



RABBI YEHOSHUA ALT

The more we imagine something, the more we reinforce its possibility. When we worry about an event occurring, imagining it in all its details, our imagination alone strengthens the possibility of it happening. The Arvei Nachal (Vayetzei, s.v. *vhinei*) remarks that fear is like a magnet that attracts metal. It has the ability to direct the object of a person's fear toward that person. That is the nature of fear: it draws forth the object of our dread and makes it real. Our thoughts are like magnets, attracting specific types of situations and occurrences.

A man may argue with his spouse one morning and then continue to think about the quarrel all day, even remembering past disagreements. Then he goes home and finds out that dinner was burned, the fridge broke, and the children misbehaved. It is no coincidence that this all happened on the same day.

Not too long ago the air-traffic controllers at Kai Tak International Airport in Hong Kong received a radio transmission from an aircraft in distress. The pilot wanted to make an emergency landing, but since the plane's landing gear wouldn't extend properly, a normal landing would be impossible. To ease the emergency crash-landing as much as possible, airport authorities spread foam on the runway, which surely helped. While rescue personnel helped the agitated passengers off the stricken aircraft, reporters rushed forward to ask them what had been going on in the plane while they were still airborne. To their utter surprise, the passengers told them that before they found out about the landing-gear failure, the crew had been showing a movie about a passenger plane that made an emergency landing. Many of the 200 passengers who watched the movie found themselves visualizing an aircraft making an emergency landing, and their plane made an emergency landing just as The Gemara (Baba Metziah 33a) states that although one has a right to

give greater weight to his own financial concerns than to those of others, whoever establishes such a way of life will end up enduring the poverty he seeks to avoid. Rashi (s.v. *kol*) comments that one should go beyond the letter of the law in that he should seek to prevent monetary loss from coming to others, even if he must forfeit some of his own financial gain for this. If one constantly analyzes his situation to see how he might incur a loss, he will never perform acts of chessed. In the end, he himself will become impoverished and will need to rely on the support of others. The Maharal (Chidushai Agados, Baba Metziah 33a, s.v. *kol*) writes that when a person is afraid of poverty, he is enabling poverty to affect him, as in *ואשר יגרתו יבא לי*, what I feared has come upon me (Iyov 3:24). This is because when one is afraid of something, he is subjugating himself to it, making it easier for it affect him. Bottom line: being afraid of something can cause it to happen.

The Maharal continues with the following analogy. If one were to lay a wooden beam across a river, from one side to the other and try to walk over it, chances are that he would fall off. If this beam were placed on the ground, however, he could easily walk on it without falling. This is because when one thinks about falling, he is influenced by the thought. Certainly, when one is afraid of becoming poor, the thought will affect him and he will be more likely to become poor.

It is written *חרדת אדם יתן מוקש אדם* (Mishlei 29:25). R' Bachaye (Bamidbar 14:9) explains *חרדת אדם*—if one fears another human, then *יתן מוקש*—this itself will be his downfall. He can bring upon himself that which he fears. So where no problem previously existed, one's fear will cause a problem to develop. In contrast, if one trusts in Hashem, he can even be rescued from a problem that already exists.

Here is a true story of a self-fulfilling prophecy. A 52-year-old woman

complained of ankle pain from which she had been suffering for two years. When she was 19, she broke her ankle and required open-reduction and internal-fixation surgery. The orthopedic surgeon told her that when she is 50 she would probably have arthritis. She spent the middle years of her life expecting to get arthritis when she was 50, and sure enough, as soon as she reached that age, she experienced the ankle pains!

The pasuk says that *ויירא משה ויאמר אכן נודע הדבר*, Moshe was afraid and said that the matter of him killing the Egyptian became known. The next words are *וישמע וישמע*...פרעה, Paroh heard about the matter (Shemos 2:14-15). The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains the juxtaposition: Moshe's being afraid that Paroh would hear is what actually brought it about.

Late one Friday night a woman was walking home from the hospital after visiting her ill sister. The area was deserted and far from any main thoroughfare, causing her to experience a sense of fear. She began to recite *מימיני מיכאל ומשמאלי ומלפני אוריאל ומאחורי רפאל*, Michael be at my right, Gavriel at my left, Uriel before me, and Rafael behind me (different malachim). She continued to say this again and again until she was calm and secure, feeling that nothing would happen to her. After she had been walking for about half an hour, two police officers exited a van and rushed to a nearby bush, dragging the man behind it to their vehicle. The man was an escaped convict for whom the police had been searching. Apparently this convict had been following her for a while and was noticed by someone who called the police. When asked why he hadn't assaulted the woman he was following, he replied that suddenly there were four men walking with her, and he was waiting for them to leave. By reminding herself that protective angels were watching over her, the woman was saved.

The newly released book "Remarkable Insights about Death and the Afterlife" is now available (as a paperback, hardcover and digitised version) for purchase and delivery on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0C9NNDCMNC> or Purchase it at <https://amzn.to/3eyh5xP>, or by sending an email to yalt3285@gmail.com. This extensive and thought-provoking book addresses these questions and many more, providing transformative insights. With a collection comprising over 70 meticulously crafted essays, it eloquently articulates the Torah's viewpoint regarding death and the afterlife. This work stands as an invaluable resource, facilitating readers in acquiring a deeper comprehension of this vital subject. It makes a great gift for friends, relatives, business associates and learning partners.

Some of the questions discussed in this book are the following.

- What is the ultimate way to elevate the soul of one's parents?
- How does the death process rectify a person's soul?
- What profound life lessons can we learn from gravestones?
- In what ways can the concept of reincarnation help us better understand life?
- What is the idea behind davening at gravesites?
- What will happen at the Resurrection of the Dead?

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