evil come from? It is when a person sees that nothing really opposes him.

Realizing who is in charge

bitachon doesn't mean that a person simply believes that "whatever will be, will be". It is to realize Who is really in charge – the One who has no opposition.

If a person thinks simply that "I" am in charge, then deep down, he is admitting that can be opposed; after all, he is only human. But if a person recognizes that Hashem is the one in charge, he will see how nothing opposes him.

(There is a separate discussion which is considered a "higher" kind of *bitachon*: Either when a person trusts that whatever will happen will happen, even if a person doesn't experience a salvation; or that he trusts that Hashem will definitely bring a person his salvation. We have not addressed this yet; we have only begun to discuss the roots of *bitachon*. In the next chapter, we will discuss what the higher *bitachon* is).

2 | The Higher Kind of *Bitachon*

The Higher Kind of *Bitachon*. You already have everything

The *Chovos Helevovos* writes that *bitachon* is the serenity of the soul (*menuchas hanefesh*) that one has because he trusts in Hashem. This calmness is the depth behind the power of *bitachon*.

This doesn't mean that because a person places his trust in Hashem, he therefore feels peace of mind. It's really the other way around: When a person lives in a world of *menuchas hanefesh*, he has *bitachon*.

What is this *menuchas hanefesh* (serenity of the soul)? It is for a person to realize, "I have already what I want." The person realizes that although right now he needs something, he will eventually get it, and therefore even before he actually has it, he feels that he has it right now. This is like the *menuchas hanefesh* we can have on Shabbos, when we recognize that "all your work is done."

On a deeper note, *bitachon* is when one realizes that although he doesn't have something, he knows that it is better that way, because he feels like he has everything he needs; that *itself* brings one's salvation.

(There is well-known difference of opinion what *bitachon* is⁴. The *Chovos Halevovos* says that *bitachon* is to know that everything is ultimately good, while the *Alshich* says that *bitachon* is when a person is sure that he will get what he wants, because he trusts in Hashem. According to what we are saying, the *Chovos Halevovos* is actually addressing a deeper kind of *bitachon*).

How To Reach This Perspective

How can a person reach the deeper kind of *bitachon* – to truly feel that one already has everything? Simply, it is because a person says to himself, "This is what Hashem decreed." However, although this is true, it is only the superficial outlook on the matter. What is the inner perspective?

Our Sages taught, "*Kavei el Hashem -- Chazor v'kavei*" -- that one has to keep hoping and placing his trust in Hashem, again and again. This means that at first, a person should place his hope in Hashem, even though he isn't certain that help will come. He is not allowed yet to believe with certainty that Hashem will send him help. But after a person keeps placing his trust in Hashem,

⁴ Soon, the author will explain that it is really not a difference of opinion, but that it is rather two different perspectives, a lower and a higher one – depending on the level of the person.

again and again, now he can move on to a higher kind of *bitachon*, and believe with certainty that his help will come.

From a simple viewpoint, it seems that continuously hoping in Hashem means that a person shouldn't despair. That is true, but why then is it necessary for the Sages to tell us that one must keep hoping, again and again? The answer is that in order to continuously hope in Hashem, it means more than just not giving up. It is the very means for salvation. A person who continues to hope in Hashem brings about his own salvation!

Let's say a person believes he can win the lottery; does he have *bitachon*? Either he is delusional – or he really believes it. If a person would truly believe that he can win the lottery, without any doubts whatsoever, he has true *bitachon*. Most people, however, do not have such *bitachon*, even when they believe that they could win the lottery.

This is not an easy level to be on, and in fact, that is why most people won't really win the lottery - because no one really believes that Hashem will really make it happen...

The Request Must Be Consistent

Bitachon thus has to be *chazor v'kavei*, to “continuously hope” in Hashem. What does this entail? When we keep hoping that Hashem will bring us our salvation, it has to be the same consistent request.

If a person asks for something else each time, then he is not placing his continuous hope in Hashem; if a person asks for something from Hashem and then he asks for another thing, his second request is not with the same conviction, so he is not “continuously hoping” in Hashem's salvation. This is not *bitachon*.

The ability to keep placing one's hope in Hashem, again and again with the same conviction, is a constant ability we all have. It comes from the inner layer of our soul. It is the true desire of our soul; it is our innermost desire. It is a desire that what we truly want – and need. (We will soon explain what this inner desire is).

It Must Be A Legitimate Need

There are two kinds of things that a person wants. There are things that a person truly wants, and then there are things that we “want,” but we don't really need them.

When a person has the true *bitachon*, he wants what he *really* wants – which is what he *needs*. Such a person gets helped from Hashem, because his desires come from his very essence; such desires are the true desires of our soul, and Hashem fulfills these innermost desires.

A person who needs food to live, and he truly hopes that Hashem will give it to him, he has *bitachon*, because he wants what he truly *needs*; anything more than what he actually needs to survive life is not part of this. When a person wants things that he doesn't really need, and he hopes that Hashem will make it happen, this is not *bitachon*, because he is wanting more than what he needs to live.

Also, it can be that a person convinces himself that he wants something, and he doesn't really need it. It is only in his imagination that he needs it. Such desires aren't either fulfilled, because they are just imaginary "needs".

This is also the meaning behind the *Alshich's* interpretation of *bitachon*, which is for a person to be sure that help will come. This kind of *bitachon* means that a person can be sure that he will be helped, because it is his innermost desire.

As long as a person wants something *from his very essence* – what he needs in order to survive life – he can have *bitachon* that he will get it. Anything more than that cannot be included in one's *bitachon*. An example of this we see from the *bitachon* of Yosef *Hatzaddik* as he went down to Egypt, of which the Sages praise him for having *bitachon*. He trusted that Hashem would save him, because such a desire came from his very essence.

There seems to be different opinions of what *bitachon* is, but really they are all correct. How? It depends what the mentality of the person is, what he's actually thinking.

When a person wants something from his *innermost desire* of the soul, then he is allowed to believe that Hashem will definitely fulfill it. (Even the *Chovos Halevovos* would agree to this.) Only when a person wants something that he doesn't really need – something that doesn't come from his innermost desire of his soul – is he not allowed to believe that Hashem will fulfill it. With such desires, if it happens, fine, but if it doesn't, then it doesn't. It all depends on what a person *truly needs*. Only our true needs get answered.

In fact, all worries that people have really come from wanting things that aren't necessary. Anything more than what we need causes damage to our life.

Bitachon in finding a shidduch

Let's say we are in doubt which kind of *bitachon* we should have (the view of the *Chovos HaLevovos*, or the view of the *Alshich*). This very question comes from the power of doubt in a person. Our power of evil doubt gets us to doubt even our *bitachon* – like, "Which kind of *bitachon* am I supposed to have?"

Doubts destroy our *Emunah* (basic belief in G-d) as well as our *bitachon* (actualized belief). Our doubts are really the source of all our problems! A person is in doubt if he really needs what he wants; what happens from this? He's not even sure if he is allowed to have *bitachon* or not; therefore,

he doubts which kind of *bitachon* he should be having, and then he never ends up having *bitachon* altogether...

All of us have many kinds of different situations in our life, and we need *bitachon* to get by them. Let's say a person needs a *shidduch* (spouse). When a person is dating, what kind of *bitachon* should he have? Should he believe that his *shidduch* will definitely happen, or should he believe that his *shidduch* will only happen if it's good for him (and if it's not good for him, then he won't find his *shidduch*)? The average person is in doubt which kind of *bitachon* to have.

With the lower kind of *bitachon* – which is to believe that if the *shidduch* is good for a person, it will happen, and if it won't be good, then it won't happen – it is clear that a person can only believe that his *shidduch* will happen if it is good for him, and if it isn't good for him, he will not get his *shidduch*. That is clear.

But let's say a person is using the deeper, higher kind of *bitachon* (which is to believe that Hashem will definitely send him his *shidduch*). Does that mean that one's *shidduch* is already here next to him, or is it just that his *shidduch* will “eventually” come? This is a very subtle point.

The answer to this is what we learn from Shabbos. On Shabbos, we cease from labor; “All your work is done.” This means that we are relaxed because we already have the good already next to us. This is the higher kind of *bitachon* to have: to believe that all is good, and that it is already here. (Therefore, when having *bitachon* that one will find his *shidduch*, he should believe that his *shidduch* is already here, right now!)

This is really the level we will all be on in the World to Come, which is the perfect calmness we will have. Right now, our calmness is not perfect, and we cannot have perfect *menuchas hanefesh* on this world.

But even now, we can have some resemblance to this level, by having some *menuchas hanefesh* – to realize that we actually have everything good next to us. This is the true depth of *bitachon* – to connect to Hashem through our calmness.

3 | What Hashem Wants

We mentioned that there are two kinds of *bitachon*. The first kind of *bitachon* is to accept whatever Hashem bring will upon me (which is the explanation of the *Chovos Halevovos*), and the other kind of *bitachon* is to be sure that Hashem will bring me what I want (which is the explanation of the *Alshich*).

In the first kind of *bitachon*, it should be mentioned that Hashem placed a “penalty” on mankind (after Adam’s sin) in order to allow His good decrees to happen. This penalty is that we have to make human effort if we are to see any results. Another important fact we must know about this is that what Hashem gives us is not a result of our efforts, even though it is true that we only see results when we put in effort.

If we are to understand simply that there are two different “opinions” what *bitachon* is, then we are not putting Hashem into the equation. We will only be focused on what we want, that it should come... but we aren’t that connected to Hashem.

But if we understand that really there are no “differences” what *bitachon* is (and that these two explanations do not contradict each other, because one is a lower kind of *bitachon* and the other is the higher kind of *bitachon*), then we are connected to Hashem through our *bitachon*. In this way, we can get ourselves to *want what Hashem wants*.

A person needs to ask himself: “What am I connected to? Am I connected to my “*bitachon*” – meaning, to what I want – or am I connected to *Hashem*...?”

If we understand simply that there are different opinions of what *bitachon* is, then we are either connected to what we want (which is improper), or we do this right and connect to Hashem. In the higher kind of *bitachon*, we are connected only to Hashem, and in the lower kind of *bitachon*, we are connected only to what we want.

But if we understand that there are no differing opinions what *bitachon* is – rather, there are different levels of *bitachon* – then when we have *bitachon*, we are connected to Hashem, not to what we want.

This is the root of *bitachon*. It is not to simply trust that Hashem will carry out what a person wants. If a person has *bitachon* only by being connected to what he wants and not to Hashem (meaning, he believes that Hashem will give him whatever he wants, but he’s focused on what he wants, and not on the “Hashem” aspect here), then he is like a container without anything to receive what will go into it (the *bitachon* one has is a “container” that receives the sustenance (*shefa*) of Hashem). When we *daven*, that is also part of our efforts.

(The *Nefesh Hachaim* writes that there are two parts to Torah: *Halacha* and *Agadta*. Of these two parts, closeness to Hashem is mainly found through the learning of *Halacha*, because *Halacha* is the will of Hashem; *Agadta* reveals the wisdom of Hashem, but the will of Hashem is known to us through *Halacha*, so *Halacha* brings us more closeness to Hashem. This is contrary to popular thinking; really, closeness to Hashem is found more in *Halacha* than in *Agadta*. This shows us that closeness to Hashem is mainly achieved through wanting to do the will of Hashem, because we need to want what Hashem wants.)

How can a person know what Hashem wants from him? The Mishnah in Avos states, “Nullify your will before His will.” In other words, if you give up what you want for what *Hashem* wants, you will then find out what Hashem wants from you.

bitachon is essentially to connect oneself to the very power of *bitachon*, which tells us that we should want what Hashem wants. Our efforts we make must be done with the awareness that it is not our efforts that produce results, but that they are only a tool to bring about what Hashem wants and to reveal His will.

4 | Fear Of The Unknown And Its Solution

The Opposite of *Bitachon* is Fear, and the Opposite of Emunah is Doubt

Everything in creation has an opposite. For everything good, there is something evil that opposes it, equal in strength. For everything evil, there is something else good that can oppose it which is also equal to it in strength. Therefore, there is a rule that in order to understand anything, we need to learn about its opposite.

Right now we are discussing *bitachon*. What is the opposite of *bitachon*? The opposite of *bitachon* is *pachad*, fear. If we understand the nature of fear, we can know everything about what it means to have *bitachon*. If we understand what *bitachon* is, then we can know that fear is whatever *bitachon* isn't.

We have two similar terminologies: *emunah* (belief) and *bitachon* (trust). What is really the difference between them? The Ramban says that *emunah* is a **potential** ability to believe in Hashem, while *bitachon* is this ability in its **active** form. When we have *bitachon*, we are acting out our *emunah*. The opposite of *emunah* is *safek* (doubt), while the opposite of *bitachon*, as we said, is *pachad* (fear).

When You're Sure There Is Danger: Use *Bitachon*

Now, what is the difference between a fear and a doubt? When a person is afraid, he is he afraid of *definite* danger, not a possible danger. When a person has *bitachon*, he trusts that Hashem will definitely save him from this seemingly "definite" danger. The opposite of *bitachon* is fear, which is when a person is afraid and he thinks that danger will definitely come.

bitachon thus solves our definite fears. The clearer the danger is, the more fear a person has; the less we see the danger – due to *bitachon* – the less we will feel the fear.

The Hebrew word *pachad* comes from the word *chad*, which means to sharpen, like we find by the words of Torah, that they should be *mechudadin b'picha*, "sharpened in your mouth." In other words, there is only reason to have fear when the danger is clear and definite; when a person feels sure of the danger, now is the time to use *bitachon*. *bitachon* enables a person to believe in a definite source – Hashem, who can take away the "definite" danger.

But what solves doubt? What should a person do if he is afraid of the unknown?

When You're Not Sure If There's Danger: Use Emunah

Doubt is solved through *emunah*.

In today's times, there is much doubt in the world; this comes from the impurity of Amalek, whose very essence is to induce doubt. In the future, when Amalek will be destroyed and there will be no more doubt, we will have the perfect *bitachon*, because when doubt is removed, we can then truly have *bitachon*.

Thus, when we remove our doubts, we reveal our *emunah*. When we have no fear of danger that seems close, we reveal our *bitachon*.

Two kinds of good fear

There is a kind of fear we find, however, which is holy.

It is written, "*Praiseworthy is the person who is always afraid.*" The *Gemara* says that this is either referring to fear about forgetting one's Torah learning, or to be afraid of sinning. When a person is afraid of forgetting his learning, or he is afraid of sin, these fears are good for him. They are holy and constructive.

Sin causes two negative emotions: sadness, and fear. Sadness is understandably caused by sins, by why should sin cause fear? We do not mean the fear from punishment; we are referring to the fear of sin itself. Why is this fear good?

It is written (Yeshayahu 33:14), "*And sinners were afraid in Zion.*" Why only in Zion (Jerusalem) was there fear of sin? It is because only in Zion was there a revelation of the *Shechinah*. The meaning of this is that when there is "revelation," there can be fear. A fear of sin shows that there is a "revelation" of the *Shechinah* in a person.

Unhealthy fears (that are not fear of sin, or those that do not have to do with our Torah learning) are detrimental, because they distance a person from feeling his oneness with Hashem.

By contrast, having fear about forgetting our Torah learning brings us closer to the oneness of Hashem, because we "sharpen" our learning. Sharpening means *mechudadin* in Hebrew, which comes from the word *chad*, "one," alluding to the source of oneness – Hashem. When a person is afraid over this, his fear is that he is afraid of being distanced from the oneness of Hashem, and such a fear is holy and praised by our Sages.

When a person is afraid of others looking at him

Some people develop a self-conscious fear that maybe others are staring at them. What is the root of this fear?

It is really because the person feels distanced from the “oneness” of Hashem. Therefore, all he will feel is his own “oneness,” so he feels alone and by himself, and this causes him to be afraid that others are staring at him. If he would feel closer to Hashem, he would only feel the oneness of Hashem, and then he wouldn’t feel alone – he would feel the “oneness” of Hashem, instead of his own insecure “oneness”.

Fear of the Unknown

The *Gemara* also relates that there are many fears which people have which they don’t know where the fears come from. When a person feels afraid and he doesn’t even know why he is afraid, that itself increases his fear. This is because usually a person feels afraid when he senses definite danger; when a person senses danger even though he’s not sure of danger, it makes him even more afraid. He’s agitating inside: “Why am I afraid, if I’m not supposed to be?”

When a person is afraid and he doesn’t know why, he has both fear and doubt. This is a fear that comes from doubt, and the doubt feeds the fear. This is a worse kind of fear, because it’s the outcome of a lack of both *Emunah* and *bitachon* at once.

Such fear is the kind of fear that Amalek induced into our people, and it represents all the impurity of Amalek. Fear of the unknown is the worst kind of fear - it is the antithesis of both *Emunah* and *bitachon* together, and it is Amalek’s very strength of evil.

The Difference Between Healthy Fears and Unhealthy Fears

We have begun to mention the holy kind of fear, which is a healthy fear, and we can use this holy fear to counter the fears that are fueled on by Amalek’s evil.

Holy fear is called “*Pachad Yitzchok*” – the “fear of Yitzchok”. What is this type of fear, and why is it holy?

The word *pachad* (fear) comes from the word *chad* (one). This shows us that unhealthy kinds of fears come from when a person feels that he is “one” – in other words, he feels all alone, with no Hashem in his life.

A person is afraid when he feels like he is “one” and all by himself, because he is distanced from Hashem, who is “*Echad*” – the true “One.” When a person doesn’t feel the Oneness of Hashem, he is left with his own oneness, so to speak; thus he feels alone, and he might even become afraid of his own self.

What is the solution for this fear? The problem here is that the person feels that he is “one” and all alone. Therefore, the solution is to go in the opposite direction – to feel “two”. Let us explain what we mean.

The holy kind of fear is based upon being afraid of future spiritual failures. This is *pachad d’kedushah* – a holy kind of fear, which was the fear that Yitzchok Avinu had. Yitzchok really had fear that he wouldn’t match up to the greatness of his father, Avrohom. He was afraid of his future; he was afraid that because he is the “second” in line, he might not fulfill his duties properly and live up to his father Avraham. He was afraid of a situation of “two” – that he will be compared to Avraham and not live up to his great father.

In other words, holy fear is to fear that one will not grow spiritually, that he will not fulfill his life’s mission. This is called fearing a situation of “two,” alluding to how Yitzchok was afraid, that the fact that he is second to come after Avraham automatically compares him to his father’s level; that he was afraid that he won’t live up to the level expected of him.

By contrast, unhealthy and unholy kinds of fear are just temporary fears of the present moment, not of future spiritual failure; in other words, when a person is afraid of the present moment, he is just being afraid of his own oneness – he’s afraid of his own self.

How a person can know if his fears are healthy or not

How can a person know if his fear is justified or not? The way to know this is as follows.

It is written, “*Praiseworthy is the person who is always afraid,*” and the Sages say that this is referring to one who is afraid when it comes to his Torah learning, or when one is afraid of sinning. Why does the *possuk* say that praiseworthy fear is “always”? What is the meaning of this?

From here we learn that the right kind of fear of the future to have is only when it is consistent. If a person is feeling a **constant** fear of future spiritual failure, like when he is afraid of sinning, or he is afraid when it comes to his Torah learning – he is afraid of the **future**, and thus he is constantly afraid. This is the **healthy** kind of fear to have.

But if a person is only sometimes seized with a fear, he fears the **present** moment; his fears are just happenstance, and that is a sign that his fears are not holy. Let us explain what we mean.

Our unhealthy fears are never really a constant fear – they are just fearful moments that seize us here and there. But when a fear is holy, such as a fear that has to do with one’s learning or because

one is afraid he will sin, his fear is constant. The consistency of the fear shows that it has a true source, and such fear is holy.

(To summarize: healthy fear is fear of the future, while unhealthy fear is fear of the present moment. Healthy fear is a constant fear of the future. When a person fears spiritual failure of the future, his fear is *pachad d'kedushah*, just like Yitzchok Avinu was afraid of the future. Fear is unhealthy when it is only temporary, because such a fear is a fear of the present, not of the future).

Another note is that *bitachon* is the opposite of the word *bo chet*, “sin comes”. When a person sins, he loses his *bitachon*, because sins cause fear, which doesn't allow for *bitachon*.

Fear of being alone

There are people who are afraid of even themselves. This is why we can find people who are afraid to be alone even for a moment. Why are people afraid to be alone, and why are these people afraid of their own self?

It comes from an unhealthy soul. It is not only delusional people who are afraid of themselves; anyone whose soul isn't healthy fears himself, and he thus fears being alone. Such a person's life is not a life. This is one of the curses that comes along with fear – it causes a person to fear his own self. A person who fears himself doesn't see himself as connected to Hashem; he sees himself as a separate entity. He is far from the “oneness” of Hashem.

Until now we spoke of the higher kind of *bitachon*, and its opposite, fear. When a person has fear, he is essentially feeling very far from Hashem; he needs to fix this by feeling the Oneness of Hashem.

There is a holy kind of fear which can return a person back to his source: to sense the Oneness of Hashem and be afraid of that. By fearing sin, and by fearing mistakes in our Torah learning, we utilize fear in the right way and fix the soul.

This is the true kind of fear which we should have; it is the inner layer to our fears, and all other fears we go through are the garments of this fear. By using the inner layer of our fears, *pachad d'kedushah*, we utilize our fears in a healthy way and for holy purposes, which can fix our soul.

5 | Real Self-Confidence

Real Self-Confidence: Being Yourself

Until now we spoke of the first kind of *bitachon* in our soul, the power to trust in Hashem. Now we will discuss the other kind of *bitachon* which we mentioned in the beginning: to trust in one's very own self. In our language, this is called *bitachon atzmi*, "self-confidence".

From where does a person draw confidence from?

Let us emphasize that we are referring to a healthy sense of confidence, not *gaavah* (haughtiness). Healthy confidence, *bitachon atmi*, is when a person recognizes his strengths, in a healthy way, not to feel conceited in others, but simply to be able to have a proper self-esteem. When a person sees what his strengths are, he sees his good qualities, and he thus feels confidence in himself. That is the simple kind of confidence one can have. There is also a deeper kind of self-confidence than this, though, and we will explain what it is.

There are situations in which a person finds himself to be confident, but we all know that there are situations in which a person doesn't feel confident. This happens because a person feels confident only in a superficial way, but he doesn't have a real, deeper kind of confidence.

We see this manifest in people when they don't act like their true personalities, and they instead put on a show and act based on what others will think. With such an outlook, a person never accesses his true confidence.

When a person is acting like his true self, he acts like who he is, and he is using his strengths in his soul. Such a person has real confidence in himself, because he trusts himself. But when a person acts a certain way only because he knows that he "has" to act that way – but he isn't being himself – his soul lacks stability, and he cannot have true confidence in himself. He might get himself to think like others because others think that way, but he's still not being himself.

In fact, for this reason, most people don't have true confidence in their souls. Most people are copying other people in how they act and think. They act mainly on self-consciousness: "What will *others* say if I do this..?"

Therefore, when people do things just to blend into society and even act confidently, this has nothing to do with confidence. True confidence from our soul is when a person relies on *himself* to act, on his actual abilities, and not based upon how others act. True confidence is to be able to "lean" on oneself for support – not to lean on others for support. Our personality and strengths are

the garments which our soul relies upon; when we rely on ourselves, our own soul - and not others – we then will have the true confidence.

To give a common example of the problem, many people, when they make *simchos* (celebrations) are mainly concerned with how others will look at it. They aren't being themselves, but basing their actions solely on the opinion of others. All the arrangements by many *simchos* are based on, "What will everyone think, what will they say about this?"

Confidence comes from your soul, not from your middos

True self-confidence is to be able to trust and rely on oneself, to rely on our very own soul for reassurance. What does this mean?

True confidence does not mean that a person relies on his personality, or on his good *middos*, for confidence. These things are just a garment of our soul – they are not the soul itself. A person is not defined by the *middos* he has, nor is he defined by the personality type he is. Those things are just layers covering over our essence.

If a person is confident in himself, let's say, because he thinks that he is a very nice person – then he doesn't have any real confidence. Such a person isn't drawing his confidence from his essence, but from the garments of his soul, which are his good qualities. A person with real self-confidence realizes that his good *middos* or various qualities he has are still not his essence, but only the garments of his soul, and that he can draw self-confidence from his very essence - his soul.

Let's go further with this: let's say a person has self-confidence based on the fact that he gives a *shiur* (Torah lecture). At first, he didn't have confidence in himself, so he improved his confidence by starting to give a *shiur*, and this boosts his confidence. What will happen if a day comes that he isn't able to give more *shiurim* anymore? What will happen if he's suddenly out of commission, like if he gets sick, or if he doesn't have students anymore?

Such a person will lose all his self-confidence, because he was getting all of his confidence from the fact that he gives a *shiur*. The "garment" he was relying on until now has now fallen away, and he will be left with nothing to get his confidence from. All of his confidence was coming from the fact that he gives a *shiur* – not from *himself*.

Each of our Avos (forefathers) had their own unique path in serving Hashem. Avraham Avinu could not have done what Yitzchok Avinu did, and Yitzchok Avinu could not have done with Yaakov Avinu did. It is because each Jew has his own strengths. If we want to have true confidence, we must realize that we each have a unique soul, and no one can accomplish what you can accomplish.

Self-confidence thus makes a person ask himself: “Who am I? Am I my good *middos*? Am I my qualities? Is this who “I” am...?”

Confidence that comes from Hashem in your soul

Yet, we must clarify the following point about self-confidence. A Jew’s confidence should not be coming just from relying on himself in the simple sense. It is only when a person realizes that even his own essence, his very soul, is only a garment clothed by Hashem.

Hashem resides in the deepest part of our soul; He is clothed by our soul, and our soul serves as a garment that covers Him. So when a person is confident, his real confidence from “himself” should be coming from the fact that he relies on Hashem, who is in his soul. With this kind of confidence, a person realizes that his qualities are only a garment of his essence, and they are only a “way” to reveal his confidence, because it’s all coming from Hashem, and not from his human abilities.

So even if a person is confident because he knows that he has a unique essence, from where does he get his confidence from? Is he relying only on himself – on how wonderful he is – or he is relying on Hashem, who is in his soul? That is the question one will have to ask himself.

If a person’s confidence comes from only himself – from the belief in his soul and in its unique qualities, without recognizing that Hashem is the source of our entire soul – then his confidence is only being attributed to a garment of the soul, and we know that garments can fall away, just like clothing can get removed.

But if a person has confidence because he knows that *Hashem* resides in his soul, and that is why he can be confident in his soul – then his confidence is based on a source, and he has the true confidence coming from the soul.

How a person can know if he has true confidence

How can a person know if he has true self-confidence? The way is by seeing where he runs to when he feels distressed. A person runs to where he leans on for reassurance. Where is a person running to when he’s scared?

If a person only has the superficial kind of confidence, then where he runs to for security will depend what kind of person he is. An action kind of person, when he is under a lot of stress, runs to do more action; he gets a feeling of security when he throws himself into doing more action. A feeling kind of person runs to his emotional world to feel secure, and a thinking kind of person will retreat into deep thought in order to feel secure.

But if a person relies and leans on Hashem for his reassurance in life, then whenever he feels stressed in any way, he runs away to *Hashem* for support. That shows that he draws his confidence from Hashem, and this in turn shows that the person has true confidence.

Where we run to when we are scared – that shows us where exactly we are getting our confidence from. Either a person runs into himself for security – which shows that he only has superficial confidence – or he runs to Hashem for security, which shows that he has the real confidence.

The Proper Attitude To Have About Learning Torah Amidst A Crisis

There is also a middle level between these two kinds of people: those who, when in distress, run to go learn Torah in the *beis midrash*. As we said, true confidence is when a person runs to Hashem for security; running to the *beis midrash* amidst a crisis doesn't always mean that the person is running away to Hashem for help. Let us explain why.

The Torah is *not* Hashem. A person can learn Torah with a sense of Hashem in his life and connect his learning with Hashem, but we also know that it's also possible that a person just learns Torah, without Hashem in his life.

So when a person runs to the *beis midrash* as a way to escape his pain, this doesn't always show that he is doing so to connect more to Hashem. It depends why a person is running to the Torah for support when he is in distress.

When a person is going through a time of distress in his life, he can run away into his learning and throw himself into thinking about the *Gemara*. This is indeed a good place to run to, to take shelter in the Torah. That is, *if the person is being himself*. As we said before, confidence is only when a person is being himself. If a person is running to the Torah and he connects his learning with Hashem, then we can say that such a person is acting like his true self. This is our true self.

A person who truly relies on the Torah in this way – one who learns Torah and is connected to Hashem through his learning - he is being himself, and thus he has confidence from his Torah learning. He has Hashem in the equation.

But some people, when going through a rough time, will dedicate themselves to learning Torah in spite of their stress, and they will run to the *beis midrash* to go learn Torah... but without Hashem in the picture. Can we call this 'being himself'? Such a person isn't 'being himself', so when he tries to gain reassurance and confidence from his learning, he will not get true confidence. He's not really "being himself."

If a person in distress runs to a place that isn't who he is, he has no true confidence in himself; even if he is running to the *Torah* for reassurance. Part of having confidence, we mentioned before, is to be who you are. If a person is relying on just learning the "Torah" itself for confidence, and

Hashem isn't in the picture – he isn't in a place that is really "himself," and he will not find solace from his distress.

One who runs to his Creator in his distress, however, has who to rely on for confidence: Hashem. Such a person's confidence comes from Hashem; he relies and leans on Hashem for support, and that is whom he takes refuge in when he needs to feel reassured.

Contradictions hold back Confidence

A person who just runs to learn Torah as a refuge from his stress might be running to a *part* of the Torah, not to the actual Torah itself in its entirety.

Only a person who learns Torah with Hashem in the equation is considered to be running to the Torah for reassurance. Without Hashem in the equation, a person might be running to a *part* of Torah, but he's not running to the actual Torah itself. He might find that although he's running away to the Torah for reassurance, he still has no one Who he can rely on to gain reassurance. Only when someone runs away to *Hashem* will he find that he has who to rely on, and from there, a person can feel confident and reassured, safe and secure.

Most people, though, are doing things the whole day that are not really who they are. They aren't being themselves. A person has to be himself, and in order to be himself, he has to know who he is – who he is, and what his qualities are; he must know that his qualities are not his actual self, but only branches from his root. All his qualities are just the branches of one's actual self.

When a person isn't himself, he will also do things that contradict himself, and this holds back his inner essence from being revealed.

We will give an example of this: the Sages say that one should not get angry on Erev Shabbos in his household. Let's say a person feels like getting angry about something in his house on Erev Shabbos, and he holds back his anger. What is he feeling inside, though? Does he feel that it is only his **body** that he is holding back from anger, or does he feel that his **soul** as well agrees not to get angry?

If a person is just feeling that it is his body which he is restraining from getting angry, not his soul, then there is a contradiction between what his body is doing and what his soul is doing. His soul is really seething deep down, and this results in a sadness, because he isn't being himself.

What a person should really do in such a situation is not only to feel that he's holding back his body from getting angry, but that he's holding back his soul as well from getting angry, and then there wouldn't be this contradiction.

Recognizing yourself from your root, not from your branches

Most people never truly recognize themselves; at most they know themselves partially.

Once I asked someone, “What is your strongest quality you have?” He answered me: “I am a good *chazzan*.” This person thinks that his main quality is that he sings well, and this is how he identifies himself. He doesn’t know how to identify himself! He thinks that his good voice, which is really only a branch of himself, that it’s his essence. Such an outlook comes from considering oneself to be a body, not a soul.

A person has to know the root of his soul (his essence) as well as the branches of his soul (which are his qualities), and a person has to know that he is *not* identified by his branches.

Let’s say a person has a certain good quality; for example, he is a nice and caring person. Is this why he has confidence in himself? If he does, he is only confident in his “branches,” but not in his roots. He relies on his branches for confidence, but he isn’t drawing confidence from his very self. What will happen when he feels distressed and he needs confidence? He will simply increase his caring and niceness toward others, trying to gain a sense of security from his niceness, but he isn’t really being confident in himself.

This is the question: Where does a person run to in a time of distress? Does he return to his roots – or to his branches? A person has to make sure he returns to his roots in his soul. In order for this to happen, a person has to know who he is, to know that he is not identified by his branches.

Most of the downfalls that people have are because they only know of their branches in their soul, and they only recognize themselves according to their branches. If they lose their branches, they fall apart, because their entire self-confidence is based on their branches, which are only a “garment” that can fall away.

All fears are really because a person only recognizes himself based on his branches, and thus he has nowhere to really run to for reassurance when he is in distress. It only makes sense that such a person should be afraid – after all, he has nowhere to get his confidence from when he needs it.

6 | Fear of Dangerous Events and the Solution

Fear of Dangerous Events

There are two general kinds of fear: Fear that comes from our soul, and fears which come from outside of our soul.

Fear in our soul, as we clarified in the last chapter, is when a person isn't acting like himself. He has no real confidence, and thus he has all kinds of fears. This was the topic we dealt with until now.

However, there are also fears which come from our outside, such as fear caused by committing a sin. When someone commits a sin, the *sefarim hakedoshim* explain that the sin itself creates certain fears that can come to haunt the person, depending on the kind of sin committed. This is a separate topic, and it can happen to even someone who has inner confidence, because this is a fear which comes from outside of us, not from an unhealthy soul.

Another kind of outside fear is when a person hears of dangerous events, like when a person hears of a tragedy.

This fear also does not stem from a lack of balance in the soul, as it is an outer kind of fear not based on the soul. Even a person with a balanced soul can have these kinds of fears.

Fear of dangerous events is really the same nature as the fear which a person has when he is afraid for being punished for his sins, such as when a person is afraid of the destroying angels that are created from his sins; the person is afraid of being punished.

So far, we have given solutions in overcoming fear in our soul, which is by having the true *bitachon* in Hashem, and in the true self-confidence we can derive from our soul. But how do we deal with fears that come from the outside of us, such as fear of dangerous events?

We are not dealing with how to have *Emunah*; that is a separate discussion. *Emunah* is a deeper subject than what we are discussing. Right now we are discussing a more basic step, something which even the lowest part of our soul, our *nefesh habehaimis*, can struggle with and deal with.

All Fears Have To Do With Change

To know the solution to fears of danger, first, we need to know what the depth of fear is.

Really, all our fears have to do with change. People are afraid of changes to our situation. For example, why are people afraid that there will be a war? It is because people are afraid of change. People fear a “different” situation than the current one, and that is the source of the fear.

People are also afraid of death, for this very reason. Even if Eliyahu HaNavi would come to a person and tell him he will go straight to Gan Eden after he dies, the person still would be afraid to die. Why? It is because we fear changes. The fact that we are undergoing a change in our situation is enough of a reason to fear, even if we know that we will be fine and good.

This is also the depth of our fear in Torah learning. The *Gemara* says that “There is no *Beis Midrash* that doesn’t have novel Torah ideas that day.” Since Torah is always becoming renewed, there are changes being made – and this causes us to fear that we won’t advance in learning Torah. Here we see that fear has to do with change (This, of course, is a holy kind of fearing change, but right now we are discussing most fears of change, which are unholy).

All fears of events – whether it is a fear of death, or a fear of losing one’s livelihood, etc. – are all essentially a *fear from change*; we fear a change to our situation. What is the solution to such fears?

A Change To Our Life Orientations

If a person is truly close to Hashem, he has no fears, because he is connected to Hashem, who is non-changing. Hashem always existed, continues to exist, and will always exist.

So, we need to change our initial perspective on things. It all depends on how we look at our situation on this world; let us explain.

Most people who have a wife, children and a home generally feel that they are all “his” acquisitions on this world. But this is really a superficial outlook, an outlook that comes from the body. We need to acquire an attitude that comes from our soul.

If a person lives life through the viewpoint of his body, he seeks stability and comfort in his physical life. Therefore, he feels like his house and his family are all “his” – and such a person, of course, will have fears in life. He’s afraid of losing “his” acquisitions in life. But if a person lives life through an inner perspective of his soul, he will only seek to stabilize his soul, not his life on this world. With a soul attitude, he will only seek stability in his soul, and he will not be concerned to make his life on this world more secure.

One who views everything he has on this world as only a “garment” of his, and not a part of his intrinsic essence, will actually feel more stable than the one who thinks that everything he has is “his.” When one realizes that everything that is his is not really his, but rather just a *garment*, he will have no fears.

This is very subtle point in one’s soul: *how to use this world*, having the right attitude towards life.

When a person makes use of this world – like when he has to buy something in a store – does he feel that it is “his,” or that he is just using it? Usually, we feel like what we buy belongs to us, and we look at everything we have in our life as “ours,” a part of who we are. When a person feels like everything that he has is “his,” he lives through his body, and he will have fears.

But when a person learns to only make use of this world because he has to take care of things, and not because he wants to own it forever, then he is living life with an attitude through his soul; he lives a life of a well-structured soul. Such a person will not fear anything that has to do with this physical world, because he won't feel like it is his. A person only fears losing what is tangibly "his".

On a deeper note, since all fears are rooted in a fear of change, a person only fears losing what he considers to be tangibly his on this world, because he fears change.

How a person should view his life on this world

Therefore, the solution to our fears is to become more connected to our soul.

If a person lives life through the prism of his soul - he is connected to his soul - then he knows that the rest of the world is not a part of who he is, and in turn, he will not be affected by the dangers and worries of this world. He knows that he is merely "using" this world and its conveniences, but he doesn't feel connected to it.

The sun sets every day. Why isn't anyone afraid that maybe it won't rise tomorrow? Don't we all fear changes? The answer to this is because no one feels any connection to the sun; we merely enjoy its rays. Therefore, no one is afraid of losing the sun, because nobody feels connected to it.

But since a person naturally feels a connection to what he has, he feels that what he has is all a part of who he is. Thus, a person is naturally afraid to lose what he has on this world. A person naturally feels that his wife, children, his house and that his source of livelihood are all "his."

Let's say a person is using a convenient electrical appliance, like a sophisticated piece of technology (such as the recorder that is recording this *shiur*). Does he feel like he is merely using it for what he has to? Usually not. Most people feel very connected to their items; they enjoy them and are scared that something will happen to their precious items. The problem that results from this is that people feel very connected to this world; they are more than just using it – they feel connected to it.

But when a person realizes that nothing on this world is really his, only then will he have no fears. He realizes that he is anyways not living on a world which is his.

Let's go further with this concept. If someone's child becomes sick, how does he deal with such a worry? If a person thinks that his children are his possessions, he will be very worried. But if a person knows that even his children aren't his, he will not feel worried, and he will be able to strengthen himself and not fall into despair (Of course, he can feel his child's pain, but it doesn't necessarily have to get him to be 'worried').

To work on this point, a person should therefore ask himself: "Where do I live? Do I live in my house – or in my soul?"

If a person thinks he really lives on this physical world of Planet Earth, he will be full of fears. This world is, indeed, a very scary and dangerous place – for a person who lives through his body. Such a person thinks that this world (and everything he has – his house, his livelihood, his family, etc.) is his, and naturally, he is terrified of losing of whatever he deems precious in his life. But one who lives in his soul has no fears, because he knows that nothing on this world is his anyway.

The *Gemara* says that are three things which “expand a person’s mind” (his *daas*): A beautiful wife, a beautiful home, and beautiful utensils. This seems to imply that we can feel connected to our possessions. But that is not the intention of this statement. What the Sages meant here was that feeling relaxed and comfortable from these things can only be positive for a person who uses these tools to improve his mind, his *daas* – when he is connected to his *daas*. In other words, these things can only expand the *daas* of a person, and that is when he **lives** in his *daas*, but not if he thinks he **lives** in his physical house.

The only way to overcome fears is for a person to live through his soul, to realize that he does not really live on this world – that nothing he has on this world is his.

What we are saying here is a solution that can help any person on any level survive this world’s worries. It does **not** require one to have perfect *Emunah* or to go above his level. It is practical advice for how to live on this world and how to eliminate our fears, and even our *nefesh habehaimis* (animalistic layer of the soul) can identify with this solution and be able to implement it.

7 | Where To Run To When You're Afraid

Living in the Innermost Part of your Soul

If a person understands life to mean that he is living on this physical world, in the simple sense, naturally, he will feel that this world is a very frightening place. This world is indeed a very scary place – that is, for someone who lives superficially.

Only those who feel like they really live on this world have fears. By contrast, those who live in their soul *do not have fears from this world*.

The Solution To Fears

When a person feels that he is in danger, where does he run to?

The simple reaction, which is superficial, would be to run away to a new place, where there's no danger. That can work if a person is in danger from the country he's living in, so he can just run to a different country where it's safer there.

But what if the danger is always here, and there is nowhere to run to? What then is the solution? On this world, there is always what to be afraid of. Where should a person run to, then? That is why we need to use the inner solution.

The inner solution for fears is not to run away from where you are. It is really to stay where you are, and to deal with it. The way a person does this is *by building for himself an inner place in his soul*, where he can run to whenever he feels scared. The only safe place a person can run to is a place in *his own soul*.

Of course, no one should retreat into this place all day, as this is not what Hashem wants from us. What we mean is that sometimes, when a person feels afraid, he should run into an inner place in his soul. A person needs to develop an internal world inside himself, where he can run to sometimes.

There are rooms in a person's heart – "*chadrei halev*." Our *Gedolim* developed their souls, and they would retreat there whenever they felt a time of danger. The Chazon Ish *zt"l* said that there is a deep, inner place in one's soul where there is no danger and only peace. That is where we need to go when we feel danger.

This is **not** the imagination. If a person wants to live in his soul based on imagining so, he will become delusional and mentally ill. Only one who lives in his soul through his internal reality that he has developed within himself can go there.

Just like Gan Eden is a place where we can sit there and feel no danger, so is there a place in our soul where there is no danger.

The Innermost Point Is Above Even Your Power of Emunah

We are referring to the innermost point of one's soul. What is the innermost point? Even *emunah*, which is a very deep part of one's soul, is not yet the innermost point. We are referring to the "*chadrei halev*," the innermost chambers of one's heart.

One who lives there will have no fears; one who lives an internal kind of life is able to access this place in his soul.

How does a person develop an internal kind of life, which will enable him to access his innermost point of the soul and retreat to there? To give a general description, this is when a person sees that life is all a set, organized path. Such an attitude will help a person live life more internally. We will explain this more about this soon.

Accepting Changes

There are two basic kinds of unhealthy fears – fears of impending danger, and fears of the unknown. How can a person overcome these fears?

We said before in the last chapter that all fears are rooted in a fear of change. Based upon this, we can know the solution to our fears: a person needs to get used to and accepting changes. Since all our fears are essentially a fear of a change to our situation, we can mitigate the fear by accepting change.

To work on this, we can think about what it means to go through a change, even a small change. This will take away the fear.

How does it work? Fear is only possible because it is unexpected. People are afraid of any changes, because changes are unexpected. A person naturally thinks: "This event is not supposed to be here...why is this happening...?"

The source of all fears is that people fear changes, and this is because all changes are unexpected. Everyone is scared of changes for this reason, and this is also behind why people fear the unknown.

Life: A Certain Journey

But if a person thinks about life and what every normal person goes through in life, he will see that everything is supposed to happen, come what may; doing this reflection will get a person to see that nothing is “unexpected,” because really, everything that happens in life is *supposed* to happen.

A person starts out life; he is born into this world, and then he grows up as a child and a teenager. He gets married, he has children, he becomes older, and then - he dies.

This is the setup of life. When a person realizes that this is the setup, and that this is the way things are *supposed* to be, he will be able to accept any changes that come his way, small or big. He won't look at life as just a bunch of circumstantial events, but instead he will come to look at everything in life as a certain path that he has to go on.

In Hebrew, this is called the “*tahalich*” (journey). Our life – from beginning until end, as well as the end itself – is all a *tahalich*.

With this acceptance, a person will then be able to expect anything, and then the person will also find that there is no place for fear in one's life.

Most people view life's events as circumstance, that everything just “happens,” with no intentional order of events, that everything in life is random. But the inner way to live life is to see life as a very specific, clear setup; everything is supposed to happen.

Of course, there is a higher way to overcome our fears, and that is if a person has total *Emunah*. But we are not speaking of such a high level; we are addressing even a person who isn't even on that level; it is something that even the animalistic part of the soul can understand. Our method can be used to calm down the simple emotion of fear that comes from one's animalistic part of the soul. It is a simple solution that speaks to even the lowest part of our soul; no one has to be learned in Torah at all to use this solution for fear. It is simply a change in one's attitude.

By realizing that everything in life has its place, that everything that happens is part of the path of life, then there is no more fear. This gives stability to a person, and doesn't allow fear to set in.

Examples of Seeing All of Life As A “Tahalich”

For example, if a person wants to develop his soul, he cannot look at the various forces in his soul as various abilities that “happen” to be there. He must look at everything that there is always a certain system to it, and that there is a reason for everything he sees. Everything has its place.

A person who truly works on himself will see that all of life is a certain system, and that everything is supposed to happen in this system.

As an example, a person can understand this from learning a *sugya* of *Gemara*. Every part in the *sugya* has its place; nothing “happens” to be there in the *sugya*. All of the information is part of the plan.

When a person doesn't view life this way, and instead everything just “happens” – then he goes his whole life with a superficial attitude: If one is worthy, he goes to Gan Eden, and if not, he goes to Gehinnom....he will go his whole life not knowing what life even is. He won't see life as a system.

When people worry about how many daughters they have to marry off, how many *simchos* they have to make, and how they will manage financially, it is all because they don't see how all of these things are supposed to happen, and then they live their whole life in fear and anxiety. Really, it's all part of the system of life.

Why People Fear Death

This helps us understand why people are so afraid of death. People think that death just “happens,” and that really it shouldn't happen. Of all changes, death is the biggest change there is, so we are all afraid of it; in addition, it always comes so unexpectedly. What we get from this is the most unexpected change possible, something that we think shouldn't happen.

But if a person knows that life has a system to it, and that death is a step in the system of life just like any other step – that yes, death is *supposed* to happen to us - then he will find that he won't fear death. Death is a step in life – it is the final step, but it is part of life, and we are to expect it. It is supposed to happen!

This does not mean that we should not pity widows and orphans, who have lost their loved ones. We absolutely must feel their sorrow, as the Torah commands us to.

But death shouldn't make us afraid. Death is a part of life that we all have to go through. People fear death only because they don't see how death is a part of life. Most people, in fact, aren't experiencing life the way they should, because they spend their entire lives agonizing over what will happen to them when they die. When people do this, they spend their whole lives experiencing death, not life!

Life is only experienced when we realize how everything that happens in life is part of a system.

We will go a step further: besides for dealing with our fear of death, how can we deal with *all* our fears and worries that we have?

The Deeper Solution to Dealing With Fears

There is a superficial solution that people have for their fears: “*hesech hadaas*” – to simply take their mind off their worries. Some people will either call a friend, and some will simply get busy with something else, in order to take their mind off their worries. It can definitely work, but what is the problem here? It is that when people have a *hesech hadaas*, many of them lose their “*daas*” (mind) in the process, because they end up “removing” all of their *daas* altogether...

Others look for excitement and stimulation to take their mind off of their troubles. They also lose their *daas* in the process; when a person becomes too excited with emotions, it ruins his *daas*.

But there is an inner kind of solution we can do. It also involves a factor of *hesech hadaas*, but it is deeper than regular *hesech hadaas*. A person can have a *hesech hadaas*, but instead of not thinking about his worries as a way to disconnect from his mind, he can instead steer his mind to something else: he can **return** to his *daas*.

We will explain how to do this.

Learning Torah in order to get back your Daas

It is written in Tehillim, “*If not for Your Torah, my delight, I would lose myself in my suffering.*” The best solution to overcome our anxieties is to learn Torah.

As we explained in the last chapter, this does not mean that one should run away from his painful reality by simply by running to the *beis midrash* to learn Torah. It’s possible that one is only learning Torah as a form of disconnecting from reality! This is not what Hashem wants from us. It’s better than running away to other places, but it is not yet the inner solution to our fear and anxieties.

The inner solution for fear is to return our *da’as* to an inner place; we will explain this. All fears really come from our sins. This is the deep source for all our fears. Fear gets created from sin.

Where in our soul are our fears located? They come from our *daas*, which is found in our heart. Fear is not just an emotion; it is a higher kind of feeling, stemming from our *daas* in our heart. The outer layer of our fears is felt through our emotions, but the inner layer of our fears is in our heart (Although there are also fears that come from our simple emotions, the main fears come from our *daas*.)

It is written, “*When a man has worry in his heart, he should speak it over to others.*” When a person is afraid and worried, the fears are located in his heart. Are they located in our heart’s emotions, or they are coming from a deeper place in our heart?

They are not coming from the heart’s emotions; they are coming from a deeper place in our heart, our *daas* of the heart. Fears are rooted in our *daas*, and they result in the emotional fears that we experience. But the fear itself is located in our *daas*.

In the *sefarim hekadoshim*, fears are known as “*daas ra*” – the evil kind of *daas*, which came as a result from Adam’s sin when he ate from the *etz hadaas*, which had in *daas tov* and *daas ra*. All fears

thus come from the evil kind of *daas*. When we have fear, it means that our *daas* has become *daas ra*. We need to gain *daas tov*, the good kind of *daas*; we need to have the real “*hesech hadaas*.” The unhealthy fear we experience is only a garment of the evil *daas*, but the root of the fear is evil *daas* itself.

Now we know the solution to fear: to use our *daas tov*, the good kind of *daas*. So what we need to do is learn how to steer our *daas* to a better place than where it is now, whenever we have fears. Let us explain how we can do this.

If a person wants to take his mind off his troubles by going to the *Beis Midrash* to learn Torah, it can only take away his fears if he learns with the intention that this is the only thing that can return his good kind of *daas*, that he needs to get back his *daas*.

This is the true “*hesech hadaas*”: take your mind off your troubles, by learning Torah – because you know that by taking your mind off of the fear in this way, you are enabling yourself through the Torah to gain back your real *daas*.

The Root Solution To Fears is Daas

We have discussed the different causes for fears, and we have given the root solution: *daas*. We have said that to solve all our fears, a person needs to get back his *daas*.

There are three basic kinds of fears, and each has its own method how to solve them. There are fears that come from our feelings, which can be calmed through our feelings. There are fears that come from our *daas*, which is *daas ra*; such fears are calmed through the *daas tov*, the good kind of *daas*. There are also fears that come from both the feelings and the *daas* together, and if this is the case, a person needs to figure out where exactly his fears are coming from – if they are coming from his feelings, or from his *daas*.

Addendum 1 | Overcoming Fear & Trauma

Our Soul Feels Scared During The Scary Months Of The Year

The month of *Teves* is of the difficult months of the year. Our Sages said that the three difficult months of the year are *Teves*, *Tamuz*, and *Av*, due to the difficult events that took place in these months; and the month of *Teves* is considered to be the most difficult from all of them.

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 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 leaning 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 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 stems 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 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

Q: *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?*

A: *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!

Q: *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?*

A: 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.

3: *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?*

A: 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.

Q: *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?*

A: 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?

Q: *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.*

A: 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.

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

A: 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.

Q: *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?*

A: 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....

Q: *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?*

A: 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].

Q: *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?*

A: 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.

Addendum 2 | Understanding Suffering & Tragedy⁵

Our Life Is A Contradiction

We are a contradiction. On one hand, we all know in our minds that “Everything Hashem does is good,” but when it comes to actualizing this belief in our life, we still feel pain.

There is a contradiction between our heart and our mind. Our mind understands, intellectually, what the truth is – that everything Hashem does is good. But the feeling of our heart is totally different than this. Simply, we would say that this is because we have a problem – we haven’t internalized our knowledge yet into our heart! We know that we have an *avodah* to internalize (“*And you will know today, and you shall return the matter upon your heart*”) and it seems that we are failing to internalize our beliefs.

That is true, but we have a deeper *avodah* than this as well. Our mind’s knowledge represents the understanding that is above us⁶, the unlimited comprehension which resides above logic. Our heart’s knowledge represents our limited comprehension. They are two different perspectives taking place at once inside us, and they are each correct.

Of course, first our *avodah* is to try to internalize our mind’s knowledge into our heart. But we must also realize that there will always be a contradiction always going on inside of us between our mind and heart. Just as we believe that our mind’s knowledge is true, we need to understand that

⁵ The following translation is from *sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Part 9, Chapter 7: “Mekor Habechi”* (“The Source of Crying In The Soul”); this translation is an abbreviated version of the full edition, and we have only adapted the parts which focus directly on how we can handle tragedy and suffering. In the beginning of the full Hebrew edition, the author starts with a question: The Gemara (Makkos 24a) recounts how Rabbi Akiva and the Sages were walking and came across the site of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. The Sages were crying, but Rabbi Akiva was laughing. The Sages were baffled at Rabbi Akiva and asked him, “Why do you laugh?” Rabbi Akiva replied that he while it is true that there has been a destruction here, the first part of the prophecy has been fulfilled, which is a sign that the second part of the prophecy – the future redemption – will be fulfilled as well. That is the story in the Gemara, and the author explains in this chapter that in our own soul as well, we have an ability to both cry and laugh at the same time, which is to have *emunah* in spite of contradictions; and that even when we cry, it should not be a logical kind of crying, but rather an illogical kind of crying – as will be explained. בלבבי. חלק ט. 007 פרק ז' עמ' קיח – קכ

⁶ In the Hebrew *sefer*, the author describes this as a manifestation of “*ohr makif*”, “surrounding light” (which is an understanding that is outside/above us), and “*ohr penimi*”, inner light, (the understanding that we have within us).

our heart's limited understanding also need to be validated (our feelings, which don't allow us any peace to make sense with things).

This is a very deep point. It seems simply that our heart is disagreeing with the truth that we know in our mind, and that there is only one truth here, the truth that our mind knows. But at the same time, we must be aware that we live all the time with contradictions in our life; we must recognize that our mind thinks one way, while our heart always feels differently.

Our *avodah* is to keep trying to internalize our mind's knowledge (that everything Hashem does is good) into our heart. When we succeed in internalizing, we then gain a whole new mind. We will still have contradictions, though, even after that.

What is then our *avodah*?

Our *avodah* is to keep continuing to internalize our knowledge, again and again, and go through this cycle: knowing, then internalizing, then finding contradictions – and then once again returning to knowing, internalizing, and finding contradictions, etc.

Our whole human makeup is a contradiction. Our mind is one kind of understanding, while our heart is another kind of understanding. It is an example of the concept of "*rotzoh v'shov*," our general *avodah* of "running and "returning." We go through a constant cycle of progressing and then falling from our progress, only to return back to progress and then to keep repeating that cycle. The fact that we have a contradiction in ourselves between our mind and our heart is not just this contradiction; it is the inner reality of every person!

Without knowing this secret about life, that we are supposed to live with contradictions, life is very difficult. We must firmly believe that our mind thinks one way, while our heart thinks a different way, and this contradiction is an inextricable part of who we are.

Now we can understand the following point. Although we know the statement of our Sages that "Everything Hashem does is for the good," that doesn't invalidate our need to cry. Why? It's not that we aren't believers; it is for a different reason. It is because our mind believes the truth – but our heart does not. Our heart is below the understanding of *emunah*, so it initially does not want to take *emunah* as an answer. On a deeper note, we cry when we have real pain and suffering, not because it makes sense to cry, but for no reason at all.

(This is the depth behind, "They cried tears in vain". We know that the destruction came about due to how the nation "cried tears in vain" when they heard the Spies' complaints about the land of Israel, and that we were punished because of this pointless crying. This was an evil usage of the power to cry, but the power to cry is good at its root, which is to cry for no logical reason at all. We can use the root good of "crying in vain" on Tisha B'av, which is really an illogical kind of crying).

It is our heart that has pain and cries, not our mind. This is not by chance. First, our *avodah* is to internalize our mind's knowledge into our heart, but at the same time, we must also understand that our heart's feelings of pain are also correct, and that it is an equal understanding to our mind's understanding. Just as our mind is correct for believing that "Everything that Hashem does is for the good," so too, when we have legitimate pain and we cry, our heart is correct in feeling the need to cry. It is a crying that is above logic, the power of "crying in vain" being used for good.

However, when a person cries simply out of a lack of *emunah*, he is using "crying in vain" for evil. It is only when a person believes that his crying is coming from his heart, from the root good power of "crying in vain," that he elevates his heart's understanding to the level of his mind's understanding.

The Three Levels Of Crying When We Have Pain

To make this practical, there are three possible reasons why a person would cry. Two of these reasons are valid reasons to cry, while one of them is a lack of *emunah*.

The lowest level of crying is when a person cries, simply, out of a lack of *emunah*.

A person with the higher perspective, though, cries with the following attitude: he knows in his mind that everything Hashem does is for the best, but he also knows that sometimes we have a *mitzvah* to cry, like to cry over the destruction of Jerusalem. He detaches from his *emunah* a bit and instead allows himself to cry.

This higher kind of crying is reflected in the following story. The Kamarna Rebbe zt"l once lost a son. As he went through this tragedy, he said that he is momentarily disconnecting from his great bond with Hashem, and that he is instead allowing himself to feel pain. He said that if he would have remained in his total attachment with Hashem, he wouldn't feel any pain over the death of his son, and since he knew that it is Hashem's will that he should cry over his son's death, he allowed himself to disconnect from his great *d'veykus* and *emunah*. He let himself descend from his lofty perch a bit, to the level of his heart's emotions, the lower understanding, so that he could cry.

There is an even higher kind of crying than this, and that is when a person cries even though he has no idea why he is crying; this is when a person is so connected with Hashem that his crying comes from a place that is above himself, a crying that's coming from Heaven. In the level we mentioned before, a person cries out of *emunah* that he knows he must cry in order to fulfill Hashem's will. But in this third kind of crying, which is a higher level, a person cries without any explanation. He's not crying because he's sad, and he's not crying because he knows that it is Hashem's will. He is crying even though he has no idea why!

How can a person reach such a level of crying? It doesn't come from within himself; it is poured down from above. It can come when a person becomes so utterly connected with Hashem that he goes above even his *daas* (mind). This is a level called “*lo yeda*”⁷, no *daas* – in other words, there is a kind of higher understanding from above that can come to a person. This can be reached when one nullifies his *daas*;⁸ when he realizes that just as he is limited in his understanding, so is there is a kind of unlimited understanding that is above human logic.

However, such a high understanding can only come to a person when he is truly connected to a life in which he has the synthesis of both understanding his human limits, as well as recognizing that there is a realm of the unlimited that is beyond him. Such a person can both “cry and laugh” at once – he can cry based upon his limited understanding, and he can laugh based upon the higher, unlimited understanding.

Suffering Is Incomprehensible!

The Maharal says that both the words “*galus*” (exile) and “*geulah*” (redemption) have the same letters in them (*gimmel* and *lamed*), because they are both from the word *giluy* – revelation. In other words, both the exiles and the redemption serve to reveal Hashem, each in their own way. (The redemption, will, of course, be a more complete revelation).

It is written, “*Behold, the angels are crying out*” (In Hebrew, “*Hein erealim tzauku chutzah*”). The commentators of this *posuk* explain that the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* is something that our logical mind cannot endure. How could it be that Hashem, who is so merciful, has given cruelty to rein free? How could He allow so much pain upon His creations? There is no logical way to understand the destruction.

⁷ Briefly, the concept of “*lo yeda*” is that there is a kind of *daas* that is above our regular *daas*; the source of this is an expression of the Baal Shem Tov, who said that “the purpose of “*yeda*” (“to know”) is *lo yeda* (to not know)” – that there is a higher kind of understanding we can reach in which we can realize that we do not understand things from our logical perspective. This is reached the more and more a person attains a deeper closeness to Hashem. It is explained at length in *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Volume V, in the beginning of the section [Mili D'Avodah \(Deep Matters of Avodah\)](#), p.293-303, as well as throughout [sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Volume IX](#).

⁸ “Nullifying” our *daas* is also discussed the author's other series, [Da Es Daatcha 009: Bittul HaDaas \(Nullifying Our Daas\)](#); see also the above mentioned places in *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Volumes V and IX, as well as in [Bilvavi IX: Chapter 6: Bittul HaSichliyus \(“Nullifying the Intellect”\)](#). See also *Getting To Know Your Happiness*, [Chapter 2: Simcha and Sechok](#), and [Chapter 3: Happiness From Our Existence](#).

“*Avinu, av harachaman*”. Our Father, our Merciful Father. Where is Your mercy?! Where is Your kindness? Even the cruelest person on this world wouldn’t bring so much destruction to the world; how can it be that You, Hashem, our Merciful Father, can do this to Your children?!

From our human perspective that is limited, there is no way to understand how it could be that Hashem, Who is the epitome of mercy (*midas harachamim*) could allow for the destruction of Jerusalem. The Destruction is something that is above our limited comprehension.

This is why the angels were crying over the destruction: because there is no logical way to understand how Hashem could allow such destruction.

However, although we do not really understanding anything – not the *Beis HaMikdash* itself, and not its destruction, and not the Endlessness of Hashem – still, we know that *we are able to have a connection to Hashem*, and that is **when we nullify ourselves to Him**.

There are many valid questions which people are asking in the world: How could there be a destruction to Jerusalem? How could Hashem allow such destruction?

How can we understand all the suffering going on in the world?

There is only one answer. It is really not possible to understand suffering; it is simply illogical! When we read the stories in the *Gemara*⁹ about the insane suffering at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem as well as all of the suffering that the Jewish people has gone through in recent times everyone is baffled: Is this the Merciful Hashem, who is supposed to be the epitome of compassion?!!

Of course, when we look into our holy literature, we can find all kinds of answers: even bad can somehow end up being good, etc. But in the end, our mind cannot endure such a thing! All of the suffering is so mind-boggling! How could Hashem pain us for so many years?!

Logically speaking, one would have to be the cruelest being possible in existence to allow so much pain to go on in Creation.

The truth is that we cannot understand how Hashem could let it be possible for so much suffering to go on in His Creation, how He could allow so much evil and destruction to take place. However, precisely because we cannot understand it, that itself leads us to an inner understanding: that **nothing can really be comprehended**.

When a person reaches this inner perspective – that human suffering is impossible to understand, since our logic is limited – he will be able to understand that even when we have pain and cry over the destruction, it is not because we are simply saddened over what is going on, from our limited perspective. The inner crying is because we are connecting to what is above our comprehension; it is

⁹ See *Gittin 55a*

a crying that we do not really understand why we are crying. It is an illogical kind of crying, and it indeed does not make any sense.