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Wind-of-Earth: The Movement Process That Leads To Actualization

With *siyata d'shmaya* we have begun to continue to learn about *simchah*. We have so far discussed "earth"-of-earth and "water"-of-earth. Now, with *siyata d'shmaya*, we shall learn about "wind"-of-earth and how it contributes to *simchah*.

Earth actualizes the potential of something and this brings joy. The wind is the power of movement, which moves and motivates something. **Wind-of-earth** is the moving force within the actualization process. It is the process itself, that brings something from potential to actualization.

Whenever anything has become actualized, this is the constructive use of earth. The detrimental use of earth is when the heaviness within the earth weighs a person down, preventing a person from actualizing potential. This is the source of the trait of laziness. In addition to this factor - besides for the heaviness of earth which prevents a person from actualizing his potential - a person will also be prevented from actualizing any potential whenever there is any halted movement in his element of wind.

Two Factors That Prevent Actualization: Laziness/Heaviness (Earth) and Opposition (Wind)

Let's explain the depth of how this works. The Gemara says that for everything Hashem created, He created it with male and female forces. Man and woman are called *eizer k'negdo* to each other. They are opposite forces, which either help each other or oppose each other. This is a rule for all forces of Creation as well. Earth and wind are opposing forces to each other. The heaviness of earth prevents a person from using his wind, his force of movement.

There are two factors which prevent a person from utilizing his potential. The heaviness of the element of earth breeds the trait of laziness, and in addition to this, any obstacles in a person's path prevent a person from using his moving force, his element of wind. When one isn't utilizing his wind properly, this is called *ruach shefailah*, a "downed wind", a dispiritedness, which also breeds sadness.

Overcoming Opposition Causes Joy

Any actualization of potential, for example, doing an act of *chessed*, or using the power of speech to perform a *mitzvah*, or using any of the abilities of the heart to do a *mitzvah* - in any of these scenarios, if one is being prevented or opposed, and one overcomes the opposition, the result is that

there will be greater actualization of potential, because there was more effort involved. Increasing one's efforts, in order to get to the actualization of anything, is also a factor that increases joy. That is the joy which we can derive from "wind"-of-earth: when we overcome our oppositions, in order to get to our goal.

This is the concept, and now we shall give examples.

Examples of Joy From Challenges

Let's say a person is involved in various projects of *chessed* and he helps others. He has actualized a potential, by wanting to help them and then actually helping them. But then he encounters some opposition or challenge in what he is doing. Now he has to try harder. Someone else gets angry or insults him, or someone else tells him that he should really be doing something else. When he persists and he finally gets to his goal and he actualizes his potential, overcoming all of the obstacles, oppositions, and challenges that were in his way, he not only has the joy of actualized potential, but he also has the joy of having overcome his challenges.

Another example is when a person is raising his children. He begins to see that a lot of effort and awareness is needed in order to raise children properly, so he makes various increased efforts to raise his children better, employing certain methods and applying certain advice. Often he will be faced with certain challenges along the way, which make it harder for him to raise his children. Other people may criticize him, either telling him that he is overdoing it, or that he's not doing enough. When a parent hears this, it makes it much more difficult for him and he may begin to feel flustered from the whole thing. The parent may lose his motivation in trying to raise his children right, and he may stop applying his energy, because others are challenging him. It becomes too hard for the parent to feel joy in raising his children. But when parents persevere with their children, in spite of the many challenges involved in raising them, they gain increased joy in raising their children.

Another example is the *mitzvah* of honoring parents. A person may try very hard to honor them, physically and emotionally, and one day he realizes that in spite of all that he does for his parents, they parents are not so satisfied. From seeing their unhappiness or dissatisfaction, he loses the energy to honor them. When he sees that they are totally unhappy, honoring them becomes very difficult and he loses his drive in this *mitzvah*.

In another scenario, the more effort a person puts into raising his children, the less he has time to honor his parents, and the same is vice versa - the more he is taking care of his parents, the less time he has for his children. So besides for taking care of his parents, which is difficult enough, he suffers in his soul because subconsciously he knows that he doesn't have enough time for his children. This is his dispiritedness, his impaired **wind-of-earth**, his oppositions which are preventing his joy.

Tackling Our Challenges

Firstly, a person should make a list of which scenarios aren't challenging to him, and which situations he finds challenging. This creates awareness to the situations where his wind-of-earth (oppositions) are preventing him.

The Gemara says that each of the winds oppose each other. Everything in Creation has many possible opposing forces to it. Sometimes there is a lot of opposition to something, and sometimes there is less. When we contemplate the idea that there is always some opposition towards everything in Creation, this can give us an idea of **wind-of-earth** in the soul: the oppositions that prevent us from actualizing our potential.

Reacting To Challenges

How should we view challenges and oppositions to us? First, we need to 'take a step out' of the situation for a bit, and contemplate the following.

Whenever a person encounters challenges, he may react to this by thinking that he can't succeed, that he is an unsuccessful person, etc. These feelings increase with the more challenges that he encounters. He begins to think that he can't do things, and he develops a low self-image of himself. There is also an opposite reaction a person may have: One may conclude that if he isn't succeeding at something, it must be the "*Sitra Achra*" (the Other Side of Evil) that's preventing him. Alternatively, a person may react that it's "a sign from Heaven" that he shouldn't continue what he's doing.

However, there is an entirely different reaction to have, which is deeper and more truthful than any of the above reactions to the situation: A person can think that if he is running into problems and challenges with what he is doing, it may be an indicator that he has involved himself with something that is not suitable for his soul to do. That is why he finds himself limited in this situation – he simply doesn't have the energies for it, because it's not tailored to his soul or to his current level.

However, what if a person concludes that he is indeed involved with something that he should be doing, and that he is simply facing a challenge? How should he view the challenge? He should view the opposition of something that's part of the plan, not something happenstance. For Hashem has designed the world in a way that we are always being challenged. It's part of the natural design of things that Hashem has built into Creation.

So instead of viewing this as *yissurim* (suffering) and that one needs to "accept suffering with love", one can instead view it with a more basic attitude, that he's being challenged because it's simply the way that things are supposed to be. It is a basic part of one's *avodah* in actualizing your potential: to overcome the challenges along the way, in order to get to the end goal. It is part of your *avodah* to go through the challenge, and it was meant for you to traverse, as part of our task on This World, and because this is the way Hashem has designed things to be.

The Deep Joy That Can Be Derived From Overcoming Challenges

This is actually the depth of the words of the Sages that one should "rejoice in suffering". There are two types of suffering. Chazal state that "There is no suffering without sin". That is one type of suffering: when the suffering is an atonement for sins, which caused by sins. Another kind of suffering is the suffering of *tzaddikim*, who encounter various challenges and oppositions due to the very design which Hashem has made. The rejoicing of the *tzaddikim* in their suffering is essentially because the *tzaddikim* recognize that it is part of their *avodah* to be opposed and challenged in this way. These oppositions really bring a deep kind of joy.

When a person actualizes his potential he has some joy, but when he overcomes challenges along the way, his joy is unequalled. The movements of the soul which one uses, in order to overcome the various factors that oppose him, increase his joy. This is the depth of the joy that can be experienced on This World.

Even when suffering from sins, which purifies a person, a person can also derive joy, from overcoming the challenges involved. It is hard for a person to know if his suffering is coming from sins or if it's the suffering of *tzaddikim* which is purely for the sake of the challenge. Our Sages do provide definitions of how to know it, but practically speaking, it is hard for a person to apply this knowledge to himself. But in either case, a person can derive joy from actualizing his potential together with overcoming challenges.

This is the depth of the *avodah* on this world, which is essentially to engage in actualizing our

potential, in spite of challenges.^[1] [1] The more one absorbs this perspective, the more one can bring an overhaul to his entire life.

All of us encounter challenges, which have the potential to make us become saddened, and removing any of our joy. The root of sadness is the dispiritedness of the soul, which comes from an impaired element of “wind” in the soul, whereas the root of joy is a repaired element of wind. This brings a person a constant inner flow of true, deep joy.

In Conclusion

We have given examples of how to view challenges of life and how to deal with them, from a perspective of joy, and in a way that can bring us increased joy when we go through challenging situations. This particular lesson was very, very fundamental.

Q&A

Q1: *What exactly am I actualizing when I actualize my potential?*

A: Excellent question. There are two parts. There is the power itself you are actualizing, as well as the opposition you are overcoming, which additionally actualizes your potential. There is actualization of deeds, middos, thoughts, will, and pleasure. This requires a study of its own.

Q2: *Can I actualize potential even if I don't know what I'm actualizing?*

A: Your awareness of what exactly you are actualizing can deepen as we go along with this, but at first, you can be generally aware that you are actualizing your potential.

Q3: *How do we awaken the good kind of wind when we encounter challenges?*

A: The more a person acquires the perspective that a person's avodah is to actualize his potential and that part of this includes encountering opposition, this is the depth of our task on this world when trying to actualize our potential, and this changes our perspective. This enables us to overcome the challenge, with joy.

Q4: *We don't always have enthusiasm to go through challenges so how can we go through them?*

A: Very good question. When a person lives superficially, he lived with sadness, the more difficult it is to go through challenges. When a person lives more internally, he can go through challenges with a deeper perspective and that is where he can find deep joy. In the inner depths of each person, a person can find joy in facing oppositions and challenges.

Q5: *What do we do when we are in a situation of doubts?*

A: That is a general question. Chazal state that a person should make a *rebbe* to remove himself from doubt. Understandably, a person cannot always call a *rebbe* when he is in doubt, and if he does so, he will remain an ignoramus his entire life. Whenever a person has doubts, the Ramban says that a person should learn Torah *lishmah* and then he will know the answers to his doubts. Alternatively, a person can connect himself deeply to thoughts of *emunah* in Hashem, and from that new perspective he can become clearer about how to face his doubts.

Q6: How do we overcome the subconscious voice that is nagging at us, for example, when we are taking care of our kids and therefore we feel guilty that we aren't honoring our parents enough (and vice versa)?

A: There are always contradicting forces within a person, and a person needs to overcome the inner contradictions. There is always a contradicting force taking place whenever we do anything. We need to overcome the challenge of these contradictions.

[1] [2] Editor's Note: As the Mesillas Yesharim states in Chapter One, "For life is a *nisayon* (test)."

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