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[Home](#) > Fixing Your Earth [Sadness] - 015 Exhaustion & The Solution

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Wind (Movement) Increases Fire (Excitement)

With *siyata d'shmaya*, we are continuing to learn about the element of earth and the trait of sadness. We are now up to discussing sadness that comes from **wind-of-fire-of-earth**.

Fire is an excitable element. A fire will burst out like an explosive, dance around, and spread further. Besides for the many other properties that fire possesses, it is an element that symbolizes passion and excitement.

The element of wind can increase the fire's strength by blowing it, causing the fire to increase and spread. The Gemara discusses a case where a person lit a fire which was then blown on by the wind, which caused the fire to spread further^[1] [1]. Wind "blows" on fire and then spreads it further. Whether the wind is particularly strong and uncommon, or even if it is a minimal amount of wind that is more common, the wind will blow on the fire and spread it further. When a wind spreads fire, it also increases the size of the fire.

This is "**wind**"-of-fire: when fire is blown upon by wind, which causes the fire to increase. In terms that apply to the soul, **wind-of-fire** is when person becomes excited and passionate about something due to his element of fire, and the excitement expands whenever he has a lot of inner "movement" (wind) in the soul.

Becoming Excitable In Action, Speech, and Thought

There are three "garments" of the soul: action, speech and thought. A person may become passionate in any of these three areas [and as a result of the increase excitement, he may drain his energy in the process, causing him to feel fatigued and, to a certain degree, sad. This sadness comes from **wind-of-fire-of-earth**].

When one acts very quickly, he will also excite himself. When one speaks excitedly and with passion, as in the verse, "*My soul leaves when I speak with him*"^[2] [2], the passionate talking will also place him in an increased state of excitement. Or, when one thinks "passionately" about something and he is very excited about what he's thinking about - such as when one is thinking deeply into something and he is concentrating heavily on it, because he is very involved with the thought - he is "blowing" on his "fire", and he becomes more excited in the process.

One example that illustrates all of the above is when a person becomes involved in *machlokes* (strife). The Sages said the fire of *Gehinnom*, which Hashem created on the second day of Creation, is the

same “fire of *machlokes*” [3] [3]. It is clear to all that *machlokes* acts very much like a fire. In a *machlokes*, the people involved will become passionate in their differences with others, they become divided from others, the *machlokes* spreads, and it causes destruction - all the traits of fire.

When a person does certain actions that cause *machlokes*, he increases the *machlokes*, “blowing” on the fire that is already burning. We can all see that there are many people who become involved in *machlokes*, all kinds of groups and sects who clash with each other, who will do different actions which excite the fire of the *machlokes* further. This is an example of **wind-of-fire** expressed in the area of action: The *machlokes* itself is the fire, and the action that a person does to increase the *machlokes* is the “wind” that excites the fire and increases it.

When a person speaks about a *machlokes* with others, this also increases the *machlokes*. In the physical world, a person can blow on a fire and spread it either through waving his hand, or through blowing with the air (wind) of his mouth. So too, a person ‘blows’ on the fire of *machlokes* either through his ‘hand’ - through doing certain actions that increase the *machlokes* - or through blowing with his ‘mouth’, by speaking about the *machlokes* with others.

A person can also ‘blow’ on the fire of *machlokes* through thought. When one thinks about the *machlokes* and he feels heavily involved with it, in his mind and heart, he is also increasing the *machlokes*. The “fire of *machlokes*” increases with the more that one’s thoughts are heavily involved in it, either from spending a lot of time thinking about it, or from thinking deeply into it, imagining and daydreaming about it, and thereby becoming more attached with it. One’s thoughts about the *machlokes* will excite the *machlokes* further.

Similarly, when people have hatred towards each other, they will often think about this hatred and become more excitable about it, which only serves to increase the hatred. This is **wind-of-fire**: when one ‘blows’ on “fire”, by becoming more excited about the fire and increasing the fire further.

Heavy Emotion/Excitement Causes Loss of Energy

Excitement comes from the element of fire, and it can either be coming from either a good, repaired place in the soul, or it can be coming from an impaired place in the soul. However, in either case, whenever one uses the fire\excitement in his soul, he can feel weak afterwards. This is true even if it was a “fire of holiness”, such as when a person becomes overly joyous at a wedding or happy occasion. He becomes so excited from joy that he forgets he needs to go to sleep, as a result of the excitement that has overtaken him.

Whenever a person has an increased amount of excitement, or great joy, as well as when they feel pressured or stressed, it can cause a person to feel drained from physical energy. Their soul is being exhausted, because they are using up a lot of energy in the soul, as a result of the excitement in their emotional state. Just as the body becomes exhausted when one uses up a lot of physical energy, so does the soul grow exhausted from using a lot of the soul’s energies, by becoming very excited and passionate about something.

While a person is actually excited, such as in a time of joy, he gains more spiritual strength, but he is physically draining his energy, and he may not be consciously aware of it. Or, he may be aware of it, but his strength is able to remain with him because he is in a state of enlightenment. But eventually, when excitement dies down, he is left physically drained - it finally ‘hits him’, and he becomes utterly exhausted.

Movement, whether physical or internal (in the soul, such as excitement or heavy emotion) cause a person to use up energy and then feel drained afterwards. When the soul goes through much inner

movement (excitement/emotion), it uses up energy when different powers of the soul are activated from their potential state, causing the soul to feel drained from energy afterwards. This also wears down the body, because the soul is connected with the body.

The Sadness That Can Follow After Extreme Joy or Excitement

Here is another example.

At a very joyous event, such as when a father is marrying off a son or daughter, he can be so happy at the wedding and dance with euphoria, to the point that he feels like he transcends all physical reality, as if there is no pain, no problems, and no worries in existence. (Of course, this doesn't mean that he won't experience any arguments or feuding at the celebration, for Chazal state "There is no *kesubah* which does not contain discord"). After the wedding, he is exhausted, because he has used up so much energy in his soul. After all, it takes a lot of energy from the soul to feel so happy! Now he needs a lot of sleep to "get over" everything that happened. In addition to simple rest which he needs, he also feels like he to rest because he is simply emotionally drained from the wedding, and he might be sleepy for the next 2 or 3 days.

When a person feels drained of his joy and vitality, he will experience the very opposite of joy and vitality: sadness, and a deathlike feeling. The great joy is no longer here, and in addition to this, there is a lingering sense of sadness that follows. But the sadness will be even more pronounced if a person used up a tremendous amount of energy in his soul, without pause. He will feel afterwards as if he has been emptied, and this leads him into a state of sadness.

Similarly, there are some people who get depressed after every Yom Tov is over. After the joy of Yom Tov has gone, one might feel saddened at the disappearance of this joy that he had felt on Yom Tov. After Shabbos as well, which is not a time of "joy" but rather a time of *oneg*/pleasure, a person is also apt to fall into sadness, as the Sages state, that the soul becomes sad on *Motzei Shabbos* because it mourns the disappearance of the Shabbos.^[4] [4] When one uses up his soul's energies and he feels emptied, he feels like he has dried up in his soul and he can become sad. This is wind-of-fire-of-earth. It is the sadness that follows after extreme excitement, vitality, and joy. The person goes from a state of joy into a state of sadness.

Exhaustion That Results From Extremity

Even more so, we find that there are some people who are drawn towards an extreme way of living, or extreme ideals or opinions, which ultimately drains them of their energy, because they are acting above their soul's natural capabilities, which causes them to use up a lot more energy than their souls can handle.

While some people act extreme because they are pursuing the truth - there are very few people like this - there are some who will act extreme, live an extreme kind of lifestyle, and advocate strongly for extreme ideals and beliefs, and this is how they arrive at joy. They do not find joy in the regular routine of life - they have to do extreme things in order to feel joyous and happy with themselves. These kinds of people have a nature in their soul which is naturally drawn towards extremity, and it is simply their personality, not because they seek truth.

People can form all kinds of extreme opinions, when they have a nature that gravitates towards extremities. Even if a person strictly adheres to a Torah way of living, he might pick a certain path in Torah which is more extreme than [the mainstream way of living of the rest of the generation], if he has a more extreme kind of personality.

When people become extreme, often it is because there is something very wrong in their life. Every

person will naturally stay at the “middle point”, at the center between the two extremes (more or less), but a person might move away from the “middle point” when he is facing issues there, and run away to any of the two extremes that are far from the middle point. But many times, people become extreme and they form extreme ideals and opinions because they have a personality that is drawn towards extremity. They will pursue a certain idea with all of their energy.

When this problem manifests in one’s *Avodas Hashem*, a person may spend all of his energy on *davening*, praying for many hours and with deep concentration, then at a later point he will spend all of his energy on his Torah learning and learn until he feels completely exhausted, and at a later point, he will spend all of his energy on the *mitzvah* of honoring his parents. While this can also come from a desire for *shleimus* (self-perfection), often it is not coming from this reason, and it is rather coming from a personality that leans towards extremes.

Even when it comes to simple matters, such as going shopping in order to buy items for the house, he is the type to purchase way more than the necessary amount for the house, as long as he feels that it is important to do so. Since he easily becomes extreme, he is not balanced.

When one has the above nature, he will think in terms of extremes, spending a great amount of time and energy in what he believes to be important, exhausting his energy over it, and then feeling emptied afterwards from energy.

Usually, what will happen when a person acts extreme? He is not acting according to his natural energies. He wears himself out, and he doesn’t do anything about the problem until he becomes desperate (when “*the waters have come up to his soul*”^[5] [5].) He will keep putting his focus on different areas, whether it’s concentrating on a *berachah*, on his *tefillos*, on his Torah learning, etc. until he becomes drained from all his energy, before moving onto the next area. In each area, he exhausts all of his energies until he is drained. He keeps becoming emptied of his energy.

On a deeper level, this power is called *mesirus nefesh* (great perseverance of the soul for a true cause), and this is a valid approach for a person to take. However, acting with *mesirus nefesh* is only constructive for one who first has *yishuv hadaas* (a calm, settled mind), who is also prepared to have deep *bittul* (self-nullification) in the situation. Only then can a person become truly dedicated to what he does. But if a person is not acting out of the deep power of *mesirus nefesh*, but of a personality that comes from the *nefesh habehaimis* (animal soul) that leans towards extremity, he will become emptied from energy.

There are people who live all the time in this way, because it is their very nature to act extreme and spend all of their energy. This follows with sadness. Yet, a person with this nature will keep acting this way, going through a cycle of joy and excitement that follows with loss of energy and then depression. He’ll make sure to “get some *chizuk*” (inspiration) to get himself out of the depression, so that can he get back into his excitement mode, whereupon he repeats the vicious cycle.

In summary, it has been explained here three different examples of how a person “blows” on his “fire” (excitement) and thereby increases it. One example was when a person excites a *machlokes*. Another example was when a person excites himself either through action, speech, or thought. Another example is when one has a personality that leans towards extremity, which causes him to excite himself (to the point that he becomes exhausted from using up so much energy).

Balancing Our Excitement

First we will discuss the solution for the first example mentioned, which is when a person “blows” on his fire/excitement and thereby increase it (**wind-of-fire**).

Understandably, excitement is a positive aspect of human nature which is necessary. The *Mesillas Yescharim* says that one needs to reach the state of “excitement of the *neshamah* (soul)”. However, excitement needs to be balanced. We need to make sure that it is true excitement of the *neshamah*, and not the imagination. We can use excitement and inspiration from external factors as a way to get started with something, but it should never become the general approach. Also, even when do make use of excitement, it should be in accordance with the natural energy of our physical body, as well as in accordance with the capabilities of our soul.

In many people, their excitement is not coming from the *neshamah*, but a superficial kind of excitement that comes from the physical body, or the animal level of the soul (*nefesh habehaimis*). But excitement needs to be in accordance with our soul’s natural energies, as well as with our natural physical energy. If a person wants to excite himself and he knows that this will take his toll on his energy afterwards, he should make sure not to overstep his boundaries, so that he doesn’t lose his balance with becoming overly excited.

For example, if a person is *davening* and he knows that he is able to greatly excite himself by thinking certain thoughts or by moving his body in a certain way, what is wrong if he does so? If this excitement is superficial and it is not in accordance with his soul’s natural level, it will only throw him off balance. If he knows that is the case, he should refrain from exciting himself to that point. The same is true if he knows that his excitement during *davening* will make him feel physically exhausted afterwards – it is a sign that he shouldn’t engage himself into such excitement.

Mitigating Exhaustion – Through Remaining Attached to the Joy or Excitement

Now we will speak of the solution for the second example given, which is the excitement that is activated through passionate action, speech or thought.

When a person becomes greatly excited and later he becomes exhausted and emptied from energy, there are two different possibilities in front of him, as he is amidst this “drained” state. If he is connected to the joy, he may be physically weak, but his soul is still very much active, because he can remain joyous. Although the joy isn’t as great as it was before, one can remain attached to some of the joy, excitement, or whatever positive state one achieved (even though one cannot have it now completely), and in that way, he is not truly emptied.

This can save one from the sadness that would normally follow in this situation. For if a person feels truly emptied both in body and soul, he will be sad, but if he can remain attached to the joy or excitement he experienced, he is not totally emptied from energy in his soul (in spite of the fact that he does feel exhausted). The soul can also provide energy to the body. Even if the body is weak and one feels physically exhausted, one can remain connected to the joy that he experienced, and in this way, his soul can give some energy to his body.

Here is another example of the idea. A young father with children goes to sleep, tired and exhausted from the day, and he is hoping to good a good night’s sleep so he can be well-rested for the next day. In the middle of the night, he gets woken up by the baby, or by one of the children. He wakes up to take care of the crying child, giving to the child whatever is needed, until the child falls asleep and he can crawl back into his bed. When he gets up in the morning, he feels like he could use another night’s sleep again. He is tired and exhausted from the night before and now there is a whole day in front of him, and he knows he will be sleep-deprived. How does he react to his feeling of exhaustion?

He has two options in front of him. Either he can think to himself that he didn’t get enough sleep, he’s exhausted, he feels like he has no energy – and of course, this makes him sad. Or, he can remind himself that he took care of his child at night and tended to the child with love. So even though he’s

physically tired, his soul can still remain with joy, and in that way, he won't feel completely emptied of energy.

Often when people use up a lot of energy and they become tired afterwards, they have nothing to hold onto when they feel exhausted, so they feel completely from energy. For example, a person puts a lot of energy into his *davening* and when he is done, he feels utterly drained. All of his elation has been in his imagination, and now he is emptied from energy, so he can be easily sad. He thinks of whatever he is left with, and he feels like has nothing of the *davening* now. He feels empty, after all of the excitement he put in. Instead, one can remind himself of the joy and elation he had when he was *davening*, and in that way, he will not feel completely emptied.

So the idea is that one should always remain with some attachment to the joy or excitement, and in this way, he doesn't become completely emptied of energy, even amidst his exhaustion. As mentioned, when one awakens some energy in his soul, this can also give some energy to the physical body (for the body and soul are interconnected), and although the soul cannot completely revitalize an exhausted body, it can still provide it with some energy, which greatly mitigates the physical exhaustion. This saves a person from the sadness that follows after exhaustion, because a person becomes sad only when he feels completely emptied from energy, so if he doesn't feel completely emptied right now, he can remain connected somewhat to the previous excitement.

Repairing Sadness That Results From Extremity (Earth-of-Wind-of-Fire)

Now we will address the solution for the third issue discussed: people who become sad from excitement because they have a very extreme kind of personality.

People who have this "extreme" leaning in their personality will usually have a lot of issues in their life. This is a broad issue to discuss. As mentioned earlier, they are not necessarily acting out of *mesirus nefesh*. Their souls contain an imbalance, by their very nature.

Most people with this kind of personality have constantly alternating periods of highs and lows in their life. They can be very excited and successful one day, then they drain themselves of energy, until they become emptied, which makes them become terribly depressed. There can be many reasons for this, but usually it is because they base their life on excitement and passion, which is a fundamentally incorrect way of living. When they become exhausted after their excitement and they feel low on energy, they often feel like their life is pointless. This comes from the emptiness that they feel, after they have finishing using it all up.

Their extreme nature causes them to make heavy use of **wind-of-fire**. When they become extreme in their excitement and later they feel emptied of energy, they fall very quickly into a state of sadness. Their very way of living is immature and imbalanced, due to being constantly emptied of their energy.

In order for such a person to repair this issue, we cannot recommend any specific exercise. Rather, this kind of person will need to change fundamentally, making a huge overhaul in the very inner structure of his soul, so that he can come out of his imbalanced nature.

To describe it briefly, he will need to build his element of **earth** so that he gains more stability in his personality, and he will also need to build a healthy source of pleasure (**water**) in his life, so that he doesn't need to turn to any extremities in order to find life pleasurable. In this way, he develops his element of "water" properly which will balance out his "fire", and he develops his "earth" which can balance out his "wind".

Usually, however, people with this kind of personality have "lives that are not lives"[\[6\]](#) [6]. They prefer

a more explosive kind of life, which fuels their nature that loves extremity and excitement. This issue is really a broader matter that we cover here completely [7] [7], and here we have only mentioned it here with specific regards to the matter we are discussing here, which is the sadness that results from **wind-of-fire-of-earth**.

In short, we have explained in this lesson about the sadness of **wind-of-fire-of-earth** and how to repair it.

[1] [8] *Bava Kamma 59b*

[2] [9] *Shir HaShirim 5:6*

[3] [10] *Shelah HaKadosh parshas Vayakhel*

[4] [11] *Taanis 27b*

[5] [12] *Tehillim 69:2*

[6] [13] *Pesachim 113b*

[7] [14] *Editor's Note: The Rav discusses more about the nature of "extremity" in **Fixing Your Fire-Anger 009_Extremity***

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