


BILVAVI

FOUR ELEMENTS

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BACKGROUND:

Yaakov and Tzvi are two idealistic yungerleit, who had gone through Yeshiva together and discussed with each other many important topics. Most recently, they met up on a long bus ride from Meiron to Yerushalayim, and they took the opportunity to discuss at length the challenges of the internet and the unique role of our generation to live a life of coming close to Hashem.

FRIENDS SCHMOOZE

INITIAL INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

Yaakov: Remember that long conversation we had before on the bus...?

Tzvi: Of course...

Yaakov: The whole concept of שער הנון דטומאה was new to me then, and you opened up a whole new world for me of what our עבודה in this generation is. But I don't know where to go from there. Obviously the first step is to try to stay as far away from the internet as possible, but I anyhow had nothing to do with internet usage. I keep thinking about where I can incorporate the שאיפה and התבטלות to Hashem in my daily life. I really am trying to live with Hashem, talk to Hashem, make Hashem the goal of all my actions, and be מתבטל to Him...

Tzvi: That's amazing! It's a different life, no?

Yaakov: For sure, without a question. But I still feel like something is missing. All these עבודות are so broad and encompassing – but also so general. I feel like I need to add something more specific – something that will touch on the little details of daily life that I struggle with.

Tzvi: I think I understand what you mean – tell me if I understood you correctly. You have an overall goal of coming close to Hashem and you feel very deeply how much you want it, but you can't figure out how to connect this שאיפה of constant closeness to Hashem to the details of your daily life – Kollel, פרנסה, wife, kids, shopping...

Yaakov: Exactly. But it's not that I'm unsure if I'm living the right way. אדרבה, I'm pretty certain that my lifestyle is as it should be. Most of my day I'm learning, and that's for sure ideal. The time I give to my family

I also know is the right thing. We weren't created just for ourselves, and giving to one's family is the most elementary level of בין אדם לחבירו. I'm also pretty sure that the time I spend earning פרנסה is the right thing for me, because I'm not on the level of בטחון to just rely on Hashem to provide for my family without doing any השתדלות at all. So I don't think I'm supposed to be changing my lifestyle, but then what? How do I go from here to feeling a constant closeness to Hashem?

Tzvi: בקיצור, you feel like your life is a bit empty...

Yaakov: What do you mean?

Tzvi: I mean that you feel a lack of inner תוכן and פנימיות in all these actions which you know are the right thing to do.

YAAKOV: Yes, yes, exactly.

Tzvi: So you want to change something...

Yaakov: But like I said, I don't think the answer is to change what I'm doing. I mean maybe one day I'll grow and be able to improve somehow on my daily schedule, but today? I think the solution has to come from somewhere else. I need to somehow find the meaning within all these actions, and to somehow understand better how they're really bringing me closer to Hashem.

Tzvi: Listen – tell me what you think. For a long time already, I've been listening to a series of שיעורים on the ארבעה יסודות. These are deep שיעורים which are based on a deep understanding of the words of חז"ל and the accepted ספרי מוסר and עבודה, which break down all our מידות into four general, basic, inner forces. I can't describe how much this perspective changed my life! It literally

takes you into a different world. You don't see things the same way anymore; everything which you once thought was superficial suddenly becomes full of meaning, in all areas.

Yaakov: You feel like this perspective somehow transformed your life into a more meaningful and deeper life...

Tzvi: 100%, without a doubt.

Yaakov: One second – but is this at all connected to living with Hashem and the שער נון דקדושה, or is this something else?

Tzvi: It's very connected. Remember how we discussed that the first step to living with Hashem is making Hashem the goal of all your actions? The difficulty here is that we don't feel like our simple, small actions are bringing us closer to Hashem.

Yaakov: Exactly my problem.

Tzvi: Well first of all, ב'רוך ה' that you reached the level to have this problem! Many people can't relate to this problem, simply because they never uncovered their strong inner desire to come close to Hashem. It's only because you uncovered this deep inner desire of רצוננו לעשות רצונך that you all of a sudden became aware of the sharp disconnect between the nitty-gritty details of your complicated life and this deep, abstract goal and dream. And this is exactly where the ארבעה יסודות come into the picture. One of the main ways to connect between our pure inner world and our hectic daily lives is through understanding the ארבעה יסודות.

Yaakov: How does it work?

Tzvi: When we look at life from the perspective of the ארבעה יסודות, we discover that our complicated lives, which seem to be made up of so many random details and responsibilities, are not as complicated as we once thought. In reality, all of our involvements in life are merely various expressions

of the four basic inner forces of our מידות. All of our feelings and drives throughout the day are nothing but various forms and expressions of these four basic יסודות. These יסודות are the underlying, inherent drives/desires of a person, and they were implanted in him by Hashem.

Yaakov: And these four desires can be used either for the good or for the bad?

Tzvi: Exactly. Our entire job in life is simply to channel these forces which Hashem gave us in the proper direction. In order to do this, we have to first learn what the ארבעה יסודות are and discover them within our own personal lives. Once we discover our personal ארבעה יסודות within ourselves and become aware of how

Tzvi: Yes. Each of us has a unique personality which Hashem ingrained within us, but that personality itself is ultimately made up of a specific and unique blend of the four basic forces of the ארבעה יסודות. Therefore, understanding the ארבעה יסודות well will give us an amazingly clear understanding into our uniqueness and personalities, and this self-awareness is itself a completely life-changing experience. You will come to learn what exactly your strong points and inborn talents are, and on the other hand, exactly what your weaknesses and challenges are.

Yaakov: I don't know – I would think that self-awareness is a matter of life experience and emotional maturity, not something which you can learn from ספרים or שיעורים...

Tzvi: Certainly you learn these things from life, not from ספרים. However, without learning from the ספרים about the concept of the ארבעה יסודות and about the various ways which they express themselves in life, you'll never be able to see your life clearly. Learning about the ארבעה יסודות is like putting on glasses – you still see through your own eyes, but all of a sudden, things are sharp & clear, and all the blur & fuzz is gone.

Yaakov: Can you give me an example? I want to get a better picture of how I would be able to use the perspective of the ארבעה יסודות to gain a deeper understanding of what's going on in my daily life.

Tzvi: Sure. Maybe give me an example of an area related to using one's מידות where someone may be struggling. The ארבעה יסודות system addresses every type of issue, including extreme situations such as depression, addictions, anxiety, etc. But of course, what we're mainly interested in right now is properly handling our own simple everyday struggles, like waking up and going to sleep on time, interacting with others properly, etc. Just pick something you would want to work on, and we'll try to see how to look at

SUMMARY OF SCHMOOZE

- ◆ All of our middos & desires are all made up of the same ארבעה יסודות
- ◆ Every person has a unique personality, because every person is made up of a unique blend and combination of the ארבעה יסודות
- ◆ Our job is just to channel each of these ארבעה יסודות in the right direction.
- ◆ Learning the ארבעה יסודות will help me connect my daily life to my dream of coming close to Hashem.
- ◆ Listening to the news comes from the יסוד האש, and takes the place of my drive to come close to Hashem!

we are currently channeling them, we must then learn how these drives are meant to be used in an ideal life, and what each one's place is in bringing us closer to Hashem. This will turn the dream of coming close to Hashem from an abstract ideal, to a living reality.

Yaakov: Sounds amazing! I guess in order for me to really understand what you're talking about I would have to start with getting some sort of picture of what the ארבעה יסודות are. But before that, tell me: Do you mean to say that everyone, no matter who they are or what situation in life they may be in, are all being motivated by the same exact four inner forces?

it from the **ארבעה יסודות** perspective...

*Yaakov: I'll give you an example – I have a big struggle with listening to the news. Very often I have an urge to call into news hotlines and listen to the latest updates, and I end up wasting a lot of time on them. For a while now I've been trying to stop myself and overcome this urge, but it's very hard. What do you say – how would you look at this from the perspective of the **ארבעה יסודות**?*

Tzvi: Great example! But before we look at it from the perspective of the **ארבעה יסודות**, maybe first tell me how you were trying to work on it until now.

*Yaakov: I would try to tell myself that it's a waste of time, and that listening to these things fills my head with all sorts of nonsense which I know I don't really want to be busy with. But even though I know that this is the truth, at the time of the **נסיון** it's still very hard to overcome.*

Tzvi: Okay, so now let's try to look at this situation from the perspective of the **ארבעה יסודות**. When we look through the lens of the **ארבעה יסודות**, we're not just looking to see what's wrong with listening to the news and how to overcome this **נסיון**. Instead, we're trying to get to the root of the issue, by determining which **יסוד** is causing this desire to follow the news. Once we know where the issue is coming from, we can learn how is this **יסוד** really meant to be used, so that this desire can find the place to express itself in a helpful way, instead of how it's expressing itself now, in a harmful way.

Yaakov: This sound a little bit complicated...

Tzvi: Of course, if you wanted to just deal with the bottom line of the issue at hand, there are easier solutions. For example, there are certain phone companies which offer a plan which blocks all phone calls to news hotlines, so if you sign up for this plan you will take away the main **נסיון**. And I'm not coming to say that this is not a good solution – perhaps this is what you really should do right now. But you have to realize that besides for dealing with the

symptom, you also need to work on the root of the issue – what is causing you to have this need for following the news? Is this an inborn **מידה** which you're just trying to squash?

*Yaakov: We both know that you can't squash an inborn **מידה**. If you stop it from coming out one way, it will just come out another way...*

Tzvi: Exactly. So even if you manage to stop yourself from following the news over the phone, unless you get to the root of the issue, you didn't really solve the problem. What you have to discover is which inborn **יסוד** is causing this desire, and how this **יסוד** can be satisfied in a proper and constructive way.

מקורות ומקבילות לשיחת חברים

עבודה כללית מול עבודה פרטית - שיעור ב' בסדרת "תיקון כח העצבות לא מפורט", ספר עלי שור ח"א מבוא לשער שני.
שינוי חיצוני מול שינוי פנימי - הקדמת ספר עלי שור ח"א.

הכרה עצמית מתוך ספרים או מתוך נסיון החיים - ספר הכרה עצמית והעצת הנפש, ספר עלי שור ח"א שע"ג מערכה א' פ"ט.
כבישת המידות מול תיקון המידות - ספר אור ישראל מכתב ל'.
מידת הריקנות ותיקונו - ספר תיקון כח הריכוז פרק י', ספר תיקון כח התאוה פרקים י"ב וכ"ג, ספר עלי שור ח"א שער ג' מערכה ג' פי"א.

Yaakov: Okay, so what do you say?

Tzvi: Most often, the desire to follow the news stems from the **מידה** of **ריקנות**, which is an expression of the **יסוד האש**. Just like physical fire dries things out, similarly the inborn **יסוד האש** within us causes a person to feel dry and empty inside, and this leads him to search for something to give him **חיות**. A person who is a bit self-aware will notice that he first experiences a subtle feeling of inner emptiness, and this feeling causes him to seek some action, which will give him some **חיות**.

YAAKOV: Okay... So how does this help me?

Tzvi: Let's go step-by-step. The **ארבעה יסודות** is not some magical overnight solution to all of your problems – it's an inner perspective into what's really happening inside of you. The goal is to become aware of all of the steps, to find where you are going wrong, and to slowly solve the issue from its root.

In this case, the fact that you search for **חיות** when you feel empty is not an issue. Every person who feels empty naturally turns to find **חיות**, and that's fine. The issue is that you feel like you need an instant solution to fill you up the second you feel empty, which is why you turn to the news and not something more meaningful. This stems from

an inner resistance toward acknowledging the very feeling of emptiness in the first place.

This self-denial of the **יסוד**

האש within us is a very common phenomenon, as admitting to the existence of our **יסוד האש** means that we have to do some thinking into our lives.

Yaakov: Why?

Tzvi: Because the **יסוד האש**, which makes us feel empty and dry at times, stems from an inner desire to come close to Hashem! Most people, whenever they feel empty and dry, try at the first second to squash these feelings by doing something, eating something, calling someone, etc. But the real way to handle this situation is to realize that you are

experiencing a feeling of emptiness coming from the **יסוד האש**, and tell yourself, "I am right now feeling empty and dry, because deep down I'm not satisfied with all the empty things of this world. What I really want is something much greater – to come close to Hashem"!

Yaakov: I don't understand – won't acknowledging this feeling of emptiness just make you feel even emptier and more depressed?

Tzvi: If a person's life is properly balanced, then these little feelings of emptiness are not depressing. When a person feels an emptiness, it's not a failure! It's like someone

הנקודה היסודית הראשונה שצריך ראשית כל ברור, מה הצורך בכל מה שאנחנו עוסקים כאן? מה יסוד הדברים?

בלשון קצרה וברורה: על דרך כלל, כל אדם ואדם כאשר הוא למד סוגיות דהויות דאביי ורבא, אז סדר הדבר שיש גירסא דינקותא. האדם לומד את הדברים לאט לאט, לאט לאט, עד שהוא מגיע למקומו שהוא מגיע, ששם מקום ההשגה שלו. מקום ההשגה שלו בדברי תורה זה לאחר שזה נבנה הרבה הרבה זמן, במשך שנים מרובות. אבל הריבוי הזה נעשה בהדרגה, ובאיטיות. זה סדר ברייתו של עולם, אצל אלו שגדלים בעולמה של תורה.

כלפי החלק של הויות דאביי ורבא, זה נמצא וגנוז במעמקי הנפש. הכח של שכליות של הויות דאביי ורבא זהו דבר שנבנה בהדרגה, בזה אחר זה. לעומת זה הכח של העבודה על דרך כלל, על דרך כלל זה סדר הדבר, הגירסא דינקותא שנמצאת בידינו היא גירסא דינקותא של דברים כלליים מאוד מאוד. לדוגמא, כשיש אדם שלא שקוע בעולמה של תורה, אז בודאי שיש לו ידיעת

מה בדברי תורה, אבל זה ידיעה מקופיא, זה ידיעה מדברים כלליים מאוד. על דרך כלל הידיעה שקיימת בענייני העבודה, היא ידיעה של דברים כלליים. לא שהם לא אמיתיים, הם אמיתיים, אבל של דברים כלליים בלבד.

עכשיו, ע"מ לקנות סוגיא של עבודה צריך להבין: כמו בגדרי הויות דאביי ורבא, אז הקנין של האדם איך שהאדם קונה את מהלך המחשבה של צורת הלימוד העיוני, זה הרבה מאוד זמן בקומת נפשו של האדם, הרבה מאוד זמן. זה נבנה, ונבנה, ונבנה, ונבנה. כשאנו באים להקביל את זה לחלק העבודה של האדם, צריך להבין שכמו שבהויות דאביי ורבא יש את המהלך, את צורת הלימוד, צורת הנידון של הדברים, שבזה עצמו כמובן שיש כמה וכמה בתי מדרשות ויש בזה דקות לפנים מן דקות, כך גם במהלכי העבודה. במהלכי העבודה קיים באופן רחב מאוד, צורת מהלך של בנין של דברים.

המטרה הראשונה כשמדברים בסוגיה ומלבנים אותה, להיכנס לצורת מחשבה כזו. זו מטרה ראשונה לעצמה, כיון שהצורת המחשבה הזו לא נקנתה על דרך כלל בגירסא דינקותא, וכמו שבהויות דאביי ורבא האדם היה בכיתה ה', בכיתה ו', בכיתה ז', בכיתה ח', בישיבה קטנה, בישיבה גדולה, ולאט לאט נבנה אצלו מהלך הדברים. אפילו אם הוא לא זוכר כל מה שהוא למד בכיתה ה' - אם הוא חזר אחריו וטוב לו, אבל גם אם הוא לא חזר - אבל הוא נבנה אצלו לאט לאט ההכרה של צורת הדברים. בהדרגה נבנה, נבנה, נבנה, נבנה, נבנה, נבנה. כך גם במהלכים שאנחנו רוצים לעבוד בענייני העבודה, כיון שעל דרך כלל אנחנו מתחילים ממקום של גירסא דינקותא של ידיעות כלליות, אז צריך להרגיל את הנפש לקנות צורת מהלך עיוני בחלקי העבודה, שהקנין שבדבר נעשה בעוד פעם, ועוד פעם, ועוד פעם, ועוד פעם, ועוד פעם. המשך בס"ד בשבוע הבא [דע את מידותיך הדרכה מעשית הקדמה כללית 001 יסוד הדברים]

who is making a shopping list before they go shopping. It's not an issue that I need to buy milk, and when the milk runs out, I don't panic. My awareness that I ran out of milk just causes me to go to the store and buy more. So in the same way, when I notice that I am feeling a lack of closeness to Hashem, which is my all-encompassing and overall goal in life, I quickly make note of this on "my shopping list" and set out to do something which will fill this lack.

Of course, you have to be careful not to let yourself dwell on these feelings of emptiness to deeply or for

too long. However, when you do allow yourself to experience your inner feelings of emptiness in a healthy way, this helps you remember how this world is all הבל הבלים, and is only meaningful if it is bringing us closer to Hashem.

Yaakov: I see I have a lot to learn about these ארבעה יסודות. But this much I can see already, like you explained – how the ארבעה יסודות can connect all of my life to my desire to

come close to Hashem. Who would have thought that listening to the news is really a form of escaping a feeling of emptiness, which stems from a lack of feeling close to Hashem?!

Tzvi: In order to study this topic properly, I think we should try to approach it step-by-step. Let's try to take the ארבעה יסודות one at a time, and try to familiarize ourselves with them. Slowly, we'll start to get a broader and broader perspective on our מידות, and we'll come to recognize these inner forces within ourselves more and more clearly.

Yaakov: Sounds great! I can't wait until next week!

ארבעת היסודות בלשון רבותינו

"שלש אמות, אמ"ש, בעולם, אויר מים אש. שמים נבראו תחילה מאש, וארץ נבראת ממים, והאויר מכריע בין האש ובין המים"
(ספר יצירה פרק ג' משנה ג')

"שלש אמות, אמ"ש, בשנה, אש ומים ורוח. חום נברא מאש, קור ממים, ורויה מרוח מכריע בינתיים. שלש אמות, אמ"ש, בנפש, אש ומים ורוח, ראש נברא מאש, ובטן נברא ממים, וגויה נברא מרוח מכריע בינתיים."
(שם, משנה ד')