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## Fixing Your Earth - 016 Losing Inspiration

### ***Laziness Stemming From Fire-of-Earth: Problems With Seeking Spiritual Ascension***

The next four kinds of laziness we will discuss stem from **fire-of-earth**. Fire rises; the fire in the soul seeks elation, and if this desire of the soul is causing a person to become somewhat lethargic or lazy, it is stemming from the 'fire' within the element of earth. There are four possibilities of laziness stemming from fire-of-earth.

#### ***4-A) Lethargy Towards Spiritual Progress (Earth-of-Fire-of-Earth)***

When a person feels 'weighed down' inside himself because he doesn't feel like he is growing spiritually - in other words, when he feels lethargic in general about growing spiritually - such 'laziness' is coming from the '**earth**' aspect within his fire-of-earth.

Most people in fact do not always feel like they are growing spiritually, and this contributes to laziness in spiritual growth. When a person has a *ratzon* for spiritual growth but he isn't actualizing it, he becomes lethargic from this.

#### ***4-B) Lack of Excitement (Water-of-Fire-of-Earth)***

When a person loses his desire for spiritual growth after he had experienced an initial desire to attain a certain spiritual goal, his laziness is coming from a lack of desire - it is a lack of '**water**' within his fire-of-earth.

For example, people who join *Daf HaYomi* were very excited at the beginning, but by the time it comes *Eruvin*, they lose interest. They get lazy because they feel like they are not as enthusiastic as when they started, because they have lost their excitement and inspiration. Even if someone is still showing up to *Daf HaYomi* every day, it can still be that he's lethargic toward it; he's only sticking it out because he has to feel that he has finished *Shas* once in his life. But inside, his excitement toward *Daf HaYomi* is gone, and he feels lethargic about it.

#### ***4-C) Lack of Direction (Wind-of-Fire-of-Earth)***

Another kind of laziness can come when a person isn't interested in any changes to his spiritual situation; he knows that he has to change, but he doesn't actively seek any changes to the path he has been on since he is young. He has aspirations, but he can't deal with changes. He can't budge from the path he has been on all his life. This comes from **wind** (direction) within fire-of-earth.

A person is supposed to seek direction in his spirituality, but not everyone admits to this, because some people have a very hard time budging from the path they grew up with. We are supposed to mature in our spirituality, however, and learn about what it means to serve Hashem – what the different ways there are to serve Him. There are many paths, and we must research them, study them, and know them.

Of course, there are people who get very confused when they study about the different methods of *Avodas Hashem*; this comes from a great deal of *katnus hamochin* (immature mind).<sup>[1]</sup> But generally speaking, one has to be clear in the general paths that there are in serving Hashem and then seek the path that will help him grow and change. A person has to be ready to take on a path in serving Hashem even if it will totally change the entire way he has been living his life, if need be it.

As a person matures, he is supposed to amass all the many different root methods in serving the Creator. (Don't get bogged down by all the details, but just know all the **general** ways of thought in serving Hashem).

This is not just limited to differing approaches between *Mussar* and *Chassidus*, for example. Even within the approaches of *Mussar* and in *Chassidus*, there are many paths as well in each of them, and a person has to know what all these root methods are, and then find where he belongs in all of this. He has to find the way that is meant for him to now work with. This of course will require wisdom about life, as well as Heavenly assistance.

Most people do not access their true power of *bechirah* (free will), and remain with the way they grew up with; they never budge from their way of thinking and do not seek to find their true way to serve Hashem. Even *baalei teshuvah*, who chose to become observant, often remain just as narrow-minded in their *Avodas Hashem* just as much as their *frum* counterparts, and they don't research the different ways that there are to serve Hashem.

A person needs to see the general picture of how to serve Hashem – to have a general description of the different paths that there are in how to serve Him.

Of course, no one has the complete picture – only *Moshiach* will have that. But each person according to his respective level should try as much as he can to have the general picture of how to serve Hashem – all the different methods – and then choose which path is appropriate for him. And as we said, one has to be ready to take on a path that will change his entire life. He has to be able to deal with the major change to his life orientations.

To illustrate, many *Gedolim* changed their method of *Avodas Hashem* depending on where they were at in life. The Chazon Ish was one way at a certain time in his life, and at a later time in his life, he was a different way. At first he was a quiet and reserved *Gadol* who wasn't involved at all with people. Later in his life, he was involved with the masses. He changed his way of serving Hashem depending on what had to be done. What we can learn from this is that a person has to be able to accept changes to his spiritual situation, even if it totally goes against the way he lives his whole life.

If a person doesn't seek to change his path in spirituality and he needs to change, then his laziness is stemming from wind in his fire-of-earth.

#### **4-D) Lack of Stable Ascension (Fire-of-Fire-of-Earth)**

When a person seeks to be totally different than his surroundings, this is due to his dominant element of **fire** that is within fire-of-earth; the nature of fire is that it seeks to rise, so it can be the cause in a person to demand constant elation. He is not necessarily doing this for spiritual reasons; he's doing it

simply because he wants to be different. He wants to transcend all limits in Creation; he doesn't want to feel that he is limited to rules, and therefore he seeks to diverge totally from the rules of life that he recognizes.

Of course, this power can be used for holiness, such as when a person seeks spirituality and he wants to totally transcend Creation, so that he can ascend to Hashem. But it can be used for evil as well: when a person simply wishes there were no rules.

On its evil side, it can become total *gaavah* (arrogance), and the person will seek to be totally different than all people in his arrogance. Or, this nature will be used at least partially for evil, like when a person simply seeks to be different than others so he can feel that he is 'rising' above everyone, not necessarily for evil purposes, but simply because he wants to feel that he is above others.

If a person learns how to use this power for good, he has the key to becoming truly close to Hashem, because he has an ability to transcend Creation and always seek to ascend in his spirituality. He wants to break all the limits of Creation and transcend it, because he wants to reach Hashem. He seeks *shleimus* (human perfection) and thus he wants to break free from Creation.

So when a person seeks transcendence, either he is using this for good - to reach perfection, to totally reach the Creator - or he is using this power for evil, which is *gaavah*.

The difference is that when a person truly seeks human perfection, he wants to go *above* Creation, which is a holy yearning that comes from the pure part of the soul. But when he seeks to break the limits of Creation *within* Creation, such as the wish to be different from all that he sees - then he isn't seeking to go *above* Creation; he is merely seeking to break the rules of Creation as he is *within* it. This becomes the evil trait of *gaavah*.

This misguided kind of spiritual ascension is a lack of keeping to the rules of Creation, causing a person to act differently than others and be "lazy" with his non-conformist approach towards life. It is stemming from **fire-of-fire-of-earth**.

### ***In Summary***

Until now, we have explained the four kinds of laziness which stem from **fire-of-earth**. All of these kinds of laziness had one common dominator - they are all kinds of laziness which result from man's nature to seek elation from his current situation, an ability that can become detrimental when it isn't being steered in the right direction.

We have only described the problems so far, but we haven't yet said the solutions. With the help of Hashem, in the next class we will list the solutions to these problems.

### ***Questions and Answers with the Rav***

**Q1: What is ever wrong with seeking to rise above the limits of Creation - doesn't this always come from the desire of every Jew to reach Hashem?**

**A:** The Snake told Chavah that if you eat from the tree, you will become like Hashem. This shows us that the desire to transcend physicality and to become spiritual doesn't necessarily come from holiness; it can be coming from an evil desire present in our *nefesh habehaimis*. This nature in a person therefore has to be steered in its proper direction. It is rooted in good, but we must make sure that we are using this desire for the right reasons.

## **Q2: Is there anything wrong with constantly seeking to grow in spirituality and not being able to deal with failures in our spiritual situation?**

**A:** This is a fundamental point. The Kotzker zt"l said that it doesn't say anywhere in the Torah that you always have to have *gadlus hamochin* (high state of mind). The way to look at our *Avodas Hashem* is not that sometimes we are Heavenly and spiritual and that sometimes are earthy and non-spiritual. Rather, the proper perspective to have it is that life itself is about ups and downs in our *ruchniyus*. We ascend, then we digress, and then we ascend. It's a cycle. This perspective helps us deal with all our setbacks in our *ruchniyus*. Without this perspective, life will feel like the suffering of *Kaf HaKela* (an excruciating form of spiritual suffering in which the soul feels like it is being tossed around the universe, as if it was flung from a massive ladle).

...There are people who don't want to go to sleep at night. They don't agree with Hashem's design of Creation; they feel, "How can it be that we should go to sleep at night? We have to keep learning Torah!!" Of course, some people fall into bed at night totally exhausted from their learning Torah, and sleep simply overtakes them and they don't like this, but there are others who go to sleep feeling very uneasy about going to sleep. Such people are the type to go to sleep when they feel like it, and get up when they feel like it...they do not want to comply to the rules and system of life which Hashem has designed.

Because of their dominant nature of fire in their soul, they want to always be ascending, and they cannot deal with the fact that sometimes we have to digress from spiritual growth. They experience tremendous frustration all the time in their *ruchniyus*. We all have ups and downs in our *ruchniyus*, as *Rabbeinu Tam* writes - that everyone has "Days of Love" and "Days of Hatred"; but these kinds of people think that "Days of Hatred" means to hate yourself when you're going through a dismal period. When a person's element of fire becomes too dominant, he has a very difficult time dealing with the setup of life that Hashem has created; life is really a system of ascending and then digressing in our *ruchniyus*, but there are people who have a very hard time understanding this. They are lacking a very basic understanding of how the soul works.

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**[1]** See Getting To Know Your Thoughts, Chapters 6-12.

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