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## Fixing Your Wind - 003 Falsity Part 3 : Living In Denial

### *Habitual Lying*

We are discussing how to fix the trait of idle speech, which stems from the element of wind in the soul. The **earth-of-wind** in the soul is the source of speaking words of falsity.

We have already discussed **earth-of-earth-of-wind** [lying as a result of fooling oneself through his imagination] and **water-of-earth-of-wind** [getting dragged after lying]. Now we will discuss **wind-of-earth-of-wind**. This refers to those who regularly lie, on a set basis. Chazal describe this kind of habitual lying as *kat shakranim* – the “group of liars.”

The more subtle understanding of this is as follows. The pure state of the soul is to be *yoshor*, to be straight-minded and honest. After the sin of Adam, man tends to have *cheshbonos rabim* (“many calculations”), as opposed to being *yoshor*. If someone has a dominant amount of wind-of-earth-of-wind in his soul, his speech is drawn towards lying, and he will do so on a regular basis. It comes from a “crookedness” that has developed in the heart - the opposite of a heart with *yashrus* in it.

In clearer language, a person who constantly lies is someone whose initial thought (*muskal rishon*) is to say a lie.

If someone’s initial thought is to say the truth but he ended up lying, even if he ends up lying many times, then he doesn’t have the problem we are discussing. We are discussing here someone who lies on a regular basis **because his initial thought** always leads him in the direction of lying.

The *muskal rishon* (initial thought) of the mind always begins in the heart. If the heart of a person has become “crooked”, a person is missing *yashrus* in his heart, and this will affect how he thinks. The mind follows his heart, and since his heart is not concerned with truth, his mind’s first thoughts are led in the direction of lying.

A lesser degree of this kind of problem (though it is still a problem) is that even if one doesn’t lie on a regular basis like this and he still has some *yashrus* in himself, still, the fact that he lives on This World and is affected by it negatively can be a factor in his habit of lying.

We find this in a person who wants to mimic his surroundings and he sees that people do things that are false, so he might follow the crowd, simply because he sees that’s the way of the world. This kind of person doesn’t lie as much as the first kind of person we mentioned here, but he is still close to that level. He is drawn towards falsity; he has learned how to wear it, like a disguise so that he can fit into the rest of the crowd. With this kind of person, it’s really not part of his nature to lie, but he learns

the trick of the trade in order to fit in with society.

These are two general kinds of people who are of the “*kat shakranim*”, the group of people on this world who regularly lie. Understandably, these two kinds of people only make up a small percentage of people.

### ***Lying To Ourselves***

But there is another kind of habitual lying which almost all of us have: lying to *oneself*.

Most of the lying that we recognize is when people lie to others. But the main kind of falsity which manifests in our soul is when a person *lies to himself*!

A person might hear about this concept of “lying to yourself” and immediately assume that he doesn’t have this problem, and that it is only others who have the problem. But this reaction shows that the person has fooled himself so much that he doesn’t realize how much he lies to himself!

In fact, most people, without exception, are really lying to themselves, every day, and all day.

Here’s how we can see it. All people have things that they want, and in addition, all people have certain energies. What happens when a person encounters something that he doesn’t want, and what happens when a person encounters something that he feels he doesn’t have energy for? A healthy reaction is for a person to realize that he simply isn’t capable of doing it, so he doesn’t force himself to do what he can’t do. But if someone doesn’t know how to be honest with himself, either he will involve himself with something else, or, he might deny the facts a little bit, so that he can calm himself.

In doing so, the person denies reality. How does a person deny reality? He convinces himself what reality is, suiting it to fit his needs.

All of us encounter situations which we don’t want to be in, as well as situations which we don’t have energy for. The issue is: how we react to those situations.

A person who is honest with himself understands that he is encountering a situation that contradicts his energies, and he deals with it accordingly. But most people, when they encounter unwanted situations, will either get involved with something else, or they will deny the reality to a certain extent.

Sometimes it’s hard to believe how a person can deny reality so much, when the truth is so apparent! Yet, people still deny reality somewhat, even when the reality is so stark and obvious.

### ***Examples of Denial***

Here is an example: If a woman becomes widowed, *rachmana litzlan*, she has a very difficult reality to face. At first, she might console herself over the fact that there will eventually be *techiyas hameisim* (resurrection), but it’s not the actual *techiyas hameisim* part of this which is comforting her; it is rather a means to calm herself and to tell herself that her husband’s death is only a temporary situation. It’s a way for her to deny the reality of the situation she has to deal with. When she knows that he can come back to life any day, it’s a way of telling herself that she doesn’t have to live with his death for that long.

It’s not really coming from a deep *emunah* that she has in *techiyas hameisim*; it’s rather a way of denying reality. Sometimes, it could really be that she is truly comforted by having *emunah* in

*techiyas hameisim*, but most of the time, it is not her *emunah* which is comforting her, and it is rather a way for her to deny the reality.

There are more examples as well of this concept, which most people can identify with. We are describing a tendency in people to deny reality somewhat; no one will deny reality 100%, but it is very common for a person to deny certain parts of the reality, as a way to calm oneself down that the reality he's facing isn't as difficult as it appears.

Here is another example: A child comes home from school and complains that school is hard. One parent will get the child to do something else to take his mind off the problem, and another kind of parent will deny the reality somewhat: "It's not actually difficult. It'll pass." In this way, a person runs away from facing the harsh reality. The parent doesn't even bother to find out what's really bothering the child, and he just tells the child that everything will be okay, because it's easier to deny reality.

There are many cases we can recall in our life in which we deny the harshness of reality. We tend to deal with our problems by denying them somewhat; if not totally, at least partially. This is the depth of "*kat shakranim*" in our soul – we lie to ourselves. Either we run away from reality by taking our mind off with it as we are involved with it, or, we deny reality.

### ***Becoming Honest With Ourselves: Attaining Self-Awareness of the Soul***

To begin the solution to this, we must know the five general layers of our soul [from lowest to highest point]: action, feeling, speech, thought, and will. (Each of these also subdivides into several layers, but these are the five general layers of the soul, beginning from lowest layer to highest layer).

#### **1. 1. Awareness To Our Actions**

Man has the habit of pushing himself away from what he needs to do. A person is in middle of doing something, yet it's possible he is not aware of what he is doing! Sometimes a person is simply spacing out, but other times it is because the person gets involved with something else as he's doing something, and later he doesn't even remember that he did it.

If a person is told that he did something and he lies intentionally that he didn't do it, this is the classic kind of liar, which we addressed earlier. But now we are dealing with a person who simply doesn't remember that he did something. What is the reason for this?

It is really because he wasn't **aware** as he was doing something; and why? Because he didn't want to do what he did, and that's why his memory of the act gets pushed away. Right now, it's forgotten from his consciousness, and that is the truth. It's not because there is something wrong with his memory. It's because earlier, he managed to push himself away from the act as he was doing it, and that's why he doesn't remember he did it.

Even more so, another way that people deal with problems is when they do what they have to do, but they didn't want to do it (for whatever reason), and therefore, a person teaches himself how to deny what he did.

To illustrate, a child often denies what he did, or; he denies certain details of what he did. The next day you ask him what he did, and he says something a little differently than yesterday. Sometimes the child is consciously aware that he is lying. But sometimes it can be because the child really believes that he's telling the truth – he denies reality, or a part of reality, so that he won't have to deal with the reality of what he did. He has fooled himself and therefore he really believes what he's saying.

If a person hears about this concept and he says, "I never have this problem," it must be that he lives in so much denial that he is totally unaware of how much he lies to himself. He cannot come to terms with the fact that he has the problem and that's why he teaches his subconscious to deny it.

Many times a person did something which was improper, and he can't deal with the reality of his mistake, so he learns how to deny realities. He might wake up on Erev Yom Kippur that he has to do *teshuvah*, and that's when he thinks about what he did; but it's even possible that even on Erev Yom Kippur he doesn't recall what he did that year.

Even if a person remembers that he did something improper, he will tend to go easy on himself and deny some of the details to what he did. To illustrate, often, if a person is in a *Din Torah* with another and he is asked to tell over his side of the story, he forgets some of the details, to the betterment of his situation. We aren't speaking about liars who don't care to lie. We are speaking of even a G-d fearing individual; a person might lie to himself, and as a result, he ends up lying to others, because he believes that he is telling the truth - and he is unaware that he is denying certain details of what really happened.

So there are two scenarios of this tendency to deny. One scenario is that a person denies the external factors in the reality, and the second scenario of this is when a person denies his own actions that he did.

## 1. 2. **Awareness Of Our Emotions\Feelings**

Now we will take this even further.

We all have emotions. We have positive emotions such as joy, love, and enthusiasm. We also have negative emotions such as sadness, anger, jealousy, and conceit. How does a person deal with the reality of his negative emotions?

Some people don't care if they have bad *middos*. For example, a *baal gaavah* (conceited person) doesn't care that he has *gaavah*; he'll even say it openly: "I'm proud of myself! I'm proud of what I do." This kind of confidence is conceited, and it is the opposite of the Torah's outlook on healthy confidence. A truthful kind of person is bothered, though, when he realizes that he has bad *middos*. If he becomes aware that he has *gaavah*, he seeks ways in how he can work on removing himself from traces of *gaavah*.

But a person might not be able to deal with this reality in himself - so he will deny that he has *gaavah*. If a person is a bit more truthful, though, instead of denying altogether that he has *gaavah*, he will convince himself that his *gaavah* is holy, (*gaavah d'kedushah*).

Or, if he knows he's jealous of someone, he'll convince himself that he his jealousy is the holy kind of jealousy, "jealousy of scholars" (*kinas sofrim*) because he can't accept the fact that he has a bad middah of jealousy. He might find many statements of Chazal that proves that he's right. He denies the reality.

We have seen how people deny the reality of their negative emotions.

### **Lower Emotions (Nefesh HaBehaimis) and Higher Emotions (Nefesh Elokis)**

Let's explore this part more deeply, and we will see how there are really two parts to this. There are two kinds of emotions we have - and there is a huge difference between them.

There are natural emotions we have, which come from our **nefesh habehaimis** (lower and

animalistic part of the soul[1]), and there are emotions which come from our **middos** (character traits).

Our **nefesh habehaimis** has emotions in it, but these are **not middos**; even animals have feelings, so there are feelings which come from our *nefesh habehaimis*, “animalistic” kinds of emotions.

Then there are feelings we have which come from our **middos** (character traits). We all have a **nefesh habehaimis** with its negative emotions, and we all have **middos** that come from our **Nefesh Elokis** [G-dly soul]; and we also have [higher] feelings, which are called **hargashah**.

To know how to differentiate which of our feelings come from our **nefesh habehaimis** and which feelings comes from our **Nefesh Elokis**, it’s a broad matter, and we won’t get into this discussion now. Here we are focusing our discussion on the very concept that there are feelings which come from our *nefesh habehaimis* as well as our *Nefesh Elokis*, and that a person has to be aware to both of these feelings.

Most people are not even aware of the feelings in their *nefesh habehaimis*, and surely they don’t reach self-awareness of the feelings which come from the *Nefesh Elokis*. When a person lives life on the level of *nefesh habehaimis*, he is not aware of his feelings at all, not even his lower emotions, which are of his *nefesh habehaimis*.

If we ask a person “What makes you happy? What makes you sad?” he often responds, “Um... I need some time to think about that.” And the answers he comes up with are very superficial and so far from the truth. A person lives life for so many years yet he doesn’t even know what makes him really happy!

A person can’t give an honest answer when he’s not aware of himself. One has to be aware of his feelings and then know how to deal with them.

If a person doesn’t know how to deal with his emotions, what will happen? He will come to the conclusion that emotions are some kind of weakness in himself, therefore he tells himself that he must run away from his emotions.

Others recognize the reality of their emotions, but they will accept their emotions they can deal with and deny the other emotions in themselves that they can’t handle. What will happen when the person encounters the negative emotion that he doesn’t know how to deal with (because he denies it)? Either he will run away from it because he wants to “push it off”, or, he will completely deny it.

When a person runs away from his own emotions, this is the total level of lying to oneself. Such a person, who runs away from his own emotions, is closing off his emotions in the process. And if he accepts some of his emotions but he can’t accept other emotions he has, he will also run away from the emotions he can’t deal with, by dwelling on the positive emotions he has. Or, he will get busy thinking about something else. Or, he gets involved with doing something else. Or, he will deny his emotions (of his *nefesh habehaimis*) altogether!

### ***The Mistake of Learning and Teaching Secular Psychology***

The idea of validating emotions, as opposed to denying them, is a concept that can apply even to gentiles, for it is within the arena of the lower soul, the **nefesh habehaimis**. [2]

In recent years, psychologists have been bringing in material of secular psychology into the Torah world, because they wanted people to recognize their emotions of the **nefesh habehaimis** and thereby be improved. Their hope was to educate people about the nature of the **nefesh habehaimis**

in the human soul; to become aware of it and thereby develop it and improve one's emotional well-being.

The problem with the entire approach, however, is that they have buried their own souls in the process of doing this! In favor of developing the **nefesh habehaimis** - the animalistic part of the soul - they ignore the deeper aspects of a Jew's soul (the **nefesh Elohis**, the G-dly, Divine soul).

Working with only the *nefesh habehaimis* (the lower emotions) alone is a way that can work for gentiles, but it is not the way for the members of the nation of *Yisrael*. Most people involved with secular psychology today do not have this mentality, and therefore, they have harmed the souls of Jews they have taught - it's as if they have buried them.

Self-help for a Jew needs to be drawn from understanding the **Nefesh Elohis** (the G-dly, Divine aspect of the Jewish soul). One must become aware of his **Nefesh Elohis**, which are his higher powers of the soul.[\[3\]](#) This kind of self-awareness is a much deeper kind of self-awareness.

However, even our **Nefesh Elohis**, which contains a lot of good in it, also needs to be perfected of course, and one needs to learn how to deal with those emotions.[\[4\]](#)

We won't get into the difference here between our **nefesh habehaimis** and our **Nefesh Elohis**, but we have laid down the outline: that they are totally different sources of emotions in us.

### 1. 3. **Awareness To Our Speech**

We have explained self-awareness of our surroundings, our actions, and our emotions. Now we will progress to discuss a higher part of our soul, which is our speech, and how to become more aware of it.

When most people talk, there is little awareness to what is coming out of the mouth. There are many reasons for this: it can be because the person isn't thinking as he's talking, or it can be for deeper reasons. Sometimes a person is talking and he is totally unaware that he's talking, and another person is talking as he's thinking into something deeply, and because he's thinking so deeply, he's not aware of what he's saying! There's a contradiction between his thoughts and his speech.

It is a very subtle matter of why people aren't aware of their thoughts, but most of the time a person is not aware of his thoughts simply because he speaks without thinking, and then he doesn't even remember what he said- and he's even ready to almost swear that he didn't say the words he said.

This problem affects all people somewhat, and the only question is how much of it affects each person, because there are degrees to it.

### 1. 4. **Awareness To The Thoughts**

Now we will progress to discuss awareness of our thoughts.

We are usually aware of our basic thoughts, but there is a more subtle kind of thought which quickly passes through our mind from time to time. These are fleeting thoughts which come and go very quickly, like a bolt of lightning.

All of us sometimes notice that we have thoughts that come and go very quickly. We have thoughts that are pleasant to think about, and we have no problem thinking about these thoughts, because they don't challenge us. But there are some thoughts we don't like to think about, such as to think about something that reminds us of something scary.

Sometimes, we are seized with sudden sadness, and we don't know why. This can be because our *mazal* is seeing something sad, even though we can't see it, as the Sages revealed; this is the more subtle reason. But many times it is a passing thought that we don't like to think about, and that is what makes us sad. We can't figure out why we have suddenly become sad, but it's really because a negative thought has quickly passed through our mind.

These passing thoughts are about things that we feel like we can't deal with; they come like a flash of lightning. That is why don't become aware of them, because we don't want to think about them.

But there are other thoughts which we can become aware of, just, we don't want to know of them, so we like to push it out of the mind. This causes a person to lose awareness to his thoughts.

These passing thoughts are really our inner thoughts, which are very hidden from our conscious state. Our external thoughts are gruff in their nature and they are revealed to our consciousness, and sometimes we deny even those basic thoughts; it's harder to deny those thoughts, though, because they're so obvious. But our inner thoughts, which pass very quickly, are about things that we would rather not think about (because they entail some kind of hardship), and therefore, because we don't want to think about them, we push them away from our mind.

### 1. 5. **Awareness of The Ratzon (Will)**

Now we will see how people deny awareness to their *ratzon* (will) as well.

There are things we want, as well as things that we want but we wish we wouldn't want it because we know deep down that it's bad, so we deny the fact that we want it.

For example, a person knows that *gaavah* (conceit) is a bad *middah*. If we ask him if he wants to feel *gaavah*, he will say "No". But the truth is, he really does want it! It's a pleasurable feeling, after all. He just knows deep down that he's not supposed to want it, so he denies the fact that he wants it. He says, "No way! I don't want anything to do with *gaavah*!" But the truth is that he's lying to himself. In fact, his own *gaavah* has convinced him that he doesn't want *gaavah*. He's not aware of his desire for *gaavah* and therefore he denies the desire for it.

We will point out here that this is not a discussion about fixing the *middah* of *gaavah* - it is about discovering what our desires are.

Most people are not aware of their desires at all. True self-awareness is very rare and it often eludes a person. It's really because a person doesn't want to deal with himself. He knows deep down that he if he were to discover what's going on inside himself, the truth would scare him. And because a person doesn't want to be afraid of his own self, it's more comfortable to deny what's going on inside himself; he'll even deny every aspect of his soul rather than deal with the facts.

*Ratzon* is the deepest layer in the soul, so when a person denies his *ratzon*, he uproots all of his self-awareness with it, because he has uprooted the root of his own soul.

### **Outline of the Solution**

Now we will begin the solution to all of this.

**1)** First of all, a person needs to decide that he will seek truth. Without agreeing to do this, none of the following will be of any use.

**2)** After making that firm decision, one has to agree that we are not perfect, and that man by essence

is an imperfect creation. We must agree with the fact that we have shortcomings. If one can't accept with the fact that he has some weaknesses, then he denies his entire self; it resembles a subtle form of heresy.

**3)** The next step is for a person to agree that he is prepared to work hard in order to fix his shortcomings.

**4)** And, believe that Hashem has given you the ability to work hard on yourself.

Now comes the following. You need to develop the following two abilities.

**5)** The first ability is called **birur**, the ability to clarify and take apart a matter. You need to know how to explain and isolate different aspects of a problem, so that you can properly define what exactly you need to work on.

**6)** The second ability you need is **adinus** (subtlety), also called **dakus** (refinement). When you learn how to become aware of subtleties, you are able to find yourself agreeing with the various subtle aspects of the soul, and then you will be able to recognize subtle aspects in your soul.

You will then be able to tell a much more subtle difference between truth and falsity: the difference between a truth and the total truth (*emes vs. emes l'amatah*). Your self-awareness will greatly increase along with this.

Without developing this ability, a person spends his whole life lying to himself.

**7)** Another ability a person needs is to acquire a deep inner calmness (*sheket*). The more you attain a deep inner calmness in your soul, the better you can listen to yourself, recognize yourself better, and experience yourself.

The deepest level of this is to recognize the deep subtleties of your *ratzon*; the second-to-highest level is to recognize the subtleties of your thoughts; and the more basic level of this is to recognize your feelings.

But in order to experience the deep subtlety of your will, thoughts, and feelings, you need the previous tools we mentioned, which is: to be interested in the truth, to acquire the ability of sensing subtleties and fine points, and to attain deep calmness of the soul. If you have those three factors, you are able to experience all of your soul's layers.

### ***Secular Psychology Vs. Understanding The Jewish Soul***

The study of secular psychology about the human soul can get a person to experience the emotions of his *nefesh habehaimis* and become aware of them, to a certain extent, so it is not totally false.

But, our point here is that when a person relies on those methods to help himself, he might feel that he has discovered a utopian kind of existence, as if he's living on the Next World with all that he is discovering; in reality, he's just learning how to make his life on **This** World better. It's not going to give him a better life on the **Next** World. He might make his life happier on this world, but he's not refining his spiritual situation.

### ***Beginning To Leave Falsity***

The more a person can identify subtle and refined points about the soul and he attains inner calm, he can penetrate deeper and deeper into his soul.



Most people, who are caught up in superficiality, are immersed in falsehood even though they don't realize it, because when a person remains superficial, he is really lying to himself all the time. Falsehood affects all of us, but when someone works on self-awareness, he is aware of what he knows about himself and what he doesn't know about himself, so he is a lot less affected by falsity.

Although the problem of lying to oneself affects all people in different degrees, we can lessen it a lot when we truly work to understand our souls and become aware of our feelings, thoughts, and desires.

The more a person understands himself, he can see that he doesn't yet understand his more inner layers. He should view this discovery with the understanding that what he knows about himself is *emes* (the truth), and what he doesn't yet recognize is *emes l'amatah* (the total truth), and that the more inner layers after that are totally not yet recognizable.

When one is interested in truth, he will seek to get to total truth about himself, and he will be able to get to even the deepest parts of the soul eventually. In fact, it can be said of him that although he's not there yet at the total truth about himself, he's still connected with that truth, even though he hasn't reached it yet. This is based on the words of Rabbeinu Yonah, that when a person accepts upon himself that he will do something, it is considered as if he already did it, even though he didn't do it yet.

### ***In Conclusion***

These are words can be further expanded into a discussion for itself, but for now, let it suffice with just mentioning the roots of this matter.

We have studied here how people lie to themselves when it comes to denying their surroundings, actions, base emotions, higher emotions, speech, thought, and will.

The way to correct it, as we outlined here briefly, is: to search for truth, to agree that we are not perfect, to agree that we will work hard at self-improvement, to agree that Hashem gives us ability to work on ourselves; and to be able to clarify and become aware of subtle points about the soul, along with inner calm.

From inner calm, a person can slowly leave the tendency of lying to himself, and to penetrate further and further into the truth about himself, getting closer and closer to the "seal of Hashem that is *emes* (truth)."

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[1] See *Tanya* chapter 1

[2] Note: For further research, see ***Getting To Know Your Feelings*** (Chapter One), the Rav brings from the Chasam Sofer that there are also subtle differences between even the *nefesh habehaimis* of a Jew and the *nefesh habehaimis* of a gentile, and that even the physical body of a Jew is different than a gentile's body.

[3] Note: The nature of the "*Nefesh Elohis*" is discussed in ***Sefer Tanya***. To date, there are several

different English translations of *Sefer Tanya* available in stores.

[4] Refer to ***Getting To Know Your Feelings***.

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-wind-003-falsity-part-3-living-denial>