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## Fixing Your Wind - 015 Bragging Part 3: Self-Absorption

### ***Wind-of-Fire-of-Wind: Talking Amidst Self-Absorption***

Now we will discuss the next kind of bragging, **wind**-of-fire-of-wind, which is when one talks about his praises to another, as he is immersed in himself.

Man is called “*nefesh chayah*”, which is interpreted by *Targum* to mean “*ruach memalelah*”, a ‘talking spirit’ – man has a nature to talk. Therefore, a person might have a nature to praise himself as his speech is moving along.

Bragging about oneself includes two factors: bragging about oneself, and bragging about one’s qualities. When **wind-of-fire-of-wind** is dominating the person, the person will brag about his qualities, because he is immersed in himself at the moment. The main factor in his bragging is that he is trying to talk about himself, therefore, he will brag about his qualities as a result.

Previously, we discussed a kind of bragging that stems from **water**-of-fire-of-wind, which is when one enjoys his bragging. There, the main enjoyment is being derived from the praises he is saying about himself. But with **wind**-of-fire-of-wind, the person is mainly absorbed in himself, and that is why he brags about his praises to others. He is more concerned with himself than with the actual praises about himself that he is saying.

That is the simpler definition. Now we will explore this more deeply.

### ***The Root of Self-Absorption: Katnus (Immaturity)***

One part of ourselves is involved with people in the world, while another part of ourselves is our private life. We live in this world, but we also live in ourselves as we are within it. What is the root of this?

Ever since we are born, the nature of man is to live with himself. Although a baby is involved with its mother, for all purposes, a baby lives in his own world. After a person gets older, he begins to get involved with others.

A baby is living in total “**katnus**” (immaturity) - he is living totally in himself. This nature of *katnus* can be carried into adulthood as well – if a person is too stuck inside himself, where he does not know how to come out of himself and be involved with others; on a deeper note, he is not emotionally capable of leaving his self-absorption to be involved with others.

Usually, this *katnus* weakens as one gets older, but sometimes, it stays in its full strength, and it simply takes on different colors, due to the fact that an adult experiences different things than a child does. So *katnus* can remain as it is even in the fully grown adult; it is sometimes obvious and sometimes not as obvious.

It is not a question of it exists or not in all people. It exists in all people, because all of us have gone through a stage of *katnus* at some point, so all of us still retain parts of our nature of *katnus*. The only question is how much it is manifest in one's life. With some people, *katnus* will only be awakened when he is at his lowest moments. With others, *katnus* is more dominant throughout the day, manifesting itself in a constant self-absorption - in which a person is mainly involved with his own life, and nothing else.

### ***Different Forms of Katnus\Immaturity***

*Katnus* is not only manifest when a person is entirely self-absorbed. It can also manifest in certain areas of a person's life, in which he becomes self-centered when he is involved with those certain areas. So even if a person is not living entirely in self-absorption, he might still get very self-absorbed when it comes to areas that are important to him, and he won't see anything else then except for himself.

The 'important' areas might either be in physical areas or in spiritual areas. Either way, when he gets involved in those areas of his life, he does not see anything else other than himself.

In others, *katnus* manifests when certain negative *middos* are exposed in the person. For example, during an argument, a person might have a very hard time remaining silent, when his negative emotions are awakened. He has a hard time understanding the other person as he's in the midst of his heated argument, and he will not be able to accept any other opinion other than his own. In this particular instance, which awakens a person's element of fire, the person will not be able to see any other side to the situation other than his own.

You can see this in a heated argument: a person can get so heated when he is arguing that he simply does not see or hear any logic in the other person's words. He might even view the other person as being worthless. This all comes from being too self-absorbed and not being able to exit his own world.

### ***Narrow-Mindedness***

Taking this further - this exists with all people and the question is how much - every person grows up with particular mannerisms and ways of thinking that he picked up from his family and community. When a person meets others who live and think differently than he does, if he has the problem of self-absorption, he simply does not validate others' way of life.

(Of course, we are not implying that one needs to accept others' way of thinking when it goes against Torah and *Halacha*. We are not talking about this at all. We are talking about the idea of accepting others who simply act differently and their actions are not going against Torah or *Halacha*.)

The more 'closed' a person is, the less he can tolerate others, whether it is another person's personality, mannerisms, opinion, etc. He lives in his own world, and according to his thinking, any other people who think and live differently than he does must be "weird". (According to his thinking, it is probably *most* people whom he considers weird). Anyone who grew up differently than he does is considered different\ unusual\weird.

This narrow-minded kind of perspective is formed when a person lives in his own "confine" (*tzimtzum*) which he has been used to living in his for his entire life. This "confined" way of living is the cause for

his *katnus* immaturity. In his mind, anything that's not like how he lives is considered to be non-existing, or it is considered a mistaken way of life. When he meets others who live differently than he does and he sees that there are other ways of thinking that exist, even if he sees that they are basically good people, he will conclude that they are still mistaken in how they live.

This all comes from living in oneself too much. When such a person meets others who are different than him, he feels that others must behave according to how he acts, feels, speaks, and thinks. This *katnus* is formed when one sees only himself, so he does not know how to go beyond his own world.

Although he is always around other people and he might even be friendly towards them, deep down he thinks that only **his** way of thinking is correct. He might even honor others and be careful not to slight others, but deep down, even as he talks respectfully to them, he feels like he is honoring others who are "weird." He cannot accept the fact that there are ways of living and thinking other than his own.

### ***A Thinking-Exercise To Come Out Of Katnus***

Here is a simple example that a person should try thinking about, which can help chip away at *katnus*: Imagine if you would be born to a different family, in a different sect of Judaism, in a different place – how would you act? All of us would act exactly like how we grew up. A person who suffers too much from his *katnus* will always think that others who live differently than he does are wrong, simply because they do not live and think according to how *he* grew up.

It would be interesting for him to know that in his previous *gilgul* (lifetime), he might have been born into a completely different type of family and community. But he probably thought last time around too that everyone else is weird, including the way he is growing up in his current lifetime....

By trying the above thinking exercise, a person can discover how confined he has become to himself.

### ***Self-Absorbed Conversations***

Until now, it was described a general nature in the soul. Now we will explain how this manifests in particular in our power of speech.

When narrow-mindedness extends into the realm of speech, a person will speak about himself and only himself.

Speech has external and internal layers to it. The external layer of speech is the words we speak, while the internal layer of speech is the power to "lead" ourselves (*hanhagah*) through speech<sup>[1]</sup>. When someone speaks from self-absorption (we all recognize people like this), all of his speech is centered around his life and what he does.

The deep source of this is the **wind-of-fire-of-wind** in the soul; it is possible that the wind-of-fire-of-wind in the soul is what is entirely 'leading' a person in his conversations and thus causing all of his words to be about himself.

A person might be riding on a bus from Yerushalayim to Tzfat, and there is a person sitting next to him and talking to him, and the guy talking might launch into a conversation where he talks about himself for the entire duration of the ride. The talker does not even pause once to listen to the other person sitting next to him, to recognize what is going on in the other person's life, to let the other have an opportunity to talk about himself. All he is interested about in this conversation is to talk about what's going on in *his* life.

He might be talking the whole time either about what he's good at, or about his shortcomings; he might be talking about his experiences, and even if he's only making small talk, he will only still talk about things that he's interested in.

The problem does not begin in his self-absorbed talking. The self-absorbed talking is all a symptom of his greater problem: he lives entirely in himself, and as a result, he talks only about himself and what goes on in his personal world.

### ***Self-Absorption In The Home***

Now I will mention a point which might bother many people when they hear this. But there are fathers who are married for many years and with many children, but when they are home, they live entirely in their own world. The father might be running his home as he should, but he might be very self-absorbed, totally detached from what goes on in his family and just living in his own world.

Even worse, though, are the parents who force their children to live exactly as they do, confining them to certain boundaries which the parents have set for themselves, while in reality it does not work for the children. This is another example of the problem of living entirely in oneself.

### ***Self-Absorption Results In Poor Listening***

Let's return to what we started out with in this discussion: when a person talks from his self-absorption. Another problem which is related to self-absorption is when a person only knows how to talk and he does not know how to be a listener. (One of the 48 qualities needed to acquire the Torah is "listening.")

There are people who don't know how to listen. You can have a person who can repeat back everything you said to him, perhaps because he has a very good memory, but that doesn't mean he listened. The reason why a person doesn't listen to another with his own ears is because he doesn't know how to listen with his heart. He might hear various details that is being told to him, but he really doesn't hear anything.

It is even possible that a person lived for 70 or 80 years yet he never really listened to even one person, in his entire life! A person has a problem with listening when he does not know how to expand beyond himself.

Even when he does listen to others, he is usually hearing what he wants to hear, not what is really being said, because he makes everything somehow fit into "his" way of thinking. For example, if he hears another person saying something about the Gemara, he will think that it is like how *he* thought. When he's learning the *sugya* of Gemara and he hears what his friends are saying about it, he hears it all as proof to what he is saying and as additional refining to his own points.

In reality, what he heard had nothing to do with his actual way of thinking, but because he lives so much in his own narrowness, he "hears" what he wants to hear.

### ***Three Possible Causes for Narrowness***

This all comes from living entirely in one's personal confines, which makes him narrowed. There are three root reasons of why a person lives so confined in himself [*tzimtzum*].

#### ***1) "Katnus" - Immaturity***

One reason is because of *katnus*, as we have explained about. *Katnus* is emotional immaturity, not

physical immaturity. A person might be an adult according to the definitions of *Halacha*, but in his soul, he might still be living in his inner confines. It might not be exactly like how when he was a child, but it is still a narrow-minded kind of existence which greatly limits him.

## 2) "Atzvus" - Sadness\Heaviness Caused by Earth in the Soul

Another reason for inner confinement can be due to a dominant amount of the element of earth in the soul; in particular, from the trait of *atzvus*<sup>[2]</sup>(stagnancy)in the soul. *Atzvus* is when a person remains where he is and cannot go beyond where he is at now.

This is not to be confused with *katnus*. With *katnus*, a person might still love new things, but he still remains in his own world, so he cannot exit his own world. But *atzvus* is a different problem: when a person feels that he must remain where he is, and since he grew up a certain way that he's used to, he is scared to change his lifestyle, or even to accept any small changes, for that matter. *Atzvus* stems from the aspect of "heaviness" that is in the element of earth.

### **The Difference Between 'Katnus' and 'Atzvus'**

What is a practical difference between *katnus* and *atzvus*? There is a big difference.

With *katnus*, a person is immature, and he cannot understand that changes need to be made to his lifestyle. It can take many times until you can finally get across to him, because he does not know how to conceptualize the idea of opening himself up to other mentalities.

With *atzvus*, a person has a hard time listening, but once you get him to listen, you can get him to understand that he needs to change and to become more accepting of others. He will still have a hard time changing, because he has to pull himself out of the inner heaviness that is upon him. That is his problem. But at least he can absorb what you are telling him.

With *katnus*, it is very hard to get through to him in the first place. He has a very hard time understanding what is wrong that he has to change. He grew up a certain way, and he is very set in his ways, and he simply does not want to open up.

For example, maybe he comes from a family which is very "family-oriented", in which the whole family must be together at least once a month and also for *Shabbosim*, and that everyone must call each other on *Erev Rosh HaShanah* - if there are family members who forget to call or get together, he looks at this as if it's a fundamental of Judaism that is going lost. (I won't get into here if this is a good thing or bad thing). The point is, that there is a nature to be very narrowed, in which a person is very set that "this is how it is done", and he does not see any other possibility.

That is an example of *katnus*, in which a person cannot absorb the concept that the way he lives is not necessarily the way it has to be. But with *atzvus*, the problem is different: he will be able to understand that he needs to come out of his narrowness, if you explain to him that he needs to; but he doesn't feel that he has the energy to make the changes. This stems from a dominance of "heaviness" in the soul, which comes from the element of earth.

## 3) Ambitions - Caused by Fire in the Soul

A third reason why people have inner confinement is because they might have a dominant amount of fire in the soul. When there is an increase of fire in the soul, a person becomes enthusiastic about the things he wants, and this reason can make him become absorbed in himself.

To illustrate a dramatic example of this, Rav Yitzchok Hutner zt"l said that a boy who is praying to find

his spouse might become so consumed with his situation that all he thinks about in his prayers is to get a good *shidduch* (mate): When he asks Hashem for forgiveness in *Shemoneh Esrei*, he is thinking, "If I get forgiven for my sins, I will get my *shidduch*..."

Similarly, Chazal say that a thirsty person cannot think of anything else except for his thirst, and a pregnant woman is mostly talking about her future child. So when it comes to certain areas of life, a person might become so consumed in it that he sees nothing else at that time, other than what he is involved in.

Some people are very absorbed for a certain amount of time or only when it comes to certain areas of their life. But there are others whose ambitions are very strong, and nothing else will be on their minds other than what they mainly pursue in life.

### ***Spiritual Self-Absorption***

Such a nature is present both in materialistic and secularized people, as well as with very spiritual people, the "*b'nei aliyah*", who are very concerned with spiritual improvement.

*Bnei aliyah* are those who recognize how futile this world is, for the most part; but at the same time, a *ben aliyah* desires truth and spiritual growth, which might cause him to become very self-absorbed. The wish to grow higher in spirituality, *aliyah*, is a power that has both good and evil sides to it. It is good because the person is rising spiritually, but as he rises, he might develop a problem of disconnection from other people, and he doesn't realize that he is very self-absorbed.

This is very common even amongst the few who are considered '*bnei aliyah*'. The reason why it happens is simple: the more a person rises and grows in his spiritual status, he becomes less connected with This World, because he is well aware of how futile it is, and he is immersed in nothing but Torah and *Avodas Hashem*; but at the same time, he still might be stuck in *katnus* – so much so that it is disturbing – in which he does not see anything else except for his own existence.

He is in touch with the pillars of the world that are "Torah" and "Avodah", but the pillar of the world that is '*Gemilus Chassadim*' is ignored. He might do *chessed*, but he will only do it for the sake of fulfilling his 'obligation' to do *chessed*, because he knows that he needs to do it in order to be complete; he doesn't see or feel the pain of others.

When narrow-mindedness is stemming from the element of fire in the soul, a person becomes self-absorbed as he pursues his ambitions, and this can be either with physical or spiritual ambitions. It seems that spiritual self-absorption is lesser of an evil than physical self-absorption, but in a way, spiritual self-absorption is worse. This is because spirituality enables a person to disassociate from the world, and with the more ambitious he becomes, the more he lives in his own world.

Although there is an obvious advantage to this, because it enables a person to separate from the materialism of the world, the problem that can come with it is perhaps even more troubling than the alternative: it can cause a person to live totally in himself.

These words are pointing out a common misconception which affects even *bnei aliyah*. Sometimes a person's ambitions when it comes to spiritual growth can cause him to live so much in his own world that he clashes with parents, with his friends and those around him, and with *Klal Yisrael*. The nature of ambitiousness is that it can cause a person to become self-absorbed, where he does not see anything other than himself.

On one hand we can look at it as a spiritual greatness, but on the other hand, it is a very big kind of *katnus*, for the person does not see anything else other than himself.

## ***Beginning The Solution***

We have described three root causes for narrow-mindedness, which is the cause for self-absorbed conversations. The solution for self-absorption depends on which of the three kinds it is.

One first has to identify how there is *tzimtzum* (narrow-mindedness) in his life; some have it more and some have it less, but we can all identify how it manifests in our life. Even if we are not entirely living in a *tzimtzum*, there can be areas of our life in which *tzimtzum* is dominant.

After seeing how it manifests in one's personal life, the next step is to try to discern where it comes from in himself, as we described:

- A)** Is it coming from *katnus* in myself?
- B)** Is it coming from *atzvus* in myself?
- C)** Or is it coming from my ambitions, which are causing me to be self-absorbed?

## ***Coming Out of Katnus***

If the self-absorption is stemming from *katnus*, then one will have to understand the following subtle matter.

On one hand, a person has to be very self-aware and live the reality of his soul, all the time. One must be familiar with his soul abilities and recognize how they manifest in his life. And he must have a holy sense of individuality for himself, as Chazal say, "Therefore, man was created individual." That is one side of the coin. The other side of the coin is to see and feel the pain of others, just as Moshe went out from the palace of Pharaoh to see and join with the suffering of his people.

The question is, how much should one be involved with others? It is a very subtle matter. If a person would try to get to know the whole world and all that goes on it - "*How great are Your creations, Hashem*" - he would fall into the lowest depths of depravity, for the world right now is steeped into the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity, and he would fall together with the rest of the world. Yet, if a person takes the other extreme, and he instead lived very inwardly in his soul, he feels no connection to others; he is living a life of *katnus*. He will be totally immersed in himself.

So it is a very fine line to know. Practically speaking, a person will need to think about the following: If he knows that he can remain spiritually strong if he were to go out into the world and join with others, then it is upon him to do so. But if one suspects that that he will have a spiritual downfall if he gets to know and understand others, it is not worth it for him to come out of himself, because the loss will not be worth the gain.

A true *ben aliyah* is one who is so strong about his individuality that he knows that he will remain spiritually strong if he gets to know and understand others. This is a deep and subtle point: the more a person is truly inward and spiritual, the better of a chance he has at surviving the evil influences of this world when he goes out there. In the language of the *sefarim hakodeshim*, it is described as "The higher that a spiritual light can reach, the lower it can descend." Meaning, when one is truly and spiritually refined, he is able to survive the surroundings which are unholy.

So there are two points contained here, which are each opposing concepts. On one hand, a person needs to have his holy sense of individuality, living inwardly with his soul, living a life that is disassociated from society, just as Moshe pitched his tent outside the camp. But at the same time, a person needs to balance himself out by joining with others. Going out into the world and joining with

others is a danger to one's spiritual level. Yet, if a person never joins with others, he is missing *Ahavas Yisrael*, a great fundamental of Judaism.

Therefore, it is impossible to say exactly how much one needs to join with others. Secondly – and this is even more important for a person to know – is how, and when, a person needs to join with others. This is also very hard to know. But in any case, the more inner that a person becomes, he needs to also ask himself if he is connecting with others.

Obviously, if a person has not yet acquired the art of living inwardly with his soul, going out into the world and joining with others will surely harm his spiritual situation, because he has not yet learned how to fortify himself. One who feels strong about his spirituality is one who can join with others and not be harmed by the influences.

### ***Involvement With Others***

When joining with others out there in the world, there are two parts to this: There is the actual *chessed* which one is doing for others, and there is also the concept of "*daato m'ureves im ha'beriyos*," that one's *daas* should be able to get along with others.

What does it mean to be *daato m'ureves im ha'beriyos*? It does not mean to simply chat with everyone you meet. It is rather the power to tolerate others, even when they think very differently than you do.

This does not mean that one must agree with everyone and think that every opinion he hears is holy. Rather, when you disagree with an opinion of another that you meet, you should ask yourself if you're doing so simply because you cannot tolerate others' thinking (which is stemming from *katnus*), or if it's because you feel that the other person is really saying something that is off-base.

We are being brief about this, but it is describing a very broad concept. The point is, that in anything you disagree with and you invalidate, ask yourself if it is truly wrong, or if perhaps it is coming from a low tolerance in yourself for others' opinions (which is *katnus*).

This is a subtle concept. The more a person matures, the more he begins to see that he has grown out of his childish views on things. He will find that there are things which he had invalidated when he was a child, which he now validates; and vice versa. It is as one of the Sages said, "I see an upside-down world."<sup>[3]</sup>

We can elaborate further on this point, and we have been brief about it: the more inner that a person becomes, the more he needs to make sure that he is also doing things for others, so that he does not become too self-absorbed.

It is impossible to say exactly how much the balance needs to be, for it depends on many factors: each person's personal situation, as well the particular situation of the generation, etc. But the point is that a person, deep down, needs to be able to tolerate others' opinions, even when he doesn't agree with them. In fact, one must be able to tolerate everyone he comes across, as long as their opinions are not overriding boundaries of the holy Torah.

As we said, knowing the fine line between what's holy and what isn't holy, is a very subtle matter to discern.

### ***Solving Atzvus\Internal Heaviness***

The second cause for narrow-mindedness we mentioned is *atzvus* (stagnancy) in the soul, which

stems from the 'heaviness' in the element of earth. In order to fix this, one has to know how to remove the 'heaviness' in his soul. We are not dealing with this subject right now, so we will not cover it here at length.

The general outline of this solution is for one to learn about the nature of 'heaviness' in the soul and then he will see how can fix this<sup>[4]</sup>. Generally, the more a person becomes spiritually elevated, he can "shake off the dust" that's on him, and he slowly can come out his element of earth, which will weaken the hold of the 'heaviness' upon him.

### ***Solving Self-Absorption Due To Fiery Ambition***

The third possible cause for self-absorption, we mentioned, is when a person is self-absorbed due to his many ambitions.

We are not discussing here a materialistic kind of person who is wrapped up in envy, desires, and chasing honor. We are discussing a *ben aliyah*, someone who is spiritually refined, who has fiery ambitions to grow in spirituality, and as a result, he becomes self-absorbed.

We must understand the following: there are two stages of spiritual growth. At the beginning of one's way, one's *avodah* is to acquire a fiery ambition for spiritual growth. A person has to be able to disassociate himself from his family and friends [if need be it], if he ever wishes to truly grow spiritually. There is a place in one's soul which is capable of this hold kind of 'cruelty'. But this is only the first stage, and it should not be the end goal.

The point of the first stage is for one to develop a strong *ratzon* for holiness. If one never gets to it, that means he has no ambitions, and he will simply follow the crowd, which means that he will not grow spiritually. But after a person has succeeded in igniting his *ratzon* for holiness, and he realizes that he has become self-absorbed in all of his ambitions for holiness – and he is aware to this – it is a sign that he is now ready for the next stage: he will now have to utilize the *opposite* kind of power than until now.

Until now he has been involved in working with his *ratzon* and being focused on his holy ambitions for spiritual growth, and this was all very good, but now he must look back at this and realize that it was only the opening stage. Now that he has arrived at *ratzon* and he feels strongly that he is ready to work on himself and grow, he needs to realize that his *ratzon* for holiness has served to build a good basis for him, and he is ready to build further upon that. But the *ratzon* for holiness is not all there is to spiritual growth.

One has to be aware of this concept even as he starts to grow and improve in his *Avodas Hashem*: "Man was not created for himself, only to help others." (These are the words of the introduction to *Nefesh HaChaim*.) The goal of growth in our *ruchniyus* is not to be self-serving. We are involved with ourselves in the beginning of our way, but at a certain point we need to realize that to remain at that level is a kind of self-absorption. One must look back at his *ratzon* for holiness that he started out with as a mere pedestal that has helped him spring very far, and that his *ratzon* for growth is not the end goal of *ruchniyus*. This is because, ultimately, we are not created for our own self-serving purposes.

If one does not realize this when he begins to improve in his spiritual growth, he is missing this basic concept of all our life; he becomes self-serving even as he becomes more spiritual. Often, what will happen as a result of this is that a person will think that "helping others" means to get everyone else to think like him....!

This is really returning to his old problem of *katnus*. This is contradictory behavior, because it mixes together different powers of the soul. When a person helps others, even if he does so out of love for

them, he is returning to his old problem of *katnus*, because he will “help” others only according to how *he* thinks it must be done.

If one has the problem of *katnus* together with a dominant amount of fire in his soul, it is a more detrimental combination, and it creates a very deep kind of narrow-mindedness and self-absorption. As soon as he encounters anything that doesn't agree with how he thinks, he will become full of misguided zealotry, invalidating anything else that doesn't suit his exact tastes; he will be destructive towards that which he should not destroy.

So the first stage of one's stage of spiritual growth is that he must worry for his spiritual situation and thus be very concerned about himself, and he is still involved with *shelo lishmah* (self-serving interests) at this point. He must aspire for *lishmah* (pure motivations) even as he's involved with *shelo lishmah*, as the Vilna Gaon writes.

And what is the level of *lishmah* he indeed needs to aspire for? He needs to be aware even in the beginning of his way that his *ratzon* for holiness is entirely self-serving, and that it is not yet the goal. The goal he must be aware of is that he must aspire to reach a selfless stage, in which he is not concerned about his own self. In the very same *ratzon* that he has for spiritual growth, which allows him to begin growing spiritually in the first place, he must make space in his spirituality for being dedicated to others as well.

The *Chasam Sofer* said that just as there is *maaser* (giving a tithe) in monetary matters, so is there *maaser* in one's *ruchniyus* (spirituality). This concept is applied practically when a person is willing to let go of some of himself even as he's involved with himself: to be aware that although he is right now involved with his own spiritual improvement, it is not the goal, for the goal is to be selfless and help others.

If one is aware of this, he has already broken through a large part of his self-absorption. Although one knows that he is not yet at the selfless stage, he must still be aware that his current stage (in which he is mainly concerned for himself, for his spiritual growth) is only meant for him to traverse so that he can arrive at a greater goal than his current ambitions for self-growth.

Thus, a person needs to have two opposing perspectives at once. He can be aware that he needs spiritual growth, but at the same time, he can feel disgusted at the fact that he is so concerned with himself and that he is not yet dedicated to others. He will recoil from the self-absorption that he discovers in himself.

Of course, there is the rule of “Your life takes precedence” (“*Chayecha Kodmin*”), when it comes to your own spiritual situation as well; the fact that your spiritual situation should take precedence in your life over concern for another's spiritual situation. However, even though this is true in the practical sense, you also need to feel pained that you are not yet at the selfless stage. This will help you chip away at a large amount of self-absorption.

### ***In Conclusion***

To summarize, we have explained the cause for self-absorbed conversations, which is rooted in wind-of-fire-of-wind in the soul. We explained that there are three possible causes for self-absorption, with their specific solutions.

In any case, the goal of all of these solutions is that a person needs to come to the point in which his conversations with others are not centered around himself, and that he is instead expressing interest

in the other's life; to recognize others and to seek how to help them in whatever they need.

It is superficial for a person to simply smile at others and seek to help others in this way. In order to really help others and be involved with others as opposed to himself, he needs to enter the other's soul - this is the essence of helping others.

This is the way to rectify the wind-of-fire-of-wind in the soul.

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[1] See ***Fixing Your Wind #010: Idle Chatter - Part 2 - Enjoyable Gossip***

[2] Usually, atzvus refers to "sadness", but here it simply means to remain stagnant. Refer to ***Understanding Your Middos #04, #05, and #06***

[3] Pesachim 50a

[4] See ***דע את מידותיך - מהות המדות\_019\_כבידות***

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**Source:** <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-wind-015-bragging-part-3-self-absorption>