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Understanding Your Middos - 04 Eliminating Sadness

The meanings of the word "Atzvus" [1]

Let us give a general introduction to this chapter.

The Hebrew word "*atzvus*" we simply understand to mean as "the emotion of sadness", to feel sad in our heart. But the truth is that in the words of our Sages, there are many meanings to the word *atzvus*. First we will list all the different meanings of *atzvus* we find in Chazal, and then we will examine each of them.

Besides for "sadness", *atzvus* can also mean "pain". By Chavah, it is written in the Torah, "*Increasingly great will be your pains (of pregnancy) and your labor; with pain (etzev) shall you bear children.*" Chazal[2] say that the curse given to Chavah after the sin was that she would have pain in child-rearing, which is called *etzev* in the possuk. From here we see that *etzev* (the same root letters as the word *atzvus*) means "pain".

Atzvus can also mean "exertion." Adam was cursed in that he would have to work hard in order to eat -"With exertion (*it'zavon*) shall you eat." The word *itzavon* (exertion) is another usage of the word *atzvus*, so we see that *atzvus* can also mean "exertion."

Atzvus can also mean "mourning." When Hashem decided he would bring the Flood upon mankind, the possuk also uses the term of *atzvus*[3]: "*Va-yisat'zev Hashem el libo*" ("He was sad in His heart"). Rashi explains that Hashem was in mourning over the destruction to His handiwork. From here we see that *atzvus* can also mean "mourning."

Atzvus can also mean "exhaustion". When Noach was born, the generation proclaimed, "*This one will comfort us from our actions, and from the "itzavon" (exhaustion) of our hands.*"[4] Targum Onkelos says that *itzavon* here means exhaustion; so *atzvus* can also mean "exhaustion."

Atzvus can also mean "constricted". The Sages describe an exact measurement as "*amah atzavah*", using the word of *etzev* to mean "constricted."

It can also mean to give structure ("*itzuv*") and it can also mean a form of idol-worship ("*atzavim*").

There are even more meanings we find to the word *atzvus*, but this is the general description, and now we will reflect into each of these meanings, one by one.

Laziness and Sadness Have the Same Root

Rav Chaim Vital writes that laziness and sadness have the same root: earth. There is proof to this from many instances in the words of our Sages where laziness and sadness appear together.

For example, "The *Shechinah*^[5] does not reside when there is sadness or when there is laziness."^[6] We also find in the words of our Sages, "One should not pray if he is in a sad mood, or if he is in a lazy mood....only with rejoicing of a *mitzvah*."^[7]

Many times the Sages as well connect sadness with laziness, like we find that the *Shechinah* cannot be present when there is sadness and laziness^[8]; also, it is forbidden to daven if one is sad or lazy.^[9]

Even the Hebrew words for laziness and sadness are similar: sadness, which means *etzev*, is similar to the word *atzel* (lazy one), with exception to the letters *beis* and *lamed*. The letters *beis* and *lamed* form the word *lev* - heart -- because both sadness and laziness have to do with a problem in the heart.^[10]

To be even more specific, Rav Chaim Vital also writes that the element of earth is the root of sadness, and it results in laziness; thus, sadness branches out into laziness.^[11]

We have explained before how the four elements differ: fire is warm and dry, wind is warm and wet, water is cold and wet, and earth is dry and cold. The coldness in earth comes from water, and the dryness of earth comes from fire; and to be to more specific, the dryness of earth is rooted in earth.

Sadness and laziness are rooted in thus earth, which is dry and cold. Laziness comes from the coldness in earth (which resembles Amalek, who induced laziness into our people by "cooling" us off), while sadness comes from the dryness in one's element of earth.

Just like laziness can come from any of the three elements (fire, water and wind) present in the earth, so can sadness be rooted in any of the three elements in the earth. There is thus sadness which comes from fire, water or wind that is present in the element of earth.

First, we will examine the sadness that comes from the earth-of-earth.

Sadness That Comes From Earth-of-Earth

Laziness and sadness have similarities. Before, we explained that there are two kinds of laziness: laziness that is rooted in non-movement, and laziness of moving slowly. Both kinds of laziness are rooted in the earth, which doesn't move.

The same two types of laziness- total non-movement, and moving slowly - are also two types of sadness.

In total non-movement, a person is sad because there is a lack of vitality; when there is a lack of vitality, there is a lack of expansion and movement in the soul. There can only be vitality to a person when he has movement. Sadness is thus a form of non-movement (and its most dramatic example is death), and when this non-movement is total, that causes a sadness that is total.

Another kind of sadness is when one has slow amount of movement. This is when one's element of earth becomes imbalanced and causes a person to feel somewhat heavy, and he feels lethargic. When a person is sad, he feels a sort of inner heaviness, and he moves very slowly.

Fire is warm and dry. Really, the dryness in a fire should cause it to descend, but the warmth in fire gives it vitality to ascend. Earth, by contrast, has no warmth, and is left with its dryness. What happens? It doesn't ascend, and when the earth gets heavy, it descends even lower. When this

happens in a person's soul, a person comes to feel sad.

(Fire by nature ascends, while water descends. If so, why doesn't water in the soul cause sadness, since it also causes a descent? The answer to this is because water descends in order to sustain. When a person descends in order to sustain others, he doesn't feel sad - he is happy. We find this by a Rebbi, who descends from his level in order to teach his student. Earth, however, falls because of its heaviness, and not in order to nourish. This is why an increase of earth in the soul causes sadness.)

Sadness that Comes from Water-of-Earth

We can also find a sadness which comes from the water-of-earth. How do we see this? There are many ways how this happens, but basically, this was the entire sin of Adam: Adam desired to eat from the fruit of the forbidden tree, and because he sinned, he was cursed with sadness. Desire comes from water of the soul, so we see that the element of water in the soul can be an indirect cause for sadness.

After Adam and Chavah sinned, they were demoted to the level of earth; Adam was cursed with, "*You are earth, and to earth you shall return*", while Chavah was cursed with the pains of pregnancy and childbirth, which are called *etzev* (sadness).

Desire, which is rooted in water, brings a person down to the earth - which causes a person to be sad. Why?

Desire itself is not a bad *middah*; there is no such thing as a bad *middah*. A person can have holy desires, like desiring a relationship with Hashem and desiring the *Beis HaMikdash* to be rebuilt. But when a person desires materialistic enjoyment, he becomes sad, because since all materialism is rooted in earth brings him down to the level of the earth.

When a person has a desire, it isn't possible for him to enjoy it unless he uses his element of earth. When a person wants to connect with the pleasure in something physical, like food, he connects to his earthiness and materialism. What happens? "When a person wants a hundred, he wants two hundred." Materialistic desires thus cause a person to become attached to his earthiness, and this makes a person sad.

This is why Adam was cursed with "*Earth you are, and to earth you shall return.*" Because he desired to eat from the tree, that itself brought him down to the earth.

This is how the water-of-earth can be a cause for sadness: desires for materialism.

Sadness that comes from Wind-of-Earth

Sometimes sadness can also be rooted in the wind-of-earth as well. How can we see this?

In *Sefer Tanya*[\[12\]](#) it is brought that when a person feels haughty, he becomes sad. Haughtiness in Hebrew is called "*gas ruach*" - to have a haughty spirit, which can also read to "have a wide amount of wind." When a person is haughty, he feels that he is more exalted than others. What will happen when he discovers that this *middah* of his is causing him to run into problems in his life and in his encounters with others? He will become sad.

What is the internal process behind how this works? When one's element of earth doesn't equal his amount of wind in the soul, he becomes sad, because he's missing the earth that can keep him more grounded. The higher and better a person thought he was than others, the sadder he will become, because he the fall will be harder when he realizes what he's done to himself.

This is caused by the wind in one's earth; let us point out that it is not the element of wind itself in the soul that is causing the sadness, but rather the wind within one's element of earth. This is how wind-of-earth can cause sadness.

Sadness that comes from Fire-of-Earth

Where do we see that fire within earth can also cause sadness?

Fire is hot and dry, while earth is cold and dry. Laziness comes from the coldness of earth, and sadness comes from the dryness of earth. The dryness of fire is what is responsible for the sadness in a person that comes from the earth. How?

Fire itself wouldn't cause sadness, because the warmth in the fire can counter the dryness. If this warmth would get removed, though, we would be left with coldness and dryness. This would enable a person's dryness to be dominant, and it would make a person become lazy.

When a person is angry, it is also a kind of sadness. Yosef told his brothers, "*Do not be sad and do not be angry with each other.*" Anger is rooted in the element of fire, so here we see that fire can be a cause for sadness.

Anger and sadness are related because they have the same root: dryness. Anger comes from the dryness of fire, while sadness comes from the dryness of earth – or it can come from the dryness in fire.

Sadness From Melancholy, Which Is In The Spleen

In our body, we can also find how sadness manifests.

The Zohar says that sadness is found in one's body – in the spleen. The spleen contains the bile, and there are four kinds of bile: white, red, green, and black. Melancholy is called *marah shechorah* – "black bile." A person is melancholy through his spleen.

There are four primary colors in Creation: white, red, green and black. They are manifested in the four elements. Water is white, because it is clear. Fire is red. Wind is green (this is a separate discussion, not for now). Earth is black (although we can find earth that is white, the main kind of earth is black).

Thus, *atzvus*, sadness, is called *marah shechorah* – melancholy.

Sadness Causes Exertion and Sleep

Now that we have explained how sadness can come from the four elements, we can proceed to the next step, with the help of Hashem.

As we said in the beginning of this chapter, *atzvus* (which usually means sadness) has many meanings. One of its other meanings is *ameilus* – exertion.

When a person exerts himself, this does not come from any of the three active elements of fire, wind or water. *Ameilus*, which comes from the word *neelam* – "hidden" – is a "hidden" force, because it comes from the "hidden" element (earth). The other elements aren't hidden – fire is lit up, wind is out in the open, and water is clear. But earth is hidden away. Thus, exertion comes from an increase of earth in the soul.

The other three elements are light, while earth is heavy. Fire moves quickly, wind moves even more

quickly, and water naturally flows quickly. Earth is a heavy element, so an increase of earth in the soul causes a person to feel exerted.

Exerting oneself comes from the dryness and coldness in earth. For this reason, a person feels fatigued when he feels that something is hard for him to do. On a more subtle note, it is because he feels like he lacks vitality, and when there is a lack of vitality, a person feels fatigued to do something. By contrast, when a person does something with vitality for it, he doesn't feel like he's exerting himself.

Vitality-Giving Exertion: Learning Torah

Yet, we find a kind of exertion which doesn't fatigue a person – it actually gives vitality! This is the exertion of *ameilus b'Torah* – exertion in learning Torah, which is life-giving.

Exertion in learning Torah is not only a tool to be successful in leaning, but to fix one's lack of vitality. This is why "Torah and labor makes sins forgotten"[\[13\]](#) – because when combines Torah learning with his exertion, his exertion has vitality to it.

We have been discussing when a person has a problem in that he feels fatigued in his soul. Fatigue comes from a feeling of inner heaviness and a lack of vitality, a problem stemming from earth.

Vitality usually comes from the element of wind in the soul. There is also an even deeper kind of vitality that a person can have, and it comes from beyond the elements – the power of *chochmah*\wisdom. It is written, "Wisdom sustains its owner." A wise person in Hebrew is "*chacham*", which has the same numerical value in Hebrew as the word "*chayim*" – life. The Torah, which is the power of wisdom, is called the "Torah of life."

What happens when a person loses his wisdom? He has to exert himself more. The wiser a person becomes, the less he has to exert himself. This is why sadness is associated with exertion and fatigue. The less alive a person feels, the more tired he feels – he wants to go to sleep, which is called "a sixtieth of death".

(By the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*, one of the Tannaim exclaimed, "Our eyes saw no sleep."[\[14\]](#) Because their element of fire was revealed at this time, they felt alive and no need to sleep).

This we can see quite clearly. The less vitality one has, the more tired he is, and he is drawn toward sleepiness. This is why depressed people sleep a lot.

Sadness and Mourning

Besides for being the source of exertion and sleepiness, earth is also a cause for mourning.

People are sad when they mourn over the deceased. Why?

A person mourns over the fact that a soul has been removed from the world, and the world is entirely earth. A person in mourning connects himself to the one who died. What happens? Since the deceased person is no longer alive, the mourner connects with the pain of the deceased, who has been removed from the "earth" that he was on. A mourning person, in a certain way, has no vitality in himself, because he connects himself to the deceased person's painful situation – and this is the epitome of sadness.

Worries are also rooted in Earth

(The Vilna Gaon[15] writes that there is another kind of sadness, and it comes from worries. He writes that the way to fix this is through having *bitachon* (trust in Hashem). The *sefer Imrei Pinchas*[16] writes similarly that the way to fix worries is by not thinking about the future.

The Vilna Gaon also writes, on a more subtle note, that sadness caused by worries are really due to exerting oneself; exertion is the curse placed upon Adam after the sin, so exertion causes sadness).

Sadness That Comes from Pain

Another usage of the word *atzvus* is “pain”. This we find by Chavah, who was cursed with *etzev* – the pains of childbirth. Why is pain considered to be a form of sadness?

The *sefarim hakedoshim*[17] explain that pain in the body causes sadness. A simple understanding of this is because the heaviness that a person feels in his body from the pain causes the sadness, but on a more subtle note, it is because when a person has pain, he doesn’t move. The elements of fire, water and wind are moving forces, but earth doesn’t move. Earth prevents movement and holds back the other elements from being used. All pain thus comes from an inability to use one’s abilities, which is essentially being caused by the non-moving element: earth.

The Hebrew word for pain is *tzaar*, which has the same letters as the word *atzar*, to “prevent.” This hints to the fact that being prevented from something causes pain. An increase of earth is responsible for preventing one from utilizing his abilities, so earth (when left impaired) is the root of all pain.

Fixing Sadness That Comes from Wind-of-Earth - Through Pain Itself

However, the very fact that a person is being prevented from doing something can already be the road to repair!

Earth-of-earth is the root of an unhealthy soul. The other elements within the earth – fire-of-earth, wind-of-earth, and water-of-earth - can enable the problems in the soul to be fixed. Let us go through the options.

Pain itself can be the solution to the sadness caused by pain! Concerning one who is in pain, it is written, “*And the living shall take to heart.*” The possuk is showing us that if someone has pain, it shows signs of life. If he doesn’t feel pain, he resembles a dead person.

If a person wouldn’t feel pain over the fact that he can’t use his abilities, it would mean that he is kind of dead, just like a dead person doesn’t feel pain. But if a person feels pain because he is being held back from doing something, he is showing signs of life, even though there is a hold of the element of earth on him.

A person cannot feel pain just from his element of earth alone (earth-of-earth), because pain involves feeling some vitality, which earth does not have. Pain comes from an increase in one’s element of wind.

Therefore, the solution to sadness that comes from pain is to combine wind with one’s earth – but only by understanding that the pain is constructive. This uses the “wind” in the pain and gives vitality to the “earth” in the pain, clearing up the sadness.

We can see this from the Gemara[18], which states that pain over a bad dream wards off the evil of a bad dream. The suffering that a person feels over a bad dream actually fixes his own pain and sadness that comes from it.

Sadness itself is the worst thing for the soul. But it can be fixed through pain! When a person has pain, he should look at the pain as a sign of vitality, and in this way, he overcomes the dominant dryness of his earth.

This is also why the Gemara says that a worthy person merits to have a nightmare, because by having pain over a bad dream, it is an opportunity that can remove his own sadness.

This is how “wind” can fix the sadness which comes from earth: by understanding how our pain gives us vitality.

Fixing Sadness That Comes from Water-of-Earth

A person fixes earth-related problems also through the water-of-earth. How?

People cry usually when they are sad, like when one is in mourning over the deceased. Crying results from sadness - yet, the crying itself can relieve the sadness. We see this clearly from reality - after someone cries, he calms down. How did this work? What does crying help?

It is because mourning is essentially a state in which one lacks vitality, an earth-rooted problem. But when a person cries, the water of his tears actually gives him more vitality, and that is why crying calms down a person when he's sad.

Fixing Sadness That Comes from Fire-of-Earth

We can also solve sadness from fire-of-earth. How?

We explained before that the dryness of earth and the dryness of fire fuel each other, which keeps the earth dry. In this, we can find the solution to the dryness.

In *sefer Tanya*, it is brought that when a person is bitter and broken-hearted about his sins, he becomes joyous through doing such teshuvah. When someone does *teshuvah* from the depths of his heart, he comes to truly feel broken-hearted in the way he should, and he's sad. *“Hashem is close to the broken-hearted.”* His sadness is what will precisely bring him to become happy, because now he is closer to Hashem. His very broken-heartedness is what brought him to the greatest happiness.

Earth by itself is dry and cannot give vitality. It can thus be the source of mourning and sadness. If a person is sad and he isn't coming to feel the true broken-heartedness, what happens? His heart becomes stony inside - a *lev even* (heart of stone). But if he mourns in the proper way, he comes to the true feeling of broken-heartedness he is supposed to feel. On a deeper note, this broken-hearted is actually the opposite of sadness, and it is life-giving; *“And the living shall take to heart.”* [\[19\]](#)

There is actually nothing that can make a person happier than true broken-heartedness. The way to get to this broken-heartedness is by realizing the lowliness of one's situation, and the sadness that one feels in his heart about this; there is nothing which removes sadness and reveals happiness more than this!

Happiness takes place when the heat of the fire in the soul increases and dominates the dryness of the fire. Sadness, by contrast, is when there is a removal of heat from the fire, and the person is just left with the dryness of fire. This causes a person to descend to his element of earth, which is entirely dry. The way to fix sadness - caused by dryness of the earth - is to use the dryness as a way to reach true broken-heartedness. One will find Hashem there; *“A crushed heart, G-d does not shame.”*

How can a person know if he's being sad in a negative way, or if his sadness is constructive? The

Tanya writes that if a person feels happy afterwards, it shows that his sadness was constructive, and that he has reached the true broken-heartedness. The sadness then becomes a tool for holiness. But if a person just remains sad and his sadness doesn't amount to anything good, such sadness is evil, and he needs to fix it.

Fixing Sadness that comes from Earth-of-Earth

We have so far explained how the other three elements contained in earth can solve sadness. Water-of-earth solves sadness when one cries, because the tears soothe the sadness. Wind-of-earth solves sadness when one has pain and comes to purify himself more through the pain. Fire-of-earth solves sadness when one is sad and broken-hearted and comes to do true *teshuvah*.

The total solution to sadness, however, lies in using the earth-of-earth.

Just like a lazy person is able to use his power of non-movement for good and come to fix his problem, so can a sad person use his very weakness as a tool to help himself. We find the following solution hinted in the possuk, "*And Hashem was sad in His heart.*"

The possuk says that when Hashem brought the Flood upon mankind, He was sad in His heart. What does this mean? Sadness is a very human weakness. But how can Hashem ever be sad? It must be that Hashem's sadness is not a regular kind of sadness that we know of. It is not a bad kind of sadness, but a totally sublime kind of sadness.

The Gemara^[20] states that Hashem cries over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. This is an inner kind of sadness which a person can have, and even Hashem has this sadness.

How can this sadness be constructive?

Sadness shows up on a person's face. The face of a person is also the place in a person which reveals how much vitality he has. When a person has an increase of wisdom, it can be seen on his face. The more a person reveals wisdom, the more he reveals a face – a happy face. The less wisdom a person has, the less vitality shows up on his face.

Before, we said that basic vitality is rooted in the element of wind. But there is a higher kind of vitality which comes from above the elements – it comes from one's *chochmah*\wisdom. The more *chochmah* one has, the more vitality he will have, and this will remove his sadness.

A person access *chochmah* with the more he reveals his soul. When a person has more *chochmah*, he gains more life, and he gains vitality – and he won't be sad. We know that learning Torah is forbidden on Tisha B'Av, because the words of Torah cause joy, and on Tisha B'Av we are supposed to be sad.

Thus, a joyous face on a person shows that he has wisdom, and a sad face shows that he's lacking wisdom.

From this we see a fourth way to fix sadness: by revealing more *chochmah*. This is not done just by revealing more wind in the soul, but through learning more the wisdom of Torah, which is the source of life. "*The laws of Hashem are upright, and they gladden the heart.*"

Another Method Of Using Earth-of-Earth To Fix Sadness

There is another way to fix sadness, and it also uses earth-of-earth.

The spleen is the part of the body that is the source of a person's laughter, yet we also find that

melancholy is rooted in the spleen. The laughter of the spleen represents the evil kind of laughter, and it is really a form of melancholy.

There is an evil kind of laughter, but there is also a way to use laughter for constructive purposes. Usually, *leitzanus* (scoffing) is evil, but it can be good when we make fun of idol worshippers and their ways.[\[21\]](#)

When a person is angry, it is considered as if he is worshiping an idol. The dryness of his earth and the dryness of the fire fuel each other, causing an outburst of anger. The way to fix this is through making fun of idol worship.

By turning the spleen, which is evil laughter, into holy laughter - making fun of evil - we nullify the dryness of fire, and this fixes the dryness of earth in turn.

The Deeper Solution to Sadness: Setting Limits

Now we will a deeper solution to sadness.

Before, we brought the words of the Gemara[\[22\]](#) that we find the term *atzvus* when it comes to measurements - "*amah atzuvah*," an exact measurement.

Let's think about the four elements before we continue. Which of the elements stay within their limits, and which spread out? Fire spreads, and so does wind. Water by nature does not stay put either; we can put it in a cup and keep it together, but naturally, water does not stay where it is. Only earth stays put. This shows us that the nature is limited to where one is rooted in earth.

Earth comes to place limitations. It can hold the other elements in place and limit them, and thus earth serves as the container. An earth wall can prevent fire from spreading, it prevents wind/air from escaping, and it prevents water from flooding. So earth serves to place limitations on the other elements.

Fixing sadness is thus to set proper limits. When Adam sinned with eating from the forbidden tree, this placed limits on his life, and now man would not live forever. This was a limitation that was detrimental to mankind. But in essence, limits are a constructive force in Creation. When a person goes beyond the proper limits and rules, this is evil, but the limit itself is a good thing.

This is how sadness can be holy - when it is used to set proper limits. We need to have limits in order to be able to exist. Hashem said to the world, "Enough", when He created the world[\[23\]](#); this shows us that we need this power of "Enough" - in other words, limits - to be able to survive.

A parent has to punish his child sometimes, and this is necessary for the growth of the child. These are good kinds of limits. We also have more prohibitions in the Torah than positive commandments - there are 365 negative commandments, while there are 248 positive commandments - to show the importance of limits.

Holy sadness is thus to have proper limitations, using our power to limit in the rightful time and place. By contrast, being extreme with our limitations causes sadness that is destructive. The first destructive limit which came to the world was the curse of death, which resulted from eating from the *eitz hadaas*.

Why the Shechinah Has Pain

This is the depth behind earth-of-earth, and it can be used to fix sadness: setting proper limits.

When Adam sinned, Hashem had to set new limits for mankind, but He was “sad in His heart” at doing so. The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* also wreaked havoc on Creation and placed new limitations on the world, but this was not the ideal situation for the world to be in.

The Sages bring that there were certain things which were taken from us ever since the destruction, and this caused certain sadness to enter Creation. This is not the regular kind of sadness we know of – it is a sadness due to the new limits that were placed on us a result of sin. This is really the pain of the *Shechinah*, because we have new limits, and these are not the ideal limits we were supposed to have.

Thus, setting up clear rules and limits is the secret to fixing sadness. When a person uses this power, which comes from earth-of-earth, he is essentially connecting to the very first kind of limit – the limits which Hashem used to create the world with.^[24]

^[1] For more on how we can remove our sadness, see the author’s series [Da Es Yichudecha, “Getting To Know Your Inner World,” chapters 13-19](#) ^[1].

^[2] Eruvin 100b

^[3] Beraishis 6:6

^[4] Beraishis 5: 29

^[5] The Holy Presence of G-d

^[6] Shabbos 30b

^[7] Berachos 31a

^[8] Shabbos 30b

^[9] Berachos 31a

^[10] This is of course referring to the spiritual heart, not the physical heart.

^[11] Author’s Note: *Sefer Tanya*, however, writes that laziness is the root of sadness), and it is noteworthy to look into the difference of opinion here.

^[12] *Tanya*: Chapter 27; see also (as well as in *sefer Imrei Pinchos: Middos: 10: 20* in the name of Reb Pinchos of Koritz zt”l)

[13] Avos 2:2

[14] Sukkah 53a

[15] *Gra, Mishlei* 5: 10 and in 10: 22

[16] *Imrei Pinchas, Vol. I, Shelach*: 62

[17] Koheles Yaakov

[18] Berachos 55a

[19] Koheles 7:2

[20] Chagigah 5b

[21] Megillah 25b

[22] Eruvin 3b

[23] Chagigah 12a

[24] This is known as “*tzimtzum*” – Hashem constricted some of His light to create the world. In terms of our soul, the author is saying here that we can connect to this spiritual state of *tzimtzum* by having proper limits.

Editor’s Summary of Chapters 1-4: We have learned about the two main middos which come our element of earth – laziness and sadness. In this chapter, we addressed four different causes for sadness: Desires, which come from water-of-earth; haughtiness, which comes from wind-of-earth, and anger, which comes from fire-of-earth. There are five solutions for sadness: Pain (wind-of-earth), crying (water-of-earth), doing *teshuvah* (fire-of-earth), exertion in learning Torah (earth-of-earth), and setting proper limits (another use of earth-of-earth).

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/understanding-your-middos-04-eliminating-sadness>

Links

[1] <https://bilvavi.net/sugya/daes.yehu?page=1>