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Fire-of-Wind-of-Earth: "Outbursts" Caused By Inner Contradictions In The Soul

With *siyata d'shmaya* we are continuing to learn about the element of earth, the root of laziness. In this lesson we will discuss laziness that comes from **fire-of-wind-of-earth**.

As mentioned, the element earth of earth in the soul [when left impaired] is the root of inner heaviness, which causes a person to move slowly. The element of wind causes a person to move. Earth and wind are contradicting forces to each other. When a person has a nature of wind-of-earth, he has a contradiction in his nature, and this contradiction may activate his element of fire, which will then explode outward, as is the nature of fire.

When a person has contradictions in the nature of his soul, this can lead to an "outburst" of a part of his nature that a person has been stifling until now. When one has contradictory forces of earth and wind in his very nature, from time to time, he is slowed down by his earth, but from time to time he will have "outbursts" (fire) of movement (wind).

Instead of giving proper outlet to the elements of earth, wind and fire that are in his personality, these outbursts are only damaging to the person. He doesn't become calmer from these outbursts, so his earth doesn't receive proper outlet. Instead, he becomes stressed. His wind doesn't either receive proper outlet, because his movements are being performed out of anxiousness, which aren't enjoyable movements. And certainly his fire is damaging to him, because it is causing parts of his personality to explode outward.

The Low Self-Image, Sadness, and Despair that results from impaired Fire-of-Wind-of-Earth

In more severe cases of this nature, a person will develop a low self-image as a result of these outbursts, because they are commonplace in his life and he often doesn't feel good about himself because of them. He feels like he is never himself. He isn't calm inside, and his external actions are not either calm. As a result of seeing this, a person can develop a low self-image because he feels generally unsuccessful, since he finds himself always losing his temper. He won't feel good about who he is, both because he is pained by the inner contradiction in his personality (earth and wind) which he struggles to deal with, and also because this causes him to think negatively about himself, making him develop a low self-image.

People who have this nature are often inwardly suffering from their inner contradictions and from their resulting low self-image, to the point that they are apt to think that they were meant to

suffer on this world. We know that all souls come down onto this world to fulfill a certain task, and that each soul must go through certain difficulties and tests on this world, and therefore, each person has his personal lot in his life. A person with a nature of impaired **fire-of-wind-of-earth** may think that his personal lot in life is to suffer from his inner contradictions and low self-image.

When a person doesn't identify the issue properly, he finds himself losing control and having angry outbursts, which he may mistakenly label as "fire-of-fire". He sees that he has a very fiery nature, so he may think that he has a nature of "fire-of-fire", and therefore, he may seek remedies to calm his "issue" of fire-of-fire. He thinks that he needs to go for anger management. In reality, though, his outbursts of anger do not stem from fire-of-fire, but from sadness at himself. When a person is angry at himself for having outbursts, this is not anger, but sadness.

In other cases, he is not having outbursts of anger, but conceitedness. Since conceitedness is also a trait of fire, and he often finds these "outbursts" of conceit suddenly making their appearance, he may conclude that his problem is fire-of-fire.

A person who often experiences outbursts of anger usually has a nature of **fire-of-wind-of-earth**, rather than fire-of-fire. Although he may also have outbursts of "conceit" as well, which is also a trait of fire, the conceit is not coming from fire-of-fire, but from **fire-of-wind-of-earth**. It is the same for his outbursts of anger. If his outbursts would be coming from fire-of-fire, the anger is coming more from his own nature. But because he is sad about it afterwards, this shows that his anger or conceit is coming fire-of-wind-of-earth, as opposed to fire itself.

The sadness that he has over his outbursts can also cause him to feel despair over his situation. This can create a very difficult situation. Children who have this nature can be very difficult to deal with. If a child is often having outbursts of anger, it is hard for anyone to be around them. The child is very reactive and he has a stormy kind of soul. This causes him to develop a low self-image throughout life, which leads to further despair about himself. People with this nature are poor souls on this world. By their very nature, they often have outbursts of anger, which leads to sadness and low self-image about themselves, which then leads to despair.

Identifying the Source of Outbursts

One needs to be able to properly identify where his "outbursts" are coming from.

Every person lives with contradictions in his soul. For example, a person may act conceited (fire), and at other times, he is too lazy to assert himself (earth). But usually a person will deny these inner contradictions in his nature, because if he were to admit to it, it would be difficult for him to deal with the contradictions in his nature. Since he would rather not deal with it, he will subconsciously deny the inner contradictions. When a person refuses to admit to his inner contradictions, he tries to suppress them, but they will only fester. Every so often, the parts of his nature which had been stifled will 'burst out', every so often.

This is the **fire-of-wind-of-earth** in the soul. Every person experiences it, because every person has some **fire-of-wind-of-earth** in his soul. However, if a person has a more dominant nature of **fire-of-wind-of-earth** [which is what we are discussing in this lesson], he will have these 'outbursts' more often, and it will be a more permanent part of one's personality.

There are inner contradictions in every person's soul, and since most people choose to deny them, these inner contradictions will 'explode' outward every so often. When the inner contradictions aren't dealt with and they aren't treated, they will fester, and the outbursts can get worse, as a person gets older.

However, since most people do not have a dominance of **fire-of-wind-of-earth** in their nature, their outbursts aren't that extreme when they occur, and it will only manifest itself in certain areas, because most people have somewhat of a balance in their **fire-of-wind-of-earth**. There is no person who doesn't have outbursts – but there are some people who have more extreme outbursts than others. These are people who have the nature of **fire-of-wind-of-earth**.

Becoming Aware of the Patterns of Outbursts

A person can get married and he thought he was a generally calm person who doesn't get outbursts of anger, but he suddenly finds himself having angry outbursts. The wife doesn't recognize him as the person he married. What happened? Really, he always had inner contradictions in his personality, but he managed to stifle it until now, so the outbursts will arrive only later.

Each person has different kinds of outbursts. In some people, they outburst of their inner contradictions will cause them to want to expand past their comfort zone, while others will want to contract into their comfort zone. Others will become lustful, etc. Each person reacts differently, but every person will have outbursts from time to time, which come from their inner contradictions.

If a person would sit with himself when he has quiet time and reflect into his behavior, he can begin to recognize the various factors which trigger his outbursts, such as specific situations where he is prone to outbursts, and etc. Without having this quiet time to reflect, a person will never do anything about his outbursts. Throughout his married life, he will have angry outbursts every so often, without ever recognizing the patterns, and instead of treating the root of issue, he will simply wait until he calms down, where everything returns to normal. But he never really deals with the issue, and he is just avoiding it. This is the pattern in most people – they never deal with the issue at its root (because they never set aside the quiet time to reflect and identify the triggers that cause their outbursts, and therefore they never gain awareness about their patterns of outbursts).

In most people, their outbursts aren't that intense, and they will only manifest in a specific area in the person's life. Since their patterns of outbursts are somewhat tolerable to live with, they don't think that much about this issue, so they do not do any inner work to try to uproot their negative patterns. When that is the case, the outbursts can worsen when they get older and they are aging. Whatever they have suppressed until now from their entire life will then come out of them, in full force, with all of their anger and bitterness that they may have kept stifled in themselves for years. In more extreme cases, a person may have had a very calm temperament in his younger years, but he had always been suppressing his anger, so he never actually dealt with his anger, and when he enters old age, he is now having angry outbursts all the time, and suddenly everyone finds it difficult to be around him.

As it was explained earlier, every person has inner contradictions in his soul, which will 'burst out' every so often, as long as the inner contradictions aren't dealt with. The problem is usually left untreated in most people, because most people do not have intense outbursts, and it only occurs every so often, so it isn't that alarming of an issue. But, as a result of ignoring the issue, they never end up getting to the root of their outbursts. Those whose outbursts are more intense and more common have a nature of **fire-of-wind-of-earth**, and they are much more likely to notice their outbursts as an issue, and to see the need to deal with it.

Whether a person has a dominant nature of **fire-of-wind-of-earth** or not, though, the more he is truthful, the more he will want to deal with this issue and uproot his negative patterns. Therefore, every person needs to discover the inner contradictions in his nature, and to reflect about how to deal with them. Although no one is able to attain perfect self-knowledge, anyone at his own level needs to discover his inner contradictions, and its detrimental results in his life.

The deeper a person is, the more he will discover about himself, when he becomes aware of his inner contradictions. When most people reflect on their personality, they will focus on the resulting issues that they see, such as how they and others around them are negatively affected by their outbursts. However, this doesn't get to the root of the issue, because it is only focusing on the 'branches' of the issue. They are looking at their patterns of behavior, but not at what is actually causing their negative behavior. One needs to discover the root of his negative behavior patterns: the inner contradictions contained in his personality.

The Key - Discovering Your Greatest Personal Weakness

Every person has one particular negative character trait, his particular "worst *middah*", which is his greatest personal weakness, which wreaks the most havoc in his life. The rest of his issues always stem from his root weakness, his worst *middah*.

One needs to know that there is no such thing as a character trait that is inherently evil. A "bad *middah*" is not "bad" per se, it is just being used in the wrong place. A "bad *middah*" just means that the *middah* isn't balanced properly by a different trait. Each trait in the soul needs to be balanced by a different trait in the soul. When it isn't, it becomes a "bad *middah*", it will be a *middah* that is being used in the wrong place, but one must understand that this bad *middah* is not an inherently evil trait, it is just a *middah* that isn't being used properly, since he has not yet attained a balance in this particular *middah*.

So when one examines the inner contradictions in his personality and what results from them, he needs to discover his worst trait, which is his most unbalanced trait. Then he will have the 'key' to discovering the root of his soul remedy. This will also repair the particular issue of impaired **fire-of-wind-of-earth** – but it is also a general remedy for all issues in the soul.

Fixing the Entirety of the Soul - By Balancing The Worst Trait In The Soul

The more a person takes the quiet time to reflect on his his inner contradictions from within himself (as opposed to just seeing how his behavior is affecting his life) and he identifies them, he can begin to identify his weakest area, and after that, he can balance out his weakest area by developing the opposite element of his weakest trait.

This brings his soul to a general state of balance. When one balances his worst character trait, not only does he fix that particular trait, but he balances out his soul in general, because he is treating the root of all issues in his soul. The rest of his soul will be fixed, on a general level, as a result of dealing with his root issue.

Keeping Track of Balance

When a person sees that is having outbursts, he needs to get to the very root that's causing the outburst. Something triggered his weakest point, and he needs to discover it. And in clearer terms, something triggered the nature of **fire-of-wind-of-earth**, which leads to outbursts stifled parts of his nature.

All contradictions in the soul are branches of the primary inner contradiction in the soul, which is where one's weakest point is. When one recognizes the root of his weaknesses and he balances it, this will balance the rest of his soul in general as well. And on a more specific level, he will find himself having fewer outbursts than he used to.

Every person has outbursts, whether in the form of laziness, anger, or desire, where he steps out of line a bit from his usual behavior, where his worst trait comes out and he acts inappropriately. No one

can ever be perfect, but one needs to see from time to time if his outbursts are becoming more balanced than before – that they are not as intense as they used to be. The *avodah* of a person is to see from time to time if he has become calmer inside himself and more balanced in his soul, by seeing how what his outbursts look like. One needs to see if he has gotten closer to *menuchas hanefesh* (inner serenity of the soul).

The less calm a person is, the more raging his thoughts are. The calmer a person becomes, the calmer and clearer his thoughts become, and the more of a *bar daas* (sensible, logical, and thinking person) he becomes. The Alter of Kelm would place priority on the quality of *menuchas hanefesh* above everything else, and the depth behind this is because when a person's thoughts become calmer, this enables a person to come out of the inner contradictions in the soul which prevent him from *menuchah*. There is no such thing as attaining complete *menuchah*, but the more balance a person gives to his soul, the more *menuchah* he will have, and hence, the less 'outbursts' he will have from his inner contradictions.

Some people require less balance for their souls, because their inner world is not as exquisite, and therefore they have fewer issues in their soul to deal with. But if a person has a rich internal world, he usually needs to give more balance to his soul, because the powers in his soul are stronger, which creates more opportunities for inner contradictions in his soul. This is the depth of the statement, "Whoever is greater than his friend, his evil inclination is greater." [\[1\]](#) ^[1]

Giving balance to the soul, through developing the element that opposes one's greatest weakness, repairs the **fire-of-wind-of-earth** that is in every person. Therefore, this remedy is not only relevant for the person who has a dominant nature of **fire-of-wind-of-earth**, but for all people in general, since all people have **fire-of-wind-of-earth** in their souls.

Dealing With the Contradiction Between the Body and Soul

Now we will take this idea further, to a higher level.

Until now, we have been explaining about inner contradictions that exist in the "animal" level of the soul (*nefesh habehaimis*), which are contradicting aspects in one's personality. We have been explaining about the contradicting elements of wind and earth within the personality. But there is also a deeper level of inner contradictions between one's "wind" and "earth" - the contradiction that exists between the soul and the body. The body is compared to the element of earth, for it was created from the earth, and the soul is called "wind", *ruach*, such as in the term, *ruach chaim*, a "living spirit." Thus, the contradicting forces of body and soul are another contradiction between one's element of earth and wind.

Many people do not identify this deep inner contradiction, because their souls are concealed from them, while their body is the more dominant force in their life. They don't struggle that much with the contradiction between the body and the soul, because their soul hasn't yet been brought to the fore, so they do not encounter a clash between their soul and body. Others, however, can relate very well to the contradictory forces of body and soul, because they have been born with a more revealed soul – which is their spiritual "wind" – so they face more contradictions between their soul's spiritual needs with their body's material desires.

Although they are more spiritual already from a younger age, they face a deep contradiction between their soul and body, and in their younger years, they have not yet attained a balance between their physicality and their spirituality. As a result, their entire *ruchniyus* (spirituality) is somewhat underdeveloped and imbalanced, and all of their aspirations to act more spiritual are a constant source of inner tension for them, between their body's physicality and their soul's spirituality, which

becomes a consistent pattern of “outbursts” of different parts of their personality. Their body will demand its physical needs and wants, but the spiritual desires of their soul are pulling them in the opposite situation, and the result is an intense tug-of-war between their body and soul.

Often, the result of an intense conflict between the body and the soul will cause a person to strongly develop his element of fire, so that he can “burn up” his previous struggles and aim for higher levels of growth. These people can be called “*ovdei Hashem*”, those who truly serve Hashem – but they start off very imbalanced. They are always having “outbursts” of stifled parts of their personality, as a result between the conflict between their body and soul. Their fire strengthens, and they will produce all kinds of issues and problems with everything, so that they can give outlet to their fire, which thrives on opposition and challenge.

People like this feel like they are always trying to bring Mashiach closer, through deliberately creating opposition in their lives, so that they can fight against the opposition and thereby bring more spiritual rectification to the world. Whenever they have “outbursts” of idealism to fight against anything they deem inappropriate, it comes from their element of fire, which they have developed very well.

Their issue is that they lack proper organization within their inner world. They are lacking structure in their souls, and instead, they are acting based on aspiration. As a result, they are lacking proper direction.

Some people like this will eventually see themselves as failures, so they fall back into their element of earth, where they become lethargic and full of despair. Others with this nature will continue to be *ovdei Hashem*, and they don’t give up just because they find themselves lacking direction.

Others like this become very doubtful about who they really are, because they struggle intensely between their physicality and spirituality, and if you meet them and ask them about what their ideals are, they aren’t sure if they are in a situation of spiritual growth or if they are becoming more materialistic. In others, the contradiction between their physicality and spirituality is so strong that they are always having “outbursts” because of it: They will keep switching their community, or they will keep switching who their *Rav* is, or they will keep switching the *sefarim* they are learning, and etc.

Others with this issue will eventually end up in total despair about themselves, whereas others with this issue will not reach that point, but they won’t be able to avoid having lots of “outbursts” from stifled parts of their personality (as a result between the strong contradiction between their body and soul), and they will remain that way for their entire life [if they don’t attain a balance in their soul]. They are very idealistic and very spiritual, but they do not have any solid approach (*mehalech*) or way (*derech*) to live life with.

Since they have a strongly developed element of fire, they will also have “holy” fire in their souls, which can propel them towards high levels of spiritual growth, but because they haven’t balanced themselves yet, their holy fire on its own isn’t able to perfect their personality, since it mixed with the baser element of fire that is in their “animal” level of the soul.

One needs to properly “build” his inner world. That is why having too much of fire in the soul can actually deter one’s spiritual development. A strong amount of fire in the soul can make a person highly motivated to pursue growth and to be very ambitious about attaining higher spiritual levels. But intense motivation alone cannot build a person.

Many people face an intense struggle between their physicality and their spirituality, and this is an inner contradiction which causes a person to have common occurrences of “outbursts” of stifled parts of his nature. These people have a lot of **fire-of-wind-of-earth** in the “animal” level of the soul, the

nefesh habehaimis, and this causes them to have a consistent pattern of “outbursts” in their life, even when it comes to their spiritual matters. The results of this are clearly detrimental.

They need to give structure to their inner world, and then they will attain a balance in their souls. They can still allow their fire to continue to motivate them, so they shouldn't try to stifle it. But along with this, they will mainly need to build their inner world and give organization and structure to it. This will repair their **fire-of-wind-of-earth**.

[1] [2] Succah 52a

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