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Water-of-Fire-of-Earth

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

One of the aspects of fire is that it is a dry element. Earth and fire are both dry elements, but in different ways. Earth is a dry element by its very nature, whereas fire will dry out the other elements. The beach is where water meets with earth, and it is called the *yabashah*, from the word *yoivesh*, "dry", because that is where the water becomes dried out by the earth. **Fire-of-earth** is when the dryness of earth and fire combine, forming the driest combination possible. **"Water"**-of-fire-of-earth is when the soul demands more "water", because the soul is becoming 'dried out' from the combination of fire and earth.

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

Earth in the soul causes a person to demand more "water" for the soul, because the earth is dry, and when the soul is becoming dried out, it will want more "water" to moisten its dryness. **Fire** in the soul will also cause a demand for "water", because too much fire 'dries out' the soul. **Water** in the soul will also demand that there be more "water" given to the soul, because water in the soul is drawn to love anything similar to it, and therefore a person will demand more "water" in his soul simply because his water wants more of the same.

Wind in the soul can also demand for water. For example, when one moves a lot, he can feel dried out, and he becomes thirsty for water. So too, an increase of "movement" in the soul would also wear out the person from energy, "drying" out the soul and causing the soul to want more "water". However, it is mainly the elements of fire, earth, and water which demand more "water" for the soul. As explained above, fire and earth will demand water for the soul because they are the driest elements, and the water in the soul will also want more water because it wants more of the same.

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

Thirst In The Soul: When The Soul Lacks Chiyus/Vitality

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

In particular, **water-of-fire-of-earth** in the soul will demand that one quench the thirst in the soul, after one has been ‘dried out’ from too much “fire” the soul, which ‘destroys’ one’s *chiyus/vitality*. This leads to sadness (earth). (This thirst takes place in the “*nefesh hebeheimis*” level of the soul, the “animal soul”, which is able to feel lacking and deficient, as opposed to the *neshamah*.)

When a person becomes very thirsty in his soul, the true answer to this thirst is Torah, as the verse states, “*All who are thirsty, should go towards water*” [1] [1], and Chazal explain that “There is no water except Torah” [2] [2]. Let us elaborate more into how the “thirst” in the soul can be quenched through the “water” of the *chiyus/vitality* that one finds in learning Torah.

The soul becomes “thirsty” because a person seeks pleasure. The Sages said that “There is nothing better above *oneg*/pleasure, and there is nothing worse below *nega*\affliction.” [3] [3] [“*Oneg*”, or *taanug*, refers to true pleasure, whereas “*nega*” refers to faulty pleasure]. The element of water in the soul is what causes a person to seek pleasure. But the more a person seeks pleasure, the thirstier he may become, in his quest to find more and more pleasure.

The soul may become “thirsty” either because the soul becomes dry (earth), or because the person is constantly destroying his inner vitality (fire). But there is also another way how the soul becomes thirsty: When a person’s entire inner world and spiritual progress is based on the experience of pleasure (*taanug*), which corresponds to the element of water in the soul. If a person bases his life on the attainment of pleasure alone - even spiritual pleasure - what will happen? He will actually become thirstier in his soul, due to all of the water/pleasure that he is seeking, and he can easily fall into the attitude of becoming chronically dissatisfied, in spite of all the pleasure he gets - as in the verse, “*All of this is not worth anything to me.*” [4] [4]

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

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

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

more pleasure.

Just as the desire for money cannot be calmed if a person keeps making more money, so is the desire for pleasure never calmed with the more that a person 'gives in' to it.^[5] ^[5] Pleasure doesn't become satisfied and calmed with the more we give in to it – rather, it will simply expand and become even needier for more pleasure. Understandably, it can never be truly satisfied.

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

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

1. *"Someiach B'Chelko" – Becoming Happier With What We Have.*

The beginning of the remedy for this issue [a sadness that results from a chronic dissatisfaction, no matter how much pleasure a person gets, which comes from impaired **water-of-fire-of-earth**], is, on a general level, to learn how to become more *"some'iach b'chelko"*, "happy with one's lot".^[6] ^[6] This was mentioned in previous lessons, and it can be applied to here as well.

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

2. *Balancing The Need For Pleasure and Vitality Through Accessing The Soul's Power of "Kabalas Ol Malchus Shomayim"*

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

The soul's need for *chiyus*/vitality stems from the *"Chayah"* level of the soul. At this level of the soul, one requires *taanug*, pleasure, which corresponds to the element of water in the soul. Deeper than this place in the soul is the power of *havayah*, the very essence of the soul, which is also called *"Aisan"*, "strength", for it is the power of inner strength of the soul that is able to function without any pleasure or vitality. It is also referred to as the power in the soul to have *"kabalas ol"*, the power to "accept a yoke" upon oneself, which usually refers to *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, to accept upon oneself the dominion of Heaven [the acceptance of a Jew's responsibility to keep Torah and mitzvos], the very opposite idea of the need to receive *chiyus* and *taanug*.

When a person lives his life based on getting *chiyus*/vitality, he will do anything as long as he gets

chiyus from the act, and if he doesn't feel like he is getting *chiyus* from it, he won't do it. This way of living resembles the statement of the Sages about one who says, "This teaching is pleasant, but the other teaching is not pleasant" [7] [7] [a person who will only do something if he can feel connected to it or not, a way of thinking which the Sages criticize].

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

Chochmah/Chiyus/Chayah (Need For Pleasure) vs. Keser/Kabalas Ol/Yechidah (Ability To Remain Strong and Observant Despite Non-Pleasure)

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

One "beginning point" of the soul is *chochmah*\wisdom. The soul receives *chiyus* (vitality) from the deep *chochmah* of the Torah, for it is written, "*And wisdom sustains her owner*". [8] [8] This corresponds to the "*Chayah*" level of the soul. There is also a "higher" beginning point for the soul: "*Keser*". The point of *Keser* is actually above the soul. When one exercises the power of *kabalas ol*, he is connecting his soul to a level that is actually above him, to the *ol malchus shomayim*, the "yoke of Heaven", which is certainly above a person's natural level. As a hint, *keser* means "crown", and the crown is placed above the head, so it is above the highest point of the person. A crown is worn by the king, who is placed "above" the rest of the people, as is the verse, "*Place upon you a king*" [9] [9]. Thus, *Keser* represents the level that is above the soul.

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

Understandably, since every person is multi-faceted in the structure of his personal soul, both of these powers exist in every person. If a person has a lot of **water-of-fire-of-earth** in his soul, he will do something only if he gets pleasure from it. He will be dependent on *taanug*/pleasure to keep him going. Others have a soul that is more drawn towards *kabalas ol*, and they will do whatever is required of them to do, whether they gain personally or not.

Doing Obligations Even When One Doesn't Feel Like It

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

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

2) In some cases, however, it is not coming from a highly spiritual ability, and it is simply a result of

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

Carrying Out Our Duties vs. Being Detached From Emotion

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

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

The Balance Between Pleasure and Non-Pleasure

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

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

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

Why A Person Needs Both "Kabalas Ol" As Well As Taanug/Pleasure

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

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

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

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

An example of *ohr pnimi* is, “And you shall know today, and you will settle it upon your heart.”^[10] ^[10] A person has certain knowledge in his mind, he can know of spiritual realities [i.e. *emunah* in Hashem], but he hasn’t yet internalized this knowledge into his heart. Before one internalizes his knowledge, it remains as an *ohr makif* which surrounds his being, but which is not yet a part of him. When one internalizes his mind’s knowledge into the heart, it becomes *ohr pnimi*, an “inner light” that is now part of him and within him.

Chazal state that “When one’s [Torah] wisdom is greater than his actions, his [Torah] wisdom is not retained”^[11] ^[11], and this is really because his wisdom is remaining at the level of *ohr makif*, and he hasn’t yet internalized his wisdom as *ohr penimi*, so his Torah wisdom hasn’t yet become a part of his being. Chazal state of such a person, “A wind can come and uproot him”^[12] ^[12], because he hasn’t yet internalized his Torah knowledge which he knows, so he is still vulnerable to sin even though he ‘knows’ better than this.

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

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

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

One Cannot Live Entirely With “Kabalas Ol Malchus Shomayim”

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

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

Chochmah (or *chiyus*, *taanug*, *Chayah*) is essentially a kind of *ohr penimi*. When a person first acquires knowledge, it is intellectual and it is not yet called *chochmah*, but when one internalizes the

knowledge into his heart, it becomes true *chochmah*, which is called *chochmas halev*, “wisdom of the heart.” When a person is having *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, though, this is an example of *ohr makif*, because it is a level that cannot become internalized right now, for it is essentially above one’s soul. Although it is true that some of the *ohr makif* will enter into one’s soul, it is not enough to have a lasting effect on the soul. For the most part, the spiritual illumination will remain at the level of *ohr makif*.

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

The following is an example. Often, when a person begins to get serious about *avodas Hashem*, he may make the following error. He begins to read the first few lines of the sefer *Mesillas Yesharim*, and he reads there that a person was created to bask in the pleasure of the *Shechinah* of Hashem, and that we are here on this world for the Next World. It may seem from these words of the *Mesillas Yesharim* that true pleasure is only for the Next World, where man can experience the *Shechinah*, whereas This World is not meant for pleasure, and that we must simply do here whatever we have to do, to have *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, as in the statement “Like an ox carrying its load.”^[13] [13]

When that is the attitude, a person will live without ever trying to get *chiyus*. A person like this will have great exertion in his Torah learning and *avodas Hashem*, but at some point he will break, because his *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* is really a level way above him, and it is a spiritual illumination that never actually enters into him. He will be involved all the time with a level that is above his soul. He will encounter a contradiction between who he is, with what he is striving for. His actual spiritual level is way below the levels that he is aiming for, and at some point, he will fall apart, with the more he realizes that he is living in a contradiction.

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

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

We Need “Shelo Lishmah” In Order To Get To “Lishmah”

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

Chazal state that “A person should always be involved in Torah and *mitzvos* even *shelo lishmah*, because from *shelo lishmah* a person arrives at *lishmah*”^[14] [14]. Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains (in sefer *Ruach Chaim*) that it is impossible for a person to start with *lishmah*, and that is why Chazal said that a person should “always” start with *shelo lishmah*. This is because it a person always needs pleasure. Simply speaking, this is because if a person is unable to bypass the human nature which

needs pleasure.

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

This is the meaning of "Your Torah in my innards"^[15] [15] - in order for one to internalize one's Torah learning so that it becomes a part of one's "innards", he must be able to first digest it, through tasting its sweetness, through experiencing pleasure in his Torah learning, and only after that can the Torah enter his innards. To illustrate, if a person needs to eat something but it is hard to digest, he will find it easier to digest if it is sweet-tasting. The better it tastes, the better it will digest.

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

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

Tasting Food on Shabbos - Learning How To Place Restraint Within Pleasure

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

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

The Balance of Kabalas Ol and Taanug in Learning Torah

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

Repairing Sadness of Water-of-Fire-of-Earth Through Accessing the "Dryness" of the Soul: Kabalas Ol Malchus Shomayim

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[1] [16] Yeshayahu 55:1

[2] [17] Bava Kamma 17a

[3] [18] Sefer Yetzirah 5:7

[4] [19] Esther 5:13

[5] [20] Editor's Note: see Succah 52b, "There is a small organ in man. When one 'satisfies' it [by giving himself more sensual pleasure], he starves it [he becomes hungrier for more sensual pleasure]. When one 'starves' it [by refraining from satisfying his desire for sensual pleasure], he satisfies it."

[6] [21] Editor's Note: The Rav discusses how to become "some'iach b'chelko" (happy and satisfied with who we are and what we have) in ***Fixing Your Fire-Anger_016_Changing A Terrible Temper***

[7] [22] Eruvin 64a

[8] [23] Koheles

[9] [24] Devarim 17:15

[10] [25] Devarim 4:39

[11] [26] Avos 3:9

[12] [27] Avos 3:17

[13] [28]

[14] [29] Pesachim 50b

[15] [30] Tehillim 40:9

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