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## Fixing Your Focus - 011 All Over The Place

### *Wind-of-Wind: An Inner Maelstrom*

With *siyata d'shmaya* we continue here to learn about the power of focus. Here we are up to discussing issues with focus which stem from “**wind-of-wind**”.

As described in the earlier chapters, the element of wind is the very opposite of consistency and permanence. The power of focus thrives on the ability of the mind to stay connected and stable to the thought at hand. A strongly developed element of earth, the root of stability, is the main factor which contributes to the power of focus. Earth provides stability, but not always does it provide connection to something. The nature of earth is that it stays where it is: the power of stability. Wind, however, is all about movement. The wind moves in all the different directions.

Getting more specific, if a person has a nature which is mainly dominated by the “wind” aspect within the wind, it will mean that he has a personality to move a lot.

When this nature is perfected and it is balanced by the element of earth, such a person can grow very far in life. He will be a very productive person who gets a lot done, but he also has a stability provided by his element of earth, which enables him to be consistent in what he does. With a balance of wind and earth, he lives the ideal kind of life.

From a deeper understanding, he is also balanced between This World and the Next World, because as mentioned previously (see Chapter 3), a person is a mix of the four elements, the elements of earth and wind being his earthly aspect, and his elements of water and fire being his Heavenly aspect, as the Vilna Gaon writes. When one has a balance between his elements of earth and wind, he is balanced between his main elements on This World, and this is the ideal way to live.

But if one has not properly developed his element of earth, and if he also has a strong amount of **wind-of-wind** in himself – with varying degrees – this is like an inner maelstrom. People who have a strong amount of **wind-of-wind** in their souls are found in absolute insanity. They are constantly moving and they are never calm; they have no *yishuv hadaas* (settling of the mind). And, as an understandable result of this, **they cannot focus and concentrate**. Since they are always in movement, they are never focused on what they are doing.

Even more so, a person with this nature will often be involved in a certain activity but his mind is already thinking about the next thing he has to do. **In order for a person to be focused, he needs**

**to be thinking about what he is doing;** his inside must be connected with his outside, meaning that his thoughts and emotions must be connected to his actions. But in many people, especially in those who have a dominant nature of **wind-of-wind**, there is an issue of doing something and simultaneously thinking about the next thing that needs to be done.

In some people, this is due to inner emptiness\boredom. In others, it is because they have many different aspirations of what they would like to do. (We will soon address this, with the help of Hashem).

In either case, though, when a person is in the midst of doing something but his mind is thinking about the next thing he will do, firstly, he is inwardly scattered. He is doing one thing, but his mind is elsewhere, and this [temporarily] scatters his soul. The wind in his soul, which is dominating him, quickly moves him to the next activity, while he is in the midst of something else. Even if he doesn't actually stop what he is in middle of doing, his thoughts will still be elsewhere.

As a result, many people like this usually have a hard time finishing what they start. They are doing one thing, but their mind is thinking about the next thing they have to do. If his mind is thinking about the next step, it is difficult for the person to be present in the here and now. When he is in the midst of doing something, he feels forced to complete it. When he is towards the end of something, he convinces himself that he has finished what has to be done. He has one foot in the first activity, and his other foot in the second activity which is now occupying his mind. Since he thinks that he has started to do the next thing, it is hard for him to finish what he's in middle of.

This causes a person to become unfocused. He is not present in whatever he does, because he is already thinking about the next thing. If he is basically finished what he has done, then it is not a problem if he starts thinking about the next thing. But if he is in the midst of doing something, and his **wind-of-wind** causes him to start thinking about the next thing and to start becoming involved with it, he won't be present in what he is in middle of doing right now.

And, as mentioned, if a person has a very strong nature of **wind-of-wind**, he is unfocused in general. A person with this nature is constantly "all over the place", always running from one activity to start another. If you know people like this, you can see that they often lose their thinking entirely while they are in middle of doing something. The person doesn't remember at all, or he is totally unaware, of what he did - he doesn't know if he did it at all, or if he began to do it and just didn't get around to finishing it.

### *Scatterbrained*

A person like this is living a life that resembles *Gehinnom*. He completely forgets where he parked the car, he forgets if he made the deposit in the bank or not, he doesn't know at which time it was, etc. (In others, there is a similarly related problem, of always having doubts about what they did or didn't do.) This kind of person is generally not paying attention to what happened, what exactly was said to him, etc. Many times he doesn't really hear what was said to him, and instead he responds to others based on what he *imagined* what was said to him. It becomes the vicious cycle of his life.

People like this usually have serious problems in their marriages. It is hard to classify this as a "problem" in the person's marriage - because in this case, the marriage simply hasn't even started. The person has never really begun to build his marriage, because since he is never *present* in what he does, there is no one here to communicate with. He is living life like a bird flying all over the place. He mixes himself up, with the many different directions he keeps 'flying' in.

We do not only mean the results of this issue, such as the fact that he tends to forget things, doesn't

pay attention to things, ends up causing damage to others, and other such symptoms. This is a total [mental\emotional] illness in the soul.

Since the above is a deeper kind of issue, we will not discuss it here, as this is not the place to discuss it. Here in this lesson, we will speak about a simpler manifestation of this issue, which is easier to deal with.

### *Quickly Getting Things Done – But At What Expense?*

The basic issue which results from impaired **wind-of-wind** is whenever a person is doing something and his mind is elsewhere. If we analyze this more subtly, it is a problem of “cramming it in” – a nature to perform very quickly, in order to get more done.

An example of this is when a person is in middle of a *sefer* and, while he is at it, he wants to finish more *sefarim*.

When a person wants to do things quickly so that he can get more things done, first of all, his work will be off-mark. Since he is focused on the next thing he wants to do, he is not fully paying attention to what he is doing right now, and he also will not be connected to whatever he is doing. These two factors – the lack of paying attention, and his disconnectedness – will both hamper his progress.

When one makes sure to do something slowly and patiently, he is connected to what he is doing, but when a person has to do many different things quickly, one after the other, he can't be connected all time to what he is doing. As a result, he won't be able to focus that much on what he is doing.

### *1- Managing Our Aspirations*

Where does this nature come from, of trying to get things done quickly? Understandably, if someone's primary element is **wind-of-wind**, it is his nature to be this way. But there are those who don't have a primary element of **wind-of-wind**, and even so, they have a nature to do a lot of things quickly in order to get more done. What causes it?

One reason is due to **aspirations**. Many people have aspirations. They may have read about self-perfection and of the purpose of man, and they want to reach this purpose, *Baruch Hashem*. In contrast to a materialistic kind of person whose aspirations are for This World, such as wealth, honor, and other worldly desires - whose ambitions are spurred on because his jealousy of others' financial success - one who is interested in the spiritual may channel his aspirations towards spiritual success.

If one is balanced, he understands that he cannot reach all his aspirations right now, and that it is a gradual, step-by-step process. But teenagers and adolescents will often be imbalanced when it comes to their aspirations, and this may continue into adulthood as well, where a person wants to “cram it in” as much spiritual attainments as he can.

When a person has so many aspirations, he may want to attain all of them, and he is impatient about it. For example, one may have an aspiration to finish the tractate of Gemara he is learning. This is a wonderful aspiration, but what often happens? Because he wants to finish it so badly, he flies through it without trying to understand it. He is consumed by the aspiration to finish a tractate and to make a *siyum* afterwards. He will persevere in this goal with *mesirus nefesh* and his whole family is happy for him, they make a festive meal for him by his *siyum*, they compliment him for it, etc. His aspirations have caused him to quickly make his way through his goal....

We must know that this is impaired **wind-of-wind**, when done in an imbalanced manner. As for a person who has a general nature of **wind-of-wind**, that is a more severe issue. Here we are talking

about a person whose main element is not necessarily wind, yet he is making a lot of use of impaired **wind-of-wind** in his life.

In another example, a person resolves that he will finish *Shas* (the Talmud) every year. There were definitely *Gedolim* who did this, but in order to do this successfully, one needs to go about in a very sensible manner. There are those who think that if they make sure to finish 7 pages of Gemara a day and they finish *Shas*, they will become a *Gadol* of the next generation. But in the next generation, he will not be called a *Gadol*, because this is not the meaning of true greatness. Although he is filling himself with content, even if he remembers all of it, if he flies through it so quickly, he has not really connected to his Torah learning from the depths of his soul. Not only hasn't he connected to it (by trying to finish it superficially), but he has never developed his level of understanding.

We do not mean *chas v'shalom* to belittle this practice of aiming to finish *Shas*, and certainly if he remembers it and knows it well, which, if only everyone could merit this. There are surely those whose souls are meant to pursue the goal of quickly trying to finish *Shas*, and we are not coming here to negate the value of this. As mentioned, there were *Gedolim* who did this, so it is obviously a valid approach.

Rather, what we want to point out here is that the perspective behind this may be an incorrect way of living. The issue is of a person can remain balanced while he is in the midst of such a goal – if he won't lose his inner stability, and if he can remain calm and serene throughout. Of course, we do not mean that a person should sit with a cup of coffee by his Gemara and try to finish *Shas* like that. On the other hand, a person will not either be successful if he tries to pressure himself in order to finish the entire *Shas*.

Aspirations often cause a person to do way more than his actual capacity, placing a great amount of stress on his soul. A true aspiration is one that utilizes a person's potential. If the aspiration is not genuine, a person aspires for something which is unrealistic for him to reach, for it is way beyond his actual energies. Either it is a goal which cannot be actually reached, or it requires too much energy from him, and it is not a goal that will bring out his best.

Aspirations are a broad matter to understand, but to be brief, most people are not aspiring as much as they could be. They are not trying to accomplish as much as they really can. A small amount of people will aspire **to be who they truly are. Most aspiring people are not aspiring to be who they are! They want to be what they imagine they need to be.**

When one aspires to be who he truly is, this is a true aspiration. The only question is who he really is – and he will need to clarify this. That is part of his inner work. But in most cases, when a person has aspirations, it is beyond his actual capabilities. Even more so, even if it is within his capabilities, it is not necessarily a goal that is meant for him to pursue. Aspirations can therefore awaken a person's impaired wind-of-wind, which causes his soul to “move” too much and to become overworked.

Aspirations are complex to understand, and it cannot be explained here in its entirety. But to be brief, a person's aspirations need to be thoroughly, deeply examined. There are general aspirations we need to have, such as the aspiration to reach self-perfection, and to do Hashem's will, which includes Torah learning, carefully keeping the mitzvos, fixing the character traits, etc. Those are the general aspirations which apply to every person, but the individual aspirations of a person need to be aligned with his unique personality. If the aspirations are taking too much energy from him, it is a sign that these aspirations are not for him to pursue, and they are an example of impaired wind-of-wind.

Therefore, a person's aspirations need to be thoroughly examined.

## 2 - Quality Vs. Quantity

Another reason why a person may have a nature to “do a lot of things quickly, in order to get more done” is because a person is placing more emphasis on quantity than on quality.

Some people have souls that are more drawn towards quantity, and others have souls that are more rooted in quality. A person may read and hear many *shmuessen* and *sefarim* of Chazal and Gedolim, which is wonderful, but if he has a soul that needs more quality than quantity, he is not connected to any of what he hears or reads, because he is filling his life with quantity, not quality.

Even if one hears words of Torah all of his life from a certain person, the words may not be individually tailored to the souls of the one who hears those words. The one listening is absorbing much quantity, but he is not getting the quality which he needs, if his soul needs the quality more than the quantity. He won't be connected to all that which he hears, because it isn't for his personal soul, since his soul needs the quality more than the quantity. He also will not be able to have true focus, because he isn't connected to anything and therefore he doesn't have *yishuv hadaas* (settlement of mind).

Even more so, though, is that **a person whose soul is more rooted in “quality” will have a harder time with focusing.** In most cases, when one has more quantity than quality, this prevents a person from having total focus and concentration - even for those whose souls are more rooted in quantity. The very connection to quantity, as opposed to quality, already creates a lack of focus. Quantity comes from an external means, whereas quality comes from within, and that is why a person who mainly gets more quantity and less quality will be less connected to what he absorbs, whereas a person who gets more quality than quantity will have more of an inner connection to what he learns about.

If a person needs quality more than quantity, and instead of pursuing his soul's need for quality, he acts according to what he thinks is expected of him in society - which usually emphasizes quality over quantity - he is mainly pursuing quantity, as opposed to quality, and in most cases, he will not be that focused. Since he is involved with quantity and not with quality, there is very little focus he can actually have.

### *A Wind-of-Wind Person Has A Greater Need For Space*

Now we shall address a deeper point. We have so far explained some extreme outcomes of impaired **wind-of-wind**, when people lose control over how they behave, and when they cannot manage their aspirations, as well as when people emphasize quantity over quality.

There is also another outcome of impaired **wind-of-wind**.

The element of wind contains not only movement, but also space. Wind cannot move unless it has space to move around in. How much can one move? According to the amount of space he has. Most people do not move according to their amount of space they have, and instead, they move whenever they feel like it. A person with impaired **wind-of-wind** will want a lot of space so that he can move around a lot.

Movement is allowed to function only when it has “space” to move around in. The external aspect of wind is movement, while the inner aspect of wind is space. Most people just move whenever they feel a need to move. A person with a lot of **wind-of-wind** will therefore want a lot of space to move. For example, if one is in a yeshiva setting, the curriculum may not be for him, and he will feel a need to move more, so he can't stay in his place for too long and he needs to move around a lot. Simply speaking, he has a greater need for movement. But the deeper way to understand it is because he

really needs more space. In order for him to move in the first place, he first needs to have his space.

Another example of this need for space is that there are some people who grow up in a very narrow home, which is small and where everyone is stuffed together in a small amount of space, and they also grow up very frugally. If someone has more **wind-of-wind** in his soul, he needs more space to move around in, and when he doesn't have this space, he suffers. Such a person is not able to function properly when he is surrounded by ten children at once. He needs plenty of open space around him, so that his **wind-of-wind** can be given the space that it needs to blow around in.

If a **wind-of-wind** person meets a person with a nature of **earth-of-earth** and he explains to him that he is bothered when he doesn't have enough space, the **earth-of-earth** person will not understand the other's great need for space, and he will try to confine him by telling him that he needs to become more frugal and not be bothered by a lack of space. But the **wind-of-wind** person will feel stifled by this argument, and he will feel that he has not been understood.

A **wind-of-wind** person needs to have his space, and if not, he cannot function properly, because his soul is structured differently than others. It is not simply a need to move more, which is the element of wind in general, but a need for more space, so that he can move around in the first place. Space itself personifies **wind-of-wind**. The **wind-of-wind** in the soul is the part of a person that needs space, and when a person has more of a nature of **wind-of-wind**, he has a much greater need for space.

#### *The Danger of Finding One's Personal Space: The Scattering The Soul*

The problem is that in the world we live in today, it is spiritually endangering for a person to find his "space" in it. A wind-of-wind person prefers to roam outside and be all over the world, and the world today is a spiritually harmful place today. If he tries to find space for himself anywhere in the outside world today, he is open to the most undesirable elements possible. In addition to this, to do so would just scatter his soul.

If a person has a nature of **wind-of-wind** and he does not lead a Torah-observant lifestyle, he is the type to 'float' all over the world, going anywhere and everywhere, in order to find his space. A more spiritual person than this will feel like he can move anywhere in the land of Eretz Yisrael alone. But even this would scatter his soul. If he would only seek quiet places, such as deserts and forests and other naturally secluded places, that would be fine, but the fact is that he will want to be all over the place. This will greatly damage his ability to focus.

#### *The Wind-of-Wind Person Stays On The Outside and Doesn't Enter Inward*

Going further with this issue, the nature of **wind-of-wind** [when it dominates] causes a person to want a different kind of movement altogether than the regular need for movement – as we shall explain.

Our Rabbis describe the concepts of "inner light" (*ohr pnimi*) and "encompassing light" (*ohr makif*). "Inner light" is when a person experiences a matter from within him, while "encompassing light" is when a person experiences a matter from outside of it. A person with a lot of **wind-of-wind** in his soul usually experiences his viewpoint from "encompassing light", as opposed to inner light, because **wind-of-wind** moves towards empty space, which exists on the outside of something and which encompasses it.

Space surrounds, envelopes, and encompasses. A person with a lot of **wind-of-wind** in his nature is the type to be a patrolman of a building, a security guard, a watchman, and the like. He likes to stay on the outside of things. He'd rather observe than join in. He prefers to stay on the outside, so that he

can have plenty of space to move around in, and the problem that results from this is that it scatters his soul.

Even more so, when a person is more internal, he is more focused and concentrated on what he does, but when a person is always staying on the outside, his soul becomes opened to all outer stimuli, and the result of this is that his soul becomes scattered. He will not be able to focus. His nature is that he tends to remain on the outside of a matter, and he will never enter inward into anything. His soul cannot be focused on anything, because he is opened to all of the different directions and all of the stimuli contained in it, which easily distracts him.

Such a person does not become involved and focused on what they are involved with, and instead they prefer to let their minds fly into different directions and think about everything else. His wistful nature of always thinking 'out of the box' may aid him in becoming a very creative person, and he may even become a very successful person. But the danger is that he can broaden and widen his thinking so much that it will resemble the "widened soul" of the wicked Bilaam.

When his nature is left unfixed, this kind of person will have great difficulty with focusing. When trying to read words or sentences, their eyes are always darting to their surroundings. As soon as they try focusing, their eyes begin looking outward.

#### *Repairing Wind-of-Wind: Giving The Mind The Space That It Needs*

However, although they have a hard time with focusing, this doesn't mean that there is something wrong with them. Rather, we must understand that their very inner makeup is designed to be like this. His soul is simply structured differently than most people.

Children with this nature grow up to be adults who end up being fired from their jobs, because they don't stay focused, and understandably, others become frustrated with them. The child doesn't focus when others talk to him, because he needs to move around or focus his attention on something else. A parent or teacher may try tutoring him, in the hopes of getting him to focus better, and when the child isn't focusing or his eyes are darting elsewhere, the parent or teacher may yell at him: "Focus! Look at me when I talk to you!" But it doesn't help, because his very nature of **wind-of-wind** causes him to act this way. His nature carries into adulthood, and even as an adult, he cannot stay confined to any place, so he floats all over the place.

It is not because he has a wild imagination which doesn't let him focus. Rather, this is how he focuses. **He needs to progress back and forth between focusing, then leaving his focus, then re-focusing, and then repeat the cycle.**

This is not a problem, it is just the way his soul is built. He needs to find his space so that he can blow around in it, so that he can stay outside of the matter and surround it, and after he finds his space, he can then come back into his focus. This is what he needs to do, in order to progress and understand things.

Most people with this nature are usually creative and they can succeed in life - but others around them who deal with them need to understand that they have a different way of focusing, so they should not become frustrated with those who have this nature. Those who are involved with them need to understand that they do not have a problem, and it is just that their souls are designed differently.

A person with the nature of **wind-of-wind** needs to look out from his *sefer* book and then look at the sky, and then return to looking at his *sefer* or book, in order to concentrate. He needs that expansiveness, in order to find his space for his **wind-of-wind** nature to thrive.

Parents should be clear that if their children have this nature described here, it should not be viewed as a problem, and it is just that the child's soul is structured differently, so he needs to "space out" in order for him to focus properly. Such souls, in order to focus properly, need to go "outward" from their focus, where they can find "space" for their minds to float around in, and only then they can come back inward into their focus - whereupon they repeat this cycle.

### *In Conclusion*

In summary, the **wind-of-wind** person needs a lot of "space" for his mind to go to, so that he can find the expansiveness that he needs, in order for him to return to his focus. That is how the **wind-of-wind** person can repair his generally unfocused nature, and that is what he needs, in order to succeed.

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