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FIXING YOUR WATER

TORAH MANUAL TO FIXING TRAITS OF DESIRE

UNEDITED TRANSLATION
V5



DEVELOPED BY THE FOUR ELEMENTS INSTITUTE

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1 | *Desires: Introduction*¹

The Element of Water: The Root of Desire

With the help of Hashem, we have so far learned about the element of earth in the soul, which included the topics of sadness, imagination, and laziness. Now we will start to discuss the element of water.

Rav Chaim Vital writes that the trait of desire (*taavah*) is rooted in our element of water. As we have said in the past, there are four root elements, each with four branches, adding up for a total of 16 possible scenarios. (And this can also subdivide even further).

Earth-of-Water: Materialistic Desires

Being that each of the elements contains aspects of the other four elements, the element of water also contains aspects of earth, wind, and fire (in addition to its primary ‘water’ aspect). Thus, in the element of water, there is also earth, so there can be desires which stem from the “**earth**” aspect of water.

Desires stemming from **earth-of-water** are desires that are materialistic in their nature, resembling the earth, the root of all material. There are four kinds of desires that branch out from this type, but that they all have in common is that they are all desires for This World; they are all “materialistic” kinds of desires.

The Four Branches of Earth-of-Water

Within this kind of desire - ‘earth-of-water’ - there are four divisions that come from it, which involve aspects of all four elements: earth, water, wind and fire: (1) ‘Earth’-of-Earth-of-Water, (2) ‘Water’-of-Earth-of-Water, (3) ‘Wind’-of-earth-of-water, and (4) ‘Fire’-of-earth-of-water.

(1) **‘Earth’-of-Earth-of-Water** is when a person has desires for money and acquisitions (the ‘earth’) of This World.

(2) **‘Water’-of-Earth-of-Water** is when a person desires to seek pleasure. The deeper understanding of this is that when a person desires something, it is not just because he seeks pleasure, but because he feels a *pull* towards it; he is being dragged towards it. The actual

¹ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-001-desires-introduction>

desire is not coming from a need for pleasure. When a person either sees or hears something that he feels a pull towards, these desires stem from the **'water'** aspect that is within **earth-of-water**. The person gets dragged after the desire, resembling the nature of water, which flows in a certain direction and drags things with its current.

- (3) **'Wind'-of-Earth-of-Water** is when a person wants something and, because he wants it so badly, he moves very quickly towards fulfilling the desire. This resembles the nature of wind, which represents movement. After the person feels like he's getting 'dragged' after his desire, he is also led to move very quickly toward fulfilling it.
- (4) **'Fire'-of-Earth-of-Water** are desires which draw a person due the 'heated' nature of the desire, creating a passion towards fulfilling the desire. The person feels a kind of 'heat' that is coming from the desire, and because he wants to feel its heat, he pursues the desire. Examples of this include the desire to steal or the desire to engage in forbidden relationships. *Chazal* say that these two desires, from all desires that exist, are the most intense. These are just examples, but the general idea is that when a person feels a fiery kind of passion for something evil, his desires are coming from 'fire'-of-earth-of-water.

These are the four kinds of desires which come from our element of earth-of-water: the desire for materialism (earth-of-earth-of-water), feeling a pull towards a pleasurable desire (water-of-earth-of-water), moving quickly and rapidly towards the desire (wind-of-earth-of-water), and desires that are heated and passionate in their nature (fire-of-earth-of-water).

We will now begin to explore each of these kinds of desires, which all stem from **earth-of-water** that is within our element of **water** in the soul, the source of desire.

Earth-of-Earth-of-Water: The Lust For Money

Desires stemming from earth-of-water are materialistic desires, and in particular, desires stemming from the "earth" aspect of earth-of-water refers to the classic example of a desire for the materialism of this world: a desire for money.

Some people have a desire for money simply because they need to have their basic needs, such as a house and clothing. They do not have an actual desire for money, only for what results from the money. We are not speaking about this here.

We are talking about people who have a love for making money, simply for the sake of money. It is referring to the type of person whom *Chazal* say about, "One who loves money, will never be satisfied by money."

It's not because these people are worried about "What will be...?" if they don't have money, and it is not because these kinds of people have a desire to gain status through having a lot of money. Rather, we are referring to someone who simply loves money - for the sake of money.

Most people who are still learning in *Kolel* do not know what this desire is. There are some *Kolel* men who like to own various items and objects, but this is more of a curiosity, not a desire for acquisitions of This World. But people who are working to make a living are familiar with the desire for money for the sake of money itself, and they struggle with this kind of desire.

Water-of-Earth-of-Water: The Desire For Fun In The Water

Now we will discuss desires that stem from **water**-of-earth-of-water, which is the desire to simply immerse oneself in a pleasurable experience. These are the most common kinds of desires that the secular world pursues. It is mainly manifest in the desire of people to spend lots of time in the water and have fun with water; to go swimming. It is essentially a desire to be immersed in water. Hence, it is a desire that stems from the "water" aspect of earth-of-water.

In today's day and age, if a person is a pleasure-seeker and he has even a little bit of money, it has become the norm that he makes a pool in his house. These are people who simply love to be in the water, so that they can be fully immersed in the pleasure of being in water.

(A desire to drink water is not coming from this. We are talking about someone who likes to be *in* the water, not someone who merely *desires* water). This desire can be further examined and subdivided. If a person has more of a desire to sit in a hot pool [i.e. a Jacuzzi], this is coming specifically from the 'fire' aspect of his water-of-earth-of-water, and if he likes to swim in a cold pool, this is coming from 'water' of water-of-earth-of-water.

Once a person is in the pool, he likes to splash around in it and swim around in it with all kinds of movements, which would seem to imply that it comes from a desire for movement, which stems from 'wind' in the soul. But those desires are only branching out of the primary desire to be in the water, so the desire to go swimming stems from **water**-of-earth-of-water.

Wind-of-Earth-of-Water: The Desire For Fast-Moving Action

Desires stemming from **wind**-of-earth-of-water are also very common. These are desires in which a person enjoys rapid movement – such as the desire to be in a car or vehicle that's driving very fast.

Just as there are people whose main desire in life is to have fun in the water, so are there people whose main enjoyment in life is to enjoy fast and rapid situations. The pleasure here is being derived from the fast movements involved in it, not from a mere desire to immerse oneself in pleasure.

Fire-of-Earth-of-Water: Desires Stemming From Sights

Desires stemming from **fire-of-earth-of-water** are when a person sees something that catches his eyes, and then he desires it. Visual desires stem from the ‘fire’ aspect within earth-of-water, just as fire is bright and noticeable to the eye. It is a desire (water), for worldly sights (earth), and the key element of the desire is the visual experience of it (fire); hence, desires of the eyes are coming from **fire-of-earth-of-water**.

We find this in the first time that the topic of desire is mentioned in the Torah. When Chavah saw the *Eitz HaDaas*, the *possuk* says, “*And she saw that the tree was good, and that it was desiring to the eyes.*”

Chazal say that “The eyes see, the heart desires, and the actions complete.” In this statement, *Chazal* are telling us that the eyes are the source of desire, because if our eyes wouldn’t look at something, we wouldn’t desire it. It all starts from the eyes.

It is the eyes of a person, the sense of sight, which mainly drag a person after desires, much more than the other senses of the body. The sense of sight is the most sensual from all the senses, and thus it is considered to be the source of desires.

We have so far laid down the issues that result from earth-of-water in the soul, the source of desires for This World. Now we will begin to go through the solutions to each of these [in this chapter, we will only cover earth-of-earth-of-water, the desire for money. The other topics will be covered in the coming chapters].

The Desire For Money: A Desire For Permanence

The first kind of desires we described are desires that stem from **earth-of-earth-of-water**. This is referring specifically to the desire to own money and acquisitions.

First we will mention that there also exist two other reasons why a person would like to own and possess things. If he enjoys owning money and acquisitions because this makes him feel like he is moving in his life and that he’s getting somewhere in his life, this comes from the element of wind in the soul, the root of movement. We are not discussing this here.

There is also a kind of person who likes to own new things, because he needs a sense of renewal in his life. We are also not discussing this here, because this merits a separate discussion.

Here we are discussing the desire in a person to own many things, simply for the sake of acquiring money, possessions, and financial security.

The desire to own possessions is also present even amongst those who live a frugal and Torah lifestyle, who are less into worldly pursuits. However, they have it on a much lesser degree than those who work to make a living. People who are working feel much more of a need to own things. In any

case, all of us have a desire to own things, and therefore, all of us possess a desire for money, some more and some less.

There is a deep reason, though, of why we like to own things. *Chazal* say, “Hashem desired to have a dwelling on this world.” Hashem has a “desire”, so to speak, to dwell on this world. This is the root of Creation – Hashem desired to dwell on our world, and that is why He created this world. He desires to dwell among us, even though we live in the lowliest realm in Creation. This is also the root of all holy desires in man: the desire to permanently dwell in something.

But when the power of desire in a person is used for evil, a person wishes to ‘permanently’ dwell in the materialism of This World.

Our *avodah*, when it comes to fixing this aspect of ourselves, is to steer our desire for permanence in a positive direction. Instead of desiring a sense of permanence of This World, we need to channel this desire towards holiness.

The solution to this desire will be two-fold.

1. Getting Used To Giving Tzedakah

The first and simple part of the solution is to simply get used to using our money for the sake of a *mitzvah*, which can slowly chip away at our desire for money, with the more we get used to this. For example, one should regularly get used to giving *tzedakah* more often. This in turn sanctifies his money, as he is using it for holy purposes.

2. Realizing That This World Is Hashem’s Dwelling

But there is a deeper part of the solution as well that must be employed. It is for a person can realize that the desire for money really stems from the root desire in Creation, which is that Hashem “desired” to dwell on this world. He can remove the desire for money from the evil ‘garment’ that is on it, and instead use it for a good reason.

The *Vilna Gaon* on his deathbed held his *tzitzis* and cried, saying, “For a few coins, a person can merit to have such a great *mitzvah*.” The depth of this is that even this lowly world can reveal Hashem, when we sanctify the physicality and steer everything on this world to a positive direction. *Tzitzis* is made from wool – we use animals, which are creatures of this lowly earth, to produce the holy *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* from them; this is an example of how we take the mundane and sanctify it.

Thus, the deeper part of the solution to getting rid of a desire for money is to realize that our money can be used to reveal Hashem on this world, specifically because we are using materialism for holy purposes, such as when we give *tzedakah*. When we give *tzedakah*, it’s not just about a superficial act of giving *tzedakah* – it’s because by giving *tzedakah*, we sanctify our money. As we give

the money, we must realize that we are sanctifying this mundane world, and through that, we are revealing Hashem more and more upon this world.

So we can use the desire for money – which was once a desire to have permanence on this material world – and use it to yearn to reveal Hashem on this world (by sanctifying it, through giving *tzedakah* and using it for *mitzvos*). This sanctifies our money and turns it from mundane to holy: at first, the person desired to have a permanent dwelling with this world, and instead, he has revealed how Hashem made this world into His permanent dwelling.

Getting used to this perspective will slowly weaken a person's desire for money. We have only begun to discuss this solution very briefly; in the next class, we will go more into detail with this concept.

2 | *The Desire For Money & Acquisitions*²

Summary of the Previous Chapter

We have begun to explain the trait desire, which is rooted in the element of water. This splits into four kinds of desires – earth-of-water, water-of-water, wind-of-water, and fire-of-water.

We have begun to explain **earth**-of-water, which subdivides further into four more divisions: (1) Earth-of-Earth-of-Water, (2) Water-of-Earth-of-Water, (3) Wind of-Earth-of-Water, and (4) Fire-of-Earth-of-Water.

In the previous class, we have described the four kinds of desires which stem from our **earth**-of-water, and we have begun to discuss how we rectify **earth-of-earth-of-water**, which is the desire for money.

Earth-of-Earth-of-Water: The Desire For Money

Earth-of-Earth-of-Water is when a person has a desire that attaches him to materialistic pursuits. The desire for money, we explained, stems from **earth**-of-earth-of-water.

We mentioned that the solution to this desire is to realize that the desire for permanence, at its holy root, is rooted in Hashem's desire, Who "desires" to have a dwelling on this world; Hashem is from a high place and descends to a lower place, the earth, by dwelling here. This is the desire for permanence on this world at its holy root, but this power becomes used for evil in a person when he seeks money and worldly acquisitions. The person with a desire for money wants to permanently "dwell" on this world.

There are many reasons why a person wants money: to be able to buy anything he needs, to seek honor and status, to seek security, and all kinds of reasons. Whatever the reason is, the root of all desire really stems from how Hashem wants to have a permanent dwelling on this world, and a person desiring money and acquisitions is using this power of desire for evil.

The Deeper Problem Of Desiring Money

Therefore, it doesn't really matter what is personally motivating the person to seek money. The real problem is that a person **seeks to reveal his essence** through money and worldly acquisitions - he considers money to be his very identity! (The solution is that he will have to learn how to change his source of identity; soon we will explain how).

² <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-002-desire-money-acquisitions>

For example, a person builds a magnificent building to become a *shul* or a *beis midrash* (a place of Torah), and he will want his name plastered on the front of the building. He doesn't need to have his name there. Besides for the fact that this person is driven to seek honor, he also has another problem: he is seeking to reveal his identity, via the means of materialism.

He identifies this new building as a symbol of his identity. He wants that his name should be written on the building, because he feels that his very essence, his very "I", is revealed through this building! When he sees his name on the building, he feels that he is a part of it. He identifies this worldly edifice as "Me."

Hashem wants to dwell on this world, because He wants to reveal His essence precisely over here, on this world. When a person desires money and acquisitions, he uses the desire rooted in Hashem's desire, for evil: he wants his essence to be revealed on this lowly earth, through money and through various acquisitions on this world. Therefore, he wants his name plastered in places where people will see it...

There are people who feel that they *are* their money. The *Gemara* says that a person has to give up either his life for Hashem, or his money. The *Gemara* asks: if a person has to give up his life for Hashem, then obviously he should give up his money for Hashem, so why did the Torah have to tell us that we must also give up our money for Hashem? The *Gemara* answers, that if someone's money is dearer to him than his own life, he still has to give it up for Hashem. We see from this that there are people who value money more than their own life!

The depth behind this is because there are people who feel that they are their money; they feel like their money *is* who they are. They identify their very "I" in their money and in their various worldly acquisitions.

The desire for money is rooted in **earth**-of-earth-of-water. It is when a person wants his essence to be revealed through worldly acquisitions. Hashem has a desire to reveal Himself on this world, but a person can misuse this root desire in Creation, by desiring to reveal his name through worldly acquisitions.

The Solution To Desiring Money and Acquisitions

How can a person remove himself from desiring money? The solution to this is two-fold.

The first part of it is what we mentioned in the end of the previous chapter [that a person should use his money for holiness]. A person needs to realize the true value of his money, which is that money was given to him only so that he can use it for holy causes.

The second point is that a person should increase his yearning that **Hashem** should be revealed on this world, as opposed to revealing himself more and more on this world. The more a person increases this desire, the more he will find that his desire for money and worldly acquisitions will weaken.

The first part of the solution – using our money for holy causes – will only rectify us on the level of the *nefesh hebahaimis* (the animalistic part of our soul), and thus we cannot base our lives on this solution. Therefore, we need to also make use of the second solution, which is to yearn to reveal Hashem on this world.

It is a reflection of what Shlomo *HaMelech* says in *Koheles*³, “*Everything is hevel havalim (futility of futilities).*” We need to realize that this world is futile, and to come to realize that money and worldly acquisitions are all vanities, because ultimately, this world was made to become Hashem’s dwelling.

“Wearing” This World and “Removing” Ourselves From This World

When we make use of the solution, what we are really doing is that we are learning how to detach ourselves from the world, while at the same time being remained with what we have to do on this world.

This is essentially another way of how we utilize the concept of “*halbashah*” (‘wearing’) and “*hafshatah*” (‘removing’), which we have mentioned in the beginning of this series⁴.

We “wear” this world when we use our money for the right reasons and make sure that it goes for holy causes; we find this hinted to in *Chazal*, that “The money of the righteous is dear to them.” We definitely must have value for money – in the fact that we need to make sure we are using it for the right reasons. This is the aspect of “*halbashah*” in our world: we must “wear” and make use of this world, for the right reasons.

The second part of our *avodah* is the part of “*hafshatah*”, to “remove” ourselves from this world – by realizing that we must not desire any permanence on this world, but rather, we should desire that only Hashem can have a permanent dwelling on this world, and thus, we must increase our yearning for that revelation.

In Summary

These are the two ideas we need to acquire in order to get rid of our desire for money, which is a desire that is rooted in our **earth** of earth-of-water:

³ *Koheles 1:1*

⁴ *This concept, the avodah of “halbashah and hafshatah”, was mainly discussed in the series אה דע | ידדדד Getting To Know Your Inner World [tentative title], which explains how we can apply “halbashah” (wearing) and “hafshatah” (removal\detachment) to our soul’s abilities. This is an art we can acquire which helps use our soul and navigate our way through it, learning when to use our abilities, and when to refrain from certain abilities and instead make use of a different ability when we have to.*

(1) We use '*halbashah*', we “wear” this world and make use of it for holiness, when we use our money for holiness, through giving *tzedakah* and other *mitzvah* causes;

(2) And we also employ '*hafshatah*', we “remove” the garments of This world, by realizing that This World is meant to be used as a permanent dwelling for Hashem – as opposed to desiring our own permanent dwelling on this world.

3 | *Pleasure Seeking*⁵

Desires Stemming From Water-of-Earth-of-Water: A Desire To Be In Water

With the help of Hashem, we have merited thus far to learn about the solution to desires which stem from **earth**-of-earth-of-water, which was the desire for money and worldly acquisitions. Now we will discuss desires that stem from **water**-of-earth-of-water. Desires which stem from our **water**-of-earth-of-water are when a person desires to be in ‘water’ itself [the desire to go swimming].

To get more specific, when a person likes to be in a cold pool, this is **water**-of-water-of-earth-of-water, and when a person likes to be in a hot pool, this is stemming from **fire**-of-water-of-earth-of-water.

One of the soul faculties is *taanug* (**pleasure**). To be more specific, the element of water in us is the source of pleasure. In addition, the element of water in us also causes us to become ‘**dragged**’ after a certain pleasure. (In Hebrew, this is called ‘*giruy*’, or ‘*hisgarerus*’). Thus, when one pursues a pleasure, in addition to the actual *pleasure* he is pursuing which plays a role, it is also ‘dragging’ factor that contributes.

In addition to these factors, all evil pleasures are essentially a desire in a person wants to become a **taker** of the pleasure. When a person is **dragged** after a certain pleasure, he begins to become more and more of a **taker**. Thus, besides for the pleasure itself, water also causes a person to be dragged after the pleasure; and besides for this, it also causes a person to become a *habitual taker* of pleasure.

The element of water, in essence, does not make a person into a taker. The element of earth is what mainly causes a person to want to receive, so water is not making a person receive. But if a person is being dragged after some kind of pleasure due to his element of water, he will find himself getting used to the feeling of receiving more and more pleasure, and this in turn will make him into a habitual taker of pleasure.

The element of water is the root of pleasure. Our element of water is used for holiness when it is used by a person to give pleasure, and it is used for evil when a person seeks to receive pleasure.

Habitual Takers of Pleasure

To give an example of the problem of “taking pleasure”, when it comes Erev Pesach, there are *chessed* organizations that give out Yom Tov needs to families who aren’t able to afford Yom Tov. Most people, though, take things for Yom Tov from these organizations that aren’t really needed for

⁵ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-003-pleasure-seeking>

Yom Tov. They grab anything they can get a hold on; they usually have their basic needs for Yom Tov, and thus they are taking things for Yom Tov that they don't really need.

What is the source of this behavior? It is because they have become so used to taking things. And when people get so used to always taking things, they won't even feel gratitude to those who gave to them, because they have become so used to taking.

The person has become **dragged** after things he doesn't really need, because he is so used to taking, taking, and taking more and more pleasure. It can get to the point that he is **not even aware** of how much a taker he has become.

Even more so, he feels entitled and deserving of others' kindnesses, so he doesn't even feel gratitude to those who give to him! That shows how unaware he is to how much of a habitual taker he has become.

Four Problems With Getting Used To Taking Pleasure

So altogether, there are four factors involved in desires that stem from **water**-of-earth-of-water: **1)** Seeking pleasure, **2)** which leads to becoming dragged after unnecessary pleasures, **3)** which leads to becoming a habitual taker, and **4)** finally, this can lead to being totally unaware that one is a habitual taker.

Countering The Pull Towards Taking Pleasure

Any person needs pleasure. We have a *mitzvah* of *Oneg Shabbos* (to enjoy Shabbos), which shows that we all need pleasure.

But we have two sources of pleasure in our soul – a healthy source of pleasure, and an unhealthy source of pleasure. Healthy pleasure is called '*oneg*'; unhealthy pleasure is called '*nega*'.

In order to gain a healthy sense of pleasure, a person has to be able to develop the ability to detach from pleasure sometimes. This is called the power of "*inuy*", to be able to accept suffering.

After a person has *oneg* as well as the ability to have *inuy*/suffering, he can begin separating from *nega*/unhealthy pleasure.

Examples of Accepting Discomfort

To work on this practically – developing the power of *inuy*/accepting suffering - when it comes Yom Kippur, we have a *mitzvah* to have *inuy*, to actually feel pain from our hunger, because we can't eat on Yom Kippur.

When we fast and we are feeling discomfort, in order for this to affect us and improve us, it is not enough that we are merely fasting. We need do so happily, and not begrudgingly. As we are fasting and feeling the discomfort, we should tell ourselves, “Hashem’s will is that I should feel some suffering on Yom Kippur by not eating. Therefore, I am doing so happily!”

Another example how one can work on this is with the concept of exertion in Torah learning. The fact that we must exert ourselves in Torah learning is not just so that we can understand the Torah. It is because all of us need to undergo a certain amount of *inuy*/suffering, and exertion in Torah learning is a prime example of how we acquire this quality. “Suffering” as you exert yourself in Torah should be done happily and willingly on your part, because you are trying to develop your ability of *inuy*, an ability that is necessary to have in life.

Another example is that whenever a person has physical suffering, he should accept it lovingly, and not just because *Chazal* say that “one should accept suffering with love” (which is certainly true in the simple sense), but on a deeper level, because he knows that it is necessary for him to develop his power of *inuy*.

When you do this, don’t think, “This is so hard for me, but what else should I do? Hashem wants me to suffer, it’s His will, so I have no choice...” This is missing the point and it defeats the whole purpose of what we are trying to accomplish here.

In summary, what you need to do, is to accept upon yourself the discomfort because you are happy and fully willing to do so; realize that it is necessary for you to build this power within yourself, the ability to have *inuy*/minimal suffering.

Solving The Desire To Be In The Water: Getting Used To Discomfort

Now let’s get back to the original point we started out with in the beginning of this chapter: the desire that people have to be in the water. It is essentially a desire to be immersed in pleasure. According to what we have said, a person can get rid of this desire, as follows.

In order to counter your pull towards pleasure, you need to develop your ability that opposes seeking pleasure, which is the ability of *inuy*/accepting minimal suffering. So you can try to apply some *inuy* on yourself even as you’re amidst the pleasure.

As an example, if you don’t like to be in a cold pool, force yourself to go into the cold pool. This will help you learn how to go against your own nature and thereby help you counter the desire for pleasure. And if you are the kind of person who likes a cold pool and you hate going into a hot pool, force yourself to go into a hot pool.

We do not mean to encourage any extreme behavior with this; we do not mean for one to enjoy suffering and thus cause himself to suffer. Rather, the point is to familiarize yourself with getting used to discomfort, on a minimal level, which you can handle.

(You don't have to jump into it. You can just wade into it slowly and get used to it. The point is to get used to going against your nature, in a practical way, one that doesn't make you do anything too extreme).

That is the first part of the solution: As you are amidst the *oneg* through being in the water, you make sure to have some discomfort at the same time, so that you can train yourself to use the ability of *inuy*.

A Positive 'Contraction' of the Soul

There is also an additional point contained in this solution which you need to be aware of as you do this. When a person is going after pleasure, he is in an expansion mode; he is seeking to expand beyond himself. Since we are trying here to lessen the pull towards pleasure, we need to go in the opposite direction: we will need to learn how to pull back from expanding. One has to be aware of this as he is getting used to the degree of discomfort in his act of pleasure.

So for example, if you don't like a cold pool, as you're wading into it and you are getting used to the cold water, [or if you're the type who likes a cold pool and you're wading into a hot pool, and you're getting used to the hot water], besides for the fact of getting used to the idea of minimal discomfort, you should also be consciously aware as you do this that you are pulling back from "expansion" mode and instead entering into "contraction" mode, for you are doing something which doesn't involve seeking pleasure.

4 | *Solving The Desire To Take Pleasure – Part 1*⁶

Summary of The Previous Chapter

We have so far explained that besides for the fact that the element of water in the soul in us is the root of seeking pleasure, there are additional factors which can lead us to pursue pleasure.

It has been explained that a person might develop a tendency to get ‘dragged’ after a pleasure, and as a result, he might get used to becoming a habitual taker of pleasure. Previously, we spoke about how to counter the nature of seeking pleasure (specifically with regards to the desire to have fun in the water), by getting used to some discomfort.

There is more to discuss about the nature in a person to take pleasure, and how we can solve it.

Inevitable Taking: The Proper Perspective

Although a person has a nature to take pleasure, at the same time, he naturally does not have a good feeling when he has to receive pleasure from people. This is because we feel indebted to the one who gives him something, and this makes us uncomfortable inside.

When a person needs *tzedakah*, for example, although he will take the money, deep down he is uncomfortable from having to take things from people. Why? Because now he feels like he owes something to the person who gave him the money.

Hashem created all of us in a way that we all need to take things from each other. All of Creation gives and receives from each other, so in concept, we must all accept this fact of life, that we ultimately have to receive from people. In essence, there is nothing wrong with taking pleasure, because that’s the way Creation is designed. We just need to know how and when to take pleasure in a healthy way.

A person needs to be willing to accept this fact about life, and this will rectify an unhealthy desire to take things.

2. Getting To Used To Giving

Along with this, a person should also make use of the power of giving to others, through various ways of benefitting other and giving pleasure to others. This will help counter the habit of taking.

⁶ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-004-desire-take-pleasure-part-1>

3. Giving As You Take

We will also add on another point to the solution, which is deeper: When you take something, make sure you give something back in return (besides for getting used to giving in general). If you ever have to receive pleasure from others, make sure you are giving something back at the same time.

The point is that within the very act of taking, there should be giving involve. (This does not even have to be done *lishmah* (for the sake of Heaven); it can be done even *shelo lishmah*).

4. Accepting Responsibilities That Are Non-Pleasurable

There is another point as well that we will mention as part of the solution.

Each day in *Kerias Shema* (and in the blessings preceding the *Shema*), we take upon ourselves the *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* – to bear upon ourselves the yoke of Heaven. We “take” upon ourselves each day the responsibility to dedicate ourselves to keeping the Torah’s mitzvos, and this is a kind of “taking” which does not give us pleasure, but it rather serves to get used to responsibilities. This shows us that there is a kind of “taking” which is not about pleasure, but it is about taking upon ourselves responsibilities.

Thus, if you get used to taking upon yourself responsibilities, you weaken your habit to take pleasures. Through the power of *kabalas ol* – ‘taking’ upon ourselves responsibilities – we lessen our habit to ‘take’ pleasure.

Weakening The Pursuit of Pleasure - Through Transcending Pleasure

Until now, we explained about the abilities in the soul of giving and taking. Generally, man is identified as the ‘giver’ in Creation, while woman is called the ‘receiver’. But there is an ability in our soul that goes above our power of giving. Giving is not the entire depth to our existence. Rav Dessler *zt”l* writes extensively about the power of giving, but, this is not all there is to our existence. There is to more to who we are than the ability to give.

Our soul’s root abilities are *havayah* (existence), *emunah* (faith), and *taanug* (pleasure). Through *taanug*/pleasure, we can move to a higher point in our soul and reach *emunah*/faith, and from there, we can reach our *havayah*. But most people remain at their level of *taanug*, and they never use it to reveal their point of *emunah* (and certainly not their point of *havayah*). Thus, most of the world runs after pleasure, and usually, it is an unhealthy kind of pleasure. It is because people do not know of anything deeper than pleasure; they are unaware of the higher parts in the soul, which are *emunah* and *havayah*.

So what we need to do is go beyond *taanug*. We can do this by using our *taanug* to reach the point in the soul above *taanug*, which is by uncovering *emunah* – namely, that Hashem runs the world.

Eemunah, without getting into all the details, is to believe in Hashem and that He runs the world. This is a deeper part in our self than our *taanug*/pleasure. By accessing our point of *emunah*, we can go above our initial point of *taanug*, and then we won't run after *taanug* so much. We won't get dragged helplessly after a pleasure, because we will identify with concepts that are above pleasure, which do not involved sensual pleasure.

Eemunah and Havayah

Higher than our *emunah* is our *havayah* (sense of existence). When we reveal our *havayah*, we go above even our *emunah*. *Eemunah* is usually accessed when we feel times of darkness; as it is written, "Your faith at nights." But our *havayah* is to recognize an unchanging reality as it is, even when we are not in a time of darkness. The *havayah* of Hashem is a constant reality, and the inner self of a person is a spark of the *havayah* of Hashem, thus, our inner self is really constant.

Eemunah is essentially our point of *ayin*/nothingness, which we access when we nullify our sense of "I" (otherwise known as "*bittul ani*" – nullifying the ego). It is also called our point of "*shelilah*", "negation." It is the point in our selves where we negate and nullify our "I."

But our *havayah* is called our point of '*chiyuvi*'/positivity. It is above the point of *bittul anilayin/emunah*. Our deep inner *avodah* is to move back and forth between our points of *emunah* and *havayah*. This also reflects our general *avodah* of *rotzoh v'shov* ("running and returning", to constantly be in movement in our *Avodas Hashem*.) In this way, we transcend our point of *taanug* - and then we will find that won't need *taanug* as much. (How to reach our *havayah* is a discussion for itself, and it merits a whole series to explain it).

Most of the world runs after unhealthy pleasure, because since they do not know how to go beyond pleasure, they never revealed *emunah* or *havayah* in their life, and therefore they end up seeking unhealthy pleasures. This is the situation we mostly find in the world. By accessing our *emunah*, we weaken our pursuit of *taanug* to a very large extent (not totally; but to a very prominent extent).

Rav Dessler (in the end of *sefer Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Vol. I) writes about two powers of our soul called *havayah* (existence) and *hasagah* (achievement). When we achieve something, this is pleasurable, thus, *hasagah* is parallel to *taanug*. But we have a deeper point in us, *havayah*, which is to go above our need for pleasurable achievements; to derive a sense of pleasure from our very existence, which is a higher kind of pleasure than the sense of our achievements.

'Roots' and 'Branches'

We always need to mainly work on the root of the problem. The root of the problem of seeking pleasure is that as we seek pleasure, we become confined to seeking pleasure. Thus, we need to learn

how to go above pleasure: first, by accessing our point of *emunah* (and later, by reaching our *havayah*).

Along with this, we also need to work on the branches of the problem, which are the topics we discussed earlier in this chapter: to accept the fact that we need to take sometimes, to get used to giving, to give even as we are in the midst of taking, and to get used to non-pleasurable activities.

Although it is mainly our *avodah* to work with the root of the solution, this does not mean that we should completely ignore the branches of the problem (which is that we get dragged after pursuing pleasures). Rather, we should mainly work with the root solution, while at the same time also putting effort into working with the branches of the problem.

In general, whenever there is a problem in the soul, there is always the ‘root’ of the problem, and the ‘branches’ of the problem; the ‘root’ of the solution mainly lays in fixing the ‘root’ of the problem. Practically speaking, though, we always need to work with **both** the ‘root’ and ‘branches’ of the problem in order to solve the issues. But, we should mainly put our efforts into working with the ‘root’ of the problem, while putting in a smaller amount of effort (no less important) on the “branches” of a problem.⁷

7 After the shiur, the Rov clarified to a questioner: “Even our spiritual pleasures are meant so we can connect to our higher source. Pleasure, even spiritual pleasure, isn’t everything. Although pleasure in spirituality enables us to connect to spirituality, it is not everything. One of the reasons why we have suffering is because life is not entirely about pleasure; although it is true that we mainly connect to Hashem through having pleasure in our connection with Him [as stated in the beginning of Mesillas Yeshtarim] sometimes we need to learn how to connect him purely from our emunah, and for this reason, Hashem sends us suffering sometimes. Of course, pleasure has a very prominent role in life, as we see from the concept of Oneg Shabbos; and we also need enjoyment in our Torah learning. But it is just that spiritual pleasure isn’t everything. If pleasure is everything, then a person will learn Torah as long as he’s getting out of enjoyment out of it, but as soon as he stops enjoying it, he gets burnt out and leaves the Beis HaMidrash...”

5 | *The Desire To Take Pleasure – Part 2*⁸

Summary of Previous Chapters

We have explained that there are four factors which contribute to our desires (which stem from our **water-of-earth-of-water**): (1) Seeking pleasure, (2) Being ‘dragged’ after the pleasure, (3) Becoming a habitual taker of pleasure, (4) Becoming unaware that one has become a taker.

Previously, we discussed the tendency in a person to take pleasure, which leads to getting dragged after the pleasure. We described the solutions, and now we will expand upon it more deeply.

When people look at something that captures their senses, they get dragged after it. It then becomes a habit to keep seeking that particular pleasure. Even after a person loses pleasure in the desire, he will keep seeking it once he has gotten very familiar with it; this is the power of habit (*hergel*).

The Power of ‘Raishis’ – Accessing Your ‘Beginning Point’ Through Reflecting

In order to counter getting dragged after pleasure, there are two powers in the soul we can make use of. One power of the soul is called the power of “*raishis*” (‘beginning’) in the soul, and the idea of it is to use our ‘beginning point’; and the other power we need is to use the power of “*acharis*” (‘end’) in the soul - to think about the ‘end’ we are heading towards.

The power of *raishis*, to use our “beginning point”, is the concept of “*Sof maaseh b’machshavah techilah*” – “The end of action is first with thought.” Man is created from a small droplet, which begins in the brain and gets sent to the *Bris Kodesh* (the reproductive organ). This process works in tandem with the faculty of physical desire. Thus, desires begin in the brain (and the brain is the root of the element of water). Therefore, the way to rectify physical desire is through using our brain, which is to make use of our power of thought. When we use our power to reflect, with our thoughts, into the consequences of running after desires, this can counter the habit of getting dragged after pleasure. [This is the outline of the concept; now we will learn how apply it].

Solution #1 – Setting Boundaries On The Pleasure

This is done by **creating boundaries** on our desires. When we place limits on the desire, we won’t get dragged after the desire beyond the limits we have set for ourselves. This is the first solution to stopping our habit of getting dragged after a pleasure – by placing a limit.

⁸ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-005-desire-take-pleasure-part-2>

We cannot lay down exact rules on how to make limits. Each person needs to figure this out on his own, how much boundaries he has to set for himself, so that he doesn't go overboard with seeking a pleasure. This is the general outline of the solution.

We will use eating as an example. As a person is immersed in eating his food, he is immersed in an act of pleasure. How can he gain some self-control? There are several methods that are available to use which can help you gain control of yourself as you're amidst the desire to eat.

For example, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein *zt"l* would decide to eat a certain amount of food on his plate and not eat more than that. He would only put the amount of food on his plate that he needed and not more than what he felt he needed. Not everyone can do this, but the point of this is to acquire an ability to set limitations on your desires.

Solution #2 – Differentiate Between ‘Necessity’ and ‘Extra’

If you feel that you are not capable of using the above solution, you can instead tell yourself that anything beyond what you actually need is extra to you, and not necessary; this helps you gain awareness that you are pursuing nothing but a physical desire which you do not need, and that in turn will help you gain some self-control.

Solution #3 – Eat, Stop Eating, Eat

A third option you can use is to try taking small breaks as you are amidst pursuing the pleasure. You can try this as you are eating. As you are eating, try to stop eating for a few moments, then continue eating, then stop again a bit, and repeat the cycle. This gives you a certain degree of control over your desire. How long should these breaks be? That depends on each person, so again, we can't give exact rules. We are rather giving the general outline of the solution, and it is up to each person to figure out how it applies to his own personal situation.

Another way of how you can work on this is that when you come into the house and you smell a good meal cooking, hold your nose for a few seconds, then go back to taking in the smell, then hold your nose again, repeating the cycle. This helps you gain control over yourself as you are amidst a desire for pleasure. Even if you just do it for a few seconds, it can be very effective to help you gain control of yourself as you're caught up in a desire for something.

Solution #4 – Leave Over A Little Food

A fourth solution you can use is called the method of *Taanis HaRaavad* (the “fast of Rabbi Avraham ben David”): to leave over a little food on your plate. Get used to leaving over a little of your pleasure.

But when you do this, bear in mind that it is impossible to completely fulfill all our desires on this world, as *Chazal* say. Therefore, it would be helpful for us if we get used to the concept that even when we have pleasure, we don't need to fulfill 100% of the pleasure – we can leave a little over a little of it.

The Common Denominator Between All Four Solutions

All of these solutions have one thing in common: “*Sof maaseh b'machshavah techilah*” – by using our thoughts to plan ahead, to think about a situation before it arises, so that we will have a plan to work with when we are faced with a problem; in particular, with regards to physical desires. This is because physical desires begin in the brain, thus the solution to physical desires lies in how much we use our brain to think and place limits on the desires.

Do not use all of these solutions at once, because they are different forms of *avodah*, and one must never mix different kinds of *avodah* together. Instead, pick one of these and stick with it [the last solution, *Taanis HaRaavad*, is the easiest to implement].

Unrestrained Pursuit of Desires In This Generation: A Dulling of The Mind

However, there is a more subtle message behind all of this which we need to reflect about, and it is the more inner part of the solution to all of these desires.

We mentioned earlier that our soul contains two opposite powers – *raishis* (the beginning point) and ‘*acharis*’ (the endpoint). What we described until now was essentially how we use our power of ‘*raishis*’ in the soul: the power to use our thoughts to place limitations on ourselves, which guide us from the start so that we won't fall.

But now we will explain how we also need to use the power of ‘*acharis*’ in the soul – the power to think about our ‘end’. It is the deeper part of the solution which we need to bear in mind as we use these methods of self-control.

When a person is pulled after a physical desire, it is as if a “*ruach shtus*” (spirit of folly)⁹ enters him, as *Chazal* say. His mind becomes dulled. There are desires which are simply unhealthy for the body, and a person is pulled after them. But besides for the unhealthy desires which people are chasing – and people know that these desires are bad for them – there is also a very large factor of desires that a person is simply being *pulled* after, and his mind is dulled in the process.

It's like a “*ruach shtus*” has entered him, causing him to become mindlessly dragged after a desire, with the more and more he gets used to various physical desires.

⁹ *Sotah 2a*; “*A person does not sin unless a ruach shtus*”spirit of folly” enters him.

We are now in the year 5775. How many physical desires have accumulated in us until now? The world is full of all kinds of crazy desires which did not exist until only recently, such as the many advertisements of various tours and vacations to hotels in other countries.

Some of the desires we pursue in our life we consider to be “normal” for even *Bnei Torah* to live with, while some desires we consider to be more for those who would like to lead a more comfortable and luxurious lifestyle. Some of desires out there that people are pursuing, such as travel and vacation, are considered by us to be meant for those who are going through a rough time in life, who could really use the vacation.

But when these vacations in hotels are being pursued, they are really very destructive to our soul. They make a person get used to a concept of having unlimited desire in his life, in which there is no restraint on desires.

If a person never works to develop his soul, he doesn't care about this problem, and when he desires these trips on a continuous basis, and eventually he gets dragged after them - and his mind becomes dulled in the process. Today there are desires which never existed until recently, such as retreats to hotels in Prague.¹⁰

When a child grows up always being able to have all his desires fulfilled, his very mind is dulled from all this. Our children are growing up in a generation in which desires are unlimited, and people are getting used to getting dragged after all kinds of desires, with no concept of restraint.

Countering The Pursuit of Desire: Using Our Inner Powers of 'Raishis' and 'Acharis'

We need to build ourselves properly, by developing our soul, so that we won't get dragged after all kinds of pleasures. If a person really wants to change and live a truthful kind of life of inner happiness, he should place restraints on how much he gives in to his desires; if not, he will be sad his whole life.

One must uncover the power of your soul which is called “*raishis*” (accessing your ‘beginning point’): to use your power of thought to reflect, about how you can make boundaries on yourself, so that you don't run to fulfill every last desire that you feel yourself getting pulled after. Along with this, you also need to reveal your power of ‘*acharis*’, to think about the end of life, our purpose on this world.

It's a difficult *avodah* indeed, to place boundaries on our physical desires, in a generation like this where desires are so unrestrained. As you work on putting limits on your desires, you will notice

10 Towards the end of the shiur, the Rav also mentioned that these were “women only” retreats to Prague, and the fact that they are geared only to women shows that the purpose is just for people to have extravagance. The Rav said, “Even if it is permissible, is this the Ratzon Hashem (the will of Hashem) from us that we should go to such places...?”

contradictions between the truth that you are aspiring for, and with the kind of life you are currently living - and you will see how hard it is.

Developing Restraint

We are living in a generation with an unprecedented amount of desires! This past week, on Erev Shavuos, I had to go the market, and I came across places that were selling **1,200** different kinds of cheesecake. 1,200 kinds of cheesecake! I am not exaggerating. (But people justify this by saying, “It’s a *minhag* in *Klal Yisrael* to eat cheesecake...”)

People are growing up in a generation that is full of physical desires; how can a person avoid chasing them?? A person has to uncover a deep, tranquil place in his soul in which he can reflect about this, how problematic it is, and how it prevents us from living a true and spiritual life. This is the most important part of the solution of fixing the problem. At a later stage, you can begin to work on how you will actually accomplish avoiding desires, but the first stage is the most important: to reflect deeply about the kind of situation we are living in, and to realize how the lifestyle of this generation contradicts the truth we aspire for. The contradiction you notice, upon making this reflection, has to bother you. If it bothers you, you already have the key to putting a restraint on your pull towards physical desires.

Summary of the Solution To Fixing The Desire For Pleasure

This is the inner aspect of our *avodah* – to make this deep reflection we have said, to have aspirations for holiness, in spite of a generation which is not aspiring for this. It is very a far concept for most people in this generation to work on, who are chasing all their physical desires.

But as lofty as such an aspiration is (even if one isn’t there yet), it is still the most important part of the solution which we need: to reflect about how the current lifestyle we are in contradicts a truthful kind of life, and to indeed aspire for the truthful kind of life. The second part of the solution is to work on this practically, by implementing *Taanis HaRaavad* which we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter [but this is only with regards to the desire for food; for any other kind of desire, use the first solution]. We have discussed here how we fix our tendency to be dragged after physical desires. Earlier, we discussed the desire in a person to spend time in water, but that was only a part of a general discussion. In this chapter, we have given the general solution to physical desires – which is, to recognize how we are dragged towards various pleasures, and how we need to solve this by placing limits on how much we give in to our desires. Using this solution will generally improve our problems with desires.¹¹

11 After the shiur (at about 47 minutes into the shiur), the Rov added on that the problem is that people only begin to think deeply about a problem after they have gotten used to living a very extravagant and gluttonous kind of life (always used to eating as much pizza as he wants), and then it is very hard for a

6 | *The Desire For Movement*¹²

Wind-of-Earth-of-Water: To Desire Movement

We have begun to discuss, with Hashem’s help, about our desires, which stem from our soul’s element of water. We have begun to explain the “earth” aspect of water, which subdivides into four divisions: earth, water, wind, and fire. We have so far discussed desires which stem from **earth**-of-earth-of-water (in the first two chapters and desires which stem from **water**-of-earth-of-water (in the previous three chapters); now we will discuss desires which stem from **wind**-of-earth-of-water.

Water is the root of desires, and wind is the root of movement. When people have pleasure in a feeling of movement, such pleasure stems from the ‘**wind**’ aspect that is within earth-of-water.

This further subdivides into four categories – desires stemming from ‘earth’ in wind-of-earth-of-water, desires from ‘water’ in wind-of-earth-of-water, desires from ‘wind’ in wind-of-earth-of-water, and desires from ‘fire’ in wind-of-earth-of-water. All of them, though, are essentially about deriving enjoyment from movement.

Desires That Stem From Earth-of-Wind-of-Earth-of-Water

When a person enjoys a sense of stability in his life, he is really enjoying a kind of ‘movement’: he is enjoying a *stable* kind of movement. Earth is the root of stability; if a person is enjoying (water) a stabilized structure (earth) in his life, he is really deriving enjoyment from having stable movement in his life. Thus, the pleasure that he has from such ‘movement’ stems from his ‘**earth**’ aspect within wind-of-earth-of-water.

To illustrate, such a person doesn’t have an easy time with a year in which there is another month added on to the Jewish calendar; he is used to having six months in his winter, and the added month offsets his schedule, and now he has a hard time continuing and progressing forward. This is a person who enjoys only movements that are stable, so he only “moves” when he has a more stabilized sense of movement in his life.

person to change his lifestyle that he’s used to. Therefore, we need to think and reflect before we develop such a kind of lifestyle, and reflect about what kind of lifestyle we want to lead – “Sof Maaseh B’Machshavah Techilah”, “The end of action is first with thought”; the first step is always to think and plan about what the right thing is, so we can know how to act properly.

¹² <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-006-desire-movement>

Desires That Stem From Water-of-Earth-of-Wind-of-Water

Desires that stem from **water** within wind-of-earth-of-water are when a person enjoys being in a body of water so that he can waddle around in it and play in it. The person enjoys the actual water, so the desire is coming from water, but to be more specific, he enjoys to *move around in* the water. Thus, this kind of desire stems from the “water” within that wind-of-earth-of-water.

Desires That Stem From Wind-of-Wind-of-Earth-of-Water

Desires that stem from the ‘**wind**’ aspect within wind-of-earth-of-water are when a person enjoys movement, but to be more specific, it is when people enjoy engaging in many different kinds of movement.

Desires That Stem From Fire-of-Wind-of-Earth-of-Water

When a person enjoys extreme kinds of movement, these desires stem from the ‘**fire**’ aspect within wind-of-earth-of-water. The nature of fire is to be jumpy; fire represents the idea of extremity.

Movement Is The Root of Pleasure

Let us examine what the deep root of pleasure is. What is pleasure all about?

When we have pleasure, we are really enjoying a certain kind of movement. *Taanug*, pleasure, is related to the word *tenuah*, which means movement. The greatest *taanug* is experienced by a true Torah scholar, who is always moving towards Hashem. So pleasure comes from enjoying a certain ‘movement’.

Taanug, or *oneg*, is when a person moves toward something that is worthy to pursue. When a person moves away from the right kind of pleasure, such pleasure is called *nega*, the opposite of the word *oneg*. *Oneg*/pleasure is thus based on *tenuah*/movement.

Using this concept, we can now see how to gain control of our desires to engage in movement: the more we become **aware** of our movements, the more we gain *oneg*, because we will be gaining pleasure from our movements.

Becoming Aware of Our Root Movement: Breathing

We are always breathing in and out. Do we ever derive enjoyment from this?

Chazal say that for every breath, our soul should praise Hashem. If a person pays attention to the fact that he breathes in and out, he can derive great enjoyment from this, because he is aware of his constant movements. Hashem is breathing new life into us every time we breathe in. If we think of our breathing in these terms, we will derive tremendous pleasure from our breathing.

When people lack true pleasure, they search for it in other unsavory places. On Shabbos, we are supposed to have *oneg Shabbos* – a deep pleasure in the holiness of Shabbos. This is to access our pleasure in spirituality, and the main time to access is on Shabbos. The deep *oneg* we can have in Shabbos is what can supply us with true *oneg*. When people don't have real *Oneg Shabbos*, they don't know how to derive pleasure from proper movement, and they will seek all kinds of crazy, unhealthy pleasures during the six days of the week.

The idea we see from this is that when we have real pleasure, we won't seek it elsewhere. Therefore, if we learn how to enjoy our breathing – which is the root of all our movements – we will have access the pleasure that comes from the main movement in our life, and then we won't need to seek pleasure in various other movements.

This is a subtle concept. Most people do not enjoy the fact that they breathe in and out. If people would feel the enjoyment in breathing in and out – not to just to know about it intellectually, but to actually *feel* enjoyment in it – they would have the root of all pleasure.

Most of the movements going on in the world do not supply us with pleasure. How many people are constantly searching for new places to find pleasure! They keep moving from place to place in the hope of finding pleasure. But if only they would have the pleasure in the root of all “movement”, they wouldn't need to search for pleasure in any of the “movements” going on in this world.

Practically speaking, to work on this, the first step is to reflect **intellectually** about the concept of your breathing process, and then, try to **feel** pleasure in it as you breathe in and out. When you derive pleasure in the root of all your movements – the fact that you breathe in and out – you won't need to get pleasure in any other extra kinds of movements.

This is the root of the solution; there are also “branches” of the solution which we will soon mention, but the main part of the solution is to use this root of the solution. Without using this concept, which is the root of the solution to these desires, a person will lack pleasure in movement, and he will search for all kinds of unhealthy pleasure.

This is the general outline of the solution we will use to solve desires for movement. Now we will examine how this can apply specifically to each of the four kinds of desires we mentioned.

Solving The Problem Of Being Tied Down To Fixed Schedules

If a person has desires for a ‘stable’ movement in life [and thus he feels that he can only function when he has organization in his life, as opposed to when he goes through changes in his schedule],

we have explained that this issue comes from the ‘earth’ aspect within wind-of-earth-of-water. It can be solved as follows.

These desires need to be examined: Does the person want a stable schedule in his life because he really wants stability in his life, or because he’s just acting lazy and therefore cannot deal with new movements to his schedule...?

Solving The Desire To Swim In Water

If a person mainly desires the movement of swimming in water (which comes from water-of-wind-of-earth-of-water), or if he desires to do all kinds of moves in the water (which comes from wind-of-wind-of-earth-of-water), he should also try to discern why he does this.

If a person goes swimming for health reasons – to keep his body fit – this is fine. Our body cannot survive on spirituality alone; we have a body, and it has physical needs, which need to be taken care of. However, there are a large percentage of people who like to swim and they are unaware of why they like to go swimming. They do not realize that it can be coming from a lack of sensing proper movement in their life. Such people need to get used to feeling more movement in their life, because they are lacking it, so they use the pool as a [subconscious] way to fill their need for movement.

The person here has to curb the desire for movement as he is in the water, similar to what we mentioned earlier (in Chapter Three). The basic outline of this solution was that you should restrain some of your movements in the water, which trains you to be in control of your desire for movement in the water. We cannot give exact instructions here on how to do this, but this is the general idea: within your movements, give some minimal restraint to the movements.

But even more so, if you have used the root of the solution – which is to derive pleasure from your breathing – you will find that your desire for movements in the water has become greatly weakened; it will be more controlled and restrained.

Solving The Desire For Extreme Movement

When a person has a strong amount of fire in his soul, he seeks extreme kinds of movement and action. In our generation especially, which lacks vitality from holiness, people are seeking all kinds of extreme movements, through all kinds of extreme activities.

The inner reason for this is because fire creates heat and dryness; when the fire in a person’s soul gets too dominant, the person ‘dries up’ inside, and since he feels that his life is ‘dry’ – in other words, boring - he will seek extreme kinds of fun.

The solution to this is that the more a person derives vitality from his main movement – as we explained, to enjoy the feeling of his breathing process, which is our root movement – the more he will find that his desire for extreme movement will become weakened.

Going Deeper: Deriving Pleasure From Our Feelings

Until now, we gave solutions that can be applied to any person on any level. Now we will explain a deeper solution to desires for movement, which will not only apply to all people, only to those who have already reached some inner purity in themselves.

We have a power to derive a sense of movement from our inner feelings and thoughts. The more a person enjoys the depth of his developed feelings and thoughts, the more vitality he will feel from his feelings and thoughts. This is the inner source of vitality that a person can tap into. He will be able to derive vitality from his own inner world, so he won't need other kinds of movement to give himself vitality.¹³

Most people do not identify with their inner world of the soul, and are instead living life through the prism of their body; as a result, they are getting their vitality from extreme occasions, such as weddings and other events. This kind of vitality is superficial, and it does not come from the soul; it is really coming from the body.

But a person can derive vitality, on a constant basis, from his own soul – and it can come from any of the soul's deep feelings, such as *ahavah* (love for Hashem) and *yirah* (fear of Hashem).

A Deeper Solution: Deriving True Pleasure From Our Torah Learning

Even more so, a person can derive his main source of movement by learning Torah [which is the power of holy thought]. This is not just by sitting and learning Torah; it is praiseworthy for a person to sit and learn, but just to learn Torah superficially won't fill the need for movement.

There are “70 faces” to interpret the Written Torah, and there are 50 “Gates of understanding” to the Oral Torah. The number 70 corresponds to the letter *ayin* (ע) in Hebrew, and 50 corresponds to the letter *nun* (נ) which spells the word *na* (נע) to “move.” Therefore, when we are learning Torah, we are really “moving”, and this can give us our truest source for an enjoyable sense of movement in our life. [Soon, we will explain how we can attain this understanding].

But these days, people often do not see how the words they are learning form a certain path. People might learn the *Gemara* in-depth and analyze the logic of the words, but they are often unaware of the general picture that the words are leading to. People often enjoy the logic in it and they enjoy it if they can remember the material well; if they reach a higher level, they enjoy

¹³ See *Getting To Know Your Feelings, Part II: Chapter 5: Developing Your Feelings*.

chiddushim in it, and if they reach an even higher level, they enjoy the truth understanding of the material. Yet, even if a person enjoys his learning in these ways, he doesn't necessarily reach the true enjoyment of learning.

It is written, *"If not for Your Torah my delight, I would go insane from all my suffering."* The Torah is truly delightful to a person when he feels like his **Torah learning is supplying him with a sense of movement**; when he deeply connects to his learning, and thus he sees where the words of the *Gemara* are leadings towards (the "*mehalech*" / "general path" of the words). This is how the Torah becomes a *Toras Chaim*, a "Torah of life" to a person – the Torah becomes "alive" to a person when he feels like the words of the Torah are moving him.

The Deepest Source of Vitality: Closeness With Hashem

If a person reaches an even higher spiritual level than this, he gains vitality from his very closeness with Hashem.¹⁴ A person can reach a level in which he is drawn after Hashem like a magnet, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* describes – which is the deepest kind of "movement" possible - and this can supply a person with the deepest kind of vitality.

Summary of the Deeper Solution

Thus, in order to gain enjoyment from our true source of movement, we need to derive vitality from our own deep emotions and thoughts. Our deep emotions are not to be confused with "excitement" (*hislahatus*), rather, they are accessed when we develop the depth of our emotions. Most people only know of extreme emotions, because their emotional world is undeveloped.¹⁵

An even deeper kind of enjoyment can be derived from our Torah learning (our power of holy thought, which is even higher than our deep emotions) when we learn with the awareness that Torah gives us movement.

A Searching Generation

But most people do not have this awareness, as we said. Most of the generation today lacks a properly developed emotional world, as well as this awareness in their Torah learning, but even worse than this is that most are far removed from closeness to Hashem.

14 This is not to imply that closeness to Hashem is independent of Torah learning. The Rov explains very clearly in other places that we must be balanced with both closeness with Hashem and learning Torah. See Tefillah #50-How Learning Gemara Brings You Closer To Hashem; Tefillah #107-Balance In Your Avodas Hashem; and 48 Ways of Torah #020 - Feeling Hashem In Your Learning.

15 Refer to the author's Getting To Know Your Feelings.

But if people would know how to derive vitality from their inner world – which includes properly developed emotions, learning Torah with proper awareness of what it does for our vitality, and enjoyment in seeking a relationship with Hashem – no one would have to look for pleasure in any other ‘movements’. Being that our generation is mostly lacking any of these three factors (the depth of feelings/the depth of Torah thought/and closeness with Hashem), people end up seeking pleasure from all kinds of unhealthy sources that are entirely focused on physical gratification.

The Deepest Sense of Movement

The deepest kind of movement can be derived from our search to become closer and closer to Hashem. This is an endless search, for Hashem is called the Infinite (*Ein Sof*). Our soul really wants an endless kind of pleasure, and this can be satisfied when we endlessly search to get closer to Hashem.

If a person merits to connect himself with Hashem, he touches upon the endless kind of pleasure, and he will gain pleasure from this deepest kind of movement. This is the source of our real pleasure, and the more we connect with it, the more our desires for physicality will weaken.

Of course, our desires for physicality will not disappear totally even at this level, as we mentioned [because we still have a physical body], but they will still become greatly restrained.

In Summary

To summarize, we need to uncover our pleasure in our root movement, which is in our inner world [enjoying our breathing; on a deeper level, enjoyment from our deep feelings and thoughts in Torah; on yet a deeper level, enjoyment in our relationship with Hashem, which is endless].

Along with this, we also need to practice a bit of restraint on our movements as we are enjoying the movement, depending on which of the four elements the desire for movement is coming from, as we explained in previous chapters.

We must point out that if we just practice restraint on our movements and we don’t learn how to derive pleasure from our inner source of movements, then we are missing the main part of the solution.

7 | *Visual Desires - Part 1*¹⁶

Desires Stemming From Fire-of-Earth-of-Water: Visual Desires

With the help of Hashem, we shall now discuss desires which stem from the ‘fire’ aspect contained in our earth-of-water. These are desires that stem from a visual experience.

Fire is bright and gives off light; earth represents materialism, and water represents desires. Thus, if a person desires something materialistic, and the desire is also based on visualizing something, the desire is coming from ‘fire’ within his earth-of-earth-of-water.

When Chavah saw the fruit of the *Eitz HaDaas*, she saw that it was “desirable to the eyes.” This is the first instance in the Torah in which we find that desires can be associated with seeing something that is a pleasurable visual experience.

We will go through the problem of evil desires that stem from fire-of-earth-of-water, and how we can rectify these desires, G-d willing.

Two Kinds of Enjoyable Sights

When a person sees something that is pleasurable to look at, either the person is looking at something because it is simply enjoyable to look at, or, his vision is enhancing whatever it is that he is getting enjoyment out of.

For example, the *Gemara*¹⁷ states that a blind person is never satisfied from his food, because he cannot see it. The sense of sight is a factor in how much he enjoys the pleasure of the food. Here we see that seeing the food is what makes eating the food pleasurable, where the senses of sight and taste work together to make something a pleasurable experience.

Similarly, if someone eats food in the dark, he doesn’t enjoy his food that much, because the sense of sight works in tandem with the sense of taste to make it enjoyable. Therefore, taste without sight is not enjoyable.

The *Gemara*¹⁸ considers an option that it is forbidden to benefit from looking at a fruit of *orlah*¹⁹, because since it is forbidden to eat from *orlah*, even visual enjoyment from it is forbidden. Here we see a concept that even if you can’t see the actual item of desire – you’re only looking at the peel and

¹⁶ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-007-visual-desires-part-1>

¹⁷ *Yoma 74a*

¹⁸ *Bava Kamma 101, Meilah 20a*

¹⁹ *Trees in Eretz Yisrael during the first three years of growth are subject to laws of sanctity (orlah) and they are forbidden to be eaten or benefitted from.*

not the fruit – still, you are getting visual pleasure out of looking at it; thus, there is a kind of desire which is coming solely from vision.

Thus, there are two kinds of pleasurable sights. There is a kind of enjoyment in which looking at the item of enjoyment enhances the pleasure of what I am enjoying, and there is also a kind of visual enjoyment in which I simply have pleasure from seeing something.

'Dragged' After The Eyes

In previous chapters, we explained that desires really stem from the tendency in man to get dragged after pleasure.

We have five physical senses. From all of the senses, the most commonly used sense is our sense of sight. *"From my flesh I see G-d."* We are always looking at something, as opposed to our other four senses, which we don't use as much as our sense of sight.

Since we are always using our sight, our sense of sight is often unrestrained. We usually do not train our eyes to be focused on something. Our eyes are always darting back and forth in whatever we see, and this leads us to getting 'dragged' after what we see.

Earlier we discussed the tendency to get 'dragged' after pleasures; here we are discussing another source for why people get dragged after their desires. Our eyes start out with an unrestrained kind of vision; when vision is never given control, it leads us to getting dragged after all kinds of visual sights. As it is written by Chavah when she saw the fruit of the Forbidden Tree of Knowledge, *"And she saw that it was desirable to the eyes."*

When this power is used for holiness, it is called *einei haseichel*, "eyes of the intellect". This is used for example when we look at our *tzitzis*, which *Chazal* say that it can remind us of to fear Heaven. Our thoughts can see things. "The eyes see and the heart desires" – our eyes can "see" through the lens of our thoughts, and this is a power that can be used either for evil (improper sights) or for holiness (imagining matters of holiness, such as how the blue color of *techeiles* reminds us of Heaven).

When a person gets dragged after his vision, *Chazal* say that "The eye sees, the heart desires, and the actions complete" - the "actions" of his body will complete the rest of the act. This is not only referring to how the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) gets aroused when a person's eyes stray after improper sights; it is also referring to how a person can simply get dragged after what he sees, in his thoughts, where he will be led to all kinds of places in his mind.

This is a power that can be used for either for good or for evil. If a person uses this power for holy imagination, such as in the case of seeing *tzitzis*, his thoughts will lead him to good, but if he lets his mind wander as he sees something that isn't holy - he will get led to all kinds of unsavory places.

Curiosity

A person might get ‘dragged’ towards certain places he is familiar with, but he might even get dragged to all kinds of places in the world that he was not previously familiar with. This happens when he has gotten used to the idea of getting dragged after his eyes.

When he feels like he’s getting helplessly dragged after what he sees, his desire for movement will also be awakened, and then he might wish to go to all kinds of strange places in the world - simply because he has gotten used to satisfying his curiosity, by always following his eyes in whatever seems interesting.

Thus, there are two problems that are created from following one’s eyes: it causes a person to get ‘dragged; after what he sees, and it also opens up another evil trait of man, which is called ‘*sakranus*’ (evil curiosity).

His curiosity will lead him to all places in the world. Once a person is curious, he might go to all kinds of places in the world just to see what’s going on there, even when it isn’t about enjoyment. He has simply become curious.

At first, a person only gets dragged after pleasures that are enjoyable, but after getting used to following his eyes, he will get used to getting dragged after anything that will satisfy his curiosity - even if it’s not about something pleasurable. He has simply fallen into the habit of following his eyes.

Following the Eyes’ Desires – The Root of Disparity

The simple understanding of the problem of following one’s eyes, as we explained, is that it can get a person used to being ‘dragged’ after whatever is pleasing to his eyes.

We find that in Creation, it is our eyes which can cause us to have separation and disparity. When a person looks at things and his vision is unrestrained, when he follows his eyes – “The eyes see, the heart desires, and the actions complete.”

Our eyes can connect us outward to others and unify us, and this is the concept behind “*ayin tovah*” (good eye), or it can cause disparity towards others in Creation, and this is the concept behind “*ayin ra*” (evil eye).

We can see this even from the physical world. When a person puts on glasses, his vision becomes more focused, and this helps him see clearer. Without glasses, his vision is unrestrained and therefore unclear.

When our eyes are unrestrained, this is the depth behind “*ayin ra*” – when we have a “bad eye”, we can’t “see” clearly; unrestrained vision, “*ayin ra*”, causes our vision is spiritually impaired. On a deeper note, an “*ayin ra*” comes from having a “*lev ra*” (an evil heart). When a person has negative feelings and thoughts towards others, he develops an “*ayin ra*” on others, because he has developed a “*lev ra*”, an evil heart.

Thus, the eyes represent disparity in Creation. In the future, *Chazal* say that all the *tzaddikim* will point to Hashem with their finger and say “*This is my G-d that we hoped for*” – in other words, all fingers, all points, will be pointed in one direction, and all the disparity in Creation will be unified into one point in recognition of the Creator. The redemption will also be a time in which “every eye” will be able to see the salvation, hinting to how it will unify all points of disparity.

Using The Eyes To Unify Our Vision

But this shows us how we can rectify our power of vision. Since disparity is the root of improper vision, in order to fix it, we need to go in the opposite direction, which is to use our vision in a context of **unity** (*achdus*).

The Hebrew word for eye is “*ayin*”, which comes from the word “*iyun*”, to think in-depth. “*Iyun*” represents how we use our “*ayin*”/eye for purposes of unity. Thus, “*iyun*” can fix our *ayin*/eye. [We will soon explain how we use this power of “*iyun*”.]

When a person has evil desires, he has *taavah*, and this causes separation in the world between people. There is a rule, “*Seeking desire causes separation.*” When a person becomes egocentrically involved with fulfilling his various *taavos*/desires, this distances him from others, because he becomes self-centered in seeking his interests. This is fixed with going in the opposite direction of *taavah*: the concept of *ahavah*, to love other Jews. Evil *taavah*/desire is really an impaired *ahavah*/love. *Ahavah* has the same numerical value in Hebrew as *echad* (one), because love means to be at one and unified with another.

Thus, [on a deeper level], *ahavas Yisrael* is a way to fix *taavah*. The person will gain an “*ayin tovah*”, a “good eye” – a kind of vision that unifies – and thereby come to fix his state of impaired vision of his “*ayin ra*”, “evil eye.”

Using The Power of ‘Echad’ Through Visual Focus

We are referring here to the power in the soul known as “*echad*” (oneness), which is one of the deepest powers in the soul. The deeper implications of “*echad*” are beyond the scope of this current discussion; here we are describing the external use of “*echad*”, which can be applied to all people on any level. We can use our power of “*echad*” on a practical level by getting used to visual focus on something. Get used to focusing on any one particular thing. This advice is written by our Sages.

Getting Used To Focusing

You can’t do this all day of course, so instead set aside time (about 20, 30 or 40 minutes – for however much time you have) and train your eyes to keep focusing on something, and don’t let your eyes budge from what you are looking at.

However, this should preferably be done with looking at something holy. Seeing something holy is what mainly improves our vision. Looking at something mundane such as a table or a chair for a long amount of time is a waste of time. Even though there is nothing wrong with staring at a table or chair, still, why should you waste so much of your time, when you could have been looking at something holy?

For example, as you are *davening*, try to keep your eyes focused as you're *davening*, for at least 30 seconds.

Your visual focus will be improved by learning how to focus on anything, but you need to utilize your time properly, therefore, choose something holy to look at. This is the first step: look at something in your house (preferably something holy, and keep focusing on it.

Keeping Your Focus

The next step is more subtle: focus on ***one point alone*** in what you are looking at, and don't let your eyes budge from it. Try this with looking at something holy as well.

Focusing On The Letter 'Beis' of the Word 'Beraishis'

The best way to work on this is by applying a concept written about by the *Vilna Gaon*: to focus on the letter *Beis* in the word *Beraishis*, specifically at the **dot** inside the letter *beis*. Keep focusing on the dot and don't let your eyes budge from it, and try to keep your concentration in it.

The *sefarim hakedoshim* write that the entire Creation is contained in *Sefer Beraishis*, and to be more specific, the entire Creation is contained in the story of Creation, which is *Parshas Beraishis*. To be even more specific, the entire Creation is contained in the word "*Beraishis*", in the letter *beis* of the word *Beraishis* - in the dot itself that is inside the letter *beis* of *Beraishis*. This is an amazing method brought in the works of our earlier Rabbis.

When you start to do this, you will probably not feel how this is affecting you and changing you. However, you will discover that it definitely helps you concentrate better on the words of the *Gemara*. So you will definitely see improvement in your power of focus, as long as you continue to work on this. (Just bear in mind that improving your visual focus is not all there is to *Avodas Hashem*!)

Mental and Visual Focus At Once

We will emphasize that the way to work on this is by using both your **physical vision**, as well as your **thoughts**, to remain focused on something.

This is a deep concept. We need to make use of both abilities at once. If you are looking at something but your thoughts are elsewhere, it won't work.

Most people, in fact, have this problem of not staying focused with their thoughts as they focus with their vision. It's not that simple to have your thoughts connected to what you see – it's actually a deep ability that you need to work hard on to acquire.

Guarding Our Eyes From Improper Sights

When you get used to focusing, your vision becomes more unified and focused, and you will find that your *shemiras einayim* (guarding one's eyes) as you walk in the street will be improved as well. You will find it easier to avoid improper sights and remain focused on a point as you walk in the street. (Part of this discussion is called developing the power of *atziras einayim*, to close the eyes, in order to avoid looking after what the eye desires; this is a different point, and we will discuss it later.)

This method of getting used to focusing, of course, will not get rid of one's desires. You will still feel desires and you will still feel yourself getting dragged after pleasurable sights, but the fact that you have gotten used to focusing on a point will still greatly weaken the desire you have towards looking at something, and it is thus a very helpful ability to make use of.

For example, if you go onto a bus and there are improper sights, you can focus your eyes on a certain point and keep looking at it for the entire ride.

If you have worked on getting used to focus when you were in your house, such as we described earlier, you will find that even as you walk in the street, you are able to avoid improper sights better, because your eyes can easily focus on something else you see. Of course, the best thing is "to think in learning", but even if you can't get yourself to always think in learning when you walk in the street, you can still avoid improper sights, by remaining focused on a point.

This is a deep power in the soul. If someone doesn't try to develop his power of focus as he is in his house, he will find the words here to be very strange. But if you have gotten used to it, you will find these ideas to be absolutely essential to your *Avodas Hashem* in every day of your life.

This concept of focus is the basis of how we fix the desires stemming from our vision, and in the next chapter we will hopefully expand upon this point, but this is the basic point which we will build upon.

Summary

To summarize, get used to focusing on something your house, preferably something holy. This should be done when you have quiet.

Then focus your vision on a point within what you are looking at, and keep focusing on it (and the best way to apply this method is to focus on the dot inside the letter *beis* of the word *Beraishis*, as we mentioned). When you walk in the street, or when you find yourself surrounded with improper sights, train your eyes to remain focused on any one point.

We are currently living in a world that is enveloped in unrestrained sights. We are surrounded by all kinds of desires that tempt our eyes (stemming from all the active elements of Creation - fire, water, and wind). But by getting used to focusing on something in your own house, you will find that it is easier to walk in the street and prevent the eyes from straying after improper sights.

The Higher Level of Focus

The more you work on this, you can reach an even deeper level, in which you can have your eyes totally open as you walk in the street, yet you don't even see anything in the street.

Rav Elya Lopian *zt"l* gave *shiurim* in Yeshivas Kfar Chassidim, and once he remarked that even though he is looking at everyone with eyes wide open, he doesn't see a thing. Someone asked him how this is possible, and he responded that it took a lot of time to develop; it's not a simple idea to work on. According to what we have explained here, we can understand how he was able to work on this.

Visual focus helps you remain focused not only when it comes to the physical world; it improves your inner world as well. The goal of acquiring this art of visual focus is not simply about how you can become more focused; the point is that by improving our external layer of vision – through focus - we will have an easier time entering our inner layer of our vision, to remain focused on our inner vision, which will help us remain connected to our inner, spiritual world even as we are surrounded by all kinds of sights that appeal to the eye.

In the next chapter, if we *merit* it, we will continue to discuss how we can rectify visual desires.

8 | *Visual Desires – Part 2*²⁰

Summary of the Previous Chapter

We will continue, with the help of Hashem, our discussion on the topic of desires, which stem from the element of water [in the soul]. Previously, we began to discuss visual desires, which stem from the **fire**-of-earth-of-water.

One way to fix the problem of visual desires, which we explained in the previous chapter, is to get used to concentrated, visual focus. By focusing on a point in what you are looking at, you train your eyes to become more focused and not to wander around unrestrained.

The Second Solution: Closing The Eyes

Now we will present a second solution to visual desires.

We have five senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Sight is unique from all the senses in that we have eyelids which can cover over our eyes and prevent us from seeing something in the first place. By contrast, the other senses, while of course we are able to stop them from working, do not come naturally equipped with anything to stop them from functioning. If we accidentally heard something, tasted something, touched something, or smelled something, there was nothing we could have done to prevent this.

Of course, we can close our ears, mouth and nose, and we can prevent ourselves from coming into physical contact with something, but by the time we close off any of these senses, we've already sensed it. Our senses of hearing, smell, taste and touch do not come naturally equipped with anything to stop them from functioning. Our eyes are unique in that we can shut them with our eyelids, and in this way we can prevent ourselves initially from seeing something in the first place.

In addition, our eyelids close on their own when we go to sleep. Hashem created our eyes with two simultaneous functions – we can see with them, and in addition, Hashem set our eyes to a kind of default mode in which they close. But the fact that our eyes close is not “another” function of our eyes; it is rather an ability that is already built-in with our eyes.

Sight and non-sight are the two alternating abilities of our eyes, but they are not two separate powers – rather, they are to be understood as two sides of the same ability. In our eyes, we can see, and we can always close them and not see; these are the two alternating abilities of our eyes.

The depth of this is as follows. Sight is really the root of our senses. When a person sees, he is led to one thing after another. Therefore, closing the eyes cannot be defined merely as ‘not’ seeing; that’s

²⁰ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-008-visual-desires-part-2>

only a superficial understanding. Closing the eyes is the power that a person has to leave his senses and enter more inward into himself.

Of course, when a person closes his eyes, he can still smell and hear and use his other senses, but it still represents the idea of leaving the senses [because since sight is the root of all the senses, detaching from sight will essentially mean a detachment from all the senses].

How Closing The Eyes Prevents Visual Desires

Let's try to understand this better.

Closing the eyes is called *atzimas einayim*; the word *atzimah* comes from the word *etzem*, "essence." In other words, closing the eyes helps a person begin to reach his essence. It can help a person reach his aspect of *etzem m'atzamai*, "bone of my bones", which is referring to one's actual essence.

When a person closes his eyes, he has the key to fixing **all** his evil desires, and in particular, it solves the desires and lusts that are vision-related. Visual desires are essentially fed from the fact that the person is being [dragged'] from one kind of visual sight to another. But when a person connects to his essence, he is going in the opposite direction of getting dragged after his sights.

In clearer language: the more a person lives and experiences his actual essence, the less he will become dragged after desires; and vice versa - the more a person is dragged after desires, he becomes more distanced from experiencing his true essence.

Closing the eyes is therefore not just advice that prevents you from seeing improper sights – it essentially helps you stop **all** desires, because it brings you more inward, into your actual essence.

Imagination

What happens when a person closes his eyes? When a person is sleeping, imagination takes over (as the Vilna Gaon and others have explained). This is a more inner kind of vision. Imagination can also "drag" a person, and in fact, it can drag a person even more than his physical vision can drag him.

When a person is using his physical vision, his vision is limited. But with imagination, a person can go above the limits of regular vision. He can imagine he is in another country; he can imagine that he is not bound at all to any limits of this planet earth, and he can imagine things that do not exist at all.

On a deeper note, *Chazal* say that “The eyes see and the heart desires” – the depth behind this is that the “heart desires” something that the eyes saw, using the power of imagination.²¹ The imagination takes the visual experience which the eyes saw and expands the vision, dragging the person to all kinds of places through the mind.

(*Chazal* say that if someone saw a Torah scholar commit a sin at night, he should judge him favorably and assume that the Torah scholar did *teshuvah* already the next day. The depth behind this is that a Torah scholar knows how to stop his imagination from dragging him after the imaginative thoughts, by entering into the true thoughts of the mind, *machshavah*.)

Thus, visual desires awaken imagination, as we see from Chavah when she saw the fruit of the *Eitz HaDaas*, that it was “*desirable to the eyes*”. The mind’s imagination can “drag” a person when he lays sight on something, and it is even more powerful than the dragging effect which is brought on by visuals.

Thought Vs. Imagination

Thus, when a person closes his eyes after seeing something improper, this may be even more detrimental to him in the long run, if he is the kind of person who has a very vivid imagination.

With most people, though, their imagination becomes more dominant only when they sleep, and not as much as when they are awake; therefore, closing the eyes is a solution that helps most people avoid lusting after improper sights. But if a person has a very dominant imagination throughout the day, he should not make use of the solution of closing the eyes, because when he closes his eyes, his powerful imagination will take over, and it will only ‘drag’ him further into fantasizing about what he just saw.

If a person’s imagination becomes weakened when he closes his eyes, then closing his eyes can help him enter better into his real thoughts; his “*machshavah*”.

So practically speaking, **most** people, when they close their eyes, can enter their real thoughts and avoid the imagination. Therefore, closing the eyes can help **most** people leave the allure of visual desires and instead enter into thinking mode.

Of course, it doesn’t totally save a person from visual desires, because this solution only addresses the external part of the problem of visual desires. But it definitely helps a person **temporarily** to avoid the object of the visual desire that he is faced with. So although this deals with the external aspect of visual desires, it is definitely helpful. This is the first part of the [second] solution to fixing visual desires being presented here.

21 Refer to עט דאס דמיון \ *Getting To Know Your Imagination_ #001 (The Structure of The Imagination)*, and #005 (*Imagination of the Heart*), which explains how the heart expands the imaginative thoughts of the mind.

(But as we mentioned, there are some people who have a powerful imagination, and when they close their eyes, their imagination becomes even stronger, and they fantasize about what they see, making it even more difficult for them to avoid lusting after the improper sight. For such people, closing the eyes when being faced with a visual desire will only prove detrimental and it will cause them to get ‘dragged’ even more after the visual desire, because their strong imagination drags them into fantasizing about the object of the desire.)

Therefore, the solution of closing the eyes [when faced with a visual desire] is a solution that is helpful for most people, and although it doesn’t totally solve the problem, it is still helpful enough to save a person **temporarily** from getting dragged after a visual desire [but for those who have a very strong imagination, this solution should not be used].

Using The Power of Thought

Closing the eyes helps a person get involved with thinking – not with imaginative thoughts (*dimayon*), but with real thought, *machshavah*; and this takes a person out of the visual sight he was occupied with. When faced with a visual desire, close the eyes, and get busy with various thoughts that occupy your mind.

Even if a person thinks about various *cheshbonos* (calculations) that are on his mind – permissible kinds of thoughts, of course, and not, *chas v’shalom*, forbidden kinds of thoughts - it is helpful. If a person is at the level of thinking about Torah or about a matter of holiness, that is an even higher kind of thought.

Understandably, *machshavah*-thoughts are a higher kind of thought than *dimayon*-imaginative thoughts, because imaginative thoughts are jumpy and they fly around, whereas *machshavah*-thoughts are a kind of thought that is more orderly in its nature.

Practically Working On This

Now that we have outlined the general idea of the solution, we will explain how to work on this practically.

All of us encounter situations in which forbidden sights are in front of us. Therefore, a person should prepare for himself something he can think about that heavily involves his thoughts, which he can use to think about when he encounters a forbidden sight.

To start out with, either you can prepare for yourself an imaginative thought that will keep your mind busy when you encounter a forbidden sight, or, you can prepare a thought that helps you have deep reflection. The second method is more preferred, because *machshavah*/orderly thought is preferred over *dimayon*/imagination. Make a list of various things to think about that will keep you interested and thinking.

Write down 2 or 3 thoughts that you will use to keep you occupied when you encounter a forbidden sight. It's better to have a few thoughts prepared as opposed to one thought, because it's hard to remain focused on one thought when you're faced with a forbidden sight. So prepare for yourself a list of a few thoughts that you will use to keep yourself occupied. They should also be thoughts that are orderly in their nature. When you encounter a forbidden sight, close your eyes and remind yourself of those thoughts you prepared. The point of this method is that it trains you to enter into orderly thought when you are faced with visual desires, which helps you leave your physical vision and instead enter inward.

If you have a hard time getting involved with deep thought, you can prepare for yourself imaginative thoughts, such as thinking about various images of beautiful scenery, or a nice picture, etc.; it is even better if it is an image of something holy.²² But it should be a kind of orderly imagination, and not a bunch of random imaginative thoughts that scatters the mind. It should be a certain order of imaginative thoughts.

If you are able to get involved with deeper thoughts than imagination, prepare for yourself a list of those thoughts that you will enter when you encounter an improper sight.

When you encounter the improper sight, close your eyes, and you will **consciously** enter the thoughts you prepared for yourself. The point of closing the eyes is not to act mechanically and just let your mind wander when you encounter a forbidden sight. It is to enter into the certain order of thoughts/imagination that you have previously prepared.

Before 'Shemiras Einayim'

This is a piece of advice that can help anyone on any level, for anyone who wishes to sanctify his eyes and protect them from seeing forbidden sights. Of course, there is much more to sanctifying our eyes; here, we have only addressed the aspect of visual desires of the eyes. Sanctifying our sense of sight is a separate *avodah*, which also needs to be explained, and we did not cover it here. Here, we discussed how to rectify the **desires** of our eyes. To summarize the solution to avoiding visual desires, there were three steps: **Step One** is to close the eyes. **Step Two** is to get busy with imaginative thoughts that you prepare for yourself. **Step Three**, which is the higher solution, is to get busy with deep thought, *machshavah*.

The Deeper Solution: Identify The Deepest Part of Your Self and Connect To It

Now we will present another solution, which is deeper.

22 Editor's Note: In the beginning of Mishnah Berurah (1:1), the advice of the Chofetz Chaim to deal with forbidden sights is to imagine the four-letter name of havayah, that if one remains focused on the name of havayah, he will be protected from any sin. This avodah explained at length by the Rav in the audio file of 02_אם נשמרת 77

As it was mentioned earlier, the point of closing the eyes is to help us enter more inward and get closer to our actual essence. Reb Yeruchem Levovitz *zt"l* once stated, “Woe is to a shoemaker who doesn’t know how to use his tools.” A person cannot utilize his potential if he doesn’t recognize the main tools that he was given to work with. With regards to our discussion, we need to recognize the deepest source of *chiyus* (vitality) we recognize from our own life. After making this clarification, become aware of it and use it.

First, we need to become aware of our deepest point in ourselves; without making this clarification, a person lives superficially, and he simply thinks that the deepest part of his being is that he is connected to Torah, to *tefillah*, to *chessed*, or to Hashem. It could be true that he is connected to *spirituality* - but that doesn’t mean he is connected to the *deepest point* he knows of from his own life.

The deepest point in the person (besides for one’s actual essence) is to be aware of the deepest current **source of vitality** that he recognizes in himself. After discovering what it is, he then needs to make use of it, as a way to avoid desires.

Thus, the purpose of closing the eyes is that it helps you return to your deepest point. This might not be your actual essence, but it definitely brings you closer to your essence. The deepest part in yourself that you currently recognize can be called your “I”, to some degree, even though it is not yet the deepest point of the “I.”

Most people, understandably, are not in touch with their actual essence. In addition, most people are not even aware of the deepest part of themselves that they are currently at. If you at least become aware of your current deepest point, you are a lot closer to your essence.

When you are in touch with your aspect of individuality, you avoid getting ‘dragged’ after desires: The closer I to my individuality, the more I am aware of my unique qualities which no one else has and the more I am in touch with it – the more I am drawn away from pursuing desires.

This is not to be understood as merely “running away” from what I see into this deep place in myself. The understanding of this is not merely that you’re running away into an “*ir miklat*” (city of refuge) in yourself as a way to escape visual desires; that is also true, but there is a deeper understanding to this. It is to connect myself to my deepest point - where it is almost impossible that some desire can drag me away from it.

The Greatest Solution To Fix Desires

Of course, it is impossible to say that desires cannot affect you at all when you close your eyes (and thereafter when you connect to your deepest point). Being that you are not yet reaching the essence of the soul, it is still possible to get dragged after desires. But if you connect to the deepest point you know of in yourself, desires generally have much less control over you.

This solves not only visual desires - it also rectifies all desires in general.

We used closing the eyes as an example of how to get in touch with the essence, but closing the eyes is merely the *tool* you can use to get to this place in yourself. Therefore, one must realize that “closing the eyes” is not the goal here in this solution. It is rather because closing the eyes are the *tool* that helps you get closer to your essence, where desires cannot control you. The more you get in touch with the deeper parts of yourself, even if you haven’t yet reached your essence, the less and less desires can control you.

The more you get in touch with the deeper parts of yourself, the more vitality you derive from your *pnimiyus* (inner world), and as a result, the less you will be pulled after desires in the outside world. Even more so, because you are more connected to your inner world, the *less your own physical eyes will feel a desire* to look at things, because desires have less control over you when you are more connected with your deeper self, and it is easier at that point to feel how This World is not your real place.

Therefore, a person should get used to closing the eyes; not just when encountering improper sights, but in general, in order to get used to it even before a test comes; the gain is so that you will learn how to enter inward into yourself, into the deeper parts of yourself that you know of. By getting used to closing the eyes and focusing on the deepest part of your life right now, you will discover that it not only helps you avoid visual desires, but that it helps you avoid all desires altogether.

In fact, the more you get used to closing the eyes and focusing on your deeper points, the more you will be able to focus on those deep thoughts even as you’re walking in the street with eyes totally wide open. Getting used to closing the eyes teaches you how to focus on the deeper parts to your existence; thus, once you gain that perspective, you won’t even have to close your eyes anymore when you walk in the streets! You can have your eyes totally open as you walk yet still not notice anything that goes on, because you are immersed instead in various thoughts.

These can be thoughts such as an upcoming *simcha* (celebration), or to think about your financial problems, or to think about *shidduchim*, or to think about your health, etc. By thinking about those things as you’re closing the eyes, desires won’t be able to ‘drag’ you. You won’t be able to notice anything on the streets when you’re involved with these immersive thoughts. (You might not notice anyone saying “Hello” to you either, because you are so immersed in your thoughts!)

In Summary

Using this solution is the root of rectifying all your physical desires in general, and visual desires specifically.

So the point is to get used to closing your eyes. Don’t do this mechanically; do so to enter into either the **imaginative** thoughts that you have prepared for yourself [the first solution] or to enter the **deep thoughts** you have prepared for yourself [the second solution]. The deeper solution is to enter the deepest part you know of in yourself when you close the eyes.

Examining The Differences Between These Solutions

Now we will go through the differences between the solutions, and why the deepest solution is the most effective.

When a person uses imaginative thoughts as a way to avoid visual desires, while this can certainly help to avoid the improper sight, it still contains a disadvantage. Entering into imagination won't solve the person's curiosity to look. Although he is keeping himself occupied with something interesting to imagine about, deep down he wishes he could just open his eyes and get a little look.

It's more like a *hesech hadaas*, to temporarily "ignore the mind", but deep down he's still curious and he wishes he could open his eyes and look. Why? It is because imagination itself is a force that drags a person from one kind of imaginative thought to another. Therefore, imagination is not powerful enough to stop the eyes from dragging them after visual desires.

If one uses the higher solution, which is to get involved with deep *machshavah*/orderly thought, although these are deeper kinds of thoughts than the imagination, it's the same problem. Our thoughts, even when they are orderly, are still a force that 'drags' us from one thought to another.

When we learn *Gemara*, even if our thoughts are very orderly and they aren't flying around, still, our thoughts still get dragged very quickly from one point to another point. Thus, if our thoughts can get dragged, our physical eyes will also be drag them after visual desires, and we will still be very curious to open our eyes and look even as we are immersed in deep thought.

But if we use the deeper solution, which is to close our eyes and get in touch with the deeper parts of our self, there, our eyes cannot drag us away, because the closer we are to our essence, the less power desires have over us to 'drag' us.

As mentioned before, this solution will give you great self-control over all other desires as well, not just visual desires. It is therefore the most complete kind of advice you can use to avoid desires.

'Shemiras Einayaim' In The 21st Century

Of course, there is no advice that is guaranteed to save you from visual desires, because we are currently living amidst the "50th Gate of Impurity", in which improper sights surround us from every angle.

It used to be that when you were faced with an improper sight, you could turn your back to it face the opposite direction, where you could leave the temptation behind you. That was in previous times, when were in the "49th Gate of Impurity". But in today's times, when we are in the "50th Gate of Impurity",²³ there is nowhere to turn to, because wherever you turn, another evil desire is there to face you.

²³ See *Ohr HaChaim: Shemos 14:10*

The only solution is to enter inward into our own souls and connect to our essence, where desires won't be able to drag us away.

There are other ways how we can develop our soul's sense of sight, in which we can form a spiritual kind of vision to protect ourselves from improper sights. There are both advantages and disadvantages to opening up the soul's spiritual vision; therefore, it is dangerous to learn about those methods.

Here in these last two chapters, we have laid down the two **root** solutions that rectify visual desires – the power of developing visual focus, as well as the power of closing the eyes (the basic part of the solution, as well as the deeper part of the solution).

9 | *Grappling with Addictions*²⁴

Desires Stemming From Water-of-Water

Until now we have discussed, with Hashem’s help, the trait of desires, which stem from the element of water. We discussed desires which stem from **earth**-of-water; now we will continue with desires that stem from **water**-of-water.

Desires stemming from water-of-water can also have four branching possibilities - earth, water, wind and fire. So there is (1) Earth-of-Water-of-Water, (2) Water-of-Water-of-Water, (3) Wind-of-Water-of-Water, and (4) Fire-of-Water-of-Water.

Desires stemming from **earth-of-water**, as we explained, are desires which *temporarily* ‘drag’ a person after the desire, for the time being. Desires stemming from **water-of-water** are different: in addition to dragging a person after a desire, they have an even more intense kind of hold on the person, due to the nature of ‘water’ which can strongly pull things with it.

Whereas desires stemming from **earth-of-water** are temporary kinds of desires that a person gets dragged after, desires stemming from **water-of-water** are more permanent kinds of desires.

Desires Stemming From Earth In Water-of-Water: Permanent Desires

When a person’s desires gain **permanence** in the person’s life and they become very extreme in nature, the person becomes very attached to the desire. Examples of these include dangerous kinds of addictions, which can eventually kill the person who is heavily attached to the desire.²⁵

These are desires that stem from **earth** of water-of-water: desires which a person feels very attached to, in his soul, with a kind of permanence. [It is this kind of addiction that we will discuss in this chapter and give solutions to].

Desires Stemming From Water In Water-of-Water: Desires For Drinking

Desires that stem from **water** of water-of-water refer to the desire to drink addictive beverages.

Water can cure a person’s thirst; when a person feels a desire to drink beverages, the desire is thus coming from the “water” aspect that is within water-of-water. One of the major desires that exist on this world is this desire – the desire for [addictive] drinking.

²⁴ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-009-grappling-addictions>

²⁵ Editor’s Note: This chapter does NOT pertain to drinking-related issues; see next chapter.

Desires Stemming From Wind In Water-of-Water: Impulsive Addictions

Desires that stem from **wind**-of-water-of-water are desires that cause a person to quickly get dragged from one kind of desire to another.

The element of water here is responsible for the ‘dragging’ factor, because the nature of water is to ‘drag’ [as explained in the previous chapters], and when the desire becomes fueled by the element of wind, which is the root of quick movement, it causes the person to move quickly from one desire to another.

The person never even finishes the first desire, because he quickly moves on to another desire very quickly. These people don’t even get to enjoy the very desires that they are immersed in. It’s as if they are not experiencing any of the physical desires of this world, even though they are constantly involved with the desires.

Desires Stemming From Fire In Water-of-Water: Addictions That Cause Disconnection

Desires that stem from **fire** of water-of-water are when a person is dragged after desires to the point that he never even experiences the first desire he was involved with.

The jumpy nature of fire is responsible for the kind of behavior, causing him to be totally disconnected from his own desires even as he’s involved with them.

Some people are fully immersed in a desire so that they can experience it fully, and only after they feel satisfied do they move on to fulfilling another desire; these people are called ‘*baalei taavah*’ (gluttons). This kind of nature can also be channeled to holiness, whereupon it is called ‘*taavah d’kedushah*’ (holy desire). But here we are discussing a different kind of person: a person who doesn’t even experience his own desires, because he is constantly jumping from one desire to the next, before he has even fully experienced the previous desire.

Earth-of-Earth-of-Water: Addictions

We will now go through each of these desires in detail, explaining each of the problems they present, and each of their specific solutions. We will begin with **earth-of-water-of-water**, which are desires that are more permanent in their nature.

In order to solve such desires, we can make use of the four elements of the soul (earth, water, wind and fire). We will begin with the less intense kinds of addictions, which require less use of the four elements, and progress to the more intense kinds of addictions, which will require us to use more than one element in the soul in order to fix.

Desires stemming from **earth** of water-of-water, as we mentioned, are desires that have become permanent in the person’s life. A person feels very deeply connected to these kinds of desires. Simply

speaking, it can be coming from his powerful *taanug* (pleasure) that he has in the particular desire that he has become attached to, but the depth behind it is that the person's very thoughts about the desire are giving him no rest, thereby 'dragging' him after the desire, as we explained previously.

There are three different examples of this kind of 'permanent' desire:

Three Kinds of Addictions

(1) If it is a desire that is **extreme** in its nature, (2) If it is a desire that is **constantly** being pursued (even if it isn't extreme), (3) Or if it is a desire that is causing a person to become **disconnected** from his thoughts as he pursues it.

'Hadragah': Going In Steps

Since earth is the root of permanence, the way to counter it when it gets dominant is to go in its opposite direction, which is to lighten the amount of the permanence. This can be done through slowly pulling away from the addiction, in steps, with deliberate intention not to try to pull away from it all at once.

When we pull away from the addictive desire slowly and in steps, this is called using the soul's power of "*hadragah*" (procedure). It is actually a power that stems from the element of earth. We can use *hadragah*, an earth-based power, to counter the earth's own nature of permanence.

But if we try to pull away too fast from a permanent addiction and we don't do it in steps, it will backfire. The whole point of the solution is to pull away slowly and **in steps** from the addiction, and that will slowly begin to weaken the addiction.

Fighting Addiction: Finding An Alternative Outlet

However, if it is a kind of addiction that a person feels powerfully connected to, then it will not be enough to try pulling away from the addiction in steps. These are desires which can drag a person very much after the desire. Thus, we will need to find something that will "drag" a person away in the opposite direction.

If this is the case, we will need to provide the person with an engaging outlet that will "drag" him away totally from the unhealthy addiction. It should be a kind of outlet that is very engaging, the kind that has the power to "drag" him away totally from the other addiction. Basically, what we are trying to do is to "drag" him away from the addiction, through "dragging" him into something else.

Whatever outlet we are replacing the addiction with has to be something that is not harmful to the person, of course, or else we have simply exchanged one unhealthy addiction for another.

(Obviously, there is an inevitable danger that is involved in using this solution, if it is not used sensibly.)

The point of the solution is to open up the person to the concept of dragging himself away from the desire that has become very permanent in his life; that is the point of what we want to achieve here.

To emphasize again: this solution (of finding an outlet that replaces the addiction) contains a risk, of getting addicted to some other outlet that will occupy the person too much. Therefore, we have to be very careful when we use this solution, and to replace his addiction with an outlet that will be engaging to him, but not something that will replace one unhealthy addiction for another unhealthy addiction.

When Crazy Behaviors Become Popular

These days, in the last couple of years, all kinds of crazy desires have entered our circles, even into the world of Torah, *rachmana litzlan*. There are certain behaviors that have entered our communities today which were never dreamed about until now; certain actions which were once considered unthinkable of until now have now entered even the communities who strictly observe Torah and mitzvos.

A *ben Torah* these days faces new kinds of desires that were never within our insulated environment until now, which are behaviors and desires of Arab lowlifes, such as smoking a “hoo-ka”. It’s hard to fathom how such crazy behaviors entered our environment, and that a *ben Torah* these days has to deal with desires that used to be pursued by the outside world.

Of course, there are worse things than this too, but the point is, a person is supposed to have certain boundaries that he never crosses, and not engage himself in crazy, addictive desires (which are entirely a product of secular society).

In Summary

Getting back to the solution: By becoming dragged after a different desire (and to do this with subtle care), a person can slowly teach himself [or another] how to pull away from the desire that he is very addicted to.

To practically work on this, the person should make a list of different actions he can do that he is already pulled after and then expand those desires, so that he can have a wide array of engaging outlets that he can choose from that can replace the addiction.

Understandably, one should only do this with desires that are not forbidden by the Torah; they should be **permissible kinds of outlets**; and they should be done with a sensible approach.

When a person involves himself with other outlets, he moves himself away from the addiction, thus, we have a way to use ‘wind’ to solve the earth-based problem of permanent attachment to a desire: by moving to other desires that you already dragged after.

Dealing With Today’s Generation

As we mentioned, however, using this solutions is risky, as it can cause a person to become addicted to a different desire; therefore, these solutions needs to be used sensibly.

The reason why we have to make use of these solutions is because we are living in a generation in which people have all kinds of crazy addictions that were never in our society before, and therefore, there is a need to make use of these solutions and save people from their addictions. But we must be aware that these solutions are somewhat risky in their nature, and therefore they require a lot of sensitivity in how to use them. Using this solution ultimately involves the danger of becoming exposed to other kinds of unhealthy behaviors.

These ideas are relevant to know in order to complete our understanding about solving desires. They are very relevant to those who are involved in *Kiruv* or with those who deal with family members that are struggling with unhealthy addictions.

Summary of The Three-Part Solution To Addictions

To summarize the outline of the solution is: **1)** To weaken the addiction through slowly weakening it (which uses the earth’s power of *hadragah*/**step-by-step withdrawal** from the desire), **2)** Through giving the person an **engaging outlet** that replaces the addiction (which uses the power of water to ‘drag’ the soul), **3)** And that these desires should be **permissible desires** that will pull him in the opposite direction (wind).

Using all of these solutions can weaken the addictive desire - to an extent.

Solving Extreme Addictions

Now we will speak about how to solve desires that have become so addictive that they are destructive and endangering to the person. When addictions are getting really out of hand like this, it will not help to merely try to pull away from it in steps or to engage in other outlets. Here, we will have to employ a more extreme solution.

We will have to use the element of “fire” in the soul for this. Fire causes separation; we can see this from the physical world, that when a fire breaks out, everyone jumps back from it and separates themselves from their place. So fire represents the power to separate. When a person has desires that

he has become totally connected to, he can become so addicted to the desire that he becomes disconnected from his own life, resembling the nature of fire, which causes separation.

But there is also a holy way to use the power of disconnection, as follows.

Using The Power of ‘Mesirus Nefesh’: To Disconnect

The way to counter fire/disconnection is through developing the power of *mesirus nefesh*: to be self-sacrificing.

The power of *mesirus nefesh* is also called using the power of “death” in the soul, to disconnect yourself from anything that you are heavily connected to. Rabbeinu Yonah writes, “Die before you die” – this is referring to how a person must develop his power of *mesirus nefesh* and “die” from this world, as a way to separate oneself from the materialism of this world. Death is the only thing that can totally separate a person from anything on this world. The soul can also use the concept of “death”, when it exercises the power of *mesirus nefesh*.²⁶

Mesirus nefesh is not an intellectual ability; it comes from your deep power of *ratzon* (the will), which is above the intellect. Therefore, acquiring *mesirus nefesh* doesn’t happen by merely intellectualizing the concept; it is almost pointless to do this. Rather, the way to develop *mesirus nefesh* is - besides for thinking about it in concept – is that a person has to realize, that our entire stay on this earth is temporary.

Anything we are connected to on this world is only temporary. Even our connections to our family and friends are temporary. By getting used to contemplating this deeply, with the more a person realizes how this world is temporary, the more he can let go of this world and all that he is connected to on this world; and that is how he can give up anything in his life that he is connected to.

At some point, all of us will need to mentally come to a deep realization, that we will eventually become disconnected from all that we are connected to on this world. Only through *mesirus nefesh* can we destroy all connections we have to this world. Logically, it is impossible to do it, but if we go above our logic and access our soul’s deep power of *mesirus nefesh*, we use the “fire” of our soul to destroy our connections to anything on this world.

There are two kinds of *mesirus nefesh* – in potential (as a “*koach*”) and in its active state (“*poel*”). All of us have the power to use the **potential** kind of *mesirus nefesh*. The active use of *mesirus nefesh* was exercised by the *Kedoshim* (holy martyrs) of previous generations; we do not all have this ability. But what we do have is the ability to exercise our potential *mesirus nefesh*.

²⁶ For more on how to use the power of “death” in the soul for constructive purposes, see *Bilvavi Part 4: Chapter 5 – Calmly Letting Go Of This World and Bilvavi Part 4: Chapter 13 – Beginning To Act Lishmah*

As an example, every day when we say *Shema*, it is brought in *Halacha* that a person should mentally decide that he is willing to get killed *al kiddush Hashem* if the opportunity were to ever present itself. We all have this power – to prepare ourselves to **potentially** use our power of *mesirus nefesh* and give up our lives. We shouldn't just be *willing* to do so – we should *yearn* for such a thing, such as how Rabbi Akiva would yearn his entire life for the opportunity to have *mesirus nefesh*.²⁷

Two Ways of Disconnecting

Most people who have unhealthy addictions are people who do not possess a strong ability of *mesirus nefesh*, and therefore they do not know how to give up a desire.

There were great people in our generation who were able to get rid of an addiction immediately as soon as they realized that the addiction was unhealthy. Rav Bentzion Abba Shaul *zt"l* immediately quit smoking as soon as he was informed that it was endangering his health. This is because he had already developed his power of *mesirus nefesh* to a great extent. He was able to decide on not smoking again, because he developed his element of earth, which is able to give permanence to a decision.

Thus, one way to solve a strong addiction is by deciding with utter conviction to keep away from the desire, which uses the power of *mesirus nefesh*. This can work for someone who has a developed element of earth, which can provide a person with the ability to keep to his decisions and stop himself totally from a desire. It can get a person to give up the addiction in one moment.

There is another method that we find in the words *Chazal* which can get a person to give up any desire he has for this world. The Talmud recounts the story of Rabbi Eliezer ben Durdaya²⁸, that when he regretted his sinful life, he let out a scream and cried; his soul left his body and immediately entered into *Olam HaBa*. In one moment, everything changed, all because of this groan that escaped him. From here we can see that there is a power in the soul to 'scream' at oneself and shake himself to the core, to the point that it causes his connection to this world to be totally severed.²⁹

This is really a use of the power of *mesirus nefesh*: to penetrate deep into the soul, which gives a person the inner fortification to immediately give up all of his connection to this world – all in the blink of an eye.

(A similar concept to this is the concept of "holy cruelty."³⁰ Although cruelty is normally an evil trait, *Chazal* say that a person should be "cruel" to his children by not listening to them if they ask him to leave his learning and go make a livelihood in order to support them. This is the same idea, that a person has the power to disconnect even from what he is deeply connected to, such as his family, if the time calls for it.)

27 For more on this topic refer to Tefillah #0140 – *The Fear of Death And Its Purpose*

28 See *Avodah Zarah 17a*

29 See also *Reaching Your Essence_004_Beginning To Reach The Innermost Point of the Soul*

30 To understand "holy cruelty", refer to *Understanding Your Middos #009 - Cruelty*.

The power of *mesirus nefesh* – deciding to give up your connection to this world - can work wonders in seconds, when it comes to solving any addiction. Even if it doesn't immediately cause a drastic change, it can still have very quick results.

Utilizing “Mesirus Nefesh” On A Practical Level

“*Mesirus nefesh*” is a great power that can be applied to many areas of life. We will give some examples of how we can apply it practically and make use of this power more often.

Let's say a person is learning with his *chavrusa*, and he realizes that he said something wrong to him. (This doesn't only happen to you. It happens to me also). It is hard for a person to admit he is wrong – either because he feels like his pride is being swallowed, or because he is haughty. How can a person be able to admit he is wrong? If he develops the power to disconnect from this world, he can 'disconnect' as well from the wrong word that he said, and thus be able to admit that he was wrong.

Like all other abilities of the soul, this is also a power that can be used for either good or evil. *Mesirus nefesh* is the ability in a person to have a rapid disconnection from this world; there are some people who unfortunately use this power for evil. For example, there are people who decide to get divorced immediately, as soon as they like someone else. So there are definitely evil uses to this power of rapidly disconnecting.

Although there are people who abuse this power as we have said, at its root, it is a holy and constructive power in a person that enables him to immediately give up any strong connection he has to this world.

Practicing Disconnection

Even if you can't give up a desire immediately, building your power of *mesirus nefesh* to give up desires will still help you give up other desires you are faced with. The more and more you do this, the more you will be able to disconnect even from things you are heavily connected to.

Practically speaking, you need to develop the ability to disconnect. Try this by disconnecting from small things in your life that you feel a bit connected to. (Don't begin with trying to disconnect yourself from major things in your life, as this will not be realistic.)

For example, look around at items in your house and decide that you feel no connection whatsoever to those items.³¹

31 For more on this idea, see Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus (Practice) #020 – Disconnecting From Materialism.

However, you must be very cautious with using this ability, because if you start getting rid of things in your house, you will ruin your marital peace, and such behavior will cause you to act destructive to both your house as well as to your soul.

Instead, begin to **mentally** disconnect yourself from the items in your house; start by **mentally** letting go of small items in your house, and do so with **conscious awareness** that you are trying to build up your power of *mesirus nefesh*, to let go of this world.

In Conclusion

We have described here how we use the elements of earth, water and wind and fire in the soul in order to solve desires that stem from **earth-of-water-of-water** – the root of addictive desires.

10 | *Drinking Issues*³²

Desires Stemming From Water-of-Water-of-Water: Addictive Drinking

We will continue now with Hashem’s help to discuss desires which stem from **water-of-water**. Previously we discussed **earth**-of-water-of-water, which are desires that are addictive in their nature. Now we will discuss **water**-of-water-water, which refers to the specific addiction for drinking – the “water” aspect that is within water-of-water.

Desires stemming from our element of water, as we explained earlier, are desires which ‘drag’ a person after them. When desire is ‘dragging’ a person towards drinking certain beverages, these desires are stemming specifically from **water**-of-water-of-water.

The desire for drinking [and we are talking about real ‘drinks’, i.e. alcoholic beverages, as opposed to ‘soft drinks’] is actually one of the most powerful desires that exist in the world.

Four Applications

The desire itself for drinking (**water-of-water-of-water**) can further subdivide into four different applications, each of them stemming from one of the four elements (earth, water, wind and fire). So there is (1) Earth-of-Water-of-Water-of-Water, (2) Water-of-Water-of-Water-of-Water, (3) Wind-of-Water-of-Water-of-Water, (4) Fire-of-Water-of-Water-of-Water.³³

Always Drinking With Other People

If people are sitting together on a regular basis to drink – sometimes they regularly sit together to enjoy sweet beverages, but it is mainly with alcoholic beverages – these kinds of desires are being fueled by a sense of permanence, for they are on a regular and set basis. Permanence is the nature of earth, thus, sitting down with others on a regular basis to drink is a desire that stems in particular from the “**earth**” aspect of **water-of-water-of-water**.

In this scenario, the person drinks beverages with others on a set basis, not necessarily because he wants to become intoxicated, but simply because it has become a fixed part of his schedule to drink in the company of others. These are people who regularly sit down with each other to have a drink.

³² <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-010-drinking-issues>

³³ Editor’s Note: This is the only shiur in the ‘Fixing’ series in which the Rav has gone beyond a third subdivision of the four elements (i.e. earth-of-earth-of-water, fire-of-wind-of-water, etc.), into a ‘fourth’ subdivision of the elements, i.e. (water-of-water-of-water-of-water).

Drinking To Become Disconnected

Another scenario of drinking is when a person becomes ‘dragged’ after the desire for drinking to the point that he becomes totally intoxicated and he loses his *da’as* (logical mind). Not only is he dragged after drinking as in the previous scenario; he goes even further than this, allowing himself to get intoxicated.

At this point, he has gotten so ‘dragged’ after the drinking that he isn’t even thinking anymore as he drinks. These desires are stemming from the “**water**” aspect of water-of-water-of-water, because he has a desire for the drink itself, and not merely because he sits with others and has a drink with them, as in the previous case. He wants to drink so that he can get drunk.

Why does he desire to get drunk, though? Being intoxicated makes a person lose his *da’as*; a person who gets drunk in order to get drunk is doing so because he wants to lose his *da’as*. The absence of his *da’as* leaves him with nothing but a total involvement in his desire for the drink; thus, his desire to drink stems from “water” of water-of-water-of-water.

Drinking To Act Crazy

A different scenario is when a person drinks wants to get drunk, so that he can let loose and perform. The deeper look at this is that he drinks because he mainly wants to experience a looseness in his movements; so it is a desire for movement, which is rooted in wind. Since this ‘wind’ is within the context of the desire for drinking (water-of-water-of-water), it is coming from **wind**-of-water-of-water-of-water in himself.

Drinking Out of Inner Emptiness

When the desire to drink stems from **fire**-of-water-of-water-of-water, it is when a person is being dragged after a desire because he feels empty inside. In other words: when his desire for drinking is being caused by some negative feeling. This is similar to the nature of fire, which causes things to become dried out; in the soul, it can cause a person to feel ‘dried out’ and thus he feels some degree of emptiness inside himself.

This is different from simply getting caught up in a desire to drink, which stems from the “water” aspect within water-of-water. When the desire to drink is stemming from a feeling of inner emptiness, it is coming from the “fire” aspect within water-of-water. For example, when a person is alone in his house and he feels a need to drink, he feels empty inside, and that is why he feels a need to drink. This can happen after a person sins; the sins cause a person to feel empty inside.

For this reason, many people who are bored and who feel empty inside themselves will often look for something to eat and drink, to ease their boredom. It resembles a fire, which is the root of the nature to demand things.

His inner emptiness can cause him to feel so bored that it can to the point of roaming the streets and getting into fights with people; he might even kill someone, simply because he is bored with himself. Most people, of course, do not actually get to that point; but the person can still feel like he wishes he could get into a fight and maybe kill a person.

Many people definitely develop an intense inner ‘hunger’ or ‘thirst’ all the time in their souls, even though they are not really physically hungry or thirsty, and they can get into a lot of fights with others along the way as they are feeling empty inside themselves. This kind of person has become so bored and empty inside himself that he is apt to wander the streets aimlessly. The fire of his soul has gotten too strong, thus he feels dry inside, causing him to feel abnormally empty – a result of his inner thirst or hunger that has become dominant.

These kinds of desires are stemming from the fire of the *nefesh habehaimis* (the animalistic layer of the soul) when it gets out of hand, and they are not coming from the normal feeling of hunger or thirst. It is the soul inside demanding that its emptiness to be filled.

We so far have outlined the problems. Now we will go through the solutions. (First we will describe how to solve addictive desires that stem from **earth**-of-water-of-water-of-water, which is when a person drinks on a permanent basis, because he feels that drinking is a part of his life.)

1) The Increase of Alcohol In Our Times

The truth is that we all have a need to drink! We see from the Torah and from the words of *Chazal* that we all have times in which we must drink. On Yom Tov, we have a *mitzvah* to drink a *reviis* of wine; on Pesach, we drink the Four Cups, and on Purim, we have a *mitzvah* to drink until we are totally intoxicated. These are the specific times of the year in which we drink alcoholic beverages.

In previous generations, when our ancestors lived in the colder countries of the world - such as Europe - they were very accustomed to drinking [to warm their bodies]. Therefore, because they were accustomed to drinking, many of us carry on their *minhag* to drink, and this also includes eating certain kinds of meat and fish that they ate. There all kinds of *minhagim* like this.

But in our times, the situation of drinking has gotten out of hand. Anyone familiar with the situation today is well aware of how the *minhag* to drink has become so extreme and abused.

Much of the drinking these days, especially in the last couple of years, has gotten way overboard, and it has nothing to do with keeping the *Halachah* of drinking on *Yom Tov* or with the *minhag* of our ancestors to drink alcoholic beverages. Unfortunately, *Simchas Torah* today has become like ‘Purim’ to many young people. People are spending tons of money so they can be able to drink alcohol at night.

It has become ‘acceptable’ for people to sit and drink together, and this is not only taking place in Africa. It is taking place in the most *Chareidi* supermarkets. There are whole sections if the

supermarket just for alcoholic beverages, and it is not being sold to people who need a *reviis* of wine for Shabbos. It is being sold to many people who simply drink for the sake of drinking. It is a very painful reality.

We can all recognize people whose entire *Simchas Torah* is about getting drunk, and it has nothing to do with wanting to fulfill any *mitzvah*.

There is a kind of desire for drinking that stems from fire in the soul, in which a person seeks to drink because he is seized with a feeling of inner emptiness, but we aren't discussing this right now; we will discuss it later. We are discussing a desire for drinking that does not come from feeling a **temporary** emptiness, but rather a desire for drinking in which a person desires to drink on a regular and permanent basis.

Drinking has become a staple in his life to this kind of person. Such addictive drinking stems from earth-of-water-of-water-of-water, because permanence is a nature of earth.

This is a particular problem that has become dominant in our current generation, in which many people are feeling empty all the time, and not just every once in a while; people are feeling empty on a regular basis and are seeking to relieve this emptiness they keep feeling.

There are a few people who are really immersed in Torah and in holiness and with good *middos*, but sadly, most people, even in the Torah world, feel an ongoing inner emptiness in their life. There is therefore a very big pursuit of physical gratification in this generation, and a desire to drink on a regular basis.

When a person pursues the desire for drinking on a regular basis, the person is really disconnecting from himself. Some people are only drinking because they are influenced by their surroundings that are into drinking, but most people who drink are drinking because they keep feeling an inner emptiness in their life.

In the previous chapter, when we addressed addictions, we mentioned the solution of pulling away in steps from the addiction. But that solution won't help so easily to stop addictive drinking.

The Solution: Building Our P'nimiyus (Inner Dimension)

The desire for drinking is affecting even people who keep Torah and mitzvos – that is, those whose Torah learning hasn't yet penetrated into their being. Therefore, they feel an inner emptiness from their life.

The addiction to drinking can therefore be present even in a boy in *Yeshiva* who is smart and brilliant in his Torah learning, because he can still feel very empty inside himself from having any real inner content. His heart might be empty [from any internalized spirituality], even though his brain works very well and he knows how to learn Torah very well.

Let us point out that the desire for addictive drinking has come into the Torah world from the outside world; it did not originate from within the Torah world. It has now recently entered the Torah world, and it is a painful reality that will be here until Moshiach comes.

When a *frum* person who learns Torah and keeps mitzvos is addicted to drinking, the problem will not be solved by simply trying to slowly pull away from the desire in steps (as it was explained in the previous chapter). This is because it doesn't solve the ongoing inner emptiness that he is feeling.

Since the source of the problem is that the person feels empty in his life, we will need to show him how he can build his *pnimiyus* (inner world), and then his emptiness will vanish, as a result of discovering a rich and inner spiritual world within himself.

Building our *pnimiyus* merits a vast discussion for itself, but to be general, it involves three things. (1) One needs to exert his mind in Torah (which he is probably already doing, and he should keep doing that), (2) One needs to be willing to really work on his *middos*, and (3) One needs to begin to start "putting his heart" into what he does.³⁴

We will not delve into this now, as it will get us off-topic, but this is the basic outline of the solution: the permanence of his addictive desire for drinking will get countered by building an inner kind of 'permanence' in his life.

2) Drinking In Order To Get Drunk

Addictive drinking applies most commonly with drinking wine or beer, but it can apply as well to any kind of desire which causes a person to lose his *da'as*.

When a person is getting drunk because he wants to go limp from his *da'as*, his desire to drink is specifically so that he can get drunk, and not because he feels empty at life. This kind of person will get drunk because he gets influenced from people in his surroundings who drink.

There were *Gedolim* who would get very drunk on Purim, but even when they were totally intoxicated, they were amazingly able to retain their self-control. This was true in spite of the fact that they got to the point of losing their *da'as*.

We see from this that the less a person accessed his *da'as* before he got drunk, the less self-control he will have when he's drunk and he has lost all his *da'as*. He will get 'dragged' totally after his desire as he is drunk. Indeed, most people are not like the *Gedolim* who have built their power of *da'as* to the point that they can retain their self-control even as they are drunk; only rare individuals are capable of this.

34 Editor's Note: As the Sages state, "Rachmana liba ba'ee" – "Hashem wants the heart." The Rav often quotes the verse in Mishlei, "My son, give your heart to me." In generation, the "heart" is the central theme of the Rav's talks. For more on the nature of the heart, refer to the Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh (Building A Sanctuary In The Heart) series, in particular, Parts I, II, and IV.

Influenced By Peer Pressure Vs. Wanting To Get Drunk

We are currently discussing desires which stem from “**water**” (of water-of-water). Unlike the previous kind of addictive drinking we discussed, which stems from **earth**/permanence, drinking intoxicating beverages on a regular basis is a desire that stems from the “**water**” aspect (in water-of-water). These are desires which are mainly caused by influence from the surroundings.

A person who drinks in this manner gets drunk only because he was around people who were drinking, and not because he planned on getting drunk. Before he knows it, he wakes up the next day and he doesn’t remember a thing. He didn’t drink out of an agenda to drink; he drank simply because he was influenced by his surroundings, and that is what is ‘dragged’ him into the drinking.

Using The Power of ‘Dragging’

Every person, in his soul, has a nature to get ‘dragged’ (in Hebrew, ‘*giruy*’, or ‘*hisgarerus*’). It is a power that can be used for either holiness or evil. When it used for holiness, a person is dragged after spirituality, and when it is used for evil, a person is dragged after his surroundings. We need to reveal its use for holiness, and this will counter us from getting dragged after things that are either unhealthy, inappropriate, or evil.

If a person is already pulled after holiness in his life, it shows that he has already revealed his power of getting ‘dragged’ after holiness. He can increase his holy activities and thus be protected from getting dragged after things he shouldn’t. But if a person does not recognize areas of his in which he is pulled towards holy activities, he will need to reveal the nature to get ‘dragged’, for holy purposes. He will need to give himself something that will drag him after holiness.

For example, when a person makes a *siyum* (completion) on a *Maseches* (tractate of *Gemara*), the *minhag* is that he immediately should start another *maseches*. The depth behind this is that as soon as you finish something holy, you should immediately continue to another goal that is holy. The idea is that you get you used to getting ‘dragged’ after holiness.

This is not a solution that is limited to learning Torah. It can be with giving *tzedakah* as well – as soon as you give *tzedakah*, give *tzedakah* again right after that. This is the depth behind the concept of “*mitzvah goreres mitzvah*”, that doing one *mitzvah* ‘drags’ you into doing another *mitzvah*. It reveals the holy kind of “dragging” in the soul, and thereby prevents your soul from getting dragged to inappropriate pleasures.

Solving Drinking In Order To Act Crazy

Now we will progress to the solution for addictive drinking that stems from **wind** (within water-of-water), which is when a person drinks alcohol that is extremely high in its amount of alcohol. The

person does this because he anticipates the high amount of crazy movements that he will be able to perform as he's drunk.

He lacks a revealed amount of *da'as* in his life, thus, he is seeking actions that are lacking in their purpose. He simply wants to act silly, so he gets drunk for that specific agenda. This can happen either from a desire for extreme drinking, or from drinking beverages that are very high in their alcohol content.

On a more extreme level of this problem, there are those who, *rachmana litzlan*, who will get very drunk just so they can be able to act crazy in front of others, and they are apt to fall to the lowest kinds of behaviors as they are drunk and as they are “performing” for others. They bring down others' spiritual level with them as they do this, pulling down others with into depraved behavior that is of the “50th gate of impurity”

The root behind this person's issues is that he is seeking to do actions that have no purpose to them, because he lacks a general sense of purpose to his life. The solution for this kind of person, then, is to think about what the goal of life is.

His problem is that he lives life without a sense of purpose, thus, if we can get him to think about the purpose of life more often - which is the fact that we are supposed to become closer to Hashem³⁵ - he will in turn be able to lessen his desire to perform crazy moves that are meaningless. His life will then gain more meaning, and that will in turn cause him to recognize that there is no point in engaging in actions that have no purpose to them.

Drinking That Stems From Emptiness

The next kind of addictive drinking we will discuss stems from **fire** within water-of-water. This is when a person drinks when he feels times of emptiness in his life; for example, when he is alone in his house and he suddenly feels an inner emptiness in his life, and he wants to relieve the emptiness. He feels unaccomplished in his life and thus wishes to relieve the emptiness he is currently feeling, by drinking a little.

Such drinking is not being done out of *taavah*/desire, but simply to relieve his emptiness. This kind of desire can come to any person who feels empty sometimes.

This is unlike the first scenario we discussed, which is when a person engages in addictive drinking on a regular basis; these are desires for drinking that stem from **earth** (of-water-water-of-water). This kind of person feels empty on an ongoing basis. Now we are discussing drinking desires that stem from **fire** (of water-of-water-of-water), which are different than this: these desires that come very suddenly to a person – the person feels empty right now, and he wants to fill his emptiness.

35 As stated in the beginning of sefer Mesillas Yescharim

All of us, to a certain extent, can identify with this. We can all feel times in which we feel empty inside. Even a person who has a regular schedule every day in which he learns Torah might still feel empty sometimes, and this can happen when he is alone in his house. He will feel a need to relieve the emptiness, so he might wish to drink a little alcohol and relieve his pain. This is not being done out of desire. It is coming from a wish to relieve the internal pain that a person is feeling.

When a person feels inner emptiness and he feels like he wants to relieve it, and he is a bit aware of it (many people are not aware of it as it is taking place, and they only become aware of it after they engage in some desire to relieve it), he can counter his inner emptiness with the following reflection.

The Solution

1) **Identifying**. He should clarify to himself that his desire to drink is not coming from desire, but rather from an inner emptiness he is feeling.

2) **Positive Thoughts**. Then, he should think about something positive in his life. He should ask himself what he has accomplished so far in his life, and this will make him feel a bit satisfied from his life, which will weaken his feeling of emptiness.

Even if this doesn't make him totally satisfied inside, to a certain extent it can still weaken the emptiness that he is feeling.

Being Able To Think Positive

However, this can only work for someone who regularly is used to being “*someiach b'chelko*” (happy towards himself). When someone isn't used to dwelling on his point of “*someiach b'chelko*”, he instead spends all his time thinking about what else he needs to accomplish, or about what he's missing in his life. If someone is used to being “*someiach b'chelko*”, though, he is already used to thinking about his accomplishments, and when he feels sad, he is able to remind himself of those accomplishments, because he has already familiarized himself with this kind of positive thinking towards himself.

In order to implement the solution of reminding yourself of your accomplishments, you have to already dwell on your positive aspects about life already beforehand on a regular basis, and then you will be able to summon thoughts again when you're down. Without already being used to the concept of *someiach b'chelko*, then you just “know” about your good qualities and accomplishments, and it won't be enough to help you when you feel down. Therefore, when you feel empty sometimes, it won't help if you reflect on the mere fact that you are a Jew and to try to feel happy at this, nor will it help you to remind yourself of your ‘*maalos*’ (positive qualities). It is about getting used to being happy about that which you have already *accomplished* in your life. Your soul is then already used to dwelling on your accomplishments, which will in turn helps you deal with times in

which you feel empty. Without getting used to this kind of thinking beforehand, a person merely “knows” about what to be happy about in the back of his mind, but it doesn’t affect him. The *nefesh habehaimis* (animalistic layer of the soul) in a person gains nothing from just “knowing” about the fact that you are a Jew or that you have certain *maalos*, and when your soul feels empty sometimes, it might seek alcohol to relieve the emptiness. It won’t help then to try and focus on positive thoughts.

Thus, reflection on your positive attributes (the fact that you are a Jew, or the fact that you have special qualities, or the fact that you have certain accomplishments thus far) won’t help you when you feel empty, if you haven’t gotten used to thinking about those positive thoughts on a more regular basis.

Giving Drinking Some Outlet

The issue is, though, that when a person is feeling empty, he isn’t able to think calmly about his positive attributes. And if he doesn’t have accomplishments that he can think of, what then can he do to alleviate himself? For such a person, it is recommended for a person to give in to a little bit of the desire for the drink, so that he can pacify his *nefesh habehaimis* (‘animal’ layer of the soul). This calms down the *nefesh habehaimis* a bit, and now you are free to think calmly.

After you take a little of the drink, now is the time to reflect about positive thoughts, which will remind you of what you have to be ‘*someiach b’chelko*’ about, and this will cure your feeling of emptiness. The mechanics behind this solution [of taking a little sip from the drink and then thinking positively towards yourself] is because when the *nefesh habehaimis* in oneself isn’t calmed, it is hard for a person to think calmly. If you calm it a bit, by letting it have some of the desire for the drink, you will be able to reflect calmly on your point of ‘*someiach b’chelko*’, which calms the feeling of emptiness that your *nefesh habehaimis* is feeling. Understandably, there are also additional solutions to cure emptiness that exist, such as getting up to walk fast or to move around quickly. These are also methods that can be helpful, but beyond the current scope of this discussion; we can’t cover it all here.

In Summary

To summarize, in this chapter, we have described the four kinds of desires for addictive drinking and how to solve them: (1) Drinking on a regular basis³⁶, (2) Drinking to get drunk, due to influence of surroundings;³⁷ (3) Drinking in order to act crazy³⁸; (4) Drinking in order to relieve one’s inner emptiness.³⁹

36 Which is solved through developing our inner world through exertion in Torah study, working on our middos, and putting our heart into what we do.

37 Which is solved through developing holy hobbies, such as finishing tractate upon tractate of Gemara, or by immediately giving tzedakah right after giving tzedakah.

11 | *Impulsiveness*⁴⁰

WIND-OF-WATER-OF-WATER

Wind-of-Water – Getting Dragged Impulsively

We will continue, with Hashem’s help, our discussion on the topic of desires. We will now discuss desires which stem from ‘wind’ aspect of-water-of-water in the soul.

As we have explained previously, desire stemming from **water-of-water** is when a person is ‘dragged’ after the desire. When desires of this nature are causing a person to perform many **movements** in order to get to the desire, however, it is particularly coming from the ‘wind’ **aspect** that is within water-of-water.

A person might get dragged after desires and engage in rapid movements as he’s getting dragged toward it, in four different kinds of scenarios: earth, water, wind and fire. So within **wind-of-water-of-water**, there will be four divisions: (1) **Earth**-of-Wind-of-Water-of-Water, (2) **Water**-of-Wind-of-Water-of-Water, (3) **Wind**-of-Wind-of-Water-of-Water, (4) **Fire**-of-Wind-of-Water-of-Water.

Imitating The Surroundings, Out of Anxiousness

The first kind of scenario of getting ‘dragged’ is when a person is permanently dragged after his surroundings, and as a result, his actions are always carried out in a chaotic manner. This is stemming from an aspect of **earth**, due to the permanent nature of the actions, because earth is the root of permanence. And since this kind of dragging after the surroundings is causing a person to act quickly, it is coming from **earth**-of-wind-of-wind-of-water.

These are people who act very anxiously. Their life is spent in a constant state of *behalah* (chaos). When a person feels empty inside himself from any inner content, he will get dragged after his surroundings. When a person is dragged after doing what his surroundings do and he does this on a set basis, and as a result his life becomes a constant *behalah*/chaos, he will be dragged after even the smallest thing taking place in his surroundings.

38 Which is solved by reflecting on the purpose of our life, which is to strive to become close to Hashem.

39 Which is solved by: 1) Regularly reflecting on your accomplishments and good attributes to be happy about (such as your qualities, or the fact that you are a Jew and thus you have a lot to be happy about), 2)By taking a little sip of the alcoholic beverage; 3) By once again reflecting on positive thoughts in your life as you’re feeling any inner emptiness.

⁴⁰ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-011-impulsiveness>

To illustrate, a child is always involved with small noises, such as playing with his toys. Every small noise in his surroundings pulls him after it. A child has no *daas* (mature understanding) and therefore he forgets about the noises a second later, so he doesn't become permanently attached to what goes on in his surroundings.

An adult, however, although he has *daas*, if he gets dragged after noises, might become pulled after his surroundings on a set basis, on even anything that goes on. His life becomes a state of *behalah*/chaos, because his thoughts are constantly getting dragged after different things that his surroundings are engaged in.

Such people are always acting in a nervous manner. Their life is full of internal suffering. They suffer on this world and don't get *chiyus* (vitality) from what they do, and they don't get reward for this either in the Next World. This person spends his whole life in a *behalah* – his thoughts are constantly unfocused in whatever he does. He doesn't have *chiyus* from what he does or from what his surroundings do, and he merely does everything because he's dragged after society and copies his surroundings.

This kind of person will “do what he has to do” and therefore he will do all the actions in life that he needs to perform, but only because his surroundings do so, and not because he is acting from within himself. He lives life superficially. He doesn't feel any vitality from what he does. His thoughts are in constant chaos from always doing whatever everyone else does, and therefore everything he does is done out of anxiousness, with no inner vitality to it.

2) Curiosity Towards Surroundings

The next kind of dragging is from **water** within wind-of-water-of-water. This is when a person is dragged from one thing to the next after he is begins to get dragged after his surroundings.

For example, when a person walks into a supermarket to buy something he needs, but along the way, he gets dragged after many other items in the store and buys more items than what he needed. A person takes in his surroundings and feels a desire to explore the entire place, dragged after one aisle to the next, in his curiosity.

Some people are always finding themselves dragged after one particular thing, while there are others who simply have a nature to get dragged from one thing to another, out of curiosity; it is the second kind of person that we are addressing.

To give another example, some people love to talk, and they can keep talking more and more about different matters, and they have a nature to talk continuously without being able to stop. This is an example of someone who keeps getting dragged from one topic to the next, and he keeps going and going, finding it very hard to stop himself; this is an example of the problem we are currently describing.

There are people who have a very talkative nature, but as soon as they are told that they're talking too much, or when they get the hint, they'll stop talking; this kind of person doesn't have the problem of constantly getting dragged, because he knows how to catch himself as he's getting dragged. But others cannot stop talking and they keep changing the topic of their conversation without stopping, and the root of this problem is because they are continuously dragged from one thing to another; we are addressing this kind of person.

3) Quick Impulsiveness

The next kind of getting dragged can be coming from the **wind** within wind-of-water-of-water. This is when a person is dragged after the surroundings and he quickly moves towards what he's being dragged after.

It's another kind of *behalah* (acting chaotic) which we discussed earlier, but the difference is that earlier when we discussed *behalah*, we discussed a *behalah* that is coming from the element of **earth** within wind-of-water-of-water, which is when a person is dragged after surroundings on a set basis. Such a person, although he acts chaotic as a result of always doing what society does, still has some *yishuv hadaas* (settled mind). But now we are discussing another kind of *behalah*, which comes from **wind** (in wind-of-water-of-water), the root of quick movement.

This is when a person rapidly moves toward something in his surroundings, and he moves towards it anxiously, because he has become so curious. The person here is so dragged into what goes in his surroundings that he will move towards it very quickly.

To illustrate, there is a kind of person who will see an argument going on, and he will quickly get involved in the argument too, even if he has nothing to do with the argument. The person gets dragged into what's going on in his surroundings, and he quickly involves himself in what's going on, even when it's about something that has nothing to do with him. So he's not just being dragged; he's rapidly moving towards whatever he's being dragged after.

If a person moves very quickly to something that he really needs, this is understandable. But here we are discussing a person who is quickly dragged into something that he doesn't need to get involved in. The only reason why he gets involved is because he has an impulsive nature to get dragged after what goes on in his surroundings.

4) Passionate Impulsiveness

The next scenario of getting dragged is when it is coming from **fire** (within wind-of-wind-of-water). This takes the previous scenario of wind and takes it even further. It is when a person becomes full of fiery passion as he's getting dragged into something going on in his surroundings, even when it's about something that has nothing to do with him.

In the previous case we discussed, which was wind, in which a person gets involved in an argument that he really has nothing to do with, he is only doing so out of curiosity and excitement. He doesn't feel a connection to the argument, but he involves himself anyway, simply because he is impulsive.

But in the current case we are discussing, fire, a person will not only get involved with something going on in his surroundings that he doesn't have to do with; he will get involved in it passionately, feeling personally connected to the argument, thinking that he really does have something to do with this argument, when in reality, this argument has nothing to do with him, and he is just acting like a hothead.

If this nature is used for holiness, it is when a person is burning for the *emes* (truth) and therefore he gets very passionate when he feels that he must defend and fight for *emes*. But others are simply getting dragged after a desire to involve themselves with the surroundings, and they can get sparked up to pursue something that they don't need. It is this second kind of person we are discussing.

In the previous scenario we discussed, which was **wind**, a person moves quickly to involve himself with what's going on in his surroundings that he's curious about, even when those things have nothing to do with him. But in the case we are discussing, when the impulsive dragging is stemming from **fire**, a person feels that he needs to pursue something even though it has no relevance to him, and he thinks that it really does have relevance to him personally.

For example, much *machlokes* (strife) that goes on in today's times is often fire-related, not wind-related. A person today who gets caught up in *machlokes* not simply out of curiosity and impulsiveness, but because he thinks that he has a personal involvement with the *machlokes* and that he belongs in it, while in reality, he really had nothing to do with this *machlokes*. He involved himself in the *machlokes* when he really shouldn't have, and he enters it with fiery passion, feeling that he must get involved. (This resembles the nature of the *machlokes* of Korach and his followers...)

So getting dragged into surroundings due to **wind** is when a person knows he's pursuing something that's not for him to pursue, and he is simply acting impulsively because he is curious, while **fire** is when a person feels emotionally involved with something in his surroundings that is really not for him to pursue, because he convinces himself that he is supposed to get involved.

We have described all of the problems; now we will go through the solutions, with the help of Hashem.

Discovering Your Individuality

First we will go through the solution of the problem in the first scenario, when a person is dragged after his surroundings on set basis, and thus all of his actions are performed chaotically and anxiously. This kind of dragging comes from **earth** (within wind-of-water-of-water).

Whenever a person is dragged after something, whether it's a particular object that catches his curiosity or whether he is always copying whatever society does, the inner reason behind this is that he is really being dragged out of his "I." Whenever he pursues something, he's really leaving his "I".

Therefore, if a person would know his true identity – if he would come to recognize what his "I" is - he would get a lot less dragged after what society does. The problem is that he lives life superficially, always doing what his surroundings do, without ever having developed his own individuality. He is not in touch with his inner self, with his "I", thus, if he attains self-awareness, he will find that he gets less dragged after what his surroundings do.

Of course, no is clear who he really is, and if anyone thinks he's that clear who he is and that he has attained perfect self-recognition, such as person is a *baal gaavah* (arrogant person), or a he is a complete fool.

But if a person has at least some degree of self-recognition of himself, he has developed his element of earth in the soul for holiness, and such a person will get less dragged after the "earth"- his surroundings. In other words, the more inner that a person becomes, the less he is dragged after superficiality, and the more that a person is "himself", the less he is dragged after things in society which are not "Me."

These are two different ramifications of the concept; one aspect is to become more internal and less superficial, while another aspect in this is for a person to only do actions that are "himself" and avoid actions that are not "himself".

To illustrate, there are people who learn a lot of Torah, but they are learning more than their mental capabilities can handle, like when they learn parts of Torah that that are not meant for them to currently learn. They are learning Torah in a way that has to mimic their surroundings, and they disconnect from their true self in doing so.

Another example is that there are people who do a lot of *chessed*, throwing themselves all day into an endeavor which is really not meant for them to work on, but they do so anyways, because they know that others do it and therefore they feel obliged to do the same.

These two kinds of people are not acting like their true self and are forcing themselves to fit a certain mold that they have cut out for themselves, based on society. But acting like this will cause a person to leave his true self and involve himself with actions that are not meant for him to pursue, on his current level, for he is not yet in touch with his true self, and therefore he is doing things that are above his capacity. He is too dragged after what his surroundings do, and he has no individuality of his own.

The better a person recognizes his "I" and gets in touch more with his true self (and as we mentioned, no one reaches perfect self-awareness, but each person can still reach a degree of self-awareness by trying to recognize what his "I" really is), the more he will be connected to himself, and the less he will be pulled after what his surroundings are doing.

This is the way to fix the nature to get dragged into doing things that the surroundings do.

2. Get To Know Your Self, then Expand Outward

The next scenario we discussed is when a person, after getting dragged after surroundings, is dragged from one thing to the next. This problem stems from **water** (within wind-of-water).

The *Maharal* and others say that the whole concept of *galus*, exile, is really a situation in which a person lacks true self-awareness, and that *geulah*/redemption is about revealing one's true self. This concept forms the basis for our entire inner *avodah*: that a person must come to have a deep awareness about himself – he must get in touch with his “I.”

People who have a bit of self-recognition – even if it's not complete – are able to avoid getting dragged after surroundings.

There are two stages in all our inner *avodah*. First a person has to reach his “I”, and this was what we explained above. After that, however, a person has an *avodah* to be able to leave the “I” - to go above it.

Most people are far from their “I”, and they have never reached their true self; they are always doing actions that are not in their league. When a person is still in the first stage of trying to avoid superficiality, he must come to identify his “I”, by improving his actions. He must do actions that reflect his true self. That is the first part of one's *avodah*.

After one reaches his “I” and he is used to doing actions that emanate from his own individuality, he must now learn how to transcend his “I”. In this way, he uses the power to get ‘dragged’ for holiness, by ‘dragging’ himself away from his ego, which will in turn help him avoid getting dragged after society.

The Prerequisite Stage: Nullifying Your Desires To Hashem

However, even before you have reached your “I”, your *avodah* begins with trying to overcome the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination), that needs to learn how align his will with Hashem's will. That is the first step of all our *avodah*, and it has to be reached even before a person gets to his “I”.

Hiskalelus: Integrating

After a person reaches his “I”, now he has an opposite *avodah*: he must do things that are the opposite of “I”. The reason for this is because a person has to gain *hiskalelus*, integration, with the collective whole of the Jewish people, and this is our *avodah* of *Ahavas Yisrael*.

Getting Used To Leaving The “I”

A person therefore needs to learn how to connect with other people who are not like him, and with places that are not like him. This must be done sensibly, or else it will be detrimental and ruin a person's individuality.

Most people in the world are involved with actions that aren't really for them to do, and their inner self is being suffocated by all of this. The true way is for a person to first reach his own individuality and only do things that are meant for his capacity, and only after a person has strengthened his connection to his inner self can he now seek to transcend his inner self and do things that are opposite his personality.

How does a person do things that aren't himself? At first, you need to do things that you don't feel connected to, as a learning process, and it is a kind of *yissurin* (suffering) you need to accept upon yourself. The second thing you need to do is to drag yourself after things that aren't "you", precisely because that is how you can reach the depth of your individuality.

When a person lives his "I" very strongly, he can connect even to things that are not his personality, and thus be able to 'drag' himself even after things that aren't for him. (When this power is misused, it is used for evil, when a person drags himself after sins, *chas v'shalom*). Go after things that aren't "you", precisely because you are trying to expand beyond yourself; or you can do this out of *emunah* that this is what is wanted of you and that you will be able to get there. There are people who use their power of imagination for this, but you need to be careful with how use the imagination.

All of the *tzaddikim* would practice this: they would allow their "I" to escape past itself and learn new things, by doing things that were not like their personality. This is the holy way to get "dragged", and it helps a person avoid getting dragged after surroundings.

This can be done in either one of two ways, as we mentioned: either you should strive to connect yourself to things that aren't "you", or, you can have *emunah* that you need to do things that aren't "you" because you believe that Hashem will lead you to where you need to get to.

3. Controlling The Expansion Beyond The "I"

However, when you are at this later stage of expanding outward past your "I", you must let your soul get dragged after new kinds of people and places to connect to only as long as you can control yourself from getting dragged too much. You need to allow yourself to get "dragged" past your "I" and thus allow yourself to expand outward only for the sake of developing your "I", but if you find that you can't control yourself once you're getting dragged, then it will only be detrimental to allow yourself to connect to things that are opposite to your personality.

Thus, even when you are at the stage of expanding outward beyond your "I", you must control yourself from getting dragged too much beyond your "I", because if you don't, it shows that you aren't in control of your "I" and you're not really coming out of it, which defeats the whole purpose.

4. *The New “I”*

Finally, the deepest way to avoid getting dragged after surroundings, which is the way to counter fire-based dragging (passionate impulsiveness), is as follows. After you have reached your “I” somewhat, now you have an *avodah* to do things that are against you “I”, so that you can overcome your ego and go beyond it.

Therefore, connect yourself to others who are different from you, and feel that this is actually the real “you”!

Until now, the *avodah* was to expand beyond yourself and do things that go against your “I”, but you are still feeling that those other things are not “you”. However, in the higher part of this stage, which is what are discussing here, you can connect yourself with people who are the opposite of “you” and come to feel that this is precisely where your “I” can be fully reached.

This is really the depth of *ahavas Yisrael* (love for the Jewish people), and it is also the depth of the concept of *hiskalelus*, integrating your private existence with the collective whole of the Jewish people.

(When this power is used for evil, people identify their “I” with things that are really not for them, and sometimes they connect themselves very strongly with even forbidden things and come to feel that this is where their “I” is. For example, there are people who are involved in *mosdos* (organizations) and make this endeavor into their entire life, and they remain like this until they die, when these things are really not meant for them to do!)

Joining Your “I” With The “Collective” Soul

There is a concept called *neshamah hakoleles*, the collective soul of the Jewish people. This is the depth of *Ahavas Yisrael*, in which a person leaves his private existence and identifies another Jew as being himself.

For example, there is a kind of collector who goes around collecting money for another Jew he knows, and he asks for the money as if it was for himself, and he sounds just as desperate as if it would be his own situation. This kind of person has reached the level of *hiskalelus* with the *neshamah hakoleles* of the Jewish people, because he feels that his soul is connected to this act of collecting money for another Jew, even though initially he felt that it’s not him; he feels that the other person’s needs are like his own.

Most people act the same way each day, and they aren’t able to connect themselves with two opposing concepts at once. A deeper person, though, can say two opposing views with the same conviction. He can connect to concepts that oppose his nature.

This is the key to the three pillars that are Torah, *Avodah* and *Chessed* – love for Hashem, love for the Torah, and love for Jews. Doing *chessed* is not just an action, and it is not just compassion; it is to feel love in your soul for another Jew by connecting to his needs no less than if he would be

yourself, and that is the depth of *ahavas Yisrael*. Feeling other's pain as your own is just an example of this concept.

First you need to reach your "I" and only do things that are "you", but after you have reached that and worked on that, you need to then go above your "I" by doing things that oppose your personality. Most people never reach their "I" and are involved with things that are not really meant for them to work on, and their lives are spent in constant *bilbul* (confusion).

Ahavas Yisrael is only reached when you take your "I" and you expand it; when you take the love of yourself and then expand that love to others. It is reached after first loving yourself in a healthy way, when you first reach *echad* (oneness) with yourself because you have developed your "I", and then after that, you can go above yourself and attach yourself to the collective soul of the Jewish people, which is *ahavas Yisrael*.

This is the holy kind of "dragging", which is the deepest method mentioned thus far in how to avoid getting dragged after surroundings: by attaching yourself to a higher place that is above your "I" [which is when you attach your private existence to the collective soul of the Jewish people].

The Deepest Method: Connecting To The Ein Sof of Hashem

Now we will mention the last point about this, which is the deepest point of all of this that completes the picture of this discussion. It will not apply to all people, but it is worth mentioning, so that we can know about it and strive for it somewhat.

Hashem is endless, and He breathed His spirit into man - therefore, the light of His "*Ein Sof*" (Infinite Light) is contained in the soul. This is above even the level of *hiskalelus* with the collective soul.

When this power is misunderstood, a person thinks that he is unlimited, like Pharaoh. But if a person connects to the *ohr Ein Sof* in his soul, he reaches an unlimited kind of dragging for holiness, where he is endlessly pulled after more and more holiness.

It is the deepest way of stopping the nature to get dragged after surroundings, and it is the holiest way to use the soul's nature to get "dragged".

We have explained here the ways of how dragging is evil - and how it can be fixed.

12 | *Coveting*⁴¹

FIRE-OF-WATER-OF-WATER

Fire-of-Water-of-Water: Getting ‘Dragged’ After Destructive Desires

We will now continue with Hashem’s help to discuss the solutions for desires that drag us. We are now up to discussing desires that stem from “**fire**” aspect of **water-of-water** in the soul.

We have explained that the habit of getting ‘dragged’ after something stems from the element of water in the soul. Getting more specific, if a person is getting dragged after something in a way that’s causing him to act destructive, it has an aspect of ‘fire’ to it (for the root of destructiveness is fire), so this kind of desire stems from ‘**fire**’ aspect that is within **water-of-water**.

First we will describe the general outline of this issue, and then we will explain it further.

The Difference Between Water-of-Water-of-Water and Fire-of-Water-of-Water

Desires which ‘drag’ us towards something are stemming from **water-of-water** in the soul, as we explained earlier. This subdivides into four branches – earth, water, wind and fire.

When a person feels permanently attached to the desire of being in the water, it is stemming from **earth-of-water-of-water**. [This was discussed in *Chapter Three*].

When a person is pulled after the enjoyment of swimming in water, this stems from the **water-of-water-of-water**.

When a person is quickly moving from one kind of desire to another desire, this stems from **wind-of-water-of-water**.

When a person is jumping around between all kinds of different desires, this stems from **fire-of-water-of-water**. Thus, a desire which is making a person ‘jumpy’ stems from fire-of-water-of-water.

Two Kinds of ‘Dragging’

So there are really two kinds of ‘dragging’.

One kind of ‘dragging’ is when a person ‘flows’ after a desire, as if he is ‘flowing’ down a river. This kind of ‘dragging’ stems from **water-of-water**, similar to the nature of water which is to flow. A

⁴¹ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-012-coveting>

person who gets ‘dragged’ after a desire will often ‘flow’ after it calmly, as opposed to getting jumpy about it.

But **fire-of-water** is a different source of ‘dragging’. It is when the person is not being ‘dragged’ in a straight flow; rather, he is becoming jumpy from one desire to another.

The Root of Being ‘Antsy’

To be a bit clearer about this, it is really not the force of ‘dragging’ itself, and it is rather a habit which closely resembles getting ‘dragged’.

An example of this are people who cannot remain concentrated on any topic for that much time; they become antsy in what they do, even if it’s only for a small amount of time. They immediately feel that they need to do something else other than what they are currently doing.

The Difference Between Taavah/Gluttony and Chemdah/Coveting

There are two kinds of desires: *taavah* (gluttony), and *chemdah* (coveting). What is the difference? They seem to be the same thing; they are both forms of desire. The simple difference is as follows.

Taavah is about getting dragged after a desire that the person is already involved in and he’s enjoying, and he is getting dragged after it more and more. *Chemdah/coveting* comes from the word *cham*, warmth. It stems from the “fire” aspect that is within water. It is when a person wants to have something that is not his; for example, to desire another person’s possessions, or to covet another person’s wife (which is prohibited by the Torah under the commandment of “*Lo Sachmod*” (“Do not covet”).

Thus, *taavah* is to further desire what I am already enjoying and have, while *chemdah* is to desire something I don’t have. That is all the simple understanding of the difference.

The deeper understanding of the difference, though, is that *taavah* is when a person wants to continue what he already has, while *chemdah* is really to disconnect from one’s current situation by skipping and jumping to something else that seems enjoyable (resembling the jumpy nature of fire).

A ‘*baal taavah*’ (glutton) is someone who runs after pleasure and wants to keep continuing his pleasure. Someone who is a ‘*baal chemdah*’ (always envious), however, is someone who doesn’t enjoy what he has, and he is always desiring what comes next.

One of the examples of *chemdah*, for example, is when one envies another’s wife; when he desires his friend’s wife, he doesn’t appreciate his own wife. So a ‘*baal chemdah*’ is someone who doesn’t enjoy what he has now, and that is why he wants something else.

Thus, the difference between *taavah* and *chemdah* is, that a ‘*baal taavah*’ is dragged after more and more pleasure that he has already enjoyed, whereas a ‘*baal chemdah*’ never even experienced their

first pleasure and are always thinking about what comes next. It seems that both the '*baal taavah*' and the '*baal chemdah*' are people with a gluttonous nature who indulge in desires of This World. But as we have explained, *taavah* and *chemdah* are different kinds of desires. A *chemdah*-rooted desire comes from 'fire' aspect of water-of-water, which is not the simple scenario of gluttony (water-of-water-of-water); it is more of a disconnection from the present.

'Chemdah': 'Disconnected' Pleasure

We should mention that although '*chemdah*' comes from fire-of-water, it does not come from the root element of fire itself. The general element of fire, when it dominates, causes a person a different kind of problem: he will become so jumpy from his dominant amount of fire that he can't concentrate on anything at all.

Here, however, we are speaking about fire-of-water (within the element of water), which is *chemdah*, someone who seems like he desires this world and he always pursuing more desires, yet he doesn't even enjoy anything of his life – not a thing.

Unlike the '*baal taavah*' who has some enjoyment in his life and whose problem stems from a lack of self-control towards on his lusts, the '*baal chemdah*' is always pursuing various desires simply because he never even enjoyed his previous desire. For example, we can see people who love money and who always want more money, but they never get to actually enjoy even one bit of their own money. This can also happen with food; a '*baal taavah*' enjoys his food and he wants more and more, but a '*baal chemdah*' is disconnected from the current '*taavah*' and he is already thinking about his next *taavah* before he has enjoyed his current *taavah*! He's always onto the next stage, when he hasn't even fully enjoyed whatever he had until then.

Therefore, both *taavah* and *chemdah* have different advantages over the other. '*Taavah*' has an advantage in that the person is at least consciously connected and concentrated on what he is doing, while '*chemdah*' has an advantage in that the person has no enjoyment at all in his *taavah*.

However, while we can say how each of these traits appear to be less evil than the other, due to each of their distinct advantages, both of these kinds of people have no life - both on This World and on the Next World. The *baal taavah* is too connected to the desires of This World, and he forfeits the Next World as he pursues all of his desires. The '*baal chemdah*' has it worse: not only does he lose his connection to the Next World as he is always pursuing desires, but he never even gets to enjoy one bit of This World, for he is constantly restless.

'Taavah' Is Partial Disconnection, 'Chemdah' Is Total Disconnection

Time consists of past, present and future. Upon reflection, we can see that both *taavah* and *chemdah* are a disconnection from time. A *taavah*-based desire is when a person is very immersed in the present moment - which disconnects him from thinking about the consequences of the future. A

'*chemdah*'-based desire is about being immersed in the future - which disconnects a person from the present.

Thus, a '*baal taavah*' totally enjoys the present moment, totally immersed in it, and he has no concept of past or future as he immerses himself in a desire. A '*baal chemdah*' is always thinking about what he doesn't have - in his imagination - which are thoughts about the future.

Thinking about the future is an example of the power of imagination; Rav Dessler writes about this. A '*baal chemdah*', who is always immersed in what he wants to gain in the future, is not even connected to the future which he spends so much time thinking about - he is just imagining it, so he is disconnected from both the present and future.

The Concepts of Present and Future

There is a deeper point here as well.

A person needs to clarify what his duty is on this world, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* says. We must always think about the future – about our goal on this world. Thus, our soul has the power to look for the goal in life - and the goal is always in the future. So the idea of contemplating the purpose of life is really our soul's power to think about the future.

But our soul also has the power to be focused on the present moment and to make the most out of it. This is an opposite power in us than the power to think about the future. So there are the two opposite aspects in the soul – the power to think of the present, and the power to think of the future.

The evil uses of these two powers in the soul are *taavah* and *chemdah*. The idea behind *taavah* is that a person is only involved with the present moment, while the idea behind *chemdah* is to think about the future.

Looking Towards The Future: Holy Aspirations

When a person uses the power to worry about the future (and to not think about the present) in a holy way, this is essentially the power of *she'ifah* - to have holy aspirations. The *Orchos Chaim L'Rosh* writes that one should always keep the goal of life in front of you, and that this is the meaning of always remembering the day of death. This is the holy way to think about the future.

Focusing On The Present

There is also a holy way to use the power of being focused on present (and to not think about the future): The *Vilna Gaon* said that a person must focus on the page of *Gemara* he is learning and not

worry about the past or future; he should be totally focused on the present moment. The depth of this matter is that a person can be fully immersed in the here and now, for this is a better place to be in than the past or future.

When the powers of thinking about the present or thinking about future are not turned towards these holy uses mentioned and they are instead used for evil, they become either '*taavah*' or '*chemdah*'. Being too involved in the present (and thus disconnected from the future) is the problem behind *taavah*, while being too focused on the future (and thus disconnected from the present) is the problem behind *chemdah*.

The Key To Rectifying 'Chemdah' and 'Taavah'

Thus, now that we have seen the roots of *chemdah* and *taavah*, we can figure out how to fix them.

Chemdah (fire-of-water-of-water) is fixed by using the power that opposes it, and the same goes for *taavah*. As we know, the classic example of forces that oppose each other are the elements of fire and water. So we need to use the 'water' behind *taavah* in order to counter the 'fire' of *chemdah*, and we can use the 'fire' of *chemdah* in order to counter the 'water' of *taavah*.

Rectifying 'Chemdah'

When a person has a *chemdah*-related desire, he is essentially disconnected from the present; he cannot really connect to what he wants. When a person has a *taavah*-related desire, he feels like he can't let go of the desire. These are two opposing natures: 'fire' in the soul destroys what is in the present by being overly focused on the future, while 'water' in the soul drags a person after the current moment and ignores the future.

This shows us the key to fixing both *chemdah* and *taavah*, now that we have seen the root of the problem: using the inner workings behind one of them will 'cancel' the other one out, as follows.

The '*baal chemdah*' is not enjoying the present and he has no future either, so he has no life altogether. We can all see that there are people who have no happiness whatsoever in their life, even though they have much to be happy about. A person afflicted with *chemdah* is always thinking about the future, and he has nothing to calm him down in the present moment. His life is full of internal suffering because he never enjoys even one moment of his life, pursuing many desires without getting to actually enjoy even one of them.

As a result, he develops a deeper problem: he does not know how to gain from the present moment. He has nothing to soothe his inner anxiety that he feels. A '*baal chemdah*' truly suffers his whole life.

We all suffer, but most people know how to calm themselves down by doing different things, such as by talking to a friend, or through getting involved in some relaxing activity; each person has

his own way to calm himself down when he's anxious. But a person who has a dominant element of fire-of-water-of-water has nothing to calm down his anxiety. He is suffering inside much more than most people do.

The reason for this is because his fire-of-water has become too strong and dominant, so his fire 'dries up' his water. The 'fire' aspect within his 'water' gets so strong that it dries up the 'water' and creates dearth of water in the soul. It destroys not only his enjoyment of the future, but his enjoyment of the present as well, sapping him of any joy in the present moment.

Thus, the solution for *chemdah*, in outline, is to know how to use 'fire-of-water' constructively: to build in oneself the power to connect to both the present and the future at once.

Using The Four Elements To Connect The Present With The Future

There are four ways of how to do this – using the elements of earth, water, wind and fire. [We will briefly describe how to use earth and wind, but we will not describe it that much, because it is more important to know how use water and fire for this, being that *chemdah* involves aspects of fire and water.]

The way to use 'earth' for this is to gain a permanence of something in the present, which counters the 'water' aspect of *taavah*. The way to use 'wind' for this is to move towards the desire in steps, which counters the jumpiness of the 'fire' of *chemdah*.

As for the 'water' and 'fire' aspects, which are the main two factors here – being that *chemdah* is rooted in fire-of-water – we will need to examine both of these elements more deeply in order to know how to use them here.

Connecting Present and Future Together

Water represents desiring the present (*taavah*), while fire represents a desire for the future (*chemdah*). Most people, to a certain extent, are involved both in the present and future, so their thoughts about the present and the future are always jumbled together. This is a problem in the soul which needs to be sorted out.

Someone who is a true *Baal Bitachon* (one who trusts in Hashem) lives the future even in the here and now, which is holy. But with most people, the present and future is mixed together in their thoughts.

Children are totally involved with either present or future, and this is an example of total disconnection. But most people, who are not as disconnected from present and future as children are, are still somewhat disconnected; the thoughts of most people are constantly going back and forth in their minds between immersion in either present or future.

Contemplate the following. We have an obligation each day to believe in and await the coming of Moshiach, even though he tarries. This comes from the power in our soul to await the future, even today, when the future is not here yet. We believe Moshiach will come, but it is more than just a belief: we have to always *hope* that he will come. The hope that he will come affects us in the here and now.

This shows us that we have the power to be aware of the future even as we are in the present, in a way that does not mix us up between the present and the future.

Thus, a person has to become aware of both his abilities to be involved in the present as well as to think about the future. One should know that he has these two different abilities in his soul – present and future – and in addition, he needs to know when and where to use them. In this way, he avoids getting mixed up all the time in his thoughts between present and future, when he learns how to separate present from future, and vice versa.

This is not limited to, for example, knowing when *Kiddush Levanah* will be, and when *Zman Krias Shema* will be. We need to reveal our ability to be involved in the present as well our ability to be involved with the future, by becoming aware of these two separate abilities of perception, and then we need recognize how to use them.

The Avodah of The Three Weeks and Tisha B'Av: Connecting To Past, Present, and Future

Sometimes we need to use the focus on the present, and sometimes we need to focus on the future.

For example, during the Three Weeks, our *avodah* incorporates all three aspects – past, present and future. We need to imagine what the first and second *Beis HaMikdash* was like, which is the past. We also need to think about the present: the fact that the *Beis HaMikdash* is destroyed and how much ramifications this has on us in our times. And we need to think about the future *Beis HaMikdash* and long for the redemption.

However, we must be clear about what is past, what is present, and what is future, and not mix them up in our thoughts. As we are focusing on the destruction, we should not be thinking about the redemption. As we focus on redemption, we should not think of the present or the past. And as we think about the present situation of destruction, we need to properly mourn, so we should not be thinking then of the future redemption.

We can give many more examples of the concept, but the point is, that the abilities to think of past, present and future should not become jumbled together in one thought at once. If you are focused on the past, you need to be able to focus on the present and future, but that doesn't mean that you should be thinking of the present and future as you are actually thinking about the past.

This is not just another concept to 'know' about. You need to know how to *connect* yourself properly to the past, present and future, and isolate each of them in your thoughts.

With specific regards to the *avodah* we have during the Three Weeks and the Nine Days, you can connect to the past by studying the words of *Chazal* about what happened then during the *Churban*. And you can become aware of the present by reflecting on the situation of the world today, which is in the depths of destruction, all a result of the *Churban* from long ago. And you connect to the future by awaiting and longing for *Moshiach* and the future *Beis HaMikdash*.

The clearer we become to these concepts, the more we can connect to either the past, present and future when we have to, depending on the situation.

Fighting One Evil With Another Kind of Evil

Now let us return to how we can rectify either *taavah* or *chemdah*.

If a person wants to overcome *taavah*, he can oppose it by awakening its opposite, which is *chemdah*, and if he wants to get rid of *chemdah*, he should awaken the nature of *taavah*! This is one of the ways of “using one kind of evil to fight another kind of evil”, a concept we mentioned earlier.⁴²

The nature of *taavah*, which is a desire for the present, can ‘cancel out’ *chemdah*, because ‘water’ (or focusing on the present) can douse out the ‘fire’ (thinking about the future). And the nature of *chemdah* ‘cancels out’ *taavah* because the ‘fire’ of *chemdah* counters the ‘water’ of *taavah*: it takes you away from getting ‘dragged’ after a *taavah* that is immersing you in the present moment.

Conscious Awareness Of Your Soul’s Abilities

These concepts might sound strange at first, because it is hard to use our soul’s abilities and active them on a conscious level. But you can use your soul abilities clearly and consciously, if you learn how to gain more and more clarity in your soul.

Our *avodah* throughout all of this, when we involve ourselves with inner work and self-improvement, is to strive to live in an *olam barur*, a “clear world”: to have inner clarity in ourselves, to give inner order to all of our soul’s abilities, knowing when and where how to use them; in other words, to become self-aware.

People often are not self-aware of what’s going on in their soul. If a person is at least more of an intellectual type, he can be aware of himself partially, but most people are not even intellectual. The more you use your intellect, the more you become at least intellectually aware of yourself.

When people aren’t aware of their soul, they view their soul as a mix random emotions: that sometimes we get angry, sometimes we are sad, sometimes we are excited, sometimes we are full of wonder, etc.

⁴² See the end of the *shiur* of *Fixing Laziness #02- Solving Laziness Due To Earth-of-Earth*.

This is a false perception of ourselves. A person has to give inner order to his soul's abilities, and to become consciously aware of them as they are taking place.

Tisha B'Av: The Avodah of Before 'Chatzos' And After 'Chatzos'

On the night of *Tisha B'Av*, when we are in mourning, we recite *Kinnos* and we must feel the pain over the *Churban* (the Destruction) and reflect about it. Our *avodah* until *chatzos* (noon) of the next day is to reflect on both past and present. We need to reflect on the past and imagine the *Churban*, and we need to reflect on our current situation, how we are missing a *Beis HaMikdash*. The *halachah* is that we cannot sit down on a chair until *chatzos* of the day, and the depth behind this is because our *avodah* then is to dwell on the past and the present, which is the idea of the *Churban*.

After *chatzos*, the *halachah* is that we get up from mourning, and we place the chairs in their proper place, so that we can sit down on a chair and show, that in the future we will get up from mourning and merit the redemption. Therefore, the *avodah* of *Tisha B'Av* after *chatzos* is to reflect on the future.

This does not mean that we should simply forget about the *Churban* after the time of *chatzos*. It just means that we have a deep place in our soul which can think about the future redemption, which is meant to be accessed after *chatzos* on *Tisha B'Av*.

If a person never thinks about this, he goes through *Tisha B'Av* very superficially. Maybe he will fulfill all of its *halachos*. But he thinks that getting up after *chatzos* means that we are supposed to forget about the *Churban* and just focus on the future redemption. As we explained, this is incorrect.

After *chatzos*, we must still dwell on the past and present, but it is just that we must also think about the future redemption as well. So getting up after *Chatzos* is not about simply disconnecting from the past and present situation of *Churban* and to just think about the future redemption. After *chatzos*, the *avodah* is, that although we are still in the present and we need to think about the past *Churban*, we should **also** think about the future redemption.

This is in contrast to the *avodah* we have on the night of *Tisha B'Av*, which is to think only about past and present destruction, and not about the future redemption.

13 } The Desire For Exertion⁴³

Desires Stemming From Wind-of-Water

We will continue with the help of Hashem to discuss the trait of desire, which is rooted in the element of water. Until now, we discussed desires rooted in earth-of-water and water-of-water, as well as their subdivisions.

Now we will discuss desires rooted in **wind**-of-water. This will subdivide into four branching kinds of desires – earth, water, wind and fire. First we will start with “earth” of wind-of-water.

Water-based desires (water-of-water) are desires that drag a person, and wind-based desires (wind-of-water) are desires that cause movement, as we have explained earlier. Earth-based desires (also within water) are desires that lead toward something lasting and permanent; the person will desire a certain action so that he can have something permanent from it.

1) Earth-of-Wind-of-Water

When a person is moving towards a certain desire so that he can be able to *rest afterwards* from the action, feeling content from a sense of accomplishment that he has put in all his energy, the desire is coming from the “earth” aspect of wind-of-water.

This power is used for evil when once uses up all his energy in order to be able to be lethargic afterwards, and it is used for holiness when a person exerts himself in Torah study, which uses up one’s energy for holiness.

2) Water-of-Wind-of-Water

Desires stemming from **water**-of-wind-of-water are when a person desires to move and he enjoys the movement, and he is being dragged towards it.

Examples of this are people who enjoy what they do but they are just being dragged after those actions; they would rather not do it, but they get dragged, for example, when they see someone else doing the same action and they get dragged after their surroundings.

They enjoy the movement involved in whatever they are doing, but it is not the enjoyment factor which is pulling them to do the action; rather, it is the *dragging* after the surroundings which is causing the person to move after fulfilling the desire.

⁴³ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-013-desire-exertion>

3) Wind-of-Wind-of-Water

Desires stemming from **wind-of-wind-of-water** are when a person enjoys it when he keeps moving without pause.

For example, there are people who keep making phone calls non-stop, and it is often community figures who have this problem; there are also people who are always moving around from one action to another. These are people that cannot sit still; they always feel that they have to be active and doing something.

4) Fire-of-Wind-of-Water

Desires stemming from **fire-of-wind-of-water** is when a person seeks something new or different and he actively pursues it. The enjoyment here is coming from the renewal that he finds in what he is 'moving' towards. [This is also known as the trait of *chemdah*, to covet.]

We have outlined the problems, and now we will go through the solutions to each of them, one by one. [This chapter will explain **earth-of-wind-of-water** and its solution. The others will be explained in the coming chapters].

Solving Desires Stemming From Earth-of-Wind-of-Water: Using Up All Energy

Desires stemming from **earth-of-wind** (of-water), as we explained, are a kind of desire in which a person moves and uses his energy so that he can feel like he has movement, and he is active until he has no energy left.

The satisfaction he feels when he is done is what is motivating him to use up his energy. The feeling of permanence he has from it is coming from the nature of earth, which is pulling him (water) and moving him (wind), thus, it is a desire stemming from the "earth" within wind-of-water.

We all have movement, but when do we stop? Normally, any person who is a bit self-aware knows that he needs to move when he has to, when there is a need for it. But there are people who can't stop moving unless they feel that they have used up all their energy, and only after they are utterly exhausted do they finally stop being active. This is the problem we are discussing here.

To illustrate, there are even people who don't come home at the end of the day unless they have used up all their energy during the day. This kind of person, when he gets to that point of having no more energy left, feels satisfied when he reaches his limits, and he derives a sense of enjoyment from this. When he realizes he doesn't have more energy, he actually enjoys this, and that is his main enjoyment here.

It's not that he's enjoying the fact that he's working hard. [If that would be case, it would be **water-of-wind-of-water**, because he is mainly in it for the 'enjoyment' of working hard]. Rather, his

whole enjoyment is when he gets the endpoint of what he's doing; when he gets to the top of his limits. And when he gets to that peak, it is then that he feels satisfied. So what he is mainly enjoying is not the very work itself, but the fact that he uses up all his energy. This is **earth**-of-wind-of-water.

The Difference Between Wind-of-Wind and Earth-of-Wind

We need to explain the difference between desires stemming from wind-of-wind and desires stemming from earth-of-wind (which we are discussing here).

Desires stemming from **wind**-of-wind are when a person desires the very notion of using his energy, and this is the nature of the wind in the soul, which seeks movement.

But desires stemming from **earth**-of-wind is when a person desires the serenity he will feel when he uses up his energy, therefore, he uses up all his energy so that he can get to that point and enjoy the satisfying feeling of accomplishment. The pleasure he has here is experienced only when he reaches the endpoint of his limitations. So when a person desires movement of this sort, it is coming from **earth**-of-wind-of-water.

It resembles the nature of earth, which utilizes the potential of the other three elements and activates them. Just as the earth can nurture a seed and enable it to grow when it is given water, air, and sunlight, so does the element of earth in the soul enable the other three elements of water, wind and fire to become utilized to their potential. Earth takes the three elements and allows their potential to become actualized. When a person is seeking to utilize his potential, he is really using earth in his soul.

When this power is used for holiness, it is used to exert oneself in Torah study; one can use up all his energy in order to learn it, and he can enjoy this too. It is very enjoyable when he comes home tired and exhausted from a whole day of learning; he gets into bed feeling very satisfied that he has used all his energy today, that he has utilized the full amount of his potential.

But when this power in a person is used for evil, a person will seek to utilize all his potential when it comes to matters of the physical world, and he will attempt to utilize his potential in all kinds of areas which are detrimental for him to involve himself in.

Balance Between Our Limited Aspect and Our Non-Limited Aspect

There are two opposite powers in the soul – the point of limits in us, and the point of the unlimited. We are limited humans, but at the same time, Hashem breathed into us His own spirit, so there is an unlimited aspect in our soul which comes from Hashem.

Therefore, there is a part in our soul which seeks transcendence over our limits. It is also referred to as the point of “Yosef” in the soul, from the word *hosafah*, to add, which is also from the word *sof*,

the end. When a person reaches the *sof* end of his soul, he wants *hosafah* - he wants to “add” onto his limits, to go beyond the end of his limits.

To illustrate, the *Yam Suf* (the Mediterranean Sea) is from the word *sof*; when the Jewish people came to the Yam Suf, they were at the *sof* of the land; they had reached an endpoint, for there was no turning back. What did they do? They were told to jump in, to go past the *sof*. The lesson from this is, when you reach the *sof* the end, now you need to go ‘beyond’ the end – now that you have reached the limits, you can now push further and go beyond your regular limits.

The power to use our energy and reach the end of our limits is an ability that can be used for either good or evil. When a person finishes a tractate of *Gemara*, he has reached the end of something, and the custom is that he makes a festive meal, a *siyum*. But as we know, one must not remain complacent just because he has achieved and finished something. He must continue to finish more tractates of *Gemara*, and we mention this in the *tefillah* we say when we make a *siyum*, that just as we have finished this tractate, so must we continue to finish even more tractates.

Thus, when one has used up all his energy in something, he must not think that he has truly come to the *siyum* (end) of his soul’s abilities. He must use the power of his ‘Yosef’ within and seek *hosafah* – to ‘add’ onto his limits, to seek more spiritual accomplishments.

How To Use Your Energies

Therefore, one should become aware of why he seeks to use up his energy. Earth in the soul is what helps a person reach his limits, while wind in the soul can stir movement and spur on a person to go beyond his normal limits. When earth and wind in the soul are balanced together, they harmonize, and this balance gives a person an understanding that he has limits, and he uses his potential until he has no more energy left. Making use of earth-of-wind in the soul is what helps a person reach the end of one’s movements, and the person enjoys it when he gets to that endpoint.

(To clarify, it is **earth-of-wind** in the soul, not just **earth** in the soul. **Earth** in the soul is just to reach one’s limits, while **earth-of-wind** in the soul is to give movement to the limits, which can help a person go beyond his limits when he reaches his normal limits.)

Therefore, one must use his **earth-of-wind** in the soul by knowing that he has limits, so when he reaches the end of his potential, he must now awaken his wind, which is to seek to go beyond his end and try to accomplish even more.

(On a deep note, this is also the depth behind the difference between the wicked and the righteous. A wicked person when he reaches the end of his limits, he remains in his earth, and he enjoys the earth so much that he doesn’t go beyond with it. A *tzaddik*, when he reaches his ends and limits, he realizes that although he has completed something, he continues even more to accomplish - he goes beyond his *sof*.)

So one must try to recognize himself and try to see the limits of his potential, and in this way, he sees how much earth and wind is involved in his movements. The point is to realize that he doesn't have to use up *all* his energy.

Earth in the soul is what enables one to utilize his potential, and this in turn brings one to become still and calm when he is done using his energy. When one reaches his limits, he has *menuchah* (serenity) from this. However, one has to know how much he can really utilize. If a person lives in the right way, he utilizes his energies in what is *needed* to be done, but if someone doesn't know how to use this power, he will seek to utilize his potential in what he *wants* to do, and not in what is needed for him to do.

When one seeks to utilize his potential in what he wants to do where it's not needed, he is using earth for evil, and this will tire him out from his energy. This is the meaning of "Torah that wears a person out." This kind of person uses all his energy, not in what needs to be done, but in what he wants to do, because he's simply following what he enjoys. He will become too serene.

He uses up all his energy, therefore, he is very serene at night when he goes to sleep, but the next day he is apt to get up whenever he wants, and he misses the time for *Kerias Shema* and for *davening*....after all, he feels content from yesterday's hard work, and now he feels that he can sit back and enjoy that feeling of satisfaction.

The proper way to go about the need for utilizing our potential is to first utilize your spiritual potential, to try to do as much as you can, and this is the secret behind exertion in Torah learning.

One should try to channel all his energy in Torah learning. With regards to material matters, one should utilize his potential in what is needed, not what he wants. If one only seeks to utilize his potential in what is not needed, he falls deep into earth-of-water, which are desires that he feels permanence in.

This is very relevant in *Bein HaZemanim*, when people are using this ability all the time: when it comes to trips and excursions and various summer activities, people tend to use all their energy, going away on trips that take up the entire day, and then they are exhausted afterwards. People during trips tend to get too caught up in their activities, and they rush through davening quickly so they can continue the trip.

Unfortunately, this behavior has entered the world of Torah too. For some reason, people think they have to use all their energy until they are exhausted, coming back in middle of the morning from these excursions. This power needs to be channeled in the right direction for holiness: exertion in Torah study, until one has used up all his energy.

Physical Exertion In Torah Learning: A Fine Line

However, even in Torah learning, we must know how to exert ourselves properly and not harm ourselves through overexertion. It is an *avodah* only for certain **individuals** to exert themselves

completely in Torah learning, through their entire body and soul, and most people cannot do it. People burn out after a few days of exertion like this. The body gets weak and then a person loses all his gains, and his very lifestyle becomes extreme too, and he will think he has to use all up his energy when it comes to anything else as well.

Even if a person is physically strong, his soul can't always handle the extreme exertion. Physical exertion is to learn Torah for as many hours as one can handle and using his mind, and exertion of the soul is when a person has *mesirus nefesh* (sacrifice) in his learning. In addition, even after all the exertion, it also needs a lot of Heavenly assistance for one to succeed. It is definitely a valid path, but it requires great *mesirus nefesh* (sacrifice), therefore, it can only apply to rare individuals who are capable of doing this.

So the general remedy is that a person must make sure not to use up all his energy when he's involved in something. He must learn how to be somewhat happy with himself (*someach b'chelko* – happy with his portion), along with working hard. He must not do more than what he can naturally do. One must act within his normal limits.

When a person seeks to utilize **all** of his potential, he won't succeed.⁴⁴ He must instead realize that this is impossible, because if one seeks to use all his potential, that means he is acting above his limits, which is detrimental. This realization calms the soul.

Of course, we must seek always truth, but we must also realize at the same time that we cannot utilize all of our powers. This realization balances out our soul and helps us act in our service to Hashem in a more balanced, productive manner.

⁴⁴ *After the shiur, the Rov clarified to a questioner that one needs to also go a little above his natural strength when it comes to spiritual work (such as Torah learning), but not more than a little bit.*

14 | *The Desire For Motivation*⁴⁵

Water-of-Wind-of-Water: Enjoyment of Transcending Limits

We will continue, with the help of Hashem, to discuss the trait of desire. We are currently discussing desires that stem from **water-of-wind-of-water**. First we will briefly review what was discussed until now.

When a person performs an action, there are always the factors of ‘earth’ and ‘wind’ involved. Wind is the idea of unlimited movement, and earth limits a movement.

When a person reaches the limit of his capabilities, he feels enjoyment in this, and he stays there, because he has reached his goal. This enjoyment is a kind of desire that stem from **earth-of-wind-of-water**. (This was discussed in the previous chapter).

But if he’s enjoying it when he goes above his natural limitations and he keeps going beyond the endpoint of where he originally wanted to get to, this is a different kind of desire: **water-of-wind-of-water**.

The *Gemara* says that there are people who desire food so much that they fill their stomachs until they vomit, and then they begin to eat again. They reach the limits of the desire and then go beyond it. This describes desires that stem from **water-of-wind (of-water)**. A desire stemming from **earth-of-water** (of wind), by contrast, is to reach the limit of the desire, stay there and enjoy it. An example of this is that, as the *Rambam* says that a person should not eat until he is full.

Until now, we discussed what a person will do when he reaches his limits – if he will stay at the limits and enjoy that feeling of reaching his limit (which shows that his desire for the action came from **earth-of-wind-of-water**), or if he wishes to go beyond the limits of his desire (which shows that the desire is rooted in **water-of-wind-of-water**). Now we will explore the motivation that is causing a person to act.

The Root of Our Motivations

Whenever we do something, what is motivating us? When a person chooses to do any act, what is ‘moving’ him to act?

Chazal say that “Nothing is better than *oneg* (holy pleasure), and nothing is worse than *nega* (evil pleasure).” So in every act we do, we seek pleasure. Rav Chaim Vital writes that *taavah* (desire) is called *ahavas taanugim* (the love for pleasures). Sometimes we do things to avoid pain, but here we

⁴⁵ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-014-desire-motivation>

are discussing why people do things in order to attain: people do things in order to get pleasure. *Ahavas taanugim* is thus a large factor in all the acts we do.

Wind-of-water is that we move towards whatever we enjoy. So desires take up a large part of our movements. The main motivating factor behind our movements is: desire.

Without awareness of this, a person is unaware why he eats, sleep, and runs. He doesn't see the root of actions. But when he looks into the root, he can see that desire is what motivates him. So the factor of *pleasure* is motivating most of our actions.

Awareness to this transforms a person's life! One becomes self-aware that he does things for pleasure, and he becomes aware of how he acts *shelo lishmah* (for ulterior motives). We are initially being motivated by *shelo lishmah*, ulterior motivations, and the *shelo lishmah* is essentially drawing us towards *ahavas taanugim* – the love of pleasure.

A person might think he's doing a certain act because of a certain reason, but if he looks deeper into himself, he will discover that there is some ulterior motivation that is pushing him, and it involves seeking pleasure.

Conscious, Subconscious, and Above-Conscious

Yet, there is a more precise way of describing the inner motivations behind our actions. What was said until now forms the basis of all inner *avodah* which the masters of *mussar* spoke about. But there is an even deeper point than this.

There are three parts to our self – the area of our consciousness (in Hebrew, *muda*, or *hakarah*), the area of our sub-conscious (*tat-muda*, or *tat-hakarah*), and the area that is above our conscious state (*al-muda*, or *al-hakarah*).⁴⁶

One part of the self is the areas which are revealed to our consciousness, our "*muda*" (awareness). There is a more inner layer to our self than thus, which is called the sub-conscious; it is called *tat-muda*, and Reb Yisrael Salanter described it as *kochos keihim*, "hidden abilities". These are areas which are not revealed to our [conscious] awareness, and they are the hidden motivations behind how we act.

Getting To Know Your Sub-Conscious

If a person knows himself a little, he is aware of his conscious motivations, but to become aware of the subconscious motivations, a person needs to attain inner calm in order to be able to get into them.

⁴⁶ See the *shiur* of Wine of Purim (*Getting To Know Your Happiness #09*).

There are several ways to become aware of the sub-conscious, but the root way of getting in touch with it is to recognize the inner and subtle voices of our soul, though inner quiet. Being that the subconscious is an area of subtle sounds inside us, we can't hear them amidst noise, so we need quiet in order to hear them and discern them. Through attaining inner calm, a person begins to experience his soul more, and then he can hear subtle sounds inside himself. The more inner calm a person attains, the more he can hear the subtle sounds.

We are not referring to having mere physical quiet; sometimes a person can be sitting in a quiet place but he's still raging inside himself, and the quiet atmosphere can actually make him more anxious and cause him to awaken his evil! We are referring to one who attains internal calmness.

The "Above-Consciousness"

There is a third factor to our psyche as well, which is often not spoken about. It is called the *al-muda*, "above" the conscious - and it is above even the subconscious.

This is the area in us which we cannot comprehend through our logic. The conscious and the subconscious areas can be understood; we can know and understand our conscious motivations, and if we attain inner calm, we can understand even what's going on in our subconscious. But the area of "above-conscious" cannot be comprehended logically.

It is described in the statement, "The purpose of knowledge is to know that we do not know." The root of our own motivations is really above our comprehension, and this goes deeper than even our sub-conscious.

The above-conscious is really our point of *emunah* (the belief and faith in Hashem that all is dictated by Him). Our *emunah* is essentially what leads us in how we act. *Emunah* is the point beyond our *seichel* (intellect), because it is above all logic and human understanding.

The Three Aspects Of Our Motivations

These concepts are very fundamental to know about. We are always moving and heading towards something. Why are we moving? What is motivating us? These are the three factors that always somehow motivate us to act: our conscious awareness, our sub-conscious motives, and our above-conscious (*emunah*).

Losing Consciousness

Most people are only in touch with their conscious, and when people are bogged down from life, they lose even their basic level of conscious awareness. They overlook things that can be seen which the physical eye. A person might not even be aware of his conscious state - either because he is so

swayed by ulterior motivations that are blinding him, or simply because he is bogged down from things in his life, and therefore he isn't paying attention to his conscious motivations.

There are actions people do each day and they aren't even aware that they did them. For example, a person forgets that he *bentched Bircas HaMazon*. He is simply unaware of his physical actions that can be seen by the eye.

Becoming Conscious: Attaining Inner Calm

The more a person attains inner calm and he is more concentrated within himself, he becomes more aware of what he is doing.

After that, he can begin to become aware of his subconscious motivations, what is motivating him to act. But the first level of awareness is to at least become consciously aware of what he does as he is doing it, and the second and higher level of awareness is to become aware of why he is doing it.

Most people don't even attain basic self-awareness of their actions. The more a person has a settled mind and he's paying attention to what he's doing – and this is a gradual process which cannot happen so fast – a person can slowly become more and more aware of his actions and be consciously aware of them as he's doing them.

After that comes the second step: to become aware of the subconscious motivations in the soul, which are only reached through deep inner calm.

Entering Your Sub-Conscious: Two Steps

In this stage, becoming aware of the subconscious, there must be a deep kind of inner calm, and in order to attain it, a person needs to get by two layers.

1) Nullifying The Will.

First of all, your very *ratzon* (will) might be getting in the way of your inner calmness. If we have many desires, this makes us anxious, preventing us from the inner calm we need in order to enter the soul. So a person needs to nullify the *ratzon*.

In order to nullify the *ratzon*, Reb Yeruchem Levovitz *zt"l* gave advice that for three times a day, do something against your will. This weakens your *ratzon* more and more and helps you acquire the art of *bittul haratzon*, nullifying the will.

2) Giving Inner Order To The Soul.

The second factor getting in the way is a lack of *seder* (orderliness) in your life. If you are very bogged down from all the troubles of life, this will hamper you from entering your subconscious,

because it will get in the way of deepening your inner calmness. The lack of *seder* creates a *bilbul*, a confusion in the soul, which mixes up the soul's abilities.

So you have to give *seder* to your soul's abilities: isolate each of them and place them in order, by becoming aware of the order of the four elements (earth, water, wind and fire) in your own personal soul. This helps settle the mind.

The Methods of Entering The Sub-Conscious

When you have the combination of *yishuv hadaas* (settled mind) and inner quiet and calmness, you are then able to slowly enter your sub-conscious motivations and discern them.

Our Rabbis had other ways as well how to reach the sub-conscious, such as by writing down what happened in their dreams, or by writing down what's happening as they were in middle of doing something, or by becoming aware of the passing, fleeting thoughts that come and go very quickly. But the root way of how to get to your subconscious is the method described here: to attain deeper inner calm.

To summarize, inner calm is attained through giving *seder* (personal order) in your soul, by isolating each of the soul's powers and categorizing them if they belong to the area of earth, water, wind, or fire. In addition, one needs to practice *bittul haratzon* (getting used to doing things against your will).

Bringing Our Sub-Conscious Into Our Consciousness

Getting used to this will reveal a whole new world to you that is within you – a completely different “world” than the world you see. Our inner world is nothing like the outside world.

The *Gedolim* who taught *mussar* in the past⁴⁷ were very involved with being aware of their sub-conscious motives. One who is there sees a whole new world in himself.

Without proper self-awareness towards oneself, a person is really living in a fantasy-like kind of life. He thinks he knows the reason of why he does something, while in reality, there can be an entirely different factor that is motivating him. Once a person becomes aware of his subconscious, he sees a whole new person there inside himself. There, he sees what his true qualities are, and what his true shortcomings are.

Most people do not reach true self-awareness, and therefore, they live fantasies about themselves. For this reason, our great *Gedolim* of the past would always suspect themselves of “*negios*” (personal interests), because they were so aware of this concept of inner motivations.

⁴⁷ Such as the Alter of Slabodka (Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt”l), the Alter of Kelm zt”l, Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l, Rav Eliyahu Dessler zt”l, and others.

Someone who doesn't know about this concept might think that it sounds like nervousness or a negative self-image of oneself. But someone who knows what the concept is understands that is simply called true self-awareness. When one is aware of this concept, it changes a person's approach towards his entire personal *avodah* and how he relates to others.

The depth of a *Gadol* is that he sees the root motivations behind each act which cannot be seen with the physical eye.

Without awareness to the sub-conscious, a person is always being dragged, subconsciously, after his desires. Not only he is dragged after desires he faces from his surroundings, but even more, he is being dragged after certain actions and he won't even know what is dragging him. Most actions taking place on the world are being done without self-awareness, and therefore are of the nature of **water-of-wind-of-water** – total “dragging”. It is usually the subconscious motives which are dragging a person, towards various acts of pleasure.

Even if a person is aware of pleasure, he might not be consciously aware that he's being dragged towards pleasure. He might *know* that he's dragged after ice cream, for example, but it must go beyond that awareness in order to become a true self-awareness. True self-awareness can show a person that he's being dragged all the time towards certain actions.

There is no other solution to the problem of getting ‘dragged’ unless a person becomes aware of his subconscious motives. This helps a person become aware of what's motivating him - and then he can choose if he should do it or not. This is the depth of how we use our power of free will (*bechirah*).

Practically speaking, most people will not be able to identify with this, but it is the root of all inner *avodah*

Using The Point of Above-Consciousness (Emunah)

The point of our “above-conscious”, otherwise known as our point of *emunah*, is the more inner motivation in us that goes beyond even our subconscious motivations.

We are not entirely motivated by pleasure, because part of our being is altruistic. *Emunah* is essentially the power to believe in *oneself*,⁴⁸ that there is a point in us of complete good. This is a deeper point of our soul than the area of our sub-conscious. It is the ‘holy spark of a Jew’ that is present in each action he does.

48 Editor's Note: There is a statement of Reb Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin, that “Had our Sages not said this, I would never dare to say such a thing: ‘One must first have emunah (faith) in himself [in his own reality of good] even before he has faith in G-d.’”

We must realize that there is always a pure motivation involved as well, even when there are mostly ulterior motivations in an act. This is the deeper way to fix how we get dragged after our inner motivations.

Therefore, one should not dwell too much on his evil subconscious motives, because then he will gain a poor self-image of himself and grow negative towards himself, when he discovers all the self-serving interests he has. For this reason, he has to carry with him the understanding of the above-conscious, the *emunah* in our soul that we are pure deep down and thus there is always some trace of holy and pure intentions in whatever we do.

Thus, even as we become aware of our subconscious motives that are evil and self-serving, we also need to carry with us our *emunah* in ourselves that deep down we are totally good and pure, and that is how we work on ourselves.

15 | *The Desire To Progress Continuously*⁴⁹

Introduction

Previously, we explained about desires that stem from **water**-of-wind-of-water. Now we will discuss desires stemming from **wind**-of-wind-of-water. (The material here will be linked to what we discussed in the previous chapter).

First we will discuss wind-of-wind-of-water, and then we will return to discuss how it relates to water-of-wind-of-water, with the help of Hashem.

Wind-of-Wind-of-Water: Continuous Desires

Wind is the root of movement in the soul. **Wind-of-wind** increases the movement in the soul, and not only does it increase the wind in the soul, but it causes an uninterrupted kind of movement.

Since we are discussing desires, we will see how this applies to desires. How does wind-of-wind (uninterrupted movement) manifest itself in water (desire)?

In the previous chapter, we mentioned the statement of *Chazal* that there are people who keep eating even after they are full, by vomiting their food so they can eat again. This is a kind of desire which keeps going and doesn't get interrupted, so it is stemming from **wind**-of-wind-of-water.

A clear example where this desire is manifest is the desire to talk. A person might talk endlessly without stopping himself. The *Chovos HaLevovos* said that the tongue is the lightest organ of the body, because it keeps moving as a person talks, allowing a person to keep talking without pause. Sometimes a person talks so much that he gets thirsty, so he needs to pause and take a drink, but in essence, he can keep talking without pause. Speech, when it is uninterrupted, is a clear use of wind-of-wind-of-water.

We can see this nature as well with people who love to travel all over the world. This a desire (water), and it involves a movement (wind) which is constant (wind-of-wind).

Conscious and Subconscious Pleasure

We have mentioned so far very clear examples of desires that stem from wind-of-wind-of-water. Now we will try to understand these ideas more by trying to get to the root of these matters.

⁴⁹ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-015-desire-progress-continuously>

As we mentioned earlier, we have our conscious state, our subconscious state, and our above-conscious state (which is really our point of “*emunah*”). We also mentioned that the root of all human motivations is pleasure. We do things either to get good pleasure or evil pleasure.

This is also relevant to our current discussion, in which we are discussing desires that stem from wind-of-wind-of-water, a desire that is continuous with no pause. Since pleasure is rooted in the element of water, it is water which is the element in the soul that motivates all of one’s actions.

Thus, water is not only a cause for movement towards a desire, but it is also responsible for the enjoyment that one has in a desire. The “pleasure” aspect is more *consciously* recognizable to the person than the “movement” aspect involved in the desire. A person will move towards a desire, but the reason why he moves is because he wants the pleasure, and he can identify more strongly with the pleasure that is motivating him, rather than how the movement is motivating him.

A person can consciously be aware that he is moving towards some enjoyment because he wants something enjoyable; he can clearly be aware that the pleasure is motivating him. That is true with regards to desires stemming from water-of-wind-of-wind.

But when it comes to desires stemming from wind-of-wind-of-water, it is a more subtle motivation. The person is being motivated by pleasure, but he is not consciously aware of it. It might not seem pleasurable to the person, even though it is really pleasure that is motivating him.

Sometimes a desire is stemming from water-of-wind-of-water and sometimes from wind-of-water-of-water, and this is why we emphasized in the beginning of this chapter that the two kinds of desires are related, but they have subtle differences.

Superficially, we can label it as simply either “water-of-wind-of-water” or “wind-of-wind-of-water”, but the more detailed definition is, to define if the motivation is coming from subconscious pleasure in the desire, or if it is coming from conscious awareness to the pleasure of the desire.

So there are two factors [in wind-related desires]: there is a motivation that is revealed to one’s consciousness, and there is also a hidden motivation that isn’t revealed to one’s consciousness. The hidden motivation (which is not always revealed to one’s consciousness) is always water, because pleasure is always the motivating force [whether one is consciously aware of this or not].

We mentioned earlier the examples of eating continuously without pause, the desire for constant movement and travel, and the desire to talk continuously without pause. When it comes to the example of talking, this is wind-of-wind-of-water, and it doesn’t seem that pleasure here is the motivating factor. Some people do experience a pleasure in their very act of talking, but usually one is not consciously aware to this pleasure. In the example of eating without pause, it is much more obvious to the person that it is pleasure which is motivating him.

(Of course, it can still be subdivided even further into what the motivations are, but we will only discuss the roots of the motivations).

Summary

To summarize thus far: with desires stemming from water-of-wind-of-water, one is more consciously aware that it is water/pleasure which is motivating him to pursue the pleasure, and with desires stemming from wind-of-wind-of-water, it is less obvious to the person that water/pleasure is really motivating him. (The example of continuous talking is therefore a more accurate example of wind-of-wind-of-water).

“Lishmah” and “Shelo Lishmah”

We will return our focus now to desires that stem from **wind**-of-wind-of-water, which is the current discussion; let us now try to understand it deeper.

When it comes to wind-of-wind-of-water, it involves two factors: continuous movement without pause, as well as pleasure. As we explained earlier, we always have two deep motivations: *oneg* (pleasure) and *emunah* (lit. “faith”; an altruistic motivation).

Our motivation of *oneg* is essentially our nature to be *shelo lishmah*, to act self-serving for our own purposes; our *emunah* is essentially our point of *lishmah*, to act purely altruistic.

With desires stem from wind-of-wind-of-water, we can examine these desires and see how we contain in ourselves a very deep contradiction: our *oneg/shelo lishmah* and our *emunah/lishmah* clash with each other.

Water is the root of pleasure, which is *shelo lishmah*. Wind (specifically, wind-of-wind) is the root of movement. But firstly, before we continue, let’s define what *lishmah* and *shelo lishmah* is.

The simple understanding is that *shelo lishmah* is to be self-serving, and *lishmah* is to it for the sake of Hashem’s will, or for His honor, etc. But there is much more depth to *lishmah*.

The *Ramchal* says in *Mesillas Yescharim* that the concept of humility is for one to recognize that we must do the will of Hashem because it is our nature to do His will, just as it is the nature of a bird to fly and the nature of fire to burn. Thus, the concept of “*lishmah*” means that when you do Hashem’s will, you are doing it because you realize that it is your very nature to do so.

We have a power of free will, but we have in us a higher power than our free will, and it is the depth behind the concept of humility. It is to perform for Hashem out of the recognition that this is your nature.

This is how the *Ramchal* describes the concept of humility, but we will apply it to understanding what “*lishmah*” is. “*Lishmah*” does not just mean “to do it for the sake of Hashem” – that’s not how to define *lishmah*. That can definitely **help** you get to *lishmah*, but it is still not yet *lishmah* itself. It can help you leave your self-serving motivations and begin to do things for Hashem, but it is still not yet *lishmah*; it is the tool that enables you to get to the point of *lishmah*.

Lishmah is defined as follows: When you do what you are supposed to, you are doing it because you know that this is what you were created for.

From ‘Shelo Lishmah’ To ‘Lishmah’

When a person remains superficial, he only experiences the outer layers of his soul and acts from those external layers. Man initially acts from his *nefesh habehaimis*, his animalistic layer of the soul, which has impure motivations.

When a person matures spiritually, he gets deeper into his soul, and he learns how to act from his point of free will. However, even at this level where he has matured and he is more spiritual, he is still not yet able to always act *lishmah*. Sometimes he will act correctly for the sake of doing Hashem’s will, and sometimes he will act correctly for his own pleasure.

But when a person goes even deeper into his soul, he can reach the very nature of his soul, which is the nature to act *lishmah*. The inner nature of the soul is the point we can act *lishmah* from.

The book of the *Kuzari*⁵⁰ writes that the Hebrew word “*teva*” (nature) has the same *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew) as the word “*Elokim*” (G-d), alluding to how the very nature of the soul is to do Hashem’s will.

But when our inner nature is covered over, either through the bodily materialism or through our own free will to remain that way, our real nature of *lishmah* is concealed as well.

“*Lishmah*” is to touch upon the deepest place of the soul - its very nature.

‘Maayan HaMisgaber’ – The Inner Source of Torah In The Soul

The Sages said that “when one learns Torah *lishmah*, he becomes like a ‘*maayan hamisgaber*’”, a “mighty wellspring”. It sounds simply like a ‘reward’ for learning *lishmah*, but the inner understanding is as follows.

The Sages state that “the reward for a *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah*” – thus, one who learns Torah *lishmah*, by essence, becomes a ‘*maayan hamisgaber*’. How does *lishmah* bring a person to become a ‘*maayan hamisgaber*? It is because *lishmah* connects a person to the simple nature of the soul that is deep within.

When a person connects to the depth of his soul, there, he connects to how his soul is really “a piece of G-d”, and there, the Torah flows into him, like a “mighty wellspring” and a rushing river. It’s really the nature of the soul. But when one doesn’t access *lishmah*, his inner nature is concealed from him.

50 11th century scholar and philosopher

Thus, accessing the point of *lishmah* in the soul is what reveals to a person his inner nature of the soul.

The Three Layers Of Our Existence

Altogether, we have seen that there are three different planes we can exist on.

The lowest level is when one remains with his nature of the *nefesh habehaimis* (the “animalistic” part of the soul). Higher than that is to access one’s free will, and higher than that, to access the nature of the soul.

One who lives through the nature of his soul is one who acts *lishmah*. One who lives through his free will and breaks his desires to do Hashem’s will is certainly working hard to acquire the level of *lishmah*, and this is indeed the Torah way of living life. But he is not yet on the actual level of *lishmah*.

Although it is brought that one should say before he does a *mitzvah* that he is doing it for Hashem’s sake and to give a *nachas ruach* (satisfaction) to the Creator, it is still not yet the level of *lishmah*. It can surely help a person aspire for *lishmah*, but one must realize that he is not yet there on that level of *lishmah*. Eventually, if a person keeps acting and aspiring for *lishmah*, he will get to *lishmah*.

The Point Beyond Pleasure

So when it comes to wind-related desires, there is both wind and water involved. Which is the main motivating factor?

Chazal say that first Hashem created wind, then water, then fire, and then earth. Being that wind was the root of all the elements, it would seem that we are always being motivated by wind (or movement). We have explained, though, that in the soul, it is pleasure which is the main motivating force. Movement is caused by pleasure, and not vice versa. So it is pleasure which mainly motivates us to act. If so, the element of water (pleasure) is what motivates all the elements.

However, that is all true only when a person is being motivated by *shelo lishmah*. When a person is still being motivated by *shelo lishmah*, his water is motivating his wind. But when one reveals *lishmah*, he reaches the nature of the soul, the power of *lishmah* - which is otherwise known as the point of *emunah* in the soul. In this state, the nature of the soul is thriving on wind, and not on water; it will be “wind” in the soul that is at the forefront of one’s motivations.

Thus, the deeper we motivation in our acts, when uncovered, is really wind. Initially it is water/pleasure which motivates us to act, but if we access *lishmah/emunah* in the soul – when we are acting altruistically – it is “wind” which becomes our main motivating force in the soul.

Here we can notice a great contradiction about the soul. The nature of wind-of-wind in the soul is that it keeps moving. What motivates a person to keep moving? It is really a spark of the endless movement of Hashem. Hashem rested on Shabbos, but His Creation runs on movement. At the same time, Creation has its limits; we stop moving at some point.

So when a person keeps moving with no limits to his movement, it resembles Hashem's endless movement – it is a spark of the Creator (on a deep note, it is also described as a spark of Moshiach in the soul, for it is said of Moshiach that he will bring an endless “wind” to the world of redemption). Wind is not in our initial nature. The power to move endlessly is a deep nature of the soul that is a spark of Hashem's Endlessness, and we do not have this power revealed in ourselves initially, but we can work to reveal it.

Using Wind-of-Wind

Therefore, we can now understand the following.

With wind-of-wind-of-water, there are two factors. The “water” factor involved in wind-of-water-of-wind is the part in us that is motivated by pleasure, while the “wind-of-wind” factor involved in it is the soul's deep desire to seek endless movement. As we explained, it is really rooted in a spark of Hashem's Endlessness. When this power (endless movement) is used by a person for evil, it shows up in people who never stop pursuing desires, and they never rest from desire. This is the meaning of what is written, *“The stomachs of the wicked are always lacking.”*

But if someone channels this power for holiness, he increases his wind-of-wind over his water, and he reveals the deeper motivation of the soul, *lishmah*. He leaves “water” aspect that is within wind-of-water, and enters into the very “wind-of-wind” itself. If one was born with a very dominant amount of wind-of-wind in his soul and he does not know how to use it properly, either he is the type to live a very anxious kind of life, or, he leads a hedonistic kind of life - both unhealthy kinds of lifestyles.

But if he knows how to use wind-of-wind properly, he must be a very great person. Wind-of-wind, when used correctly, is what can help a person strive endlessly for spiritual growth. These are the *“bnei aliyah”* of the world, those who truly ascend in spirituality, which are there are few of. This kind of person truly strives for spirituality, and he keeps ascending. His secret to success is that he knows how to make use of the powerful amount of wind-of-wind in the soul; it is not easy to know how.

Purifying Your Motivations

If a person is acting his whole life from the place of **water**-of-wind-of-water in himself, it's possible that he does everything *shelo lishmah*. He might come to Heaven after 120 and they'll tell him that he was self-serving your entire life; *Chazal* describe such a judgment.

A person who only serves Hashem for the spiritual bliss involved, has this problem. He is not acting evil, but he doesn't reach the purpose of life, as the Ramchal writes in *Mesillas Yescharim*. The Ramchal is clearly describing a person whose life is led by water-of-wind-of-water.

A person like this might even strive his whole life to become close to Hashem, but he is in it entirely for the bliss involved. He does it all for pleasure, albeit spiritual. When he gets to Heaven, all he will be interested in is the spiritual pleasure that he will get...

Our Rabbis write that there are instances in which the soul has to come back onto the world so that it can become purified from the motivation of pleasure and learn how to serve Hashem altruistically. Such a person is reincarnated just so that he can leave his state of water-of-wind-of-water and enter into his wind-of-wind-of-water – to leave *oneg* and discover the secret of *lishmah*.

In fact, he might even spend his second time around on this world with no feelings of closeness to Hashem, because this is meant to rectify his previous lifetime in which he only sought closeness to Hashem for the sake of spiritual bliss and pleasure. The missing pleasure he has the second time around on this world is all meant to rectify his previous lifetime!

Wind-of-wind-of-water is the power to move endlessly. Only a small percentage of people have truly revealed its power from within themselves.

“Maayan HaMisgaber” – The Inner Source of Torah In The Soul

If one discovers that he has revealed his place of wind-of-wind in the soul, he needs to discern from where it is coming from in his soul, for we have a *nefesh habehaimis* (lower, animalistic soul) and a *Nefesh Elokis* (higher, G-dly soul).

There are people who have a revealed amount of wind-of-wind, but it comes entirely from their *nefesh habehaimis*. These are people who are able to always motivate themselves, simply because it is their nature. It doesn't necessarily mean that they have reached holiness or greatness. Another possibility is that maybe he has fooled himself, and it is really pleasure (water-of-wind-of-wind) that motivates him to act, not the desire for endless movement (wind-of-wind-of-wind).

One needs to get to his holy power of wind-of-wind, which is in the *Nefesh Elokis*. People might fool themselves and assume that they have reached their holy kind of wind-of-wind, while in reality they haven't yet reached it.

A person might learn Torah day and night, and it seems like he has reached the holy kind of wind-of-wind in the soul (which comes from the *Nefesh Elokis*). But it can still be coming from his *nefesh habehaimis*. An ant can also keep moving; the fact that a person is always moving, progressing, and motivating himself further is not always a sign that he has reached the soul's deep desire for endless movement.

It's not something you can clearly see – it is a very hidden kind of power, and it needs a lot of subtle discerning in order for one to recognize it. Someone might seem like a person who learns

Torah *lishmah*, because he looks like a “*maayan hamisgaber*” in Torah, always producing Torah *chiddushim* and never ceasing from learning – which all seems to be sign that he has reached “*lishmah*”. In reality, however, it can be because he is very brilliant in his intellect, and he has merely sharpened his intellect with the more he learns Torah. It doesn’t always come from the inner source of Torah that comes from the deepest part of the soul.

The “*maayan hamisgaber*” is an inner flow in the deepest part of the soul, whereas a mere brilliance in Torah learning can still be at the same level of brilliance that one has in secular fields of knowledge. Just because someone is always learning Torah and always producing *chiddushim* doesn’t mean that he has reached his deep place of “*maayan hamisgaber*”. Maybe he is always progressing in his learning simply because he has more of an ‘intellectual’ kind of wind-of-wind (which comes from the *nefesh habehaimis*) - which is no proof that his movement is coming from deep in his soul.

Of course, it’s better to think always about Torah than to think about other topics, but the point of what we are saying is that just because a person learns Torah non-stop, this doesn’t mean that he has penetrated deeply into the soul. There were always brilliant people throughout the generations who learned a lot of Torah and they were clever and sharp, but they did not always become *Gedolim*. There were people who assumed that these brilliant heads were *Gedolim*, but they were mistaken.

Surely, Hashem rewards all people who learn Torah, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes; but that still doesn’t tell us if he is a “*Gadol*” or not. It’s even possible that someone who looks like a big Torah scholar is actually a smaller person than another person who is a lesser Torah scholar! A person who has become a “*maayan hamisgaber*” might have less Torah *chiddushim*, while one who isn’t a *maayan hamisgaber* might have much Torah *chiddushim*, but it’s all external and not coming from the inner flow of the soul.

Being Truthful

In summary, if one identifies wind-of-wind in himself, he must know really well if his wind-of-wind is coming from a holy source, or if it’s merely coming from his intellectual sharpness and brilliance. When one learns Torah and he has *oneg* (pleasure) in it, the *sefer Igley Tal* praises this. However, if pleasure is the entire reason a person learns Torah, he is mistaken. One can end up enjoying his learning, but if he learns only because he enjoys it, he is making a grave error, and this is a common mistake that people make in their learning. It might be *taanug* in his learning, or *taanug* in his *gaavah* (arrogance), or other kinds of *taanug* that are motivating him. Whatever the case, the real question always is: What is really motivating him.

The Self-Accounting

This is the test of what a true “*ben aliyah*” is.

One who wants to be a true *ben aliyah* needs to reveal the power of wind-of-wind-of-water in the soul for holiness. But it needs a lot of discerning of where exactly the wind-of-wind-of-water it is coming from in himself. It is a very deep kind of internal self-clarification.

To try and discern this, one must know if his constant Torah learning and delight in it is being motivated by any of the following factors:

- (1) Is my desire to grow spiritually coming the deep nature of the soul which moves endlessly towards the Creator (which stems from the *Nefesh Elokis*, the 'G-dly' layer of the soul, in me)?
- (2) Or is it because I have a nature to keep going without pause, and it has nothing to do with a spiritual motivation (which comes from the **wind-of-wind-of-water** in the *nefesh habehaimis*?)
- (3) Or perhaps I am mainly learning Torah and trying to grow spirituality solely because I seek the spiritual pleasure and high levels of understandings (which comes from water-of-wind-of-water in the *nefesh habehaimis*?)

One needs to work his way upwards and purify his motivations, until he can finally get to the holy desire in his soul which seeks endlessness. If his desire for spiritual attainment is not coming from that deep place in himself and it is instead coming from the *nefesh habehaimis*, he must make sure to keep working to purify his motivations in his spiritual progress [by increasing his power to act *lishmah*], until he eventually reveals the desire for endlessness which comes from the *Nefesh Elokis*.

16 | *The Desire For New Tastes*⁵¹

Desires From Fire-of-Wind-of-Water: The Need For Renewal

We will now continue with the help of Hashem and return to the point we are in middle of discussing: desires, which stem from **wind-of-water**. Currently, we are up to discussing the “**fire**” aspect of **wind-of-water**.

Water is generally the root of desire, while seeking pleasure is a kind of inner movement, and movement is the root of wind. Thus, seeking the pleasure of desire is a nature that stems from **wind-of-water** in the soul [in the *nefesh habehaimis*].

We have previously discussed desires that stem from earth, water and wind that all stem from **wind-of-water**. Now we will discuss desires which stem from the **fire** in wind-of-water.

Fire has many natures. It is dry (which gives it similarity to earth), it is illuminating (which makes it similar to water), it is jumpy (which makes it similar to wind), and it also has a nature to produce. Besides for the fact that fire is mainly defined by its destructive nature, fire can sprout into new flames, which shows us that fire can produce something new.

The other elements are recycled; earth returns to earth, water evaporates and returns back to the earth, and wind blows around, but fire is always being renewed. It is always being renewed, as soon as it ceases. Fire destroys something and then is enflamed even more after it destroys.

With regards to our soul and our current discussion of desires, there are desires which are constantly becoming renewed in the person. These desires thus stem from **fire-of** wind-of-earth.

There are people who had a gluttonous childhood, eating as much as they pleased. They were used to eating on certain foods, i.e. cholent and kugel on Shabbos, and they feel like they cannot part from such foods. They go their whole life enslaved to these ‘Shabbos’ treats. They have become so used to these foods because they are used to the pleasure in them. These are old pleasures, so these are not the desires that stem from “fire”, because they are not new.

What we are currently discussing are desires that are new to the person, and all of us can recognize this: “new” kinds of desires that keep coming out on the market. One who has a dominant amount of fire-of-wind-of-earth will feel a desire to constantly seek new kinds of tastes and desires that he hasn’t tried yet, and he feels this on a regular basis.

It is not simply that he tries out new pleasures when the opportunity comes to him; that wouldn’t be a problem (there are people who are afraid to try new things, and this is a problem). Rather, we are discussing a kind of person who seeks out new pleasures on a constant and regular basis.

⁵¹ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-016-desire-new-tastes>

This is stemming from a dominant amount of **fire-of-wind-of-water** in the soul: one who seeks renewal in all kinds of new pleasures. These people are getting their pleasure from the aspect of renewal in the desire.

For example, a person was used to eating specific foods in his childhood, and when he gets older, he looks for new kinds of foods that capture his interest. He might even look for various kinds of strange foods from other countries. He is looking for something new. He might pursue something that is small, as long as it is new and interesting; or he might pursue something extreme, as long as it is “new” to him.

Differentiating Between Fire-of-Water and Fire-of-Wind

Earlier, we spoke of the desire for food which stems from fire-of-**water**-of-water, which is also a desire for renewal, but it stems from “internal dryness” in the soul, so the person seeks new tastes. The dryness in the soul demands something new. People who always seek something new in the house to eat, this stems from inner emptiness – or internal dryness. That kind of desire makes a person jumpy from one desire to another, and it causes a person to skip from one desire to another. This is generally an evil kind of desire; people who have desires like this actually suffer from these desires.

Here in this chapter, we are speaking about the desire to eat for the sake of trying something new, which stems from a different aspect in the soul: fire-of-**wind**-of-water.

Part One of the Solution: Tasting Of The Shabbos Food

The people in the desert wanted the *manna* to taste like anything, and this shows us that people seek renewal. When this desire is used for holiness, it is to try new things; the *Talmud Yerushalmi* says that one has to give an accounting if he did not taste of foods. We are meant to taste foods, because our soul demands renewal.

However, that is only true when just tastes it. Once a person goes beyond taste and he is dragged after the food, this is evil, and earlier we addressed this. The *manna* tasted like anything, and that was fine. But if one wanted to get the feeling of a full stomach, this was not the purpose of the manna, and it is evil. The desire for taste stems from a holy place in the soul. When taste goes overboard, it becomes evil, and it becomes *taavah*, desire.

One needs to eat the right amount of the food and not overeat; that’s first of all. In addition, one should try tasting the Shabbos food – to taste it, and no more. Shabbos is the time where we are meant to use the soul’s power of taste. But it is only holy when one just tastes of it and he doesn’t indulge in it; so that he doesn’t get carried away for the sake of his own pleasure.

The soul wants to taste because it demands renewal, so one can taste from all the foods on the Shabbos table – taste it, but not more than that.

The Prerequisite: “Chiddushei Torah” On Shabbos

When one tastes the Shabbos food, he should make sure that it is being done with intention to satisfy the need for taste. In this way, the desire doesn't become a pursuit of renewal.

The *Mishna Berura* says that one should think of *Chiddushei Torah* on Shabbos. There is a power of *chiddush* (renewal) on Shabbos. If one learns Torah all the time but he doesn't have any *Chiddushim*, he has no taste in his Torah learning, and this is a problem that needs to be solved.

Renewal shows that there is a taste and enjoyment in what one is doing. One whose main taste is in *Chiddushei Torah* satisfies his soul's need for taste. Therefore, if one is just tasting the food on Shabbos but he isn't striving to have *Chiddushei Torah* on Shabbos, it is as if he has a branch without a root.

So the proper way to satisfy taste is through *Chiddushei Torah*, and this channels the **fire of wind-of-water** in the soul in a proper direction. It gives a person constant joy, and for this reason, a Torah scholar is titled as “Shabbos”.

This is the holy way to use taste: striving to have *Chiddushei Torah*, mainly on Shabbos; and then one can taste of the Shabbos food.

When There Are Abnormal Eating Habits

The evil usage of taste is when one seeks renewal in their tastes, which comes from the *nefesh habehaimis* (the lower, animalistic part of the soul). These are people who are always looking for some new kind of pleasure.

This kind of person is never relaxed – it comes either from inner dryness in his soul⁵², or because he has inner anxiousness. These people suffer a lot on this world; earlier, we addressed this kind of person. This is all stemming from a dominant amount of **fire-of-wind-of-water**.

Sometimes this kind of person will go to one place to eat, and another place to go to eat. If you know people like this, they are going all over the world to try all kinds of pleasures and comparing their experiences.

The people in the world who are mainly gluttonous are people who look all over the world for pleasure, on a regular basis. One who has a dominant amount of **fire-of-wind-of-water** is affected the most from gluttonous desire.

⁵² See *Understanding Your Middos #011- Internal Dryness*

Most people do not have this problem; therefore, the words here are only meant for those who are dominated by **fire-of-wind-of-water**.

Growing Up With Unrestrained Desires

There are people who need to realize that this is their nature, even if they grew up in a frugal lifestyle where they didn't have much food in their house. The only reason why they didn't eat that much when they grew up was because the lifestyle of their home didn't allow for that much food, but that doesn't take away the nature to be gluttonous. It could very well be true that a person has a very gluttonous nature all along, which was merely suffocated until now due to his frugal upbringing.

What happens when a person with a gluttonous nature is unaware of his nature? When he gets older, he will feel a contradiction in himself: he was raised very frugally, yet he still has gluttonous eating habits.

The fact that he didn't eat that much when he was younger didn't affect his soul, because it wasn't done with any emphasis on spiritual growth and self-control. Rather, it was simply the way the person grew up, and his nature was merely suffocated until now, when he gets older, his true nature will emerge, and he will find that he is very much pulled after gluttony and pleasures with no training on having self-control.

Even if he was aware of his gluttonous nature (which is rare), he doesn't know how to channel this nature towards holiness, and he will discover that he lives a contradiction: he was used to not pursuing pleasure when he was younger, but now that he has gotten older, he finds himself running after pleasures with no restraint.

Two Differing Paths of Our Gedolim Regarding Abstinence

We find that there were two differing paths in which our *Gedolim* conducted themselves with.

One path of our *Gedolim* follows the dictate of *Chazal* that “one should eat bread dipped in salt and drink water in a cistern, sleep on the ground, and live a life of suffering – this is the way of exertion in Torah study”. There were indeed *Gedolim* who were able to live their life like this.

There was another path in *Avodas Hashem*, a completely different way, which was also observed by our *Gedolim*. The Sage *Rebbi Yehuda HaNassi* (known as *Rebbi*) was extremely wealthy, and his table was always set with the finest of foods. Some commentators explained that this was because of the concept of royalty, and therefore his home had to look like a royal place, as befitting a king.

But the *Raavad* and others explained that it was because *Rebbi* utilized the power of “inner expansion” in the soul. What is the power of “inner expansion”?

There are two parts to it. A person is comprised of body and a soul; the body requires frugality in order to survive, but the soul actually requires expansiveness in order to feel satisfied. The soul on this world wants little to do with this world, but in its real place in Gan Eden, the soul needs expansiveness; it wants more and more spiritual light.

There were some individuals who possessed very high level souls, thus their souls required more expansiveness than thus usual. Thus, the *Raavad* and others wrote of a concept of smelling fragrant spices, which expands the soul.

However, we are discussing someone whose lower part of the soul demands expansiveness, which is a desire that comes from the *nefesh habehaimis*.

When a person merits to enjoy spiritual matters, such as his Torah learning, he enjoys spiritual renewal, which satisfies his higher soul, and this also calms even the *nefesh habehaimis* to a certain extent. However, even if a person merits to enjoy Torah *chiddushim*, if his *nefesh habehaimis* contains a dominant amount of fire-of-wind-of-water, he will not be calmed that much by the spiritual pleasure of Torah *chiddushim*, and he will require some physical pleasure.

The Solution To Abnormal Eating Habits

The solution for this includes what we have explained above: that on Shabbos, he should strive to have Torah *chiddushim*, and in addition, he should taste each of the Shabbos foods on the table, as was explained earlier.

However, being that a person who is dominated by **fire-of-wind-of-water** struggles a lot with his gluttonous nature that he is used to, his element of desire is more powerful, so his mere aspirations of wishing to improve will not be enough to do the trick. It is wonderful that he is aspiring to improve himself, but one must also know his actual spiritual level very well, and he must be very self-aware and realize that he has a problem of self-control when it comes to his pursuit of new foods.

Therefore, practically speaking, only a few people can satisfy their need for taste and food through just tasting the Shabbos food, and trying to produce *Chiddushei Torah* on Shabbos is also not feasible for this kind person, as we mentioned. Therefore, most people will need more than these spiritual methods in order to satisfy their demand for pleasure that is coming from their *nefesh habehaimis*.

For Those Who Have The Money To Spend

If one feels that this is indeed the case, this is what he should do.

If he has plenty of money to spend, he should buy things that can minimally calm his physical need for renewal [such as candies, light treats, or new items for the house], and he should do this

sensibly and not get carried away with these things, or else the whole solution will backfire on him. By giving in to small pleasures, he will be able to lessen his pursuit of worldly pleasures.

For Those Who Don't Have The Money To Spend

Most people, though, simply do not have the money to spend so much on the pursuit of pleasures. Such people should try the following.

First of all, a person should try to lessen his pursuit of worldly pleasures and increase his spiritual pleasures. Secondly, the person should try to feed his need for renewal, by trying out small things that can give him some renewal.

For example, the *Raavad* writes that when one wants to calm his mind, he should eat something sweet. Just taste it and no more. When you get used to this exercise of just tasting it and no more, you give yourself expansiveness and renewal.

These are subtle matters, so if one doesn't know his soul well, he will deny his nature tasting something can calm him down. Most people, in fact, do not know their souls well, and even when they become aware of their nature, they tend to deny their actual feelings, perhaps because they feel that this concept goes against their *mesorah* (tradition), and they suppress themselves deeply as a result.

But if one knows how to work with his soul, and he has come to the conclusion that he is dominated by fire-of-wind-of-water, here is the solution. It is two-fold: On one hand, a person must try to come up with Torah *chiddushim*, especially on Shabbos, together with tasting of the Shabbos food.

In addition, we are saying that a person does need to calm his *nefesh habehaimis* somewhat. If one can afford it, he should spend money on things that can calm him down minimally – such as foods that he can taste of that will calm him - and this should obviously be done sensibly. If one doesn't have that much money, one can try to give himself small amounts of renewal every here and there, either by tasting candies (and try different flavors), or small foods, or even to buy small new items for the home. All of these things provide a degree of renewal and expand the soul, which satisfies the soul's demand for pleasure.

Understandably, if a person just practices the second part of the solution and he doesn't do the first part (*chiddushim*), he lives a life entirely through his *nefesh habehaimis*, which is a life devoid of spirituality.

In Conclusion

Most people will find these concept strange, because most people have never heard of the concept of inner expansiveness that the *Raavad* wrote about.

People usually identify with frugality, perhaps feeling that “This is the *mesorah* (tradition)!” and that trying to expand the soul would be veering from “the *mesorah*”. But this erroneous perception really comes from a lack of self-awareness about the soul. When one lives with proper self-awareness, he recognizes that he needs to work with his soul.

These matters should be practiced sensibly and within proper limits, because it is a matter that is only effective when practiced with proper limitations.

17 | *Dry Desires*⁵³

Desires That Stem From Fire-of-Water

With the help of Hashem, we are currently up to discussing desires that stem from **fire-of-water**. There will be four subdivisions of this: earth (of fire-of-water) water (of fire-of-water), wind (of-fire-of-water), and fire (of-fire-of-water); we will go through each of them, beginning from earth, then water, then wind, and then fire.

Earth-of-fire-of-water, with regards to desires, are desires that stem from the dry nature of fire. There are three sources for desires – thirst, which stems from dryness in the soul⁵⁴; searching for something that is a “dry” kind of desire; and after fulfilling the desire, a person is still thirsty for the desire, as it is stated by our Rabbis: “This world is like salty water.”⁵⁵

The more a person tries to quench his desires, the thirstier he becomes for that desire. These are specifically desires which “dry” a person out after he gives in to them, leaving him thirsty for more and more of it.

Water-of-fire-of-water is when a person searches for a reciprocal relationship – as it is written, “*just as water reflects one face to another face, so is the heart of man to another*”. This is a power that can be used either for holiness or for evil. It can be used as a power to acquire deep friendships, “beloved friends” (*rayim ahuvim*) - or it can be *chas v’shalom* used for evil when a person seeks relationships which are forbidden according to the Torah.

Wind-of-fire-of-water stems from the renewal aspect in fire; these are desires in which people seek new things all the time. These kinds of desires fill the world today, and in an astounding manner.

Fire-of-fire-of-water stems from the strife aspect in fire. There are wars in the world, and the Torah requires certain wars as well; the fire in the soul can cause a person to have a desire for war.

When it is used for holiness, it is like the wars which Dovid *HaMelech* fought, but when it is used for evil, it is a desire for war. It is also the root of the trait of *nekama*/revenge; as is well-known, the *Mesillas Yesharim* says that “nothing feels sweeter than revenge”.

We have mentioned the four kinds of desires stemming from fire-of-water. We will now begin to go through explaining these desires, one by one, with their specific solutions. We will begin with explaining desires that stem from **earth**-of-water-of-fire: desires that are “dry” in their nature, which cause a person to “dry” himself out when he pursues them.

⁵³ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-017-dry-desires>

⁵⁴ For further research on “dryness” of the soul (“yoivesh”), see *Understanding Your Middos #011-Internal Dryness*.

⁵⁵ *Statement of the Vilna Gaon*

Earth-of-Fire-of-Water: Dried Up Inside

Desires stemming from **earth-of-water-of-fire** are when a person has a dominance of **internal dryness** in the soul. Therefore, he seeks “dry” kinds of desires, which dry him out and leave him even thirstier than before.

When a person feels empty inside and he goes looking through the fridge for something to nosh on, really he is looking for **movement**, just it is manifest as a desire for food; it is all stemming from a desire for some movement.

For example, when a person eats a lot on Shabbos, it seems like he just wants good food, but it’s really a desire for movement. The person is bored inside because he isn’t moving, so his desire for movement will appear in the form of desire for food. We addressed this earlier [in Chapters 5 and 6].

Others search for desires, however, because they are **dry** inside. This problem stems from the *nefesh habchaimis*. It can show up as a desire for a drink, but it’s really more than that: the person feels dry inside, and that is why he is “thirsty”.

Step One: Try To Discern Where The Desire Is Coming From

Whenever a person feels a desire, he should try to discern where it is coming from. Is it coming from being **dragged** [after **movement**], which we addressed earlier? Or is it coming from inner emptiness and boredom?

When a person is sitting in his house and he suddenly feels a desire for a certain snack, sometimes this can also be that he is being dragged after things, and his imagination is responsible for this; he is not aware that it is his imagination which has awakened him to want something. He hears or sees something, and his imagination is awakened, which can cause him to desire it.

(Some people search for food because they feel pressure and to ease their tension, but we are not dealing with this. This is not desire. If this is done sensibly there is nothing wrong with this, and sometimes we can use food to calm the body, like when you are nervous before a test. It just needs to be done with awareness: one must know if he is eating to calm himself, and how much he needs to eat to calm himself.)

But when the desire stems from **internal dryness** – which really shows that there is a lack of **chiyus (vitality)** inside the person – this is what we are dealing with here.

One must become aware of why he is having the desire. It is a subtle discerning; the more of a *bar daas* (mature thinking) that a person is, when he has a moment of calm, he can reflect and try to discern where his desire is coming from. He might not get it perfectly, but he can still attain a degree of clarity what is causing him right now to have the desire.

But a person also has to be aware if it's coming from inner boredom, which is a problem stemming from "wind" in the soul: a desire for movement. If that is the case, we dealt with this earlier [in Chapters 5-6; and he should use the solutions given there]. If he discovers that it comes from inner dryness, though, it is because he is missing vitality. The solution for this will be to gain some vitality, which we will speak about here how to do.

This is the first part of the solution: try to figure out where the desire is coming from in yourself. Here we are discussing desires that stem from internal dryness.

Step Two: Identify Your Inner Dryness

The second part of the solution, which applies to the actual time of the desire, is as follows. One needs to reflect: "What exactly is it that I am desiring?"

Sometimes a person desires different things all the time – one day he may want something salty, the next day something spicy, the next time something sweet, then moist, then dry, etc. There are all different directions that desire can go in. There are other factors that contribute to these desires which are really causing them.

Here in this chapter, we are addressing a person who knows clearly what he strongly desires. We can see this in people who like to eat or indulge in things that are of a "dry" nature. For example, there are people who like to hear sad songs. Before listening to the song they looked happier, and after the song, they are sad - and they actually enjoy hearing these sad songs! The desire here is for something that dries a person out. These are usually people whose souls have become very dried out – they have no vitality in their life.

It can manifest as well in a desire for certain foods, but it is not limited to food. It is coming from a general lack of vitality in the person's life. The person is immature, because he doesn't know how to pull away from these dry kinds of desires that do not satisfy. He gets pleasure in the very dryness of the desire, as opposed to enjoying the object of his desire.

These people do not have any real enjoyment in their life. It is not desire created from dryness - rather, it is dryness in their life which is causing them to have these desires.

If a person has a strong amount of earth in his soul along with this, he will get very depressed and melancholy. But even if he isn't, a person with inner dryness will seek desires that are dry in their essence.

Here is another example of this: There are people who search for desires that are outdated. For example, there are people who enjoy looking for antiques, or for anything that piques memories of the past, things that provide nostalgia, which do not have any current vitality to them; things that are out of existence.

There are more examples as well of this concept: when a person seeks desires that are entirely dry in their nature, and they get vitality from this dryness – but it's a dry kind of vitality.

(If a person feels a very strong desire for a particular thing it is usually coming from his *nefesh habehaimis*).

So the second part of the solution is to realize, as he is amidst the desire, that his desire is really drying him out, and he should become aware that it is really the dry nature of the desire which he is drawn towards. Meaning, the person needs to realize that it is not the actual desire that he is seeking (such as the food or the music or the antiques), but that he is looking for something dry which he gains vitality from. He should become aware that he likes to seek “dry” kinds of desires – because he is dry inside himself, for he lacks vitality.

Step Three: Feel The Dryness After The Desire

The third part of the solution applies after the person has experienced the desire and given in to it. The Vilna *Gaon* says that a person imagines how salty water will cure his thirst, and after he drinks it, he finds out the truth. When a person is thirsty inside, feeling a powerful desire for a certain thing – usually, it is something that will only be detrimental to him. After he gives in to the desire, he’s thirstier than before.

Holy desire is when a person uses desire as a way to increase his yearning for more. Evil desire is that when the desire goes away, a person feels dry afterwards, and he loses vitality. He feels dead.

When a person gives in to a desire that he really wanted, if he is calm afterwards, he can feel this feeling of inner dryness in himself that we are describing. A person who isn’t calm afterwards, though, won’t be able to discern this.

Giving Yourself Vitality

Let us examine now what happens before a person feels the desire.

There are people whose entire desires are dry, and there are others who feel dryness after they give in to desire.

To fix these desires, one has to know where he gets vitality from. Every person has things he gets vitality from. When it comes to our physical needs, we get life-giving vitality from the things we eat and drink, and we also get put to ‘death’ when we go to sleep.

Thus, we have two ‘endpoints’ in our life – our source of “vitality”, which is food and drink, and our source of “death”, which is our sleep. (On a more subtle note, after the sin with *Eitz HaDaas*, even food and drink have become deathlike, because eating caused the sin of death).

Every person has a physical source of vitality, or else he can’t survive. Just as a person has physical vitality, so does his *nefesh habehaimis* (“animalistic” layer) in his soul need vitality. If a person would go for even one moment without giving his soul vitality, he would die!

Of course, this doesn't happen so fast. But if a person would ever come to a point in which he no longer has soul vitality anymore, he would die. The *nefesh habehaimis* cannot survive without vitality, just as the body cannot survive without vitality.

This doesn't mean of course that the *nefesh habehaimis* in us needs vitality every second. (In Kelm, they would go for three days without eating or sleeping much). Rather, it means that if there would be a moment in which all of the soul's vitality ceases, the person would have a spiritual death. When a person is completely depressed and melancholy, he is dead inside; but there is almost no one who ever reaches that point.

Everyone must be aware – not just to know this intellectually, but to be actually aware – of the source of vitality that our personal *nefesh habehaimis* needs. The only issue is *what* is giving it vitality, and *how much* it needs. But you must be aware that it needs vitality.

There are some people in this world who are very spiritual, and only feed their souls, and not their bodies. They skip from the body to the soul, leaving out the needs of their *nefesh habehaimis*. What happens? It is tragic. The person only feeds his soul with Torah and mitzvos, and eats the bare necessities to survive – and he neglects his *nefesh habehaimis* in the process. His basic emotional needs will be missing, and he will suffer internally.

The *nefesh habehaimis* in us is like an animal in us that has been placed into our ownership, which we need to take care of and feed. It's your personal "animal" within you that you need to feed – you must have pity on it and give its basic needs. The *halachah* is that one must feed his animals even before he feeds himself - so too, one has to know *what* his *nefesh habehaimis* needs in order to feel 'emotionally' fed, as well as *how much* emotional nourishment it needs. It is like any other poor person who needs your help.

Feeding Your 'Nefesh HaBehaimis'

Being aware of this changes one's entire self-awareness towards his soul. One must not deny his *nefesh habehaimis* and its needs.

There are four elements in it (earth, water, wind and fire), and one must know its nature, and where it gets its vitality from – and to give it what it needs. Don't give it more than it needs, but make sure to give it *exactly* what it needs. At times, you can also give it a little less than what it needs, so that you can train it to need less. But you must definitely feed your *nefesh habehaimis* and generally not ignore its needs.

Without knowing about this – and indeed, most people do not know how to feed their *nefesh habehaimis* – a person will "dry up" inside, because his *nefesh habehaimis* is not getting its needs.

Often a person has all kinds of negative emotions and he's not sure where it is coming from. The root is often because he is not self-aware enough towards his *nefesh habehaimis*, so he's not aware of what it needs for vitality and what bothers it. The result is that he doesn't feed his *nefesh habehaimis*.

This often happens to people who do not have much spirituality in their life and they are also not that successful in the world, and in addition, they don't even feel vitality from bad *middos* such as conceit and honor (which other people do feel vitality from). They feel so meek inside, and they sort of "dry up" inside themselves.

Many people are filling up most of the day with eating out and all kinds of foods, and a large part of this (not always, but for the most part) is due to a "dried-up" *nefesh habehaimis*, which is constantly seeking its vitality that it is starving for. The person is often not aware that his pursuit of desires are really stemming from internal dryness in his soul, and he's not aware that he is really dying for vitality. Upon becoming self-aware, he might discover that he eats a lot of extra food in order to satisfy his inner dryness.

So first, one must try to see where he gets vitality from in his life. We already know that we must feed our spirituality, our "G-dly soul" (the *Nefesh Elokis*), through Torah and mitzvos that it needs. In addition, each person needs to find his unique self in Torah learning. And we all know that we must take care of our physical needs, such as to wear the right shirt size and shoe size. So too, one must try to figure out what his "*nefesh habehaimis*" needs, what bothers it, and how to feed it.

This kind of self-awareness enables a person to treat a problem at its root, and the other problems go away on their own. They won't *completely* go away of course, because a person always has some inner dryness left in himself, but a large part of the problems do go away, when he has this self-awareness towards his *nefesh habehaimis*.

This will, in turn, slowly lessen the dominance of 'internal dryness' of the soul.

The Key To Overcoming Temptation

Chazal say, "When the *yetzer hora* is present, there is no *yetzer tov*",⁵⁶ so when there is inner dryness in the soul, it is very hard to overcome a desire when it dominates. But when a person gives inner order to his soul beforehand by feeding it on a regular basis, it is much easier to overcome temptation.

The Great Solution To All Psychological Issues

Therefore, a person must know what his spiritual needs are, and what his "*nefesh habehaimis* needs" are. (A person also needs to know his physical needs, but we are not dealing with this right now). Without this proper self-awareness, a person might be a *ben Torah*, always learning Torah and doing the mitzvos, and always trying to do Hashem's will, but he has no real and inner vitality sustaining him!

⁵⁶ *Nedarim 32a*

A person has to be a “*ben Ish Chai*”, to be “alive”, and if one does not feed the needs of *nefesh habehaimis*, he is not “alive” inside. Both our *Nefesh Elohis* (G-dly and Divine soul), and our *nefesh habehaimis* (animalistic soul – our basic emotional needs) need to be kept alive. Hashem wants our *nefesh habehaimis* to be alive (and to be purified), and therefore, one must know well what his *nefesh habehaimis* needs in order to feel alive.

The words here have been brief, but they are coming to explain the root of many problems in today’s times, in which there are an endless amount of psychological disturbances. People today are full of emotional suffering, going all over the place for therapy and trying to get helped, and sadly, many people aren’t finding anyone who can help them. But many of the emotional problems going on in today’s times are simply because people lack a source of inner vitality in their life; because they don’t know what it is. When there is a lack of vitality in the soul, a person will have an entire “zoo” inside himself, because there is chaos in his soul from all of the desires he has that are not being pacified in any way.

So the first step of the solution is to figure out and clarify where your *nefesh habehaimis* gets vitality from. When this is discovered, a large percentage of a person’s problems will fall away, and not just the area of desires. The concept is being applied here to the topic of desires, but it is really an idea that can be used to solve most of the issues in our soul.

This is one part the solution to solving desires that stem from “inner dryness” of the soul.

Step Three: After You Feel The Inner Dryness From Desires

The other part of the solution is, as we mentioned, that after you give in to a desire and you feel dry inside, to be aware of the following. There are two reasons why there is dryness after desire.

One reason is because desire causes disparity – “*Those who seek desire, are separated.*” When a person has a desire, he has vitality from it, but when the desire goes away, he is left with nothing, so he feels dry. He was connected to something, but it wasn’t a true connection; when that false connection goes away, he feels alone again. That is the simple meaning of the *possuk*.

The deeper meaning, though, is based on the concepts here: dryness is what is causing the desire, so it is really feeding the body, not the soul. It leaves some mark, however, on the *nefesh habehaimis*, and the *nefesh habehaimis* gets something from it.

For this reason, a person seeks a desire and imagines that he needs it, while in reality, it is “salty water”, as the *Vilna Gaon* says. Meaning, it sustains his body, not his soul. So a person will just feel the dryness again, and not only that, but he is thirstier than before, so the desire increases more and more.

Thus, desire stemming from dryness of the soul causes a person to go back to dryness after he gives into such a desire, and then he gets even thirstier, having an even stronger desire than before

for the original desire. (As we said, sometimes desires can be stemming from boredom, and this is not necessarily a desire that dries a person out afterwards.)

For Those Who Always Feel Dry Inside

These two parts of the solution can apply to most people, and now we will say a third point, which might not apply to all people.

There are a few people who always feel dry inside, and it is their nature. These people have a very dominant nature of earth-of-fire-of-water in their souls, therefore, they always feel somewhat 'dry' inside themselves. If one is like this, the advice is to look for things that can provide a little bit of vitality, and to keep trying this. It can be something that is a dry kind of desire - as long as it is a little bit.

However, if a person overdoes it and wants to taste a large amount of something dry, then it will backfire, and it will be like pouring too much oil onto a fire, which only puts out the fire.

But if you keep giving yourself a little bit of vitality, it is beneficial. It accustoms your soul to gaining vitality, and the more your soul gets little doses of vitality, the more it is released from its dry confines, and it can conceptualize the idea of giving yourself vitality.

Caution Advised

However, it should be mentioned that there is a danger with this. In spirituality, it is wonderful to increase your vitality, but right now we are dealing with providing for the needs of the *nefesh habchaimis*, which are physical, so it might open a person to the world of desires, which are evil and destructive to the soul.

Therefore, practically speaking, one should mainly try to draw a little more vitality in his life from a spiritual source, and when it comes to the area of your physical needs, gaining vitality must be done sensibly and with prayer to Hashem for assistance.

This last part only applies to a few people, but the first two ideas are applicable to almost all people in the world.

18 | *The Desire To Love and Be Loved* ⁵⁷

Water-of-Fire-of-Water: The Desire To Seek A Reciprocal Relationship

Desires that stem from **water-of-fire-of-water** in the soul, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is the desire of a person for love – to love, and to be loved.

Human nature is that we want to love others, and we also want to be loved in return. This can be channeled towards holiness when it is used to love Hashem, to love the Torah, and to love Eretz Yisrael. It is used for evil when a person desires a forbidden kind of relationship, which stems from the *nefesh habehaimis* (the baser, animalistic level of the soul).

We all have this deep desire to love and be loved. How it manifests is different with each person, but all people want to love and be loved; there is no person who does not want to be loved.

A child always wants to be loved. When a person grows up, often his desire to be loved becomes hidden inside him. Sometimes it is because a person is not the emotional type, and sometimes it is because the person became hurt by a loved one, which caused him to become hardened; the person will then lose his desire to be loved. Either way, his desire to be loved is still there, it has just become hidden.

It appears that there are some people who do not have any love in their life – that's how it seems. But these people really do want love; it is just that their desire for love has become very buried deep inside themselves. These people might even be so hardened to the point that they deny their own emotions, and they might even think that the power to love doesn't exist in them. But the truth is, they really do have the power to love, and it is just very covered over by many layers.

If someone doesn't feel the need to love and be loved, it must be that his feelings are very covered over, and he needs to learn how to remove the layers covering him. He needs to find some areas in his life where there is love present, because they do exist; and he needs to extend those areas.

However, right now we will not discuss how to do this, because generally, such people are very emotionally hardened, and they need to first work on opening their emotions in the first place⁵⁸. First one has to open his emotions, and then he can reveal love in his life. Usually someone whose emotions are more revealed in his life will also have some revelation of love in his life.

A large amount of people identify with the desire to love and to be loved. For example, we naturally want children, not just because it's a *mitzvah* to have children, but because there is a natural desire in our soul to have children so that we can have someone to love. This is a deep nature

⁵⁷ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-018-desire-love-be-loved>

⁵⁸ See *Fixing Your Wind #05 – Flattery Part 1 (Internal Dishonesty)*, in the sub-section titled 'Step One – Speaking About Emotions'.

in every soul. People will spend lots of money to enable themselves to have a child. It is all because there is a very deep need in the soul to have someone whom we can express our love to.

But, people want to love someone who will reciprocate. It is written in Mishlei, *“Just as water reflects a face to a face, so does the heart of man reflect one to another.”* People are not prepared to only love and have a ‘one-way street’ in their relationships; we want to be loved in return, for all the love we are putting in.

There are others, though, who take the other side of coin, and they only want to *be* loved, but they do not express a desire to bestow love upon another. This kind of person, even if he is loved by Reuven, will still want Shimon to love him. This kind of nature comes from a lower place in the soul [the *nefesh habehaimis*].

So there is one kind of person who wants to love and be loved, and this is coming from a healthy place in the soul. This is human nature, and it is healthy, as long as it is used properly. But another kind of person will want to be loved, but he doesn’t wish to have someone whom he can love. This is unhealthy.

Children are immature, and therefore they will want to be loved, but they don’t know how to give love back; yet, even a child will express love to his parents, although he isn’t mature yet. When a child gets older, he will usually express love to his parents. But when a fully grown person suffers from a lot of *katnus* (immaturity) in his soul, he will only want to *be* loved, and he doesn’t have a desire to love someone. He wants to be loved - even if it is by a person whom he doesn’t love. He will want to be loved by someone, but it doesn’t have to be someone whom he will love back; as long as he feels that he has received love, he feels fine, and he does not feel a desire to love the person back.

We can view this as a lack of gratitude to the one who loves him – he doesn’t give back in return, yet he still wants to be loved. This is the unhealthy nature that can exist in a person: he wants to be loved, but he doesn’t want to give any love back. The healthy kind of love is when one desires to give love back to the person whom he feels loved by.

Hashem created in us a nature that we want to love, as well as to feel loved. However, if you take a look at the world, how many people enjoy a reciprocal relationship? It is rare. The world today is immersed in pursuing their own gratification, and there are a few people who search for true love. What we see mostly today are people who pursue desire, not love. We can see some sparks of love every here and there, but it pales in comparison to how much desire is taking place.

But deep in our soul, our soul wants real love; our soul wants to find real love. People get married, some later in life and some earlier, and come to the conclusion that there is very little love to be found in their life. Most people come to this frustrating conclusion and give up on love.

For example, the average couple gets married and thinks they “found each other”, and after some time, when they have gone through much frustration with each other, they give up. As they have children and raise them, they sort of put off their wishes as they take care of the children, hoping

that things will work out on their own and that it will all work out, that the love will form between them on its own.

Lo and behold, the children get older and don't need their parents anymore to take care of them, and the couple is back to where they started, seeing that the situation hasn't gotten any better since when they were newlyweds; the matter was merely on hold until now. They are back to their original disappointment, and many times they are full of resentment at each other. They might receive their love from a particular favorite child and get consoled from this, or they might imagine that all of their children love them and that is where they draw their comfort from.

Often, there is some love they are indeed receiving from their children, but it pales in comparison to how much they need to love and be loved.

In Search of Love

There are two different possible results from this.

Either a person despairs from love – both from finding it, and from getting it. Or, the person will become so desperate for love that he will search endlessly for it.

This kind of person (in the second outcome) endures terrible inner suffering. In the home, his love will depend on whatever situation he has been given by from Hashem; the amount of love he receives will depend on his personality, his spouse, and all of the family members. But when a person searches all the time to love and be loved, it will envelope his entire life.

In his home, he will always wish to love and be loved, but it will go further than his home. In *shul*, in the *beis midrash* or *kolel*, in the apartment building with his neighbors - he will always search to love and be loved. Wherever he goes, he wants to see loving connections between people, or else he is turned off. He wants to always see love in the world, in whatever situation he is in.

These kinds of people will often make meetings in their home just so they can see their old friends again. If they can't do that, they will seek connection in their *chavrusa*, always agonizing and wondering if he has a close relationship with his *chavrusa* or not....

Sometimes, he is indeed successful in forming connections with others. But at a certain point in his life, he might realize that he made a mistake about certain people he became friends with. It's all a question of time before he realizes that he feels betrayed by others, and in general, he feels that others aren't reciprocating. He goes through a constant anxiety with this.

Summary Of The Three Kinds of People

So we have explained thus far three kinds of people.

Some people are simply emotionally hardened, and there are a number of people like this. It is not a large percentage, but it is not a small percentage of people either. These might be people who are working people, or intellectual people, or even people who spend the entire day immersed in learning, but their emotions are never accessed, because they have become hardened somehow. Their emotions are hidden from them, and they will need to work to bring them outward.

Of course, every person expresses some emotions sometimes, but for the most part, these kinds of people do not have much emotion going on in their life; their hearts are not alive in what they encounter.

Another group of people have emotion revealed in their life, but they feel disappointed in people, because they aren't finding people to deeply connect with. They give up on their relationships with people. There are a small percentage of people like this.

A third group of people are those who do not give up on love. They keep searching for love, because they are desperate for it; they will not give up. But they suffer tremendously, because they are always searching for love no matter how much they are met with disappointments in their relationships, and their friendships keep changing; there's always a new best friend, until the next time the best friend does something to him that turns him off and he finds a new best friend. He gets hurt by one previous best friend, then he finds another best friend, again and again, and he keeps getting wounded inside from all of this.

We have been brief about this kind of problem here, but it is describing an enormous amount of internal suffering that takes place on this world. If you know anyone like this, you should know that his entire life is full of suffering.

These are the three groups of people which we generally find in the world.

The "Private" Aspect Of The Soul

Now we will talk about an additional, deeper point.

We all seek companionship (Dovid and Yehonasan had the most perfected friendship in the world). People seek love that is dependent on something.

There is depth upon depth to love. Until a certain point a person can love another, but when it comes to a certain point, a person cannot love others beyond that point.

To illustrate, there are areas in which friends can't be involved in together, either due to their differing personalities or simply because of circumstances. All friends have some companionship with each other; each person gets different things with each other. From one person you get one thing, from another you can learn knowledge in Torah from, etc. Each of your friends gives you something else. But there is one part of yourself which does not include anyone else – it is your "private" aspect, and no one can be included in it.

Most people do not identify this part in themselves, so they don't have a problem including others in every aspect of their life. But when a person understands himself well, he is aware that there is a part in himself which is "private", that he doesn't want to include others in.

If he would try to include others in that part of himself, it's like the suffering of Iyov – why? Because the needs of this "private" aspect in the self really cannot be filled by others. It is entirely about being alone.

For example, it can happen with a couple in which one of the spouses is very emotional and wants that the other spouse be included very much in his/her life, and he/she feels that the other spouse really has no such interest. The emotional spouse might accuse the other of being uncaring, while the truth is that the other spouse really is paying attention to what's going in the other's life, and it is simply because the other spouse is simply not able to give of his heart past a certain point. He really is giving all his heart, as much as he can, but he can only include the other spouse in his life up to a certain point.

This can be for either one of two reasons. Either it can be because beyond a certain point, a person doesn't recognize himself, and therefore he cannot extend that part of himself to others. Every person has a point in which he can't include others in, and with each person this is different. Some people cannot give of their heart to the other because they don't recognize themselves well; and in others, it is simply because there is a part of us which cannot be included with others. *Chazal* say that "each person is created individual", because each person has a private aspect which cannot include others.

This is not a coincidence that Hashem made us this way. We have two layers in us – a part in us which connects to others, which we need, and a deeper part in ourselves, which is "private", reserved, alone. Both parts of our personality are necessary. When one understands this well, he knows how to live alone in himself, as well as to live with others and get along with others.

When a person doesn't recognize his "private" aspect, he will always feel that others need to be included in his life. He will be met with frustration, because he will see that it is simply impossible to always include others in all aspects of his life. What will happen to him? Either he will become hardened inside from all of this frustration, or, he will keep searching for more and more deep friendships - and he will never be satisfied.

But when a person realizes that the soul is multi-faceted, he is aware of the two parts in himself. The word "face" in Hebrew is *panim*, from the word *pnim* (inside), because if you only give a happy *panim* toward others and you have no *pnim* developed in yourself, it is not *panim*. But if one has developed his own *pnim* (internal world) inside himself and he also has *panim* to others, this is the meaning of giving *he'aras panim* (an illuminating countenance to others). It means to shine your *pnim* outward.

There are people who always smile at others, and they are not in touch with their *pnim*; it's better than nothing, and they will get reward, but it is not *he'aras panim*; (it is *he'aras chutz*). Only when one has a *pnim* is it called *he'aras panim*; he has a part in himself which is being turned outward.

Developing The Power of “Alone” In The Soul

This is the deep way to live properly. With this perspective, every time a person goes through disappointment from others, he has a place of “alone” that he can return to in himself, instead of falling to despair.⁵⁹ He tries to be included with others, and when he sees that sometimes he can’t, he has a place to return to in himself which is private and doesn’t need others. It is painful when others aren’t included in our life, but it doesn’t have to break you, because it is only one part of yourself; when it happens, you can return to the private aspect in your soul, and then you will be able to survive from there.

When one is in touch with his private aspect and he nurtures it well (and the intention here is not to despair from relationships, or to become a cold person who becomes self-absorbed), he lives a life of “*rotzoh v’shov*” (to “run and retreat”). Sometimes he is involved with others, and sometimes he turns inward into himself, in a cycle, back and forth.

So we must be aware of these two parts in ourselves and keep cycling between them, back and forth, all the time. Our relationships with others are necessary, and indeed, Hashem created us to unify with each other. But that is only one part of ourselves.

What will happen if one truly connects with others all the time and he has not yet developed his private aspect? He experiences others’ ups and downs, physical and spiritual, and this will also take a lot of emotional and mental strength from him; (this requires its own discussion in how to deal with). There are people who are so caring for others that they truly suffer from others’ problems.

When the average person is told of another’s difficulty, he will usually just nod his head and maybe feel him a little, but he doesn’t really experience the other. But a very caring person will actually experience the other’s pain, and he might get so pained by what he hears that he falls down together with his friend, because he has no place inside himself where he can run to for relief; he has no “alone.” It’s very dangerous to have deep connections with others when a person hasn’t yet developed his power to be alone inside himself.

The true way to live is to develop both abilities: to be able to turn outwards to others and be involved with them, but at the same time, to be able to enter inward and live alone in themselves.

So on one hand, a person has to always be in touch with his emotions (and if a person is too emotional, he needs to develop his intellect more so that he can learn how to detach from his emotions sometimes, but we are not dealing with this now), but at the same time, one must be balanced. If a person is deeply feeling and he doesn’t have a place of “alone” in himself, he might go crazy from all that he hears going on in the world. With proper frame of mind, he can learn how to be balanced even with all his powerful emotions, to feel others yet also return to his alone.

The amount of how much he needs to connect is different with each person, but the point is, he will know how to deal with two worlds at once. The outer part of himself is involved with others, with This World, and the inner part of himself is his place of alone, which reflects the Next World.

⁵⁹ See “*Getting To Know Your Self*”, for more on this concept of discovering your “alone” aspect.

This is the key to enduring disappointments with regards to others. When one gets hurt from others, he can return to his place of alone, and be calmed. This is a fundamental concept in life, and it stems from knowing how to use the element of **water-of-fire-of-water** in the soul: the need to love, and the need to be loved.

The Point of Unconditional Love

This is a broad discussion, and we are only briefing it.

Here is a following deeper point: We should also understand that there is a deeper part of our soul which can love yet not have to feel loved in return.

Earlier, we spoke about the part in the soul which wants to be loved yet not give back love in return, and this is a lower part in the soul which is unfortunately dominant in today's world, in which so many people want to be loved but they don't feel a need to give love back. The healthy part of the soul is the part in our soul, which softer people are very in touch with, is the part in us which wants to love and be loved, to enjoy a reciprocal relationship. We have dwelled on explaining this part of the soul, and how to use it properly and give it balance.

But there is a deeper part of our soul which loves others and doesn't expect to be loved back. It is even deeper than the love a father has for his child.

A father loves his child and wants to be loved back, and in addition, there is not always a reciprocal relationship between a father and a child, because the father's love for the child is certainly greater than the child's love for the child. The Torah discusses a father who comes to rob his son's home; we do not suspect that the father will kill his child, because the father always loves his child, even if he would steal money from him. But the child might kill his father. So the father-son relationship is never a completely reciprocal relationship.

But there is a part in the soul that wants to love, yet it does not expect to be loved back. A person who is very in touch with this part of the soul knows how to transcend his private existence and unify himself with the collective essence of the Jewish people.

This is referred to in the language of our Sages as "*Shechinah*" or "*Kneses Yisrael*", when there is a collective kind of love that is not based on individual kinds of love. It is a general love towards the entire *Klal Yisrael*, and it emanates from a higher part in the soul, not from the part in ourselves which wants "love and to be loved".

(On a more subtle note, in deeper language, one has to be able to leave the "root" and love even the "branches"; [he must first begin with the general love towards *Klal Yisrael* and after he has developed that power, he must descend from that level and try to love each member of *Klal Yisrael* individually.] But the higher kind of love is the part of the soul that feels a need to love yet not expect to be loved back in return. This is a very pure level of *Ahavas Yisrael*.

Summary of The Three Different Kinds of Love

To summarize thus far, the lowest kind of love is when a person wants to be loved yet he doesn't want someone to give love to. This stems from the *nefesh habehaimis*. The basic and healthy kind of love is when one wants to love and be loved. The higher kind of love is the need to love without expecting to be loved back. The deeper understanding of it is that it is not just a desire to love; it comes from the love of the soul towards all people.

Unconditional Love Is Present In Our Gedolim (and Parents)

This deep part of the soul (to love yet not expect to be loved back) is the part in the soul which the *Gedolim* accessed in themselves; the *Gedolim* where all our faithful shepherds that led their flock, which was us, always guiding us no matter what we did to them. And a father as well knows of this kind of love towards his love, that even after his child hurts him, he continues to lead his child, because he knows how to love yet not expect love in return.

If a leader/father needs others to love him in return, he will only get hurt by the people they are involved with; unfortunately, most people are not that grateful to what is done for them, and if they feel that the one who is leading them needs love in return, they will not feel that motivated to give any love back.

This is because most of the time, people don't recognize at all the good that was done for them; or, they are simply ungrateful, so they end up 'repaying good with evil', as we see from people who hurt those who try to help them. An ungrateful person will hurt someone who tries to help him if he's not getting the help he wanted, and he will even have feelings of resentment towards him, which he doesn't even have towards someone who never tried to help him at all.

The Need To Be Loved Cannot Ever Be Denied

Even if a person has reached selflessness, though, it is still impossible for a person to suffocate his need to be loved. Although the deep part of the soul is prepared to give love without getting back love, the outer part of the soul wants to be loved, and it is impossible to deny its needs. But, those needs cannot be sustained through This World.

This is a fundamental mentality that a Jew needs to live with: There is no way for a person to receive all his love from anyone on This World! There is no perfect love to be found on this world, because there is no one on this world who has completely reached the depth of his soul.

Most of the time we can't receive love from others, simply because we live in a cold world, and even amongst our close surroundings, we cannot get complete love from them. There are a few people on this world who can provide love to people, but even the love that is being offered is not deep enough to keep us sustained; it doesn't emanate from a deep place in others' souls. Therefore,

we are never able to be completely loved by anyone on this world, because there is no one who can give it to us!

The more sensitive a person is - or the more in touch he is with his *Avodas Hashem* - he can feel a giant void in himself, always feeling alone on this world. It is really because a person does not have a truly deep connection with another; the part in our soul which wants to be loved is not getting its needs.

Most people don't feel this way; the only ones who feel it are either people who are very sensitive, or people who work very hard in their *Avodas Hashem* and they have entered very deep into themselves, so they feel this part of the soul. There are very few people on the world, though, who are like this.

It is impossible for a person to get his love completely from anyone on this world. It can happen that a person imagines that another loves him as deeply as he wants to be loved, and that is how he calms himself. The person will get hurt by that friend, then find a new friend whom he can get his imaginary love, and then repeat the vicious cycle, again, again, and again.

As an example, if a person is on his second marriage, he might claim that his wounds from the previous marriage have healed, and that now he is getting all the love he needed. But the truth is that it's impossible for a person to receive his love completely from any situation on this world. There's no such thing.

Where Will We Get Our Love From?

So where are we to receive complete love from?

This is the depth of *Ahavas Hashem*: to love Hashem, and to be loved by Hashem. One who wants to find absolute love will not get it on this world, and he will only get it from Hashem. This is the depth of the power in the soul to love Hashem.

Without uncovering the need for this, a person can still love Hashem, but it won't be complete. The complete level of *Ahavas Hashem* is that a person reaches a place in his soul in which he realizes that no one on this world can completely love him, and that only Hashem can truly love him. There is no other option.

The more sensitive and feeling a person is - the more a person enters the depth of *Avodas Hashem* with the more he is in touch with his soul - he identifies this part of the soul: the need to love and be loved. That need either results in causing him to suffer terribly on this world, because of the horrible loneliness he feels - or, it can cause him to go in the other direction: to reach the depth of love for Hashem, and to feel loved back by Him.

In that deep place in the soul, one can be bound up with Hashem in love, and he can receive a love which is not found on this world from any person. When a person reaches this place in himself, he reaches the total bond with Hashem.

The more a person enters inward into his soul, the more he can feel Hashem's love for him, and he should then express his love back to Hashem, more and more, which connects the soul deeper and deeper into the love of Hashem for him. It is there that a person can truly get his need to be loved. It is written, "*Much water cannot extinguish the love*" – the endless kind of love comes from Hashem, and it is the only source we have for receiving complete love.

If a person has any doubts about this, the only love he knows of will be in small amounts, not enough to really sustain his needs. He won't receive all the love he needs from others, and even more so, even his own love for others won't be complete.

The View of Modern Therapy Vs. The View of The Holy Torah

There is no place for trying to denying the need in a person to feel loved.

Often, when a person gets older and matures, he discovers his need to be loved, and when he gets hurt by others, he will develop a survival tactic by denying his need to feel loved, so that he can avoid the pain of getting hurt by others. He might go to a therapist who will advise him that he doesn't have to feel loved by others and just take his mind off it, such as by getting busy with his private goals, etc...

But the way of the Torah is to acknowledge the need to be loved, and that there is no place for denying our need to feel loved by others.

Sometimes, we do have to know how to detach, when the situation calls for it. But this cannot become a general mentality to have in life. Generally speaking, we need to awaken our need to be loved, and we always need to be in touch with it and satisfy it.

Just like a child always wants to be loved, so do all of us retain this inner child that always wants to be loved, no matter how old a person is. You always need love – right now, this moment! It should never be denied. You just need to know how to get it in the right way.

In Conclusion

To summarize: The need to be loved, without needing someone whom we can love back, is a negative trait that stems from the *nefesh habehaimis*, and this problem, if it is manifest, must be fixed.

The need to love and be loved in return, is a healthy need. If a person merits it, he might get his love from certain people on this world who can give it to him. Most people, though, *do not* merit this. But there are indeed some people who do find love on this world. But even such a person, who feels loved on this world, also needs to understand, that only part of his love can be gotten from this world.

Why? It is because each person, at some point in his life, needs to develop the power of “alone” in his soul, a part of himself which is private and does not need others.

This is not to be seen as hardening oneself, but rather as a healthy kind of emotional detachment that is necessary sometimes. One can return to that private place in himself whenever there is need for his emotional health, or whenever he gets hurt by other, so that he can have a place of inner serenity in himself which he can return to at times and draw strength from.

But there is a deeper part in the soul which can love and not have to be loved in return. This is a person who has the trait of leadership, and all of the *Gedolim* reached this power. The leaders of our people, throughout all the generations, never expected anything in return for all that they gave to us.

Finally, a person needs to be aware that there is always a part in us which wants to be loved, even if one has reached selflessness; and that this need cannot be received from anyone on this world. One should awaken this part of himself to be loved and realize that he can only get it from Hashem. It should not be suffocated (except at certain times when it is necessary to detach). Generally speaking, one needs to feel loved, and he should awaken his need to love Hashem and be loved by Him.

If a person merits it – through purifying himself, through *tefillah*, and through truly searching for Hashem – he will reach the love of Hashem, which is contained deep within the Jew’s soul, and then a person will feel the love of Hashem for himself and his love for Hashem in return.

In this way, one can enjoy a life of constant love. Just as we can always feel the warmth of the sun on our body, so can a person always feel the warmth on his soul from the love of Hashem - that he can feel all the time, when he has penetrated to that place in himself.

These matters are broad, and we have been brief here, so as not to digress too much from the current topic, in which we are learning about how to fix the trait of desires. We have described here the deep desire of the soul to love and be loved; may Hashem help us that these words be properly pursued and in their proper guidelines, working his way upwards [in order of the steps that was presented here]⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ See also *Bilvavi Part 5 – Loving Hashem, and Tefillah #0102- When You Feel Unloved, and Tefillah #0133-Sanctuary, and Mesillas Yesharim - Searching For Love.*

19 | *The Desire For News*⁶¹

Desires Stemming From Wind-of-Fire-of-Water

We are currently discussing desires that stem from **fire-of-water**; we have already discussed desires that stem from earth ('dry' desires) and water (relationships) that are rooted in the fire-of-water of the soul. Now we are up to discussing desires that stem from the '**wind**' aspect of fire-of-water in the soul.

As we have mentioned in the past, water is the root of desire, wind is the root of movement, and fire is about renewal (similar to how the flame of a fire keeps flickering and becoming renewed). When desire stems from **wind-of-fire-of-water**, a person has a desire to move (wind) towards something new (fire).

The world is full of various desires that people pursue; what are the main desires of the world? People mainly pursue the desires of money, illicit relationships, food, and vacations. When a person has an overpowering desire for food and he also desires movement, he will have a specific desire to eat in the street, because he enjoys movement as he's having food. These kinds of desires, however, are not taking people over all the time.

There are a few people think about making money all day, but most people, even if they desire money, do not actually think about this all day. The desire for illicit relationships are also an overpowering kind of desire which totally consumes a person who is involved with it, but these desires as well are not taking place every second in the person's life (although it can definitely be said that in the generation we live in, the world is not that far from the total level of this). Desires for food, and desires for excessive movement, are also not that constant.

But the desire which we will discuss here in this chapter – the desire for renewal – is a kind of desire that is constant. There are two aspects to this.

There is a kind of renewal which a person produces from within himself; for example, there are people who are able to always have new Torah thoughts, and if this kind of person works for a living, he is the type to be creative and always come up with novelty ideas. This doesn't always mean that he actualizes his ideas, but he is constantly having new ideas. This kind of person, because he is naturally drawn towards renewal, is always coming up with new ideas.

This is an "inner" kind of renewal. because the renewal is being produced from within the person, and it is not drawn from an outside force.

The other kind of renewal is called "outer" renewal; this is referring to the renewal we get from the "news" we pick up, either hearing or reading. There is a desire to know what's new. If this desire

⁶¹ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-019-desire-news>

to know “What’s New?” gets too dominant, a person will constantly seek “What’s New?” due to the wind-of-fire (of water) in his soul which is getting dominant and raging.

By nature of the soul, most people will not seek to hear new things, and they will only seek it ever so often. But in the situation of this generation that we are in today, things have changed. The desire to hear about new things is being awakened in almost all people (except for a few people who don’t care much for the news). The events going on in the world that we hear about awaken the desire in the soul to hear about new things.

The Problem With Hearing/Reading the News

Technology, an advent of our recent times, has recently caused a great increase in the desire to hear new things and to follow the news. It used to be that a person didn’t hear all the news that went on. When a person has gotten used to following the news, even if he doesn’t read the news every day, he still feels a need all day to know what’s new. This is the problem that technology has recently created.

When a person needs to read the newspaper every day – either because he is bored, or simply because he is curious – once a person has a fixed time every day in his schedule when he reads the news, his need to hear what’s new will always be active, even if he’s not actively seeking what’s new.

This is not new to our generation; it existed as well a hundred years ago, that even amongst *frum* Torah Jewry, people were reading secular newspapers, so the *Gedolim* had to start a *frum* newspaper in order to replace the reading material; it was a kind of newspaper that came close to being a “*frum*” newspaper.

The truth is that there really is no such thing as a newspaper that is designed for a *ben Torah* to read, but it was definitely close to being a ‘kosher’ newspaper. However, although the reading material was perhaps ‘kosher’, it still caused people to get used to reading new things, which made them develop a need to always seek what’s new. It became a fixed part of a person’s schedule.

Some people always need to hear and read what’s new simply because they are ‘dried up’ inside, and it’s not because they seek renewal. This kind of person reads the paper every day for the same reason that he has a coffee every day; it merely is a fixed part of his schedule.⁶² But most people have a need to seek what’s new, every day, because they really want to hear about new things.

In the last couple of years, the advances in technology have caused people to always have to know “what’s new”. There are people who have no *yishuv hadaas* (calm mind) at all because they have gotten so used to their gadgets, because they are always wondering what’s going in this place of the world and that place of the world.

⁶² Refer to *Fixing Your Water #017 – Dry Desires*

However, in our generation, most of the time the desire to hear “what’s new” is not coming from the desire in the soul to seek renewal. There are only a few people like that. In our generation, the desire to hear “what’s new” simply envelops the entire world.

Understandably, this causes anxiety in the soul. Even worse than this, though, is that it also causes in the soul a constant awakening of the desire for renewal. People who have the latest technological forms of communication usually do not have that much self-control over how they use their gadgets, and they have become enslaved to an ongoing desire for to hear the news and find out about what’s new in the world.

We are not merely speaking about people who always need to know what’s new in the world, which can make a person become connected to the worst kinds of evil. We are speaking about the fact that people are enslaved to their gadgets (even if they are ‘kosher’ gadgets), because they have gotten so used to always receiving the news.

An example of this is the need a person to always view every [text] message that every one of his friends sends. It causes a person to always be in needs of renewal that is superficial in its nature. The desire for news also includes the desire in a person to always know current events, and to know what’s going on all over the world (and now they even have news about what’s going on in outer space!).

A *ben Torah* who truly spends his day immersed in learning Torah doesn’t have this problem. But anyone involved with the outside world has to struggle with this problem, and even those who are learning all day inside a *beis midrash* still might be very connected to the world - if he is a person who has a smartphone in his pocket. Depending on the kind of phone a person has in his pocket, that very factor alone will decide how negatively connected a person is with the world.

Developing A Stability In The Soul

Even a telephone in the home which is always ringing creates this problem: the desire to constantly hear what’s new. It destroys the **stability** of the soul.

(Every ability in the soul is good at its essence and needs to be balanced. One has to know if his soul is demanding change or renewal; these are separate concepts. Earlier we addressed the desire for change. Change is a power of the Jew’s soul, as the Jewish people are compared to the moon, which is always being renewed.)

The first issue for a person to know is how he is used to always hearing about what’s new. When a person is used to always hearing what’s new, he will develop a problem of not being able to think properly. Even if he’s always reading new words of the *Gemara*, Rashi, and Tosafos every day, he doesn’t necessarily “think” into what he reads. He is always seeking something new - whether it’s consciously or subconsciously. Therefore, he doesn’t even read what’s written there! In his mind, he’s seeking something ‘new’ in the understanding - so he doesn’t even see the simple and basic understanding of the words he is reading.

Every person needs renewal, and indeed this is the power of a Jew's soul: renewal. But it must be balanced with **stability** in the soul; earlier, when we discussed the need for change, we discussed this. Stability is described as "*What was, will be.*" The power of stable consistency is a deeper power than renewal.

Of course, it's not good either if a person is the same every day, and he never has anything new in his life. A person has to make sure to have a strong stability in what he does, and that will counter his need for renewal. When the needs for renewal and the stability are balanced, such renewal will be constructive. If a person always keeps following news, he is constantly leaving himself behind and abandoning his true self! This is the disturbing problem of this generation, in which people are constantly disconnected from themselves, living and experiencing the events of this world that they do not belong to. If we could define the situation of the generation, this is the definition: people that are disconnected from their real selves, constantly involving themselves in a world that is not theirs.

What happened in the past isn't here anymore, and what will happen in the future isn't either here yet; when a person is involving himself with the news, he is essentially disconnected from himself, for he is immersed in either the past or the future. He is neither there nor here.⁶³ We aren't even discussing the *kind* of news that a person is listening to; we are simply speaking about *what takes place in the mind* when a person always needs to follow the news.

This concept is true both with regards to one who has developed a constant need for renewal, as well as with one who has a constant need for change.

Step One: Constricting The Desire For Renewal

The daughter of Rav Hutner *zt"l* once found him learning *Mishna Berurah* for a few consecutive hours. She was not accustomed to seeing her father learn *Halacha* for so many hours straight, so she asked him what's going on. He said to her that he felt his need for emotional renewal was becoming dominant, and he wanted to stabilize it by learning *Halacha*, which would cool off his desire for renewal. He did this to place limits on his desire for renewal.

Understandably, each person needs something else that will place limits on his desire for renewal, according to his specific situation. This is the first step in fixing the desire for renewal: to place limits on the desire for renewal, so that a person won't be impulsive to follow the news that much.

Step Two: Deriving Renewal From Torah Chiddushim and From Avodas Hashem

The second step is for a person to know what kind of renewal he is seeking. Firstly as we mentioned, one has to discover how much he is seeking renewal, and then he needs to see how he is directing this desire: Is he seeking renewal in the area of the outside world, or in his internal world?

⁶³ See *Tefillah #0125- Past, Present, and Future*

In other words, does he ever have ‘renewal’ in his life from his Torah learning and from his inner feelings of serving Hashem – or is he only seeking renewal from the outside of himself?

A healthy soul cannot only get renewal from just intellect or emotion alone; nor is renewal from the outside world alone enough to satisfy the soul’s need for renewal.

A person is usually getting renewal from all three areas, and the issue is only in the percentages. Therefore, one has to know: “How much renewal do I get from Torah learning? Secondly, how much renewal do I get from my inner feelings of being involved in serving Hashem? Thirdly, how much renewal do I get from new things in the world?” This is a deep self-introspection to make.

One who learns Torah regularly and he has knowledge in it, and he merits *chiddushim* (novel thoughts), is naturally able to direct his need for renewal to the area of his Torah learning. But if one doesn’t merit to have *chiddushim* in his Torah learning (like if he learns *Halachah*, and even if he learns *Gemara* in-depth but he doesn’t have *chiddushim*), he might get renewal from hearing the *chiddushim* of others. This is a valid kind of renewal which can satisfy his need for renewal.

If someone isn’t tasting renewal in his learning because he doesn’t have or hear *chiddushim*, he will need to get healthy renewal from his feelings. When one *davens*, each time, he can merit a different level of closeness to Hashem. So our feelings can provide us with inner renewal.

However, this is a matter which requires balance. If it is done correctly, a person will be able to get renewal from his feelings, which will satisfy his need for renewal in a healthy way.

But what should a person do if he is not talented enough to produce Torah *chiddushim*, and he is not a deep kind of person who can get vitality from his feelings in *Avodas Hashem*? He will have to get renewal from somewhere. There is no way for him to suffocate the desire for renewal. What will happen? He naturally will feel a need to get renewal from the outside world, and this presents a problem.

Before a person concludes that he needs this world to provide him with renewal, he should try to see if he is able to get renewal from his Torah learning, by actively seeking to produce Torah *chiddushim*. Of course, one should not learn Torah solely so he can produce *chiddushim*, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes; but one should definitely try to have *chiddushim* in his Torah learning.

Secondly, one should try to uncover renewal in his feelings. Most “new feelings” that people have, however, are stemming from their imagination, not from true feelings. That’s a different problem⁶⁴. But if one merits to learn Torah *lishmah*⁶⁵, he can get renewal from learning Torah *lishmah*; even if one doesn’t learn Torah *lishmah*, he can still get renewal from *chiddushim* in his Torah learning.

When a person has renewal in both his learning as well in his feelings in *Avodas Hashem*, he has a solid and healthy source of renewal from within himself.

⁶⁴ See *Getting To Know Your Feelings Part 1 Chapter 8*

⁶⁵ *For the sake of learning Hashem’s Torah*

Step Three: Channel Your Creativity

Now we will address the third step that is involved with this.

First of all, it should be noted that some people simply have a very creative nature. An artist, who enjoys to paint or draw pictures, is engaging in a healthy outlet that he feels a need for, and as long as he acts sensibly, there is nothing wrong with such kind of renewal. His *nefesh habehaimis* needs it.

Those are the three steps: figuring out where you get renewal from in your life, then through acquiring stability in the soul via Torah *chiddushim* and feelings in *Avodas Hashem* (i.e. in his davening), and if one has an artistic nature, he can get renewal too for his *nefesh habehaimis* from his creative pastimes.

Arm Yourself With Inner Renewal

The desire to hear the news, though, is not a healthy outlet, so it is not an option for us to get renewal.

If one isn't getting any renewal from his Torah learning or from his *Avodas Hashem*, he will naturally seek renewal from this world. [He will want to follow the news and the "hock", in order to satisfy his need for something new].

We must know the following: There is no way to be protected from the outside world. If we have inner renewal, we are able to be protected from the world; but if one does not have inner renewal, he will be harmed by the influences of this world.

This includes even a person who learns *Daf HaYomi* every day, and even if he learns Torah all day: if he doesn't have *chiddushim* in his Torah learning or if he doesn't derive vitality from *Avodas Hashem*, he will be harmed through following the news.

Therefore, the very first measure a person needs to take in order to be protected from the influences of this world is to get inner renewal (from Torah *chiddushim*, and from new feelings in his *Avodas Hashem*).

The Detriment of Reading The News

However, even if a person already has inner renewal in his life, such as the above two examples, he should still be aware of the following.

In the later generations, there became a need in the Torah world to have a *frum* newspaper. One of the *Gedolim* (I think it was Reb Yisrael Salanter, but I don't remember for sure; but the story is definitely true) started a newspaper so that *frum* people could have a kosher newspaper to read instead of having to read the secular news. There was one Chassidic Rebbe who bought the newspaper and then threw it in the garbage immediately. His *Chassidim* said to him, "Isn't this

embarrassing the *Gadol* who said that we should buy the newspaper?” He responded, “The *Gadol* said I must buy it. He didn’t say to read it. I bought it so that I could listen to exactly what he said.”

The depth behind this story was because although it was true that a kosher newspaper was needed to replace the secular papers, this was only meant for people who need to read. Most people who buy the newspaper would feel that it is *bal tashchis* to throw away the paper as soon as they buy it, rather than care about *bal tashchis* to their souls. Hearing the news that goes in the world always does some damage to the soul.

There is no such thing as clean news! Is there any person here who thinks that he can enter *Gan Eden* with even the cleanest newspaper?! The newspapers, every one of them, are filled with falsity and gossip, and with all kinds of opinions from all over the world that ruin the purity of the mind⁶⁶. Any of the weekly newspapers are filled with all kinds of material that are harmful to our souls.

Here comes the inner kind of test. If one is prepared to totally cut himself from all the news and newspapers, he is to be praised; but there are only a few individuals who can do that. The average person is going to hear the news and read the news; it’s too hard for him to hold back. What should he do to improve? Should a person read the paper and try not to accept the *lashon hora*...?

The problem really starts in reading the paper in the first place. From a purely *Halachic* perspective, even before a person wants to work on spiritual improvement, there is no way to justify reading the papers.

But even if a person would somehow gain a “*heter*” in *Halacha* to read and follow the news, he should know that the newspapers are all filled with confusing information. In one section you read the opinions of the *Gedolim*, in another section you read the opinions of various reporters and writers (and you get all the opinions of what each person in the world is thinking, including the opinions of people who are from “*Erev Rav*”). And this is even in the most ‘kosher’ reading material that’s possibly suitable for a *ben Torah*! It’s impossible to have a paper that is suitable to be read by a *ben Torah*! It’s a huge and disturbing mixture of all kinds of opinions, condensed into one paper.

The problem is that there are people who have a need to hear the news. Where can they get it from? From a conversation overheard by the *mikveh*? How will people satisfy their desire for news in a healthy way?

If you think about it, it’s a very difficult battle we are dealing with. It surrounds us from behind and from in front, “*panim v’achor*” as our Rabbis put it. There is nothing clean in the news; so the whole desire to hear news these days is a very, very big threat to one’s spirituality.

There is no way to permit such an outlet, because it will definitely harm a person’s spirituality. However, there is also no way for a person to avoid hearing the news. What, then, should a person do, when he inevitably does hear news?

⁶⁶ See *Tefillah #093- Media Influence*

Ridding Yourself Of Influences From Following The News

First of all, as we explained, he needs to make sure that he mainly gets renewal from Torah learning and from the feelings has in his *Avodas Hashem* (and if he is creative, he can gain renewal from his various talents).

But in addition to this, when he does hear the news (and inevitably, this will happen to everyone at some point), he needs to deeply examine each piece of news that enters his ears. He should wonder to himself: “What happened before I heard this piece of news? What happens to me afterwards now that I have heard it? What was new to me? What was true, and what was false?”

Besides for the fact that much of the reading material is forbidden because of *lashon hora* or for being inappropriate, there is a more subtle issue involved with reading the news. There is falsity mixed into everything! Even if the news is true, there is falsity mixed into the article one is reading. There is no such thing as a person reading news that is “true”. If a person reads news and accepts what he’s reading at face value, it greatly harms his soul.

First of all, maybe the article you are reading wasn’t even said by the person who is writing it; and even if he did say it, how true is the content in the words of the article?

So the first thing you should know about reading the news is that you have no idea if the material you are reading is true or not. In every event that happens, it is impossible to really know what happened. You are relying totally on the opinion of some writer who is telling you about the event, and the writer himself is probably immersed in worldliness, which is this world of falsity. I don’t mean that the writer is not on a high spiritual level; he is simply immersed in falsity, in facts that are not even facts. Most of what is written about is about non-existential things.

Of course, there is a tiny spark of truth to everything, and that is actually what enables the falsity to survive and be accepted. But most of what is being written about simply does not exist in reality! A person reading the news is not only immersed in the news; he is immersed in imagination, because most of the time the “news” isn’t even reality. People are living all day in that imaginary space...

If a person reads the news, even if it’s a kosher newspaper, he must make sure that he keeps examining the information and wondering how much of it is true and false. Although a person cannot always know what the truth really is, one thing he can know for sure: What he is reading is definitely not totally true, because you do not have to believe everything you read. After you read or hear the news, tell yourself that you are not obligated to believe what you just read.

This will help a person greatly chip away at his desire to be influenced by the news he hears. Every time he hears the news, he will be able to feel turmoil if he should accept it or not. On one hand he will feel that he can’t hold back from hearing the news because he feels “tied to it like a dog”, but at the same time, his soul can feel inside that it is constantly hearing falsity and licking it up.

For example, a plane crashed this week. Is there anyone here who knows the real reason of what led to its crash? Is there anyone who we can believe about why it happened? The only way to know is through *Ruach HaKodesh*, or else you are hearing lies. There is no news which we can truly believe.

In Conclusion

The topic discussed here describes a problem which envelopes the entire world, and it has become especially stronger in the recent years. Hearing and accepting what you read about in the news is simply destructive to our soul.

In order to avoid the influences which can destroy our soul's spiritual stability, we must know how to guard ourselves from all that we hear about, as it was described here.

20 | *The Desire For Competition*⁶⁷

Fire-of-Fire-of-Water: Desires For War/Challenges

Let us continue here with the help of Hashem to discuss the trait of desire. We are up to discussing desires that stem from **fire-of-fire-of-water**. We mentioned earlier that this is a kind of desire for wars and challenges. There are a few reasons why a person desires a challenge, but whatever the exact cause is, **deriving pleasure from a challenge** is always stemming from the ‘fire’ aspect of fire-of-water in the soul.

Rav Chaim Vital writes in *Shaarei Kedushah* that the element of water is the root of desiring pleasure, and the traits which result from this are jealousy (*kinah*) and envy (*chemdah*).

Envy (*chemdah*) means to desire something which isn’t yours, such as being envious of another’s wife or home. Envy can also be a desire for something you don’t own; it can even be towards something which is ownerless. **Jealousy** (*kinah*) is a different result of desire; it is to be envious of something which belongs to another, when it is currently in the possession of another. There are two kinds of jealousy.

One kind of jealousy is when a person wants something that another has and he doesn’t want the other person to have it. Another scenario of jealousy is that a person wants something that another has and he is fine if the other person has it too, as long as he has it. In another scenario of jealousy, a person wants to be the sole owner of something.

If a person is jealous of another, yet he is fine if the other person has what he wants, this is permitted jealousy, and it is called *Kinas Sofrim* (desire of scholars)⁶⁸. The negative kind of jealousy is when a person is jealous of another and he doesn’t want the other to have what he wants.

Thus, the kind of jealousy we are discussing is rooted in desire. In the second kind of jealousy, a person is being destructive to another because of his jealousy, for he doesn’t want the other to have what he wants; this kind of jealousy is rooted in **fire**, because the nature of fire is to be destructive.

But when a person is jealous of something because he desires it, and he is fine if the other person has it too, such jealousy is a desire rooted in the element of **water**. (On a more subtle note, though, all jealousy implies that the person doesn’t want the other to have it.) Let’s explore more deeply into these kinds of jealousy.

⁶⁷ <http://bilvavi.net/english/fixing-your-water-020-desire-competition>

⁶⁸ To understand “*Kinas Sofrim*” and how to solve evil jealousy, see *Understanding Your Middos #034 – Eliminating Jealousy*.

The Desire For Competitiveness

Often, children act competitive with each other, and we can also see adults who act competitive with each other. Where does the nature of competitiveness come from?

Sometimes it can stem from the trait of jealousy which each person can have, or, it can come from being raised in a competitive kind of environment in which he was encouraged to have *Kinas Sofrim*.

When one is jealous of something simply because he wants it, this is a kind of desire. But when one is competitive with another, he will feel a desire to harm another in the process of getting what he wants, and this comes from fire in the soul. It appears simply like a desire for something, and therefore, the person will harm another who gets in his way.

But the deeper way to understand it is that the person derives pleasure from the very challenge and competitiveness with another; it is not simply out of a desire to obtain what he wants.

The desire of jealousy simply appears to be “I want something for myself”, which makes it seem like any other kind of desire; but it is really a pleasure derived from being competitive with another.

Anyone can recognize the competitiveness in our world today, in which people are not only pursuing their goals, but they are enjoying knocking down others in the process. The ‘goal’ aspect is another factor of the desire, but the main joy they are having is being derived from the satisfying feeling of knocking others down in the process.

As an example, many people love to engage their time in competing with others in sport-like events, and they derive joy from the very challenge with others.

It’s possible that a person is competitive with another even if the other is not aware of the competition. This nature usually manifests either as a result of a person’s upbringing to be competitive, or you can see it in the many people of the world who love to engage in competitions with others, and they will spend a lot of their time in trying to defeat others.

Desire is not an evil trait by essence, because as we know, every trait can be used for either good or evil. With a dominance of fire-of-fire-of-water in the soul, however, a whole new kind of evil is awakened in the person. When a person wants to be competitive with another, he enjoys being in a challenge with another, and that means he will step on another and hurt another in order to get what he wants. This is clearly the classical example of what it means to have bad *middos*, and nothing good can be said about it.

At its worst level, this nature of competitiveness is called “*loimed al menas l’kanter*”, one who learns Torah in order to fight with others, of which *Chazal* say that “it’s better had he not been born”. The desire for competitiveness will cause a person to chop down others who gets in his way.

Desire comes from water, and competitiveness comes from fire, and water and fire contradict each other, yet that is the depth of this evil desire, in which a person engages in a contradictory kind of force.

There are even people, *Rachmana Litzlan*, who are full of inner turmoil in themselves, and they derive enjoyment from their own inner contradictions; that's how they deal with their internal anxiety. But usually, most people turn their competitiveness outwardly, towards others, and they enjoy the very competition with others.

If you know about the wars fought in history, you'll discover that in all of these wars, both sides were mainly interested in the competition itself. Even when people fight to protect their boundaries or because they wanted something, their main joy was derived from the very fight itself. Hundreds and thousands of people are prepared to die in war, all because they are enjoying the satisfying feeling of knocking others down.

Challenges That Are Holy

The truth is that competition with others is inevitable. We have to know how to use this ability properly. The issue is if we are using it properly or not: If we are being competitive with others in order to bring others down and feel victorious, or if we can just do what we have to do without trying to bring another down.

To illustrate, the *Gemara* says that if a father and son or a teacher and student engage in learning Torah together, at first they become like enemies to each other as they argue with each other (and this is the way it should be, because the *Gemara* says that one should learn with a *chavrusa*, and not learn alone; this is not a coincidence, for it is the preferred method of learning), and in the end, they love each other. In other words, there is a good-natured and friendly kind of competitiveness when people learn Torah with each other, and this is the way it should be.

Our understanding in Torah can only come to us when we learn with a *chavrusa*. But this will involve some feeling of competition that comes along with it. We need to know how we should approach this reality.

In a situation where a person is learning alone, for whatever reason (and indeed, the *Ramchal* says that every person should have a little time each day where he learns with just himself⁶⁹), although he won't face competition with a *chavrusa*, he will still encounter contradictions and questions in his learning, so there is no way to avoid the idea of opposition in our Torah learning. Therefore, he will still have to know how to deal with them, when they inevitably come.

If a person just learns superficially, his mind is working, but his heart is not in it, so he although he will be aware intellectually that there are questions and contradictions, the questions he encounters in his learning don't bother him. But when a person is alive from his learning, the contradictions in his learning that he encounters really bother him, and he feels like his own self is being contradicted. The soul grapples with dealing with the contradiction.

⁶⁹ For more on this concept, refer to the *derasha* of 48 Ways #020

Usually, a person like this who encounters contradictions in his learning [in *Gemara* and in *Tosafos*], will be really bothered by it. Either his mind will be logically bothered, or his heart deep down will feel unease, at the contradictions he comes across.

A large amount of people are dealing all day with the power of opposition, and they enjoy the feeling of being opposed. Here is an example of the concept: There are people who like very spicy foods. The inner reason for this is because the person enjoys dealing with such a challenge! It's a kind of contradiction that one can deal with, and there is a certain enjoyment derived from this.

There are many more examples as well we can give that illustrate the concept.

External and Inner Pleasure of The Soul

Now we will say the following very deep point: it is the external layer of our soul that enjoys oppositions and contradictions, while the inner layer of our soul which enjoys it when things are kept simple and calm.

In terms of the elements of the soul, the inner layer of the soul enjoys **water-of-water**, which flows continuously and calmly; the external layer of the soul enjoys **fire-of-water**, which is the nature to enjoy opposition, challenge, competition, and contradictions.

Thus, a person should try to reflect deeply into himself and ask himself what he mainly enjoys in life: Does he mainly enjoy it when things are flowing smoothly and the situation is calm, or does he mainly like it when there is something unpredictable and challenging going on?

A healthy soul enjoys it when things are going smoothly and all is calm and well. This is because the inner nature of the soul enjoys calmness, and it recoils from opposition.

If a person has a destructive nature – when his fire-of-water-of-water is very dominant - this is a clearly evil trait; he will derive his main vitality in life from being competitive with others. Of such people, *Chazal* say that “it is better had he not been born”.⁷⁰ On a deeper note, such a person is really destroying himself through his own destructive nature.

The *Ramchal* writes in *Mesillas Yescharim* that “nothing is sweeter than revenge”. This is not an exaggeration, as we know that the *Ramchal* was very precise with his words. Why indeed is revenge so enjoyable to a person? It is because the soul enjoys the very competitiveness, not the goal of what the person was trying to get. The enjoyable part is the other person has been harmed, and when this desire becomes actualized, it is the feeling of revenge.

However, as we are explaining, it is only the external layer of the soul which enjoys the ideas of competition, opposition, and ‘sweet revenge’. In fact, it is the totally external and superficial part of the soul.

⁷⁰ This refers to one who is “*loimed al menas l'kanter*” - one who learns Torah in order to challenge others

In the future, at the very end of the End of Days, Hashem will take revenge against the other nations. Because we are very close to the End of Days, there is a dominant power of revenge which is becoming manifest in Creation - but it is being used in the wrong place and for the wrong reasons. For this reason, “revenge is sweet.” A person might be aware of this consciously, but even if he’s not consciously aware of it, he still be enjoying it subconsciously.

Revenge is a dramatic example of this emotion, but even if one doesn’t come to take revenge, he still has a nature to enjoy bringing others down. Every person is familiar with this feeling. If one allows this desire to go unfixed, his own destructive nature will get out of hand and it will eventually ‘destroy’ his own life.

As we explained, it is only the external layer of the soul which enjoys revenge and competitiveness with others. The inner layer of the soul, however, derives enjoyment when things are flowing along as they should, when there is simplicity, and not when there are any kinds of contradictions going on. It enjoys being reminded of *emunah* (belief and faith in Hashem); it enjoys the ‘regular flow’ of things, when things are calm.

When a person lives a very physical kind of orientation, he mainly enjoys feelings of revenge. When he reveals his soul more, his source of enjoyment changes: he will only enjoy a situation in which things are flowing along with simplicity, and he will recoil from situations that are unpredictable that involve challenge with others.

Thus, every person needs to become aware of these two sources of pleasure in himself: the pleasure in defeating others, and the pleasure in simple calmness. Then, he needs to ask himself which of these pleasures he mainly enjoys in his life.

Here is an example: a person is reading *Sefer Tehillim*, and he reads about the wars that Dovid *HaMelech* fought. What is he mainly enjoying as he says these words? Is he enjoying the fact that Dovid won all these wars, or he is mainly enjoying the more calming parts of *Tehillim*? When you deeply reflect, you can feel how the matters described in *Tehillim* really envelope your entire soul. There are ‘wars’ in your life, and there is also calmness in your life. Ask yourself which of these aspects you enjoy more.

If one becomes aware that he mainly enjoying war and strife in his life, he needs to separate from these superficial kinds of emotional pleasure, and instead try to begin tasting internal kinds of emotional pleasure, by focusing on matters of simplicity and by deriving enjoyment from them.

This doesn’t mean that one should stop arguing with his *chavrusa* when he is learning. He should just try not to argue with his *chavrusa* for the sake of trying to defeat him.

The Negativity We Find Ourselves In Today

When it comes to our Torah learning, we encounter contradictions and questions. [We have already explained that the perspective towards this should be, that although questions and

contradictions are an inevitable part of our life that we run into (and certainly when we learn Torah it is this way), still, our main enjoyment should not be derived from situations of question and opposition, rather from situations in which things are kept calm and simple.]

As we discuss this concept, we should also be aware of the following. In our current times, there is a lot of *machlokes* (dissension) today, lots of “*Daas Torah*” issues, and so forth. Dwelling on all of these issues - and deriving vitality from them - causes the soul to mainly get enjoyment in life from all of these negative kinds of thoughts.

Most people in the generation are mainly getting enjoyment when they reflect into these negative situations. It could even be that as a person is speaking about the “Torah perspective” on a certain situation, he’s getting vitality from a sweet feeling of knocking down others, and this is an unhealthy source of vitality. When he comes upstairs after 120, and he did many mitzvos and spread a lot of Torah knowledge and he always made sure to speak against wicked people, they will tell him in Heaven that his intentions were all for the sake of knocking down other people....

When a person discovers himself enjoying revenge, even if it’s within his Torah learning or if it pertains to speaking negatively about situations of the world (even if it’s a true perspective), still, he is running away from his inner place of in his soul of simplicity, and he is involving himself in the outer layer of his soul, which enjoys strife.

How To Derive Pleasure From Simplicity

In order to access your inner place of pure simplicity, you can take a *possuk* or statement of Chazal that awakens your *temimus* (earnestness) and *peshitus* (simplicity), and repeat the words simply, or you can contemplate it simply. Be consciously focused on trying to awaken your *temimus* and *peshitus* as you do so.

The more you get used to this, the more you will feel yourself deriving enjoyment from the simplicity of it, and it will calm you down from all the negativity going on in the world that you hear about.

The Situation of Strife In Today’s Times

If one doesn’t know how to derive pleasure from *temimus* and *peshitus* – and indeed, most of the world right now is like this, steeped very deep into the fire-of-fire-of-water in their souls – then even if he learns all day is in a yeshiva or Kolel, he is being enveloped by a pleasure in negativity.

The inner light of Torah is hidden deep in the soul, and one cannot access the light of Torah if he mainly derives enjoyment from negativity (even if those negative thoughts are true “Torah perspectives” about current events). This is the meaning of how “Torah comes from Eretz Yisrael” – the source of Torah comes from a place which is pure, innocent and strife-free.

In the generation today, the dissension going on today has reached its greatest depths of evil; it is the depths of the evil ‘50thGate of Impurity’! On the second day of Creation, the idea of strife was created (because Hashem separated the upper waters from the lower waters), and Gehinnom was also created then; the connection is, that the ideas of strife and Gehinnom are interconnected. Gehinnom is fire, and strife came from the separation of the waters; when this fire and water are combined, there is fire-of-fire-of-water - a desire for strife.

In the End of Days, there is strife everywhere; nothing is untouched by strife. In the future Hashem will be One and that oneness will put an end to all the disparity, but until then, there is much disparity, and it only increases.

There are people whose entire lives are centered around strife and controversy with others, as if it’s the greatest mitzvah in the Torah. This is all because the world right now is deep into the fire-of-fire-of-water, otherwise known as *machlokes*/strife. And since the entire Creation is right now steeped in it, the generation derives vitality from it (whether a person is consciously aware of this or not), and this is a negative kind of vitality.

Surviving The Negativity of This World

In order to rectify this very deep kind of problem that envelopes us right now, we need to go in the opposite direction.

We need to learn how to derive vitality from our inner simplicity, to connect ourselves to the simple belief in Hashem, to connect ourselves to the Torah, which is called “*Toras Hashem Temimah*”.

Of course, when we learn Torah, we see that there are contradictions in what we learn, in the words of Abaye and Rava, and when we have to argue in learning with others. But if we make sure to connect ourselves to our inner simplicity in our soul, we will gain a wonderful balance in our soul, of both pleasure from simplicity as well from the contradictions and arguing we encounter in the words of Torah we learn, and the balance of these two acts together will provide us with true and inner vitality.

Without gaining vitality from simplicity, it will be impossible to survive this current world (at least in this current lifetime we are in).

It used to be that there were a few issues of *machlokes*, but today, each person struggles with all kinds of *machlokes*: “What type am I? What type of *shidduch* is for me?” There are always two sides in whatever situation we face today. We are inevitably forced into these kinds of situations. How can we deal with the challenges? How do we make sure to be above all the pettiness we go through?

The answer is: if you derive vitality from an inner source in yourself, the place of simplicity (*temimus*, or *peshitus*) in yourself – and if you make sure to make it into your main source of

enjoyment – you will have a chance of surviving all the strife (or at least some of it) that surrounds you.

So one needs to enjoy simplicity, as well as to derive enjoyment from the contradictions he comes across in his Torah learning, and together, with the balance of these two abilities, a person will be able to deal with all the competitiveness and challenges he has to deal with inevitably on this world. He will be able to pass through them, back and forth, and be guarded by his power of *temimus/peshitus*.

This is actually a deep spiritual light which Hashem has given us to be able to survive and protect ourselves as we are in this dark exile; the light of our *peshitus/temimus* can shine away all the darkness of exile we face, and this inner light we contain in ourselves is the power that can help us truly bind ourselves with Hashem and survive the dark times of *machlokes*/strife that now envelopes our people.