

יסוד העפר - תיקון מדת העצבות

REPAIRING OUR ELEMENT OF EARTH [SADNESS]

TORAH MANUAL TO REPAIRING SADNESS



DEVELOPED BY THE FOUR ELEMENTS INSTITUTE

מאת מחבר סדרת הספרים
בלבבי משכן אבנה ודע את עצמך ועוד

1 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Translator's Preface	2
1 – Coming Out Of Despair	4
2 – Maintaining Inner Vitality	11
3 – The Groan Of Disappointment & Its Solution	17
4 – Coming Out Of Negativity	22
5 – Coming Out Of Comfort Zone	28
6 – Overdoing It & The Solution	34
7 – Masked Pain & The Solution	38
8 – Indifference To Pleasure & The Solution	44
9 – Reviving The Spirit	50
10 – Harmonizing With Opposition	54
11 – Unfulfilled Wishes & The Solution	58
12 – Unrealized Aspirations & The Solution	63
13 – Painful Separation & The Solution	69
14 – Dissatisfaction & The Solution	77
15 – Exhaustion & The Solution	87
16 – Emptiness & The Solution	94

Translator's Preface To The New Edition

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The system of the 4 elements (earth, water, air and fire) to understand our inner dimensions is referenced as early as the *Sefer Yetzirah*, and was explained more in detail by Rav Chaim Vital, the student of the *Arizal*, in *sefer Shaarei Kedushah*. In a few words that describe the root of repairing our character, Rav Chaim Vital explains based on the *Arizal* that all of our negative *middos* come from these 4 elements. Our element of earth is the source of sadness, laziness, and despair. Our element of water is the source of lust, stealing, envy, and jealousy. Our element of wind is the source of falsity, idle speech, self-praise, flattery, mockery, and gossip. Our element of fire is the source of conceit, anger, honor, intolerance, and control-seeking.

In the last decade, the Rav shlit" a who authored *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh* and *Da Es Atzmecha* as well as many other *sefarim* which bring people closer to HaKadosh Baruch Hu and closer to their true self, has been explaining how to fix our character at a core level. By building upon the approach of Rav Chaim Vital of the 4 elements the Rav has gone into incredible details of the human soul. Each lesson is filled with deep insights about the different natures and habits that may dominate a person, along with guidance on how to repair or balance a certain nature that we encounter in ourselves.

In the last few years, there has been a growing interest in using the approach of the 4 elements within the frum, Torah world. Books such as *Mastering Your Relationships* by Mordechai Weinberger and *How To Get Along With Everyone* by Shimon Gruen hit home in their wonderful hands-on approach of making the concept of the 4 elements practical and revolutionary. Yet, there is so much more to it. **The 4 elements approach is not mere psychology, it is *avodas Hashem* at its deepest level, and it is the key to our personal *tikkun*.**

The Rav shlit" a began to explain the 4 elements in-depth in hundreds of lessons prior to the release of the aforementioned books, and was the first to begin to explain the concept in such detail and clarity. But most astoundingly is that the Rav shlit" a has never read a secular book, and he has developed the approach drawing entirely on the full literature in Torah and *Chazal* on this topic. In addition, the specialty of the "Bilvavi" approach towards the 4 elements is that this particular series goes into greater detail of the breakdown of the 4 elements, which divides into four subdivisions for each of the *middos*. For example, if sadness comes from the earth, there is a lesson that explains how to work with the earth-of-earth-of-earth and how to work with the water-of-earth-of-earth, and so forth.

The focus of the series is on how to achieve a balance in our *nefesh* so that we can reach our personal *tikkun* and come closer to Hashem. It will also improve our relationships with others, but the focus of the series is primarily on developing our elements within us and balancing them. With each lesson, you will gain clarity about the inner workings of the *nefesh* (human soul) and you can begin any inner work by choosing which *middah* you would like to start working on. As per the guidance of the Rav shlit" a, you don't need to start working on all of your *middos*, as this will only be exhausting and not practical. Instead, choose to work on one particular *middah* that you feel is getting the most in your way, and keep your focus there. You can learn any of the lessons in order to gain more clarity and knowledge about the *nefesh* and to understand the approach better, but as far as working on the concepts, it is recommended to only keep your focus on working at the one *middah* that's getting in your way the most. It is also necessary for a person to understand that his essence is a pure *neshamah* and that all imbalances and shortcomings in our nature exist on our outside, and they are not our core. We should be aware of our positive strengths and capabilities and have a positive self-image before embarking on *tikkun hamiddos*.

3 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

To date, this series includes:

Repairing Our Earth – Sadness

Repairing Our Earth – Laziness

Repairing Our Water – Desires

Repairing Our Wind – Speech, Lying, Flattery, Bragging

Repairing Our Fire – Conceit

Repairing Our Fire – Anger

Repairing Our Fire – Honor

Using Earth: Focusing

Using Earth: Joy



For Inquiries on the "Four Elements Institute"
Contact: mobile 054.840.8187 · Email: 4elements@bilvavi.net



Questions in all spheres of life in general and the *nefesh* in particular
are welcome in the Q&A system and will be transferred to the Rav, *Shlita*
email: rav@bilvavi.net

For Inquiries on "Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh"

Contact: mobile 052.763.8588

Email info@bilvavi.net



The Rav's classes appear on "Kol haLashon" Torah Bank Service
USA 718.521.5231 | Israel 073.295.1245

1 – Coming Out of Despair

SADNESS IS CONFINEMENT, HAPPINESS IS EXPANSION

With *siyata d'shmaya*, we will learn here about the element of earth, the root of sadness (*atzvus*).

The opposite of *atzvus*/sadness is *simchah*, happiness. What is *atzvus*/sadness, and what is *simchah*/happiness?

We find in Chazal two different measurements, *amah atzeivah*, a measurement which appears exact and confined to its place, and *amah sochakas*, a measurement which looks like it is expanding.¹ Thus the term *atzvus*, which is related to the term *atzeivah*, is when one stays confined exactly to where one is, whereas *simchah*, happiness, is to expand past where one is. Sadness is about being confined, whereas happiness is about expanding.

SADNESS IS UNUTILIZED POTENTIAL, HAPPINESS IS UTILIZED POTENTIAL

There is also a deeper way to understand the difference between sadness and happiness. Happiness is experienced whenever a “potential” is being actualized, which results in expansion. By contrast, sadness is whenever a potential has not been actualized. Or, even if a person has begun to actualize his potential, if he reverts back to the potential state, there will be resulting sadness. That is the fundamental understanding of the difference between sadness and happiness.

THE ELEMENTS OF SADNESS

The four elements (earth, water, wind, and fire) can all be different root causes for sadness, and they each have their subdivisions.

[The general root of sadness is in the element of earth, so all sadness is generally rooted in earth. But each of the elements contains all four elements, so there is earth-of-earth, water-of-earth, wind-of-earth, and fire-of-earth. Therefore, sadness can come from either: earth-of-earth, water-of-earth, wind-of-earth, or fire-of-earth.]

I. SADNESS - WHEN POTENTIAL ISN'T ACTUALIZED

We shall start by discussing the sadness that comes from **earth-of-earth-of-earth**. This particular sadness comes when one's potential is completely not actualized.

When we left Egypt, the joy of our redemption was (besides for being a simple freedom from our slavery), a deep joy, of leaving our potential state, where we were not yet made into the Jewish nation (for we were only the Jewish

¹ Eruvin 3b

5 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

people then in the potential sense, but not in the active sense), and by leaving Egypt, we now entered into our actualized state, to become the chosen Jewish nation. This was the deep cause for our joy.

Our main joy is on the festival of Succos, the “time of our harvest”, and the apex of all the festivals, because it is the total actualization of all our potential as the Jewish nation. The Torah calls Succos as “*chag ha’asif*”, “time of harvest”, and the depth of the joy of the harvest season is that it symbolizes the gathering of all potential and its actualization, and that is why it becomes the time where we can truly rejoice. In contrast to this, if we plant something and it doesn’t sprout, or if it grows deformed, we haven’t actualized the potential of the seed, so we are sad over it.

There is reason to be sad when:

- 1) Something stays where it is, in its raw, potential state.
- 2) When something doesn’t expand past where it is.
- 3) If something started to expand, but then it reverts back to its raw, potential state.
- 4) The worst is when something has no potential at all. When we do not see potential in something, this is the greatest cause for sadness. This is the sadness stems from **earth-of-earth-of-earth**, as we will soon explain.

The element of earth is depicted in our Sages with the term, “She has nothing of her own” (in Hebrew, ליה ליה מגרמיה כלום, “*les lei m’garmei klum*”).² When the earth becomes ruined and nothing can grow in it anymore, it cannot produce. It can no longer give anything of its own. It has nothing to give. When nothing can come from earth, the earth is “ruined”, damaged, impaired.

Every human being has the ability to keep growing throughout his life. The *tzaddikim* (the righteous) are especially growing people. But the wicked stay stagnant their whole life; they never grow. Even if one is not in the category of the wicked, and he is simply a non-growing person, he slowly ‘rots’ throughout his life and he eventually returns to earth, when he dies and his body decomposes in the earth. At death, his existence reverts back to his potential state. But he still has the potential to grow again at the time of the resurrection, when the dead will rise from the earth. Therefore, death is not the end of a person - it is merely a return to his potential state.

EARTH-OF-EARTH-OF-EARTH: TOTAL DESPAIR

In the soul, though, a person may feel like he has reached his “end”, whenever he feels despair. That is **earth-of-earth-of-earth** – it is the state of despair, and it is the very opposite of the soul’s power to have hope.

There is always hope for the Redemption. The depth of this is because the Redemption exists in a potential state, and we await and hope for the day when it will be actualized. But when a person despairs, he doesn’t believe in his potential, or he doesn’t believe it can be actualized. He feels weakened from this. From despair, a person doesn’t believe in the actualization of a potential of something. What happens, as a result from this? The “potential” goes back to its root, raw state, and it stays there, in a hidden state where it is covered over and concealed.

² Zohar I 168b (Editor’s Note: In terms of the Sefiros (the Heavenly spheres, which include chessed, gevurah, tiferes, netzach, hod yesod, and malchus), the element of earth is associated with the sefirah of malchus (royalty). It is also associated with the feminine, and the power to receive, and the trait of shiflus (lowliness), for the quality of royalty is given to one who attains mastery over his/her inner drives).

6 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Normally whenever a person is sad, he still has some hope that things will change and get better. There is a verse, “*It is good to go to a house of mourning, and the living shall take to heart*”³, and the meaning of this is that a person can derive vitality even from a house of mourning, where there was death. A person can find vitality even from thinking about death. But when one doesn’t believe in resurrection of the dead, as the Sages discuss in Tractate Sanhedrin, there is nothing for him to derive vitality from when he thinks about death, because he believes that death is the end.

There are people who want their bodies to be cremated after they die. They do not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Inwardly, their souls have become so “dried out” from their element of earth, from their despair and from their absence of hope in a future Afterlife and Resurrection of the Dead, that they willingly let themselves become turned into ashes after death. They truly believe that their death is their end. The Hebrew word for despair, *yei’ush*, contains the word *aish*, fire. The hint of this is that despair can burn up the soul, drying it out completely, and destroying the person. Those who let their bodies become destroyed after their death do so because indeed, they believe that they truly become destroyed after they die, and that their death is their end.

Fire burns something and reduces it into ash, which really means that fire returns any element to its potential state. But despair is even worse than a destructive fire. From despair, a person destroys even his potential state. A person who is dying can have hope that he will eventually be revived at the resurrection of the dead. His death has meaning to it, because even though his body will decay into the earth, he will eventually be revived. He still exists in a potential state, even if he were to be killed by any of the four capital punishments of *Beis Din*. He can always hope that even though he will die, the death is only a temporary return to his potential state, and eventually, he will become actualized again from his potential state (at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead). But through despair, a person convinces himself that there is no hope, and that he doesn’t have any potential anymore for anything.

That is the sadness which stems from **earth-of-earth-of-earth**.

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS TOTAL DESPAIR

The earth can produce things from its soil, but **earth-of-earth-of-earth** will return something back to its potential state and keep it there, where it rejoins its root and stays there.

When a person has deep despair in his soul, like if a person totally despairs from living, he would die immediately, as a result of this loss of hope. All he would feel is a state of non-existence, and this, itself, would kill him. This was said in the name of Rav Yitzchok Hutner. But in reality, there is no such thing as absolute despair. **Earth-of-earth-of-earth** in the soul, which is the experience of despair, is when a person feels a loss of potential. Despair is experienced either on a partial or absolute level. If one feels total despair, he dies as a result of this terrible state to be in. However, the reality is that “There is no such thing as (total) despair”⁴, and that is because there is always some hope (*tikvah*), no matter the situation.

Total despair does not exist. Even if there is despair on this world, it can only be partial. In the classical case of despair which is discussed in the *Gemara*, where a person despairs over a lost item, he believes that he has lost it and he gives up on finding it; his despair, however, is only partial. Deep down, he still hopes he will find it. The commentaries on the *Gemara* explain that even though he despairs, he is willing to spend money to get it back. It is

³ *Koheles 1:18*

⁴ *Likutei Moharan: Tinyana: 78*

7 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

still considered to be despair, of course, according to *halachah*, and the item is now considered ownerless and someone can acquire it. But even though it is despair, the despair is only partial, and never total.

Therefore, even when a person does feel despair, he should understand that his despair does not encompass his entire soul. It is only a partial issue in the soul.

The Creation is composed of two aspects called *maaseh Beraishis* (lit. “the making of Creation”), and *maaseh merkavah* (lit. the making of the Heavenly “Chariot”). The *maaseh merkavah* aspect of Creation essentially means that the entire Creation is vastly complex and contains a countless amount of parts and details. Therefore, even if a person feels despair about something, his despair can only be about one particular aspect. If he would despair about everything, he would die. Since there is no aspect in Creation that is all-inclusive, if a person despairs over one aspect, it is never total, because it does not represent the entire picture.

When a person despairs over a lost item, he has despaired from only one aspect of his life – finding his item - but he still has hope when it comes to other aspects of his life. And even when it comes to the item he has despaired from finding, he will still hope to find it. Although for the most part he has despaired from finding it, and there is a rule that “most is like the entirety”, he still has not totally despaired from finding it.

Going deeper, since despair can never be total, even when a person does despair, it is never a total despair. Even death, which is the end of a person’s lifetime, is not the end. There is an eventual Resurrection of the Dead, and even the physical body, which is dead and buried in the ground, is still here. It is just in a decomposed state. Even the wicked who end up in *Gehinnom* do not have a total end, because they later become the dust under the feet of *tzaddikim*,⁵ which is their continued existence.

Therefore, even when a person has despair over one particular aspect of his life, this does not include the totality of his life. A Jew’s soul contains a point where there is no such thing as despair. Even regarding the rest of Creation, there is also a concept where there is no such thing as total despair. In the future, the light of hope will spread to all of Creation, and there will be no despair, all the way until the lowest elements of Creation. It will be like a circle, where all the points are equidistant from the center.

Currently, this power of hope is very hidden, because it is in a concealed dimension. But in the future, this point of hope will become revealed and it will spread to all of Creation, where it will reach every point, all the way down until the lowest elements. Despair is essentially the “empty void” (in Hebrew, *chahal*) which Hashem first made in Creation to fill all of space with, and hope is called the “line” (*kav*) that fills all of this empty space (as the Ramchal explained).

STEP 1: FOCUS ON THE PARTS WHERE THERE IS NO DESPAIR.

Whenever there is despair, you can find hope. Therefore, the repair for a person with a lot of **earth-of-earth-earth** is, firstly, to focus on the parts he hasn’t despaired yet from. For example, in the case where a person has despaired from finding his lost item, he still hasn’t yet despaired from other things. If he lost his money, he still owns his property. He should focus on whatever he does have.

STEP 2: AWAKENING HOPE – BY FOCUSING ON POSITIVE ASPECTS OF ONE’S LIFE.

The second part of the repair (for a person whose sadness comes from **earth-of-earth-of-earth**) is to awaken hope, by reminding himself of a part in his life where he feels the least despair in. One should find aspects in his life which he still feels hopeful about, and focus on those areas.

The highest use of this power is when a person awakens his hope in Hashem, as is it written, “*Kaveh el Hashem*”, “Hope for Hashem”.⁶ But even if someone isn’t at this level, he can awaken the power of hope on a very simple level, by finding hope in the aspects of his life where he doesn’t despaired about. One can keep awakening hope by reminding himself of these aspects in his life, and in this way he strengthens the soul’s power of *tikvah*/hope.

3. FINDING THE GLIMMER OF HOPE WITHIN THE DESPAIR

Next, one can take this further. Even when one does feel despair when it comes to certain areas, he can discover that his despair is never total. As mentioned before, the classic case in the Gemara for despair is when one loses an object and he despairs from finding it. Even when he despairs, the commentaries explain that he still has some glimmer of hope that he might find it. Based upon this insight, a person can remind himself that even in situations where he feels despair, there is still some hope to be found, even within his despair.

For example, a person’s son went off the *derech* (dropped Torah observance), G-d forbid. The father has long ago given up on his son from returning to *Yiddishkeit*. Someone may come over to him one day and tell him, “Maybe in a year from now, your son soon will be back to *Yiddishkeit* by then.” The father, when he hears this, may suddenly be filled with hope again, that perhaps his son will indeed return to being observant again, even if he has already given up on his son. What is the logic in this? Didn’t he give up on his son already? It is because even when a person has despair, the despair is always partial. It never becomes total despair. There is always some hope in the most despairing of situations, even if only a faint glimmer, which remains fully intact, and which can always be uncovered.

So a person can still awaken some hope, even after he has despaired. From an inner, truthful perspective, the entire idea of despair doesn’t actually exist [only in one’s imagination, and not in reality], whereas hope always exists. Hope simply becomes concealed and covered over by the despair, and therefore, the hope needs to be uncovered and revealed. Despair may certainly feel more real to a person than hope, but in reality, hope is more powerful than despair. A person who feels total despair is denying reality, because in reality, there is no such thing as total despair.

After one understands this on an intellectual level, he should try to relate to it better and feel this concept. When people say that they despair, this despair is not total, because deep down there is a hope that things will get better. Even when people totally give up, they will say “I gave up, but I still hope that things will get better.” This further proves that despair is never total, it is only partial.

When a person gets used to thinking about the concept that “There is no such thing as total despair”, and he also gets used to feeling it in his reality, he slowly awakens the point of “non-despair” in his soul, and he strengthens this part of himself. In this way, one creates a conflict between the points of despair and the non-despair in the soul, and

⁶ *Tehillim* 27:14

9 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

then these forces in his soul will be at war with each other. With the more that one strengthens his power of non-despair, eventually his power of “non-despair” will win out his soul’s despair.

HOW HOPE WORKS

Many people don’t know how to awaken the power of hope properly. When they are told that they need to hope that things will get better, they don’t really think about what this means, and they don’t try to feel this power of hope (*tikvah*) in the soul. So they “force” themselves to have hope. But during the entire time, they are afraid, worried, and anxious that the situation will still not get better.

Their fears are not a result of their hopes. Rather, they are afraid of the results if their “hope” doesn’t materialize and they are afraid they won’t be able to handle the difficulty when the terrible results arrive. Instead of awakening hope, they are full of anxiety because they fear that their “hopes” won’t come true.

One should understand that he cannot uproot the power of hope from the soul. This would be like trying to uproot one’s own existence, which is impossible. It is possible for a person to make himself die, *chas v’shalom*, by taking his own life, but it is not possible for him to take away his own existence. The existence of a person is not within his power to remove. Hope is the very existence of man, and it is the most positive aspect of man’s soul. The Hebrew word for hope, *tikvah*, is from the word *kav*, line (which symbolizes all of existence).

Without placing hope in the Creator, people would not be able to exist [they wouldn’t be able to cope]. Hope for the Creator, itself, is the power that keeps people going. These are the words of our Sages. A person might deny his power of hope, but he cannot uproot it. Hope is bound to be revealed in every person’s life, and the only question is, in what way. Will it be revealed to a person in a joyous state, or will he uncover it through painful circumstances?

There is a dispute in Tractate Sanhedrin⁷, between Rebbi Eliezer and Rebbi Yehoshua, if the Redemption will depend on *Klal Yisrael* doing *teshuvah* or not. According to one opinion, the Redemption will take place even if *Klal Yisrael* doesn’t do *teshuvah*, and according to the other opinion, the Redemption will happen only if *Klal Yisrael* does *teshuvah*. Even according to the first opinion, *Klal Yisrael* will do *teshuvah* anyway, because if they don’t do *teshuvah*, Hashem will appoint “a king as harsh as Haman” who will terrify everyone with his decrees. How will everyone do *teshuvah* because of this? Everyone will be spurred on to place their hope in the Creator alone, realizing that their salvation will come only from Him. Hope in the Creator is always there, it is a present force, and all a person has to do is to agree that it is there.

Most people feel disappointments even after they decided to give hope a chance, but this is because they didn’t hope in the right way. They simply “had hope”, but their hope had nothing to do with placing their hope in the Creator. Their hope was instead a fantasy, which can only be an offshoot of hope, but not hope itself.

In addition to this factor, whenever people hoped for things that weren’t good for them in the long run, they become disappointed when their hopes don’t materialize, and their hearts become ill in the process. When people want a nice house and they are jealous of what others have, and they hope they will have it too, and eventually they see that they aren’t getting what they hoped for, they become terribly disappointed and they give up. On a deeper note, it is not a true hope, because the soul knows that this is not its share in life, so it doesn’t hope for it, though a person is not consciously aware of this.

⁷ *Sanhedrin 97b*

10 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Hope is proper and constructive when a person hopes that Hashem will give him whatever is good for his own lot in life. Only of such hopes is it said, “*Kaveh el Hashem, chazek v’yaametz libecha, v’kaveh el Hashem* (“Hope for Hashem, strengthen and fortify your heart, and hope for Hashem”), which is explained to mean that you should keep praying, and even if you see your prayers aren’t being answered, “*kaveh, chazor v’kaveh*” – hope, and keep hoping.”⁸

IN SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This idea is the way to counter total despair (**earth-of-earth-of-earth**): by uncovering the power of *chazor v’kavei*, to keep hoping.⁹ The clearer one is about this, the further he is from despairing.

Despair is only possible when one wants to attain something within his reach but he isn’t trying hard enough to get it, or when he wants something that isn’t good for him. A person should not hope that Hashem should give him a certain thing that he wants. Rather, he should hope that Hashem will give him his due share.

On a deeper level, a person should hope for Hashem Himself. That is the implication of “*Kaveh el Hashem*”, to “hope for Hashem”. Instead of simply desiring to receive *shafa* (sustenance) from Hashem, one should have a desire for Hashem Himself, as it is written, “*To You alone I desired.*” That is the deep hope of the soul, and this is the ultimate actualization of the soul’s potential – the very opposite of the sadness that comes from total despair, **earth-of-earth-of-earth**.

We have explained briefly the problems in the soul that result from impaired **earth-of-earth-of-earth** in the soul (despair) – and the roots of how to repair this, with *siyata d’shmaya*.

⁸ Rashi Tehillim 27:14

⁹ Editor’s Note: For more about the power of *tikvah*\hope, refer to the Rav’s drashos of:

Tefillah_0101_ There. Is. Always. Hope

Tefillah_0130_ Hoping.For.The.Full.Revelation

Bein HaMitzarim.005.A.Time.of.Light.And.Darkness

Melaveh Malka_002_A.New.Meal

2 – Maintaining Inner Vitality

WATER-OF-EARTH-OF-EARTH: DRIED OUT FROM VITALITY

With *siyata d'shmaya* we shall continue to learn about the element of earth, and the trait of sadness. In this lesson we will learn specifically about sadness which comes from the aspect of “water” that is within the element of earth.

Earth is an element which is both dry and cold. The existing properties of the elements are dryness, moisture, heat, and coldness. The trait of laziness stems from the coldness in earth, and the trait of sadness results from the dryness in earth. The main aspect of earth is its dryness. In contrast to this, water is cold and moist.

Water is the opposite of earth because water is moist, whereas earth is dry element. But water also bears a similarity to earth, due to its coldness. Therefore, the coldness of the element water in the soul can awaken the coldness of the element earth in the soul. Once the element of earth is activated, its main property, dryness, will also be present.

The first time in the Torah where water and earth combine is by the creation of man, whose form was created from the heavens (the element of water) and the earth (the element of earth). When water and earth mix together, the result is cement. At first, cement is moist, but after some time, the cement dries and it hardens, where it becomes the opposite texture than how it first started out. At first, the water overcomes the earth. It starts out as a moist substance. But after some time, the earth overpowers the water, and it becomes dried and hardened.

Applying this in terms of our soul, we find that one can first be full of vitality about something – this is due to his element of which is water, which is a living element - but after some time, he becomes “dried out” from what he’s doing. His “water” becomes dried, hardened, and earthy, and instead, his “earth” overpowers his water, so his water “dries up”.

When someone keeps doing something that is life-giving, this is known as the term “*ben ish chai*”, one who is a “living man.” In contrast to this, when he stops doing these life-giving actions, his earth overpowers his water and he becomes “dried out” from what he’s doing. When he makes sure to keep moving without interrupting, he is energized, and his water overpowers his earth, because the constant movement will enable his water to overpower his earth. But the more he takes breaks in his actions and he stops what he’s doing, or if he is only taking minimal breaks and he really needs more than that, his earth overpowers his water and he will become “dried out”.

MOTIVATIONS THAT STOP A PERSON FROM PERFORMANCE

What we will need to know is: What causes a person to stop doing whatever he was doing until now? Why did he stop?

One reason is because of laziness. Another reason can also be sadness. If a person is sad while doing something, the sadness can cause him to stop what he’s doing, and then he has to start over again, which makes it harder. Or, he will keep interrupting what he was doing, always taking breaks.

12 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Laziness can cause a person to take many breaks, and sadness as well can cause a person to take many breaks. These are two different sources of why a person interrupts his performance, but they are both rooted in the element of earth.

Stopping one's work can also come from an impaired element of wind. We find that in the Egyptian bondage, the Jewish people were tired and exhausted from their *kotzer ruach*, their "shortness of breath", which made them feel *avodah koshoh*, difficult labor.¹⁰ When one feels that he has to stop, when he is sad about what he's doing, this makes him feel that his work is too difficult for him to do. He becomes 'dried up', and he feels somewhat "heavy" in his soul, so he won't want to continue his performance. That is how "earth" stops a person from progress.

The element of water can also be a source of stopping one's actions. For example, there are people who only act when they feel a *chiyus*, energy, in what they are doing.

A person whose main element is earth will stay in his job long after he receives his pension, because he stays where he is and he thrives on permanence and routine. Another kind of person will work as long as there is a purpose to his work. This is the element of wind (direction). Others work as long as they are enthused about what they are doing (fire). Others will only work at something they find pleasurable (water). If they enjoy it, they do it, and if not, they drop it. Of this Chazal say, "He tears his Torah study into torn pieces."¹¹ When he has his 'water' (his energy), he performs, but when he isn't getting his water/energy, he stops his performance. The same problem is with fire: When a person has a dominant nature of fire, he acts based upon excitement and enthusiasm, but when his enthusiasm wanes, he stops.

People who are water-based or fire-based thrive either on pleasure or enthusiasm, and their whole life is a cycle of performing, stopping, and getting back into it, repeating the cycle. They are constantly going through the statement of Chazal that "All beginnings are hard",¹² but they are in a dire situation, because they keep interrupting what they are doing. Either of these ways of living is not a way to really live.

So far, we have seen how the problem of interrupting one's performance can come from any of the four elements [within earth] – earth, water, wind or fire. Each of these can be further analyzed. Here we are speaking about the problem of stopping performance which comes from **water-of-earth [of earth]**, which is when one needs to constantly move in order to feel alive, and when he stops moving, he loses his aliveness and he becomes dried out.

JOY COMES FROM CONSTANT INNER MOVEMENT

Now we shall proceed to understand the following.

The ideal way to live, as opposed to a life of *atzvus*\sadness, is to live a life of *simchah*\happiness. A person cannot always maintain an equal level of *simchah* at all times. A clear example of this is that the Torah calls Succos as "*zman simchaseinu*", time of our joy, which implies that normally, we do not have this *simchah*. Rather, sometimes we are more joyous, and sometimes we are less joyous. In the Three Weeks, we are in mourning, but even *Sefer Eichah* was composed with *ruach hakodesh*, which the prophet could only have amidst a state of *simchah*. What we can learn from this is that *simchah* must always be present in one's life [even when there is pain]. Certainly there are different levels of *simchah*, but there should always be some level of *simchah*.

¹⁰ Shemos 6:9

¹¹ Sanhedrin 71a

¹² Mechilta Shemos 19:5, cited in Rashi (*ibid*)

13 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Simchah (joy) exists only when there is constant movement for the soul taking place, which provides a person with *chiyus*, a spiritual source of life-giving energy or vitality. When constant movement is missing from the soul, or if a person isn't moving at all, he is kind of dead inside. When one is 'dead' in his soul, this is the total level of sadness, because there is nothing more saddening than death. "Death" in the soul - or the cessation of movement in the soul - is the root of all sadness in the soul. Therefore, *simchah*\joy requires a state of constant inner movement in the soul. (On a deeper level, *simchah* is when we actualize our potential. This is a deeper level of *simchah* though which we are not speaking about here).

Movement produces happiness, whereas the absence of movement is death and sadness. A dead person doesn't move, and 'death' in the soul is when a person has no inner movement. By contrast, *simchah*\joy is when there is constant movement taking place. Certainly a person cannot always be moving, because this is physically impossible. A person only moves when he needs to get things done, but otherwise, he doesn't move. What we mean is that a person always can access inner movement, in his soul. In this way, one can always be in a state of movement, and then he will always be able to find joy.

RESTING IN ORDER TO CONTINUE AFTERWARDS VS. RESTING IN ORDER TO REST

For example, even when one rests or goes to sleep, where he will not be moving, he knows that he will have to get up after some time and continue to be active. So even when he is getting into bed to rest, or when he is relaxing or taking a break, he can be aware that he is in between one movement and the next. In this way, one can always feel like he is in movement, so that he never ceases totally from moving.

In This World, we cannot attain total serenity. "Torah scholars do not have complete *menuchah* (serenity), not in This World and neither in the Next World."¹³ Only in the future, in the Next World, will we have total *menuchah*. For now, any of the *menuchah* that we can attain exists within our world of movement, which means that our *menuchah* on This World is never a complete state of *menuchah*. We are constantly going through a cycle of movement, rest, and movement. So even when we rest, it is for the sake of returning to movement afterwards. It is never a total rest. This should become our perspective towards resting from activity: even when we rest, it is not a total rest, and it is only for the purpose of being able to move again later, after we have become refreshed.

As we are explaining, joy can only exist when there is movement. Therefore, a person always needs to be in a state of "movement" so that he can be joyous. Even before going to sleep or taking a break, one needs to be aware that he will be returning to work afterwards, so that he doesn't feel like he is completely stopping his movements.

COMPLETE REST IS "DEATH" FOR THE SOUL

There are two different reasons why a person would stop moving.

One reason, which has detrimental results, is when a person feels very down, in a dismal mood, where he doesn't feel like doing anything at all. This is called *dikaon* (crushed spirit). A person in this state will want to crawl underneath his blanket, go to sleep, completely tune out the world and all of his life, and he wishes he could just fall into an eternal sleep and never wake up. Sleep is considered to be "a sixtieth of death"¹⁴, so when a person wishes he

¹³ *Berachos 64a*

¹⁴ *Berachos 57b*

14 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

could sleep forever and a put a stop to everything, this is a deathlike state for the soul, because he is trying to cease all of his movements. Just as there is physical death, so can there be death in the soul, and that is when a person wants to stop all movement.

In contrast to this, one can have an altogether different attitude towards resting and taking breaks, which is more constructive: All interruptions of one's performance should be seen as a break for the sake of performing better afterwards. (Taking a break from activity, or resting or going to sleep, should never be seen as a desire to access a state of total serenity. Rather, the break should be seen as a means to a greater end, which is that it will enable a person to perform and continue better afterwards.)

This is a major change of perspective, and it causes an inner overhaul. Without this perspective, a person has "death" in his soul whenever he ceases activity and he wants to rest. One must know that it is not a healthy state of the soul when one feels that he is in state of total serenity from all activity.

Therefore, whenever you return to your activities after you rest, you should view it as a continuation from before, as opposed to starting over again anew. If your attitude is that you need to take a break from your activities and then you will start again anew, this means that you are interrupting your state of movement. When you stop moving, this brings on sadness, because as it has been explained earlier, non-movement is "death" for the soul. Instead, you should be aware, when taking a break, or when you rest or go to sleep, that is so that will continue your activities afterwards, and not because you are trying to cease all movement.

When one lives in this way, he is never completely interrupting his state of movement, even when he takes breaks from moving. Living in this way distances a person from sadness, and enables a person to be in a state of joy even when resting.

One should first contemplate this change of perspective on an intellectual level, and then put it into practice. Practically speaking, whenever a person takes a break or he is about to rest, he should know that it is for the purpose of returning to work afterwards, and not for the purpose of simply taking a break.

2. DRAWING MOVEMENT FROM BREATHING

Taking this another step further, one should also try the following, when he is about to rest, so that he can always feel like he in a state of movement. One should try to add on some tiny amount of movement even when he's resting, so that he doesn't become completely inactive.

For example, whenever one is taking a break from work or from any other activities, he should try doing some small "movement", so that he doesn't become completely non-moving. A good example of this is by becoming aware of the simple movements of his breathing.

When one is lying on his bed, he can try becoming aware of his breathing. There are two basic kinds of breathing: (1) Focusing quietly on your soft breathing. (2) Taking quick, deep and strong breaths, on the exhale and inhale, with acute awareness of the breathing.

When one becomes aware of his breathing - first on an intellectual level and then on an experiential level, where he can feel his breathing more acutely - even as he's lying on bed and doing nothing, he will be accessing some movement. This keeps him in a state of movement, so that his rest doesn't become total and deathlike, and this allows him to remain in a joyous state.

15 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

It should be noted that we are not speaking here of how to draw joy from any higher levels of the soul, but on a very basic level, from the *nefesh habehaimis* (the “animal” level of the soul), within the realm of basic emotions (which is called “*koach hamargish*”).¹⁵ There are deeper levels of joy as well, which are a higher experience than the feelings of the *nefesh habehaimis*, and it requires a different *avodah* to reach.¹⁶ Here we are speaking about a simple ability present even in the “animal soul”: an ability to listen to, and sense, the inner movements of the soul.

There are different ways to go from sadness from joy. One of the ways, which we have described in this lesson until now, is by increasing movement. But there is also another way. Since we live in a world of movement, a person is always able to find movement. We are not speaking about the constant movements of planets and stars in the Creation, which we cannot feel. We are speaking of a constant movement that we can feel and sense from within ourselves: the movements of the soul.

One can become aware that he is using his power of action, or his power to feel emotions, or his power of thought. But even when one isn't performing any action, and even when his emotions and thoughts are quieted (relatively speaking), he can still feel the movements in his soul, by becoming aware of his inhale and exhale.

When one becomes aware of the simple movement of his breathing, he will always be in a state of joy, because he is accessing the movements of the soul, which provide joy and which don't allow for sadness to set in.

PAIN VS. SADNESS

A person in this state may still be able to feel *merirus*, “bitterness” – which is a constructive feeling of pain - but he will never feel *atzvus*, sadness, which is detrimental.

As explained in the *sefer Tanya*, the difference between *merirus*\bitterness and *atzvus*\sadness is, that *merirus* is a feeling of pain which is constructive and which increases the quality of a person's life, whereas *atzvus* is a feeling of sadness that is self-defeating and toxic for the soul. One can feel *merirus*, a sense of bitterness, over his sins, but this doesn't have to bring him to the non-productive feelings of sadness known as *atzvus*. Through *merirus*, a person is able to do *teshuvah*, because he is bitter enough to feel remorse over his sins and to repent, but this is not the case with *atzvus*, which simply leaves a person feeling down and dispirited.¹⁷

What is the difference between *merirus*\bitterness, which is constructive, and *atzvus*\sadness which is not? *Merirus* is a feeling of bitterness where the movements of the soul are very much active. When one is pained over his sins, he is really feeling the pain of contradictions: he notices that there is a contradiction between his knowledge and feelings with the way he acts, and this feels painful to him. His bitterness over his sins is a movement in his soul. In contrast to this, *atzvus* is a sadness that does not come from movement in the soul. It is the very opposite – it is a feeling of sadness borne out of an absence of movement in the soul.

Even when we mourn the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, we can be aware that it is also the day when *Moshiach* is born. This is how we make our pain constructive, purposeful, and meaningful. That is *merirus*.

¹⁵ Refer to *Gra on Yeshayahu 11:1*, who lists the 70 abilities contained in the *nefesh habehaimis* (animal soul), which includes the “*koach ha-margish*, the “power to feel” [the source of basic human emotions and which also includes the senses].

¹⁶ Refer to Chapter Nine

¹⁷ *Likkutei Amarim (Tanya): 31*

16 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

The more one becomes aware of the inner movements taking place in his soul, he will always feel himself in a moving state, and hence he will distance himself from further and further from sadness, and instead he draws himself closer to joy.

Certainly, life is not entirely pleasant and calm. Life is complex. The *Mesillas Yesharim* states that no one on this world has complete serenity and peace in his personal lot in life. But pain does not have to become sadness. Pain is a movement of the soul, and that makes pain another source of *chiyus*, vitality. This is also the depth behind the concept of “Rejoice in suffering”¹⁸ which the Sages taught. Pain is another source of vitality. When one has this perspective, he can always find himself in a state of movement, and then he will be able to find joy even amidst suffering and pain: because pain is a kind of inner movement, and joy is derived from being in a state of inner movement.

IN CONCLUSION

The more one listens to, and becomes aware, to his inner movements of the soul, he repairs the element of **water-of-earth-of-earth**. He will always feel like he is in a state of movement, which will stop him from feeling “dried out” of inner vitality. When one lives in this way, he lives a life of repaired **water-of-earth-of-earth**.

¹⁸ *Maseches Derech Eretz* 7:23, *Pesikta Zutrasa Parshas Va'Eschanan* 11a

3 – The Groan of Disappointment

WIND-OF-EARTH-OF-EARTH: THE GROAN OF DISAPPOINTMENT

With *siyata d'shmaya* we will continue the discussion on the element of earth and the trait of sadness. In this lesson we will learn about sadness that stems from **wind-of-earth [of earth]**.

Earth is the root of sadness. Wind is the very opposite of the element of earth. Wind and earth are in opposition. Wind is a moving element, the very opposite of earth, a non-moving element.

How can sadness result from earth and wind? The Sages describe a certain kind of sadness known as “*anachah*, a groan, which breaks half a person’s body” (and according to another opinion in the *Gemara*, a groan breaks the entire person’s body).¹⁹ What is *anachah*, a groan?

Earth is the root of the holy kind of laziness, also known as *menuchah* (serenity), which is the “secret of *Shabbos Kodesh*”, and hence the opposite of evil laziness. When the element of earth is impaired, the results are laziness and sadness. When the element of earth is repaired, it reveals *menuchah* \serenity. When wind crashes against the earth, there is a shrieking sound of the wind, which sounds like a groan. This illustrates the concept of *anachah*.

The word *anachah* is also related to the word *hanachah*, “placed down”. When wind travels, it has no rest. Movement is restless, and it will only ‘rest’ in order to move more. This is called *hanachah*, being placed down. When something is placed down, it is not there permanently, and it is only lying there because it will be picked up later. After the six days of the week, where there is movement/activity again, there is the *menuchah* of Shabbos, when the movements/activity of the weekday cease. On Shabbos, there is a *hanachah*, a cessation, of all movements. Then the six days of the week return. So even when one rests from movement on Shabbos, it is only for the purpose of moving again afterwards.

In the period of the Three Weeks, we have days of mourning, and when the Nine Days are over, we recite *Nachamu Nachamu Ami*, “Be consoled, be consoled, my nation” - there is *nechamah*, consolation. On a deeper note, this is also a movement which leads to serenity.

When wind/movement stops at a halt, it is being stopped by earth/serenity, and then the previous movements now become a cause for sadness. For example, we see that when one begins to move in order to do something, and he doesn’t get to complete it, he groans, out of disappointment. This is because his movement did not bring him to the desired serenity that he was seeking. The *Gemara* says that Dovid HaMelech was groaning, and it was because his efforts didn’t entirely come to fruition.²⁰ When there is a stop to movement and the desired results don’t happen, a person becomes lazy, and sad. There is movement, the cessation of movement, the lack of serenity, a resulting laziness, which leads to a sadness. That is “*anachah*” - groaning.

On *Tisha B’Av*, the people “cried tears of vain”, due to the Spies’ report. What happened? They had left Egypt, and they were moving towards *Eretz Yisrael*, and now their movement stopped, because they didn’t come to their desired results. They did not get the serenity they wanted, and therefore they were very saddened. They wanted to

¹⁹ *Kesubos 62a*

²⁰ *Berachos 16a*

18 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

get to their *menuchah*/serenity – in this case, their inherited land - where they would be able to build the *Beis HaMikdash*. Shlomo *HaMelech* was called *ish menuchah* (man of serenity) and he was the one who built the *Beis HaMikdash*, but the generation of the desert did not merit to reach the land and build the *Beis HaMikdash*, hence they never reached their *menuchah*. This led to their *anachah*, their sighs and their groans of sadness.

A groan of sadness not only breaks the heart, it breaks the body (either halfway, or totally), as the *Gemara* says. The groans broke the bodies of the Jewish people, and this was the true meaning behind the decree on the generation to die in the desert. This groaning was the root of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, which is the root of all sadness. It is written, “*For great are my groans, and my heart is sick.*”²¹ Groaning out of sadness is the very symbol of the Destruction. As it has been explained here, whenever a movement has been stopped in its tracks - either totally or partially - this leads to groans of disappointment. Thus, mourning over Yerushalayim is defined as groaning about the destruction.

This is the sadness that stems from **wind-of-earth [of earth]**. It is really a sadness brought about by a subtle form of laziness, for it is a sadness caused by a halt of movement.

THE GROAN OF SADNESS VS. THE GROAN OF VITALITY

As mentioned in the previous lesson, the *Baal HaTanya* and others explained that the difference between *atzvut*/sadness and *merirus*/bitterness is, that sadness is a crushing state which leads to despair and a deathlike existence, whereas *merirus*/bitterness leads to vitality, energy and more life. Whenever a person groans out of disappointment, this can either be expressed as a physical groan of frustration, or, it can be used as an opportunity to gain vitality. We will explain how.

When groaning is coming from sadness, the breath (air/wind) of a person escapes from his throat, and he stays where he is, kind of paralyzed. This resembles death, when everything in the person goes still. Such a groan is an expression of the person’s sadness at being disappointed, that something has not come to fruition, and this is the kind of groan which the *Gemara* is referring to when it says that a groan breaks the entire person’s body. The kind of “groan that breaks a person’s entire body” is when a person groans out of sadness, frustration, disappointment, and it leaves a person in a deathlike state, where he is still and he doesn’t budge from his place.

However, in another scenario, a person will let out a groan of disappointment, but it doesn’t deplete his energy. He is ‘alive’ after the groan, as opposed to being ‘dead’ in the previously mentioned scenario. Such a groan is the kind of the groan that breaks ‘half’ the body – but it does not break the ‘entire’ body.

Only when a person becomes deathlike after groaning, does the groan break the entire body. This is the depth behind the argument in the *Gemara* if a groan breaks half or the entire body. A groan causes the breath/air/wind of a person to escape outward. When one’s spirit has gone outward and it doesn’t return to him, this groan will cause a person to be sad, because it resembles a state of death. In contrast to this, a person’s breath/air/wind can leave a person and then return to him, in the form of focused inhaling and exhaling. In this scenario, the breath hasn’t merely gone outward from the person. It returns to the person, and it renews his spirit, filling him with renewed vigor and energy. If a person groans in this way, his groans actually infuse him with more energy.

A dead person doesn’t breathe in and out. He has no breath, no air. He has lost his “wind”. He is missing the *ruach chaim*, the “spirit of life”, which personifies a living person. The dead person’s air/wind has gone entirely

²¹ *Eichah* 1:22

19 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

outward, and it hasn't returned to him. A groan, when it is emitted on an impaired level [without conscious awareness, as will soon be explained] is a debilitating act which is deathlike to a person. This is the depth behind the matter that being in a state of sadness causes the soul to depart from a person.

In contrast to this, a groan can also be emitted in a way that brings more life to a person. It is written, "*It is good to go to a house of mourning, and the living will take to heart.*"²² When one goes to a house of mourning, where people sigh and groan, because they are in sadness as they mourn and grieve the deceased, this is a constructive kind of groan which provides a person with more vitality. Such a groan doesn't just escape outward from a person, it re-enters him afterwards, renewing the person with a new sense of life. It is a holy kind of groaning.

The idea here is that when a person groans, he needs to make sure that he 'breathes back in' the air/wind that has left him. Practically speaking, this means that after one groans, even if he is doing so because he is disappointed and frustrated about something, he should feel that the groan has renewed his soul.

This is the depth behind how going to a house of mourning brings more vitality to a person. A groan doesn't have to sap the energy and life out of a person. To the contrary, it can give more vitality to a person. The air/wind emitted from such a groan resembles the holy wind that is referred to as "*Ruach apeinu Moshiach Hashem*", "The breath of our nostrils, the messenger of Hashem".²³ This is also the depth of the statement, "On the day of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, the *Moshiach* is born."²⁴ The "wind", the life-giving air that has left us – and on a deeper level, our spiritual source of vitality - can be returned to us. And when it returns, it is a more renewed, spiritual kind of air that is a new source of energy for us. This is also the implication of "One who mourns Jerusalem, will merit to see it rebuilt."²⁵

Thus, there are two kinds of groans. One kind of groan is destructive to the spirit and to the body, for it increases the element of earth in the soul, which in turn causes sadness. The other kind of groan is holy, and it gives renewed vitality to a person.

GOING TO SLEEP WITH THE AWARENESS THAT MY SOUL WILL RETURN UPON AWAKING IN THE MORNING

Sleep is called "a sixtieth of death".²⁶ When a person sleeps, his soul leaves him. In different terms, his "wind" leaves him as he sleeps. His "spirit of life" returns to its Source above as he sleeps, and his body lies still. When a person goes to sleep, he knows that he is giving over his soul to Hashem and he is confident that he will wake up the next morning, with his soul returned to him, and with a renewed spirit. There are a few people who, unfortunately, go to sleep wishing they won't wake up the next day. But most people believe that they will wake up the following morning, and they want to. [However, this confidence is usually only in the subconscious, so it is often a lost opportunity for growth].

One should become consciously aware, before going to sleep, that his spirit will be leaving him, and that it will be returned to him upon awaking. When one has this awareness, his sleep becomes an experience of renewal for him. He becomes consciously aware that the body goes silent as he sleeps, and that his wind/soul returns to its

²² *Koheles 7:2*

²³ *Eichah 4:20*

²⁴ *Eichah Rabbah 1:51, Yerushalmi Berachos 2:4,*

²⁵ *Taanis 30b*

²⁶ *Berachos 57b*

20 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Source and becomes renewed, and then returns to the body in the morning, whereupon the body and soul are both renewed. In this way, sleep can be an opportunity to access a holy kind of “groan”, when a person is aware that his absence of spirit when he sleeps is actually a means to renew the spirit.

TRANSFORMING OUR GROANS INTO A SOURCE OF VITALITY-GIVING ENERGY

When a person feels exhausted and depleted from physical energy, naturally, he groans. If one groans without any awareness, it leaves a person feeling kind of dead. The result will be that he becomes immobile and he simply stays where he is, feeling like he can't do anything, and this resembles being dead. Instead, a person can use the groans of his disappointment as a way to become consciously aware that his spirit is leaving him and then returning to him renewed, and that this, itself, is renewing him. One can become aware that as he is groaning, he is letting his “wind” escape outward, and that his wind can return to him and renew him.

Without being consciously aware of this, a person simply lets out groans and sounds of frustration, whenever he meets disappointment. This kind of groaning does not renew him, and it will only increase his anxiety. Instead, when a person meets disappointment, he can groan with the awareness that his groan is an escape of breath that can return to him and renew him. For indeed, the breath that returns to him is a completely new breath. The groan should be released with this conscious awareness that it is an act of renewal - as opposed to a simple reaction to the feeling of frustration and disappointment.

This is the holy use of the power that is called “asleep while awake”. This is a groan that emanates from amidst *menuchah* serenity, not a groan that comes from laziness. This idea can be practiced throughout the day, whenever one feels disappointment or frustration at something. One should mainly work on this idea at a serene time, when one has quieted his mind, as opposed to a stressful time.

In summary, the holy kind of groan is: (1) When one has the awareness that he is about to let out a groan, and (2) He is aware that he is disappointed, and that is why he is groaning. (3) In addition, he lets out the groan with the intention of being renewed after his next breath. One should become aware that he is releasing his wind outward and that he will be breathing it back in, when it is renewed. He should be aware that he is emptying out his breath/wind/spirit, and in turn, he is receiving a renewed wind/spirit.

This is the holy way to use the power of groaning, and this is the deeper meaning of the verse, “*Great are my groans*”²⁷ – but although it is a groan, this is not the detrimental kind of groan that leads to the end of the verse, which is “*My heart is sick within me.*”

A WORLD OF INNER MOVEMENT

One who lives mainly in his inner world, and less in the external, superficial world, is able to feel the inner movements of his soul. These movements are called *ratzu v'shov*, “advancing and retreating”. When one lives an inner kind of life, he lives inwardly, meaning that the main movements in his life are felt on an inward level, as opposed to his outer, external movements, which are deemed superficial.

²⁷ Eichah 1:22

21 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

A person who lives on the inside, in the inner world, is able to identify well with the concept described here, of becoming aware of the exit and re-entering of the breath. When one feels exhausted he can feel vitality from his breaths and become renewed, and then he continues on with his actions, from that renewed place.

One who lives superficially will have difficulty understanding this concept. A person who lives mainly in the external world outside of him is living superficially, and he resembles a dead person, because he has no life taking place inside of him. When he feels exhausted, he isn't aware of how much energy he really has and how much he doesn't, because he isn't aware of his inner movements. Only when one lives inwardly can he discern his energy level, knowing how much he can do and how much he can't. Such a person is able to have constant renewal in his life.

IN CONCLUSION: A RESEMBLANCE OF "RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD" FOR THE SOUL

When one encounters frustration and disappointment and his groans are emitted with the kind of awareness that was described here, he transforms all of his groans into a source of vitality-giving energy, which infuses him with more and more life, as opposed to the groans which debilitate and break the person.

Making use of this power is called a degree of "Resurrection of the Dead", for at the Resurrection of the Dead, the wind (life\spirit\soul) will re-connect with the earth (death\body) to renew it. Although it is not the total level of the Resurrection of the Dead, it is still an illumination of it, and it can be experienced on a soul level.

This all rectifies the sadness which stems from **wind-of-earth [of earth]** in the soul. It removes a person from the laziness that stems from **wind-of-earth [of-earth]**, which in turn removes the sadness, and instead gives a person a *ruach chaim*, a renewed "spirit of life".

4 – Coming Out of Negativity

FIRE-OF-EARTH: AN INCREASE OF “DRYNESS” IN THE SOUL

We are continuing here to learn, with *siyata d'shmaya*, about the element of earth, and its resulting trait, sadness. In this lesson we will learn about **fire-of-earth** [of earth].

As explained earlier, earth is a dry and heavy element. The heaviness in earth breeds the trait of laziness, and the dryness of earth is the root of sadness. Both earth and fire are dry elements. The difference between them is that earth is a cold element, whereas fire is a hot element. So there are two kinds of dryness – the dryness of earth, and the dryness of fire.

Fire-of-earth is the combination of the dryness of earth and the dryness of fire. Therefore, the sadness produced from **fire-of-earth** is a very “dry” kind of sadness – meaning that it is experienced as an absence of vitality. Dryness manifests in the soul as a lack of vitality, hence, the result of dryness is sadness. When the dryness of fire combines with the dryness of earth (in the soul), there is a deep kind of sadness that results from this.

The element of fire contains many properties. Fire is a destructive element. When a fire meets anything, it will try to burn through it, overpower it, and otherwise destroy it. Fire is also a bright, illuminating element. Fire has other properties as well, but here we will discuss these two particular properties of fire, destruction and illumination, and we will see how this pertains to our subject, sadness.

HOW THE FIRE'S ILLUMINATION CAN INCREASE THE FOCUS ON DEFICIENCIES (CAUSING NEGATIVITY)

Hashem has created many creations, as we say in the after-blessing of “*Borei nefashos, rabos v'chesronan*” – “The Creator of many souls, and their deficiencies”. Each of the creations has its various existing properties (its “*Yeish*”), but only Hashem is perfect, and therefore, all of the creations come with their various qualities as well as deficiencies [this is their aspect of *ayin*, their nothingness].

This represents two different ways a person can view Creation. Either a person sees the existence of each thing (*yeish*), or, one notices the flaws and deficiencies in everything (*ayin*).

The depth of the trait of sadness is, when one has the viewpoint of seeing the deficiencies in something. This is the sadness that comes from **fire-of-earth**. Through fire's illumination, which brings everything into the light, a person is shown the various flaws and deficiencies in something.

This is also the depth of how to understand the destructive nature of fire. Fire expands the deficiency in something, by illuminating the deficiency and bringing it into the focal point. Destruction means *kiluy*, from the word *kol*, “entire”, because fire ‘destroys’ something by illuminating the flaws in something, thereby expanding the flaws, which gives a person the viewpoint that the thing is ‘entirely’ flawed. Fire doesn't produce new deficiencies in something, it simply expands the view on the deficiencies, which causes a person to focus more on it. This is the negative use of **fire-of-earth**.

23 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Through fire's illumination, a person sees the deficiencies in something. Compare this to walking through a muddy path at night. In the dark, a person won't see the mud and it won't bother him as much, because he can't see it. He doesn't notice it as much and he's not focusing on it, so it won't bother him. But in the daytime, when the mud can be seen in the broad daylight, a person is much more bothered by the sight of the mud he's walking on.

In this way, the light causes a person to gain a more negative view, instead of a more positive view. While in general the light is associated with the positive – as it is written, “*And G-d saw that the light was good*”²⁸ – this is true in the general sense, but there is certainly a way for light to be used in the negative sense. At its higher root, the light is good, but there is also an impaired use of light, and this is when a person focus on the flaws in something – he is using the fire's “light” to illuminate the flaw in his eyes, and to focus heavily on the flaw. Thus, fire is destructive, by illuminating the flaw in something.

These are the inner workings behind the sadness that comes from the dryness of **fire-of-earth [of earth]**. It causes a person to see the flaws in everything, and this obviously makes a person sadder. Here are some examples of it.

EXAMPLE 1 – OVERLY CONCERNED WITH HAVING OVERWEIGHT CHILDREN

In a family which is blessed with children, a parent may obsess over the various individual circumstances of any one of the children. This causes the parent to be sad, and to brood in the sadness, increasing the parent's focus on the negative aspect that he sees. For example, his children may all be overweight. Then he may become saddened at this, and the more he focuses on this unpleasant aspect, he becomes entirely concerned with the weight of all his children. The more he clings to this negative aspect, his sadness worsens, and he becomes even more negative about the situation, and it eventually spawns into a destructive kind of thinking towards his children. And this only increases his sadness.

This is the depth behind the curse, “*I will greatly increase your suffering*”²⁹ [the Torah here uses the word *atzvus*, sadness, in the term *atzvoneich*, “your suffering”]. Not only is there sadness, but the sadness worsens, with the more that a person clings to his negative view of things. It becomes a destructive view, and he becomes more negative, seeing only the negative aspect in something. It only causes him to become sadder, with the more destructive that his view becomes, towards the situation.

To illustrate, a person has a fire in his house, and he immediately starts emptying out the valuable items from his house. He quickly tries to save whatever he can, as the fire destroys the rest of his home. He will at least manage to salvage a few items from his house. But if he becomes so saddened by the fire because he is focusing on his losses, his sadness worsens and he doesn't try to save anything from his home. He clings to the negativity of this situation and therefore he doesn't bother to salvage anything from his home, and the fire destroys everything in his home.

The more that a person is attached to his **fire-of-earth [of earth]**, his sadness worsens, because his destructive, negative view continues to expand, for this is what is meant by the curse, “*I will greatly increase your suffering*” - where not only is there sadness, but the sadness continues to increase and worsen.

As a result of becoming too attached to **fire-of-earth [of earth]**, when a person encounters just about anything, he will immediately look for the faults he can find in it. He is connected to a negative view, so all he will see is the

²⁸ Beraishis 1:4

²⁹ Beraishis 3:16

24 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

flaws and deficiencies in something. This is the depth of the sadness that comes from **fire-of-earth**, and it only makes a person sadder and sadder, with the more he clings to his negative perspective.

In today's language, this is called having a "negative perspective", "being negative", etc. Here we have explained that this problem comes from the impaired use of **fire-of-earth [of earth]** in the soul.

I - CONNECTING TO HAVAYAH - THE INNER DIMENSION OF GOOD IN THE CREATION

The depth behind why we see deficiencies in anything is because the world has become mixed with good and evil, ever since the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Sages state that the world today is "mostly evil, with only a little good." However, if one's soul is connected with good, one sees the hidden good that still exists in the Creation. This is the power of how "*A good eye, he is blessed*",³⁰ the power of *ayin tovah*. This is not just about adapting a more positive perspective, but about becoming connected to the depths of good that are found, in a hidden dimension within the Creation.

The more one connects his mind with the thinking of the Torah, which is called *tov* \good, for the Torah is called a *lekach tov*, a "good purchase" - and the more one connects his view with the view of the Sages, who are the *einei haeidah*, "eyes of the congregation", who possess the "good eye" that is above the realm of regular human intellect – the more one will see the "good" that is in the Creation. But the more that a person is connected with evil, the more he will see the evil in Creation, and the more he will focus on the negative aspects found in the Creation.

While the Sages said that the world today is mostly evil, that is only in the external layer of the Creation. On the inside layer of Creation, it is entirely good. The only issue is: where one's soul is connected to.

REFRAMING DEFICIENCIES AS "LIMITATIONS"

How can a person repair the negativity (**fire-of-earth-of-earth**), which causes him to be sad?

In truth, all of the "deficiencies" in Creation are only "deficiencies" when they are seen as the root of destruction. But the more a person connects to the point of *havayah* [the raw, existential state of reality, which is completely good] in the soul, the less he will see "deficiencies" of Creation as "deficiencies" destruction, and instead, he sees them as the **limitations** of something. As the Sages state: "These are the very limits of the world".³¹ [Meaning, instead of viewing something or someone else as having a flaw, one can realize that the thing or the person is simply limited].

In different terms, this is the difference between the concepts of *yediah* (higher "knowledge") and *bechirah* (free will). The more a person connects to the higher view, which is *yediah*, the more he becomes connected with *havayah* (the deeper dimension of reality),³² and as a result of seeing things from this higher view, the less he will be bothered when he notices the deficiencies in something. Instead of seeing deficiencies of each thing in Creation, he sees the limitations of each thing in Creation, for all of the Creation is ultimately limited.

³⁰ *Mishlei 22:9*

³¹ *Sefer Yetzirah*

³² *Editor's Note: The Rav explains how to access the view of "yediah" (higher knowledge) and to rise above the view from bechirah (free will), in Reaching Your Essence, chapters 9 and 12*

25 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

This is also described as “eating from the *Eitz HaChaim* (the Tree of Life)” even as one lives in this current world, where we have become affected by the view of the *Eitz HaDaas*. When one connects his soul to *havayah*, (alternatively known as *yediah*), it is as if he is “eating” from the *Eitz HaChaim*, which is above the view of *bechirah*, represented by the *Eitz HaDaas*. Through connecting to *havayah/yediah/Eitz HaChaim*, one sees how everything in Creation is simply “limited”, as opposed to noticing the “deficiencies” in something.

This concept is also known as “higher fire”, like the fire of the Burning Bush which wasn’t consuming the bush, a fire which does not destroy. This is a kind of fire which illuminates each thing and shows a person the limitations of each thing, as opposed to illuminating the deficiencies of each thing.

However, this is a very deep perspective, and a high spiritual level, so it is not that practical for most people who hear this. We only mentioned it here so that we can see the root of how we repair the sadness that comes from **fire-of-earth [of earth]**.

2 – FINDING THE GOOD IN EACH THING

Now we will speak on a more practical level.

Practically speaking, we can repair the nature of negativity by focusing on the “point of good” that is contained in something. Since the entire Creation is a mix of good and evil (ever since the first sin), there is nothing in the Creation that is entirely bad. There is always some good contained in everything. One must traverse this point at some stage in his life, of always noticing the good in something, even if the good is very hidden and hard to find at first. One should think about something and notice any good points in it.

On a basic level, this causes a person to become more positive, and on a deeper level, it awakens the point of complete “good” that is in the soul, which focuses on the good in each thing.

One should start by noticing at least one good point in something, and then he should gradually work on noticing at least three good points in something. It is recommended that when one begins to work on this idea, he should not try to find the good in anything forbidden by the Torah, for this is generally spiritually harmful to do, and it is not for most people to engage in.

Not only does this cause a person to start seeing good, it also enables a person to connect to the point of good that is contained in each thing. This is a gradual process. A person with a more positive personality will have an easier time with this idea, but even someone with a more negative personality can work on this idea, and gradually begin to notice the good in each thing. This will slowly connect his soul to the good found in each thing, to the *havayah* (actual existence) of something, as opposed to the deficiency in something.

This connects a person to the hidden good in each thing, which is really the “Torah’s illumination” that is in each thing. The soul of the world is the Torah, and one can find a point of “Torah” in each thing, by becoming connected to the good that is found in each thing. While a *sefer Torah* can be burned (G-d forbid), this destruction only occurs to the ink and parchment of the *sefer Torah*, which are physical, but the actual Torah itself can never be burned, for the Torah is the very soul of Creation.

This is another path by which one can return from the view of the *Eitz HaDaas*, to the view of the *Eitz HaChaim*. It is more practical than the path presented earlier, though it is not as deep, for it is a path that runs through this current world, which has become damaged ever since the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*. The first path,

mentioned earlier, is a higher road to take, because it is entirely above the view of seeing any “deficiency” in Creation, whereas the second path mentioned is within this current world of “deficiency”. In either path, though, a person trains himself to see that there is really no such thing as a “deficiency” in Creation, even when it appears to be.

3 – SEEING THE “EXPANSION” OF SOMETHING

There is also an additional, third method to come out of the sadness caused by negativity.

Since the soul is saddened by focusing on the flaws in something, the same is true in the converse – a person becomes joyous when he focuses on the increase and expansion of something. When something dries up, it contracts and it is lessened, thereby causing sadness. Hence, one can come out of sadness/dryness by finding the expansiveness in something. Therefore, an integral aspect in coming out of sadness is by finding expansion in something.

(Although we are mentioning this concept with regards to solving the sadness that comes from **fire-of-earth [of earth]**, any sensible person can understand that this idea is important for solving all kinds of sadness, and not just **fire-of-earth-of-earth**. In each of these lessons, we are mentioning solutions that are particularly suited to the sadness being described in that lesson, but many of the concepts can be used to solve all kinds of sadness in general).

Sadness comes from contraction, and joy is found in expansion. We will give some examples of how to find “expansion” in something. A person sees a person and notices faults in him. What should he do now? He should now “expand” the person in his mind, by reminding himself that this person must have some good deeds. Chazal state “the good deeds of the righteous are considered to their offspring”,³³ and therefore, we can find expansion in every Jew, for every Jew has good deeds.

(Understandably, this idea can be misused as well, like everything else. For example, if a person meets a heavy person, he should not ‘expand’ the person’s weight in his mind, because this kind of expansion would only make him think worse of him. So one should use this idea sensibly, and only for the purposes of gaining an ‘expansive’ view of the other person).

One should try to find any points of “expansion” that are contained in each person, and in that way, one can connect to the “expansion” in each person, as opposed to the flaws found in each person, which would minimize the person in his eyes. (The depth behind this power is that it is a use of the “light of the Infinite” that is found in each thing). In different terms, a person connects to the “additions” (*tosefes*) that are able to be produced from each thing.)

Here is another example. A person can look at an animal and think about what is produced from it, such as milk, eggs, etc. Even the dung of the animal, which seems to be nothing but waste and garbage, is actually very valuable and highly useful, for it is used to make many different products. In this way, one sees the “expansion” contained in the animal. Even barren trees which don’t produce any fruit, can have other important uses. One can also view plants and rocks and think about what can be made out of them. In all of these examples, a person is viewing something which is seemingly useless to him, and he sees the ‘expansion’ contained in each thing.

³³ *Beraishis Rabbah* 30:6

IN SUMMARY

To summarize, we have explained here three different perspectives which a person can use to come out of the sadness that comes from negativity, which is caused by the “dryness” of the soul (**fire-of-fire-of-earth**):

1. When you notice a flaw or deficiency in something, instead of thinking it as a flaw or deficiency, reframe your view by viewing it as a **limitation**, for everything in the Creation ultimately has its necessary limits. Therefore, nothing in Creation is perfect, by its very design.
2. Everything in Creation has some good in it. Train yourself to see the “good” in each thing.
3. See the “expansion” (or addition\to sefes) contained in each thing in Creation, i.e. by thinking of what can be produced from a rock, plant, animal, or human being.

These are all deep perspectives, which can be used to repair the sadness that comes from the dryness of **fire-of-earth [of earth]**. The more that a person becomes connected to any of these perspectives, the more he will come out of the sadness that comes from the destructive dryness of **fire-of-earth-of-earth**, and instead, he will become connected to fire’s holy illumination - the repaired use of **fire-of-earth-of-earth** - which enlightens each thing, thereby causing joy.

5 – Coming Out of Comfort Zone

EARTH-OF-WATER-OF-EARTH: CONTRACTING AFTER EXPANDING A BIT

With *siyata d'shmaya* we are continuing to learn about the element of earth, the root of the trait of sadness. In the previous lessons we learned about the sadness which comes from the “earth” within the element of earth. In the next few lessons, we will learn about sadness that comes from “water” within earth. In this lesson, we will begin with sadness that stems from the “**earth**” of-water-of-earth.

As mentioned earlier, the heaviness of earth is the root of laziness, and the dryness in earth is the root of sadness. In the first lesson, we mentioned the concepts of contraction and expansion. Sadness is associated with contraction, whereas joy is associated with expansion.

Water is an element that can naturally expand. The water can widen beyond where it is. This is the opposite of earth, which is constricted to where it is. Earth is an element that places limitations, and it keeps something in a contracted, constricted state (*tzimtzum*).

“**Water**”-of-earth is when there is expansion applied to contraction – meaning that there is first a constriction, and then an expansion. **Earth-of-water-of-earth** is when there is first contraction, then expansion, and then a return to contraction.

When something stays where it is, this represents death: a still, lifeless state. Sadness is a deathlike state, where there is only constriction, and no expansion. By contrast, movement/expansion represents life and joy. When a person can't move, this represents absolute sadness. Whenever a person doesn't feel like he's moving, he is deeply sad in his soul. Non-movement is not just laziness, it is also sadness. Earth causes a person to stay where he is, whereas water makes a person to want to expand. This can be felt as a contradiction in the soul, when one feels a need to expand past where is, and at the same time, he also wishes to remain in place.

(Movement can either come from water or wind. If the movement manifests as a need to expand, it comes from water, and it comes from a need to change directions, it is coming from wind).

EXAMPLE 1 – STUCK IN A BAD JOB

Those with a dominance of impaired **earth-of-water-of-earth** have difficulty when it comes to “expanding” past where they are. (There is also the opposite kind of problem, where a person is constantly ‘broadening his horizons’, always looking for news to expand past where he is. This is an evil trait which Chazal refer to as the trait of the “widened soul” of Bilaam).

Here we are discussing the kind of person who doesn't want to expand, even when it is necessary to do so. For example, if a person is working at a job where there isn't that much growth and he needs to change jobs, or if he really needs to make more money to support his family, or other legitimate reasons, and he may be too uncomfortable to make the change. He doesn't want to ‘expand’ past where he is, even though he needs to.

29 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

When a person has more water in nature, he will be able to ‘expand’ past where he is, so he will apply for different jobs, expanding his options. But if he has very little water in his nature, he will not want to leave his old job. Even if he agrees to apply for another job, he will only consider it only if he is certain that he can return to his first job, in case the new job doesn’t work out. If there is no guarantee that he can keep his first job, he won’t even try applying for the new job, even though he really needs to leave his first job.

EXAMPLE 2 – SAME OLD HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Here’s another example. A person has a table in his dining room since the day he got married, and by now it is old and shaky, and he really needs a new one. He buys a new table and keeps it in the storage room, but he doesn’t use the new table until the first table is absolutely unbearable for use. There are also those who will use even broken plates and utensils their whole life, because they don’t want to try something new. They would rather remain with their broken plates, because that is what they were used to.

If a person has too much earth in his soul, he will not budge even a bit from his old antics. But even if he has some water in his soul and he can expand, he will only expand if he knows that he can return to his original situation. Otherwise, he will not budge from where he is.

EXAMPLE 3 – EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY ON OLD CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

This can also be a problem on a more emotional level, with regards to friendships. A person may be too tied to his old circle of friends, so he doesn’t want to make new friends. If he is a very social type, he may feel too ‘loyal’ to his previous group of friends, so he may have the problem of never being able to make new friends, because he doesn’t want to disconnect from his previous social circle.

Even if he is willing to form a new circle of friends, he may always want to return to his original circle of friends, and therefore he won’t try that seriously to form new friends, even if he has different circumstances in his life right now where it makes sense for him to part from his old group. He is too afraid of ‘burning his bridges’. He will only make new friends if he knows for certain that he can always return to his old friends, in case the new circle of friends doesn’t work out for him.

Although he “expands” a bit, by trying to make new friends, he is only doing so if he knows for certain that he still has his old niche amongst his previous circle of friends. In that sense, he stays somewhat constricted, even as he expands. This is impaired **earth-of-water-of-earth**. It’s as if “he has one foot outside the door, with one foot inside the door.” He feels that he cannot completely disconnect from his previous situation. This problem has many bearings on different aspects of life, as we have begun to explain and as we will continue to see.

EXAMPLE 4 – EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY ON PARENTS AFTER MARRIAGE

In marriage, the Torah commands, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and he shall cleave to his wife”*. After a person marries, he must become more emotionally attached with his wife, and less with his parents. This doesn’t mean of course that a person should completely abandon his parents and friends from until now, just because he has a wife now. He can certainly remain close to his parents and his friends, even after he is married. But

30 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

some people take it too far. Even after they marry, they will never make the emotional shift of becoming closer to their spouse than they were with their parents. In some cases, a person even makes sure that there is still a room waiting in the house for him, in case he gets divorced.

A person like this cannot make the necessary, healthy disconnection that his soul needs right now. The fact that he seems to others as a more ‘family-oriented’ person, who is very close to his parents, with deeper ‘family ties’, is just a superficial excuse for his behavior. It is really a problematic situation for his soul, because he cannot part from the situation he grew up in. He is always wishing he could go back to his home. The Torah says “*Therefore a man shall abandon his father and mother, and cleave to his wife*”, but he feels differently than this....

This is impaired **earth-of-water-of-earth**. The earth keeps him in place, the water allows for some expansion, and the “earth” of his water-of-earth causes him to contract back to his original situation. He takes one step out of his first situation, but he keeps one foot behind him, because he feels like he is not ready to completely disconnect from his first situation. Even when he takes some steps away from his previous situation, he will be easily flustered by any difficulty and he will become full of despair, which makes him want to immediately return to his first situation, wherever his comfort zone was.

EXAMPLE 5 – CAN’T MOVE ON TO A NEW YESHIVAH\KOLEL

Here is an example. A person was learning in a certain place [a *yeshiva* or *Kolel*], and then the need arises for him to switch to a new place. When he goes to learn in the new place, he may encounter some new difficulties. So he quickly leaves and goes back to learn in the first place, even though that place wasn’t good for him anymore – and even when he left, he made sure not to ‘burn his bridges’ there, so that he can return there if he needs to.

If he has a lot of “water-of-earth” in his personality, he can leave behind his first place and perhaps he’ll make sure to visit it every so often, to keep up with his friends. He is somewhat dependent and attached to his first place, but at least he can make the disconnection from it. But if a person has a lot of “**earth**”-of-water-of-earth, he makes sure to ‘leave one foot behind’ in his first place – he never fully disconnects from it. He is too afraid of completely leaving it, so he will quickly return there if the new place doesn’t work, and he even makes sure before leaving his first place that he’ll be able to easily return.

ATTACHED TO HIS COMFORT ZONE

This creates a deep contradiction in his soul. He feels the need to move from his place, and indeed, he takes some steps away, but eventually, he finds himself back in his first place. He simply cannot disconnect, on an emotional level, from his previous situation.

Either he will develop a low self-esteem, when he realizes that he keeps failing whenever he tries to make a transition to a new place, or, he will become totally full of despair, when he realizes that he is not able to pull away from a situation even when he knows that he needs to. This ‘earth’ will dry up any water he has, he won’t be able to come out of any place where he is, and he is buried there.

Living in this way creates a very difficult situation for a person. Even if it doesn’t cause a person to totally despair, he will still be a very unsuccessful person in general. His will is still active, and he does not want to become full of

31 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

despair, so he will keep pushing himself, so that he doesn't fall into despair. But the people around him see that he cannot make any changes in his life, and indeed, he feels like he can't.

So, when he gets used to returning to his comfort zone after he has tried to move away from it, either he may end up in total despair, because he feels like he can never make the necessary changes in his life. Even if he doesn't totally despair, he will still feel like an utter failure, because he knows that he isn't able to make necessary changes in his life. It's all because he is too attached to his comfort zone.

The above examples were extreme cases which aren't that common. When one lives with such an attitude, he is always 'leaving one foot behind' in everything. Even when one tries to move forward and make changes, he might make sure to take a few steps behind him, so that he can remain attached to the first situation.

Here is an example which we can see in children. A child in first grade gets a report card at the end of the year which says that is being promoted to second grade. However, in some cases, the child may wish to remain in the first grade. When he enters second grade, he may wish to return to first grade, either because he liked the *rebbe* better, or because he misses his old seat and desk, etc.

This childish perspective may remain in an adult. If a person in adulthood has never graduated from this attitude, he may go through a difficulty in life and then he will recede several steps backward, back to wherever his comfort zone was. His **earth-of-water-of-earth** dominates and causes him to return to his previous situation, even if several years have passed already since he has left it.

A VICIOUS CYCLE OF SADNESS, HELPLESSNESS AND DESPAIR

Such a person will never have *menuchah* (serenity) in any place. He will always want to move forward from where he is, but whenever he tries to make any changes in his life, he finds himself quickly running back to his comfort zone. Even after he has begun to move forward, he will take several steps back from where he is, as soon as he encounters difficulty in his new place.

This is also called "*Kaf HaKela*" (an intense form of spiritual suffering, of being 'flung' all over the universe) in the soul, for such a person never finds his place. He has no permanence and he is missing a feeling of stability in his life. That is why he keeps returning to his previous situation, to wherever his comfort zone was. If he is too embarrassed to return to his previous situation, he may take to the streets. Such a person is like Kayin, who was cursed with having to wander the earth.

When a person has no place where he can feel permanence in, this leads him into despair. Simply speaking, he will feel despair because he sees that he is constantly unsuccessful wherever he is. But there is a deeper reason for his despair. It is because he can't find any *menuchah* in his life. He will find comfort only in his despair! His feelings of despair then become like his comfort zone to him, because it is the only the familiar feeling he knows of that he can always return to....

The earth contains dryness, and it also contains heaviness. When one despairs, this can come from an increase of "dryness" in his element of earth, but it can also come from the "heaviness" of his earth. Part of the reason for despair is that a person wishes for permanence and serenity, and he feels too 'heavy' inside himself to make a new move and find his place, and as a result, he despairs.

32 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

When one is always ‘leaving one foot behind’ when trying to move forward, he never finds permanence in any place, and this causes him to feel despair in the depths of his soul. The despair is even comforting to him, because it feels familiar to him. It is very unfortunate that this is where he finds his serenity, but sadly, this is the only “comfort” that he knows of.

We have described the problem of impaired **earth-of-water-of-earth**: when one is always returning to his comfort zone, after he has tried to take a few steps away from it (contraction that comes after a bit of expansion).

The way to repair this issue is as follows. The idea will be the same, but it can be described from a few different angles.

1 – BEFORE TRANSITIONING, THINK ABOUT IT SENSIBLY

Part of the issue here is that a person often moves too much, or that he transitions to a place where he doesn’t find permanence in. If a person would make only a small move and not a major move, or if he would find permanence in his new place, there is far less of a chance that he will want to return to his previous comfort zone.

In most cases, though, the new move doesn’t work out as he thought it would. For example, he thought the new place would be better, he thought the new school was better for his children, etc., and now he finds out otherwise. The problem was that he lacked clarity about what he was doing. He didn’t think it through enough, before making his move.

So before a person makes a new move, he should first try to gain clarity about the new situation he wants to enter. He should think about it carefully, before he makes the change. Most changes that people make are done with a lack of awareness, and from being out of touch with reality. People often rely on false kind of trust, a blind faith, and they think that they’ll deal with the issues when they come. Instead, a person should think about what the new move may entail, and how he will deal with any of the problems that may arise.

2 – MAINTAINING SOME ‘EXPANSION’

Additionally, when a person tries moving forward or embarking on a new endeavor, or moving to a new place, etc. and then he sees that the new plans aren’t working out, he should try to keep moving forward just a bit, even if he won’t be making the full adjustment to the new plans. Once he has begun to move out of his previous situation, he shouldn’t completely disconnect from his new move. In this way, one allows himself to keep expanding, and he doesn’t put a stop to his expansion once he has begun to expand. He allows some of the expansion to continue, even though he isn’t completely moving forward.

When one makes sure to maintain expansion, by trying to move forward from his previous situation even a little bit, he acquires joy, because joy comes from expansion. If a person trains himself to continue his movement/expansion and he doesn’t put a complete stop to it, even though he is mostly falling back into his comfort zone, he is making sure that he doesn’t completely destroy his previous place, and in that way, he keeps his power of expansion intact.

Here is an example of how to work on this idea. A person resolves to *daven* for 40 days at the *Kosel*. After a few days, he sees that he can’t keep to his resolution. What does he do? He may start looking for other *segulos* to be

33 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

involved with, or he may just return to his home then. But instead of abandoning his resolution completely, he can try doing it for one or two more days, even though he knows that he won't be doing it for the full 40 days. The gain of this will be that he will be learning how to continue moving forward, even when he has started to fall back to his comfort zone. He allows himself to keep expanding, and he doesn't completely put a stop to the "expansion" which he has started.

If a person feels like he can't move forward at all, it is not because he isn't able to - it is only because he doesn't want to, and not that he can't. Any person can take one more step forward from where he is, even if he is mostly falling back into his comfort zone.

IN SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

In summary, the first step is that whenever a person needs to move into a new place or situation, he should try to make a change that will be smooth, one that he can handle, so he should think about it well, before he makes his new move. He should try to find a place where he will find permanence in, rather than making a rash decision and transitioning into a place he has no idea about. And if he meets up with difficulty and he is tempted to quickly return to his comfort zone, he should try to keep moving a bit forward from his comfort zone, even though he won't be making a total change from it, so that he can continue to have some 'expansion'.

Getting used to this will provide a person with joy, and it lessens the sadness that comes from impaired **earth-of-water-of-earth**.

6 – Overdoing It

WATER-OF-WATER-OF-EARTH: WHEN THERE IS TOO MUCH EXPANSION

With *siyata d'shmaya* we are continuing to learn about the element of earth and its resulting trait, sadness. Now we will learn about sadness that comes from **water-of-water-of-earth**.

Unlike earth, which is dry, the water is a moist element. The opposite of sadness, *atzvus*, is *itzuv*, formation. We see that when something is formed correctly, it brings joy to us, and when something does not attain a proper form, it is saddening.

When we form something, we place water on earth, which moistens the earth, and then we can fashion things from it. This is the constructive use of water combined with earth. But if too much water is applied, the earth becomes mushy, and we cannot form anything with the moist clod of earth. Too much “water” doesn’t allow for a formation. [In this lesson, we will refer to water as “*chiyus*”, life-giving energy or vitality. Therefore, the idea is that applying too much energy into something is detrimental, and instead of causing joy, it brings sadness]. That is the outline of the idea we will explain about in this lesson.

WATER-OF-EARTH: THE VITALITY IN COMPLETED FORMATIONS

If we are combining physical earth and water together to make something, and the earth dominates the water, there can be a proper formation. If one is actualizing his potential, this is a constructive use of the element of earth, for the earth nurtures the potential of something. This is the opposite of the dryness of earth, which ‘dries out’ a person and prevents him from actualizing something. Through the actualizing of potential, one gives formation to his actions.

For example, when an expert craftsman takes raw material and builds something from it, and it is made by an expert, even seeing the object fills a person with life-giving vitality and joy. Usually something that looks beautiful brings joy to a person. But even if something isn’t particularly beautiful, as long as it is completed and it is refreshing to look at, it gives *chiyus*, a life-giving feeling of vitality, and it brings joy to a person when he sees it.

Similarly, a person can receive *chiyus* when he sees a person who appears to be full of life, and in contrast to this, he feels sad when he views a dead person. (But if he goes to a house of mourning, he can receive vitality from there, even when he thinks about death, as it is written, “*It is good to go to a house of mourning, and the living will take to heart.*”)

When one views anything that gives him a refreshing feeling of life-giving energy or vitality, it brings joy. Many people receive vitality from viewing various sculptures, pieces of art, architecture, or a scenic view. They feel more energized when they view these things. The work of the artist or sculptor actually contains the vitality of the one who fashioned it. The artist or sculptor has placed his own life into his work, and when people receive vitality from looking at the art or finished pieces, they are actually receiving the artist’s vitality which has been placed into the art.

35 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

(For this reason, there is actually a certain gain to the various products which are manufactured today by computers, because the products do not contain any thoughts, since they are not made with the thoughts of a person, and therefore one is not gaining any impure thoughts of the maker, by using these items).

Applying this on a deeper level, a person can look at the Creation and receive vitality from viewing the Creation, the vitality of the Creator so to speak, by viewing His Creation, which is His handiwork.

All of the above is the repaired use of water-of-earth, where an increase of living-giving energy (the element of water) is cause for joy.

WATER-OF-WATER-OF-EARTH: 'OVERDOING' IT

Water-of-water-of-earth [when it is impaired], though, is when there is a lot of water\ vitality, to the point that it is detrimental.

For example, if a nice-looking picture is placed on the wall, it is pleasant to look at, but if we place too many pictures on the wall, it is no longer enjoyable to look at, because there is too much to focus on now. It makes the wall become too crowded, it is confusing to the eyes, and it is too much. Instead of a nice look, it becomes an eyesore.

When there is too much of something, even if it is beautiful and pleasant, the overabundance of it takes away its beauty. So when there is too much life-giving vitality that is placed into something, the overabundance of vitality actually becomes a root for sadness. Normally, life-giving vitality is a cause for joy, but too much vitality is a cause for sadness.

Here is a more tangible example. If a person is overly meticulous when he is working hard at something, making sure that it should be a perfect job, he will apply too much energy into what he's doing, much more than is necessary. He will keep adding on more and more to it, and eventually, it will look ugly. If he puts in a normal amount of effort into it, it looks nice. But if he can't finish what he's doing and he keeps adding to it, it doesn't look nice anymore. Since he is expending too much energy on it, beyond his actual capacities, this causes him to be sad about it.

This is impaired **water-of-water-of-earth**. It is a sadness that comes from applying too much energy into something. It is an overabundance of energy, which is not life-giving, but deathlike.

'DRAGGED'

When one puts in too much effort, much more than necessary, he is just being 'dragged' (a negative use of the element of water). The problem here is that he isn't setting proper boundaries.

Impaired **water-of-water-of-earth** causes a person to be continuously dragged. For example, a person may wash fruit in the sink for 5 or 20 minutes, but if he places the fruits under the water for too long, the fruits become shriveled and ruined. Too much water has been applied. It causes the fruit to lose its form, its *itzuv*. When one places too much life-giving energy into something, this is too much 'water', and an overabundance of water ruins the formation of the earth. Thus, 'overdoing it' with too much vitality causes sadness.

THE TWO ROOTS OF SADNESS – EARTH\CONTRACTION, AND WATER\EXPANSION

Through death, the physical body decomposes, because after death, a person loses the light of his *tzelem elokim* (his likeness to G-d), for his soul has left him. Although the body itself still retains some of the light of the *tzelem elokim*, it is only a tiny imprint, and not enough to prevent the body from decomposing. An exception to this is if the person was a great *tzaddik*, who still maintains his *tzelem elokim* on his body even after death, to the point that his body stays fully intact. But if one does not merit this level, his body decomposes. Why does the body decompose in the earth after death?

It is because the sin of Adam brought “separation” to the world. Adam and Chavah desired to eat from forbidden *Eitz HaDaas*, as the Torah says, “*And the tree was desirable...and she took of its fruit and ate.*”³⁴ The verse in *Mishlei* teaches that a Torah scholar who seeks forbidden desires becomes shunned and “separated” from his friends.³⁵ Thus, the desire to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* brought death, and hence all sadness, to the world. The trait of forbidden desire is rooted in the element of water. Therefore, water/desire is the root that caused all sadness to come to the world. From this we see that sadness comes from the impaired use of water. All death, and all sadness, came about from the desire to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas*, a forbidden desire which stems from the impaired element of water.

There is a *Midrash* that after Adam ate from the tree, he said, “*I ate, and I will continue to eat.*”³⁶ The original act of eating stemmed from desire/water, and his desire to eat more from the tree stemmed from “**water**”-of-water.

At the beginning of Creation, the Torah says that there was “*tohu u’vohu*”, a vast depth of nothingness, which covered the earth, and darkness which covered the water. The *Midrash* states that this “*tohu*” which originally filled the world is the *tehom*, the deep waters of the world, which has the same letters as the word *hamaves*, death. Thus, the *tohu*, which was water, was the root of death. When Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, he was cursed with death, to return to the earth. The soul must return to G-d, and the body must return to earth, as a result of sin. The curse of death came about through *tohu*, the *tehom*, which is the deep “waters” of the world – a hint to the impaired kind of water.

The *Gemara* says that when Dovid *HaMelech* was digging into the ground to lay the foundation for the *Beis HaMikdash*, the waters of the *tehom* threatened to rise up and flood the world.³⁷ On a deeper level, this can be understood that the many desires that are present in all people are so vast that they are capable of flooding the world, bringing death and destruction.

Therefore, Adam’s sin was that he used the evil kind of “water” in the soul, which is able to ‘flood’ the world. Thus, the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas* did not merely stem from the element of earth (which is the simple understanding, for sin is associated with earth), but from the element of water, forbidden desire, which destroys the world: the waters of the *tehom*. This is how water/desire causes death and sadness: when there is too much water/desire. The Flood also came about through the sin of forbidden desires, and the Flood indeed brought death to the world.

Just as death/sadness can come through too much contraction, so can it come through too much expansion. These two root forces in Creation, contraction and expansion, are also known as *kamatz* (contraction) and *patach*

³⁴ *Beraishis* 2:9

³⁵ *Mishlei* 18:1

³⁶ *Beraishis Rabbah* 19:12

³⁷ *Succah* 53b

37 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

(expansion).³⁸ Sadness doesn't only come from being in a state of contraction - it also comes from desire, from improper expansion, as we see from the desire to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas*, a desire which stemmed from water/expansion. It was this desire that caused death, sadness and separation (and decomposition of the physical body after death) to come to the world.

This is also described in different terms: The *tohu*, which refers to the *tehom*, is the root of evil that comes from water, while the *Eitz HaDaas* is the root of evil that came through the element of earth. That is why sadness can either come from contraction/earth, which is rooted in the *Eitz HaDaas*, or it may come from too much expansion/water, which is rooted in *tohu/tehom*. To illustrate the idea, we can see that the waters of the world are not a place for residence. A person cannot live in the water. People swim in the water and they can spend some time in it, but not for that long. The waters of the world serve as a passageway to get from one place to another. But the water itself a place for death; it cannot be a place to live in.

So there are two roots for death: When there is contraction (earth*Eitz HaDaas*), or when there is too much expansion (water*tehom*). That is why there are two roots to sadness: either when there is contraction, or when there is too much expansion. The *Gemara* says, "Whoever adds, subtracts."³⁹ When one "adds" more than necessary, there is too much expansion, and this is detrimental. Hence, expansion can be a cause for sadness.

Therefore, we can gain the following insight about sadness. Whenever one is sad, simply we can say that this is because he feels that he is lacking something, he is missing something, and he wonders what is missing from life. But the deeper reason for his sadness is not because he is missing something, but simply because he has overdone himself! He has "expanded" too much.

As an example, both Kayin and Hevel wanted to expand past their boundaries. Kayin could not have killed Hevel, if Hevel would have stayed within his boundaries. The Torah says that Hevel "also" brought an offering, after Kayin did⁴⁰, and the depth of this is that Hevel wanted to expand past his boundaries, and therefore Kayin saw Hevel as a threat, because he feared that Hevel would interfere with his space. Hevel expanded too much, past his own space and into Kayin's space, and this improper use of "expansion" brought about his death.

In summary, sadness can either come from missing something, from contraction (earth), or it can come from "overdoing" it, which is expansion (water).

THE SOLUTION: LIMITATIONS

Therefore, the way to rectify sadness which comes from **water-of-earth-of-water**, the sadness that comes from too much expansion, is by realizing one's limitations. In order to work on this idea, one should refer to other lessons where we have explained about this concept.⁴¹

We have explained here the two roots of sadness, contraction and too much expansion, and how to repair the sadness that comes from too much expansion (earth-of-water-of-earth).

³⁸ (*Kamatz* and *patach* are different sounds of pronunciation for Hebrew letters (*Lashon HaKodesh*). The "*kamatz*" is pronounced as an "uh" sound, and the "*patach*" is pronounced as an "ah" sound).

³⁹ *Sanhedrin* 29a

⁴⁰ *Beraishis* 4:4 (Editor's Note: There are many other reasons as well as to why Hevel was punished with death at the hands of Kayin)

⁴¹ Editor's Note: Refer to *Fixing Your Focus* 005 – *Addicted To Same Behaviors and Thoughts*

7 – Masked Pain

SADNESS THAT COMES FROM BEING “SCATTERED”

With *siyata d'shmaya* we are continuing to learn about the element of earth, and the trait of sadness. In this lesson we will learn about sadness that comes from **wind-of-water-of-earth**.

As explained in the previous chapter, it is the dryness in the element of earth which causes sadness. Water causes a person to become dragged after something, and wind can move in any of the four directions.

Wind is different from the other elements because there are four different kinds of wind, because the wind can split into four different directions. We pray in *Shemoneh Esrei* that our wayward ones be gathered together from all “four corners of the world”. The wind scatters anything into the four directions of the world. Wind is one element which splits into four different directions, whereas the earth itself is a scattered element to begin with. Earth is a scattered element, just like the wind, but it cannot gather everything into one place like the wind can. Only the wind can unify and bring everything thing.

Wind-of-water-of-earth is when a person is ‘dragged’ into different directions, and as a result, he is sad.

JOY COMES FROM BEING UNIFIED, SADNESS COME FROM BEING SEPARATED AND SCATTERED

It is written, “*Pull me after You*”,⁴² and this is the holy use of being “dragged”. This is the holy kind of *taavah*/desire. Unlike evil lusts, which cause separation and scattering, the holy desire of being pulled after closeness with Hashem is a desire that brings about unification, the antithesis of separation.

Wind-of-water-of-earth, when impaired, results in a sadness that comes from being dragged into different directions, where one becomes “scattered”. One of the main aspects of sadness is that it comes from the aspect of “scattering” in earth, besides for the dryness of earth. Sadness comes from contraction, a deathlike state, and after a person dies, his body becomes part of the earth and his body separates into many pieces. This is another root for sadness: becoming scattered.

Joy comes from being unified, whereas sadness comes from separation and scattering. When a person is sad, he sits alone, and when he is joyous, he connects to others. When a person makes a joyous occasion, he includes others in it. When one is sad and in mourning, the fact that others are visiting him and joining with him in his pain, is comforting. This is the depth of comforting a mourner. It is because the joining of others rectifies the pain of the aloneness which accompanies mourning.

Another example of this idea is Succos, which is called *chag ha'assif*, when the harvest is gathered, and which is also the *zman simchaseinu*, time of our joy. The joy on Succos is because there is gathering together, joining, and unity. Joy comes from unity and joining together. It is not simply a joy over the gathering of harvest, which is a

⁴² *Shir HaShirim* 1:4

superficial joy, but a gathering of all spiritual power from the entire year. It is the point which gathers together the three festivals, as well as the *Yomim Noraim* and Succos.

As proof to this, the Four Species on Succos correspond to four different types of people, and they are all bound together. During Succos, the time of our joy, we bind together the Four Species and wave them in all four directions of the earth, to remove “harmful winds”, and the depth of it is that we are using the *lulav*, one species (all four species are called under the general name ‘*lulav*’) which connects together the four directions of the earth. The *chag ha’asif* also “gathers” together all kinds of Jews on Succos to ascend to Jerusalem.

There are many other explanations as well, as to what the joy of Succos is and how this is related to *chag ha’asif*. In summary, joy comes from togetherness, while sadness comes from separation and scattering.

PIZUR – SCATTERING OF THE SOUL

When one is scattered over different directions, he becomes sad. The *Chovos HaLevovos* says, “May the Merciful One save us from “*pizur hanefesh*”, scattering of the soul.” When one acts from clear *daas* [awareness], he is closer to living a more focused kind of life, which enables him to live in the inner, spiritual world, which is a world of oneness (*echad*). But when one acts from a place of desire, or from his various other unfixed *middos*, he will become ‘scattered’ in any of the directions. He will have *pizur hanefesh*, a scattered soul.

Wind-of-water-of-earth is when a person has the nature to become dragged into being scattered all over many different directions. Here we are studying the sadness that comes from this scattering. *Pizur hanefesh* is a concept that has far-ranging effects, and here we are only addressing how it results in sadness. When a person has a nature of **water-of-wind-of-earth**, he often seeks a lifestyle of *pizur hanefesh*, of being scattered between many different activities, and this leads to sadness.

One who is living a lifestyle of *pizur hanefesh* will often be sad, though he is not always conscious of it. He involves himself in many different activities, and as a result, he has constant *hesech hadaas*, he is always ‘taking his mind off’ his bothersome issues, and this actually makes him become sadder. And he doesn’t even know why he feels sad.

What does a person do when he’s sad? There are many different things people do, in order to take away their sadness. Some people, when they are sad, cannot have any joy at all, not even a tiny bit. Others will allow themselves to be dragged after the desire for food, and others will get involved in some activity, so that they will get busy and avoid thinking about what is bothering them. However, this is just a way to have *hesech hadaas* (a removal of *daas*), and it does not actually remove the sadness. The person is merely avoiding any thinking about his sadness. Deep down, the person is still sad, even though he is involved in various activities.

Of course, *hesech hadaas* can definitely ease the sadness. The Sages state that if one has a worry in his heart, he should speak of it to another⁴³, so that he will ease some of his anxiety. But this does not take away the sadness, it merely eases it.

If a person commits a sin, *chas v’shalom*, he is really bothered by it and saddened by it. But he doesn’t want to deal with this unpleasant feeling, so he will try to have *hesech hadaas* from it, and he will take his mind off it in various ways. Just because he has forgotten about it, does that mean that Heaven has forgotten about it and he won’t

⁴³ Sotah 42b

be punished? No, it doesn't help that he is having a *hesech hadaas*. In his subconscious, he is really sad about the sin. He manages to push his sadness very deep into his subconscious, placing it into hiding, so that he won't think about it and be bothered by it. He is still sad, and it is just that he has pushed it away into a place where he can't feel it.

MASKED PAIN

If we meet someone who has a nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, it is hard to tell that deep down he is sad, because he hides it very well. This is because he has a nature to 'scatter' himself by throwing himself into many different activities, in order to take his mind off his troubles. He may come across as unorganized or a bit chaotic from all the different things he does, but it doesn't seem that he's sad from all of this.

Deep down, though, this kind of person is really very sad, and this is because his soul is scattered. He doesn't even know that he's sad, though, because he is 'dragged' after many different things, in order to take his mind off his troubles. He is always the kind of person who always manages to be "busy", and he has "no time to be sad" – but just because he doesn't show it, that doesn't mean he's not sad. It's just that he's pushing away his sadness deep into his subconscious.

Here's a good example of this. A person has a family member or a parent who passes away, and he has to take care of the funeral and the burial. Usually he is not so sad before the funeral has taken place, because he is busy making the arrangements for the funeral and burial, he has to call a lot of people, and he has no time to think about his sadness. He isn't processing his grief yet. Only after the funeral and the burial does the grief begin to settle in, now that he has the time to think about what has happened. Now he is calm, and now he can think about his sadness.

We see from this that being busy enables a person to avoid his feelings of sadness. Deep down a person can be very sad, but he can make himself appear to others to seem as if he is happy, by always being busy, involved, helpful, useful, productive, etc.

When a person is 'scattered' in his soul all the time, from being involved with many different activities and pursuits, although he has 'no time to be sad', that is only true in the external sense. Deep down, in his internal world, the person with a nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth** can be full of a deep kind of sadness. He is just covering it very well, through his many different activities. He might even know that he is sad deep down, and he wants to calm his sadness, so he throws himself into various activities, in order to have a *hesech hadaas* and thereby avoid the painful feelings of his sadness. In doing so, he's trying to fool his own subconscious.

There are people who are consciously trying to remove their mind from their sadness by involving themselves in other activities, and certainly this is a valid way to ease sadness, and it can be somewhat healing to them. This is a sensible thing to do, and it can help – as long as a person is consciously aware that he is doing so for the purpose of having *hesech hadaas* from his troubles. But if a person isn't consciously trying to ease his sadness, and he simply throws himself into other activities - for the sake of taking his mind off the sadness, and not because he is trying to heal his sadness - this is detrimental.

When a person is busy all of the time - even if he is known to others as a kindly, helpful person who is known for his good deeds – if he never has time for himself, it shows that he is out of touch with his own inner world. He has no inner calm in his life, because he never has time alone for himself. Therefore, he is constantly trying to calm himself down by throwing himself into other activities, such as by helping others, etc. He always has time to help

41 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

other, but he will never be with himself. It is really because he has a fear of being alone with himself. He is afraid to be alone with himself, because he has a deep-seated fear that he may discover the depth of his sadness which he knows is laying in his subconscious. This kind of person also loves to be around people all the time, because he never wants to be alone with himself.

Often, this kind of person has difficulty with the *mitzvah* to go to a house of mourning and comfort the bereaved. He will make up all kinds of excuses why he doesn't want to go, and he will claim that it's too depressing to be in the company of a mourner. If you tell them that there is a verse, "*It is good to go to a house of mourning, and the living will take to heart*", he will reply that he doesn't get a good feeling out of going to a house of mourning (even though the *possuk* is clearly refuting his argument). The truth is that he really has a fear of meeting his own sadness. He is afraid that thinking about death will remind them of his own sadness, so he chooses instead to run away from this kind of situation.

When it comes the Three Weeks, the Nine Days, and Tisha B'Av, which is a period of mourning for the Jewish people, this kind of person will look for all kinds of different ways to take his mind off thinking about anything to do with sadness and mourning. He might delve into the 'intellectual' aspect of this period, by immersing himself in the *Midrashim* or the any of the relevant parts of *Gemara* and *halachah* that are relevant to Tisha B'Av, but it is all a way of running away from feeling any actual sadness about Tisha B'Av. This avoidance only causes him to become sadder and sadder, with the more he tries to take his minds off the sadness that he knows he's supposed to feel. When people act like this, they are really running away from their own self.

A person with a nature of impaired **wind-of-water-of-earth** will try to "run away" from himself, within himself [by trying to fool his own subconscious]. A person with this nature can often feel a deep sadness, a feeling of bitterness that wells up from inside of them, and he doesn't know where the sadness is coming from. Wishing to relieve themselves of this unexplainable sadness, people with this nature may try to remove the feelings of sadness in any possible way, by drinking alcohol or with any other means of 'medicating'.

There can be several reasons for this mysterious kind of sadness, but one of the reasons is because of what we have described here: it is because they are "scattered" in their souls, by always involving themselves in different activities, so that they can take their minds off their sadness. All they know how to do about their sadness is to run away from their pain. They can become conscious of the bitterness inside of them, but they don't know where it's coming from, and what to do about it.

THE FAKE SMILE

We are talking here of a sadness which usually cannot be detected by others. In most scenarios, people cannot tell on the person that he is sad. This is because the person comes across as a busy, useful and productive person to others. He may be a very helpful or kind person, who is known for having a "good heart", and everyone has only the best to say about him, but in reality, his constant involvement with helping people is really a way for him to run away from himself.

He appears to others to always seem fine, he looks basically happy, and he may always be smiling at others, making sure to always give others a *sever panim yafos* (a pleasant countenance), but this is all a "mask" that he is wearing, to hide the terrible sadness that he is really feeling deep down, which others cannot see.

The Sages praise the act of showing others a pleasant countenance. But a person with a nature of **wind-of-water-of-earth**, when he smiles at others, isn't smiling out of any inner joy in his heart. He has none. He may be smiling at others because he read in the *sefer Chovos HaLevovos* says that "A pious one has a shining face, even though there is mourning in his heart".⁴⁴ When these words of the *Chovos HaLevovos* are understood simply, it seems to imply that a person can be sad and mournful in his heart, but he doesn't show it outward to others, and he makes sure to smile at others even though he is sad deep down.

Just because a person is smiling at others all the time, that doesn't mean he is happy. He can still be terribly sad, in his heart. But even more so, by smiling at others and misleading them into thinking that he's happy, when he's really not, he is projecting a false, happy image to everyone that he meets. And this is how he lives his life.

The words of the *Chovos HaLevovos*, that one can be mournful in his heart yet show a happy face to others, is only speaking about a person who also has some joy in his heart, who isn't entirely sad in his heart. With such a person, the smile that he shows others is emanating from the inner joy that exists in his heart, in spite of the fact that he also may have things to mourn about and be sad about in his heart. Even though he has some sadness and mourning in his heart, he chooses to let the joy in his heart come out also, and that is what he lets people see. He shows others a happy face because he is showing others the inner joy that is also present in his heart.

It does not make sense that the words of the *Chovos HaLevovos* should be understood simply, that a person who is sad in his heart should smile at others anyway and fool them into thinking that he is joyous, when the reality is otherwise. That would be an entirely fake smile, and it is misleading to others. We do find that when it comes to anger, one is allowed to show an angry face at others when they act incorrectly, but he must not feel actual anger in his heart. But this was not said about joy. If one shows others that he's joyous, when in reality he's not, he is fooling them into thinking that he is happy. On his outside, he projects a happy image to others, while on the inside, things are completely different. It is a false way of living.

If a person thinks that the *Chovos HaLevovos* means that one should smile at others even when he is not happy at all inside himself, he is not being truthful. He is one way on the outside, and a different person on the inside. It is falsehood! People who smile at others all the time, when they are not really happy at all, may get much reward in Heaven for all the broken hearts that they have healed with their smile - but they are not living truthfully! It creates a contradiction between one's outer world and his inner world. The person projects a happy image outward to others, but on his inside, he is sad, and he will become sadder and sadder, with the more that he gives the 'fake smile' to others.

As it was explained here, it can be difficult to notice the sadness in a person if his sadness is coming from **wind-of-water-of-earth**, because such a person tends to throw himself into various activities so that he can take his mind off his sadness, and therefore he appears to be a busy, productive person to others, who likes to be around people, and that is why it's hard for people to notice his sadness. That is why such a person suffers greatly inside, because he is usually suffering and no one knows about it.

Now let us see how to repair this issue.

⁴⁴ *Chovos HaLevovos: Shaar HaPerishus (Duties of the Heart: The Gate of Abstinence): 4*

COMING OUT OF DISPARITY AND ENTERING INTO ONENESS

Since the sadness here stems from the problem of becoming “scattered”, it is clear that the way to fix this issue is: through the power of focus. One should refer to the series of “*Fixing Your Focus*”, where we elaborated much about this point.

To be brief, all “scattering” comes from the perspective of our outer, external world, where there is “a lot” in front of us [seemingly], whereas the power of focus is a perspective that comes from the inner world, which is “oneness”. The more a person enters into the inner world, the more “oneness” he will see. He will see more and more that everything is really one, for everything is ultimately unified through *echad*, the oneness, which binds all the details in Creation together.

This is a hard concept for people to grasp at first. A person starts out learning about the letters of the *Aleph Beis*, and he sees that there are 26 letters, and that each letter can be pronounced in many different ways. Then when he gets older and he learns *Gemara*, he sees that there is an endless amount of details in Torah. He sees that there are so many different points in the Torah, and it seems that there is a myriad amount of points in the Torah, to learn about and remember. It seems, then, that the more one enters into the Torah, he discovers more and more information. It does not seem that the inner world is oneness, and that everything can be unified into one point. But that is really a superficial perspective. The inner perspective is the very opposite of this.

Here is a clear example. The Creator is one, so to speak. He created one creation, the Torah, and the nation Yisrael is a part of the Torah. This is all one unit. After the creation of the nation Yisrael, the 70 nations were formed, and then the endless amount of creations after them. But at the root, all of the creations are one. The deepest point in the soul, which is called the *Yechidah*, is one unit, and it contains the entirety of the soul. The lower layers in the soul – the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah* and the *Chayah* – contain many different points. But the very root of the soul, the *Yechidah*, is only one single, point which is all-inclusive of all the details in the soul.

The inner world is one unit, while the outer world contains many details. However, it only appears that there are many different details to the outer world. At the root, everything is one. The inner perspective in learning Torah is to see how all details are all one, and to keep unifying the details. A person needs to aspire to unify all details, and the highest level of this unity is when one connects all details to the true One, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

This perspective must be made into the initial perspective for our souls. It must become our main viewpoint towards everything. This is depth of having *emunah shelaimah*, the complete level of faith in the Creator: when we grasp that there is a oneness of the entire Creation, which unifies everything together. Our goal throughout whatever work we do should always be: to reach this viewpoint of *Echad*, the oneness which binds together all details in Creation. In the series of *Fixing Your Focus*, we elaborated about the power of focus, and how to unify our actions, emotions, and thoughts. But our goal in life should be to reach more and more oneness, for the purpose of the Creation is that there should be a unity of all creations.

The deep joy in the future is that everything will be unified. But even now, we should be living our lives with the soul’s deep perspective of oneness, to keep unifying all the details in life and to see them all as one point.⁴⁵ The more we unify the many details together, the more joy we will discover.

⁴⁵ Editor’s Note: The Rav explains more about “unifying” in *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Part 8

8 – Indifference To Pleasure

FIRE-OF-WATER-OF-EARTH: THE DESTRUCTION OF PLEASURE

With *siyata d'shmaya* we will continue here to learn about the element of earth and its resulting trait, sadness. Here we will discuss sadness that comes from **fire-of-water-of-earth**.

The nature of water is that it becomes ‘dragged’ after other elements. Water is also the root of the idea of *ahavas taanugim*, the love for pleasure, which causes a person to search for pleasure. Fire, though, is a destructive element. **Fire-of-water-of-earth** is when a person has pleasure (water) and his fire ‘destroys’ his pleasure, resulting in sadness (earth). Hence, the sadness that comes from impaired **fire-of-water-of-earth** is when a person is having difficulties experiencing pleasure. The person with this nature will become ‘dragged’ after his search for pleasure, but his “fire” quickly destroys whatever pleasure he experiences.

Whenever a person experiences pleasure, there is always some end to the pleasure. This is because the element of earth in the soul places limitations on everything, including the experience of pleasure. Therefore, all pleasurable experiences will ultimately be limited, and a person will never experience endless pleasure. At some point, the pleasure ends. This is how the element of earth puts a stop to pleasure: by limiting the pleasure that a person experiences.

However, earth is not the only element which limits pleasure. Fire can also limit pleasure, by ‘destroying’ it. (An example of this is the day of Shabbos *Kodesh*, when Hashem “finished” the Creation. On Shabbos, we cannot light a fire, and the depth behind this is because Shabbos itself is a ‘fire’ which ‘destroyed’ the first six days of Creation and put an end to it. This is the deeper reason why the Torah forbids work on Shabbos.)

Fire-of-water-of-earth is when a person becomes sad because his pleasure has been stopped. To illustrate, if a person takes a grape and sucks on it, at first he will enjoy it, but if he keeps sucking on it, after some time he will no longer enjoy it. If a person eats something that he enjoys, his tongue will first feel pleasure from tasting it. (Each person has his own particular tastes that he enjoys.) But when he keeps tasting it, at some point he will no longer find the taste enjoyable. That is a normal situation, but when a person’s element of fire dominates, the fire ‘destroys’ the limitations of the pleasure even before the limitation of the pleasure has arrived! That will mean that a person will not be able to experience pleasure in something long before he has stopped enjoying it. As soon as his pleasure begins, it ends.

When a person isn’t concentrating on the pleasure, he can’t enjoy the pleasure, as the *Gemara* says that a blind person isn’t satisfied from the food he eats⁴⁶, because he cannot see it and therefore he isn’t concentrating on it. We learn from this *Gemara* that in order for a person to enjoy what he’s tasting, he needs to be focused on the pleasure he is getting from the food.

A person might go to a wedding and glance into the kitchen there, and when he sees that how the cooks and waiters are handling the food, he might become disgusted at the lack of hygiene and then he won’t be able to enjoy the food when it is served to him. Even if he ends up eating it (for example, if he is starving and he really needs to

46 *Yoma 74a*

eat), subconsciously, he is disgusted at the food he is eating, because of what he saw in the kitchen. So even as he is tasting and enjoying his food somewhat, he feels disgust within the pleasure, and it kills the pleasure. The disgust which he feels towards the food will greatly limit his pleasure in eating the food.

PLEASURE FOLLOWED BY GUILT

Here is another example, which is more extreme. A person may be eating his food, and if he has a bit of *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven) and there is some room to doubt the *kashrus* of the food, he will not enjoy the food. It may be permissible according to *halachah* to eat the food, but he has a little doubt that something may be wrong with the *kashrus*, and this bothers him as he's eating the food. He will not be able to enjoy the food, because as he eats it, he feels guilty about whatever pleasure he is getting from the food, in addition to his doubts about it.

The following is a deeper example of “guilty pleasure”. Whenever a person eats something, if he is not that spiritual, he just eats mindlessly, without ever feeling guilty about indulging. He is satisfied with the fact that he keeps Torah and *mitzvos*, and he doesn't see anything wrong with enjoying food, since it's permissible. As long as it's permitted to eat, he eats it, as much as he wants to, and as long as it's kosher. But a more spiritual kind of person is aware that the act of eating food has been tainted from the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*. There is also a concept of “holy eating”, which resembles the eating of the *korbonos*, but most acts of eating today resemble the act of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, which brought the impure effects of the Serpent upon man.

True pleasure is referred to as “*oneg*”, and faulty pleasure is referred to as “*nega*” [the opposite rearrangement of the letters in the word “*oneg*”].⁴⁷ When a person is aware of this concept, and as he eats it he is also feeling pleasure in his eating, he feels a contradiction in his soul. On one hand, his soul wants pleasure (*oneg*), but he is also feeling that the pleasure from food is really faulty pleasure, *nega*, and not true pleasure, *oneg*. What will happen? His awareness of *nega* will block him from any *oneg*.

When one is not aware of this, this will not bother him. But once he becomes aware, he feels a painful contradiction. We can find two people from the same family who both eat a lot, but one of them keeps eating without feeling any guilt afterwards, while another will eat a lot and feel that no matter how much he eats, he is not satisfied and there is a lingering sense of emptiness. His pleasure is being blocked, because he is aware deep down that the pleasure from food is *nega*, not *oneg*.

In the future, we will all have *oneg* in Hashem, and we will merit an “inheritance without any bounds”⁴⁸, but in our times, pleasure is limited. The limitation on our pleasure today comes from the power of **fire-of-water-of-earth**. Water expands and causes a person to seek pleasure, but a person will be prevented from the pleasure, when his pleasure is quickly destroyed by his “fire”.

Even more so, there is a deeper point here. The more inward and spiritual that a person becomes, the more he may recoil from all pleasure on this world. For example, there are some people who live entirely for reward in the future - as in the statement, “Today is for doing, and tomorrow is for reward.”⁴⁹ With some people, this verse is the embodiment of their lives. But when one approaches life like this, it is an attitude of “*shelo lishmah*” (not acting for the sake of Heaven), and such a person will never arrive at “*lishmah*” (acting for the sake of Heaven) by living his life

⁴⁷ The terms *oneg* and *nega* are found in *Sefer Yetzirah*

⁴⁸ *Shabbos 118a*

⁴⁹ *Eruvin 22a*

that way. Although Chazal state that a person should act *shelo lishmah* in order to arrive at acting *lishmah*⁵⁰, this does not mean that a person should base his entire life on *shelo lishmah*. But in any case, there are people who live with this attitude, of doing everything right on this world in order to receive reward in the Next World.

When they experience any suffering on this world, they comfort themselves with the fact that they will receive greater reward in the Next World. To them, everything is always about what reward in the Next World they will receive. The Next World to them is entirely about pleasure and bliss, as in the statement, “Shabbos is a semblance of the Next World.”⁵¹ They may recoil from pleasure on This World because they are afraid it will deplete their pleasure in the Next World. They may be afraid of honor for the same reason, that receiving honor will use up their honor in the Next World. So they may avoid pleasure on this world because they don’t want to use up their pleasure in the Next World.

They may take it so far that even when they *daven*, they don’t want to feel enjoyment in it, because they fear that the enjoyment they have on this world in their *davening* will use up their enjoyment in the Next World, so they will *daven* without enjoyment. They will immediately pull back from anything as soon as they begin to feel that they are enjoying something. It is because deep down, they feel that they are using up their reward in the Next World, and therefore they never allow themselves to fully enjoy anything.

There are also others who are even more extreme, and they don’t want to enjoy anything at all. They are afraid to have a good life. They feel that any pleasure on this world will somehow make them suffer later on, and that Hashem will punish them later for any pleasure they had, as if they will need to pay a heavy price for any pleasure. If life is going good for them, either they will think that it’s depleting their reward in the Next World (as in the first kind of person mentioned earlier), or they will think that a punishment from Hashem is in store for them. So they choose to live a life of fear, living all the time in a shadow of fear over them, and they don’t want their life to be good, and if life is good for them they become afraid that this will not be good for them in the end.

These kinds of people are constantly looking for problems and faults in themselves and in their lives, so that they can feel like they are suffering. These people will be very careful about avoiding *ayin hara* (evil eye). A person like this does not allow himself to feel pleasure, because he wants to place himself in a constricted state, so that life shouldn’t get too good for him. This comes from **fire-of-water-of-earth**. It is a destructive power in the soul which blocks a person from feeling pleasure.

Pleasure is a source of vitality-giving energy for a person. The less pleasure a person has, the less alive he is. Life is experienced when we move, and pleasure is our main movement. Without pleasure, we are not alive. A dead person doesn’t move and he can’t enjoy anything. **Fire-of-water-of-earth** provides a person with pleasure (water) but the pleasure is quickly destroyed by his fire, causing sadness (earth). That is the problem with **fire-of-water-of-earth**: a drying up of pleasure in the soul, which results in sadness.

Now let us see how to solve this issue.

ACCESSING OUR ROOT PLEASURE AND OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF PLEASURE

A person was created to enjoy the spiritual revelation of basking in the presence of Hashem, as stated in the beginning of *Mesillas Yescharim*. Therefore, pleasure is built into the design of our soul, and we need it. The main

⁵⁰ *Pesachim 50b*

⁵¹ *Berachos 57b*

47 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

pleasure we are created for is to connect to our root, to our *havayah*, to one's true self, and to the holy Torah, and, going deeper, to connect to Hashem Himself. As it is written, “*Then you will have pleasure upon Hashem*”⁵². That is the true pleasure of the soul, and that is how the soul is designed to be.

What is the root pleasure that the soul needs to experience? It is to experience the soul's movement from the state of *shelo lishmah* into the state of *lishmah*. The level of *lishmah* is above the realm of pleasure, whereas the level of *shelo lishmah* is within the realm of pleasure. That was the ideal design of the soul, had Adam not sinned by eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*. After the sin of Adam, though, this higher root of pleasure became concealed. Now pleasure is mainly experienced through the animal soul (the *nefesh habehaimis*), which takes pleasure in the various material pleasures of This World, or, *chas v'shalom*, in pleasures that are forbidden.

To summarize, before the sin, the pleasure of the soul was to move from *shelo lishmah* to *lishmah*, and after the sin, the soul mainly experiences pleasure in the pleasures of This World, which are a mixture of good and evil, a result of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V'Ra* (which contained a mixture of a good and evil).

In the future, pleasure will be unbounded, for it will be the pleasure in the Infinite, which is unlimited. This is the “inheritance without any boundaries” that was promised by Hashem to Yaakov Avinu, and it is also the meaning of the verse, “*Then you will have pleasure upon Hashem*”. Currently, pleasure is limited. There is a statement in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that “Constant pleasure is not pleasure”⁵³, and this is said of our current state, where we are not able to constantly experience pleasure. Therefore, in our current state, it is already ‘built-in’ to our souls that our pleasure must be limited.

However, the question is: What is the amount of pleasure that a person needs? There are no clear boundaries to this. It is different with each person. It is like asking how much food each person needs to eat. Each person needs to eat a different amount, depending on his metabolism and other factors. We cannot tell each person exactly what he needs to eat, because each person needs a different amount, and the same is with pleasure. If a person gets less pleasure than what he needs, he will be missing energy, and if he gets too much pleasure, his pleasure will go from *oneg* to *nega*. Even if he gets too much spiritual pleasure, this is also true. Surely that is the case when people overdo their physical pleasures.

It would seem, then, that a person should play it safe by trying not to get any pleasure at all, so that he shouldn't endanger himself in any of the above two extremes. However, this is not really possible. A person cannot deny the need for pleasure which his physical body and animal soul needs, and one must recognize that this is his current level. Some rare individuals are above this, and they are fully in control of their physical body and animal soul. But most people are not like this, and they are dominated on varying levels by the needs of their physical body and animal soul.

That being the case, almost all people need to get pleasure of [the body and] the animal soul, but they will also need to get some of the higher, root pleasure, by the traversing the path of *shelo lishmah* to *lishmah*. This includes pleasure of connecting to one's very *havayah*, to the holy Torah, and to Hashem. And one will also need to get worldly pleasure which satisfies the needs of the “animal soul” – understandably, in the proper amount, and not by indulging.

⁵² *Yeshayahu 58:14*

⁵³ *Baal Shem Tov parshas Eikev 63*

48 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

One's *avodah* [with regards to pleasure] is to increase the pleasure of going from *shelo lishmah* to *lishmah*, so that he can enlighten the animal soul, but along with this, one will also need to provide some pleasure for his animal soul, on the level of the animal soul [i.e. the basic needs for physical nourishment and emotional well-being].

However, one needs to be very cautious with this and not overdo his worldly pleasure. If one gets too much pleasure on the level of the animal soul, this will increase his *shelo lishmah*, and it will also conceal the *neshamah*.

"B'DIEVED, L'CHATCHILAH" – NOW THAT WE ARE IN THIS SITUATION, IT IS HASHEM'S WILL

After a person has worked out the above, the next issue to consider is: What is the depth of the pleasure that a person needs to feel, whenever he is experiencing pleasure?

There are two kinds of pleasure: spiritual, and material. There are also two ways to experience pleasure: by acting in order to receive pleasure afterwards, or by directly experiencing pleasure. When one acts in order to receive pleasure, one should identify this as *shelo lishmah*. When experiencing worldly pleasure, this should cause a person to feel pained that he is experiencing a mixture of good and evil on the world, *nega*, and that it is only the pleasure of the "animal" level of the soul.

However, there is also a concept of "*b'dieved, l'chatchilah*" (or "*l'chatchilah* within the *b'dieved*" - that even after we have landed ourselves in a situation that is not the ideal state, it is right now ideal, because Hashem wills it). Now that we live after the sin of Adam, there are two extreme approaches to our current state: Either we can look at this as a very saddening situation, because it is not the ideal one. Or, on the opposite extreme, there are people who don't care about this change at all, so it doesn't bother them, and they forget completely about the ideal state. But there is balanced perspective in between these two extremes: Now that this is our situation, where we are found in a state that is "*b'dieved*", we need to look at it as *l'chatchilah*, the ideal situation, since Hashem wills it that we should be in this current state.

The more a person fears Heaven and mourns the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, he is pained, but amidst the pain, he must also realize that it is also the will of Hashem, and he can even get pleasure from our current state. To illustrate the idea, if not for the sin, there would be no such thing as immaturity. When we see a child who acts immature, should this remind us of the immaturity that was created by sin, or do we get pleasure in seeing the child? A healthy reaction would be to get pleasure in watching a child.

We also find this concept of "*l'chatchilah* within *b'dieved*" with regards to getting some pleasure from marital relations. Although the pleasure in marital relations is a worldly pleasure that is a mixture of good and evil, now that Hashem wills that we should be in this current state, we are also allowed to get some pleasure from it. This is because even within the "*b'dieved*", there is an aspect of "*l'chatchilah*", and since Hashem currently wills it that we should be in the state of after the sin, we should also get pleasure from it.

Certainly, a person should not take this idea too far and never feel pained at all over the fact that we currently live after the sin of Adam (in which taking base pleasure is inevitable). One needs to utilize this concept with the proper balance. The *Mesillas Yesharim* says that a person should abstain from the materialistic desires of This World to the extent that this isn't ruining his *yishuv hadaas* (calmness of mind). This is because one needs to allow his pleasure to expand. One should realize that the will of Hashem is for him to experience some pleasure, even worldly pleasure, as long as it is pleasure that is needed for our sanity. One should allow his pleasure to have its outlet.

49 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Otherwise, a person will be depriving himself of the need for pleasure, and this would be a destructive use of his element of fire.

REPAIRING FIRE-OF-WATER-OF-EARTH: VALIDATING THE NEED FOR PLEASURE

As we are discussing in this lesson, when one's fire is destroying his pleasure and he is saddened as a result, this is the sadness that results from **fire-of-water-of-earth**.

As explained here, there are some people who have problems when it comes to experiencing their own pleasure. They don't know how to get the pleasure they need, so they are feeling jealous of those who throw off the yoke of Torah from themselves, who indulge themselves in cuisine, intoxication, and various worldly pleasures, who appear to be greatly enjoying themselves. (In reality, of course, this can be compared to children who become envious of other children.) There is definitely a problem if a person isn't getting pleasure and he doesn't agree to the need for pleasure. A person will become sad from the **fire-of-water-of-earth** that is burning up any bit of pleasure he begins to have.

One needs to give proper outlet to his need for pleasure. How much pleasure exactly, and what kind of pleasure, is a delicate issue, because there is a different answer for each person. One will need to *daven* for Hashem for help in clarifying this area. In summary, a person will definitely need to give pleasure to his soul, both in the spiritual as well as in the physical, to a certain degree and in the proper balance.

IN CONCLUSION

May Hashem help us that we merit to seek the truth, and to receive the proper amount of pleasure we need. Understandably, we still have the *avodah* to lessen our need for pleasure and to increase our point that is "above" pleasure, for that is the purpose of everything: to reveal the presence of the Creator, completely.

9 – Reviving The Spirit

WIND/JOY/MOVEMENT/SOUL AND EARTH/SADNESS/HEAVINESS/BODY

In the coming lessons, we will learn about sadness that comes from problems in the “wind” aspect of the element of earth.

As explained by the Vilna *Gaon*, earth and wind are opposing elements: Earth is the coarse, material aspect of one’s being, whereas wind is the spiritual part of one’s being. The element of wind is essentially the “breath of life” which Hashem blew into man – the soul – whereas the element of earth is essentially the physical body. Since wind is the “breath of life”, it is a revitalizing, life-giving element, whereas earth is a deadening element. Sadness comes from the element of earth. Hence, the opposite of sadness – joy - comes from the element that is the antithesis to earth: the wind.

To give a subtler definition, wind is the root of movement. The wind can move in any of the four directions of the earth [and it can also move up and down, adding for a total of six possible directions]. The nature of water is that it descends, whereas fire naturally rises. The Vilna *Gaon* says that each element is drawn to its root. Fire is rooted in above, in Heaven, and therefore the nature of fire is that it will rise upward. Water is rooted below, in the earth, and therefore water will naturally be drawn downwards. The wind, however, can move either up or down.

If both wind and fire can move upward, what is the difference between the movement of fire and wind? Wind will move something upward by itself, whereas fire can only move upwards after it draws its power from the upward movement from the wind. Fire destroys something in order to rise. Wind, however, doesn’t destroy in order to move forward. A strong wind can lift something high into the air as it is, without destroying anything first.

When wind meets earth, what happens? The wind lifts the dust of the earth high into the air. The wind elevates the most refined parts of the earth, the specks of dust, into the air. Dust is so refined that it almost has no substance. Unlike ash, which is thick and which is lifted by fire, dust is subtle and it is lifted only by the wind.

In the soul, when earth overpowers wind, this causes “heaviness” in the soul, and in turn, sadness. A person feels alive and energetic only when his inner movements, his inner spirit, his “wind”, is active. However, joy doesn’t come from the element of wind alone, but from “earth-of-wind”: where one’s earth moves because of his wind. When one’s wind is moving his earth, the result is joy. The earth and the wind here become harmonized with each other, one of them doesn’t overpower the other, and the wind will gently “move” the earth. Hence, when a person has repaired earth-of-wind, there is joy. But when one’s earth overpowers his wind, there is resulting heaviness in the soul – the earth is weighing down on the wind and dominating it - and the result is sadness.

JOY COMES FROM A HARMONIOUS BALANCE OF WIND AND EARTH

The balance of wind and earth in the soul, which is known as the balance between the soul and the body, is called “*mafli laasos*”, “a wonder to make”. This balance is the result of a harmonious state that is reached after much refinement, and it is not the natural state for the body or soul. When there is a balance between wind and earth, there is a joy that results from one’s wind moving his earth. The inner movements of the soul’s wind make a person

51 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

feel more alive inside, and the spiritual core of one's being penetrates the gruff physicality and materialism of the body and the animal soul. But in the natural, unrefined state, one's earth will naturally overpower his wind.

Although we are all given the power to be a *"mafli laasos"*, for it is part of our very design that Hashem has created every human being with, one's "animal soul" (*nefesh habehaimis*) will usually get in the way and won't allow for a proper balance between the elements of wind and earth. Instead, the earth and wind in the soul will clash with each other, and usually, the earth will overpower the wind. The result will be a dominance of earth: sadness.

If the elements of earth and wind would simply be in a contradiction with each other, either the wind would overpower the earth or the earth will overpower the wind. However, deep in the soul there is an ability to harmonize the two opposing elements together, as opposed to these elements simply overpowering each other. Accessing this power in the soul is at the very root of *simchas hachaim*, leading a joyous life. If one never accesses this power, one will live his life on the level of the "animal soul", separated from his higher, "G-dly" soul (the *nefesh Elokis*). He will not be able to combine together his elements of wind and earth, and as a result, his wind and earth will just clash and contradict with each other.

JOY IS DRAWN FROM THE G-DLY SOUL ONTO THE ANIMAL SOUL

As mentioned, joy is the result of a harmonious balance between the soul's elements of earth and wind.

To give a more precise definition, joy comes from an inner, spiritual light contained in one's G-dly soul (*nefesh Elokis*). However, the inner light from which joy comes forth needs to be drawn down and shined upon the animal soul (*nefesh habehaimis*). The "light" of joy contained in the G-dly soul needs to be drawn into the "container", the G-dly soul.

While the concepts of "light" and "container" are fundamental in all areas of spiritual work, it is especially applicable to joy. The *neshamah* (Divine soul) contains all of the G-dly attributes, the *middos*, whereas the "animal soul" contains all of the lowly character traits such as impaired conceit, lust, laziness, etc. The rectification of the "animal soul" always lays in the "G-dly" soul, which draws light from the *neshamah*.

In general, there is a difficulty when it comes to shining the light of the "G-dly" soul onto the "animal" soul. Firstly, one needs to access its light, and secondly, the "animal" soul is initially not on the level of receiving the light. One's task is always two-fold: *"Remove yourself from evil, and do good"* – one needs to "do good" by accessing the spiritual light in the first place, and one needs to remove evil by purifying the "container" so that it can properly hold the spiritual light. This is true about all areas of *avodah*.

With joy, the *avodah* is different. Joy is not simply drawn from the "G-dly" soul onto the "animal" soul, as with all other qualities that the "G-dly" soul beams down from the *neshamah* onto the "animal" soul. Joy only comes from a unified state of the "G-dly" soul with the "animal" soul. This is because man only became complete when both his body (corresponding to earth and also to the "animal" soul) and soul (corresponding to wind and also the "G-dly" soul) were created. Therefore, joy doesn't come through accessing the "G-dly" soul alone, but from unifying the "animal" soul (body\earth) with the "G-dly" soul (soul\wind).

I. CONNECTING EARTH AND WIND – THROUGH SPEAKING WORDS OF TORAH

The unification of the “animal” soul with the “G-dly” soul is mainly achieved through the power of speaking words of Torah. When one speaks words of Torah, the speech of the body becomes a vehicle for spirituality. This enables a “bridge” between the “G-dly” soul and the “animal” soul.

As explained earlier, sadness results from **earth-of-wind-of-earth** (when one’s earth/materialism overpowers his wind/spirituality). The way to repair this is through connecting the “animal” soul with the “G-dly” soul. Since joy stems from earth-of-wind (as explained earlier), it is already contained in the very makeup of the soul, to unleash forth joy. The soul already has a built-in power to enlighten the sadness of the element of earth in the “animal” soul, with the joy of the wind\G-dly soul. Since joy comes from connecting wind and earth together, one who wants to find joy will need to access the connection between wind and earth.

As mentioned, the main way to achieve this connection is through speaking words of Torah. This is the depth behind why Torah learning brings a person to alacrity, to watchfulness, etc. and all other spiritual levels of growth.

2. CONNECTING EARTH AND WIND - BY BECOMING CONSCIOUSLY AWARE OF OUR DAILY REVIVAL

Sleep is called “a sixtieth of death”⁵⁴. When a person sleeps, his body and “animal” soul remain on this world, while the “G-dly” soul returns to Heaven. Upon awakening, the “G-dly” soul returns to a person. In other words, when one wakes, his ‘wind’ (soul) returns to his earth (body). One is able to feel a certain sense of heaviness when he is drifting off to sleep, or when he’s tired. He can feel that his physicality is taking over, and that his spiritedness has left him. And when one wakes up, one can feel that his spiritedness has returned to him: he can actually feel that a spirit of life has returned to him.

If a person was ever at the throes of death, he was able to feel very strongly that his spiritedness returned to him. But any person can experience a degree of this feeling of returned spiritedness, upon waking up from his sleep. One is able to feel how his spiritedness has left him and how it has now returned to him. Every person is able to feel this experience, but not everyone is consciously aware of it. But this power of feeling the return of one’s spiritedness is contained in every person’s soul, and it can be especially felt upon awakening. One only needs to become consciously aware of it.

When one becomes consciously aware, upon awakening from his sleep, of this process of being regaining his spiritedness, one thereby connects to the “spirit of life” (*ruach chaim*) within him. This, in turn, enables him to access an inner source of joy, which can revive his spiritedness whenever he becomes sad. It is essentially the power in the soul to connect to the wondrous combination of body and soul/spirit, which is called “*mafli laasos*”, deep in the makeup and structure of every soul.

When one is regularly connected to this power, the body-soul connection is no longer an abnormal “wonder”, but a power that can be learned by a person as second nature. However, this will only be true after one has developed a conscious awareness of this power.

In this lesson, we have described a concept that is less about practical action, and more about developing a certain awareness. The more one develops a conscious awareness of his return of spirit upon awakening, the more that will he become connected to the soul’s power to revive the body. Then one will be able to consciously feel that his inner

⁵⁴ Berachos 57b

“wind”, his spiritedness, is able to uplift his coarse, material and heavy “earth” aspect, for he becomes aware that his “wind” can revitalize his body and soul and become re-energized. In turn, this will greatly lessen the feeling of internal heaviness that breeds sadness, increasing the soul’s power of “*mafli laasos*”.

THE DEPTH OF THE BELIEVING IN RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The complete level of this power will be revealed in the future, with the Resurrection of the Dead (*techiyas hameisim*). Currently, we are able to experience some of this power on our own level. It is like a degree of a “Resurrection of the Dead” for the soul.

Awareness of this concept is also the depth behind our belief in the Resurrection of the Dead which Hashem will bring about to all of the deceased, in the future. On a simple and superficial level, believing in *techiyas hameisim* means to believe in the future event of *techiyas hameisim*. But *techiyas hameisim* is not limited to this. It is also a certain perspective, an attitude to live life with, that Hashem is constantly reviving the dead. When the “wind” in our soul is moving our “earth”, we become lighter, “light as an eagle”, and we become more energetic. In this way, we are able to access the power of *techiyas hameisim*, “reviving the dead”, in our own souls.

In the future, there will be no more sadness, for it will then be the time when “*Hashem will swallow up all death forever*”, and death is the epitome of sadness, hence when death will cease, all sadness will cease with it. But even now, on our own level, we can access a degree of this light, of “*Hashem will swallow up all death forever*” – which is essentially the power of the “Resurrection of the Dead” in our own soul. This is how we use the power of “wind” in our soul to repair and rectify the “earth” in our soul.

10 – Harmonizing With Opposition

SADNESS RESULTS FROM ABSENCE OF WILL

In the previous lesson, it was explained that the element of wind in the soul is an uplifting force which elevates a person towards the spiritual, whereas the element of earth in the soul is material and coarse, drawing a person downward.

To illustrate the contrast between wind and earth, we can see that at death, a person's body lies flat on the earth, still and unmoving. The body is buried in earth, whereupon it returns into the earth, devoid of any life or activity. In contrast to this, the element of wind keeps the body moving.

The soul's element of wind elevates and uplifts a person, enabling one to 'shake off the dust' on his soul. In terms of the powers of the soul, it is essentially the will (*ratzon*) which motivates a person. If we go deeper than this, it is actually the search for pleasure (*taanug*) which motivates the will. A person wants anything either because he seeks pleasure, or because he wishes to avoid pain [and thereby maintain his pleasure]. Therefore, at the root of the will is the motivation for pleasure.

Wind in the soul enables a person to be motivated, uplifted, to move and progress. Therefore, the soul's element of wind is mainly revealed through the power of the will. The will is the very motivating factor behind the movement of the soul's wind. When one's will is active, the element of wind in the soul will be activated and it will make a person want to move.

The weaker one's will, the less one will want to move, and in turn, the sadder one's soul becomes. A person feels crushed and dispirited when he is sad, and it is really because his element of wind is not active. When there is a loss of will/wind, the element of earth will dominate, leading to sadness. Therefore, the more a person is making use of his will, the more that his element of wind will be able to overpower his earth, and the further he will be from sadness. By contrast, when one's will is absent, there is resulting sadness.

THE SADNESS THAT RESULTS FROM CONSTRICTED MOVEMENT OF THE SOUL

The wind is able to move in six directions – in either of the four directions of the world, as well as above and below. Fire will only move upward. Fire gets its power from wind, and then it can rise. Water can only descend.

When a person balances his element of wind, he is able to move either upward (fire) or downward (water). But if one can only move in a certain direction, he will either be able to move upward or downward. This results in sadness. Why?

If a person is only moving upward – this is the element of fire [i.e. always aspiring for higher levels and goals, and never satisfied with any previous accomplishments] - he will always be drying himself up of vitality, because he is always destroying his previous level in order to go higher. And if one can only move downward [in favor of achieving higher levels of growth, he chooses to connect to others and influence them, out of his love for others]-

this is the element of water - he will be drawn downwards, towards the element of earth, the lowest element. If a person can only ‘move’ in his soul through his soul’s element of water, his water will send him below, towards earth.

SADNESS WHICH COMES FROM WATER-OF-WIND-OF-EARTH: ONLY ABLE TO MOVE DOWNWARD

In this lesson, we are discussing the sadness that results from **water-of-wind-of-earth**. This is when the movements of one’s element of wind are only moving in a certain direction (water), which sends a person down to earth, just as the nature of water descends to the earth.

On a deeper level, this also resembles the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*, which was “*desirous to the eyes*”. Desire is a trait which is rooted in the element of water (the root of experiencing pleasure). Although there are many explanations given of the nature of the sin, one of them is that Adam and Chavah were being motivated by a desire for *taanug*, pleasure. The element of water – in the form of the desire for pleasure - caused man to sin, which meant that from now on, man would descend to the level of the element of earth: sin, death, and perpetual sadness.

When water/desire/pleasure brings a person down to his element of earth, the result is sadness. This is the sadness that results specifically from **water-of-wind-of-earth**. When one’s element of wind can only move downward, his element of water will naturally pull him down to earth (sadness), as it is the nature of water to descend towards earth.

SADNESS RESULTS FROM STAYING AT AN EXTREME

The element of wind can contain opposite elements, fire and water. It can move upwards with fire, or it can move downward with water. Thus, wind can integrate opposite elements together. Wind can move in all of the six different directions, which are all opposite from each other. When one has a repaired element of wind, it can also integrate together two opposing elements, such as fire and water.

Sadness results whenever a person is drawn towards any one extreme and he isn’t able to integrate two opposite directions together. Sadness is a trait that results from an impaired element of earth, and it will either come from increased dryness in the soul (“fire”-of-earth), or from increased heaviness in the soul (“earth”-of-earth). In either case, sadness is always the result when a person is only able to move in one extreme.

To illustrate the idea, we can see that the earth is easily scattered. After death, the body disintegrates into the earth and becomes spread apart, because there is nothing holding it together. When the body is without a soul, it doesn’t have the “wind” to keep it together, and it falls apart. In contrast to earth, which spreads things apart and cannot integrate elements together, the wind is an integrating element. The wind is likened to the soul, for the soul is called *ruach chaim*, “spirit of life”, a term that connotes the element of wind, and it is the soul which holds the body together. When the soul leaves the body, the “wind” (soul) has left the earth (body), and the result is that the body becomes scattered.

To illustrate the idea further (how sadness comes from staying at an extreme), as mentioned before, sadness is always the result of either too much earth (stagnancy, or heaviness, and or scattering) or too much fire (destruction, or dryness). These are two different extremes: when a person is generally pulled downward (earth) or when a person is generally pulled upward (fire).

USING “WIND” IN THE SOUL TO INTEGRATE OPPOSITES TOGETHER

Since sadness is the result of being able to move in only one direction, the more a person connects to the element of wind’s power to integrate opposites together, the further he will be from sadness.

Death is a state of separation of the soul from the body, and death also separates man from another. The first time in the Torah where we find the term “sadness” is when Chavah was cursed with “sadness” (*etzev*) of the pains of pregnancy and childbirth. The *Gemara* says that after the sin, Adam separated from Chavah for 130 years. From here we see that sadness leads to separation. Therefore, in order to counter sadness, one needs to leave the state of “separation” – the fact that he cannot integrate two opposite directions together – and, in turn, to develop the power of integrating opposite directions together.

To summarize the idea, the root of sadness is when one is at an extreme and he isn’t able to integrate opposite aspects together, and he remains in a state of separation. In contrast, the more a person connects to the power of integrating opposites together, the further he will be from sadness.

DEVELOPING THE POWER TO HARMONIZE WITH THAT WHICH OPPOSES US

Now we will explain how to practically actualize this idea.

Each person has a certain personality contained in his soul, which is a part of his *havayah* (existential self), and each person also faces many different factors that directly oppose his personality. For example, Hashem has designed the Creation in a way that man and woman have opposing natures. The Torah says that Hashem created woman “as a helpmate to oppose man”, meaning that a woman’s nature is opposite than a man’s. This is an example of an “outer” opposition, though, for it only exists on the outside of oneself. There is also “inner” opposition that one faces: within oneself. We each have a certain nature that is dominant, and we also have parts in our own nature that oppose our dominant nature.

Ever since the first sin, when Adam was cursed with death and was told “*You are earth, and to earth you shall return*”, the “earth” in the soul became dominant on a general level, and the true element of wind left the soul. Although the element of wind still exists in the soul, its power today is far smaller than in the original state of man, before the sin. From that point onward, even our element of wind functions on the level of “earth”: the current level of the element of wind which we have is not the absolute wind, and it is only wind on a level of “earth”. In spite of this, however, there is still an “imprint” of the original element of wind that still exists, deep in the soul, for there is a rule that even when a spiritual light is removed from the world, an “imprint” of the light still remains.

Therefore, even in our current state after the sin of Adam, we still retain some degree of the absolute “wind” in the soul, which contains the ability to integrate aspects together. This is a very fundamental point: Every person has some power of the original light of before the sin, to integrate opposites together. Not only do we still retain this power in the soul, but it is actually the secret behind all of man’s inner vitality.

One should tap into this power by trying to identify whatever opposes him, both his outer and inner oppositions, and then he should identify his ability to integrate opposites together. Since every person has earth and wind in the soul, it is impossible for any person to avoid clashing with another’s personality, for one’s person’s earth will inevitably be opposed by another’s wind, and vice versa. This is the implication of the words of the Sages, “Just

57 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

as all their faces are dissimilar from one another, so are their opinions different from one another.”⁵⁵ In spite of this, every person is able to get along, on varying levels, with others. One needs to identify his ability to do so, and then expand this point further, so that he can use this ability to harmonize his personality with those whom he needs to deal with regularly, who have an opposite personality than his. One is already using this power, and he needs to identify it and then expand it further, so that he can connect his element of earth with his element of wind.

On a practical level, when it comes to issues in marriage, where spouses encounter oppositions with each other, counselors today will generally try to see how the opposite personalities can somehow live together in peace. However, this advice can also be taught to gentiles, and perhaps even animals can be trained to live harmoniously together. The Torah approach is, that after the differences and opposite personalities have been discovered, the work is to see how they are each “helpmates” to each other – how they can each integrate the opposite personality into their own.

Due to the time constraints of this lesson, there isn’t enough time left to give some practical examples of it. If there would be more time, we could provide more examples. But the idea has been said. One needs to identify his power to integrate aspects together.

EXAMPLE – GETTING ALONG WITH OPPOSITE PERSONALITIES

Here is one more example of the idea.

A person lives with his family, and each family member has different personalities. With some personalities, he can really connect well to, and with others, he can get along with, whereas other family members have a personality that bother him. A parent may connect well with the personality of one of his children, a little less with another child, while a different child’s personality ‘gets under his skin’. What can he do about this?

He should try to see if there is another person in his life whom he gets along with, even though there is somewhat of a personality clash with that person, and then he should try to apply this ability to the relationship he is facing a challenge in. For example, his brother may get on his nerves, but he has a friend with a similar personality to his brother’s, yet he finds that he can get along with his friend. So he can discover that he does have a power to harmonize with another personality that he doesn’t normally like, and then he can try to mimic this in his relationship to his brother.⁵⁶

55 Berachos 58a

56 Editor’s Note: After this lesson, the Rav was asked: “Is it possible for a person to get along with every kind of person?” The Rav answered: “The only person who can integrate with all personalities in the world is Mashiach. Even Moshe Rabbeinu couldn’t harmonize with everyone – and the proof to this was Korach. If a person thinks that he can get along with everyone in the world, he is just imagining it. It is not possible for a person to get along with every kind of personality in the world!”

11 – Unfulfilled Wishes & The Solution

WIND-OF-WIND-OF-EARTH: FEELING DEFICIENT FROM AN UNFULFILLED WILL

With *siyata d'shmaya* we will continue here to learn about the element of earth and the trait of sadness. Now we shall discuss sadness that comes from the “wind” that is within “wind-of-earth”.

As explained in the previous lesson, the element of wind is expressed through the soul's power of *ratzon*, the will. Therefore, “wind”-of-wind can be defined as the very “will” of the will. It is the root of the will, and it is a will that is constant. A person has many things that he desires, wants, and wishes for. Yet, he doesn't necessarily desire these things on a constant basis. The will of the will, or “wind-of-wind”, is a consistent will.

In most people, the will alternates. One day a person will want a certain thing, and the next day he will want something else. The will of most people keeps switching from one will to another will. But the inner root of the will is constant, and it doesn't change. One's outer will alternates from one wanting one kind of desire to another, and sometimes one will want something more, and at other times, he will want it less. Every person wants certain things, and the only question is: (1) How much a person wants it, and (2) What a person wants.

It is these factors of the will which change, and the stronger the will, the more a person will want it, and the more presence it will have.

Every will is based on some deficiency. If I want something, it means that I am missing something. Before I want something, I wasn't necessarily missing it. Now that I want it, I feel deficient if I don't have it. If I remove the will for it, I won't suffer when I don't get what I want.

Whenever one wants something, it places the soul into a state of confinement (*tzimtzum*). For this reason, **wind-of-wind**, the root of the will, can also cause sadness, when a person doesn't get what he mainly wants. If a person gets what he mainly wants, he is happy, and when he doesn't get it, he is sad. That is the sadness that comes from **wind-of-wind-of-earth**.

THE DEPTH OF SADNESS: FEELING DEFICIENT

This kind of sadness (which comes from wind-of-wind-of-earth) also represents the very depth of the trait of sadness. Although the general root of sadness is in the element of earth, sadness doesn't only come from the “earth” within earth – it can also come from the “wind” within the element of earth.

When Hashem breathed a spirit of life into man's body, man became essentially different from all other creatures. Man is different from other living beings, such as animals and plants, because man feels lacking when he doesn't get what he wants. A plant or animal never feels deficient about itself, whereas a human being can feel deficient, and therefore, a human being can become sad. In fact, already at the very beginning, man felt that he was missing something, and that is why he wanted the woman to be created. The root of this is because man was created from the “earth”, which is devoid of life and hence deficient. Whenever man feels deficient because he doesn't get what he wants, he returns to the “earth” he was created from: he becomes sad.

EARTH IS REPRESENTED BY ACTION, WIND IS REPRESENTED BY SPIRITUAL SPEECH

Now let's proceed to discuss a deeper point.

Man has a soul, and the soul has three “garments” that cover it: action, speech, and thought. Action is the lowest use of the soul, speech is the intermediate use of the soul, and thought is the highest function of the soul [besides for the essence of the soul itself, which is beyond thought]. When one is very connected to the realm of action, he will feel more deficient, because physical action represents This World, which is inherently deficient [since it lacks the spiritual completeness of the Next World]. When a person connects to the realm of speech, he is elevated beyond the realm of action, and he will feel less deficient. This is all the more so when a person becomes more connected to the realm of thought, for as the *sefarim hakedoshim* state, “Man is thought” (“*adam da machshavah*”).

Action cannot be the primary function of man, for even animals can do actions. Therefore, the primary use of man is in the realm of speech, and even more so, in the realm of thought. The lower aspect of man is the power of action, and this is represented by his element of earth. The intermediate aspect of man is the power of speech, which is represented by his element of wind. The highest aspect of man is his power of thought. As long as a person is only connected to the realm of actions, he is connected to a state of deficiency, and his element of wind cannot be expressed.

Therefore, a person needs to make use of his element of “wind” in order to become elevated above the state of feeling deficient. But, more importantly, he needs “**wind**”-of-wind, an unceasing kind of spiritual speech, which is expressed through constantly speaking words of Torah, as in the expression, “The Torah does not cease from his mouth.”

When one is connected only to his element of earth - via the power of action - his “wind- of-wind” will not be active. In contrast, when one speaks words of Torah and he is also very much connected to it, and especially when he thinks about the words of Torah he says, he is utilizing the spiritual power of his **wind-of-wind**.

In summary, when one is more connected with his element of earth – represented by an involvement in the realm of action, with less connection to the realm of speech [namely, speaking the words of Torah] – he is essentially connected to a state of deficiency, for the element of earth is the symbol of deficiency. When one is in a deficient state, he feels that he is in an empty void, and hence, he will be sad. In contrast, when one becomes more connected to the power of speaking words of Torah, he will find joy.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE - VIEWING THE WILL AS A GARMENT OF THE SOUL

So far, we have outlined where the source of sadness is (feeling deficient), and, in turn, where we can find a source of joy. Now we will speak of this idea on a more practical level.

Consider the following. A person walks by a store and sees something in the window, and he feels like he wants it. He thinks of how much he wants it, and he begins to feel lacking without it, and he feels that if he doesn't get it, he will be missing something in his life. But before he saw it, did he feel like he was missing anything? No, he didn't feel like he was missing anything. He has seen it and he desires it, and now he wants it badly, and this places a confinement on his soul, because he feels somewhat 'locked in' unless he gets it. However, he needs to remind himself that the *ratzon* (will) is but a “garment” of his soul. One will feel deficient as long as he thinks that his *ratzon* is coming from his very essence. Instead, one needs to view his *ratzon* as a “garment” atop his soul.

60 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Practically speaking, when a person wants something and then he feels that he “must” have it, how can he remove this feeling that he is missing something? He may be very tempted to go ahead and buy it, so that he can calm his desire. If he does so, though, he is making a mistake, because there is a rule that “Whoever wants one hundred, will want two hundred”.⁵⁷ Once he gives in to getting what he wants, he will only want more. So it will not really calm his desire if he allows himself to buy it. Instead, he can remove his feeling of deficiency from the root, by having the attitude that “What I want is not who I am. My *ratzon* (will) to buy this item is a “garment” that clothes my soul, but it is not my soul itself. It is something I want, but it is not me. I can separate from my will.”

In this way, one can stop “wanting” what he wants. But this can only happen when one has the awareness that the will is a “garment” of the soul. All of the various powers of the soul are the “garments” of the soul, not the soul itself. So one needs to be aware and remind himself that even when he wants something very badly, this, too, is but a “garment” of the soul. (We are speaking here only of removing private desires, which are mundane, and not about removing the innermost desire of the soul itself, which is holy.)

When one wants something badly, he wants it deeply in his soul, and he will be terribly disappointed when he doesn’t get it. After that, he will just stew in his disappointment. Instead of this, one needs to practice seeing his will as a “garment” of his soul, as opposed to a desire that is coming from the soul itself. When that is the case, it will be much easier for a person to let go of trying to get something he wants.

Compare this to an article of clothing which a person wears. If the clothing is small, it feels confining. When a person wants something badly, it’s like wearing tightly fitting clothing. It confines him. One needs to remove the “confine” upon his soul that has been created from wanting a certain thing, and when he lets go of trying to get what he wants, he removes himself from the confine.

The idea can also be explained in different terms, which mean the same thing. The soul of a person is his essence, whereas the body is the “garment” which confines the person. Any desire comes from the body, which confines the soul. The more that a person learns how to identify himself as a soul and not as the body, the more he enables himself to pull out of the “confine” of the body, i.e. his various *retzonos* (desires).

In summary, the idea is for a person to view his will as a garment of the soul, as opposed to being an intrinsic part of him. One needs to first contemplate this concept on an intellectual level, until it internalizes in him and he senses the truth of it. One should keep up this awareness until he reaches a point that whenever he wants something, it doesn’t cause him to feel deficient when he doesn’t get it.

The more a person becomes aware of this, he will feel more complete inside, and in turn, he saves himself from the feeling of deficiency.

BEING HAPPY WITH WHAT YOU HAVE: REALIZING YOUR DIVINE SOUL

Chazal state that one should be “*someiach b’chelko*” (happy with his share)⁵⁸. On a simple level, this means that one should have a positive attitude, by focusing on the good instead of the bad. This is true - but it is only the superficial layer of what it means to be happy with what you have. Instead of simply ‘seeing the glass as half full, not half empty’, one needs to realize that he really has a *full* glass, not *half* a glass! Being happy with what you have means that you realize that you have *everything*!

⁵⁷ *Koheles Rabbah* 1:32

⁵⁸ *Avos* 4:1

61 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

The *ratzon*/will causes a person to feel deficient when he hasn't yet gotten what he wants, and to feel that his 'glass is half empty'. To counter this, one needs to learn how to be "happy with his share", *someiach b'chelko*, and one's true "share" is the fact that he has a Divine soul, a *neshamah*, which is called a *cheilek eloka mimaal*, "a portion of G-d, from above".⁵⁹ This awareness is the true "*cheilek*", the true "share", that one needs to find joy in: the fact that he's a "*cheilek*" *eloka mimaal*! This provides a person with the perspective that he is really complete on the inside, and that any of his desires which cause him to feel deficient are but a "garment" atop his soul.

HAVAYAH (UNCHANGING ESSENCE) VS. TENUAH (MOVEMENT)

This concept, of separating oneself from one's *ratzon* (will), through the awareness that the will is but a "garment" of the soul and not the soul itself, can also be described in terms of the difference between *havayah* (unchanging essence) and *tenuah* (movement).

The soul moves in various directions, through the many abilities present in the soul, but beneath all of the soul's movements is the very essence of the soul itself. The element of wind in the soul causes a person to move and utilize his various abilities. This is *tenuah*, movement. Deeper than man's *tenuah* is his very *havayah*, the very essence of the soul. On a deeper level, before the Creation, there was only the *havayah* (essence) of Hashem, and after Creation, Hashem allowed for movement (*tenuah*) in the Creator. In terms of the soul, *havayah* is one's "portion of G-d, from above", and *tenuah* is expressed through the various movements of the soul.

Tenuah/movement corresponds to the *avodah* of Moshe Rabbeinu, who represents *ratzon*, the will for holiness. Moshe is also personified by *daas* (spiritual knowledge and awareness), and *daas* is the power that moves and leads the world. The *sefarim hakedoshim* state that there is "an extension of Moshe in every generation"⁶⁰, and this is because the power of Moshe, which is *daas*, is what guides and moves every generation. *Havayah*/essence corresponds to the *avodah* of *Moshiach*. *Moshiach* will reveal that "Hashem is one", just as in the state of before Creation. This corresponds to *havayah*, the unchanging essence. (*Havayah* also corresponds to Yaakov Avinu, who was called the "wholesome man", *ish tam*, for he stayed spiritually perfect and he was unchanging, just like *havayah*.)

The concepts of *havayah* and *tenuah* also exist in our personal souls. The element of wind in the soul is the manifestation of *tenuah*/movement, whereas the essence of the soul itself is the manifestation of *havayah*, the very essence of the soul.

A person can stop feeling deficient when he doesn't get what he wants, by going above *tenuah*/movement/*ratzon*/will, and by accessing his *havayah*/unchanging essence. How can one have more access to his *havayah*? One way is, when a person understands that it is impossible for him to always get what he wants, for the *ratzon* is always bigger than what is actually capable of achieving. In this way, one lets go of *ratzon*. Another way is when a person uproots his *retzonos*. The more a person uproots his various *retzonos*, the closer he is to revealing *havayah*.

When one is only connected to the power of *tenuah*/movement in his soul, he will only be happy in the part of his 'glass' that's 'half full'. When one is more closely connected to his *havayah*, one finds that he has a 'glass' that's completely full. *Havayah* offers a person a sense of inner completeness and satisfaction with whatever one has, and this also corresponds to the concept of *menuchah* (serenity) on Shabbos. *Menuchah* is essentially about connecting

⁵⁹ *Iyov* 31:2

⁶⁰ *Shelah HaKadosh: Maseches Shavuos: Torah Ohr* 32 (in the name of the Zohar)

62 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

oneself to the *havayah* in his soul, which is above all of his *tenuah*/movement/*ratzon*/will. Thus, the depth of being happy with one's share is when one connects to his *havayah*.

IN CONCLUSION

In summary of the lesson, sadness that comes from **wind-of-wind-of-earth** is when one over-identifies with whatever he wants, with his various *retzonos* that stem from his *ratzon*/will. A person becomes sad from being overly connected to what he wants, which essentially means that he is too connected to the various “movements” of the soul. When one cannot go above the “movements” of the soul, he is essentially connected to a state of deficiency, where he will feel like he is missing something in his life because he isn't getting what he wants. At this state, the most he will be able to do in order to calm his sadness is by focusing on the part of his ‘glass’ that's ‘half full’. To repair this sadness, one needs to learn how to connect to his *havayah* – the unchanging essence of the soul which isn't lacking anything.

Havayah can also be described as a perfected element of earth. This is also an implication of the verse, “*All is from earth, and all returns to earth*”⁶¹ - it is referring to an element of “earth” that is rectified and perfected, the deep place in the soul of *havayah*, where one can find the depth of what it means to be *someiach b'chelko*. This is the way of how we can repair the sadness that comes from **wind-of-wind-of-earth**.

⁶¹ *Koheles 3:20*

12 – Unrealized Aspirations & The Solution

SADNESS THAT RESULTS FROM FIRE-OF-WIND-OF-EARTH: WHEN ONE'S WILL "DRIES UP"

With *siyata d'shmaya*, we are continuing to learn about the trait of sadness, which comes from the element of earth. In this lesson, we will learn about sadness that comes from **fire-of-wind-of-earth**.

As explained in the previous lessons, the element of wind corresponds to the *ratzon* (will). One of the aspects of fire is that it is destructive. Therefore, **fire-of-wind-of-earth** is the source of sadness that stems from a 'destroyed' will. When one's fire is being destructive to his wind/will, a person falls into earth, sadness.

If we look deeper into the cause for this sadness, what is it that causes the fire to be destructive? It is the element of earth which has caused the fire to be destructive. Earth and fire connect together because they are both dry elements. The dryness of earth and fire combine, "drying" out the wind/will, and the result is that a person becomes sad from this.

WHY DOES A PERSON'S WILL WEAKEN?

When a person wants something, he is motivated. The stronger the will, the more motivated he will be and the more he will move to get what he wants. The will can become weakened due to one of two reasons.

One reason is despair, which is a nullification of the will, where a person gives up on what he wants, because he sees that he can't actualize his desire.

Another factor that weakens the will is when one loses interest in his current will, because he wants something else that he considers more important. When this happens, he no longer regards the previous will as important. This is embodied by the verse, "*And all this is not worth anything to me.*"⁶²

To illustrate, if a person desired copper and then he becomes interested in silver, he no longer desires copper and now he is trying to get silver. Then he sees gold and he begins to take an interest in gold, and now he wants to own gold, and he is no longer interested in silver.

This idea also exists on a more inner level, when it comes to desiring higher spiritual levels. When a person is aiming to reach a higher spiritual dimension than his current one, he no longer has a will to reach the spiritual realm that is lower than the one he is trying to reach. This is a result of the element of fire in the soul, which 'destroys' the previous level and deems it as worthless, in favor of the higher level.

The nature of fire is to rise higher, and the Vilna *Gaon* says that this is because each element wants to return to its root, and since fire is rooted in Heaven, it naturally rises to Heaven. But there is also a deeper understanding of why fire rises. Fire rises higher because it gets its strength from the destruction of a previous level. The fire in the soul is designed to 'yearn' for its higher root, and therefore, anything that a person deems as a lower level than the

⁶² *Esther 5:13*

64 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

fire's source [which is in Heaven] will be 'destroyed' by the fire, because it is deemed as worthless. This is how fire rises higher: because it keeps destroying the previous level.

In the soul, fire manifests as a desire to keep going higher, and, while this is not always the case, it can happen that a person deems the previous level as worthless, because the person is aware that there are higher levels. It is like the rule of the *Gemara*, "Anything which is deemed to be burned, is considered already burned."⁶³

(Holy, repaired "fire" is when a person desires to go to a higher level after he has destroyed his previous level, whereas evil, impaired "fire" is when a person wishes to go higher than his previous level (conceitedness) or when he goes higher by destroying others and bringing others down so that he can feel higher.)

To summarize: there are two detrimental ways in which one nullifies his aspirations. One way is through despair, and the other way is through losing value for his will. When one wills something and he doesn't believe he can get it, or he doesn't believe that Hashem can help him, he despairs, and he falls into the dryness of fire, which awakens the dryness of earth, and he becomes sad. In a different scenario, a person loses value for what he wants and he 'burns up' his will. Here we will focus on this second scenario: when one loses value for his current level.

IMAGINATION "BURNS" AND DESTROYS ONE'S CURRENT LEVEL

When one uses this power of "*bittul*" (nullification) to nullify the value of other things, if he lives through imagination and he imagines that he can get to a higher level right now, he is really burning up his current level. He is desiring a "world that is not yours"⁶⁴. He wants to be on a higher level, which can exist only in his imagination. He is not realistic in what he wants.

Others have a problem that they imagine they have something, simply because they want it. On a spiritual level, a person will imagine that he is at a higher level simply because he wants to get there. But here we are speaking of a far less dramatic example of imagination: When a person simply wants to get to a higher level and he realizes he's not there, so he deems his current level worthless. He can't get to the higher level, because he isn't able to get there right now, and now he doesn't have his current level, because he has just burned it up.

What happens to him? He 'dries up' and he falls into the sadness of the element of earth. If he is deeply immersed in imagination, he will imagine that he is already at the higher levels. Most people have this problem of imagination. They imagine that they are already at the higher level they want. They confuse imagination with reality. They have a strong will, but their will is in the category of imagination.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONCEITEDNESS AND IMAGINATION

Now we will speak about a deeper point.

Each person has his own soul root, as well as one's current level. One has an *avodah* that corresponds with the root (*shoresh*) of his particular soul, and in addition to this factor, one also has his current spiritual level (*madreigah*). When one aspires to get to higher levels, he must know: "What is an aspiration that is closer within my reach, and what is an aspiration that is far from my reach?"

⁶³ *Gittin 20a, Succah 32b, Bava Kamma 76b*

⁶⁴ *Nedarim 9b*

65 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

An aspiration that is close within a person's reach is whenever a person aspires to get to a level that corresponds with his soul's root. Such an aspiration is more founded in reality, because one is always able to rise a bit higher than his current level. One may become conceited, though, and he will desire to get to his soul's root, without being aware of his current spiritual level and limitations. Although it is within his reach to get to his soul's root, at his current level, he cannot get there right now. Therefore, he is being conceited if he tries to get to the higher level. His desire to reach the higher level is therefore not an example of an imaginative aspiration, but an aspiration that stems from his true *ratzon*.

The person here is somewhat connected to the higher level he wishes to reach, but he cannot actually reach it right now. While he cannot actually reach the higher level, he is not being imaginative for wanting to get there, because he does have a connection to it. So he is being conceited, but he is not being imaginative.

In contrast to the above, if one wishes to be on a higher spiritual level and therefore he deems the current level as worthless, it is a sign that his aspiration comes from his imagination. As mentioned, this problem is found in most people, who will aspire for a higher spiritual level that they want and therefore imagine that they already there. Their will to reach a higher spiritual level is not coming from a true *ratzon*, but from their imagination, because they are desiring that which is completely out of their reach.

For example, a person may think he can succeed at attaining higher spiritual levels because he sees that others succeeded at attaining them, so he imagines that he can also do the same and succeed. But often a person doesn't have the same abilities as another person, and his motivation is just being fueled by his imagination. What happens? Either a person will eventually despair from attaining his aspiration, or, in his aspiration to go higher, he will deem his current level as worthless. In either of these outcomes, the inevitable result will be sadness.

Imagination causes a person to wish to reach higher than his current level. We can notice that there are two detrimental factors involved here. Take the following example from the material world. When a person has a hundred dollars and he desires a million, he has no connection to the million dollars right now. If he has a very strong imagination, like some people do, he will want the million dollars and imagine he has it already, or that he can at least attain it. He will want something that isn't within his actual reach, and what will happen? First of all, he will eventually despair from getting it, but in addition, he will also not be satisfied with the 100 dollars that he has, because the more he wants the million, the more he will consider his 100 dollars to be absolutely worthless.

In most people, even when they aspire for higher spiritual levels, their aspirations are not realistic. Most of the time, when people have very high spiritual aspirations, they will eventually become sad, when they don't actualize their aspirations. People often desire to reach higher levels that are simply not within their reach right now. The only way for a person to actualize his high aspirations is when one has great *mesirus nefesh* (a willingness of self-sacrifice for the cause), which enables a person to penetrate to the highest levels. But most people cannot do this, and therefore their high aspirations aren't actualized, and as a result, they become sad from all of their many aspirations: either because they despair, or because they deem their current level as worthless.

(When a person desires to be another person, even if the other person in question is a certain *tzaddik*, this is an aspiration which isn't truthful and it is not constructive. A true aspiration is when a person desires to actualize his true "I", to be "who I really am". Young teenagers often have an issue with this and it is difficult to convince them of this reality, because they are in the process of developing their self-concept and therefore they can have a very hard time relating to this).

In summary of the issue, the bigger a person's aspiration is, or the further it is from his current level, the greater his risk of falling into sadness from this, either because he will despair of actualizing his aspiration, or because his aspiration to reach higher levels causes him to deem his current level as having no value at all.

CLARIFYING YOUR ASPIRATIONS

Aspirations come from one's element of fire, which inspires the soul to go higher. But whenever one feels an aspiration to reach higher spiritual level, one first needs to clarify: "What, indeed, are my aspirations?"

Some people, even if they are in a time of quiet and calmness, when they are asked this question, are still not clear about what they aspire for. They will first need to ask themselves: "What have I been aspiring for, until now?"

Then, a person may discover that whatever he aspires for is not necessarily what he *needs* to aspire for. So one needs to clarify: "What is it that I aspire for, and what do I actually need to aspire for? And who says I need to aspire for this?"

Most people cannot define clearly their aspirations. When it comes to external aspirations, people may be able to name them. A person may know that he wants to finish a tractate of *Gemara*, or that he aspires to do a certain act of *chessed*. But when it comes to internal aspirations, most people cannot name them.

What are one's internal aspirations? It consists of what a person internally aspires for, as well as why a person is aspiring for it. After one discovers what his aspirations are, he must then realize that all of his aspirations are really "on condition" that they are true to his soul's actual capabilities right now. If one discovers that his aspirations are not really for him to reach right now, one needs to be prepared to re-think and re-assess his aspirations. Then, one needs to clarify what his current level is. This is a fundamental clarification about oneself, and it is difficult, because many people don't want to admit to their current level, because they prefer to be on a higher one. But one must be honest with himself and become aware of his current spiritual level (*madreigah*).

When a person isn't aware what his current level is, it is as if he doesn't know where he is standing. How then will he know where he can get to? He must first know where he is currently found! Of course, it is impossible for a person to know exactly his current level, but one needs to become as clear about it as possible.

After figuring this out, more or less, one needs to clarify what he aspires for and if it's really possible right now for him to reach it. The more a person clarifies his current place, and he becomes clearer about his root (which he cannot know completely, because it is very hidden from him), and where he needs to get to, his aspirations become clearer. This will be a gradual process of clarification.

This saves a person from the problem of deeming the current level as worthless. Unlike impaired **fire-of-wind-of-earth**, which burns up one's current level and brings him to sadness, a person can instead use **fire-of-wind-of-earth** on a repaired level, by "burning up" his fantasies so that he can become clearer of what exactly he can aspire for. This is a holy use of the element of fire, as opposed to the impaired, destructive fire. It is when a person realizes that a certain level is not for him to aspire for right now. It may be a level that others are capable of reaching right now, but which he, personally, cannot reach. Therefore, he realizes that he needs to stop aiming for it. He becomes aware that it's only in his imagination to reach that level.

EXAMPLE 1 – REMAINING GROUNDED WHEN READING STORIES OF TZADDIKIM

Often, a spiritually aspiring person becomes delusional in his aspirations. He may have been inspired by a certain *tzaddik* he has seen and he wishes to become like the *tzaddik*, right now. Or, he may have read stories or biographies of *tzaddikim*, or he heard about these stories from others, and his soul desires very much to be on those levels. Often the stories are exaggerated, but even when they are completely true, the person wishes to be on that level. He wishes to delve into a certain area of Torah that the *tzaddik* mastered, or he wishes to pass a test that the *tzaddik* passed.

If one is unstable in his soul, one day he will aspire to be like a certain *tzaddik* and another day he will want to be like a different *tzaddik*, and he mixes himself up all the time, because he keeps aspiring for different points. But if one is clearer than this, he is reading or hearing a story of a *tzaddik* and at first, he becomes aware of his *ratzon*/will to gain more holiness, but then he clarifies to himself if this level is for him right now to reach. What will happen? He uses his **fire-of-wind-of-earth** to ‘burn up’ his fantasy, realizing that he cannot attain that higher level right now. As opposed to despairing, or deeming himself as worthless unless he becomes like the *tzaddik*, he simply becomes aware that his desire to reach higher is not realistic right now. There is nothing here to aspire for, because he cannot reach it.

This is also applicable whenever one notices that another person is on a higher level and he wishes to be on the higher level that the other is on. People with a lot of fire in their souls will become very excited and they will immediately want to become like the *tzaddik* or like the other person who is on a higher spiritual level than they. Others have a calmer soul and they aren’t as excitable, but they still have a *ratzon* to go to higher spiritual levels, and they will want to get to the higher level slowly, though not nearly as fast as their more fiery counterparts. This all takes place on a subconscious level, of course, because a person is usually not aware of this process of aspirations taking place within him. What happens? All of these wishes for more holiness and for higher levels keep ‘piling up’ in his soul, and the person desires to be on many higher levels that he cannot reach right now.

(We are speaking here of spiritual desires, not of physical and material desires.)

EXAMPLE 2 – READING MANY SEFARIM ABOUT GROWTH AND SPIRITUAL IMPROVEMENT

Here is another example. A person desires to enter the world of *avodas Hashem*, so he reads through many different *sefarim* that explain about *avodas Hashem*. How many *sefarim* has one gone through? Any person has probably gone through at least 20 *sefarim*. Others like to read more and they have gone through a lot of *sefarim*, while others read less, but any person has read a considerable amount of *sefarim* by the time he is in adulthood. There are many imprints left on one’s soul from all this. What happens? He has been constantly reminded and awakened to holiness, and he is envious of the higher level of others, even if only subconsciously. As a result, his **fire-of-wind-of-earth** will naturally get to work, and either he despairs, or he deems his current level as worthless.

In contrast, the true way to react to this is as follows. First of all, when a person reads so many *sefarim*, it is like pouring too much oil into a fire, which extinguishes the fire. A little bit of oil is good for the fire, but not too much. But even the little amount of *sefarim* that a person does need to read, must be applied correctly. When a person reads or hears a story of a *tzaddik*, he must clarify: “Is this story applicable to me? Is it really for me to work on this and aspire for this?”

WHEN HEARING STORIES OF TZADDIKIM, CLARIFY YOUR CURRENT LEVEL

To illustrate further the idea, there is a story that Rav Chaim Soloveitchik zt”l would keep his house open for strangers to come sleep in. His son, the Brisker Rav, related that often he didn’t have his own bed to sleep in, because it was always given away to a stranger to sleep for the night. Once he was writing with a pen, and a pauper came into the house and took away his pen as he was in middle of writing with it, because he needed the pen. When a person hears a story like this, his reaction may be, “Wow, what a level of *chessed* this was! I need to do this too....”

But most people are not able to do such *chessed*. If most people would try to do this, they would lose any calmness they have! If a person is already at the level in which he lives for others, this story can be of use to him and help him expand his current level of *chessed*, but most people are not on such a level, and if they would try to actualize the level described in the above story, they would lose their minds.

IN SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

So, whenever one hears a story about a *tzaddik* or about any higher spiritual level, he must clarify to himself: “Is this something I can work on? Is it applicable on my current level?” In most cases, it is about a very high level which a person cannot attain right now. One needs to identify his wish to reach higher spiritual levels and then realize that he cannot actualize it right now, because it is not within his current level to do so.

This is the holy, repaired way to use **fire-of-wind-of-earth**. This is how one can save himself from the sadness that results from the impaired use of **fire-of-wind-of-earth**, and instead to reach the joy of being content with one’s true current place. That is where joy is found, for this is what it means to be “*someiach b’chelko*”, “happy with one’s share” – as simple as it sounds.

13 – Painful Separation & The Solution

EARTH-OF-FIRE-OF-EARTH: THE SADNESS THAT RESULTS FROM SEVERED CONNECTION

With *siyata d'shmaya* we are continuing to learn about the element of earth and the trait of sadness. In the coming lessons, we will discuss the sadness that comes from the “fire” of earth.

One of the aspects of the element of fire is that it causes separation. A fire burns through something and reduces it into ash, breaking apart the molecules and separating them from each other. Fire takes something that was once one, unified piece, and turns it into scattered pieces of ash.

In this aspect, fire is the antithesis to the element of earth, which enables something to stay attached in one piece. The earth bonds, unifies, and connects things together into one piece. While earth itself also a scattered substance, anything placed in the earth will become part of it. A house is built on the ground and becomes attached to it, and it is considered to be a part of the ground, as in the rule of the *Gemara*, “Anything attached to the ground, is like the ground”⁶⁵, and as we declare about *chametz* on Erev Pesach: “Let it be nullified, like the dust of the earth.”⁶⁶ Even pegs, which are not as firmly attached to the ground as a house, are considered part of the ground. Earth is an element that enables permanence, attachment, and connection.

As a result of the sin of Adam, man’s body must return to the earth, after death. The Vilna *Gaon* said that everything in Creation yearns to return to its root, and since the physical body is rooted in the earth, the body returns to its “root”, the earth, after death. Anything that comes from the earth will want to go back to the earth. Plants and animals are nourished from the earth, and they eventually become part of the earth, when they rot or die. In that sense, we can consider animals to be an extension of earth. Food mainly comes from the ground; the staple food of human beings is bread, which comes from the ground, as we say in the blessing of *HaMotzi*. We need to continuously eat in order to survive, and therefore, human beings have a constant connection to the element of earth. We keep returning to earth: throughout our life, by consuming the food grown from earth, and eventually returning to the ground after death.

This idea is the root behind sadness: when a person keeps ‘returning’ to ‘earth’. The most profound sadness is represented by death, which follows with the sadness of grief and mourning over the deceased. What is the depth of the sadness over the deceased? It is because people are grieving over the separation of the soul from the body. The very separation itself is what causes people to be sad.

Unlike earth, which keeps things together, fire causes separation. Whenever separation occurs, the element of “earth” will oppose the “fire” – the separation - because the task of earth is to keep something connected together. The *Gemara* says that moveable property is not considered to be permanent property⁶⁷, whereas unmoving property is considered to be permanent property. Earth keeps something in place and doesn’t let it move. Hence, earth is the idea of permanence.

⁶⁵ *Mishnayos Tractate Shavuot* 6:6

⁶⁶ *Pesachim 3a, Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim* 434:2

⁶⁷

THE SADNESS THAT RESULTS FROM GRIEVING AND MOURNING THE DECEASED

Since the element of earth has an inborn yearning to keep things together, it will go through a ‘grieving process’ whenever a connection has been severed, for earth desires permanence.

This is the depth behind the sadness of grieving and mourning over the deceased, and it also the very depth of sadness itself. Earth is the idea of permanent connection, and whenever a connection is severed, the earth will desire a return of the connection, and it will ‘grieve’ the loss of connection and permanence that has taken place. A person experiences this inner process as sadness.

We can see that whenever a person mourns a deceased person whom he was close with, such as a child mourning the death of a beloved parent, the mourning itself enables the children to connect to the deceased parent. This is really because sadness [in this case, grieving and mourning] is a trait of the element of earth, and earth enables permanence, connection, and bonding.

What does sadness cause? Simply speaking, sadness is an emotion. But on a deeper level, sadness, grieving, and mourning is a way for people to remain connected to each other. If not for the sadness of mourning, people would become separated from each other, through death. Through mourning the deceased, the mourners are able to remain connected to the deceased. Thus, earth\sadness enables one to remain connected to something.

Death causes separation between people, as it is written, “*For death will separate between me and you*”⁶⁸, but the element of earth in a person will desire to reconnect with the deceased. Sadness is essentially a deep yearning for reconnection, to remain connected to something after there has been a separation.

EARTH-OF-FIRE-OF-EARTH: A CONSISTENT DESIRE FOR RECONNECTION AFTER SEPARATION

Fire-of-earth is when there is separation (fire) within bonding (earth) where a person is not able to accept that there has been a total destruction caused by the separation/fire, because he still desires to reconnect. “**Earth**”-of-fire-of-earth is when a person has a continuous, consistent yearning to reconnect, long after the separation has occurred.

A clear example of this is when a person still wants to grieve over the deceased, even after the *halachic* mourning period of 12 months is over. This prolonged sense of grieving is experienced by those who have a lot of “earth” within their fire, resulting in the sadness (earth) that is produced from **fire-of-earth**. Hence, the sadness of prolonged grieving stems from **earth-of-fire-of-earth**.

When this nature dominates, a person feels like he cannot separate completely, even though a separation has occurred. Therefore, he cannot accept the separation. The earth in his soul desires to remain connected to that which he was connected to, long after there has been fire\separation. The “earth” within his “fire-of-earth” will be experienced as a desire to experience connection (earth) even within the separation (fire), causing him profound sadness (**earth-of-fire-of-earth**), because he will want to keep reconnecting.

When one repairs his power of **earth-of-fire-of-earth**, he is able to use it in a holy manner: to keep reconnecting with the *kedushah* (holiness) of the spiritual, meaning that he never allows himself to ever become completely disconnected from the desire for holiness and for closeness with Hashem, as in the verse “*Pull me after You, with*

⁶⁸ Rus 1:17

desire".⁶⁹ But when **earth-of-fire-of-earth** is left in its impaired state, it will manifest as an inability to accept any kind of separation or loss of permanence.

EXAMPLES OF IMPAIRED EARTH-OF-FIRE-OF-EARTH (INABILITY TO ACCEPT SEPARATION)

Here are some very practical examples of it.

There are some people who cannot part from anything which gives them a feeling of childhood nostalgia. It might be an item or a toy they remember from childhood, yet they feel like they cannot part from it, even in adulthood. An elderly person might have an entire shelf full of various childhood memories, objects, and toys. Holding onto a picture album is more understandable, and it isn't a sign of being unable to part from the past, but toys and other objects from childhood are simply there to evoke childhood nostalgia. People can feel very close to these items, attaching great meaning to them, and they might feel so powerfully connected to these items that they are absolutely unwilling to separate from them.

Another example, which is very common, is when a person dies and he leaves over certain family "heirlooms" as part of the inheritance, and the children are fighting about who gets to keep these cherished family heirlooms. Usually, when there are fights between the children about inheritance, they are fighting over money, but in some cases, they will fight even over things that have no or little monetary value, simply because these items are "meaningful" and provide certain childhood nostalgia. Even if the children aren't actually feuding sad about this, they might still be unable to part from some of these objects. A child (now an adult) may feel a powerful connection to these objects: "This is something that belonged to my father! This is something that belonged to my mother!"

Another example, which is also very common, is that there are some people who feel forever connected to their past memories, whether big or small. They keep remembering their past memories, and they will tell others about various past events that they are reminded of, and they can often be heard saying, "I remember that such and such happened about 30 years ago..." What is the source of this?

Sometimes, it can be because a person never wants to think of his future, even in old age, and therefore he always busies himself with the past. Whereas Torah scholars become wiser as they age⁷⁰ and they will think more about the Next World, an ignoramus will only become more foolish as he ages, and he may never want to think of his future at all. In many cases, an elderly person has no future and no present, only his past. After all, it is difficult for him to move around and be active as he used to, he feels unneeded, as if he is "gone from the world". Therefore, he doesn't have a present. He feels like he has nothing to do on this world right now, so all he thinks about is the past. This is why we find that many old people will only talk about their past, and they can talk to others about their past all day long. This problem is found by many elderly people.

But in other cases, a person will often talk only about his past. He will tell others about random memories of various past events he remembers, as long as something triggers a past memory. This is the kind of problem we are discussing in the lesson: an unwillingness to separate. When people talk all the time about random memories, it is really because they have a difficulty in severing themselves from whatever happened. Even in their young age, they may be like this, and the problem will just worsen in old age. In young children, this problem may manifest as an unwillingness to part from certain toys.

⁶⁹ *Shir HaShirim* 1:4

⁷⁰ *Avos* 5:21

72 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

On a similar note, we discussed in one of the previous lessons about a problem of unwillingness to depart from a situation, such as a person who works at a bad job but doesn't want to part from it, or a person who lives in a bad house which he doesn't want to move out from. This is reminiscent of the rule of the *Gemara*, "This is how it is, so this is how it always was."⁷¹

Earth-of-fire-of-earth is when there is a permanence and consistency (earth) of the despair (fire-of-earth) from connection. We have so far learned how earth and fire clash, and the problem of impaired **earth-of-fire-of-earth**. The earth in one's soul will demand a permanent kind of connection, and when one despairs from attaining permanent connection, there is resulting sadness. This is the sadness that results from **earth-of-fire-of-earth**.

REPAIRING THE SADNESS OF EARTH-OF-FIRE-OF-EARTH: USING OUR "FIRE" TO DISCONNECT

Another aspect of fire is that it rises. When a person has the power to disconnect from something (this is a use of the element of fire), he is able to "rise" above the situation. This is the repaired, holy use of fire. Through using the element of fire, a person can disconnect himself from a previous situation and move on. It is like when a first-grade child graduates to second grade.

What happens when the element of earth dominates, though? A person stays in place and he cannot disconnect from his current situation. This causes sadness. It resembles death, where a person stops moving. Although the dead can also talk to each other (as we find in the *Gemara* that spirits can talk to each other⁷², and also because the words of Torah are uttered from the deceased when others speak of the deceased's Torah teachings⁷³), this is very minimal movement, and for the most part, the dead do not move. The less movement there is, the more a person will stagnate, and the more profound his sadness will be.

As explained earlier, sadness comes from a demand for permanent connection after the connection has been severed. A person yearns to be permanently connected with something, and when he isn't getting the permanent connection, he becomes sad. How can this sadness be repaired?

It is clear that there is only one eternal connection that each person has: to his root. The root of a Jew's soul is in the collective soul of the Jewish people, in the Torah, and in Hashem. All other connections and relationships that we have on This World are transient. They do not last forever, and they are only a temporary situation, for the time that we are on This World. All of the connections and relationships that we have are but 'branches' of the 'root' connection that we have, which is our connection to Above. There is no connection or relationship that we have on This World which is permanent. When a person identifies himself as being a *neshamah*, he recognizes that his main connection is to his root, which is: to the souls of Yisrael, to the Torah, and to Hashem.

However, a person usually identifies much more with his body, as opposed to his *neshamah*, and therefore he is heavily connected to the root of the physical body, which is the element of earth. That is why in the usual scenario, a person will mainly desire connections that are worldly and temporal. The Zohar says that "A person sits in this world and thinks he will be here forever." A person knows, intellectually, that he will not live on this world forever, but he doesn't think of this often, and he definitely doesn't speak that way, because his material body is demanding for him to be connected to various worldly things.

71 *Kesubos 75b*

72 *Berachos 19b*

73 *Yevamos 97b*

73 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Whenever one becomes connected to anything on This World and he wants it to be forever, he is attaching permanence to it, and in doing so, he misuses the soul's power of permanence (earth). Instead of using his power of permanence to be connected with the eternal, to Above, he uses his power of permanence to be connected to [various things or people] on This World.

One needs to become aware that all of the connections that we have on This World are temporary, and they are not with us forever. They are not an intrinsic part of our being. One needs to re-think all of the connections and relationships he has on This World, and realize that these connections are not permanent, and that one day he will not have them anymore. Ideally, one should acquire this thinking even before he becomes connected with anything on This World, and he shouldn't wait to acquire this attitude until after he is already connected. A person needs to realize that someday, all of the connections that he has on This World will come to an end.

EXAMPLE 1 – THE TRANSIENCE OF MARRIAGE ON THIS WORLD

Here is one example of the idea. (For some people, this will be very hard to hear. But it is the truth.) A person gets married, *Baruch Hashem*. In a few cases, the couple already knows beforehand that they will not be with each other forever. But in most cases, the couple thinks that they will be together forever. And what will be with later? They never think about this at all.

Certainly it is possible for their souls to be connected even after they die, when their souls unite with their root, in Heaven. But in most marriages, the husband and wife do not form a connection of the soul with each other. Most people are not marrying a spouse with the same soul root (*shoresh haneshamah*) as they, and instead, they are marrying someone who is in the category of a “second spouse” (*zivug sheini*, who is not their ‘soul mate’), as opposed to a “first spouse” (*zivug rishon*, the soul mate), so the husband and wife do not share the same soul root. Therefore, most couples will not be connected with each other forever.

Even in the cases where the husband and wife do bear the same soul root, they are usually distant from each other, because they usually will not form a true, genuine connection with each other⁷⁴, and therefore, their connection is not stemming from a true place. For most people, marriages are in the category of a temporary connection. Since most people are living at an external level of life, as opposed to the inner layer of life, the connection between the spouses is usually temporary, not eternal. They usually do not form a bond with each other that becomes intrinsic.⁷⁵

(This is the depth behind why in the Talmud, the tractate of Gittin (the laws of divorce) precedes the tractate of Kiddushin (the laws of betrothal and marriage) - it is because there is often an attitude of disconnection from each other's souls which the couple enters into marriage with. (On a deeper level, the tractate of Gittin precedes the tractate of Kiddushin because it is like how the concept of *heda'er* (nothingness) precedes *havayah* (being)⁷⁶: one needs to first understand how this connection is able to be destroyed, in order to understand how to build this

⁷⁴ Editor's Note: Refer to *Getting To Know Your Home (Da Es Baisecha)*

⁷⁵ Editor's Note: Refer to *Getting To Know Your Home (Da Es Baisecha)*

⁷⁶ Editor's Note: The first two of the “70 forces of the soul” according to the Vilna Gaon are “*heda'er*” (nothingness) and *havayah* (existence, or being). First Hashem created a void in the soul, and then He filled it with the sensing of one's existence. Refer to the Rav's *shiurim* on the 70 forces of the Soul, in “*Getting To Know Your 70 Forces of the Soul*”, of which the first 2 classes have been adapted into english.

relationship properly). In light of the above, one needs to understand that his marriage will not be forever, and that there is no guarantee that he will remain connected with his spouse in Heaven.

ABUSING RELATIONSHIPS VS. DEEPENING THE QUALITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Certainly, if one goes too far with this concept, he will abuse the idea and he won't value any of the relationships he has, since he is aware that all of his relationships are temporary, and this makes him become apathetic in his relationships with others. That attitude would only have a devastating effect on his marriage and on all his other relationships as well.

But that problem will only happen develop when one is not aware of the true nature of connection with others. One needs to understand that without a connection to Above, all relationships are on this world are missing their root and they will cease one day, because they are not attached with their root. Therefore, one needs to strengthen the quality of his relationships with others with the awareness that our primary connection we have is with Above, with that which is eternal [the souls of the Jewish people, the Torah, and Hashem].

In short, the idea is that a person needs to be aware before he gets married, and before he enters into any relationship with another, that every connection he has on This World will only be temporary, and that it will end one day.

EXAMPLE 2 – THE TRANSIENCE OF OUR CHILDREN ON THIS WORLD

This idea should also be applied to how one views the relationships he has with his children. A person is joyous upon the birth of a child, but what does he need to think when he is about to have a child, or at the birth of the new child? He needs to become aware that his connection to this child will only be temporary. It is only a relationship for This World. One should become aware of this even before the birth of the child, and not wait to develop this attitude until later.⁷⁷

EXAMPLE 3 – THE TRANSIENCE OF OUR LIVING QUARTERS

Similarly, when one moves into a new home, he must also be aware that he will not have it forever. One should be aware that just as he has entered his new home, so will he leave it one day.

CHANGING OUR VIEW TOWARDS RELATIONSHIPS

We can give many more examples of the concept, but the point is always the same: That we should understand how every connection we have on This World is temporary, and it is not here forever!

There is also a higher attitude to have: Every connection that we have on this world can be seen as a “tool” which we can use to reveal the root of all connections, which is our connection to Above. This is a very deep perspective.

⁷⁷ Editor's Note: Refer to *Tefillah_0124_The Only Lasting Connection*

75 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

But on a far simpler level - which applies to most people, who live in the external side of life - the attitude needs to be, that all connections we have on This World are not with us forever.

This is the depth of repairing the element of earth. Without this attitude, one is too connected with his earth and he will want to feel permanently connected to things, and this will lead him to sadness.

THE JOY THAT CAN BE REVEALED THROUGH MOURNING

Now we will go deeper with this idea.

When one of the spouses passes away before the other - which is usually the case, because it is rare for the spouses to die together at the same time - there is normally an intense sadness that results from the grief caused by this separation from each other. But if one acquires the deeper view that is being described in this lesson, one becomes aware that the separation of death is only a separation of soul from the body, which actually serves to reveal the connection to Above, a soul connection.

When one is truly aware of this, instead of experiencing inconsolable sadness that usually accompanies the mourning period over the death of a beloved one, this very situation can instead become an experience of the verse *“For in joy, they go out.”*⁷⁸

When one lives like this, he becomes aware before entering each relationship with another person that there will be an eventual separation, and that their connection is only temporary. Of course, one cannot attain this perspective completely, because we will always be affected somewhat by the material view of our physical body, since we live on This World. But one is still able to acquire this awareness on his own level, and thereby give deeper meaning and change entirely his view towards all connections and relationships that he has on this world, for the better.

The quality of one's relationships with others will increase, with the more one adapts this deeper perspective towards our connections and relationships that we have on This World.

When a person first hears about this concept, he might think of it as a cold attitude which causes one to become disconnected from others and apathetic about his relationships. This happens only when a person is only able to relate to a material, physical connection to another, and that is where the person attaches permanence to. When that is the case, it is certainly too difficult for people to accept the idea of learning how to disconnect.

When one cannot relate to anything more permanent than a bodily connection to another, then of course, he will become terribly saddened when he hears about the very idea of disconnection or separation from another.

In contrast, the more one becomes in touch with his intrinsic essence, with his eternal soul, the more he can connect to the intrinsic essence of others, with their eternal souls, forming an eternal, “soul connection” with others, as opposed to forming a physical connection to others that is limited to our temporary stay on This World.

⁷⁸ *Yeshayahu 55:12*

IN CONCLUSION

Earth-of-fire-of-earth, when impaired, is when a person demands connection after there has been a separation, and this leads to sadness. When one identifies the outer and inner layers of connection [the outer layer of connection is the physical, material aspect of the connection, and the inner layer is the connection to Above that fuels the connection and enables one to form a true soul connection with others], he gains the awareness before entering into a connection and relationship with another that it is only temporary [meaning that it is not guaranteed to be forever]. Through this, one trains his soul to be able to be connected with others yet be able to also disconnect from them.

This awareness enables one to have a true connection, to the eternal, to Above [as explained, this includes one's connection to the collective soul of the Jewish people, to the Torah, and to Hashem].

This is also how one attains a balance between his opposing elements of earth and fire. Instead of a clash between one's earth and fire, one is able to unify them together, so that the earth and fire are working together in a harmonious balance. This balance is particularly necessary in marriage, enabling a man and woman to become truly connected to each other, a union that reveals the *Shechinah*.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ *Sotah 5a*: "When a man and woman merit it, the *Shechinah* dwells between them."

14 – Dissatisfaction & The Solution

WATER-OF-FIRE-OF-EARTH: DEMANDING VITALITY AFTER BEING DRIED OUT INSIDE

With *siyata d'shmaya* we are learning about the element of earth and the trait of sadness. Here we will learn about sadness that results from **water-of-fire-of-earth**.

One of the aspects of fire is that it is a dry element. Earth and fire are both dry elements, but in different ways. Earth is a dry element by its very nature, whereas fire will dry out the other elements.

The beach is where water meets with earth, and it is called the *yabashah*, from the word *yoivesh*, “dry”, because that is where the water becomes dried out by the earth. **Fire-of-earth** is when the dryness of earth and fire combine, forming the driest combination possible. **“Water”-of-fire-of-earth** is when the soul demands more “water”, because the soul is becoming ‘dried out’ from the combination of fire and earth.

Why would the soul demand more “water”? It can be coming either from the elements of earth, water, or fire (it can also come from the element of wind, but it will mainly come from earth, water, or fire).

Earth in the soul causes a person to demand more “water” for the soul, because the earth is dry, and when the soul is becoming “dried out”, it will want more “water” to moisten its dryness. **Fire** in the soul will also cause a demand for “water”, because too much fire ‘dries out’ the soul. **Water** in the soul will also demand that there be more “water” given to the soul, because water in the soul is drawn and dragged after anything similar to it [i.e. the love for similarities], and therefore a person will demand more “water” in his soul simply because his water wants more of the same. **Wind** in the soul can also demand more water for the soul. For example, when one moves a lot, he can feel that his energy has dried out, and he becomes thirsty for water. So too, an increase of “movement” in the soul would also wear out the person from energy, “drying” out the soul and causing the soul to want more “water”.

However, it is mainly the elements of fire, earth, and water which demand more “water” for the soul. As explained above, fire and earth will demand water for the soul because they are the driest elements, and the water in the soul will also want more water because it wants more of the same.

Water-of-fire-of-earth is when a person demands more “water” for the soul due to a dominance of “dryness” in the soul that is produced from the combination of the two “driest” elements, fire and earth. There is a resulting sadness (earth) that results from the dearth of “water” which has been “dried” out by one’s “fire”, hence, this is a sadness that comes from **“water-of-fire”-of-earth**.

THIRST IN THE SOUL: WHEN THE SOUL LACKS CHIYUS/VITALITY

What, essentially, is thirst? When it comes to physical thirst, the body becomes thirsty and one needs to imbibe physical water in order to quench his thirst. But thirst also exists in the soul. When one wants more “water” in his soul - in other words, when one feels a demand for more *chiyus*, vitality – he becomes “thirsty” in his soul.

In particular, **water-of-fire-of-earth** in the soul will demand that one quench the thirst in the soul, after one has been ‘dried out’ from too much “fire” the soul, whenever one’s fire has ‘destroyed’ his *chiyus*/vitality. This leads to

78 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

sadness (earth). (This thirst takes place in the “*nefesh hebeheimis*” level of the soul, the “animal soul”, which is able to feel lacking and deficient, as opposed to the *neshamah*, which never feels deficient.)

When a person becomes very thirsty in his soul, the true way to quench this thirst is Torah, as the verse states, “*All who are thirsty, should go towards water*”⁸⁰, and Chazal explain that “There is no water except Torah”⁸¹. Let us elaborate more into how the “thirst” in the soul can be quenched through the “water” of the *chiyus*/vitality that one finds in learning Torah.

The soul becomes “thirsty” because a person seeks pleasure. The Sages said that “There is nothing better above *oneg*/pleasure, and there is nothing worse below *nega*\affliction.”⁸² [“*Oneg*”, or *taanug*, refers to true pleasure, whereas “*nega*” refers to faulty pleasure]. The element of water in the soul is what causes a person to seek pleasure. But the more a person seeks pleasure, the thirstier he may become, in his quest to find more and more pleasure.

The soul may become “thirsty” either because the soul becomes dry (earth), or because the person is constantly destroying his inner vitality (fire). But there is also another way how the soul becomes thirsty: When a person’s entire inner world and spiritual progress is based on the experience of pleasure (*taanug*), which corresponds to the element of water in the soul. If a person bases his life on the attainment of pleasure alone – even spiritual pleasure – what will happen? He will actually become thirstier in his soul, due to all of the water/pleasure that he is seeking, and he can easily fall into the attitude of becoming chronically dissatisfied, in spite of all the pleasure he gets - as in the verse, “*All of this is not worth anything to me.*”⁸³

To illustrate, if a person is very thirsty and he comes across a tiny amount of water, he will drink all of the water he finds but he will not really quench his thirst. The amount of water that he requires is far greater than the amount of water he is drinking. In the soul as well, a person can be very “thirsty” because he is seeking a lot of “water” – a lot of pleasure – so even if he finds some pleasure in his life, it will never be enough to satisfy his overwhelming need to experience more and more pleasure.

How much pleasure does one need? What is the definition of minimal pleasure, and what defines a lot of pleasure? How can we determine this? It will depend on how much pleasure one is seeking. If a person feels like he needs a lot of pleasure, he will not be satisfied if he finds only a little bit of pleasure, whereas if he feels less of a need for pleasure, he will be satisfied if he finds just a minimal amount of pleasure.

For example, one child may be satisfied when we give him some candy, whereas another child will not be satisfied from this, because he wants more pleasure than this. A little bit of candy is meaningless to him, and it is not nearly enough to satisfy his need for pleasure. We know that if a child grows up surrounded with a lot of nosh and candy, he might develop a problem of not being able to enjoy normal, nutritious foods, such as bread, because he is so used to the sweet taste of nosh and candy that he is disgusted by anything else. That is a more obvious kind of problem, but there can be another problem as well: When a child grows up surrounded with a tremendous amount of pleasure, he will never be satisfied, no matter how much pleasure he imbibes, because he will always want more pleasure.

80 *Yeshayahu 55:1*

81 *Bava Kamma 17a*

82 *Sefer Yetzirah 5:7*

83 *Esther 5:13*

79 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

Just as the desire for money cannot be calmed if a person keeps making more money, so is the desire for pleasure never calmed with the more that a person ‘gives in’ to it.⁸⁴ Pleasure doesn’t become satisfied and calmed with the more we give in to it – rather, it will simply expand and become even needier for more pleasure. Understandably, the need for pleasure can never be truly satisfied.

Here is another example. Two children are learning in the same class. One child is enjoying his learning, while the other isn’t. There can be many reasons for this. Maybe the child who is doing better is a more motivated kind of child, or maybe he is smarter and he can think and understand things quicker. Or, maybe he is learning about a topic that he finds more enjoyable. While any of the above may be true, there can also be a deeper reason as well. The child who is doing well is not such a seeker of pleasure, so can easily enjoy his learning. Any little pleasure he gets from his learning is enough to satisfy him. The other child, though, has been raised in atmosphere that made him become more indulgent in pleasures. Therefore, it is harder for him to enjoy his learning, because even if he finds it somewhat enjoyable, it is not enough for him. He will never feel like he is getting enough pleasure, because he has been raised in a way that made him have ‘higher standards’ of pleasure.

Water-of-fire-of-earth is when a person seeks a lot of pleasure, to the point that even if he does get pleasure, it doesn’t feel like enough. Instead, it feels deathlike and saddening. Compare this to two people who are fed the same exact food, and one of them is happy and satisfied from it, while the other remains dissatisfied and sad. If they are both eating the same exact food, why do they experience it differently? It is because the second person has been accustomed to a lot more pleasure than the first person, so he will naturally want more pleasure and it is harder for him to become satisfied.

I. “SOMEIACH B’CHELKO” – BECOMING HAPPIER WITH WHAT WE HAVE.

The beginning of the remedy for this issue [a sadness that results from a chronic dissatisfaction, no matter how much pleasure a person gets, which comes from impaired **water-of-fire-of-earth**], is, on a general level, to learn how to become more “*some’iach b’chelko*”, “happy with one’s lot”.⁸⁵ This was mentioned in previous lessons, and it can be applied to here as well.

While this is generally true, we will also add on here another solution, which is more specific to the kind of sadness we are addressing here, the sadness that comes from **water-of-fire-of-earth**.

2. BALANCING THE NEED FOR PLEASURE & VITALITY BY ACCESSING THE POWER OF “KABALAS DL MALCHUS SHOMAYIM”

A more specific way to overcome the problem of sadness caused by pleasure-seeking is: to balance the soul’s need for *chiyus* (vitality), with a deeper power in the soul that does not require *chiyus*. We shall now elaborate on this.

The soul’s need for *chiyus*/vitality stems from the “*Chayah*” level of the soul. At this level of the soul, one requires *taanug*, pleasure, which corresponds to the element of water in the soul. Deeper than this place is the soul is the

⁸⁴ Editor’s Note: see *Succah* 52b, “There is a small organ in man. When one ‘satisfies’ it [by giving himself more sensual pleasure], he starves it [he becomes hungrier for more sensual pleasure]. When one ‘starves’ it [by refraining from satisfying his desire for sensual pleasure], he satisfies it.”

⁸⁵ Editor’s Note: The *Rav* discusses how to become “*some’iach b’chelko*” (happy and satisfied with who we are and what we have) in *Fixing Your Fire-Anger_016_ Changing A Terrible Temper*

power of *havayah*, the very essence of the soul, which also called “*Aisan*”, “strength”, for it is the power of inner strength of the soul that is able to function without any pleasure or vitality. It is also referred to as the power in the soul to have “*kabalas ol*”, the power to “accept a yoke” upon oneself, which usually refers to *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, to accept upon oneself the dominion of Heaven [the acceptance of a Jew’s responsibility to keep Torah and mitzvos], the very opposite idea of the need to receive *chiyus* and *taanug*.

When a person lives his life based on getting *chiyus*/vitality, he will do anything as long as he gets *chiyus* from the act, and if he doesn’t feel like he is getting *chiyus* from it, he won’t do it. This way of living resembles the statement of the Sages about one who says, “This teaching is pleasant, but the other teaching is not pleasant”⁸⁶ [a person who will only do something if he can feel connected to it or not, a way of thinking which the Sages criticize].

In contrast to this, there is a deeper power in the soul than the need for *chiyus*, which is called “*Aisan*”, an ability to connect to any act out of inner strength of the soul, even when one doesn’t receive *chiyus* from the act. When one uses this power in the soul, “*Aisan*”, the person does not wonder how much *chiyus* he is getting, only how much *kabalas ol* (accepting responsibilities) he is having. This power in the soul is also the depth behind the concept of *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, accepting our responsibilities towards Heaven, to observe Torah and *mitzvos*.

PLEASURE VS. ABILITY TO REMAIN STRONG AND OBSERVANT DESPITE NON-PLEASURE

There are essentially two different “beginnings” of Creation, “*Chochmah*” (lit. “wisdom”) and “*Keser*” (lit. “Crown”), which also represent two different “beginning” powers of the soul: two different ‘starting points’ for the soul which are each fundamentally important for the soul to function.

One “beginning point” of the soul is *chochmah*\wisdom. The soul receives *chiyus* (vitality) from the deep *chochmah* of the Torah, for it is written, “*And wisdom sustains her owner*”.⁸⁷ This corresponds to the “*Chayah*” level of the soul. There is also a “higher” beginning point for the soul: “*Keser*”. The point of *Keser* is actually above the soul. When one exercises the power of *kabalas ol*, he is connecting his soul to a level that is actually above him, to the *ol malchus shomayim*, the “yoke of Heaven”, which is certainly above a person’s natural level. As a hint, *keser* means “crown”, and the crown is placed above the head, so it is above the highest point of the person. A crown is worn by the king, who is placed “above” the rest of the people, as is the verse, “*Place upon you a king*”⁸⁸. Thus, *Keser* represents the level that is above the soul.

When one seeks *chochmah* (wisdom) alone - without accepting upon himself the responsibilities he has towards Torah and *mitzvos* - he is really seeking *taanug* (pleasure). The result from this is that he won’t be able to do anything unless there is pleasure involved. In contrast to this, when one is more concerned about *kabalas ol* – carrying out his obligations towards Heaven even when he doesn’t get pleasure – he is using the soul’s deeper power, *Aisan*, also called *Keser* (which corresponds to the “*Yechidah*” level of the soul), he is able to go above the soul’s need for *taanug*/pleasure.

Understandably, since every person is multi-faceted in the structure of his personal soul, both of these powers exist in every person. If a person has a lot of **water-of-fire-of-earth** in his soul, he will do something only if he gets

86 *Eruvin 64a*

87 *Koheles*

88 *Devarim 17:15*

81 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

pleasure from it. He will be dependent on *taanug*/pleasure to keep him going. Others have a soul that is more drawn towards *kabalas ol*, and they will do whatever is required of them to do, whether they gain personally or not.

DOING OBLIGATIONS EVEN WHEN ONE DOESN'T FEEL LIKE IT

When a person is able to always carry out his responsibilities - whether he feels like it or not, and he is not dependent on gaining personally from it - this can come from any one of the following possibilities.

1) It may be because he has a nature that is more easily drawn towards the highly spiritual power of *kabalas ol*, to keep all of one's obligations of the Torah and *mitzvos* no matter what he feels like, an ability that comes from a very deep place in the soul (as explained above).

2) In some cases, however, it is not coming from a highly spiritual ability, and it is simply a result of hardened emotions. The person may have developed a problem of deadening his emotions, so he can do anything even when he doesn't feel like doing it, but this is not a quality, it is a deep issue which needs to be addressed. (However, even in this very problematic case, the person is still a greater "vessel" to become connected to the power of *kabalas ol* – since he is able to carry out his responsibilities even when he doesn't feel like it, he is a lot closer to revealing the soul's deep power of *kabalas ol*.)

CARRYING OUT OUR DUTIES VS. BEING DETACHED FROM EMOTION

So, the idea is that a person is able to overcome his dependency on pleasure (as well as the need for spiritual pleasure) by connecting to the power in the soul that is above the need for pleasure, which is called *Aisan*, the inner "strength" in the soul, which is accessed through the power of *kabalas ol*.

There is also another way by which one can solve the problem of being dependent on pleasure, but it is not a recommended approach. When one becomes more involved with the realm of action, he will be less involved with his emotions, and in turn, he will not be dependent on his emotional state. By getting more involved in various activities, he will be able to do things whether he feels like it or not. However, while this can work in solving the issue at hand, it will create a worse issue: the person will teach himself how to cut off from his emotions. This is clearly detrimental, so we will not recommend this approach.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN PLEASURE AND NON-PLEASURE

One needs to become balanced between the soul's powers of *chochmah* (*Chayah/chiyus/taanug*) and *Keser* (*Yechidah/Aisan/kabalas ol*) in order to overcome the dependency on *taanug*/pleasure.

If one only lives to get *chiyus*/vitality and *taanug*/pleasure in what he does, one will only do something if he gets *chiyus/taanug*, and then he will fall into the sadness that results from impaired **water-of-fire-of-earth**, because he will become sad whenever he doesn't get enough *chiyus/taanug*. That is why a person needs to access the soul's power of *kabalas ol* (*Keser/Yechidah*), so that he will be able to act even when he doesn't get *chiyus/taanug* in what he does.

This is the depth of how we rectify impaired **water-of-fire-of-earth**: to balance out the soul's need for *chiyus* and *taanug* by accessing the soul's power of *kabalas ol*. Practically speaking, how does this distance a person from sadness? When one doesn't feel like he's getting enough *taanug*/pleasure or *chiyus*/vitality, that is when he needs to make use of the soul's power of *kabalas ol* - to take care of his duties in spite of not getting *taanug* or *chiyus* from it. The more a person practices this idea, he slowly attains a balance in his soul, between his *chiyus*/*taanug* and *kabalas ol*.

WHY A PERSON NEEDS BOTH "KABALAS OL" AS WELL AS TAANUG/PLEASURE

It was already mentioned that if a person bases his life on receiving *taanug*/*chiyus*, he will fall into the sadness caused by impaired **water-of-fire-of-earth**. It would seem, then, that a person should go to the other extreme, and he should only live a life of *kabalas ol*, taking care of his duties of Torah and mitzvos without ever trying to get pleasure or vitality in what he does. However, this would also be detrimental. Why?

As mentioned before, *kabalas ol* corresponds to the point of "*Keser*", which is above the actual spiritual level of a person. Whenever a person utilizes the power of *kabalas ol*, he is really connecting his soul to a level that is above his soul. For example, when one accepts upon himself the *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* [when reciting *Kerias Shema*], he is essentially accepting upon himself a level of commitment that is above his current spiritual level. He is connecting himself to a spiritual illumination (*ohr*) that is greater than him, above him, and not yet a part of him.

In the *sefarim hakedoshim*, it is explained that there are two kinds of spiritual illumination: *ohr pnimi* ("inner light", a spiritual illumination that goes "into" the person, where it becomes internalized and "within") and *ohr makif* ("surrounding light", a spiritual illumination that remains "outside" of a person, due to the time or place that a person is in).

For example, when a person lights the menorah on Chanukah, there is a spiritual light that surrounds his home, so Chanukah light is an example of "*ohr makif*". It creates a spiritual effect that surrounds a person, but it is not yet internalized. If a person manages to internalize it into his being, it becomes *ohr penimi*, inner light.

An example of *ohr pnimi* is, "*And you shall know today, and you will settle it upon your heart.*"⁸⁹ A person has certain knowledge in his mind, he can know of spiritual realities [i.e. *emunah* in Hashem], but he hasn't yet internalized this knowledge into his heart. Before one internalizes his knowledge, it remains as an *ohr makif* which surrounds his being, but which is not yet a part of him. When one internalizes his mind's knowledge into the heart, it becomes *ohr pnimi*, an "inner light" that is now part of him and within him.

Chazal state that "When one's [Torah] wisdom is greater than his actions, his [Torah] wisdom is not retained"⁹⁰, and this is really because his wisdom is remaining at the level of *ohr makif*, and he hasn't yet internalized his wisdom as *ohr penimi*, so his Torah wisdom hasn't yet become a part of his being. Chazal state of such a person, "A wind can come and uproot him"⁹¹, because he hasn't yet internalized his Torah knowledge which he knows, so he is still vulnerable to sin even though he 'knows' better than this.

Living in either extreme – *ohr penimi* alone, or *ohr makif* alone – is disadvantageous.

⁸⁹ *Devarim* 4:39

⁹⁰ *Avos* 3:9

⁹¹ *Avos* 3:17

When a person only makes use of *ohr penimi* but he doesn't want to be open to receiving any *ohr makif*, he greatly limits himself, because he will only relate to his own inner understandings, but he cannot relate to any perspective other than his own. Although he can have a vast inner world of his own, he is placing himself in a state of *tzimtzum* (confinement), because he doesn't allow himself to expand. People who have a lot of *ohr penimi* can be very closed-minded, and they cannot relate to others. If you try to tell them of another perspective or a novel insight that they never thought about, they will find it too difficult to relate, because they only see what they know from within themselves. They will not expand further than their own private, inner world.

At the other extreme are those who only live in *ohr makif*. A person like this can have a vast amount of spiritual knowledge and understanding, but he has never yet done the inner work of internalizing what he learns. He will be left empty, in spite of all that he knows, because he has never actually developed his own inner world. He is essentially living "outside" of himself. A person who lives only in *ohr makif* will be able to speak of very high spiritual concepts and perceptions, which clearly shows that he is capable of comprehending them, but in spite of all that he knows, he does not act upon what he knows, because he isn't that interested in internalizing his knowledge.

ONE CANNOT LIVE ENTIRELY WITH "KABALAS OL MALCHUS SHOMAYIM"

Now that we have seen the outline of the idea, let us see how we can apply it to ourselves personally.

What, essentially, is the difference between a person who is more interested in *taanug* (which corresponds to *chochmah*, *chiyus*, *Chayah*) with a person who is more interested in *kabalas ol* (which corresponds to *Aisan*, *Keser*, *Yechidah*)?

Chochmah (or *chiyus*, *taanug*, *Chayah*) is essentially a kind of *ohr penimi*. When a person first acquires knowledge, it is intellectual and it is not yet called *chochmah*, but when one internalizes the knowledge into his heart, it becomes true *chochmah*, which is called *chochmas halev*, "wisdom of the heart." When a person is having *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, though, this is an example of *ohr makif*, because it is a level that cannot become internalized right now, for it is essentially above one's soul. Although it is true that some of the *ohr makif* will enter into one's soul, it is not enough to have a lasting effect on the soul. For the most part, the spiritual illumination will remain at the level of *ohr makif*.

Therefore, if a person wants to base his life solely on *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, he is living all the time in *ohr makif* (also called "*makifin*" – "surrounding" spiritual illuminations), and, practically speaking, none of it will enter into his being. He will be living all the time in a spiritual illumination that is on his "outside", spending all of his time and energy on levels that are essentially beyond him.

The following is an example. Often, when a person begins to get serious about *avodas Hashem*, he may make the following error. He begins to read the first few lines of the sefer *Mesillas Yesharim*, and he reads there that a person was created to bask in the pleasure of the *Shechinah* of Hashem, and that we are here on this world for the Next World. It may seem from these words of the *Mesillas Yesharim* that true pleasure is only for the Next World, where man can experience the *Shechinah*, whereas This World is not meant for pleasure, and that we must simply do here whatever we have to do, to have *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, as in the statement "Like an ox carrying its load."

When that is the attitude, a person will live without ever trying to get *chiyus*. A person like this will have great exertion in his Torah learning and *avodas Hashem*, but at some point he will break, because his *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* is really a level way above him, and it is a spiritual illumination that never actually enters into him. He

will be involved all the time with a level that is above his soul. He will encounter a contradiction between who he is, with what he is striving for. His actual spiritual level is way below the levels that he is aiming for, and at some point, he will fall apart, with the more he realizes that he is living in a contradiction.

This will usually happen to people when they enter into old age, when they become weak and they have less energy, when they can't do the *mitzvos* as much as they would like to. What happens? They have less access now to *ohr makif*, and instead they are left with an inner world that is empty, because they never developed yet.

I am not even referring to people who were never serious about *avodas Hashem* to begin with, who certainly worsen in old age when they don't have strength anymore to do *mitzvos*. Even when people lived all their life and they were very serious about their *avodas Hashem*, and they always acted out of *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, if they didn't try to get *taanug* in their *avodas Hashem*, they will eventually break, when they can no longer be strong in their *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* as they were able to in their younger years. They are left with a gaping void inside themselves that was never filled.

WE NEED "SHELO LISHMAH" IN ORDER TO GET TO "LISHMAH"

Chochmah [and *taanug*] also corresponds to the concept of *shelo lishmah* (not acting for sake of Heaven), whereas *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* corresponds to *lishmah* (acting for the sake of Heaven).

Chazal state that "A person should always be involved in Torah and *mitzvos* even *shelo lishmah*, because from *shelo lishmah* a person arrives at *lishmah*⁹². Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains (in *sefer Ruach Chaim*) that it is impossible for a person to start with *lishmah*, and that is why Chazal said that a person should "always" start with *shelo lishmah*. This is because it a person always needs pleasure. Simply speaking, this is because if a person is unable to bypass the human nature which needs pleasure.

But the depth of this is because only tries to do everything *lishmah*, all of his spirituality will be at a level of *ohr makif*, so it will never become internalized into his being, as *ohr penimi*. In order for the level of *lishmah* to be *ohr penimi* for a person, one needs to first go through the process of *shelo lishmah* - through having pleasure in his Torah learning and *mitzvos* - and then he can become a "vessel" that can contain the level of *lishmah*.

This is the meaning of "Your Torah in my innards"⁹³ – in order for one to internalize one's Torah learning so that it becomes a part of one's "innards", he must be able to first digest it, through tasting its sweetness, through experiencing pleasure in his Torah learning, and only after that can the Torah enter his innards. To illustrate, if a person needs to eat something but it is hard to digest, he will find it easier to digest if it is sweet-tasting. The better it tastes, the better it will digest.

In the same vein, a person needs to first experience a sweet taste in Torah and *mitzvos*, in order for it to become internalized in his being. It is not possible to live only in a state of *lishmah/kabalas ol malchus shomayim*. Rather, a person first needs *shelo lishmah* as a "funnel" to diffuse the great spiritual light of "*lishmah*" so that it can enter his system properly. Slowly, *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* can slowly enter into his being and become a part of him, where it goes from *ohr makif* to *ohr penimi*. Through having *taanug*/pleasure in Torah and *mitzvos*, a person builds his outer "vessel" so that he can hold onto his inner "vessel" – and then his *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* can slowly enter him and remain in his soul.

⁹² *Pesachim* 50b

⁹³ *Tehillim* 40:9

Thus, one needs to go through *shelo lishmah* in order to get to *lishmah*, working his “way up, from below” (*misata l'eila*). In turn, the higher level, *lishmah*, can then enter into him, where he can shine the light from above down to his “vessel” below (“from above to below” – *m'leila l'sata*).

TASTING FOOD ON SHABBOS – LEARNING HOW TO PLACE RESTRAINT WITHIN PLEASURE

On Shabbos *Kodesh*, there is a concept of *taanug*/pleasure, by enjoying the taste of the Shabbos food. We are given an “extra soul” on Shabbos to be able to eat more food on Shabbos. Shabbos is also the time when one can internalize his *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, where one's *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* can go from being *ohr makif* that is above and outside of him, and to become turned into *ohr penimi*, internalized in him. The Vilna Gaon said that a person needs to be extra careful on Shabbos that he shouldn't come to indulge in food and eat *shelo lishmah*.

Therefore, Shabbos is a time where one can work on this balance of *taanug* with *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*: one can learn how to bring *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* into his pleasure, by restraining himself from indulging in more food. Shabbos is the more appropriate time of the week to experience *taanug*, and this is because there is more opportunity on Shabbos for *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, enabling one to give proper balance to his *taanug*.

THE BALANCE OF KABALAS OL AND TAANUG IN LEARNING TORAH

When it comes to learning Torah, one needs to first learn it with exertion in it - *kabalas ol*. At some point later, he begins to understand its *chochmah* and he gets *taanug*/pleasure and *chiyus*/vitality from it. This process enables one's Torah learning to become “*Your Torah in my innards*”. One will then be able to keep returning to his *kabalas ol* in his Torah learning, now that he has also received *taanug*. He can then keep cycling back and forth between *kabalas ol* and *taanug*, attaining the correct balance.

REPAIRING SADNESS OF WATER-OF-FIRE-OF-EARTH BY ACCESSING SOUL'S “DRYNESS”: KABALAS OL MALCHUS SHOMAYIM

Based upon the above, how can we repair the sadness that results when one feels ‘dried out’ in his soul, when he doesn't feel like he is getting enough pleasure? Practically speaking, what can a person do about this?

Sometimes, he may need to fill the void of pleasure and vitality in his soul by giving himself more appropriate *taanug*/pleasure and *chiyus*/vitality. But there may be times when this is not feasible. For example, if doing so will only cause him to seek too much pleasure, then getting more pleasure is not the solution. Or, there may be times when he is simply unable to supply himself with more pleasure. What, then, he should do?

If one cannot get pleasure right now, it is now time to enter into the state of *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*. Understandably, one needs to do so in a balanced and sensible manner (as explained earlier). In that way, the “thirst” of the soul - or the dependency on pleasure - is removed.

A person can work upon this idea as follows. Whenever one is amidst a state of pleasure, he should try not to satiate himself completely. He can allow himself to become satiated from the pleasure, but he should stop at that point. This idea is mentioned by the Rambam with regards to eating, that a person should eat a meal until he feels somewhat satiated, but he should not eat more than that, so that he doesn't become completely satiated.

86 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

This is how one can train himself to control his need for pleasure even as he is amidst the pleasure itself, and it is a degree of revealing *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* within his *taanug*. It is a way for a person to immediately return to a state of *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, even after he has just experienced *taanug*.

This is the depth of how we rectify impaired “dryness” of the element of earth, and its resulting sadness, and in particular, the sadness that results from **water-of-fire-of-earth**.

As explained earlier, fire dries out the other elements, water seeks pleasure after the soul has become dried out from pleasure, and the earth is dry by its very nature. The way to rectify one’s dependency on pleasure is through *kabalas ol*.

When one uses the power of *kabalas ol*, he is actually using the “dryness” of the element of earth in a holy manner - he is using a power in the soul that doesn’t require pleasure. Although this power is generally called *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* - which is about connecting oneself to a level that is above the soul - the root of this power is not in *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* (that is only an outcome of this power, not the root), but in the general power of “*kabalas ol*”, which is holy use of “dryness” in the soul: the ability to act even without getting *chiyus*/vitality and *taanug*/pleasure.

To summarize, when one makes sure to get *taanug*, he nourishes the element of water in his soul, and when he also makes sure to have *kabalas ol* without trying to get *taanug* or *chiyus*, he is using the “dryness” of the element of earth in a holy manner, and he thereby gives balance to his need for pleasure. This is how one repairs the sadness caused by **water-of-fire-of-earth**, which results from a “dried-out” soul: when one learns how to use the soul’s “dryness” in a holy manner, being able to act even when he doesn’t get pleasure.

This frees the soul from being dependent on pleasure, for it enables one’s pleasure to become more balanced, through *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*.

15 – Exhaustion & The Solution

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, it will 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 further⁹⁴. 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 a person becomes excited and passionate about something due to his element of fire, and the excitement expands whenever one 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 increased 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*”⁹⁵, 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* (dissension). The Sages said that the fire of *Gehinnom*, which Hashem created on the second day of Creation, is known as the “fire of *machlokes*”⁹⁶. 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.

⁹⁴ *Bava Kamma* 59b

⁹⁵ *Shir HaShirim* 5:6

⁹⁶ *Shelah HaKadosh parshas Vayakhel*

When a person 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 that 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. Thus, 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 the impaired use of **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 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.

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

Physical movement or internal movement (such as heavy excitement or heavy emotion) cause a person to use up his 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 needs to rest because he is simply emotionally drained from the wedding, and he might find himself very tired and 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.⁹⁷ 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 impaired **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, and this causes them to use up a lot more energy than their souls can handle.

There are only a very few amount of people who act extreme out of a pursuit of the truth. When most people act extreme, it is not because they are pursuing the truth. They will live an extreme kind of lifestyle, and advocate strongly for extreme ideals and beliefs, and this is how they arrive at their 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 to be extreme, and not because they seek truth.

⁹⁷ *Taanis* 27b

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, running 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 simply because they have a personality that is drawn towards extremity. When this happens, they will pursue a certain idea with all of their energy, in an extreme and imbalanced way.

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 he will learn until he feels completely exhausted. Sometime later, he will turn all of his energies on the *mitzvah* of honoring his parents, and he will go to extreme lengths to honor them. 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 this 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*”⁹⁸.) 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 used in the right way when one has *mesirus nefesh* (great perseverance of the soul for a true cause) for something, and this is a valid approach for a person to take. However, acting with *mesirus nefesh* is only constructive for one who has first attained *yishuv hadaas* (a calm, settled mind), and 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 after he acts extreme.

There are people who live all the time in this way, because it is their very nature to act extreme and to 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 increases it (**wind-of-fire**).

Understandably, excitement is a positive and necessary aspect of human nature. The *Mesillas Yesharim* 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 we 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*, and it is instead a superficial kind of excitement that comes from the physical body, or the animal level of the soul (*nefesh habehaimis*). Proper excitement is only when the excitement is 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 in 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). This is because 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.

92 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

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 get a good night's sleep so that 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 depleted 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 was in his imagination, and now he is emptied from energy, so he can easily become 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 of this, 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, even after his excitement has gone.

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, but later 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 finished using all of their energy.

93 · Repairing Our Element of Earth [SADNESS]

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"⁹⁹. 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 cannot cover here completely¹⁰⁰. 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.

⁹⁹ *Pesachim 113b*

¹⁰⁰ *Editor's Note: The Rav discusses more about the nature of "extremity" in Fixing Your Fire-Anger 009_Extremity*

16 – Emptiness & The Solution

FIRE-OF-FIRE: TOTAL DESTRUCTION

With *siyata d'shmaya*, in this lesson we will conclude the discussion on the element of earth and the trait of sadness. The last kind of sadness we will learn about is **fire-of-fire-of-earth**. (Understandably, there is always a lot more to say about these matters, as is the way of Torah, which contains wisdom that is “longer than the land, and wider than the sea”. In spite of this, we will try to cover as much as we can, with the help of Hashem.)

One of the aspects of the element of fire is that will destroy anything it comes into contact with. In some cases, a fire cannot overpower another element. For example, if a fire meets a large amount of water, the fire will not be able to get past the water, and the water will extinguish the fire. But generally, fire will destroy and overpower anything it touches.

In addition, not only does fire destroy, but it will also turn the object of its destruction into another fire, adding on to the size of the original fire. This is in contrast with the other elements. For example, if water causes destruction to something, it doesn't turn it into water. When a strong wind breaks something, it doesn't turn the object into wind. Earth can cause something to spread and scatter, but it cannot turn something into earth. Fire is the only element which can turn anything it touches into its own element: fire.

This particular aspect is the “**fire**” **within fire**: When fire destroys something, and then turning it into another fire. That is the outline, and we will analyze the details of this concept and explain it, with *siyata d'shmaya*.

FIRE – THE ONLY ELEMENT WHICH DESTROYS, NULLIFIES, AND DISAPPEARS

Every creation on this world has its *havayah*, its existence, which has been created anew from Hashem. Our Sages also revealed a rule that everything in Creation will always returns to its original element. On a more cosmic level, the earth was first created from nothing and it will eventually return to its original *havayah*, its original state of nothingness, after the current 6,000 year era¹⁰¹. In addition to the fact that each existing creation is created anew from Hashem, everything in Creation is also temporary, as it will eventually become nullified at the end of the year 6,000. This particular aspect of Creation – the fact that everything is a new *havayah*, and that it is all temporary and eventually nullified - is essentially the “fire” of Creation.

In addition to the first two aspects of fire mentioned earlier (destruction, and replicating), there is also a third aspect of fire: a fire is a “new” creation which did not originally exist in the first six days of Creation. The Sages state that the fire of *Gehinnom* was created on the second day of Creation¹⁰², but this is not the “fire” which we know of in our world. The Sages state that fire began with Adam HaRishon, when he needed light and he struck together

¹⁰¹ see Sanhedrin 97a

¹⁰² Pesachim 54a

some sticks and rocks on *Motzei Shabbos*, and the first spark of fire emerged¹⁰³. Therefore, the fire we have today is essentially a “new” creation of fire, which did not exist in the original six days of Creation.

For how long does a fire remain lit? On Chanukah, the *menorah* must be lit for at least 30 minutes, and the flame in the *Beis HaMikdash* had to be lit the entire day. For every moment that the flame continues to burn, can we say that the fire keeps being renewed? Is it a new fire each moment, or is each moment a continuation of the original fire? Certainly, the fire that is burning 5 minutes later is getting its strength from the previous fire, so the fire is not new, it is a continuation. When one first lights a fire, it is new, but for every moment after that the fire remains lit, the fire is not a new fire, it is just a continuation of the first fire. It can be compared to the renewal of the moon each month. When the moon is renewed, it is not actually becoming a new moon, it is just being continued. In that sense, it is renewed, but in essence, it does not become a new creation.

The idea we want to bring out from this is that whenever fire continues fire, or whenever a fire enables another fire, the ‘new’ fire is not actually a new fire, but a continuation of the original fire. Even when a small spark becomes a fire, the fire is not new, it is just a continuation of the original spark.

Every fire starts out new, but as it continues, it is no longer new. Therefore, a fire has no past (its past is gone, because it has been replaced by a different fire) nor does it have a future (for it may be extinguished). When a fire goes out, it is no longer here. By very default, fire’s existence (*havayah*) undergoes an absence (*heda’er*).

(There are two different elements of fire: “higher fire”, which is Heavenly, and “lower fire”, which is the fire that we know of on This World. Higher fire is never extinguished, such as the fire of the Burning Bush. The Gemara says that there are six Heavenly fires which came to the Altar, and this fire doesn’t have the limited properties of fire on this world. “Lower” fire, which is the fire we have on this world, is no longer here once it is extinguished.)

This is in contrast with the elements of earth, water and wind which keep continuing to exist, and which always remain in some form. The earth can be razed and its dirt and dust will be scattered around, but its matter will always remain, and it will simply take on a different form. The same is true for the elements of water and wind – they never completely disappear, they simply take on a different form. The wind (air) never disappears, and water will evaporate into the air, but after it rains, the water returns to its previous form. The only element which totally disappears from the world is fire.

THE SADNESS OF MOURNING: THE FEELING OF AN EMPTY VOID

Now we shall see how this concept applies to the soul.

As mentioned in previous lessons, sadness is most profound when people express their grief at the death of another person, and with the sadness of the mourning period that follows. Nothing epitomizes sadness more than death and mourning. Simply speaking, this was because ever since Adam and Chavah sinned, mankind has to endure the curse of death, which causes the body to return to the earth, and earth is the element of sadness.

There is nothing sadder than death. Although the Torah uses the term *atzvus* (sadness) by the curse given to woman - “*I shall greatly increase your pains*”¹⁰⁴, which refers to the pains of pregnancy and childbirth – ultimately,

¹⁰³ *ibid*

¹⁰⁴ *Beraishis* 3:16

this is sadness that leads to a great joy, for there is a birth of a child. In contrast, the sadness caused by death is the ultimate sadness.

Why is it that nothing causes more sadness than death? Death symbolizes the total removal of something, where the something is no longer here. This is similar to the idea of fire, which is no longer here once it is extinguished. The soul experiences this as sadness: when there is an absence of the *havayah* (existence) of something. In contrast to joy, where a person rejoices with whatever is here (*yeish*), sadness is when nothing is here (*ayin*).

When one is sad because something has been removed and it is no longer here, this sadness comes from the “fire-of-fire” (total destruction and extinguishing) of “earth” (sadness). [Hence, this is a sadness that comes from **fire-of-fire-of-earth**.]

SADNESS VS. JOY

In line with the above, when we consider what the antithesis to *atzvut*/sadness is – which is *simchah* (joy) – we can discover that there are two factors that enable *simchah*: 1) Renewal, and 2) “Being happy with one’s lot”, which, at the deepest level, is when one is happy with the very existence (*havayah*) of something.

Sadness lacks both of the above. When something can no longer be renewed, there is reason to be sad over it. And when something is no longer here, I cannot be happy with it anymore, because it is no longer here. It has no more *havayah* (existence).

The elements of earth, water and wind can remain independent from other factors in order to keep existing. Earth, water, and wind can each survive on their own. Fire, though, is dependent on certain factors in order for it to continue existing. Each continuous burning of the fire needs to be fueled by the fire that preceded it. The Hebrew word for “fire”, “*ais*”, is similar to the word “*ishah*”, woman, just as woman is dependent on man for satisfaction [in marriage], as a result of the curse given to Chavah, “*And to your husband shall be your desire.*”

This is the depth of the idea mentioned before that fire has no “past” or “future”. It has no “past”, because the current fire is a continuation of the first fire, so it is always a “new” fire each moment, cutting off from its past. Fire also depends on certain factors in order to keep burning (it needs to remain lit), so its “future” is uncertain. It is bound to become extinguished. Fire doesn’t even have a total “present”, because since it is dependent on certain factors to remain aflame, its present is always uncertain.

FIRE-OF-FIRE-OF-EARTH: THE FEELING OF NOTHING BUT EMPTINESS

Based upon the above, we will now explain another deep aspect about fire, and how it is used in the soul.

The existence of the soul, its *havayah*, is not dependent on other factors. Each person is unique, because each person does not have to imitate another. Each person has his own unique *havayah* (existence), and since each person’s *havayah* is unique, a person does not have to make himself similar to others in order to be like them and imitate them.

The element of fire, though, is the antithesis to the concept of *havayah*, for as explained earlier, a fire will always turn other elements into itself. When a fire touches something and burns through it, it turns the object into fire, just like itself. This shows us that fire is not ‘satisfied’ with its own existence. It needs to get everything else around it to

become like it, in order for it to be nourished. It wants to turn every other existing *havayah* into its own *havayah*. Either the fire turns everything else around it into another fire, or, it will destroy everything else around it simply so that there should be nothing else left other than itself.

This is the “perspective” in the soul that comes from fire: “Everyone else must be like me. If that cannot happen, then everyone else shouldn’t exist, so that there is only me!” First a fire will want to turn anything it touches into an addition of “itself” – fire – or, it will completely destroy whatever it touches, so that the object can become nullified to it, and in that way, nothing else is here except for the fire.

This particular aspect of fire is the **“fire”-of-fire**: the very strength of fire. In the soul, this can be experienced as a sadness that comes from “emptying out” everything that is around oneself, creating an “empty void” (*chahal*) and a sense of absence and nothingness. There is no worse sadness than a feeling that there is absolutely nothing in the world.

When a person is sad about the death of someone else and he mourns, he feels the void that is left over from the disappearance of the deceased person’s soul from the world. This is but a sliver of the sad feeling of emptiness that comes from **“fire-of-fire”-of-earth**. One feels pain and sadness at the death of another, he is sad because the deceased person isn’t here anymore, and this causes a person to feel a certain sense of emptiness, an absence of something, an empty void, which has been left by the disappearance of the soul of the deceased. With death, the life of the deceased person has come to a grinding halt, his physical existence has stopped, and there is now an empty void in his place.

When one feels this empty void, he feels a profound sadness. This is the deepest kind of sadness that one can experience. This sadness is not simply because there is a discontinuation of something or someone, but because of what results from the absence: the feeling of emptiness that it leaves over.

When one continues with this sadness, he goes deeper and deeper into the empty void. Slowly he will begin to feel a complete sense of emptiness, as if everything around him is nothing, as if there is nothing in existence except but this empty void (*chahal*). The sadness which had begun from a feeling of emptiness then becomes truly toxic, and the more that a person stays in this void, the more a person will view everything around him as empty and nothing. He will keep “emptying out” everything else around him, deeming it as entirely worthless, nothing, and empty.

The philosophers argued if darkness is a new creation, or if it is merely a void left over by the absence of light. This was also debated by the Sages (such as in the works of the Vilna Gaon). But when there is **“fire-of-fire”** in the soul that is left impaired, it causes a person to feel nothing but “absence”, a sense of emptiness. This causes one’s soul to feel as if it exists in an empty void. The very perspective of the person becomes that of emptiness, for the person in his sadness will keep “emptying out” everything around him.

The pain that we experience over the death of others is essentially a sense of emptiness that we can feel on This World, but there is a much more painful kind of emptiness that exists. The suffering of *Gehinnom* (Hell) is called *heda’er* (absence of existence) by the Maharal. Whatever pain we feel on this world is a ‘branch’ of the ‘root’ of all pain, which is the suffering of the soul in *Gehinnom*. The only reason why we do not feel the root pain (*Gehinnom*) on this world is because our soul is concealed by the physicality of the body. It is in *Gehinnom* where the soul truly feels the root of all pain, which is the absence, the *heda’er*, the “emptying out” of all reality, where the soul acutely feels an empty void.

We can relate to this from dreams, where we are able to feel the emotions of joy and sadness on a much sharper level than when we are awake. When we go to sleep, the soul separates from the body, so the barriers of the body aren't present, enabling the soul to feel realities on a much sharper level.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE SAD FEELING OF EMPTINESS

Whenever people feel pained over the death of others, the *avodah* is to use the pain as a reminder to awaken ourselves to feel the “root” of all pain, which is essentially that the entire reality of This World is an empty void (*chalal*), since, on a deeper level, there is nothing in existence other than *Ain Od Milvado*, “There is nothing besides for Him”. This is the intended purpose of all the emptiness that we feel on this world: it is really because we are meant to uncover the emptiness of This World and thereby discover *Ain Od Milvado* (or, alternatively, to discover *Ain Od Milvado* and thereby discover the emptiness of This World).

As long as a person hasn't touched upon the deep sadness that comes from feeling the utter emptiness of the entire reality on This World, any pain or sadness that he feels on this world is but a sliver of the “root” of all pain: the utter emptiness of This World. Even if a person feels the nothingness and emptiness of this world, if he doesn't know of the painful sadness that comes from feeling how utterly empty This World is, he will not be able to feel the true emptiness, which is called *ayin*.

Only when one reaches the deep pain that comes from feeling the emptiness of our reality on This World – a clear example of this would be the mourning on the day of *Tisha B'Av*, where we are essentially mourning the destruction of the true reality, for the world currently lacks the revelation of *Ain Od Milvado* – only after one feels the sadness that comes from this feeling of emptiness, can one uncover the “root” of all of this pain.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed by fire, and it will be rebuilt by fire. The deeper meaning of this is that it represented the true reality, and the “fire” that destroyed it was the absence of the true reality which led to its destruction. It will be rebuilt by “fire”, by the very “destruction” of the current reality.

THE HOLY USE OF “EMPTINESS” VS. THE EVIL USE OF “EMPTINESS”

As it has been explained here, “fire-of-fire” (of earth) in the soul leads a person to the *chalal*, a feeling that everything in existence is an empty void. This feeling of emptiness can be used either for good or for evil.¹⁰⁵

If a person reaches a feeling of deep emptiness as a result of the terrible sadness that comes from feeling that all of reality is an empty void, he might go so far into the sadness of this emptiness as to deny the *havayah* of all existing people in the world and all creations, denying even his own *havayah*, and even worse, to deny the reality that there is a Creator. This is the worst state possible for the soul, and it is the evil use of the power of feeling emptiness.

In contrast to the above, a person who experiences the utter emptiness of This World is able to conclude that this is because there is only one true reality: “*Ain Od Milvado*”, there is nothing besides for Hashem. One can then choose to integrate himself (to be *miskalel*) with the Creator, by choosing to nullify his will to the Creator, as a result of feeling the empty void in Creation. This is the desired *tikkun* (rectification) for the soul. However, if one feels

¹⁰⁵ Editor's Note: The Rav explains more about this nature of “emptiness” in *Fixing Your Fire-Conceit_016_Self-Transcendance*

rather “forced” into acknowledging this and not because he is really choosing to nullify his will, this is the root of heresy.

There is one day of the year where we are meant to reach this level completely: on *Asarah B'Teves*, which is the root of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, a day which is considered to be sadder than even *Tisha B'Av*.¹⁰⁶ When we experience the sadness of thinking about the very root of destruction and we feel how much emptiness this has led the world to, we can then remind ourselves of the root of all this pain and emptiness, which is really because there is only one true reality, *Ain Od Milvado*. At the very depth of sadness and destruction and emptiness, we can uncover the root, and turn it into the greatest joy: the realization that everything is *Ain Od Milvado*.

In the future, everyone will be on this level, for everyone at that time will want to give up his own *havayah*, in submission to the *havayah* of Hashem, and people will do so out of joy. When one is able to give his soul to Hashem with joy, as everyone will be able to do in the future, this is actually the deep use of the power of *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice), the total *bittul* (self-nullification) of all of Creation to the reality of *Ain Od Milvado*.

In contrast, when one is not able to give up his own reality for Hashem and he doesn't want to undergo *bittul*, this is the very depth of sadness, where one remains stuck in the emptiness of Creation, the **fire-of-fire-of-earth** that brings a person to the worst sadness. But when one is able to come to *bittul* as a result of feeling the emptiness in Creation, he uses the power of “emptiness” for holiness.

This is the meaning of “*All came from earth and all will return to earth*”¹⁰⁷, which implies the universal *bittul* of all of Creation in the future. There is also a verse, “*For with joy, they go out*”¹⁰⁸ – which is a hint to how all of Creations will willingly choose to “go out” of their own *havayah*, with joy, to become completely part of the *havayah* of the Creator, which is *Ain Od Milvado*: “There is nothing besides Him”.

IN CONCLUSION

With that, we have concluded, with *siyata d'shmaya*, our study of the element of earth and the trait of sadness. May we merit to leave behind all *atzvus*/sadness, and to enter into *simchah*/joy. Amen.

¹⁰⁶ Editor's Note: As explained by the *Beis Yosef* (*Orach Chaim* 550) citing the *Avudraham*, [when *Tisha B'Av* falls on *Shabbos*, the fast is pushed off to *Motzei Shabbos* and Sunday, but] If the fast of *Asarah B'Teves* were to fall on *Shabbos*, it would be observed even on the *Shabbos*. (In actuality, *Asarah B'Teves* will never fall out on *Shabbos*, for the Sages designed the calendar in a way that *Asarah B'Teves* will never fall on *Shabbos*. But if not for this fact, the fast of *Asarah B'Teves* would fall out on *Shabbos* and we would be required to observe the fast even on the *Shabbos*. In this respect, *Asarah B'Teves* is considered more severe than *Tisha B'Av*. This is due to the beginning of all the main tragedies of the exile which began on this day.)

¹⁰⁷ *Kohel* 3:20

¹⁰⁸ *Yeshayah* 55:12