

## ***The wind & the breath of life- an inspiration from Alexander Yanai. # 5 Equalizing the nostrils - an additional reading***

Many of us are amazed of the treasure of knowledge the ATM's of Alexander Yanai represent. Despite this there are not many direct references in the text where Dr. Feldenkrais got inspiration or material for his creations. The influence from other teachings are evident and sometimes it is possible to follow a development of a certain lesson into the special approach which is known to be Feldenkrais method. One such influence became clear to me when I participated in the annual meeting of FGNA in Georgetown, Washington in the summer of 2000. Twice during the conference I encountered the ATM # 5 Equalizing the nostrils in different settings.

This particular ATM when created in a big group of experienced people was very impressive. The integrative part of the lesson evoked another life-force of mine and was brought to the surface as part of the somatic experience at the floor namely my Torah & Judaic studies. The language/culture tension between Swedish, Hebrew and English has for many years been a tool and source in my learning. A need to detect differentiation's as well to find common factors between my different languages, cultures and professions. Since Georgetown I have been addressing this insight of #5 now and then in my teaching and feel that my reading might be of value for Others. As we all know so well - the breathing is always there, in every lesson, in every move.

For those not so familiar with the Hebrew Bible and specifically the Torah (teaching) it is worthwhile to mention that it exists two parallel stories of creation in the first part, Genesis. They are narrated in two different styles and by different authors (this is not a fundamentalists reading) The first description is a creation by naming or conceptualising, the second a creation by making or moulding. Both are equally included in the text and a rich source for interpretation and exegesis. The second story is not so well known, sadly enough, as it has a more appealing balance between man & woman, at least in Hebrew. Personally I like to read them as two sides of a culture reality, the verbal and the non- verbal way of narrative & teaching. One reality that can not do without the other. A truly somatic approach.

In part 5 of the 7 parts of this particular ATM Dr Feldenkrais instruct .... "Try to do the following. Close your mouth and speak. You are completely blocking your mouth, lips and teeth. Do not make any movement with your mouth, lips, and teeth while you loudly say the following quotation from the Torah.

"When God began to create heaven and earth — the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day...."

This is Genesis 1: 1-5

I should have liked to ask Dr. Feldenkrais if it would not been more adequate to quote the other story instead as I could understand it to be more fitting with the ATM . And that reading is...

"...When the LORD God made earth and heaven when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil, but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth the LORD God formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being..... "

This is Genesis 2: 5-7

The observant reader is now objecting, my quotation above is not what is written at page 27 volume one part 1 in the Alexander Yanai collection. True. My choice is from a New Translation of the Holy Scripture according to the traditional Hebrew Text; (The Jewish Publication Society ISBN 0-8276-0364-9) And I do not use the Christian expression Old Testament either. What most practitioners will use is King James that is printed.

" In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the dark. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night And the evening and the morning were the first day...."

Another translation slightly different would read....

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said,. "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

## ***The wind & the breath of life- an inspiration from Alexander Yanai. # 5 Equalizing the nostrils - an additional reading***

....In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens when no Plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."  
(Revised Standard Version translated from the original tongues being the version set forth A.D. 1611 revised A.D. 1881-1885 and A.D. 1901 compared with the most ancient authorities A.D. 1952)

A fourth choice could be a secular reading as this one by Robert Alter, professor in comparative literature in Berkley, in his book Genesis, Translation and commentary ISBN 0-393-03981-1

"When God began to create heaven and earth, and the earth then was welter and waste and darkness over the deep and Gods breath hovering over the waters, God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And it was evening and it was morning, first day.....

.....On the day the LORD God made earth and heavens, no shrub of the field being yet on the earth and no plant of the field yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not caused rain to fall on the earth and there was no human to till the soil, and wetness would well from the earth to water all the surface of the soil, then the LORD God fashioned the human, humus from the soil, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living creature....."

I have quoted four translations, as I understand this to be the officially accepted approach in the Feldenkrais community for elaborating of different understandings of the matrix. There are fine differences between the many more existing translations and every practitioner using the A Y # 5 in any language but Hebrew should in my opinion make a conscious choice if at all use the text and if yes what translation to use.

Central for my reading are the Hebrew words Ruach and Nishmat Chaim. Ruach in plain language means wind. Neshama means breathing, (Chaim means life). They also mean soul. Both words are physical, words of action. Somatic words.

I have chosen a quote by Aryeh Kaplan in his book; Meditation and the bible (ISBN 0-87728-617-5) as clarifying these concepts that might be of interest, space is omitting other explanations . I quote

"In order to understand the concept of Ruach HaKodesh more clearly, one must understand the precise meaning of the word Ruach, which is usually translated as "spirit." The meaning of this word becomes evident when we understand the Kabbalistic concept of the soul. In the Bible, we find that three words are usually used to refer to the soul, these being Nefesh, Ruach and Neshamah. According to the Kabbalists, these represent the three most important levels of the soul. Looking at the etymology of these terms, we see that the word Nefesh comes from the root Nafash, meaning "to rest," as in the verse, "And on the seventh day. He ceased work and rested (Nafash)" (Exodus 31:17). The word Ruach is often translated as "Spirit," but in many other places, this same word also means wind. Finally, the word Neshamah , comes from Neshimah , the Hebrew word for breath.

The master Kabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Ari), explains that these three levels can be understood if we take a glassblower as an analogy. The process begins with the breath (Neshimah) of the glassblower, blowing into a tube to form a vessel. This breath then travels through the tube as a wind (Ruach) until it reaches the vessel. The breath finally enters the vessel, forming it according to the desire of the glassblower, and there it comes to rest (Nafash). In the case of the soul, the "Blower" is God Himself. Thus, in describing the creation of man , the Bible says, "God formed man out of the dust of the earth, and He blew in his nostrils a soul (Neshamah) of life" (Genesis 2:7).The spirit known as Ruach is thus the "Breath of God" that enters into man's being. Although God's influence constantly permeates man's being, like the air around us, it is not usually detectable. Air can only be felt when it is in motion, when we sense it as a wind (Ruach). Similarly, God's spirit can only be detected when it moves in us, and it is for this reason that such spirit is also called Ruach, the same word as for wind. This is also evident from the etymology of the word Ruach . This word is closely related to the Hebrew word Oreach , meaning a "visitor" or "guest," as well as the word Orach meaning a path. Both of these words indicate a concept that is not normally present, as well as one of motion and travel. In the same respect, wind is not a normal state of the air, but is one that comes about as a result of motion. The word Ruach is even more closely related to the word Reach , a fragrance. Just as a fragrance can be detected even though it is not otherwise visible, so can the inspiration associated with Ruach. The highest of the three levels of the soul is the Neshamah, which is the "Breath of God," while the lowest is the Nefesh, the level that rests in man. The part that connects the two is that which is called Ruach. Therefore, when God wishes to enlighten a person or convey a message to him, it is transmitted through the level of Ruach. Such a person is then said to have attained Ruach HaKodesh, the holy Ruach. This, then, is the concept of Ruach HaKodesh, the enlightenment aspired to in meditation. It is referred to clearly in such Biblical verses as, "A spirit

***The wind & the breath of life- an inspiration from Alexander Yanai. # 5  
Equalizing the nostrils - an additional reading***

(ruach) is poured upon us from on high" (Isaiah 32:15). This is also very closely related to prophecy, as we see from the verse, "I will pour forth My spirit (ruach) on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 3:1). " So far Kaplan and the Ari.

Worthwhile mentioning is that the narrative of the Torah regularly is using words of action or parts of the human body to express emotions and feelings. The examples are numerous.

The first translation of the Torah from Hebrew into Greek used the word Pneuma for Ruach, wind. In Latin the choice is Spiritus that according to my dictionary could be a puff of wind or a breeze but also the tone in a instrument and of course breathing and soul.

People with a catholic background had to make a major shift when Ghost was changed to Spirit back in the sixties after the second Vatican Meeting. Elaboration's of this is also left out. Still the word Spirit in English is a bit problematic. According to my eight edition of the Oxford and thesaurus ,published in 1991, Spirit is different than the words in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The word Spirit is defined by either the intelligent non-physical part of a person or a rational or intelligent being without a material body or the soul or a prevailing mental or moral condition or an attitude; a mood; a supernatural being such as a ghost or a fairy.

I find the modern English language defining a human split between body and soul. When used like this it creates a difficulty for me not only in the language consequently also in the thinking and action. In my understanding a somatic approach could therefore be a greater effort in English than in Hebrew.

By this reading I also want to show how one can follow the somatic approach of the Feldenkrais method back to some of its roots in the Hebrew-Judaic culture, a culture as close to the orient as the occident.

In Sweden there was a new bible translation published in 2000 and the word wind is now the choice in the first story. It is unhabitual for most people and there is confusion as the familiar text is changed.

I am looking forward to read about the wind in other cultures. The floor is free. (a Swedish expression to invite for a discussion)

Stockholm December 2001

Eva Laser