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A Word of Caution Before Continuing

The lessons of this chapter and the chapter before it are not for everyone. Anyone who reads this has to determine on his own if it speaks to him and if it's for him to work on this. If you come to the conclusion that the style here is for you, it is then upon you to figure out which of it can apply to you and which of it doesn't.

We have to emphasize this point, because if the approach here is not for you to work on, then trying to work on this will only cause a lot of frustration and anxiety for you.

Summary of Previous Chapter

Earlier, we explained that sadness is rooted in the element of earth in the soul¹, and that earth itself subdivided into four different possibilities: earth-of-earth, water-of-earth, wind-of-earth, and fire-of-earth. Each of these can be a different cause for sadness in a person, though they are all rooted in our element of earth.

The 'earth' aspect of earth, when it gets too dominant, can cause a person to feel a kind of "inner heaviness" in himself, which breeds on sadness. It can also come from feeling that you have fallen or failed in some way, which comes from the "water" aspect within our element of earth. Sadness can also come from having pain over unfulfilled desires, which comes from the 'wind' aspect of our earth. Sadness can also come from separation and strife, either in oneself or with other people; this comes from the 'fire' aspect in our earth.

These four possibilities for sadness can be subdivided endlessly; there is no end to how many details there are to this. We can't go into every detail, so we will have to just explain the roots. It is up to each person to think about this information, and then to try to see which of these are the root causes for his own personal sadness in life.

We have mentioned the four main roots of sadness. We will first explore the lower elements and work our way upwards, in the order of earth, then water, then wind, and then fire.

First we will begin with the sadness that comes from our **earth-of-earth**, and the four kinds of sadness that are contained in it. What these will all have in common is that they are all forms of sadness caused by "inner heaviness".

[Sadness Caused by Earth-of-Earth]

1. Messiness (Sadness Due To Earth-of-Earth-of-Earth)

Within **earth-of-earth**, there is the earth itself. One of the aspects of earth is that it is dark and murky. Thus, feeling “dirtiness”, or a lack of cleanliness, can awaken the sadness caused by earth-of-earth in the soul. It is the ‘earth’ aspect within earth-of-earth, hence, such sadness is stemming in particular from earth-of-earth-of-earth [in his *nefesh habehaimis*].

To give an example, if a person always lives in a messy or dirty house, this causes him to feel certain sadness at this. Seeing messiness or dirtiness, and being bothered by it, causes a person to contract inside himself and feel sad at this. The messiness, or the dirtiness, can awaken him to feel sad when he sees it. It is a form of “inner heaviness”, because the dirtiness or messiness that he sees is weighing heavily upon him, bothering him, and he is suffering from it.

2. Desires (Sadness Due To Water-of-Earth-of-Earth)

A second kind of sadness comes from the water within earth-of-earth. This is a sadness caused by one’s desires, which are rooted in the element of water.

When a person has a desire for something materialistic, such as a desire to own a nice house or to eat good food, he experiences sadness at this, because the desire connects him to the materialism, which makes him sad. The very connection itself to the materialism makes a person sad.

On a more subtle note, though, desire causes sadness because a person becomes engrossed in what he wants, and that itself is a factor which contributes to the sadness. Being very engrossed and concentrated into the desire causes a person to have certain “heaviness” in the soul, which is rooted in the element of earth; and earth causes sadness. The stronger the desire is, the “heavier” a person feels because of this.

We can find this by many people, who suffer from *pizur hanefesh* (a ‘scattered soul’) – they are ‘scattered’ inside themselves due to their very desires. Most people are full of many different desires, and all of these desires weigh upon him and make him feel ‘heavy’ inside.

The classical example of this is Amnon, who lusted after Tamar and became so engrossed in his desire for her, that he had melancholy from his very desire.

3. Despair (Sadness Due To Wind-of-Earth-of-Earth)

A third cause of sadness comes from the wind within earth-of-earth. This is the feeling of despair – when a person wants something but he despairs upon getting it, he has pain at this. This doesn’t make him stop wanting; he still wants it, but he has pain at not getting what he wants. This causes sadness with it.

The despair a person has from this also creates in him a kind of ‘inner heaviness.’ It makes the soul feel ‘heavy’ upon despairing from what one wants, and this in turn makes a person feel sad. This is also called “*ruach nishbar*” – a broken spirit (a power that is manifest both in the side of holiness as well as in the side of evil. Here we are describing how “*ruach nishbar*” is evil: when it becomes evil and negative despair).

If a person works on nullifying his will, he feels lighter inside as a result, and he would avoid the inner

heaviness (which was caused by his despair) that's causing the sadness. But if a person doesn't work to nullify his will, he suffers, because he experiences despair when he doesn't get what he wants. This makes him sad.

4. Lack Of Clarity (Sadness Due To Fire-of-Earth-of-Earth)

A fourth cause for sadness can be coming from the 'fire' aspect within earth-of-earth: when we are sad due to strife in our life, which casts darkness upon our life. This also breeds on 'inner heaviness' in the soul.

How does this come from the 'fire' of earth? The *Ramban* says that fire is dark. Although we know that fire is bright and it is illuminating, the *Ramban* says that the term "black fire on white fire" [by the fire of Har Sinai] connotes that the nature of fire is really to be dark. In terms of the soul, the 'fire' aspect of earth can make a person feels 'dark' inside. We will explain what this is.

In the previous chapter, we mentioned that fire causes sadness because fire is the root of separation, strife, and doubt. Doubt causes sadness because it is the same idea as strife, which produces two opposing sides. Right now we aren't discussing this particular aspect of fire; that is the element of fire itself, which we will discuss later when we get to discussing the element of fire. Here we are explaining the aspect of 'fire' that is found within the element of earth.

This is something else. We are talking about when a person feels "dark" inside - meaning, when he feels a lack of clarity in general, as if everything in his life has gone dark. This can happen, for example, when a person is learning a *sugya* in *Gemara* and he isn't finding it enjoyable. Or, whenever a person feels a general lack of clarity in his life, it comes from a "darkened" soul. The soul feels 'darkened' and it becomes unclear about things.

If a person is sad and he doesn't even know why he is sad, and he tries to figure it out according to the possibilities we have mentioned thus far (earth, water and wind within earth-of-earth), but he still cannot figure out why he is sad, it is a sign that he is very doubtful about his life in general. This is exactly what we are talking about right now, and it is a nature that comes from a dominance of **fire-of-earth-of-earth**: sadness created by doubts, which makes a person's life feel dark and uncertain. The lack of clarity itself is a reason for sadness.

This is the sadness that comes from the fire in our earth, and it is a feeling of 'darkness' that the soul experiences and feels.

If a person figures out why he is sad (either due to earth, water, or wind within earth-of-earth), then at least he knows why he is sad, and he succeeds in solving this kind of sadness. But if a person doesn't even know why he is sad, that itself makes him sad. If that is the case, his sadness stems from fire-of-earth-of-earth.

People who have a strong amount of fire in them usually experience this kind of sadness more often, because they are usually more clarity-oriented, and when they don't feel clarity in their life, it is very painful.

Really, this kind of sadness is an all-inclusive kind of sadness. It is a kind of sadness which includes all of the kinds of sadness which we mentioned until now. Anyone who is sensitive to soul matters knows what this is - a kind of "darkness" that the soul feels.

If you think about this deeply, you will discover that this sadness is coming from your mind. It's a mental kind of sadness: your mind feels a lack of clarity.

We find this kind of sadness when a person is tired. Being tired is related to sadness, as we find that the word *etzev* can mean both “sadness” as well as “tired.” Adam was cursed with hard labor which would make him tired, which was part of the sadness that he would have to endure as a punishment for the sin. When a person feels very tired, he can feel the tiredness coming from his head. This is because when the mind feels stressed, it makes the head tired, and a person can sense his tiredness coming from his forehead. It shows up even more acutely in his eyes, and he can feel the tiredness coming from his eyes.

In the same way, a person who feels a lack of clarity in his life can feel how this is a mental kind of sadness, and he can identify that the sadness is coming from his mind.

This is the general description of this kind of sadness, and there are more details to it. We have only been brief in explaining it.

We have explained all the possibilities of sadness that comes from earth. Now, we will go through the next four possibilities of sadness: sadness which comes from the element of water in us.

[Sadness Caused By Water-of-Earth]

We have discussed **earth-of-earth** as the source of sadness, and now we will progress to discuss the second main source of sadness: **water-of-earth**. This is sadness caused by failure.

Since all of the elements contain all the other elements as well, water also contains earth, fire and wind. There is sadness that can come from the earth within water-of-earth, as well as sadness stemming from water-of-water-of-earth, and wind-of-water-of-earth, and fire-of-water-of-earth.

The nature of water is that it descends. Since water descends, a person can feel sad when he feels some kind of ‘descent’ or falling, and if this is the case, his sadness is coming from the aspect of **water** that is within the element of **earth**.

There can be different aspects of the descent, however, which are bothering him, and there are four possibilities in this.

1-2. Sadness Due To Failure

‘Water’ can be a source of sadness in a person whenever a person feels a ‘fall’ from a previous level that was higher than where he has currently fallen to. In this, there are two factors that can contribute to the sadness. Firstly, the *actual fall* from the previous situation can make a person feel sad at this – the fact that he has had a failure, and the nature of the failure. Secondly, the *place* where the person ends up falling to is also a cause for sadness – the situation he is currently finding himself in, which reflects his failure.

If a person is sad because of the first reason – the fact that he had had a failure – his sadness comes from the “**water**” of his water-of-earth. This is because he is sad due to the very ‘fall’ that he experienced, which is similar to the nature of water, which naturally falls. But if someone is sad after a failure for the second reason – he is sad because of *where* he has fallen into – then his sadness comes from the “**earth**” within the water-of-earth.

The second person only feels sad only if he feels that he has totally failed in something, because the sadness is based on *where* he has fallen to. But the first kind of person feels sad at the very fact that he had even a minor failure, because the very fact that he has failed/fell makes him sad.

3. Sadness Due To “Ups and Downs”

If failure makes a person sad because he does not like the feeling of ups and downs, he is mainly bothered by the movements that failures cause. Movement is rooted in wind; therefore, when one is sad at failures because he is mainly disturbed at the turbulence in his life, his sadness is stemming from the **wind** aspect of of-water-of-earth.

On a higher level, this is the sadness experienced by *b'nei aliyah* -- those who are always involved in spiritual growth. People who are always involved in spiritual growth feel pain every time they have even the slightest fall from their progress.

The *Vilna Gaon* writes that we are always either ascending or descending in our spiritual level. Those who are more involved in spiritual growth feel this all the time, and therefore they have sadness whenever they feel even a subtle fall from their level.

Most people do not feel their constant ups and downs, and therefore they only feel sad upon experiencing a major failure. But those who are more spiritually oriented are sad even when they have any degree of failure, even if it's just a little descent from their level. They feel more their ups and downs, and it is that particular aspect which saddens them - more than the "failure" itself.

4. Sadness Due To Non-Growth

Another kind of person is sad even if he feels that he isn't growing higher, even if he isn't failing. The very fact that he isn't ascending makes him feel like he is failing. This kind of sadness is more painful than the other kinds; this comes from the **fire** within the water-of-earth, because fire seeks to ascend.

If a person feels sad because he had a failure, his sadness is rooted in the water-of-water-of-earth. But if a person feels sad because the day went by and he didn't feel any spiritual growth, his sadness comes from 'fire' of water-of-earth, which is a more acute and sharper feeling of sadness.

Which of These Makes You Sad?

We have described subtle differences between sadness caused by failure or non-growth. Therefore, if a person feels pain at the fact that he had a failure, he needs to figure out what exactly about this is making him sad.

He should ask himself: "Am I sad because of the way that I failed? (Which would be earth-of-water-of-earth)? Or am I upset at the very fact that I had a failure (which would be water-of-water-of-earth)? Am I sad because my failure has taken me in a different direction than I would like to be (wind-of-water-of-earth)? Or am I sad simply because I feel like I am not growing higher (fire-of-water-of-earth)?"

This is a deep self-introspection that a person must make. If a person isn't clear what exactly about what makes him feel sad when he experiences a failure, he will keep feeling very confused inside himself.⁽²⁾

[Sadness Caused By Wind-of-Earth]

The element of wind, which is the root of movement, is the source of sadness caused by unfulfilled desires. This can also have four different ways how it causes sadness. There is 'earth' in wind, 'fire' in wind, 'water' in wind and, of course, the 'wind' of wind.

1. Lack of Motivation

The aspect of **earth** within **wind-of earth** that causes sadness is when a person wishes deep down

that he should have spiritual goals, but he can't get himself to reveal more this inner will. He feels that he doesn't even "want" to "want" in the first place – and this makes him feel sad at this. He knows that he is *supposed* to want a worthy, spiritual goal – but he doesn't see himself revealing this will. The will of a person indeed has to first become revealed, in order for a person to even "want" it in the first place.

When a person doesn't reveal his will, this causes sadness. This comes from the element of earth, because the person just stays where he is and doesn't move – he doesn't move his soul to reveal what he should want.

If a person just wishes that he could want something spiritual – but he doesn't reveal this actual will – he will have sadness at this. It's not enough to "want"; a person has to actually reveal his actual will, or else it is just blissful wishing. It's not enough to want; a person has to *want* to want, and the only way to do that is by revealing his actual will.

Once a person reveals his will, he will be able to truly want what he the worthy goal he is pursuing, and he will then be able to actualize his will. As long as a person doesn't reveal his will, and he just remains at his wishful thinking, he will feel sad inside.

Many people who learn Torah in-depth all day and do all the *mitzvos* usually feel this sadness. They feel frustration at the fact that they know that they are supposed to want spiritual goals, but that they don't feel like they really *want* it. They know that they should want more levels, but they don't feel this desire, and this makes them feel sad inside: "Why don't I feel like I really want more levels? How come I don't feel a great desire to want more and more spirituality?"

All people who are connected even a little to spirituality know what this sadness is. They know that they are supposed to want higher levels in spirituality, but they also feel like they don't really want it. A person knows that he wants to become the next *Vilna Gaon*, but that's the problem – he only **wants** to be like the *Vilna Gaon*; he's not doing anything to get there (This, understandably, will breed despair in a person when he sees that he's not becoming the next *Vilna Gaon*).

This is the sadness caused by the **earth**-of-wind-of-earth. It can manifest itself in one of two ways: either that a person wants something but he hasn't succeeded in utilizing his potential, or it could be that the person has succeeded in revealing some of his potential, but he is sad because doesn't feel that he really utilized it in the way he could have, and his success only feels partial to what it could have been.

2. Unfulfilled Aspirations

Another cause for sadness is the **water** within wind-of-earth. This comes from the very desire. To be more specific, the desire itself is rooted in wind, and the pull toward fulfilling it is rooted in water. When a person feels himself fulfilling what he wants, he is happy, but when he feels that he isn't fulfilling his wants, he becomes sad.

This we can find by people who, when they were younger, were very idealistic and felt themselves pursuing their goals and dreams, but later in life they lost their drive to pursue what they wanted, which made them become sad.

3. Contradicting Desires

Another kind of sadness is the actual **wind** within the wind-of-earth. When wind encounters other opposing winds, it faces a contradiction to itself. When a person has contradictory desires – like when he wants something that contradicts a different thing he wants – this makes him feel inner

contradiction, which makes him sad.

4. Lack of Enthusiasm

Another kind of sadness is the **fire** within wind-of-earth. This is when a person wants something, but he lacks enthusiasm in it. He feels sad at the fact that although he wants something worthy, for some reason he doesn't feel enthusiastic at this, and this makes him feel sad inside.

In Conclusion

We have mentioned that there are 16 possible factors that can cause sadness. There are 4 root causes (earth-of-earth, water-of-earth, wind-of-earth, fire-of-earth), but they each have 4 possibilities, which ends up for a total of 16 possible causes for sadness.^[3] So far, we have only explained 12 of the 16 in detail. We described the kinds of sadness that stem from **earth-of-earth**, **water-of-earth**, and **wind-of-earth**; in the next chapter, we will cover the remaining kinds of sadness we didn't discuss yet, which stem from **fire-of-earth**.

Try to discern which of the reasons listed until now is mainly present in your life, and which of them makes you sad the most often. Don't do this by looking back at the last week or so and reflecting which of these kinds of sadness you felt the most. What you need to do is go through your *entire past*! Look back at your whole past and see which of these reasons caused you to be sad the most.

When you do this, you will see that each situation that made you sad was actually made up of many of these factors. There is never one cause alone that made you sad – there were a few factors involved that made you sad.

Again, we must mention that all of this is only for one who feels that the method here is for him. Don't want this because you know that you should want it; only use these methods here if you feel in yourself that you really want it. And don't force yourself to want it, if the path here is too challenging for you. If you feel that you really want to use the methods here, you can work on this.

We haven't begun yet to explain how we work on removing our sadness – we are still exploring the causes for sadness in us, which we must know before we begin to work on ourselves.

[1] In the "*nefesh habehaimis*" area of the soul

[2] The sadness caused by wind-of-water was not covered here, because it will be explained in the next sub-section, which will explain the difference between sadness caused by wind-of-water with sadness caused by water-of-wind.

[3] The sadness caused by the element of fire will be explained in the next chapter, and it will also explain the difference between fire-of-earth with earth-of-fire.