

## Nourishment for the Neshama

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### **A step beyond just experiencing fear - elevating it and hopefully extinguishing it over time!**

A pathway for the sins often arise out of fear that places us in the hands of the yetzer hara, whose foothold is in our subconscious, and who tempts us toward jealousy, desire and ambition for honor. After really introspecting on Rabbi Moshe Weinberger's class 11 in Menuchas HaChaim, <http://lvracha.com/2012/09/16/notes-from-a-portion-of-rav-moshe-weinbergers-menuchas-hanefesh-shiur-11-on-what-judging-means.aspx> the question comes up about the source of the fear itself. Rabbi Weinberger explains that any fear that is NOT yiras Hashem is fallen yiras Hashem. It merits to comprehend the importance of the strength that fallen yiras Hashem acquires within our minds and how elevating the midda of yira back to yiras Hashem becomes worthwhile.

The midda of yiras Hashem, like any midda, is one that we can grow in. If we are weak in yiras Hashem, either due to lack of education regarding the six constant mitzvahs or due to an injury that causes our yiras Hashem to fall, we may subconsciously apply our gevurah, our strength, to gripping onto a fear that belongs only in the outer casing, the garment of our existence, and not in our essential self. The problem is that this strength, the gripping of this fallen yiras Hashem, can be deeply set into our emotions, into our hearts, and into our minds depending on how long ago the midda of yiras Hashem falls and is captured with our strength in our emotional makeup and stored in our hearts and minds.

Yet it may rear its head every day, many times a day. It may present itself to us in the area that we fight off, the thing that plagues us as a bad habit or bad character trait, the thing that surfaces within us that we react from without thinking, that place to which we feel a victim.

The strength is ours. The fallen fear of Hashem is the hostage. Our seichel combined with emunah wrapped in love of Hashem become the rescuers. Emunah is needed because we must know beyond any doubt that we have a higher soul that is capable of releasing the trapped fallen fear and elevating it to true yiras Hashem. The love of Hashem is needed because that is how we take the bite out of the trapped yira- when we have a sense of Ahavas Hashem based on an experiential insight of how much Hashem loves us, then we know that when we elevate our fallen yiras Hashem, we will only add to that experiential insight and grow in Ahavas Hashem and in the pleasure of receiving a sense of being beloved in His eyes.

Bravely look at that cloudy covered-over hole in our gut, that feeling that has no name, that surfaces like an unwanted visitor ready to lead us into all the trouble that we have been led into (do a cheshbon hanefesh of every decade of your life and see what mistakes were made to find this, if you don't already know). Then turn to Hashem and tell Him that we want Hashem to be King in this part of us too, that we are begging to not have this part of us so dark and ask Him to help us elevate our fallen yiras Hashem to reconnect to Him. One suggestion is to say "I judge that this feeling is not precious in Your eyes. And if it is not precious in Your eyes, I dismiss it and ask that the strength be used to serve You in a manner that is precious in Your eyes." If this is done sincerely, by feeling the feelings without judgment or action, over time, more clarity will come, the feelings when they surface will be more sortable, we will begin to see distinctions and bring our seichel to them, obtaining behira and hopefully breakthroughs and be able to see what halacha tells us. An example of a halacha that we might come to see that we are not applying to a darkness in our hearts is explained by Rebbetzin Heller in her Elul Energy Workshop. Rebbetzin Heller teaches from the Rambam

Hilchos Teshuva that one expression of anger that we may not realize is when we think poorly of others. Rebbetzin Heller explains that thinking poorly of others is very addictive because it seems like it is only in our minds, what harm is there? However, the payoff is that when we judge someone we feel superior and this is like rechilus and lashon hara, it is addictive for that same reason and even though it is not visible, it eventually comes out in words and actions and in any event keeps us from learning from our fellow Jew what is good in them. Thus when we tell Hashem we want Him to be King over our darkness, we may not at that moment understand where we are outside of halacha. Yet by judging that the darkness is not pleasing to Hashem, He in His mercy can give us more insight, and we can find perhaps a halacha that we can apply to create a boundary that keeps us within His light and out of that dark space, a dark space that might be a lifetime old, rooted in childhood lessons taught by emotion without understanding the full impact upon the child.

Therefore, if you are a parent, please understand the importance of teaching children from an early age what the right thing is to do in a lovingkind way, by asking is what we are doing beneath us or fulfilling what we know is good and right, and not in a way that is frightening to a child. When a child, especially a little child, is frightened, the basic desire to please the parent falls and gets trapped in feelings of low self-worth. This basic damage and lack of belief in oneself can be the source of fearfulness for a lifetime. A child might mistakenly grow into a person who (because their dependency needs to be taught how to ask, how to do things in a proper fashion, were met with chastisement, beratement and severe or even abusive consequences that felt like rejection and abandonment) creates a feeling of fear to then figure out what the right thing is to do. Such a person feels endangered and stressed all day long! There is no inner security. The child may grow to be well behaved, but the inner being of the person, the person's ability to feel connected to Hashem, has been hijacked. But even for those who have been hijacked, it is still from Hashem and it is a guarantee that a person's higher soul is standing ready to shine into the darkness and elevate the fallen yiras Hashem out of the grip of our own inner strength and reconnect it to a place of healthy yiras Hashem.

Any time a person has a dark feeling that pervades their mood and has no apparent root, it most likely is sourced in the yetzer hara and is presented to us as "good advice" or as "this is who you really are, so just accept it" but it is really just fallen yiras Hashem trapped that opens the door to us considering such negativity as the essential self. By asking ourself, is it precious to Hashem and resoundingly knowing that it is NOT because it is dark and negative and Hashem is light love and abundance, and then judging it as such rather than judging the circumstances, other people or Hashem as the problem, we fulfill a very important step in our self esteem.

Rabbi Nivin teaches us that our self esteem should be based on our criteria of living up to Is this precious in the eyes of Hashem, taking incremental steps to fulfill our criteria. That is, if I fall into darkness 5 times a day, try to remember to do these steps and bring it down to four times a day, then three times a day, until we are able to extinguish it. Even if we do not succeed, because success is in Hashem's hands, the effort to live up to the criteria we set is the basis of our self esteem – effort and choice. We choose to judge our feeling as not precious to Hashem and ask Hashem to please help us use that strength for healthy avodas Hashem. We met our criteria and regardless of what happens next, we can feel good about what we did and about our essential self.

It is likely that every person has this type of fallen fear, given that no parent is perfect and good parents discipline their children, and all children feel that any consequence is either too strong or ineffective. It seems like a Divine plan! Yet civilization requires us to follow the commandments and teach our children basic right from wrong in order to have proper boundaries. When people react violently, as we often see today, instead of with constructive approaches that respect the boundaries of those involved, it results in everyone shutting down to this dark place! We become afraid, and from that place of fear, our perception of civilization and the respectfulness it promotes begins to loop hopelessly in the limited ability of the analytical mind. We don't know what to do. the limited analytical mind becomes overwhelmed like a computer that needs to be rebooted, but the operating system of logic and rational thought even combined with respect for all people falls short of what is needed. The fear we feel, the frustration, begs the question, Hashem, is this feeling precious in Your eyes? Is it precious for me to be afraid of \_\_\_\_\_? Please be King over this fear and lead me to elevate this fear back to fear of You alone and then show me gently where to use my strength so that what I do is pleasing in Your eyes alone. Each person's response is likely to be

different, but chances are we will all be finding a way to shine Hashem's light in our own unique way in our daily lives, bringing His light to the world. And we know this dark world needs more light.

In summary, if we can come to understand that the fears and negativity to which we feel victims stem from fallen fear of Hashem that has been trapped with the strength of our lower soul in our subconscious, and that it has a purpose, for our higher soul to elevate the fallen midda to true yiras Hashem, we can begin using our seichel and Ahavas Hashem to help ourselves fix our worst middas. Try it. And may Hashem grant us success and let us know with redemption!