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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 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 is 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.[\[1\]](#)

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.

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.

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

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