

Raj/ACIM Study Group – January 16, 2003

A Course In Miracles reference pages)
Chapter 2 – THE SEPARATION AND THE ATONEMENT
Section – FEAR AND CONFLICT
First Edition – p. 25 / Second Edition – p. 29

RAJ: Good evening.

AUDIENCE: Good evening.

RAJ: And welcome.

The subject of the section we're in is "Fear and Conflict." And I just want to refresh everyone's mind about what we spoke of last week, and that is that when you turned your back to the Altar, when you looked outside of yourself rather than within, that act of turning your back on the Altar caused a *disconnection from* your Essential Being and your Sanity, with a capital "S". And that act itself was what caused every succeeding experience to be colored by fear.

Having conveniently forgotten that you turned your back on the Altar, you think that your fear is occasioned by what you are seeing. And so then, in order to get rid of the fear, you engage in trying to change the world out there, to change what you are seeing, when that won't negate the fear at all. The only thing that will negate the fear is what *caused* it. And what caused it was to turn your back on the Altar. So, let's keep this in mind as we proceed.

And we will start here.

READER: *Fear is always a sign of strain, arising whenever what you want conflicts with what you do.*

RAJ: Anybody not clear on what that means? I'm sure everyone has experienced the conflict between what they want and what they *do*. And many times you sacrifice your integrity by doing what you think you need to do, let us say, to survive, and then you live with the disturbance within you.

Continue.

READER: *This situation arises in two ways: First, you can choose to do conflicting things, either simultaneously or successively. This produces conflicted behavior, which is intolerable to you because the part of the mind that wants to do something else is outraged. Second, you can behave*

as you think you should, but without entirely wanting to do so. This produces consistent behavior, but entails great strain.

RAJ: I'm not commenting here because this is utterly and simply, clear English.

Continue.

READER: *In both cases, the mind and the behavior are out of accord, resulting in a situation in which you are doing what you do not wholly want to do. This arouses a sense of coercion that usually produces rage, and projection is likely to follow.*

RAJ: Mind you, at the bottom line, what you are doing that is not consistent with what you want is being done because you have chosen to do it. That simple fact needs to be very clear. You haven't done it because of circumstances, even though you might project *your* decision and your action out there in order not to have to take responsibility for it.

But the fact is that you have said, you have defined the situation in such a way that you say to yourself, "I have no choice but to do what I don't want to do, and so I am going to do what I don't want to do." And many times, what you choose to do is not principled. And so, you're going against your very own *principles* and you feel *coerced*. Naturally you feel coerced by *the circumstances* to *act* inconsistently with your own integrity. And then, once you blame your circumstances, *that* is where you let your fear erupt and be expressed.

But you must not forget that the reason you are behaving the way you are behaving is because you have defined the situation such that, you say, "I have no other choice. My circumstances require me to be unprincipled. My circumstances require me to break the law. My circumstances require me to behave, let us say, in an ugly way because I am so frustrated by my circumstances." When the fact is that you are frustrated because you have defined the situation, and believed your definition, and said you have no other choice than to behave in a way that is upsetting to you.

If you remember that it's your definition and your choice, and that there are other definitions of what's going on available to you, *then* you will be empowered to make a change, and not be required to blame circumstances.

Continue.

READER: *Whenever there is fear, it is because you have not made up your mind. Your mind is therefore split, and your behavior inevitably becomes erratic.*

RAJ: That's called sitting on the fence.

Continue.

READER: *Correcting at the behavioral level can shift the error from the first to the second type, but will not obliterate the fear.*

RAJ: Why? Because the only thing that will obliterate the fear is to stop looking at everything all by yourself and giving it all the definitions you're giving it. Again, the only thing that will correct the fear is turning back to the Altar.

Continue.

READER: *It is possible to reach a state in which you bring your mind under my guidance...*

RAJ: Oh no! There it is again. *Bring your thoughts under my Guidance.* It's getting monotonous, isn't it? But what is getting monotonous is pure simplicity. It's reminding you that the answer isn't complicated. And when you reach for my Guidance, you are, in effect, turning back to the Altar. You are choosing *not* to be independent. You are choosing to join. Joining occurs as a result of your connection with the Altar in the middle of you.

Continue. Start the sentence over.

READER: *It is possible to reach a state in which you bring your mind under my guidance without conscious effort, but this implies a willingness that you have not developed as yet. The Holy Spirit cannot ask more than you are willing to do. The strength to do comes from your undivided decision. There is no strain in doing God's Will as soon as you recognize that it is also your own.*

RAJ: Now, the recognition that it is also your own, might not come until your distress caused by your insistence to look at everything by yourself has become so uncomfortable that you arrive at a point where you experience the meaning of the words, "There must be another way." You might not have the slightest idea what the other way is. But, when you arrive at that point, you face the option of abandoning your convictions and your willfulness, and *reach out for help*, which again is turning toward the Altar to break the isolation. There must be another way and you don't know what it is, but you know that you cannot persist in your commitment to looking at everything by yourself.

Continue.

READER: *The lesson here is quite simple, but particularly apt to be overlooked. I will therefore repeat it, urging you to listen. Only your mind can produce fear.*

RAJ: Let's emphasize the word "your." Only *your* mind can produce fear.

Continue.

READER: *It does so whenever it is conflicted in what it wants, producing inevitable strain because wanting and doing are discordant. This can be corrected only by accepting a unified goal.*

RAJ: Yes.

Continue.

READER: *The first corrective step in undoing the error is to know first that the conflict is an expression of fear.*

RAJ: Now this applies to *any* conflict of any kind.

Continue.

READER: *Say to yourself that you must somehow have chosen not to love, or the fear could not have arisen. Then the whole process of correction becomes nothing more than a series of pragmatic steps in the larger process of accepting the Atonement as the remedy. These steps may be summarized in this way:*

1. Know first that this is fear.

2. Fear arises from lack of love.

3. The only remedy for lack of love is perfect love.

4. Perfect love is the Atonement.

RAJ: And the Atonement is only available to you as an experience when you are willing to abandon what you are seeing as the world out there, and going within into the silence, and asking for help of God, of the Holy Spirit, of Me, of your Guide. It is one simple answer.

The biggest aspect of it is that you must be willing to set aside what seemed so all-fired important to you to be afraid of, to set aside all of the thoughts you have about it, to set aside all of the hurt feelings that you have about it, and to let your mind become still so that when you say "help" and you reach out and break the *disconnection*, you can hear and feel the response, the embrace, the Clarity, the Love that will infill you and re-inspire you to Love.

Continue.

READER: *I have emphasized that the miracle, or the expression of Atonement, is always a sign of respect **from** the worthy **to** the worthy.*

RAJ: Now, I would suggest that you not start this with you and someone else quote “in the world,” but that you start this with yourself and with your Guide; yourself and with Me; yourself and with the Holy Spirit; yourself and with God. There will be less argument, less resistance from you if you will do this.

And the response you get will acknowledge your worthiness, and inspire the experience of your worthiness *in you*, and will then prepare you to turn to your Brother or Sister looking for, sending out the messengers for, that will come back to you and confirm to you your Brother’s or Sister’s worthiness, which will then set into motion the circumstances, the dynamics, that will allow your Brother or Sister to be inspired experientially with an experience of their own worth, and thereby have the capacity to recognize and acknowledge in you, your worth.

Continue.

READER: *The recognition of this worth is re-established by the Atonement. It is obvious, then, that when you are afraid, you have placed yourself in a position where you need Atonement.*

RAJ: That position is with your back to the Altar.

Continue.

READER: *You have done something loveless, having chosen without love. This is precisely the situation for which the Atonement was offered. The need for the remedy inspired its establishment.*

RAJ: Even more than that, the fact that it is impossible for you to become something you *are not*, established the fact that you must, sooner or later, remember that fact, so that everything that follows your having turned your back on the Altar, will serve to be that which will lead you to turn around once again. It’s inevitable because What God Has Made cannot be undone.

Continue.

READER: *The need for the remedy inspired its establishment. As long as you recognize only the need for the remedy, you will remain fearful. However, as soon as you accept the remedy, you have abolished the fear. This is how true healing occurs.*

RAJ: Yes.

Pardon.

SEEKER: [in the background] Let's speak to that one moment.

RAJ: Someone has asked me to speak to that.

RAJ READING: *As long as you recognize only the need for the remedy, you will remain fearful. However, as soon as you accept the remedy, you have abolished the fear.*

RAJ: How many of you have had the experience of having a serious, frightening, upsetting, disturbing problem, and you do turn to God, or you do turn to your Guide or the Holy Spirit, and you pour out your heart, and you tell them what your problem is, and you go on, and on, and on, describing just how bad the situation is, what the dynamics are, what your best perception of the situation is, and you don't shut up long enough to hear the answer because *you* are so preoccupied with the problem and all of its multiplicity of dynamics? That's it in a nutshell. As long as you recognize only the need, as long as you will let only the need fill your mind even when you're asking for help, you will not be in a *receptive* mode to hear the answer.

So, be aware of the need, express the need briefly, and then *shut up* and *listen*. And listen as long as it takes to hear the answer. And if it doesn't come tonight, then your next free moment or your next free hour continue, and persist listening for the answer without rehearsing, and rehearsing, and rehearsing the problem. Devote yourself to the joining with the Father, or the Holy Spirit, *expecting* the answer.

Microphone.

SEEKER: With that in mind, the recommendation that you just gave to start with yourself rather than other individuals.

RAJ: Start with yourself and the Holy Spirit.

SEEKER: And the Holy Spirit.

RAJ: Rather than yourself and your fellowman.

SEEKER: I see. Right.

Whereas so much of conflict can come from a result of relationship. Someone else pushing your button. Holy Spirit using your Brother to push your button. And you're trying to understand it, or one is trying to understand it. The need is there, but the complexity... I'm not sure I'm being clear. When in relationship, conflict can be more prevalent, appropriately dealt with, or brought to surface. To back away *from that* and just look at your own fears. The fear of attack. The fear of lack of love.

RAJ: No! No! No! I didn't say to bring your attention to yourself and your psychology. I told you to bring your attention to the Father, bring your attention to the Holy Spirit. Bring your attention to someone *other* than the one you're having problem with. In other words, bring your attention to someone whom you do not have to be defended against so that you might become defenseless.

SEEKER: It's that separation, that dividing.

RAJ: Pardon.

SEEKER: That being in conflict. The stopping and saying, "I need to turn to my Guide."

RAJ: Exactly.

SEEKER: And not engage in the rhetoric, as you explain it. It's that fear of attack which I know the *Course*... or the experience of *perceived* attack that I believe makes this simple thing not easy.

RAJ: That is correct. *But* perceived attack is the only way you can see any part of the Kingdom of Heaven when you are looking at it all by yourself.

SEEKER: Because if you are facing the Altar, in touch, then you will not *misperceive* the misperceived attack.

RAJ: You will not misperceive an attack where there is none. And you will see What Is Really There. And the *Vision* of What Is Really There that is provided to you, will cause you to behave with Love in that direction, which is the Atonement.

SEEKER: I'm working with the perceived attack.

RAJ: That's the problem.

SEEKER: I'm trying to separate from that. Is there any...

RAJ: You separate from it by withdrawing your attention from it, and redirecting your attention to the Altar within, to the Holy Spirit, to Me. You arrive at a point where you say to yourself, "It is less important to me to defend myself against the attack than to be in communion with a Brother whose Spirit and Presence will fill me with the experience of my Invulnerability, the experience of my Divinity, the experience of my utter safety, so that I might *completely* abandon the use of fear. And so that I might completely abandon any inclination to attack in defense of myself." You see? So that then you might be in a spontaneous, inspired frame of mind to behave in a new way with this one you *had seen* as attacking you.

And if indeed this Brother or Sister who you had seen as attacking you, if indeed he or she was behaving out of fear as well, your benign Presence and the Gift of Love that you bring to him or her, will lay the groundwork for them to feel safe enough to abandon their fear as well, and have the situation transformed.

SEEKER: And that's Reality. That is the purpose of the moment.

RAJ: That is correct.

SEEKER: Is that correct?

RAJ: That is correct.

It is utterly simple. It only seems difficult because you are so convinced of the way you are perceiving things, having *forgotten* that everything you perceive will be perceived improperly *as long* as you are looking at it all alone, having your back to the Altar. So, no apparent threat that you experience is valid. It is the inevitable result of having said, "Father, I'd rather look at it myself. Father, I would rather look at it *all by myself*. Father, I'd rather look at and determine for myself what it is." You see?

SEEKER: I understand. Thank you.

RAJ: You are welcome.

ANOTHER SEEKER: That's a big statement that shocks the sensibilities: *No apparent threat is valid.*

RAJ: Thank God someone is saying it.

SEEKER: So in any situation where I think I'm being attacked, I'm wrong? In any situation...

RAJ: Lets put it this way. In any situation where you think *hate* is being expressed, you are wrong. As the *Course* says, everything that's happening is either Love, or a call for Love. So when you see attack, what you... What Is Really Going On is a call for Love.

What Is Really Going On is a *request* for someone to see that the fear that is motivating the attack is invalid, and the desire to feel and know that it is invalid. The *behavior* seems to call for defense, but what will solve the problem of the apparent attack is a Presence of fearlessness, a Presence of Peace, the Presence of Love that conveys one way or another that the behavior is not frightening. And therefore, your Brother is not frightening, even though he is behaving in a way that is attempting to engender fear.

SEEKER: So the proper response to an apparent threat is to deny the validity of that apparent threat.

RAJ: Indeed. You deny it and you go within and ask to be filled with the appropriate response... the appropriate response to the call for Love. In other words, the form of Love that will completely obliterate the fear that has engendered an aggressive act, a show of hate.

Anyone who is expressing hate is experiencing a severe lack of self-appreciation, of self-worth, a complete lack of his or her being lovable. And the attack is a completely distorted way of saying, "Look at me. I am better than I think I am. I am better than I think the world thinks I am. I do not deserve to be suffering like this." But those kinds of intelligent words aren't what come out. What comes out is hateful words expressed toward you, distress with you, slanders on your character.

But if you are able to stand there recognizing, because you've turned toward the Altar, that this is a call for Love, and you are at the very least unmoved by the behavior, still in your peace, you have conveyed silently something extremely important to the person in such a great state of fear that he would ask for help through an act of hate. And that is that who he is, and how he is feeling, and how he is behaving, is not disturbing to you, and therefore maybe, because you aren't confirming his awfulness to him, *maybe* there's another way to look at himself in which he isn't awful. And the moment [snap of the fingers] a glimmer of that occurs within him, he is able to abandon his commitment to his conviction that he has justification for fear, and communication can open. And when you continue to be the Presence of calm Intelligence and Love, and he feels your benign-ness, he is able to relax and, you might say, warm up to you.

So, does that answer your question?

SEEKER: Yes.

RAJ: Okay.

ANOTHER SEEKER: So, taking this just a little bit further, so okay, we're like we're doing it with the Holy Spirit, and we're doing it one-on-one with people who want to attack us. Let's say you're in a group of people and they are attacking one another, or that's what it's looking like to me, so I have to go and turn toward the Altar and try to, you know, be in my Peace. Right? [laughing] That's really hard to do.

And even when I do that, sometimes it really feels like I'm not making any difference, or contributing in any way to these people that I care about a lot, who I'm seeing having distress with one another.

RAJ: Well, one way in which you are helping is that out of the group of people, there is one fewer of that group contributing to the insanity. And by

your withdrawal of your participation, it's that much more difficult for everyone else to *maintain* the chaos.

Now, you don't do this so that you can have control and make a healing happen. You do it because you are remembering your Function, even if everyone else has not remembered theirs. It's that simple.

SEEKER: It's a really different way to be with people than we've been with people, though. I mean I feel like it's kind of like to be like with you first, and like receiving your tone, kind of. And, but, sometimes to people it looks like you don't give a shit, or, you know, you're withdrawing, or, you know, you're not playing with them the way you used to, or...

RAJ: That is correct. And you must...

SEEKER: [laughing] And then they really try to get you in.

RAJ: Yes. And you must... you must understand what's happening and let them go through their withdrawal pains, if you want to call it that—the experience of not having you as their drug of choice that continues their misperceptions.

SEEKER: I guess I... I guess it brings up a lot of feelings of inadequacy of how to answer the call for Love, I guess.

RAJ: That's because everyone who is engaged in attacking each other is feeling a sense of potential power in converting and changing the other. And what you are doing is not being done for the purpose of changing anyone. And so, because you've just stepped out of that arena of the exertion of power for the purpose of changing each other, it feels like you have moved into a place of powerlessness.

But you have moved into a place of what I'm going to call Infinite Groundedness. And as each one of you makes that choice to be in that place of Infinite Groundedness, you provide what I'm going to call a leverage against the dream that far exceeds the little bit of willingness that you were able to bring to the process. Because what you find yourself joined with *is* Infinite.

SEEKER: I think sometimes I have wanted them to change, though.

RAJ: Pardon.

SEEKER: I think sometimes I have wanted them to change, and that's probably what I'm wrestling with it. Right? It's kind of like you turn toward the Altar and you feel that kind of Groundedness and Infinite... like you're saying. And then you turn back and see all this chaos. So, try to muck

around in it, change them, say a few good things. That doesn't work. You know, it's kind of this...

RAJ: And since you're moving out of an arena in which changing each other is the modus operandi, it's easy to think that turning to the Altar is a new and better way to change everyone.

SEEKER: [laughs] Right.

RAJ: And when that doesn't happen, you wonder what has gone wrong.

Remember, the more who are Awake, the more difficult it is for those who are asleep to continue dreaming dreams. And so it might not seem immediately rewarding in the larger picture to have made the choice for your Peace, to have returned to your Function, and to do it because it simply *is* your Divine Function, and not because of some power it gives you to be a force for good in the illusion. You see?

Okay.

ANOTHER SEEKER: Raj, turning to the Altar also means surrendering in that moment. And in surrendering, we join. And then by joining...

RAJ: Well, joining *is* you surrendering your autonomy. Yes.

SEEKER: Okay. Okay. Right. But I mean, they are one and the same?

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: And in the *Course* it also says, and this really hit me hard, is that anything that we perceive lacking in any situation is what we haven't brought to the situation. And so that goes along with what we're talking about here. And so joining, or turning to the Altar, means that not only do we surrender, but that we trust that God is in charge of the situation.

RAJ: Surrender doesn't occur without trust.

SEEKER: Okay. All right. That's a good point because they have to be all combined here.

RAJ: Indeed.

SEEKER: And I also remember you stating that if—and I think it was last week—but I wasn't here to hear it, but I heard it, but I read it—that if we would allow you to control, to guide us in all that is meaningful, you will take care of all that is meaningless.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: So that would apply in this kind of a situation.

RAJ: Of course.

SEEKER: And so trusting that the Holy Spirit is in charge also means that the Holy Spirit is in charge in the other person, too.

RAJ: Of course.

SEEKER: Well, I'm just clarifying how this works.

RAJ: Indeed.

SEEKER: So it's very important to trust. Surrender.

RAJ: Yes. That is the element of charity that was discussed last week. Because charity acknowledges that another is further ahead than where their *behavior* indicates they are.

SEEKER: Ah. You are appealing to the best in them. Or you're addressing the highest in them.

RAJ: You are acknowledging the highest in them. When you acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is in charge of them as well, you are acknowledging something that is apparently beyond their present sense of themselves, and beyond what their behavior is indicating their point of growth is. So yes.

Now mind you, we're not talking about an intellectual acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit being in charge. Because when you turn to the Altar and you are infilled with the Father's Love, *you know* that the Holy Spirit is in charge of them, that the Father's Love is embracing them as well. What you find yourself knowing about yourself, you know is utterly True about your Brother, and so you are acknowledging a point they don't seem to have grown to yet. And that is charity.

SEEKER: So what they observe is you in your Peace, in your unruffled attitude, and in your confidence in them.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: And then you take care of all that's meaningless.

RAJ: That is correct.

SEEKER: Okay. Thank you.

RAJ: And you won't know what is meaningless until you've taken these steps.

Okay.

ANOTHER SEEKER: Okay, I took some of the things you said last week and kind of twisted them all around. But it seems to be really working for me. So I was thinking that what I'm doing here is taking the world of form, these things I'm seeing with my eyes, and I'm substituting those things for What's Real. And by thinking that that's what's real—this person attacking me, all this stuff—I'm giving life to it with my mind.

Now have I wandered down off the track again?

RAJ: No. That is quite correct.

SEEKER: Okay. So...

RAJ: What you've given life to is your misperception.

SEEKER: Yeah.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: Right, by believing this hideous person is being an idiot.

Because I've been stopping some of that and noticing some of these people are really nice after all. [laughing] So it's really working for me. And I can see from what you're saying that I really need to spend more time asking to see What *Is* Real. I'm kind of stuck. Part of me is really, really glad to just let go, and know that what I'm not seeing What's Real. But then, like you said, I want to see something really great happen. And sometimes nothing really happens, and it's like, "Oh, well." I don't know what my question is. Never mind.

RAJ: Well, it's a wonderful starting point to say, "what I'm seeing isn't Real," because that makes it clear to you that you don't know What It Is.

SEEKER: Exactly.

RAJ: And if you don't know What It Is, you can't help but have a curiosity begin to form as to What It Is. And so, sooner or later, you are going to arrive at the point where that curiosity has grown enough for it to be felt by you, and you'll say, "Oh, well okay. I got a certain amount of relief from existing in a world that I was seeing that isn't Real. And I have a certain amount of peace from no longer reacting to it. But I'm sort of in a limbo here. I'm not being terribly disturbed by anything anymore, but everything is still rather meaningless. And if it isn't Real, if the way I'm seeing it is not True, then what *is* really going on?" And that's where the invitation for an infilling from a Source beyond your best judgments occurs, and you are no longer isolated. And that's where the shift in perception begins to happen; the miracle. So take it all the way.

SEEKER: Yeah. I'll work on that part, 'cause the other part has been kind of fun.

RAJ: Play with that part. Don't work on it. Have fun with that part.

SEEKER: I'm too serious.

RAJ: Have fun with both parts. Do them lightly, but do them.

SEEKER: [laughs] Yes sir. Thank you.

RAJ: You are welcome.

Okay, let's... one more question.

ANOTHER SEEKER: I just want to try and bring this all full circle for me. Fear originates in *my* mind, as you said the emphasis being upon *your* mind here.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: That is where fear originates.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: Now, and feeling fearful is never valid, and seeing threat is never valid.

Now, I usually think I see threat when I presume that my Brother is acting fearful. So I think I see fear in my Brother and I interpret that as threat to myself, but the fear *cannot* be in my Brother because the fear is within *my* mind. And by assuming that my Brother is acting fearfully, instead of acting as a result of his Guidance of the Holy Spirit, is what makes the invalid image of threat seem real to me?

RAJ: No. Your Brother may well be feeling fear. And his behavior may well be stemming from the fear he is experiencing, because he has *his* back to the Altar. Whether or not *his* behavior based on *his* fear creates fear *in you*, depends on whether you have *your* back to the Altar.

SEEKER: And not acknowledging that he and I are both just puppets, and there is no will that opposes God that would be threatening to me?

RAJ: What I want everyone to be careful of is theoretical or intellectual acknowledgements.

You can make that educated acknowledgement about your Brother, but it will lack the unction of Love that comes from having turned toward the Altar yourself, and having been infilled with the Father's Love yourself that constitutes the Gift that you will spontaneously extend to your Brother,

because you can't contain it yourself. And thereby, you might say, declare that the two of you are incapable of being governed by fear. You see what I'm saying?

SEEKER: At this point, yes. I think we'll go further when we have a chance.

RAJ: Your employment of fear cannot cause your Brother to behave in an attack mode. Your Brothers and Sisters are not the puppet of your misperception.

SEEKER: And there is no will in opposition to God's.

RAJ: That is absolutely correct.

SEEKER: And when I presume threat, I'm thinking that *there is* a will in opposition to God's that is obviously guiding my Brother in his threat towards me.

RAJ: And you wouldn't do that if *you* were not asserting a will of your own by not being connected to the Altar.

SEEKER: Yes. And so again, feeling threat or seeing fear should be utilized as a reminder that I have turned away from the Altar. And if I utilize the reminder to turn back to the Altar, the feeling of threat and the fear will disappear into the vaporous nothingness that it ever was.

RAJ: Yes. *And* you will look at your Brother who may still be behaving on the basis of his severe fear, and you will know how to be the presence that alleviates it.

SEEKER: Respond appropriately because I did turn to the Altar to see what would be appropriate.

RAJ: Exactly. Exactly.

SEEKER: Thank you.

RAJ: It's very important to understand that *no one* and *no thing in your world* becomes the puppet of your misperceptions. So when someone else is behaving poorly, you cannot say, "Well. It's my fault. I'm perceiving it." No.

When you turn to the Altar and you are warmed by the Glow of Love that is the Father's Love being the very Fire of *You*—because ultimately the Fire in the Altar, the Light in the Altar, is your Essential Being—in turning to that, it doesn't eradicate your Brother's ignorance. And you will still see a call for Love. But you will *see it* as a call for Love, and you will respond with Love. And the response with Love is what will be transformational, is what will be the trigger for the miracle.

So your Brothers and Sisters are never *acting out your* dream. You are not responsible for your Brother's poor behavior. But *your poor response* to his poor behavior is *your responsibility* to correct. Because your poor response will confirm his poor response. And it will be the blind leading the blind and falling into the ditch.

SEEKER: So if I react fearful to my perception of his fearful threat to me, then what we have just done is created a mutually-agreed-upon definition.

RAJ: Exactly.

SEEKER: I got it.

RAJ: And then you will defend yourselves against each other, and confirm that mutually-agreed-upon definition even more completely.

SEEKER: Yes.

RAJ: You have it.

Okay, let's continue.

Oh.

ANOTHER SEEKER: Okay, we've got I'm going to assume that, if we could, we chose to always face the Altar and we are calling for this infilling Love and Peace. And we're going through our day, and a Brother comes up with what we perceive as an attack, and we're hooked. We're turned from the Altar. That's the dynamics.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: Could we talk...

RAJ: That's one of the possibilities. Yes.

SEEKER: Okay. But, you know, providing that we all have a little willingness, and we all want to do what we're asked to do, and we're.... okay so we're mind set, body set, you know. We're going through our day peaceful, and all of a sudden "bam!" You know, we're hooked. And we're obviously jerked from the Altar. Help us at that moment.

RAJ: Remember you jerk yourself away from the Altar.

SEEKER: Well, okay. All right. Yes. Is that... but we have the willingness. We have the intent. We have the knowing. And we're still pulled. Okay.

RAJ: That's okay.

SEEKER: Or we're hooked or something. But what I'm trying to say...

RAJ: It is a well established habit.

SEEKER: I understand.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: But most of us are hooked faster than we can count to ten.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: Okay. Before we can realize it, because of our ignorance, or our habit, or whatever you...

RAJ: Yes [??].

SEEKER: So, and we don't have time to sit down and listen right at that moment. We could take time if we didn't get hooked, you know. So help us with that moment. That the willingness has not gone away. The wanting has not gone away. The behavior has not gone away. It's that we're hooked! So is there some insight you can give to us to say, "Respond I love you." Or respond, you know, is there a way we can see it another way faster than we are now?

RAJ: Only through practice.

It's like doing a meditation and you say your mantra, and somewhere along the line you start thinking a thought. And at some point you realize, "Oh, I'm not saying my mantra." And you go back to your mantra. You let the thought go 'til after your meditation and you get back to your mantra. The more you meditate, the less frequently thoughts arise, and when they do arise, the more quickly you recognize that you've lost the mantra and return to it. Through practice, the length of time it takes from when you are suddenly caught off-guard to the point where you recognize that you are caught off-guard, that will shorten.

There's no way to get around the fact that the call for a change in your experience will require you to stop and take a moment, or take a few moments, to choose for your Peace again. There is some point in the vigorous interchange where you are actually going to have to stop participating in it, even if you have to say, "Excuse me. I've got to go to the lavatory."

SEEKER: That's the shortening.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: The engagement. We may continue the engagement. We're going to recognize it sooner. We shouldn't start from the expectation that we're going to recognize it and therefore it's not going to happen.

RAJ: Yes. You're going to have to break the pattern somehow. And another way it might be is that you will say right to the person you're in this vigorous interchange with, "Wait a minute. I've lost my perspective here. Just a moment, because I don't choose to proceed in this fashion because it's not getting us to the solution."

ANOTHER SEEKER: [in the background] That'll mess up a good fight.
[audience laughter]

RAJ: Someone said, "Ah, that'll mess up a good fight." [audience laughter]
Ah, yes.

ANOTHER SEEKER: [in the background] May I just say one more thing?

RAJ: You will have to... you *will* have to. I don't mean... you will have to almost physically *take* the moment to stop what you're engaged in, to become still enough to make a new choice, and proceed with what is really going to contribute to resolution.

EARLIER SEEKER: [in the background] I was trying to do it before I got hooked, but getting hooked and then not pursuing it seems a little more valuable.

RAJ: Oh. Say it one more time.

SEEKER: [with the mic now] Okay. I was trying to not get hooked. But what you've said is I'm going to get hooked, but I don't have to maintain that hookedness. That's where the diminished effort... the destructive will diminish.

RAJ: That's correct.

SEEKER: Okay. I think that's very important that...

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: We come as...

RAJ: If you are used to thinking, which all of you are, when you start meditating, when you start learning meditation, you find that it's very hard to not think for any length of time, just because that's the prevailing habit. But in your persistence in meditating, you arrive at a point where you have longer and longer periods of silence—something you never dreamed was a possible experience.

SEEKER: I think... yeah. Thank you.

RAJ: In the process of learning, you can't afford to criticize yourself for thinking. Thinking is going to happen because it's the prevailing habit.

Getting hooked is going to happen because defense is the prevailing habit. It's the inevitable habit of *being* when your back is turned toward the Altar, and the Kingdom of Heaven looks as though *it* has no Source and is all happenstance. And because it's happenstance, it's not dependable. And because it's not dependable, it's potentially threatening to your well-being. Therefore, existence *is* an ongoing state of defense. You see?

So it's the prevailing habit. And as you begin to break it, it's going to hook you. So you say, "Okay." And then you take each time you're hooked as the opportunity to choose once again, instead of just playing it out to the bitter end. And then you *take* whatever moments it takes to actually shift gears. And you do it because you know, and you will know more and more clearly as you do this, because you know that in not playing out the old habit of defense, you actually come to resolutions. It's *productive*, you might say. And it's therefore totally reasonable to engage in what is productive where everyone benefits.

Okay.

ANOTHER SEEKER: Raj, I want to point out something that as I've experienced. And that is if I meditate, I have noticed if and after, if an attack comes, it doesn't penetrate. It's like there's an invisible shield. But if I hesitate too long and *think* about what I think I'm perceiving, then, oh, I'm hooked. But there is a moment there where there is a shield.

RAJ: Indeed.

SEEKER: Where it bounces off.

RAJ: It's similar to if you've had a lack of sleep, your temper is shorter than when you're well rested. Yes.

SEEKER: So I found that is really vitally important in helping break these habits.

RAJ: And so, the practice of meditation on a regular basis can enhance your restedness, your...

SEEKER: The pause.

RAJ: ...your centeredness, so that the shield, as it were, the decreased inclination to react can be enjoyed more. Yes.

SEEKER: Yeah. I think that's really important. A really important point. Thanks.

RAJ: It is a valuable tool. Yes.

SEEKER: Thank you.

RAJ: Taking five or ten minutes to be with your Guide has the same wonderful benefit.

Okay. Let us continue.

READER: *Everyone experiences fear. Yet it would take very little right-thinking to realize why fear occurs. Few appreciate the real power of the mind, and no one remains fully aware of it all the time. However, if you hope to spare yourself from fear there are some things you must realize, and realize fully. The mind is very powerful, and never loses its creative force. It never sleeps. Every instant it is creating. It is hard to recognize that thought and belief combine into a power surge that can literally move mountains.*

RAJ: Now let's stop there.

RAJ READING: *The mind is very powerful, and never loses its creative force.*

RAJ: What I want you not to get hooked on is the word “creative,” because creative is so closely aligned with Creation, and all of you, your egos, love the idea of becoming co-creators with God.

As you read this:

RAJ READING: *The mind is very powerful, and never loses its creative force.*

RAJ: Think of “creative” in terms of there being a manifestation. So, you become fearful and your heart begins to race. Ah! Something physical. Something measurable. Your Mind *has* had an effect that is measurable. There has been a manifestation of the fear.

I'll tell you something though. *Fear* cannot create for its defense. Let's put it this way. The use of fear in your mind for the purpose of defense, cannot cause a gun or a knife to manifest on the table in front of you for you to protect yourself with. So, creativeness, creation, which would be the case if a gun or a knife appeared on the table that hadn't been there before, creation of that sort is *not* what this is referring to.

Understand that your Mind is always having an effect. What you're thinking is always having an effect.

And, when you choose for your Peace and you let it in and you feel it, your heart beat slows down. Your blood pressure drops. Physically your body begins to function more efficiently. There is an effect. In that sense it is creative. We're talking about that there is always a Manifestation of your Mind.

Continue.

READER: *It appears at first glance that to believe such power about yourself is arrogant, but that is not the real reason you do not believe it. You prefer to believe that your thoughts cannot exert real influence because you are actually afraid of them. This may allay awareness of the guilt, but at the cost of perceiving the mind as impotent. If you believe that what you think is ineffectual you may cease to be afraid of it, but you are hardly likely to respect it. There **are** no idle thoughts. All thinking produces form at some level.*

RAJ: Indeed. It produces form by *affecting* form.

RAJ READING: *If you believe that what you think is ineffectual you may cease to be afraid of it, but you are hardly likely to respect it.*

RAJ: I will tell you that one of the reasons that Paul is reluctant to let me respond to everything, is because he is afraid that if he does, everything that he will be about will be profoundly meaningful and have its effects. And there is something in him that does not... in his ego perception, that does not want to influence others. He is afraid that the result of joining with me completely, which in effect is the same as turning toward the Altar and making commitment to it completely, is going to result in something that will be—you see, he doesn't even want to hear the words—something that will be profoundly meaningful. And those are not the words I want to use.

Nevertheless, he is afraid of being of what it would mean to be the focal point for that kind of meaningfulness. So in effect, he is afraid of joining with me completely because it would constitute a joining with all of you completely that would have a profound effect, which would naturally be an Experience of the Atonement and would therefore be utterly beneficial for everyone involved. But then, as his ego perceives it, that would be a matter of being extremely influential. And he is not totally aware of the devotion which is part of his mutually-agreed-upon definitions to everyone's right to make their own discoveries for themselves without help.

And yet, inconsistent as it is, he is willing to do it from time to time, for an hour and a half every Thursday night, and perhaps six hours two days in a row once a month, knowing that there is blessing involved. But I will tell you... and I am sharing this with you because this isn't so different from everyone's fear, and one of the reasons every single one of you choose to remain tiny and never really know the Truth. Because discussing what the truth might be and debating it and rolling all of the possibilities over in your mind is so invigorating, and saves you from having to be significant yourselves. He doesn't mind doing it occasionally, but he knows that if he

makes commitment to me, to the Altar, totally, it will be like going from one cylinder on a 16-cylinder engine to all sixteen cylinders. [audience amused] So I use him as an example for his elucidation as well as yours.

You really do all use fear as a way of avoiding being the significant Presence of God that you are, if you would just let God in completely. And that's what the Atonement is about.

Yes. Microphone.

SEEKER: Just for the benefit of all of us about being at the Altar all the time, or Paul making commitment, or any of us making commitment, isn't it a lie though that we would be the focal point? Isn't it that really the Kingdom would be the focal point? We'd just be the space where it happens.

RAJ: That is correct.

SEEKER: 'Cause that's the fear. It's going to be all about me, or I'm going to get it, or I don't know, you know. But it's personal.

RAJ: That is correct.

SEEKER: And that the devotion itself undoes that whole personal issue. It's just not where my focus would be anymore.

RAJ: That is correct. Again, it's because the personal sense each of you has of yourself is the prevailing habit that you will be emerging from. And so your feelings about your tininess tend to be carried over in your imagination about the Experience of being Whole. All of you have your little places you get hooked. The necessity is to persist anyway. And that Paul does.

And this is where we will end for tonight. Thank you.

AUDIENCE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

RAJ: You are welcome.

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