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Anger Stemming From Wind-of-Earth-of-Fire: When Anger Paralyzes

With *siyata d'shmaya*, we will continue to explain the element of fire, the root of the trait of anger. Now we will discuss anger that stems from **wind**-of-earth-of-fire. As mentioned briefly in the introductory chapter, wind-of-earth-of-fire refers to the movements (wind) that result from anger.

When a person is angry, one of the things that happen is that his movements are weakened, and his element of earth takes over, which can somewhat of a 'paralyzing' effect on his movements.

We see this on an extreme level with children and also with some adults, that when they get angry, they feel like they can't move, they become melancholy, and they take to their beds and go to sleep. Their element of earth becomes dominant as they are angry, and they feel like they can't do anything as they are angry. Their wind\movement is weakened by the dominant amount of earth, making them want to go to sleep and not do anything.

Even if this is not necessarily what happens, there is also a more subtle result of this kind of anger. As explained in previous chapters, anger is a result an opposed will; when one's *ratzon* (will) has been attacked or it is unrealized, a person is angered. Anger is not always a fiery display of rage; anger can also be quietly experienced as a subtle feeling. As long as a person feels an opposition to his will, he is angered at this.

The result of the frustration can certainly lead to despair (the subject of the first chapter) a loss of vitality (the subject of the previous chapter), and to a state of paralysis (the subject we are currently discussing).

But let's understand the following. When a person's will is opposed, he had a certain reason that he wanted such a will and he considers it to be his current goal and purpose in life. A person wants a certain desire and he tries to get it, so he views obtaining the desire as his current purpose in life. When a person is trying to get something he wants and he is actively striving to get it, and he doesn't get what he wants, the result is anger.

This gives us more of an insight into understanding anger. At first we defined anger in the general sense of the will being opposed. Now we are explaining more about how this works. When a person is moving towards a certain goal and he doesn't arrive at the goal he was striving for, he is angered. This is not simply because his will was opposed. It is a little more than that: it is because the movements in his soul haven't gotten to their desired goal. The result is anger, and therefore, anger

can cause a restraint on one's movements.

This is the anger that stems from **wind-of-earth-of-fire**.

Analyzing The Motivations In Our Actions

In order to tackle this kind of anger, then, we need to analyze the root of our motivations in our acts, of what makes us strive towards our various goals and ambitions.

Most people in the world are working towards goals, and even if it seems that there are people who are not working towards a goal, there is still a reason each person has of why he is doing certain actions. So every person is doing certain acts for certain reasons. When a person doesn't get what he wants after actively striving to get it, either he might tell himself that he shouldn't get his hopes up anymore about anything and he will come to feel despair (earth), or he might keep performing in the hope that he will eventually get what he wants (wind).

If we don't know the reason of why we are doing a certain action, the chances of getting angry are much higher, because we don't know what we are aiming for in the first place. But even more so, we need to get to the inner root of all our actions - the inner motivation of why we must act.

Letting Go Of Our Self In Our Actions

Let's go deeper with this analysis into our actions.

We are taught that Avraham and Sarah taught the world about Hashem and they made many converts. What happened to all of those converts? The Sages explain that as soon as Avraham left the world, the converts went back to their old ways. If so, what did Avraham gain? Simply, we can say that he brought holiness into the world for the time that these converts remained loyal. This is true, but there is a deeper way to understand it. It is to show us that the actions of man can never be completely realized.

That being the case, all our actions\mitzvos must be done solely because it is Hashem's will that we do them - even if we were to gain nothing from it in the end.

A very good example of this is Moshe Rabbeinu, whose life's purpose was to redeem the Jewish people from Egypt and bring them to Eretz Yisrael. The entire generation which he led did not make it to Eretz Yisrael, and he did not either make it. If so, what did he gain from all of his actions in leading the Jewish people, when he did not reach the goal? But it shows us that a person must do everything simply because it is Hashem's will. Every time that Moshe led the Jewish people, he was doing Hashem's will, and this was the purpose.

Hashem created His world with its people and He does not need any of their actions. It is simply His will that we do certain actions that He has commanded us to do; all of the 613 mitzvos. We must do them whether we understand them or not.

For example, when one is putting his *tefillin*, he might be thinking that he is building the spiritual realms, as explained in *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*. Indeed, this is true, but others put in *tefillin* with an even more inner perspective: because it is simply Hashem's will that we put on *tefillin*! This is based on the words of the Gemara, "Why do we blow shofar? Because Hashem said to blow!"^[1] Even if *tefillin* wouldn't build any worlds, we would have to put it on, simply because it is Hashem's will that we do so. In fact, even if Hashem would have made it that it destroys worlds, we would have to put it on! But not many people would be willing to do it if that's the case. Yet, this is the inner perspective which we need to strive to internalize.

Man naturally needs to feel that there is some gain and some purpose in everything he is doing. He must think that he is building something and getting some *toeles* (purpose) out of it. But the inner perspective to have is that “we are servants of Hashem”, and therefore, it should not make a difference to us if we get a *toeles* or not from all that we do. The true meaning of being a “servant” to Hashem is that we serve Him even if our acts wouldn’t cause anything good to happen. He simply wants us to act according to how He has told us to act.

If Hashem would command a person to do something and he would get absolutely no reward for it, would he listen? Would a person do something for Hashem if he will gain absolutely nothing from it? Most people would not be willing to do it. The greatness of Moshe was that was nullified to Hashem in this way.

Avraham Avinu fathered a wayward son, Yishmael, and Yitzchok Avinu had a wicked son Esav. All of their hard work on these children did not amount to anything, and their efforts on them were for naught. They did not despair from this and they kept being the servants of Hashem, even after going through such a setback like this; that was their greatness.

The pain of fruitless effort, after having toiled so many years, would be unbearable to any normal person, who cannot accept that his actions do not amount to anything. When people realize that they were unsuccessful after all that they did, the natural result is anger, disappointment, and sadness.

Each person, at some point, will need to realize that he must choose, to be willing to be nullified to Hashem, in the sense that he is letting go of any personal gain. Therefore, a person should know if he is doing his actions purely to get his goal, or if he is ready to perform even if he were to get nothing out of it. Hashem created us with a nature to see our goals met, but it is this very nature which we must also return to Hashem and let go of.

This is a deep use of our *bechirah* (free will). The first and elementary stage of *bechirah* is to choose between good and evil, and the second, deeper level of *bechirah* is, to choose to be prepared to do all of our actions for Hashem even if you were to gain absolutely nothing from it.

This concept has many applications. At first when we hear of this concept it sounds too lofty, but every person at some point will need to realize it.

Why People Want To Be Remembered

Most people want something to remain of themselves on this world after they die - they want to “leave their mark” on this world. Some people want buildings to be named after them. Others are more spiritual with this desire, so they will write a *sefer* with their *divrei Torah*, this way they know that something will remain of them on this world. But let us think about this.

Why do people want something to remain of them on this world? Man lives on average for 70-80 years and his life will feel “like a passing dream”^[2] when he dies. Shlomo HaMelech said in *Koheles* that there is no memory of our past life! If nothing is to be remembered of us anyway, why do people wish so badly to be remembered on this world?

It is because nobody would want to feel that all of his lifetime was for nothing. Therefore, a person feels that he must know that something will remain of him after he leaves the world, so that he will never come to have a feeling that his life was all in vain.

But when a person lives with an inner perspective, he understands: What is so bad if nothing remains of a person on this world after he dies? What would happen if nobody remembers that he died...? Why must a person feel that everyone should know of his *yahrtzeit*...? (Aside from the fact that he might

not know why he was living in the first place...)

When a person is aware of why Hashem created him and he truly serves the Creator, it does not make a difference to him if he will be remembered or not after he dies. To illustrate, look at a rock outside – does it make a difference to you if this rock won't be here tomorrow? Just like it doesn't bother us if a rock will go missing in Creation, so should it not bother a person if there would be no remembrance of him.

This deep perspective will only be possible when a person is truly serving the Creator and he lives to do His will. But when someone is not able to live selflessly for Hashem, then it will not be possible for a person to accept that he doesn't have to be remembered after he dies.

Anger and The “I”

Based upon the above, we can now understand that anger is linked directly with the “I” of man. Anger means that “my” will has been opposed, “I” did not get the goal I wanted, and therefore “I” am angered. But if one gets to the inner root of his actions – the fact that we must act solely because it is Hashem's will that we act - he greatly lessens the opportunities for anger.

More specifically, acquiring this attitude is what rectifies the anger stemming from **“wind”-of-earth-of-fire**, which is when a person becomes angry after his will has been opposed, to the point that he feels paralyzed.

Practically Working On This Concept

If someone tries to quickly attain this high level being described, he is being delusional. To practically work on the concept, one should take one of his actions and be prepared to do it for Hashem even if nothing will come from it. He should do it simply because it is the will of Hashem, and for no other personal reason or gain.

This is also the depth of the concept of acting *lishmah* (for non-ulterior motivations). There are many levels to *lishmah*, level within level, but here, it has been described the deepest level of *lishmah*. The deep nature of our soul is prepared to act *lishmah* for Hashem.[\[3\]](#)

The Roles of The Heart and Mind In “Lishmah”

So far, we have described a role of our “heart” in *lishmah*. What is the role of our “mind” in *lishmah*? The thoughts we need to think are that we are found in Hashem's world, not our world. Hashem's thoughts are very deep, as it is written, *“Your thoughts are very deep”*, so we do not comprehend Hashem's purpose in creating the world, in creating us, and why we must do certain things for Him. That is the why we must do all of the actions required of us.

Any of the reasons which we do understand are but slivers of understanding which are meant to aid us and give us some appreciation of what we doing, but we do not know the actual reasons of why we must do all of the acts that we must do for Hashem. There is a famous statement in our *sefarim hakedoshim*, *“The purpose of knowing is to know that we do not know.”*[\[4\]](#)

To illustrate, the Ramchal[\[5\]](#) lists several reasons of the purpose of Creation, and after all of them, he writes that the ultimate purpose in Creation is that Hashem's name be revealed. All of these understandings are just drawing us closer, but we do not comprehend the actual reasons. As the Chazon Ish said, *“The world is a closed riddle”*.[\[6\]](#) We do not understand the Creator's reason in creating us, and anything we do understand is simply to draw us closer to act correctly, but we still do not comprehend anything.

This must give us a totally different perspective towards life. When we get up in the morning, we can remind ourselves that we are living in Hashem's world, and we do all of our actions *mitzvos* simply because Hashem has commanded us to. It is about *what* we must do, not *why* we must do.

In this way, we can live a life of being nullified to Hashem. Without being aware of the concepts described above, many people cannot handle the mention of such a thought.

In Conclusion

Acquiring this perspective (becoming aware of the fact that this world is Hashem's world and it is not ours, and that we must be willing to let go of any personal gain if Hashem were to ask it of us) greatly lessens the opportunities for anger, and in particular, it helps fix the paralyzing kind of anger that stems from **wind-of-earth-of-fire**. It instead replaces the imbalance of "wind" in the soul with an awakening of the holy kind of "wind", the inner root of all motivations: to be prepared solely to do Hashem's will.

We cannot reach this point completely, because it is a very high level, but we can certainly touch upon it, each day. Every day you can take one *mitzvah* and be prepared to let go of any personal gain from it, and do it solely because it is Hashem's will and for no other reason. Getting used to this draws you closer and closer to a *lishmah* kind of life, and it is explained in our *sefarim hakedoshim* that *lishmah* is the secret of all *avodas Hashem*.

We must again emphasize and warn, however, that you should not try to grab this level too fast, nor should you practice it so much. This is because it is a very high level, and one should not delude himself that he is acting entirely for Hashem. Instead, do this realistically and practically by just taking one *mitzvah* a day and to do it solely for Hashem's will, and for no other personal gain.

It indeed takes a lot of wisdom of life and prayer in order to touch upon this point in a sensible way. But we should definitely try to touch upon it and connect ourselves to this concept of total *lishmah*, even though we cannot reach it fully.

[1] Rosh HaShanah 16b

[2] As we say in the prayer of "U'Nesaneh Tokef" on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur

[3] For more on this concept, see ***Fixing Your Water_015_The Desire To Progress Continuously***

[4] *sefer Bechinas Olam 13a, 33a.*

[5] in *sefer Daas Tevunos*

[6] *Emunah U'Bitachon: 1*

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