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## Fixing Your Earth [Laziness] - 007 Going Against Your Will

דע את מידותיך הדרכה מעשית - עפר-עצלות מפורט 007 - רוח דמים דעפר

### *Wind-of-Water-of-Earth*

With *siyata d'shmaya*, we continue here the discussion about the element of earth, and the trait of laziness which results from it. In this lesson, we will learn about the particular kind of laziness that comes from **wind-of-water-of-earth**.

Earth is the root of laziness, water is the root of the nature to be dragged, and wind is the root of movement. If one has a dominant nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, he has a contradictory nature. Earth and wind are opposing forces to each other, on this world. Earth causes a person to be unmoving, and wind causes a person to move. When one has a dominance of wind within his element of earth, there are contradictory forces taking place in his nature.

What will this contradiction produce? His causes him to have an unmoving nature, or, he will move very slowly, while at the same time, his wind motivates him to move. He will have a contradiction in his nature, because even though he doesn't move much, due to his earth, his wind makes him aware that he needs to move. This contradictory nature can be manifest in several ways.

One of the ways it is manifest is when one has a nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**. Such a person has a nature to both be unmoving and moving, due to the dominant natures of his earth\ non-movement and his wind\ movement. His element of water "drags" him towards different movements. His wind will demand movement, while his earth keeps him in place.

He is not simply "dragged" due to his element of water, but due to the very contradiction in his soul. When his need for movement suddenly bursts out of its dormant state, he moves, and he becomes dragged after movement. His wind overpowers his earth. But whenever he is not dragged towards movement, his earth overpowers his wind, and he stays stagnant.

When a person has a nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, in most scenarios when he is moving, it is only because he is being 'dragged', and not because he really wants to move. His movement is coming from his element of wind, but from his water, which is dragging him towards movement. This is due to the contradictory forces in his soul.

When one is dragged towards movement, it may be a small kinder of movement or a larger kind of

movement.

### *Dragged Into Smaller Movement*

Here is an example of a smaller kind of movement he can become dragged towards.

For example, if he wants to do some minimal work or to take a short trip somewhere, his nature of earth causes him to stay in his house, while his nature of wind pushes him to get moving and take care of the errand. Some external factor can also get him out of the house, such as if a friend calls him and asks to go somewhere with him, to which he replies “Yes, yes” and he goes. His wind is then given outlet. But if his friend doesn’t call him, or if he doesn’t get invited to his friend’s wedding, he doesn’t go. He only goes somewhere if he gets a push, but otherwise, he isn’t proactive about it.

There are many other examples as well, of this kind of nature. But there is a lot more to it, because it is a nature that becomes the very way that the person lives his life.

### *Dragged Into Larger Movement*

A person like this may end up doing all kinds of things in life, such as running various organizations or projects, and it is only because he has been dragged into these activities, because he has a desire to achieve, but at the same time, he is held back by his earth which doesn’t let him pursue other options.

When a person is asked, “How did you become involved with this?”, he may respond that he believes that this is his role in life. He believes that he is brilliant and strong enough to be the man for the job. Whether he is right or wrong or not about his beliefs, at least he is thought out, and he is following a plan. But others, when asked how they became the head of certain organizations or projects, or their job, might respond that it was all coincidental, and if he has a bit more spiritual, he will say that it was all from Hashem that he ended up in this position. However, what truly motivated his way of living? It is because he was simply ‘dragged’ towards certain kinds of movements and activities.

Of course, from a higher perspective of emunah, it is all from Hashem. Hashem also arranged that this person should be dragged, because He conducts the world and moves all that is in it. But in the actual, practical sense – from the viewpoint of a person’s “animal” level of his soul – what was this person’s motivating factor? He did not choose what he wants to do with his life! He has a contradiction between his earth and wind, and his water has dragged him towards certain movements, and once he enters into something after being dragged towards it, he stays there.

It is shuddering to think about, but this is the reality taking place: A person looks back at his life and wonders how he got to where he is in life, and he might say it’s all Divine Providence. Although this is all true from a higher perspective, it is not a truthful way of living when one touts this attitude. The truth is that the person has been dragged towards certain activities to do in his life, and that is where his comfort zone was. He lives a life of being dragged after certain activities and places, and that is how he got to where he is today.

This kind of person, after becoming dragged towards certain activities or places, forms certain ideologies about his way of living. Now that he is there, he can’t admit that he has been dragged. Instead, he blames it on Hashem, or as an ideal way of living. He cannot admit, even subconsciously, that maybe he is living in the wrong way. So, to counter this, he forms certain beliefs about his way of living. He changes his ideals about life, his *hashkafos*, to suit his beliefs.

He might even write a *sefer* about all his newfound *hashkafos*, but he has fooled himself. He is not being truthful with himself, even if his *sefer* contains truths, because he’s not writing it from a truthful

place in himself. He may have fooled even his subconscious, by forming certain beliefs about life, when he is not aware of the true reason - that he has simply become pulled after a certain way of thinking or a certain standing or position in life, which he finds too difficult to part from.

Even more so, a person with this nature might become very active about what he does, which strengthens his beliefs about life. His wind becomes strengthened. Not only doesn't he admit that he has been pulled after something, but he has blown it up, and he brings proof from this that he's right. He decides that he must teach his children a new way of life, based on his newfound beliefs, when in reality, he is terribly wrong. This happened to survivors of the Holocaust who came to Israel after the war. They became involved with politics and believed that all of life should revolve around this.

In summary, a person with a nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth** has a contradictory nature, between his earth and wind. He becomes dragged towards certain activities and places in his life, due to his element of water. He becomes firm about his beliefs in life, due to his nature of earth, and he becomes active about his causes, due to his element of wind. That is the way he lives his life, and he thinks that his way of living is the right one.

### *Repairing Wind-of-Water-of-Earth*

Now let's see how this kind of person can fix this impaired nature. Although we can approach this issue from many different angles, we will say one fundamental approach.

The higher of an **awareness** that a person has to himself, he is far from these issues, because he doesn't have the problem of fooling himself. He knows how to be self-critical with himself and therefore he doesn't make a move without thinking about it beforehand. In contrast, the less awareness that a person has, he is more prone to the issues discussed in this lesson.

A person with this nature, unless he is regularly involved with inner work, can easily be dragged and pulled into an ideology, and if he doesn't, it is simply because Hashem has not yet given him the opportunity to find a place to be drawn after. But as soon as he does get that opportunity, he is drawn after the lifestyle that becomes his ideology, and he stays there.

In contrast, the inner perspective towards life, in whatever a person wishes to do or thinks about, is that a person must always suspect himself in two areas. The first thing he must wonder is: **"Maybe the path that I'm taking is the wrong one?"** The second thing he must wonder is: **"Even if the path I am taking is a proper path, who says it's the right path for me, individually?"**

Any person can ask himself these two questions, no matter where he stands in life. Besides for the general clarification about life which each person must make, which is to wonder what man's purpose is on this world, what the Creator asks of him - this includes Torah and *mitzvos*, and all of halachah, as well as the matters of *chassidus* (piety) - there is also another question a person must clarify: What each person's individual task on this world is. Any person, wherever he is in life, must ask two fundamental questions about his individual task on this world: "Who says I'm taking the right path? And who says it's for me?"

#### 1. "Who Says I'm Taking The Right Path?"

Regarding the first question, of "Who says I'm taking the right path?", one may counter to this that he's not taking an individual path, but a path that was already taken by the Sages and great Torah leaders. If so, why is this even a question? It surely is a true path, and certainly we must have *emunas chachomim*, and to have faith in the Sages. But that is not what we are questioning here. The question is **if a person is clear about the path he is taking** which was once traversed by our Sages and leaders.

There are many people in our generation who are taking various paths in avodas Hashem and they claim that they are taking the path of our Sages. But if one does his research into these ways of the Sages, he will see that there is barely a comparison. The person is fooling himself and imagining that he is taking a path traversed by the Sages. People today are suggesting all kinds of paths, based on generalities that were practiced by certain leaders of the past. In some places, the main emphasis is on Torah learning, and in other places, they mainly emphasize *tefillah*. In other places, they mainly emphasize chessed, and others will mainly emphasize Eretz Yisrael.

There is truth to all of these paths, but they are very general. One must know all the subtleties involved in any of these paths, in order to have the complete picture. If one is missing even one of the subtleties involved, it changes the whole picture.

For example, The Vilna Gaon aspired to go to Eretz Yisrael and told his students to live there, in order to hasten the redemption, and this was based on the words of Rabbi Yehudah HaChassid. This is all true, but one must understand how far this definition goes, and the depth to it.

When people claim that their path was already taken by the Sages, they are certainly correct that there were Sages who took such a path, and without a doubt, this is part of our *emunas chachomim emunas chachomim*. *movement he malement of wind, but from his water, which is dragging him towards movement.* (faith in our Torah sages). But most people today don't understand these paths of the Sages which they are taking. They understand only the external surface of these paths.

Many people today don't even understand the path of their current teachers in this generation. Certainly, one must listen to the guidance of his teachers, leaders and sages in today's generation, whether he understands or not. But when people today try to take any of the paths of our sages and leaders, usually, their understanding is superficial. It is as if they are following a general blueprint of a building before it is actually built, without knowing what the building will really look like. A large part of their work will be off-mark, and another large part of what they will do resembles a body without a soul. Yet a person may feel confident that he is taking a path of the Sages.

How much one needs to cry during his lifetime, in order to understand the path of his own teachers! This is not referring to understanding the ways of other teachers in this generation. Rather, one must first try to really understand the ways of his own teachers!

Many times a Rav says one thing and the student says another thing. Sometimes the student writes a sefer in his Rabbi's teachings, and what the Rabbi actually said and what the student wrote in the sefer are two different things. What was said, and what was written, are not the same thing. It is well-known that details can get lost in between the communication.

In whatever path of the Sages that a person takes, he must know what the path is. We are not discussing here those who take their own path which isn't based on the Sages, which usually stems from being conceited. We are referring to someone who is taking a path of the Sages, who must learn about his path in-depth, along with prayer for help, and with clarifying. One must know the external aspects of the path [i.e. *halachos* and *minhagim* associated with this particular path of *avodas Hashem*] as well as the internal aspects of the path [i.e. the *hashkofos* that are behind it].

## 2. "Who Says That The Path I Am Taking Is Right For Me?"

Even more so, one must ask himself a second question: "Even if I am taking a correct path, who says it's right for me?" This is question to which there is no absolute answer for.

The Sages state that "one must learn Torah in a place where his heart desires." But this is only true for one who has purified his heart, who can then trust what his heart is telling him. When a person is

still controlled by his evil inclination, his initial will comes from the evil inclination, so he cannot trust what his heart wants. Even *tzaddikim*, who aren't ruled by their *yetzer hora*, can still have *negios*, some subtle ulterior motivations. So one must always question himself: Who says that I am taking a path that is right for me?

There are some people who believe that if they were born and raised in a certain environment which emphasize a certain path, this must be the path that is right for them, because if not, why did Hashem place them there? There is some truth contained in this argument, but it is not certain. It may have been a good path until now, but maybe now he needs a different path. Maybe Hashem placed a person into this path so that can he get out of there! A person may believe that any confusion and doubts about his path stem from the Other Side, and that he shouldn't question anything. If a person has such a perspective, he will never clarify anything his whole life. That is definitely not a truthful approach.

On the other extreme, a person cannot be in doubts all day if he's taking the right path or not. But one must certainly go through a clarification process about life.

In whatever situation or path in life a person is found in, one must get to know the abilities of his soul, and then he needs to see if his soul is able to handle the path he is found in. This requires exertion and prayer. One must pray to Hashem that he should become clear, and secondly, he must pray to Hashem to guide him on the right path. After all this exertion and prayer, he must still suspect himself that maybe he is going on the wrong path. This is known as *safek d'kedushah*, "holy doubt".

In summary, one first needs to clarify what his path is, and if it's right for him. Even if he clarifies that the path he is taking is good for him, he needs to always suspect if he's taking the right path or not. This repairs the "dragging" aspect that comes from **wind-of-water-of-earth**. Although it does not completely rectify the nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, it definitely weakens the detrimental kind of "dragging" that comes from this nature.

### 3. Going Against His Nature of Becoming Dragged

One will always need to suspect if he's taking the right path or not, even after he has become used to this clarification process, because he has the nature to become dragged, and therefore, he is always prone to becoming dragged.

When one gets used to this kind of self-examining, he may reach the conclusion that he has been "dragged" his entire life after different things, and to feel drawn after a certain path because he has gotten comfortable there. When he realizes that he has a nature to get 'dragged' like this, he can conclude that he has a nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, and therefore he will have to be even more wary of his tendencies. In that way, he rectifies his nature even more, because he lives with awareness of his nature.

If one realizes he has such a nature, he must always go against his nature to get dragged. He has a nature of water which drags him and pulls him towards certain things, and he must realize that he can lose everything if he simply follows his nature. Such a person, whenever he feels drawn towards something, must ignore his feelings. He has to learn how to go against his nature which drags and pulls him after things. He cannot do this constantly, as this is impossible. But he must at least be able to say "No" to his initial thoughts and feelings.

For example, if one realizes he has a nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, and he has opened a *chessed* organization, he must suspect that he has become dragged after such an endeavor. Instead of thinking that Hashem has enabled him to live a life of doing *chessed*, he must suspect that he has

become dragged after this way of living, and that it may be causing him to lose everything and to divert his attention away from his true individual purpose in life.

When people live superficially, if they ever examine their spiritual situation, they are concerned about how much Torah they learn, how many *mitzvos* they do, how much they did, etc. Although this is a truthful self-examination, it is only external. The inner self-examination which one needs to make is: "What is my individual role on this world? Am I reaching it?"

If one doesn't work hard to clarify this part, he might be in error about his entire way of living! He may be taking the wrong path in general, or he may be taking a path that is not right for him to take. In contrast to this, one can live a life in which he is constantly going against his nature to become pulled and dragged after things, because he thinks before following his heart's desires and he questions them.

### *The Ability of "Thinking Into The Opposite"*

Now we shall see an additional insight into this nature of becoming dragged.

When a person lives a life of being dragged, his problem is that he only sees one side of a matter, without seeing a bigger picture. He doesn't think of any other options, so he will only 'flow' in one direction – the one he feels a pull towards. To illustrate, water becomes dragged after its current, and it will only flow in one direction. There are some places where there are different currents in the water which clash with each other, but generally, water flows in one current, in a particular direction.

How can a person go against his own 'flow', when his element of water is causing him to get dragged into a certain direction?

There is a power in our ability of *daas* called "*daas hamis-ha-peches*",<sup>[1]</sup> [1] to "turn over" in the mind, to do the opposite of what your initial logic is.

A person might be the type to always go with the flow around him, which, in many cases, can be spiritually harmful to him – and this is generally the case with pursuing *taavos*, negative desires, such as becoming lulled after good-tasting food, exciting clothes, or certain possessions he wishes to own. What is the depth of fixing the trait of evil desires, *taavah*? It is to go against the flow. When you train yourself not to go with the flow around you, you can go against it, and then you can avoid pursuing your desires.

So too, whenever you feel like you are being dragged and pulled after anything, you need to create a countering force which will oppose the pull. The idea is to get used to training yourself, at first in your thoughts and then in your feelings, to deliberately go against your own thinking and feelings, and to instead think of the opposite option.

This concept is called "***dovor v'hipucho***", thinking into the opposite, and it is a fundamental idea which helps for many different areas, but it is especially effective whenever a person wants to overcome a particular desire or pull which he feels drawn towards. He needs to get used to thinking of doing the opposite, and to challenge what his thoughts and feelings are telling him.

Of course, this power must not be used in the wrong place. One should not lie instead of telling the truth. This power is meant to be used mainly in Torah study, where a person must challenge his logic and think into the opposite. In this way, a person can come out of superficial thinking and enter into in-depth Torah study.

Reb Chatzkel Levenstein zt"l said that he heard from the Alter of Kelm, that in whenever a person

learns of something new, he should think: "What did I think before I learned about this, and what do I think now?" This kind of thinking is the beginning stage of getting used to the idea of *dovor v'hipucho*, where a person simply thinks about what has changed, from before until now. Similar to this idea, the Gemara says that there was a student who could think of 150 reasons why a certain *sheretz* should be impure, as well as 150 reasons of why it should be pure.

One needs to take this idea further and always think into the opposite of his reasoning. Whenever one thinks of a reason of why he should do something, he should think of a reason why he shouldn't. For example, when a person feels like some good-tasting food, he should identify the reason he wants to eat it, which is the trait of desire, and then he should think of a reason why he shouldn't eat the food: Perhaps he doesn't need to eat it right now.

This fundamental way of thinking is an ability which builds the soul in general, and in particular, it uproots the nature of becoming dragged after any stimuli. The idea is that before one is about to do something, he should first think of why he shouldn't do it.

### *Changing The Will*

Getting used to this idea not only changes a person on a behavioral level, but it also changes a person's very will (*ratzon*). It works with the will, instead of directly working with one's behavior, and in turn, negative behaviors are prevented, by way of the will.

The will produces the thoughts, and the thoughts produce emotions and character traits, which produce the actions. The Sages state, "The eye sees, the heart desires, and the tools of action complete" - after a person has seen and desired something, he runs after it, until he gets what he wants. But if a person has trained himself to always question his logic whenever he wants something, he has already weakened his will for it. When his will for it is weak, he thinks about it much less, and in turn, he will feel much less of a desire for it, so he won't try to get it. He prevents himself from becoming dragged after various stimuli.

When one gets used to this, and he is being overtaken by a pull towards anything, he can think: Why am I getting dragged and pulled towards something? Am I being motivated by my element of wind, or my element of wind, or from the contradiction between these two elements in me? The clearer a person becomes about his soul, he recognizes his inner workings better, and he can become more aware of his motivations. As a result, he will have less explosions of impulsiveness.

### *Daas - The Ability To Go Against Your Thinking and Actions*

So far, we have explained how the ability of *dovor v'hipucho* is used in the area of *daas*, that a person can learn to think against his own initial logic. It can be also used on a practical level, in the realm of action, where a person can go against his own actions. The power to go against yourself is called *daas*.

The Vilna Gaon<sup>[2]</sup> [2] said, based on the Zohar, that Shlomo HaMelech wrote three sefarim - *Shir HaShirim*, *Mishlei* and *Koheles* - parallel to three different abilities in the soul. *Shir HaShirim* corresponds to the soul's abilities of love and kindness. It is a *sefer* that describes the love between the Jewish people and Hashem. *Koheles* corresponds to *yirah* (awe) and *bittul* (self-nullification), because it speaks about the worthlessness of everything on this world. *Mishlei* corresponds to *daas*, and the third part of this *sefer* describes opposite concepts of each other (*dovor v'hipucho*).

*Mishlei* is also called a *sefer* of *mussar*. The whole idea of *mussar* is based on using the ability of *daas*, or the ability of *dovor v'hipucho*. The *mussar sefarim* challenge us to go against our initial thinking, and to change our actions as well - to go against both our thoughts and our actions.

When one wants to change his *middos*, by going against his nature- for example, if he is lazy, he tries to overcome his laziness, and if he gets angry often, he tries to overcome his anger - although this seems commendable, it is like a 'branch' without the 'root'. Everything has a 'root' and a 'branch' to it. In order to change anything, we need to "overturn" it.

How do we "overturn" anything, in the actual sense? If we "overturn" the 'branches', we haven't overturned the 'roots'. Instead, we need to "overturn" the 'roots'. The way to "overturn" the 'root' of anything is by connecting our power of inner *daas* to our initial will (*ratzon*), which then enters our thoughts, which then extends to our emotions and character traits (by always "thinking into the opposite" throughout), and then our behavior can change. This is the depth of how to rectify the soul.

### *Practically Using The Power of "Dovor V'Hipucho" To Go Against Your Will*

The nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, which was described in this chapter, is a nature which contains opposite forces, earth and wind. Its very nature is built from opposite forces, *dovor v'hipucho*. How is **wind-of-water-of-earth** repaired? Through acquiring the way of thinking of *dovor v'hipucho*. In that way, one begins from the root (his will) and eventually his "branches" (his behavior and actions) are changed. Practically speaking, this means that whenever a person wants a certain thing, he thinks into the opposite of what he wants. He will also be able to act in the opposite way than what he wanted to do, because he has weakened his will for it.

### *Fixing Behavior By Working Against The Will*

Thus, the ability of *dovor v'hipucho* is a tool to fix one's character traits. It is not just a way to change behavior, but a way to fix the character traits, which will in turn influence one's behavior.

Many people, *Baruch Hashem*, have the merit to work on fixing their character traits. But usually they work on their *middos* by trying to "change" their behaviors. They are working with a branch without the root. As a result, only a small amount of their behavior becomes improved. But the more a person works with the path of inner *avodah* as described in this lesson, by becoming aware of the contradictory forces of earth and wind within him, he can discover his power of *dovor v'hipucho*, to against what he thinks and wants. This ability is already ingrained in the soul, and all he has to do is bring it out of its potential state.

This is true for all people, but it is especially true for a person with a nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, who, due to his contradictory nature which causes him to get pulled after different things, will see the necessity even more to access the power of *dovor v'hipucho* [and go deliberately against his desires, thoughts, and feelings].

### *Using This Power (Dovor V'Hipucho) Sensibly*

When a person does not understand how to use the power of *dovor v'hipucho* properly, it manifests as a nature to alternate between different extremes each day. Today, there is a term for this known as "split identity crisis". It is like the expression, "Today he is a *malach* (angel), tomorrow he is a *galach* (priest)." His soul is moving in different extremes. That is the negative side to this power.

But when a person has an impaired nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, it is already ingrained his nature to use the power of *dovor v'hipucho* [so there is nothing wrong with his personality]. In order to use this power sensibly, we have explained here that a person should not simply act differently all the time. Instead, a person should work with the roots behind his actions [which are his feelings, thoughts, and desires that empower them]. One works with the root of the issue by challenging his own will, through thinking into the opposite option of whatever he wants.



## In Conclusion

As a person perseveres with this idea of thinking into the opposite, he comes closer to truth. Whereas in the past, his contradicting elements of wind and earth would awaken his element of water to drag him after different things, instead, he will access the pleasure that is found in his element of water, because he can contain opposites in himself. He will actually enjoy going against his thinking, gaining a *taanug* (pleasure) in the idea of *dovor v'hipucho*. It will become a *taanug* for his *neshamah*, which can be felt all the way down to the animal level of the soul, the *nefesh habehaimis*.

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[1] [3] Editor's Note: Our mental ability of *da'as* divides into three general abilities: **(1) *Daas d'havdalah***, also called *daas ha-mavdeles*, or *havdalah*, separation. **(2) *Daas d'hachraah***, also called *daas ha-machraas*, or *hachraah*, decision. **(3) *Daas d'chibbur***, also called *daas ha-mischaberes*, or *chibbur*, connection. (4) In the series of *Da Es Daatcha* (Utilizing Your Daas), the Rav explains additional abilities of the power of "*daas*", such as ***daas ha-mishapeches***, also called *daas d'hipuch*, "turning over" – which is essentially the same concept as *dovor v'hipucho*, a "thing and its opposite", a concept mentioned in previous chapters in this series.

[2] [4] Gra: *Mishlei*: hakdamah

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