

Raj/ACIM Study Group – October 2, 2002

A Course In Miracles (reference pages)
Chapter 1 – THE MEANING OF MIRACLES
Section – THE ESCAPE FROM DARKNESS
First Edition – p. 8 / Second Edition – p. 11

RAJ: Good evening.

AUDIENCE: Good evening.

RAJ: We will step right in and we'll let Judy read first. And if everyone will remember to hold the microphone up near the top. Thank you.

READER: *The Escape from Darkness*

The escape from darkness involves two stages: First, the recognition that darkness cannot hide.

RAJ: Let's stop right there.

Suddenly we're talking about darkness and escaping without any preamble, but it is intelligent because darkness is the place from which you begin your journey Home.

But what is darkness? Darkness is the place where you hide... darkness is the place where you hide your most fearful secret from yourself and everyone else. And what you've hidden there is what you discover when you arrive at the bottom of the barrel in your life experience. It's called darkness because it is the place you have chosen to ignore. It is the place where you have refused to bring your attention and, you could say, therefore, the *Light* of you.

And what is this most fearful secret that you hide from yourself and everyone else? It is that you're not in charge of anything. It is that you don't have the answer. It is, most succinctly put, the awareness that you are truly incompetent. Now it happens that this is the utter Truth. You, on your own, separated from your Source, are absolutely incompetent.

Now the barrel that you finally end up finding yourself at the bottom of, is filled with all of the techniques you have developed to cover up the fact that you are incompetent. You have filled it up with wild imaginations as to your ability and your skill and your capacity to think intelligently and reasonably, and therefore demonstrate that you do have control, that you are competent. The reason you all ultimately end up at the end of the... at the bottom of the barrel is because you can't really pull off the lie. You can't really *prove* your competence.

And as time goes by, as your life passes by, you could say, you lose the rev for proving your capacity. You lose the vigor that you had so easily brought to proving your competency and making your mark in the world. And you have had successive experiences that have demonstrated to you that no matter how hard you've tried, you haven't succeeded at really demonstrating your competency. Mind you, all of what you filled the barrel with to cover up your incompetency involved mutually-agreed-upon definitions with others, who were also engaged in filling their barrel with their competencies and their skills. And the reason there was so much sparring that went on, so much warring that went on, was because part of what was involved in demonstrating your competency was in proving your superiority to *others* who were trying to demonstrate their competency. You see?

Well, sooner or later, and it's better if it's sooner, you come to the point where the war gets tiring, the lack of fulfillment of expectations dampens your spirit, *your will* to be independent. And a little bit of honesty begins to percolate into your awareness. You decide that struggle isn't worth it. And as you let go of the struggle and sink toward the bottom of the barrel deeper into the darkness, you finally come to the point where you recognize that you're powerless, that you are incompetent, that you can't control anything.

And since you have come to the bottom of the barrel through all of the ego structures you have created, the ego looks at your realization and says, "You're a failure." It says, "There's no reason to live." And if you stay in the ego perspective for very long as you are observing the Truth about you, the ego will distract you from succumbing to the Truth about yourself and accepting it. And it will say, "There's one last thing you can do to demonstrate that you have control, even though you're a total failure. And that is you can do yourself in by your own hand. You can kill yourself, instead of dying naturally into the blessing..." It [the ego] doesn't say this, but the blessing that awaits you in your acceptance of the Truth of this deep dark secret that you on your own are totally incompetent.

This last act that the ego suggests is a last attempt at control—which you have to be willing to dishonor, because when you arrive at the point of feeling the fact that you are not competent on your own, and you accept it and don't fight against it by engaging in a final act of suicide, you discover an incredible thing. Peace. Why? Because now you don't have to go to all the effort you had been going to present this false front of competency. There is great peace in being able to say, "I can't do this. I can't do that. I can't live up to your expectations. I can't live up to the expectations I have placed upon myself that I accepted from my parents. I can't be something

I'm not. I don't even *want* to be something I'm not any longer." This constitutes a great release.

And in that release comes a joy welling up together with an awareness about yourself that in your incompetency as a separated independent individuality, you're quite Holy, you're quite Whole. This is the Truth that was hidden in the darkness, hidden out of sight in that place you chose to ignore. And this is the beginning of Awakening. This is the beginning of the return to your Sanity, your Whole-Mindedness, you might say; not fractured by insane attempts to prove that you are independent and competent in your independence.

Let's continue.

SEEKER: May I ask [a question]?

I missed the part about how your ego justifies suicide as avoiding recognizing your incompetency. In other words, having come up against suicide, it's... the feeling for me was, "All was lost. I was a total failure."

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: Just like when you're at the bottom of the barrel.

RAJ: You *were* at the bottom of the barrel.

SEEKER: Right. Right. And I was saved from that.

RAJ: Yes.

SEEKER: That act. The interesting thing that I recognize is that suicide is... I don't know what the statistics are, but it's a very low percentage of the people in the world commit suicide.

RAJ: Indeed.

SEEKER: And so that's almost like saying that people don't feel like failures, *or* they're too afraid to take their own lives. Do you see what I mean? If that's... when you say the ego—and the ego is not original—it tries this with *everyone*. Okay, because I don't know... I mean I'm guessing that most people have entertained the question of suicide at one time or another.

RAJ: Yes. Mind you, I said, "If you stay too long in the ego's frame of reference observing this Truth, the ego will...."

SEEKER: So, you're saying that if you recognize your incompetency from the ego frame of reference for too long of a period, this suicide thing is the way... what the ego suggests to you to cut it short.

RAJ: Exactly.

SEEKER: To stop it.

RAJ: Exactly.

SEEKER: So that it can preserve itself.

RAJ: Exactly.

ANOTHER SEEKER: [in the background] Be in control.

PREVIOUS SEEKER: So the ego actually knows that there's life beyond death, that it is not extinguishing itself. Or is it kind of like a Kamikaze thing?

RAJ: No, no, no. It's that the ego recognizes that you're getting close to honesty.

PREVIOUS SEEKER AGAIN: I see. And it would rather extinguish itself than have you....

ANOTHER SEEKER: [in the background] [maintain??] control.

RAJ: No, no. It is an act that keeps it alive.

PREVIOUS SEEKER AGAIN: I see. So the ego knows that death is not... there's nothing final about death. It even recognizes that. Or else it would be asking for its own extinction.

RAJ: No. It has nothing to do with the ego recognizing anything about life or death. It has to do with the fact that the ego's existence depends upon the secret remaining a secret.

SEEKER: So we'd rather sacrifice everything rather than give that secret up?

RAJ: It elicits a consummate *act* of independence as a means of securing its existence. It is *its* nonexistence that it will not tolerate.

SEEKER: I see.

RAJ: But it has no sense of life or death, of the here or the hereafter.

SEEKER: So again it's just another.... it's just another insane thing.

RAJ: Exactly.

SEEKER: It's just another insane... I mean, "I'll extinguish myself rather than give up control and face the Truth."

RAJ: No. It isn't even a matter of the focus being on extinguishing oneself. It is a focus on an overt *act* as though *action* based on ignorance constitutes life.

SEEKER: I see. I see. I see. It never gets to thinking, "What about what happens after?" It just... it is gonna....

RAJ: The ego has no capacity *to think*, per se.

SEEKER: I see.

RAJ: It doesn't reason. It is a....

SEEKER: Program.

RAJ: It is a defense mechanism.

SEEKER: I see.

RAJ: And it defends itself. That's *all* it ever does.

SEEKER: I see. Okay. Thank you.

RAJ: You are welcome.

Yes.

ANOTHER SEEKER: I guess I was thinking that we all commit suicide. I mean, we all, that's what we've been doing—we haven't been dying normally.

RAJ: In a...

SEEKER: In a sense.

RAJ: In a broader sense, that is correct.

SEEKER: So I could see that as giving up. You know, being disgusted and just giving up and not thinking in terms of trying to keep taking care of yourself and going on with life.

But, anyway, never mind.

RAJ: Every death is a suicide. It is a decision not to face life.

But what we're talking about here is what darkness is. And that it is the place where you have hidden the Truth About You that will undo all of your mutually-agreed-upon definitions and the bondages associated with them, *and* which will serve as the stepping stone to the return of your Sanity.

Simply dying from an illness, or old age, or whatever description you want to give it, is not the same thing as coming to this place where you've hidden the Truth About Yourself from yourself.

Continue.

EARLIER SEEKER (reader): Where did I leave off? I'm incompetent.

RAJ READING: *This step....*

SEEKER: Oh, I see. Okay.

READER: *This step usually entails fear. Second, the recognition that there is nothing you want to hide even if you could. This step brings escape from fear.*

RAJ: Yes. You see, when you arrive at that point of recognizing that you're incompetent, and you're looking at it from the ego's vantage point, it is experienced with fear. But then, as it begins to dawn on you that you really can't solve the problem yourself—whatever it is, or you really can't pay the bill because you really don't have the money—a realization occurs that you can't get blood from a turnip, or you can't get water from a rock. And therefore, if you don't have the answer, it isn't necessary for you to have the answer. And you have been suffering from a self-imposed requirement that you *always* have the answer to everything—which you don't *ever* have. You see?

So when you realize that the realization that you're incompetent, that you don't have the answer, *is itself the answer*, and that it means that you're *not supposed* to have the answer, *then* you can see that there can be no penalty for not having an answer that you were incapable of having. And you realize, "My God, all this time I've been trying to do something that's impossible." In that realization, you can abandon trying to do the impossible, because it's clear to you that *it is* impossible.

So it says, second, there is...

RAJ READING: *...the recognition that there is nothing you want to hide even if you could.*

RAJ: You no longer want to hide your incompetence, because it's a jewel of a blessing to you.

RAJ READING: *This step brings escape from fear.*

RAJ: Again, because it's utterly clear to you that there can be no penalty for your not being able to do something that you were *never created* to be able to do.

Continue.

READER: *When you have become willing to hide nothing, you will not only be willing to enter into communion but will also understand peace and joy.*

RAJ: Yes. You cannot stay long in the realization of your incompetence without discovering that in your peace and your joy and your newfound awareness of your Holiness, you still exist. In other words, the world and you did not come to an end.

What you have experienced as *need*, which you now realize you are incompetent to meet and that you were never meant to meet on your own, you find yourself wondering, “How is this need going to be met?”—not, “How am I going to figure out how this need is going to be met?”—but, “*How* is this need going to be met?” It’s just a simple response and it constitutes prayer, because you’re asking the question but you’re not asking it of yourself. And when that happens, the Holy Spirit responds, your Guide responds. Communion occurs. Realization happens. Isolation has been broken.

This is one of the reasons that I’m constantly pointing you in the direction of paying attention to your needs—not so that you can figure out how to solve them—but because needs are the threshold of clarification. Needs are the threshold of further enlightenment when you recognize their existence and honor them by not ignoring them and ask for help without quote “leaning unto your own understanding” unquote.

Okay.

ANOTHER SEEKER: The less drastic path to Awakening that involves more willingness and less plummeting to the bottom of the barrel, I’m seeing this is the same process of realizing my incompetence, and in that I’m seeing that that’s where I can see my Innocence. Because I really can’t do anything so I am innocent; I’m not responsible. And that connects me to the curiosity, when seeing this exact same activity going on, only not bringing me to the brink of suicide, and not looking really whole. Happening in an everyday activity and not being unbearable.

RAJ: Yes, it is certainly possible to do this more gracefully by consciously choosing for it, instead of letting circumstances force you into the corner where it’s so dark and the Truth About You awaits you. You can *invite* the Consciousness of the Truth About You. Yes.

SEEKER: The key is to have help from the Awakened Ones.

RAJ: Indeed.

But Life Itself is Divine. And the Divinity of It is what constantly insinuates itself into your conscious awareness and causes all of your attempts to be competent to fail, and ultimately bring great discouragement to you. It is the Divinity of Being that brings discouragement to the false sense of self that's trying to proclaim its competence. So what drives you to the bottom of the barrel is Reality exerting Itself, you might say, *being* What's Real. It is your Divinity disallowing you to be comfortably insane. So no matter how you arrive at the jewel that was hidden in the darkness, no matter how you arrive at it, whether it seems to be circumstances or a spiritual desire to wake up, it's still the Divinity of Being which brings you to that point.

SEEKER: The Way Things Work.

RAJ: Exactly. Yes.

SEEKER: Just simply not resisting that is why it's not excruciating.

RAJ: That is exactly correct. Yes.

Okay.

READER: *Holiness can never be really hidden in darkness, but you can deceive yourself about it. This deception makes you fearful because you realize in your heart it **is** a deception, and you exert enormous efforts to establish its reality.*

RAJ: Indeed. You understand the meaning of that.

SEEKER (reader): Yes.

READER: *The miracle sets reality where it belongs. Reality belongs only to spirit, and the miracle acknowledges only truth.*

RAJ: Ah. And the miracle acknowledges only Truth right where the ego was saying failure lay; right where the ego said catastrophe awaited you.

SEEKER (reader): The darkness.

RAJ: Yes.

Go on.

READER: *It thus dispels illusions about yourself, and puts you in communion with yourself and God.*

RAJ: Exactly.

READER: *The miracle joins in the Atonement by placing the mind in the service of the Holy Spirit.*

RAJ: Instead of in the service of the ego. Instead of in the service of that which would cause you to once again try to climb to the top of the barrel.

Continue.

READER: *This establishes the proper function of the mind and corrects its errors, which are merely lacks of love.*

RAJ: Indeed. Do you see that all of your attempts to be competent, all of your attempts to prove your competency, all of your attempts to be in control, all of them are expressions of lack of love. Because all of them are in the service of your denying your Conscious Awareness of Yourself—Who You Really Are. It is an act of aggression against Yourself. Ultimately it's an act of aggression against God, because what's being covered up in the darkness *is* the Presence of God *being* All There Is of you. Now it doesn't mean that God is being abused, because all of this is going on in the imagination. It's not really happening. And no matter how long you have spent attempting to get to the top of the barrel and stay there, you never for a moment had any competency *or any existence* as a separated entity capable of rising to the top of the barrel and staying there.

SEEKER (reader): So that's why, in the world, no one ever really stays at the top of the barrel, whether it be a movie star, or an athletic hero, or a CEO [Chief Executive Officer of a company], or on and on and on.

RAJ: That is correct.

SEEKER: And then once like, for instance, with boxers or football players, there's always comebacks—trying to come back, make a comeback to the top of the barrel.

RAJ: Indeed.

And then there are those who were successful, apparently, who got bored with their success and moved to another venue, another arena of...

SEEKER: Proving their competency.

RAJ: Exactly. Of excelling, *because* it never truly satisfies.

ANOTHER SEEKER: [in the background] Because it's lonely at the top. Yeah. [barely audible]

RAJ: It is. Someone said the phrase is, "It's lonely at the top." It's actually lonely from the moment you have established a mutually-agreed-upon definition with someone else to be independent. So it's, you might say, lonely from the bottom up. As long as there is an attempt to move vertically, it is lonely, no matter where you are between the bottom and the top of the

barrel. It's lonely by definition because you have said, in so many words, "I'd rather see it my way. I choose to fool myself into believing that I can be independent and have an independent viewpoint." That's the definition of being alone. Therefore, everything that follows will be imbued with loneliness.

ANOTHER SEEKER: Some people that make it to the top find their bottom of the barrel there and turn within and move in an intelligent direction from there.

RAJ: Indeed.

SEEKER: What I wanted to ask you was....

RAJ: Mainly because when they arrive at the top and they recognize that it is the top, they see that it truly is the topmost point that they have been fighting for and working for, and they find that they are still unfulfilled. It's a very depressing realization because it means that all of the sacrifice and all of the work that they did was for nothing, and *therefore* they've spent their whole life on the wrong track. And there they are, at the top, which is the bottom of the barrel. They had no competency to create what they had been fooled into believing could be created and did await them.

SEEKER: I wanted to ask you about....

RAJ: In other words, as a total success, they were complete failures.

SEEKER: The imagination that we're living in, and there's been these hints dropped—a lot of conversation about time being an illusion, and you said there wasn't any evolution, and I remember you saying, "the cavemen, if there was such a thing"—am I living in this imaginary world pretending that there was this fast history of evolution, etc. I mean ancient... a lot of times in the *Course* it talks about ancient in a seeming almost sarcastic way. I mean is this all just an illusion? History.

RAJ: You are living in the middle of the Kingdom of Heaven. You are living in the middle of Eternity. There's no time occurring right now, right here. *But* through the use of your imagination, you are seeing and experiencing time and the conceptualization of infinity as being on a timeline that is infinite, with an infinite future and an infinite past. And so you are experiencing a *misperception* of Eternity, right here, right now, in the middle of Eternity.

SEEKER: So the T. Rex [Tyrannosaurus Rex] bones they dug up are our image that we're holding in our mind of this enlightened being that's passed on. I mean I don't... I can't really conceptualize not having history from where I am now. But I'm beginning to see that it's not going to work, as I'm

moving forward, to keep thinking of things in the past, of this vast past that's brought us to this point. That's....

RAJ: Well, it is impossible for you to conceive of the Meaning of the word "Eternity." The closest you could come to it would be Wholeness—infinately all-inclusive Wholeness in the now. The reason you must let go of the past, and the reason you must stop anticipating the future, is because until you let go of that conceptualized timeline, you will be unable to experience the eternal presences of T. Rexes, and anything else that it seems existed in the past but no longer exist. I've said before that by releasing the future and the past from your consideration, and letting your awareness be brought to the moment you're in, and then letting that moment be snuffed out, *that's* where the transition into the Conscious Experience of Eternity occurs.

SEEKER: Eternity is kind of being found in the stillness, in the void.

RAJ: Yes, but also I want you to grasp that Reality is not off at a distance. Right now, right here in this room, you're experiencing Eternity. Right now, right here in this room, you are experiencing the Kingdom of Heaven. But you are experiencing it through a sieve. You are experiencing it through a filter—a highly complex filter of definitions which you have applied to the Kingdom of Heaven and Eternity, including this concept of life being a timeline moving from the past to the future.

What I want you to understand is that Reality, Eternity, the Divinity of everything, the Divinity of you, all of this is just a shift of perception away *right here*. And it will be a shift of perception about everything that is *right here*—[tap on the glass of the table] the glass top table, the chair, your hands, the microphone, the red color of the word on your shirt, the color itself. This is why I say be curious about every single thing you're experiencing, because in a moment of defenselessness, in a moment of looking with innocent eyes innocent of preconceptions, it can all change. Not that *it* will change, but what you're allowing it *to be* in your experience will change and more truly represent Reality.

But let the curiosity be present here and now, because it's not off in the future that you're going wake up. It's going to be in the moment that you look defenselessly at the orchid, or the glass of water—like, "What in the world does that mean? What in the world is that?" You see? And then shutting up and allowing the answer to be revealed. More than that. Letting the answer be revealed by the very thing you've asked the question about. You don't have to ask your Guide, "What's the Meaning of that orchid?" Ask the orchid. Be open to it because it has the full means of conveying to you what its Meaning is. That is its gift—to convey its Meaning.

SEEKER: Thank you.

RAJ: Let's continue.

READER: *This establishes the proper function of the mind and corrects its errors, which are merely lacks of love.*

RAJ: We will back up one sentence.

RAJ READING: *The miracle...*

READER: *The miracle joins in the Atonement by placing the mind in the service of the Holy Spirit. This establishes the proper function of the mind and corrects its errors, which are merely lacks of love. Your mind can...*

RAJ: Oh, that's another important point.

RAJ READING: *This establishes the proper function of the mind and corrects its errors,...*

RAJ: It doesn't say *you* have to correct its errors. The errors are corrected spontaneously as Truth dawns in your awareness. As you see the Truth, what isn't true becomes obvious. And once what isn't true is obvious to you, you naturally no longer invest any trust or commitment to them. And correction is complete just because you were paying attention; not because *you* managed to find some way on your own to correct the error. You see? Do you see what I'm trying to say? I'm trying to say that everything that exists that is Real is insisting upon your return to Sanity. Your return to Sanity, Whole-Mindedness, is inevitable. And everything that is going on is geared toward supporting your letting yourself into that deep, dark corner where the Truth About You is hidden.

You say, "My mind is all screwed up. I've got to straighten out my mind so that I can move forward on my spiritual path." Or "I've got to straighten out my mind so I can have healing." [single audience laugh] See, that's part of the exercise of control. And the spiritual exercise of control for spiritual benefit is one of the most noble means of getting to the top of the barrel. [mild audience laughter]

If your mind is all screwed up, all you have to do is stop trying to unscrew it and say "Help" to God. You don't have to be able to get into the right frame of mind to have a healing of your mind. You've got to ask for help. You see?

So you don't have to be at a certain level of perfection before the benefits of What You Perfectly And Divinely Are can register with you. That's why in your worst moments miracles can happen, because it's not up to you to manage your mind in such a way as to create a healing. The only management of your mind that you have to employ is to say "Help," instead

of trying to do it yourself. That's the only discipline that you can actually bring to bear on the problem of being, in order to get out of the problem.

SEEKER: I can't stop it.

RAJ: Pardon?

SEEKER: I can't stop it. My mind. I can't stop it.

RAJ: That is correct.

SEEKER: And that's why this next sentence is so fascinating.

READER: *Your mind can be possessed by illusions,...*

SEEKER: Sometimes I really feel like, I mean, run by my life. In other words, it runs me. Because there's the next thing to do, and the next thing, and I'm always in a hurry to do this thing, and that thing, and that thing, and the mind's spinning about thinking and planning. And I can't stop it. I mean I use the best techniques and studied with the, you know, studied the masters and all these techniques of meditation. I can't stop it. Can't do it.

RAJ: There's your realization.

SEEKER: Hallelujah. [some laughing in the audience]

RAJ: Now succumb to it. Yield to it. Don't resist it any longer. Accept it.

SEEKER: How about tomorrow? I'll do that tomorrow. [more laughing in the audience]

RAJ: Exactly.

READER: *Your mind can be possessed by illusions, but spirit is eternally free. If a mind perceives without love, it perceives an empty shell and is unaware of the spirit within.*

RAJ: In other words, if a mind perceives without Love, it perceives... it perceives a soap bubble. It perceives a boundary. It perceives only limits and is unaware of the Spirit within. I have said before that the ego is like the sphere of a soap bubble—fragile, thin, insubstantial, but very visible, very definite. Your present sense of yourself is this space inside the bubble. And you in your Totality are the space inside the bubble *and all* of the space outside the bubble.

But if a mind perceives without love, it perceives an empty shell. It doesn't perceive that it's a full shell, because it's preoccupied with the finiteness of the boundary, and either protecting itself against it, or enlarging the boundary.

RAJ READING: *But...*

Continue.

READER: *But the Atonement restores spirit to its proper place. The mind that serves spirit **is** invulnerable.*

RAJ: Because it is boundary-less. It has no outside and it has no inside. There is no means of conflict.

SEEKER: There's no walls to defend.

RAJ: Exactly. Without the bubble.

SEEKER: There's nothing to defend against.

RAJ: And again, if the bubble represents the ego, the bubble itself is a defense mechanism. It is the only element, and I use that term very loosely, it is the only element in existence that implies, or suggests, the need for defense, the existence of defense. When the bubble pops, there is nowhere to be found, anything which gives meaning to the word "defense."

SEEKER: And the bubble can't be put back together again, as far as us.

RAJ: That is correct. The bubble isn't even really there.

ANOTHER SEEKER: Just for purposes of illustration.

RAJ: Just for purposes of illustration. [pause] What do you mean?

SEEKER: I mean that's the reason that you use that example.

RAJ: Yes, I use that example for that purpose.

SEEKER: When I read this after talking about the past, and it said, "without love, you see an empty shell instead of the Spirit," and then I got it how my definitions make me look at the dinosaur bones instead of experiencing the Living Christ that is really what's there; the empty shell of a dead body instead of the Living Christ that's really there.

RAJ: Indeed.

SEEKER: And then I also could see how I have this network of definitions that wraps that empty shell around every Living Christ, all of the Living Love that's all around me, but that's not what I'm seeing. I'm seeing it all as an empty shell.

RAJ: Exactly. Yes. Yes.

SEEKER: For purposes of illustration.

RAJ: Continue.

READER: *Darkness is lack of light as sin is lack of love. It has no unique properties of its own.*

RAJ: Isn't that interesting? The subject is darkness—but you can see that darkness is lack of light, or the absence of light—but isn't it interesting that sin is lack of love? Sin therefore is not a presence, is it? It's just an absence of something. And if sin is not a presence, then you cannot be guilty of sin.

You may *suffer* from withholding Love, because extending Love is your Function. You may suffer from *that*, because it is impossible for you to be in a state of Self-denial and be comfortable. But you cannot suffer for *sins*, because there is *no presence* of something that can be identified as sin, anymore than there is a presence of something called darkness.

So, this is a very valuable thing to contemplate. *All sin is a lack of love.* If you are suffering, it is not because you are being penalized for your sins. It is because you are *neglecting* to fulfill *your* Function, which is to be Love. You are withholding the only True Self-Expression you can engage in, and that cannot be comfortable. But because that is what you're suffering from, you can correct it.

If your suffering were the result of your sins, you would have no means of getting out from underneath that suffering. But it's the fact that sin is nothing more and nothing less than lack of love, it is *because* sin is nothing more and nothing less than the lack of love that you cannot possibly be bound to suffering. And a new decision on your part to let Love flow through you, *will* release you from the suffering.

Continue.

SEEKER: May I?

And this not fulfilling your Function, or withholding Love, is the root cause of *all* suffering. All suffering.

RAJ: Absolutely.

SEEKER: Okay. There's not any suffering, whether it be from disease, or guilt, or... that does not come from this not fulfilling of one's Function.

RAJ: That is correct.

SEEKER: So the human condition is that.

RAJ: Is the experience of withholding the Love That You Are.

SEEKER: So business is a suffering place. [laughing] Your place of business is your place of suffering. [laughing]

ANOTHER SEEKER: But we have a choice.

PREVIOUS SEEKER: That's true, yes. But I mean in the purely economic sense of supply-and-demand, competition, win and lose. In that sense. Yes, we have a choice of making the place of business a place to extend Love.

ANOTHER SEEKER AGAIN: Or a choice for Love.

PREVIOUS SEEKER: Right. Exactly

RAJ: So...

RAJ READING: *Darkness is lack of light as sin is lack of love.*

RAJ: Continue.

READER: *It has no unique properties of its own. It is an example of the "scarcity" belief, from which only error can proceed. Truth is always abundant. Those who perceive and acknowledge that they have everything have no needs of any kind. The purpose of the Atonement is to restore everything to you; or rather, to restore it to your awareness.*

RAJ: Ah. Because it never went anywhere and you never stopped being Whole-Minded. So all that happens is that it is restored to your awareness because you're no longer consciously and conscientiously ignoring it, keeping it hidden.

Continue.

READER: *You were given everything when you were created, just as everyone was.*

RAJ: Now, why do you suppose it was put that way? Why not just say, "You were given everything when you were created." Why add, "just as everyone was"?

SEEKER: The story of the whole book—joining with our Brothers.

ANOTHER SEEKER: I have it and you don't. Ha ha.

RAJ: Just a moment.

Because having it is nothing special—you weren't left out, and no one else was left out.

The whole reason for mutually-agreed-upon definitions is for the purpose of demonstrating competency as we have been talking about, so that you

might rise to the top of the barrel, which obviously not everyone can be at, and so that you might feel a purpose to life and the fulfillment of it. The result is a loss of compassion for, and involvement with, your Brothers, your fellowman. Equality, involvement, witnessing for your Brother—these things are disallowed when you are claiming independent ability to be competent.

RAJ READING: *You were given everything when you were created, just as everyone was.*

RAJ: You could say that levels the playing field. And if you all have everything, then no one has to struggle at the expense of another to get, or to experience having.

RAJ READING: *You were given everything when you were created, just as everyone was.*

RAJ: That statement triggers a Unity, a unifying energy in your mind which is essential to abandoning the barrel existence. No one stands above or out from anyone else. And because you all have everything, you all share everything equally. And in that sharing, you bless each other equally, infinitely.

Continue.

READER: *The emptiness engendered by fear must be replaced by forgiveness. That is what the Bible means by “There is no death,” and why I could demonstrate that death does not exist.*

RAJ: Now what emptiness is this referring to?

SEEKER (reader): I don't understand.

RAJ: It's the emptiness which the ego suggests is in the deep, dark corner at the bottom of the barrel.

ANOTHER SEEKER: Incompetence.

RAJ: Incompetence is one being empty of competence.

ANOTHER SEEKER AGAIN: Yeah.

RAJ: Empty of success.

RAJ READING: *The emptiness engendered by fear must be replaced by forgiveness.*

RAJ: Now what does that mean? It means the withdrawal of the ego's definition of what's in that dark corner. And in the forgiveness of your preconception about it, your abandonment of your preconception about it,

you can begin to recognize that the fact that you don't have the answer and that you don't have control, is truly *the answer* that you need to yield into so that the acknowledgement of it might bless you with relief and peace and joy and spontaneous clarity that allows for the correction of the *need* that brought you to your point of desperation.

RAJ READING: *That is what the Bible means by "There is no death,"...*

RAJ: Well, this, you could say, is my way in the *Course* of pointing out that the ego, left to its devices, would call for suicide. *If* forgiveness doesn't occur, and you don't embrace the horrible answer that you are incompetent, and the blessing of the realization that because you're incompetent you must never have been *meant* to be competent, and therefore it is useless to try any longer to do the impossible. You see? And in that recognition and embrace that it's useless to do what's impossible, you are ripe for communion to occur, for connection to occur to replace the isolation that you had fought so dearly for, so that you could get to the top of the barrel on your own and make your mark and prove that you really are something.

SEEKER (reader): And the way that we do that is by asking for help.

RAJ: Indeed.

SEEKER (reader): Why is it that we *are in need*?

RAJ: [small laugh] Why are you in need?

ANOTHER SEEKER: [inaudible]

RAJ: When you are looking at *God* and saying, "That isn't God," you are denying your Source. And when you deny your Source, it is like strangling yourself. You *need* your Source. You *need* the Conscious Experience of your Connection, because there is *no way* to exist without it.

SEEKER (reader): So it's not because we separated from God.

RAJ: Absolutely not.

SEEKER (reader): Even when we are fully Awake with God, we're still going to be in need. Okay.

RAJ: Absolutely correct.

SEEKER (reader): So when....

RAJ: Except that when you yield to the fact that Being Itself is a state of need, and you *yield* to the Father, and you experience your Oneness with the Father, and you don't cease to be needy because you can't ever become

not needy, your defenselessness in the Presence of God allows you to be filled by the Presence of God. Now actually it allows the Conscious Awareness that you have always been filled by the Presence of God to register with you. And now—in your Experience of Wholeness—enlightenment, fulfillment, need, and fulfillment of the need are inseparable and simultaneous. And because you're experiencing utter Fulfillment, and no sense of lack, there is no experience of need to succumb to, or think that you have to overcome.

But it is important for you to understand, as you are letting go of the ego frame of reference and the ego definitions, that you will never arrive at a point of not being in need. And you must *yield* to that Truth, knowing that it's the Truth, so that you don't bring any vestige of ego, or attempt to bring any vestige of ego, along with you saved in your hip pocket so that when you arrive at the point where there's no need, you can *really* assert control. You see? I see that you see.

SEEKER (reader): Thank you.

RAJ: Continue.

READER: *I came to fulfill the law by reinterpreting it. The law itself, if properly understood, offers only protection.*

RAJ: And another way of referring to the law is quote “The Way Things Work” unquote. The Way Things Work meaning as God has set, and is setting, everything into motion at every moment.

READER: *It is those who have not yet changed their minds who brought the “hell-fire” concept into it. I assure you that I will witness for anyone who lets me, and to whatever extent he permits it.*

RAJ: Ah.

SEEKER (reader): That's good news.

RAJ: I will witness for every one who lets me, *and* to whatever extent *he* permits it. You must give permission. You can't be dragged into the Kingdom of Heaven. You must *invite* clarification. You must *invite* the companionship, and you must let it in.

Continue.

READER: *Your witnessing demonstrates your belief, and thus strengthens it. Those who witness for me are expressing, through their miracles, that they have abandoned the belief in deprivation in favor of the abundance they have learned belongs to them.*

RAJ: Yes. Nothing more needs to be said about that.

Don't be afraid of the darkness—the darkness within you. It seems a scary place. The ego needs for you to be frightened of the place where you've hidden the Truth About Yourself. But don't be frightened of it. And don't be afraid to go there. And don't be afraid to let yourself be present in it, because the darkness is not a presence. It's just a place where you are consciously refusing to let the Light of your Awareness shine on the Essential Truth that is your salvation. And the Essential Truth that is your salvation that the ego insists upon covering up is that you have no personal, private, independent competence of any kind.

And with that utter clarity, we will end for tonight.

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