

# Fears & Anxiety - The Source Of Fear

## Dr. Michael Laitman Education Series

With Adva Bar-Yehuda, social worker treating people suffering from fears and anxiety,  
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**Adva Bar-Yehuda:** Generally speaking, every individual has fears. With some, fears even become anxieties and phobias. My question is, “What is the root of the problem? Why are we in constant fear of something?”

**Michael Laitman:** It safeguards us, preventing us from taking whimsical actions that could harm us. It helps us safeguard our lives, our existence. We also say that to children, “Be careful,” “Look out,” “Don’t go there,” “Be a good boy so others won’t harm you,” “That boy is a bad boy, stay away from him,” etc. We constantly teach our children to be wary.

We also see that in animals. Let’s say, a lioness takes her cubs for a walk to teach them how to survive in their habitat. First, she teaches them about the dangers, and then how to obtain food. While they are young, she gets them their food; she only teaches them how to be careful: to fear the right things and not to fear familiar things.

So I think that fear is fundamental in man. It has a very high Upper root. Even our first commandment in correcting ourselves is called “fear.” [The Zohar](#) divides that fear into several fears: Fear of being harmed in this world, fear that my relatives or I might suffer, whether in health, finances, or what have you, but this is the source of these mundane fears.

Later, a person in this world begins to fear the next world, what will happen afterwards. After all, it is certain that I will pass away from here, perhaps to something else. If so, what will happen over there? Meaning, I am already afraid of what happen there, if there is “a there.”

After that, there is fear called “Divine fear,” fear that God may harm me. And there is also the fear of Hell or of punishment in the next world. These fears have to do with orthodox people, regardless of religion or belief system; it is common to all.

Then there is fear to those who desire to attain, like those studying Kabbalah, who wish to attain the Creator, to reveal Him, to please the Creator, or to attain adhesion with Him. This is altogether a different fear. It is a fear of whether or not I will achieve it, whether I can succeed at that. Meaning, it is not a fear of lacking something, but fear whether or not I can be good to Him. That is already a different fear, outside of me.

Each fear that I mentioned divides into many more subdivisions. I was once interested in homeopathy, and I think it specifies 700 types of phobias, fears, and anxieties. And perhaps we could count even more. But all of those things stem from our nature.

Because we are made of the desire for pleasure, which in Kabbalah is called “will to receive,” our desire for pleasure is constantly fearful, “Will I enjoy? Will I have everything I want, at least partially somehow, will I not suffer?” In other words, since our makeup is sensitive matter—we sense ourselves, sense our reality—I always have a fear of feeling bad.

In other words, fear is a fundamental feeling, and atop it, all our other actions exist. Thus, our dreams, hopes, actions, everything stems from fear.

Fear is really the most fundamental trait of all living beings. Man’s development also stems from fear. If we were not afraid, we would be indifferent. After all what do we need in life? I wouldn’t bother going out in the morning to make a living, and I wouldn’t invent new technologies. It is all motivated by fear.

And the more our egos grow from generation to generation, the more fearful of being dissatisfied we become. Thus, from generation to generation, we become more fearful.

The human society has become so expansive and global that we are tied by thousands of connections, which are actually sources of fear to me. In the past, we didn’t think of such things. We lived in villages, and probably spent our whole lives not leaving the village even once. And the whole village was relatives. Everything was familiar.

Today there are so many sources of concern, reasons for fear, things that affect me, that I’m truly in great fear. And the media, too, particularly today, when everyone is trying to profit by drawing public attention, they create such movies that it’s truly horrifying to see what they are offering to the public.

It turns out that we are living in a terrified society, in a generation that is right to be anxious. There are so many unknown and uncontrollable elements, which depend on thousands of unknown causes, that we have lost control, as in the last crises in ecology or even in economy. This can truly cause people anxiety.

Fifty years ago we weren’t so afraid for our future. We thought we would progress and things would get better. And now, all of a sudden, we don’t know what tomorrow will bring. And we certainly do not know if things will be good for our children. It is no longer a phobia; we are already seeing that the world is declining. We are already facing a very real fear that we are heading toward bad things.

It is no longer fear things might not be good; we *know* they won’t be good. It is no longer a phobia, as if we’re dealing with an imaginary fear. Today there are very real, clearly defined sources of fear that are part of our lives. It is not a phantom, but a reality we must face, so what should we do? These fears are so real and so tightly connected to our lives that we must learn to deal with them.

So a question arises, “What am I going to do? Should I take drugs to sedate the fear? Should I run to the other end of the world? People truly are in great distress.

**Eli Vinokur:** It is very clear with adults. Now I am asking, why are children afraid?

**Michael Laitman:** If we are talking in terms of time, then ten minutes ago that child was an old person who died. What is a child? It is a reincarnation. We carry the same phobias, the same problems from one lifetime to the next. We don’t correct the soul, and it returns even more corrupt than before. Today, our perception of the world and of life is even worse than before, because it is a new generation, and the soul gets another, very different clothing from before, for the worse.

Because this clothing is according to the soul, it must be more corrupt, as well. It is more sensitive, more capable of spiritual matters, but on the other hand it is weaker, more vulnerable, and with less capability of coping. This is why we see the young generation’s escapism. They develop for themselves all sorts of false shells. They do not want to be connected to food, money, industry; they escape to more virtual things.

It is with good reason that we have developed the Internet. The young generation developed such artificial surroundings for themselves, so they could live there. They not only communicate through the Internet, they “enter” it. And it is all a result of fears and anxieties that would otherwise simply take them over.

**Eli Vinokur:** Is there some type of regularity coherent evolution to this process?

**Michael Laitman:** I would say it is a combination of two things. When a person is born, it is like a seed, containing all the information about growing a human being. Of course there are basic things that we will not be able to change, whose development is predetermined. However, the extent to which these things will develop, and how they will interconnect depends a great deal upon that person’s social environment.

In other words, there is a solid inbuilt structure, which is distinct and preexisting in a person, like a casting out of a mold. And yet, how each trait will develop, and the connections between the traits, those depend on the society, the environment. Therefore, if we could set up the right social environment for people, I don’t think that we would see anyone with problems such as the phobias that exist today. I think that proper education could dissipate them all.

**Eli Vinokur:** And what is the correct education?

**Michael Laitman:** It is an environment that provides a sense of confidence, a sense of mutual guarantee. This is all it takes. People are such social beings, that is, we are so dependent upon society that it is not a problem for society to complement for all our needs wherever we feel scarcity and fear.

Even with fears such as claustrophobia, fear of heights, which seem to have no connection to the social element, the society can give such an array of examples that people will acquire the society’s attitude to these matters and will stop being afraid.

**Adva Bar-Yehuda:** What can I tell parents to make them understand the essence of that distress, to make them see its origin?

**Michael Laitman:** You’re a social worker, right?

**Adva Bar-Yehuda:** Right.

**Michael Laitman:** Is there an organization of social workers?

**Adva Bar-Yehuda:** Yes, there is.

**Michael Laitman:** So you should give lessons on TV, like us. A TV channel costs about a million shekels a year, not that much. Besides, your organization can get a discount from the government, start a TV channel, like us, develop your broadcasts, and teach the parents. Make it appealing and fun enough and teach them how to teach the children.

But people don’t really care enough, I’m not hearing anything but fancy words. Why can’t those organizations do anything? I always ask myself, “Why do we need to watch all kinds of atrocities on TV?” Ok, there is the Knesset [Israeli parliament] channel. Is that more important than a channel that teaches how to be good parents? I don’t think so, but there is no such thing. Teachers, psychologists, lawyers, every union and every society can do something like that, and then we won’t turn to all kinds of other directions.

If a father is hurting because his son is in distress, and he knows that there is a channel where he may find answers, he will certainly watch it, no doubt. That channel should have explanations on how to help children with phobias or what to do with all sorts of habits, antisocial behavior etc. Why aren’t there any? Because you are not doing it.

**Eli Vinokur:** What should the right approach be in explaining to a child who is afraid?

**Michael Laitman:** An ordinary parent cannot do it. Instead, we need to set up the right environment for children. I would admit three year olds, though it’s still young, but I would have them join a sports team or something, where by force, coupled with the support of his friends, he will absorb confidence from them. So group games are good, but not when they start fighting with each other.

**Eli Vinokur:** I once heard you say on this topic that the ego should not be rewarded at any stage during a competition. Rather, it should be...

**Michael Laitman:** Yes, collective.

**Eli Vinokur:** Collective all the time.

**Michael Laitman:** Yes, because this is how he acquires a sense of confidence from them, a sense of support, and this is very important.

**Adva Bar-Yehuda:** Some children tend to be more afraid of people than other children. Why is that?

**Michael Laitman:** Well, for sure there is a genetic reason that they are more sensitive. Fears, as we said, are at the basis of creation, in our will to receive, our desire for pleasure. It is our entire substance.

It stems from the sensitivity of the substance. The more sensitive the substance, the more fearful the child will be. People who as adults become great scientists, writers, musicians, artists, always have slight perversions in their childhood. It is well-known in psychology. We need to understand that it accompanies us all the time, because if our matter is sensitive to how it senses reality, it will always come accompanied by fear of what one will sense.

Again, we should respect the fear. Without it we would ruin ourselves instantaneously. In other words, all we need is to know how to work with it. There are no bad fears, no fears we need to cancel. There are also no fears we need to make latent. We do it because we have no other options, but we should actually invert them. If there is any fear, any problem, or any phobia, I need to rise above it.

The wisdom of Kabbalah says that none of that can disappear; I need to rise above those fears to what is called “fear of the Creator.” I actually do see all the fears, all the problems, all the faults, the emptiness, the helplessness, and everything that develops in me. I see that as I grow over it, beyond it. When the importance of the Creator, the importance of spirituality draws me stronger and becomes more essential to me, then I view all those fears as what is called “help made against him.”

**Eli Vinokur:** Can you say that to a child? How can this be explained to children?

**Michael Laitman:** No, no. What I am saying is that we mustn't suppress the fears. We should only complement them through the society.

**Adva Bar-Yehuda:** What happens when there are children who aren't afraid of anything?

**Michael Laitman:** This is really terrible; it is more of a problem than fear. There are children who seemingly want to dare fate. This is a different and deeper problem that stems from a very high point—which is contrary to fear—our confidence in the Creator. The child is not aware of what is going on here, but he subconsciously says, “I want to feel that You are operating me, let's see You, and then I throw myself.”

There is such a thing inside of us. For lack of a grasp of the upper force, when I seemingly crave to feel Him, but I can't, in my frustration, I do what I do and say, “Now You catch me.”

**Adva Bar-Yehuda:** There is such a thing in psychology. It usually refers to children who later find it difficult to accept social morals.

**Michael Laitman:** It's not as if the wisdom of Kabbalah deals with materialistic psychology, although it appreciates it, and Baal HaSulam even writes about it. Let's hope that in the future we will work together and actually treat the population in such a way that will make all those children complete individuals.

**Eli Vinokur:** How do you view that cooperation? What tools does psychology bring and what does Kabbalah contribute to it?

**Michael Laitman:** Kabbalah does not approach individuals; it has no statistics. It doesn't deal with it; it deals directly with the upper level.

**Eli Vinokur:** At the root?

**Michael Laitman:** Yes. Combining what psychology does with people with the broad and genuine basis that Kabbalah can provide—where the forces can be obtained, where the facts can be found, why something must be this way and not another, meaning putting some solid truth into it—would give psychology a great power to approach without errors, and to rise to another level of treatment. Because we already know that we do not destroy the phobias; but what do we do with them and how? In other words, here we must provide precise definitions regarding the approach and the manner of treatment. But the treatment itself is already psychological work.

**Eli Vinokur:** While you were talking, a question came to my mind. When a child is afraid, once it is in its mother's arms, it feels completely safe. It's as if all those fears suddenly dissipate. As soon as Mother approaches he stops being afraid. What is it about it that makes it so?

**Michael Laitman:** That, too, stems from the upper root, the Upper Mother, from connecting to the Upper One. Here, too, we need to understand that we should show a person and give him a feeling that he can connect to his upper root, to that Mother, and then he will truly feel satisfied that he has no lacks. This is already the other half of Kabbalah, which develops in a person the ability to grasp onto the Upper One. Then, instead of phobias, he feels the opposite—he acquires confidence from above.

**Adva Bar-Yehuda:** I heard you say that fear develops the person. I admit that I found that very surprising. I searched and did not find it in the literature...

**Michael Laitman:** You see, there is something to be learned from Kabbalah.

**Adva Bar-Yehuda:** Could you elaborate on that in a few words? I suppose we don't have much time left.

**Michael Laitman:** The issue is not fear itself but how we relate to it. Envy, hatred, lust, honor, adultery, any type of trait we may have inside, the agreeable ones and the and the not so agreeable ones, and the terrible ones, we can manage them correctly and well, since nothing was created purposelessly or to harm us, but so we would manage it properly.

Therefore, if we can manage something as basic as fear, without destroying anything, but by connecting it to a person correctly, we will suddenly see that just as people are, without changing or diminishing anything, we elevate a person over his fear. He becomes as high as the fear. Then, if he rises above it, he begins to see his fear through the now healthy and confident eyes—why he used to be afraid, for what purpose, where it came from, what it gave him, what it is giving me now that I have risen above it, am I lying to myself or not. See what an expanse he opens for himself, what depth he sees in creation and in himself.

That is why the wisdom of Kabbalah says that there is nothing bad, we just need to know how to use it. Therefore, with all the phobias and all the great problems that surface in our generation, we only need to work correctly.

**Eli Vinokur:** When you say to “rise above,” how should I understand it? I don't understand what it means to “rise above”?

**Michael Laitman:** The “Introduction to the Book of Zohar” explains what is “fear,” how many parts are in it, and how we should work with it. It writes there how we should overcome it, what we gain by it, and how a person grows from knowing how to use fears. He doesn't erase them; he knows how to utilize them properly. He controls them instead of being controlled by them, and then he understands that it really is “help made against him.”

**Eli Vinokur:** So when a certain fear comes over me, should I immediately try to attribute it to something more important than I have?

**Michael Laitman:** You begin to rise above it and begin to advance through it. You no longer feel it as fear; it helps you rise above your own matter.

**Eli Vinokur:** I understand that it came to promote me, not for me to remain in it, but to rise, perhaps to a higher fear?

**Michael Laitman:** Certainly, yes.

**Eli Vinokur:** And is that something we can begin to explain to children or is that still too difficult?

**Michael Laitman:** It's not a problem. In such matters, children and grownups are the same.

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Topic: Fear, Part 1 of 2