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Lengthening, Widening and Deepening Da'as

Different Kinds of Da'as

The *Mishnah* in *Avos* (5,11) states that there are four kinds of *de'os* (behaviors) when it comes to anger. Here we can see that anger is a kind of *da'as*. Someone might be slow to anger, or he might be short-tempered. If someone is easily appeased, he is called *oirech apayaim* – slow to anger. If he is easily angered, he is called *kotzer ruach* – short-tempered.

Chazal state that there are different levels of *da'as*. Women have “light” *da'as*. Deaf people have “weak” *da'as*. A fragrance can settle give a person *yishuv hada'as*, a “settling” of the mind (this is when one returns his *da'as* to the way it originally was). There are also three things which “expand” one’s *da'as*: beautiful utensils, a beautiful wife, and a beautiful home.

We need to understand this. What does it mean to have “light” *da'as*, “weak” *da'as*, “settled” *da'as* and “expanded” *da'as*? These four kinds of *da'as* really represent the four *de'os* in anger that is stated in the *Mishnah*. There is *da'as* which is deep, *da'as* which is wide, and *da'as* which is long.

Lengthened Da'as and Widened Da'as

What is width, and what is length? Width is the expansion of a boundary, while length is to stick out past a boundary. When a person is angry, it is called *maarich af* – “lengthening of the nose.” When a person is angry at another person, he is going past his boundaries.

The Beis Hamikdash is called “a dwelling in between shoulders.” This represents a widened *da'as*, just like there is a wide space in between the shoulders. That is also why the width of the Beis Hamikdash is compared to the sea.

When a person has “lengthened” *da'as*, the *da'as* is endless, just like length has no end. When a person has “widened” *da'as*, he has increased his *da'as*, but this causes destruction. Why? This is because width, which is *rochav* in Hebrew, has the same letters as the word *cherev* (sword), a connotation to destruction. These are two kinds of *da'as* in creation: widened *da'as*, which is a *da'as* that is confined to the limits of creation, and lengthened *da'as*, which is the kind of *da'as* a person uses to know the *da'as* of his Creator. Lengthened *da'as* cannot be destroyed; only widened *da'as* can be destroyed, and that is how the Beis Hamikdash was able to become destroyed – because it contained widened *da'as*, not lengthened *da'as*.

What is widened *da'as*? This is when a person adds onto his knowledge, but only within the confines of the knowledge. But lengthened *da'as* is when a person adds on more and more knowledge, until eventually he comes to know his Creator. What is the difference?

Widened *da'as* is when a person increases his knowledge, but the knowledge here is only another garment of the same *da'as*. It's not really more information. Lengthened *da'as* is when a person receives more knowledge and more knowledge.

Widened *da'as* is like imagination, because the person imagines that he is expanding his knowledge. Lengthened *da'as* is real, actual knowledge – Chochmah—because the person is receiving actual new information that he didn't have before.

Deep Da'as

The third kind of *da'as* we mentioned is “deep” *da'as*.

Depth is not length and it is not width, so what it is? What is the very concept of depth? Depth is when one grasps how everything connects – when one connects the length and the width.

Da'as is really a tool; it is not a purpose unto itself. The purpose of our *da'as* is to be a receptacle that will hold the *ohr*, spiritual light, that we want to put into it.

From the viewpoint of just length or width, *da'as* seems to look like the actual light we want to have. But such an understanding is superficial, and this is a kind of understanding that came about through the *eitz hada'as*. The viewpoint from depth sees how *da'as* is but a tool; this is the real understanding, which comes from the knowledge of the *eitz hachaim*.

If a person sees his *Da'as* as a receptacle to achieve a greater means, then he will be able to receive the light that will go into that receptacle. He will be able to expand his knowledge. But if a person that his *Da'as* itself is the spiritual light that he wants to receive, then he doesn't have the receptacle to hold the light, and he won't get the light.

Deep *Da'as* is when a person realizes that all his *Da'as* is only to be used as a tool to receive spiritual light, and that is not the spiritual light itself. It is the perception that *Da'as* is only a tool to achieve a greater means.

Let's take any knowledge that we know about. Do we look at our knowledge as a tool, or as an actual spiritual light? To illustrate the question better, when a person learns Torah, does he think that his knowledge in Torah is just a tool to help him understand, or that it is the actual spiritual light itself? If a person has the deep kind of *Da'as*, he is aware that any knowledge he has is only a tool to help him learn. One's knowledge is not the end goal.

If someone's heart has been opened, and he always receives new understanding in areas, he has lengthened his *Da'as*. If someone keeps expanding the same piece of information but he doesn't really add onto the knowledge, he has widened his *Da'as* – either in the lower usage, which is imagination, or for a higher purpose, which is Binah. If someone realizes that both his lengthened *Da'as* and widened *Da'as* are just tools, he has deepened his *Da'as*.

Without deepening the *Da'as*, a person thinks that his *Da'as* is actual spiritual light, not a tool. Only through deepening the *Da'as* can a person see how everything in the universe is to be used just as a tool to achieve a greater means.

That is the reason why beautiful utensils expand one's mind. It is because a person knows that

utensils are just utensils (tools).

We need all three kinds of *Da'as* – lengthened *Da'as*, widened *Da'as*, and deep *Da'as*.

If a person only has lengthened *Da'as*, he is always stepping over his limits. Although there is a positive in a person to break his limits, this ability itself needs limits as well; everything must have its limits, even the power to go over limits. For this a person needs to balance it with widened *Da'as*.

If a person only has widened *Da'as*, he will just widen his knowledge and think that his knowledge is the goal.

But with deep *Da'as*, a person can understand that both lengthened *Da'as* and widened *Da'as* are only a tool to receive the endless light of Hashem. Deep *Da'as* balances the lengthened *Da'as* and widened *Da'as* and enables one to receive the light of the *Ein Sof* of Hashem.

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