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## Fixing Your Wind - 005 Flattery Part 1: Internal Dishonesty

### *The Source of Flattery*

We continue here with the help of Hashem to explain how we fix our element of wind in the soul, the root of idle speech.

We are currently up to discussing **water-of-wind** in the soul, which, as we mentioned briefly, is the source of the trait of flattery (*chanufah*). The Sages say that those who regularly engage in flattery are of the four kinds of people who cannot greet the *Shechinah*.

Flattery is about false connection with others. When one speaks words of flattery to another, which is our current subject, this stems from **water-of-wind**. The wind is the root of speech, and the water is the root of connection; thus, **water-of-wind** is the source of words of flattery.

**Water-of-wind** (words of flattery) subdivides into four more branches: earth, water, wind and fire.

### *Earth-of-Water-of-Wind: Flattery That Reflects Internal Dishonesty*

**Earth-of-water-of-wind** is the source of speaking words of “flattery” that are caused by an “internal dishonesty”. Chazal describe this as “one who is not *“tocho k’baro”* - his “inside is not like his outside”. Chazal also call this “one who is not *“piv v’libo shavin”*, “his mind and heart are not equal with each other” - one who speaks words that are not matching what’s really on his heart.

Now we will proceed to understand the following.

When words remain unspoken in a person’s heart, the words remains in the heart, and this is the “earth” aspect that is involved in words of flattery. The words coming out of his mouth, which do not match what’s on his heart, are the “wind” aspect in the words of flattery.

We will explain this in broader terms. When one speaks words that do not match what’s going on in his heart, the words are superficial; this would be **wind-of-water-of-wind**. But as for the words unspoken that remain in his heart which he hasn’t released outward - that part stems from the “heaviness” of the element of earth. So this particular aspect is the **earth-of-water-of-wind** that is a factor of the flattery, and that is what we will discuss here in this chapter.

We have explained so far how earth and wind are factors in internal dishonesty, but water and fire can also be involved in dishonesty, depending on the situation. If the words of flattery are words conveying love, it is water (because love\connection is rooted in water). If the words are about honor,

it is fire, because honor is a trait of fire [because fire seeks to ascend, which is the idea of honor]. An example of this is what the Sages state that Korach used flattery to engage the others with him in his argument, by speaking words to them that made them feel honored.

So the “earth” aspect in speaking flattery are the words unspoken which remain in the heart. The “wind” aspect is the words that come out of his mouth, which are not in line with the words in his heart. The “water” is when one speaks words of flattery to another that are loving, and the “fire” is when one speaks of flattery that makes another feel more honored.

We have described the evil traits which stem from each of the four possibilities in **water-of-wind**. Let’s now discuss how we can rectify these traits, beginning from earth, then water, then wind and then fire which are within water-of-wind.

### ***Rectifying Earth-of-Water-of-Wind***

**Earth**-of-water-of-wind, as we explained, is when a person speaks words that are not in line with his heart. This is what lays behind one who speaks flattering words to another.

Why does a person not say what’s really on his heart? One reason is because he simply doesn’t want to say them. But why doesn’t he want to say them? He is being silent from those words, and his silence is really a form of flattery. The Sages state that the followers of Korach were silent so that they could flatter him and win his approval. So we see that being silent in the face of flattery can be a form of flattery itself.

When the words of a person remain dormant in his heart and he speaks words of flattery instead, this stems from the **earth**-of-water-of-wind.

The element of earth is rectified and holy when a person utilizes something from its potential state into its active state; similar to how the earth can nurture something and bring it out from the ground in its full form.

With flattery, though, a person’s words remain in his heart, and this leaves the words in their dormant state, which is an evil use of earth: when something remains as it is, unutilized. This comes from the aspect of “heaviness” in the earth. Earth is a heavy substance, therefore, it can bring on internal heaviness in the soul. When the “heaviness” in the earth of the soul gets too strong, it causes a person to be unable to utilize his potential.

### ***Two Kinds of Internal Hardening***

We will try to give more understanding to this concept.

The dominant amount of “earth” here is what is responsible for causing one’s words to remain in his heart. This happens for either one of two reasons:

**1)** When person has a problem expressing his heart’s emotions through his mouth, it is because his element of earth is stuffing his heart and blocking the words he really wants to say, from escaping his mouth.

Here, the problem is that the blocked heart is preventing the mouth from expressing the right words. He knows deep down what he really would like to say to another; the words are revealed in his heart, but it is his **mouth** here which isn’t allowing the words to be revealed.

**2)** There is another kind of blockage in the heart which can occur, however, which has worse

implications than in the first scenario: when the blockage is taking place **in** the heart. This is a deeper kind of inner heaviness. Here, the person is not even aware of the words that he really wants to say to the other person. He will be blocked off from knowing his own emotions.

### ***Inability To Express True Emotions & How It Results In Flattery***

In the first scenario, the words he would really like to say are at least revealed within his heart, and it is just that they are not being revealed through the mouth. In the second scenario, though, the words are concealed even from the heart. What will happen in this scenario? Not only doesn't he express himself in a way that's true to his emotions - he doesn't even know what his true feelings are in the first place.

So there are two scenarios of when a person doesn't say what's really on his heart. In the first scenario, a person is consciously aware that he's not saying what he really wants to say. This results in words of flattery to another person. In the second scenario, he has fooled himself so much with his flattery to another that his words are concealed even from his own heart; so he will not be consciously aware that he's flattering the other.

In the first scenario - when one's true words remain in the heart and he instead says something else to another, he will deceive the other person; he will say words to another that are not true. But in the second kind of flattery, the person not only fools another; he fools himself. This is a kind of flattery which a person is not consciously aware of; his element of earth has gotten so heavy that even his heart is stuffed from it (not just his mouth), and that is why it doesn't register to him as flattery. He's not even aware that he's flattering another.

### ***The Source of Unexpressed Emotions: Inner Heaviness***

This concept - of **inner heaviness** that gets too dominant<sup>[1]</sup> (resulting in a loss of self-awareness), is not limited to the scenario of flattery. It is a concept that applies to all of our emotions: inner heaviness can block a person from being aware of his emotions.

There are bodily emotions, as well as soul emotions. The bodily emotions are our sense of touch, which can feel things. Our soul's emotions are (mainly) in our heart. When earth gets too heavy in the soul - and this happens to many people - a person loses his self-awareness, and he doesn't feel what's going on inside his internal world at all.

### ***Two Reasons For Lack of Emotional Self-Awareness***

How does a person become completely disconnected from self-awareness to his emotions? There are two possible causes for it.

One cause for it can be because of **internal contradictions** in the soul, which causes a person to be concealed from being self-aware.

But another cause is because of **inner heaviness**. The possuk says that "*Hashem hardened the heart of Pharoah*" - Pharoah's heart was "hardened"; meaning, there is a concept of a "hardening of the heart", a "heart of stone", which causes a person to lose awareness of himself. The emotions of a person's heart can become covered over and concealed from a person's conscious awareness - a "heart of stone". This is the reason behind why a person doesn't feel what's going on in his internal self.

Such a person might be the kind of person who flatters others all the time, yet he's not even aware of this as he does so. But the problem starts before the trait of flattery. It comes from a lack of self-

awareness, due to a dominant amount of internal heaviness.

### ***Two Kinds of People On This World: Non-Emotional and Emotional***

To be general, there are different kinds of personalities in the world: some are born less emotional, and some are born with a more emotional nature.

Each person, depending on his unique situation, has to do inner work with himself on This World, which he was put here in order to improve and rectify himself. Both types face a different struggle than their counterparts; we aren't saying here who has a healthier personality type, because the purpose here is not to downplay anyone, *chas v'shalom*. No one should be made fun of for a nature he is born with! It is merely upon each person to work to rectify his nature that he was born with.

If one was born with less of an emotional nature - either because that's his personality, or because he was like that in a previous lifetime (otherwise known as "*gilgul*"\soul reincarnation), and therefore that part of his personality is heavily imprinted on him when he's born in a new lifetime) - it is upon him to learn how to open up his heart and reveal feelings in his life, which provide emotional vitality to a person.

Others, though, have the opposite struggle: they are born with a more emotional heart, but as they go through various life experiences that are unpleasant, they become hardened, and they get closed off from their emotions. They suffer from their emotions, and the more emotionally sensitive a person is, the more he suffers from his emotions.

At a certain point, he learns more or less how to harden himself from emotions, as a survival tactic so that he won't go crazy from all the internal suffering. He disconnects from feeling emotions altogether, and he instead places all his energies on the areas of action and intellect, so that he won't have to face anything that has to do with emotions\feelings.

### ***Those Who 'Run Away' From Their Emotions***

There are those who have merited to learn Torah all day in the *beis midrash*, enjoying a life immersed in the intellect, and this helps them escape from their emotional suffering. But we must understand the following (this is a harsh fact, but it is true): there are people who are immersed in Torah not because they are immersed in Torah, but because it helps them run away from their emotions!

There are people who suffer so much from their emotions, and so, they crave the cold intellect which can disconnect them from their powerful emotions; so they turn to Torah learning as a way to leave their emotions behind, and instead be involved with intellect.

This has nothing to do with the *possuk* "*If not for Your Torah my delight, I would go insane from my suffering.*" Rather, it is an excuse of running away from self-awareness of their emotions! *Baruch Hashem*, such people don't run away to the streets; of course it is better to run away to the Torah rather than run away to the street! But the point of what we are saying is that their Torah learning is mainly a refuge to them from emotional suffering, and it is not out of a love for the Torah itself.

The intellect is much more appealing to a person than to become involved with action, so they run away into their intellect; they talk it into themselves that only the intellect is important, and that emotions are for people who are "weaklings" and for people who have are "immature" and have to "grow up". They form this erroneous belief about life: that life is all about intellect, and that emotions have no place. A person might make this mistaken notion his entire life, and it's really all an excuse for running away from self-awareness to his emotions.

Of course, as we already said, it's better that a person turns to Torah learning to satisfy his intellectual needs, than to look elsewhere to satisfy it. But he is still forming a belief that life is all about intellect, and this is a very incorrect perception about life.

It might seem to us that people who are disconnected from emotions are stronger and more mature about life than their sensitive counterparts, because since they are less sensitive, they don't get hurt as much. So it seems that the people who harden themselves from emotions are the 'winners' in life who can get by life scot-free from emotional scars and insults, while the emotional people of the world are the like 'babies' who can't make it on this world.

As a result of this erroneous perception about life, the person with an emotional nature might force himself to adapt a non-emotional nature. If he ever feels insulted, he tells himself that this is an immature reaction, a sign of weakness, and that he has to "just grow up already" and "not be insulted."

We can go further into the details of what results from this kind of mentality about life, but the common denominator between all "desensitized" people is that they have trained themselves [whether consciously or subconsciously] to disgust all signs of emotions and feelings, and that emotions and feelings are for "weak" or "immature" people.

With this kind of attitude towards emotions, most people surely can't speak about emotions and express them, because emotions have become a totally foreign concept to many people. Many people recoil from the topic of emotions and get uncomfortable about any mention or thought of it.

So this is what's behind a person who speaks words of flattery: his emotions cannot be expressed properly by his mouth, and they remain dormant in his heart; or, even worse, he is closed off entirely from his own emotions, because his heart has become closed and hardened from feeling any emotions.

Thus, the root of flattery doesn't begin with flattery - it begins way before that. It starts with a "hardened heart".

### ***Two Scenarios of A "Hardened Heart"***

In fact, most people have a 'hardened' heart!

There can be two kinds of people like this. Either it's because some people were born with a less emotional nature, or, it's because a person taught himself to suppress his emotions. In either case, almost all people are uncomfortable with expressing their real feelings.

Of course, some people do express their true feelings; but it's rare to find such a person. Most people do not express what's really going on in the heart. People lock up their feelings in some jail inside themselves and express something differently in their mouths: words that have to sound "mature" and emotionless.

With most people, the feelings are for the most part closed off. The world is drawn toward mostly action, not emotion. Sometimes a person has a *simcha* (a celebration) and then he allows himself to "get emotional", but beyond that, people are afraid to get emotional. People are mostly living with action and with rational thought, and emotions are rarely accessed.

Thus, flattery really is a sign that one lies to his own heart; he is disconnected from what's really going on in his heart and that's why he doesn't say the words he really wants to say.

If a person has an emotional nature and he can't express himself properly, he suffers greatly. He feels an internal contradiction in himself, because he feels emotions inside himself, but he cannot express them properly. There are also people who are emotional but they are not honest with themselves, and that is why they flatter others as well as lie to themselves. Another kind of person, though, is honest with himself and with others, and even though he is emotional, he doesn't flatter others.

The Gemara says that it's permissible to flatter the wicked<sup>[2]</sup>. However, if a person is missing a sense of *yashrus* (straightness\honesty) in his heart, when he lies to the wicked, he's not using the permitted kind of flattery; he's simply using his tendency to flatter others, and he justifies his behavior with this statement of Chazal that one is allowed to flatter the wicked.

### **Step One: Speaking About Emotions**

Now that we've studied the roots of flattery, we can explore how to rectify it. The matters here are not only about how we can rectify the trait of flattery - they are matters that apply to all of our life. First we will explain how to solve the first kind of flattery (of the mouth) and then we will explain how to fix the second kind of flattery (of the heart).

Firstly, we must understand that the fact that people don't like to speak about emotions is not a plus. It is a weakness.

However, when we do speak about emotions, they must be expressed within proper boundaries. When a person doesn't understand properly what emotions are, he tends to think that emotions are childish reactions; he thinks that emotions are about being "sensitive" and thus a sign of weakness. But when a person has a proper perspective towards emotions, he knows that emotions are not limited to our base emotions of our *nefesh habehaimis* (animalistic layer of the soul); they stem from our higher *middos*, such as love and fear of Hashem, and compassion, etc. So all of our feelings really stem from higher powers in our soul.

Our emotions are not merely sensitive reactions to insults. The emotions in a Jew's soul stem from a higher soul. The emotions in a gentile's soul are merely 'emotions', whereas the emotions in a Jew's soul stem from G-dliness. Our emotions are from a high and lofty place in ourselves, not from a lower place in ourselves.

Of course, our emotions can certainly be negative, and that is when we just view them as stemming from our *nefesh habehaimis* (animalistic level of the soul) and below that. But our emotions, in essence, really stem from a higher place in our soul.

If this would be the perspective that a Jew has towards himself, he would greatly remove the blockage from his emotions.

Most people, as we said, have a hard time speaking about emotions, because they view emotions with disdain, thinking that emotions come from a low place in ourselves. One needs to instead view his emotions as stemming from a higher place in the soul, and then he can train himself to this kind of mentality; the next step will then be to get used to speaking about our emotions.

### **Emotional Training**

To our chagrin, people usually first hear about this concept of "expressing your emotions" only when they go for guidance before marriage, and until then, one is not taught how to express his emotions properly. This creates a difficulty in suddenly making the transition of 'learning how to communicate your emotions to your spouse'.

The boy getting married hears from the marriage teacher that “When you live with your spouse, you have to speak about your feelings with her.” It goes in one ear and goes out the other ear. A person might get himself to express his emotions for the first week of marriage, and soon after that, he’s back to his old routine...

The truth is that teaching people how to express emotions shouldn’t be limited to pre-marriage guidance. It should have been developed way before when a person was a child. The problem is, “emotions” are not a subject taught in yeshivah, nor is it taught in the girls’ schools. It is not popular to talk or teach about emotions, and then when a boy getting married hears from his marriage teacher that he will have to express emotions when he’s married, it seems foreign to him, and he feels uncomfortable, as if he’s going to be contradicting his whole life that he lived until now.

When a person grows up in a way that doesn’t teach how to express emotions, how can he be expected to suddenly express love to his wife, when he has never been taught about emotions until now?! Instead, a person needs to be taught way before marriage of how to speak about emotions.

Most of the emotions expressed in marriage, in fact, are negative emotions (such as anger and complaints), or they are express mundane things. Of course, it’s important to know how to express emotions in those areas as well, but it’s more important to get used to expressing emotions on a regular basis.

### ***Finding Someone Whom You Can Express Your Emotions To***

One idea of how a person can try this is to pick a friend, or perhaps two or three, who are good listeners, whom he or she can express his\her emotions with.

Of course, this should be done sensible. It should not be overdone, and it should not either take up most of a person’s life. It needs to be done in its proper and healthy limits. The idea is that is that when one speaks about positive emotions, and in a healthy amount, he trains himself to speak about emotions, and this can eventually train a person to naturally speak about emotions.

This is something which all people need. Speaking about emotions needs to become natural. This ‘breaks the ice’ on all his stifled emotions and gives a person the key to removing all the blockages.

Most people, understandably, don’t do this; but as we said, that is a weakness, not a sign of strength. Because most people cannot express emotions, most people have a hard time with the concepts of fear and love for Hashem, because it involves emotion. A person might be able to conceptualize love of Torah and even speak about it, but ironically, he recoils from expressing anything to do with the emotion of love. If one can’t express love, how can he express love of Torah?! It doesn’t happen.

This is the first step, and it is the more superficial aspect of the solution.

### ***Step Two: Meditating On Your Feelings***

The second step of the solution, which is the inner part (and if one is a more inner kind of person, he can start with this step), is: to take quiet time (as the Chazon Ish says to do, in sefer *Emunah U’Bitachon*) and reflect on what you are feeling. Ask yourself what you are feeling.

Some people try this and don’t feel a thing; all they feel is the temperature. (Others aren’t even sure of what the temperature is!) To start having feelings start with trying to feel physical feelings: feel if it’s cold or warm in the room.

After that, try to feel if you're happy or sad. If you can't discern if you're happy or sad, try to remember a time in which you were happy or sad. The point here is not to learn how to infuse yourself with positive emotions; the point is to begin to feel your emotions, which opens your soul to the emotions.

Next, take a pen and paper and write down the various emotions you feel. Don't write down what you learn about in sefarim, and don't write down what you would like to feel. Instead, write down the actual feelings you are feeling.

You can then notice which feelings are more common in your life, and which are not as common. This slowly gets you used to recognizing your emotions, and as you progress with this, you can recognize how high the quality of the emotions is.

Just as you can work to understand the words of the *Rashba* in-depth, so can you work to understand your emotions in-depth and begin to experience them.

### ***In Summary***

To summarize, there are two steps you can take to begin opening your emotions. The first step is to train yourself to speak about emotions, and the second step is to take quiet time to reflect about your feelings, beginning with bodily feelings and then your various emotions.

One who does this will transform into a new being; he'll discover new qualities in himself. He will also discover his weaknesses, and this needs to be dealt with. But he'll reveal a whole new world in himself which will provide him with new emotional vitality.

Yes, some pain will come along with this, because as one increases his emotional sensitivity, he feels pained from the various feelings he will come across. It is indeed written, "*An increase of knowledge is an increase of pain.*" However, that is how life is supposed to look like.[\[3\]](#)

### ***Pursue The Truth***

When one can properly express his words, as well as what's on his heart - along with working to pursue the truth - he will have the key to rectifying the trait of flattery.

Chazal say that "it is permissible to flatter the wicked on This World". This is permissible, but it is not an obligation; if one has to use flattery, it should bother him that he has to engage in flattery, because ultimately, we are supposed to pursue truth, and it should bother us when we have to engage in any kind of deception.

### ***In Conclusion***

We have explained what flattery causes, what its root is, and how to rectify it at its root: to get in touch with one's true emotions, which will enable one to express himself honestly and simply, in the true way that a Jew lives life.

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[1] For more on “inner heaviness”, see עפר-כבידות\_018\_מהות המדות (English translation not yet available).

[2] Sotah 41a

[3] See ***Getting To Know Your Feelings, Part II, Chapter Nine***

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