



**BILVAVI**

# FOUR ELEMENTS

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## BACKGROUND

Last week, Yaakov and Tzvi began learning about the ארבעה יסודות of our middos, and covered the יסוד הרוח, which creates in a person an inner need for movement.

**Tzvi:**

Yaakov, are you ready to move on to the next of the ארבעה יסודות?

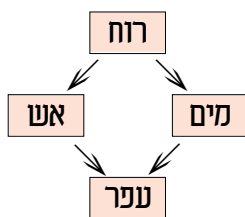
### מקורות ומקבילות לשיחה

שהרוח הוא המניע את כל ארבעת היסודות ספר דע את נפשך פרק ג', ע"פ דברי ספר היצירה. דברי חז"ל שהסדר הוא רוח - מים - אש ספר יצירה פרק א' משנה ט'. אכילה הנובעת משיעמום, ופעולות זהות ממניעים שונים ספר הכרה עצמית והעצמת הנפש, פרק יד.

## FRIENDS SCHMOOZE EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Yaakov:** I just wanted to first clarify something about what we learnt last week. We discussed last week how the element of wind is the most basic element, and how it creates in a person the need for movement. However, the examples we gave of a person's need for movement seem to be uncommon examples, like the fidgeting of a person who's sitting still for too long, or a baby's need to be rocked. It would seem that this is not as central of a force within a person as you made it sound like...

**Tzvi:** Good question, and let me explain. The relationship between the four elements can be described using the following diagram, where we picture wind on the top, water and fire side-by-side below it, and earth at the bottom: The source of all of the forces within a person is the element of wind, which is what makes him move in the first place. Without the element of wind nothing starts – a person would not want to do anything. Wind is therefore on top, because it is the most basic force within a person. Once a person starts to move, using his element of wind, then the elements of water and fire kick in and give direction to his movement.



**Yaakov:** And what about the element of earth?

**Tzvi:** After the elements of water and fire set the direction of the person's movement, the element of earth kicks in and sets the exact details of how the movement will be carried out למעשה. But right now we're still up to the first two steps - the element of wind which supplies the generic force of movement, and the elements of water and fire which direct this movement.

**Yaakov:** I'm picturing this sort of like the engine of a car vs. the steering wheel, where the engine creates the car's movement, and the steering wheel directs where it will go to?

**Tzvi:** Very good. Really the elements of water and fire aren't exactly like the steering wheel of a car - they're more similar to the gears of a car. In a car, the engine gives the power, but the gears control where all the force and energy of the engine will be channeled to - forwards, backwards, or neutral.

**Either** way, last time we were trying to find examples of how the יסוד הרוח expressing itself on its own, as a pure drive for movement itself. These types of movement really are somewhat uncommon, as you are pointing out. But this doesn't take away from the יסוד הרוח being the most central force within a person, because aside from the movement of the יסוד הרוח on its own, it is also what

supplies the power behind all of the other types of movement of the other **יסודות** as well.

*Yaakov: Is there any practical difference due to the fact that the movement of the **יסודות** really comes from the **הרוח**?*

**Tzvi: Definitely** - I'll give you an everyday occurrence which you can understand and learn how to deal with specifically because of this **יסוד**. We are all familiar with the very common phenomenon that people eat even when they are not hungry. On a simple level, one would think that this is due to the middah of **ta'avah**, which as we will soon learn, comes from the element of water, and can create a desire for physical pleasure. However, very often that's not the truth - the truth is that the person was simply bored, and he decided to eat just because he needed something to do. Here you have a desire which started out as a simple need for movement, from the **יסוד הרוח**, which then just got channeled towards **ta'avah**.

*Yaakov: And how does understanding this help me practically?*

**Tzvi:** It changes the solution to the issue completely! Very simply, if a person is overeating because he is lacking pleasure in his life, then to solve the issue he has to figure out the best way to fill his need for pleasure. However, if the issue really is that he is bored and he needs something to do, then the solution is to find him something which will get him to start moving and doing something, but this need not be something which will give him an especial amount of pleasure. These are two totally different issues altogether.

*Yaakov: Got it. But you are making*

*things a bit complicated now - until now I thought that we are going to cover four underlying drives in a person, which each cause certain unique desires and middos. Now you're telling me that it's not so simple - you can't really tell what **יסוד** is causing a person to act in a given way, as here we have a person who is overeating, and you're telling me it can come from either the **יסוד הרוח** or the **יסוד המים**.*

**Tzvi:** True, you're right. But this is an undisputable fact, that two people can both be doing the same action, while it can be coming from two totally different places inside of

them. **כעזרת ה'** as we go on, we'll learn the nuances of how to differentiate between middos which are similar on the outside, but really come from two different places inside.

*Yaakov: This sound a little bit daunting...*

**Tzvi:** It's not as complicated as it sounds. Forget all the fancy words of the **ארבעה יסודות** for a second - I don't know if you ever thought about it, but I'm sure that you also could have come to realize on your own that you sometimes eat just because you're bored. So once you get the knack of the **ארבעה יסודות**, then instead of calling it bored vs. pleasure, you'll call it **רוח** vs. **מים**. It's really not so complicated...

*Yaakov: I hear... that makes sense.*

**Tzvi:** Another thing to keep in mind is that the **ארבעה יסודות** are made up of two sets of opposites. There's the **יסוד הרוח** which moves vs. the **יסוד העפר** which stays in place, and there's the **יסוד המים** vs. the **יסוד האש** which we'll try to explain soon **בעז"ה**. And it's good to know that there are far less complications between the two opposite **יסודות** of each group - you generally won't have a middah that you're not sure if it comes from **אש** or **מים**. Let's say in our case of overeating - usually you'll be able to assume that if it's coming from **מים** or **אש** it will be from **מים**, and if it's coming from **רוח** or **עפר** it would be from **רוח**. So even before you get a full picture of all the nuances of all the **ארבעה יסודות**, you'll hopefully still be able to feel like things are progressing in the right direction and becoming clearer and clearer.

*Yaakov: Okay. Either way, **כל התחלות** and I'm pretty sure that this is*

## SUMMARY OF SCHMOOZE

◆ The **yesod הרוח** is the force behind all actions, even those which come from one of the other **yesodos**.

*Mashal:* The engine of a car makes it move, while the gears channel the movement in the right direction.

*Nimshal:* the **yesod** of **הרוח** supplies the basic force of movement, and the **yesod** of **האש** or **yesod** of **המים** direct this movement towards a specific direction.

◆ What this means practically: Sometimes person may do things simply because he needs to move around and not necessarily because he wanted to do exactly what he did. For example - overeating may stem from boredom (a need for movement) and not from a desire for pleasure.

And the solution corresponds to the root of the problem - finding something positive to do.

◆ Breakup of the four **yesodos** into pairs of opposites:

**יסוד הרוח** (movement) vs. **יסוד העפר** (stability);  
**יסוד המים** vs. **יסוד האש**  
(which we will hopefully learn soon!)

P.S. - Don't forget: all beginnings are difficult!

*something I really want, so I think it's worth investing in even if at the beginning it might be a drop hard.*

**Tzvi:** You're determination is very inspiring, and **אם ירצה ה'** I hope we'll have **סייעתא דשמיא** that the difficulty of the **התחלה** should pass quickly. So are you ready to move on to the element of water?

**Yaakov:** Sounds good. Is that what comes after the element of wind?

**Tzvi:** Yes, at least according to how the

**ארבעה יסודות** are brought down in one place in Chazal. The truth is that there are various arrangements of how to set up the **ארבעה יסודות** brought in the **sefarim**, but I think we should leave this discussion for later on, after we get a basic picture of what the four elements are.

**Yaakov:** No problem. So what is the element of water?

**Tzvi:** As a very general definition, the element of water drives a person to connect to things outside of

himself. A prime example of this is the middah of ahavas Yisroel, which causes a person to feel emotionally connected to others. But in order to cover this element properly and see how focal of a place this element has in a person's life, I think we should leave the element of water for next week, so that we'll have more time to discuss it...

**Yaakov:** Sounds great. Looking forward!

## FIXING YOUR MIDDOS

I have this issue that whenever I'm in middle of doing something I enjoy, it's extremely hard for me to stop. For example, it could come the end of first seder and I have to pick up my kids from the babysitter, but if I'm in middle of an interesting sugya, I just keep going and going. Eventually, I end up stopping at some point, but I end up coming very late to pick them up. How can I work on this issue using the four elements perspective?

Answer: The issue of not being able to stop doing something which you're in middle of can come from multiple causes. Some people simply have a hard time getting up from their place, which is due to the heaviness of the **יסוד העפר**. Other people have a hard time stopping what they're doing because they are very anxious to get more and more done, which stems from the **יסוד האש** which drives a person to get things done. However, since you stressed in your question that you have a hard time primarily when you're doing something which you enjoy, it would seem that the root of the issue in your case is that you have a very strong and unbalanced koach of the **יסוד המים**, which causes a person to be pulled very strongly after something enjoyable.

The usual way to curb the **יסוד המים** is through the **יסוד העפר**, as the passuk says "הנותן חול גבול לים" - that Hashem places sand as a boundary for the ocean. In practical terms, this means that the **יסוד העפר** gives a person the power of self-control, and therefore most people, if they decide before they start doing something at what point they'll stop, they'll be able to control themselves and stop at that point. However, for people who have an unbalanced **יסוד המים** this solution will not work, because the feelings which pull them to continue are extra strong, and it takes them a lot more effort to have self-control and stop than it takes most people.

What you need to do in this case, is to get used to somewhat balancing this middah of being pulled after things you enjoy, by working on building up the opposite koach of the **יסוד האש**. The **יסוד האש** is what gives a person the koach of **התנתקות** - the power to disconnect, which is the ability to disconnect emotionally from something he is in middle of even without finishing it. This is the total opposite of the **יסוד המים**, which pulls a person further and further along what he is in middle of, and the **רצון ה'** is that a person should have both capabilities, and that he should decide each time logically which koach Hashem wants him to use.

Therefore, practically speaking, you need to get used to, from time to time, stopping yourself for a few minutes smack in middle of something which you are enjoying doing while you are still in middle, for the explicit sake of gaining the self-control to disconnect. [To avoid **ביטול תורה**, you should practice this specifically when doing something enjoyable other than learning. Alternatively, you can sometimes practice in middle of learning, by switching your focus from a more enjoyable aspect of learning, such as perhaps working on the **סברות** of the sugya, to a harder aspect, such as perhaps working on the **השבונוות**, depending on whatever you find more or less enjoyable.] Building your general ability to disconnect from something in the middle will certainly make it easier for you to disconnect when the time you set for them is over and you have other things you need to do.

Hatzlacha Rabba!

[Note: The solutions given in this section are meant to provide general direction. For more specific guidance on this issue, see "Fixing your Focus" chapter 6 published in Hebrew]



## IC) IT TAKES TIME.

It takes a lot of time in order to develop the power to think in an inner way. How much time it takes depends on each personal soul; each person has a different situation. But the point is to get used to listening so that you can slowly acquire the ability to think about sugyos of avodah.

After listening to about 20 shiurim or so, you can ask yourself if you're beginning to feel a change in how you think. This is not about memorizing the details of these shiurim; it is about the ability to open your mind.

## WHY WE MUST LEARN 'HOW TO THINK'

To illustrate, let's say a child hears a sevara (*logic*) of lomdus (*abstract thought about the Gemara, which requires in-depth analysis*), in which two possible options of thinking are presented. He asks, "What is the difference between the two options?!" When he gets older he begins to see that there is a difference.

Thus, in the beginning stage, as we are getting used to listening to these shiurim, and we are acquiring the way to think about these matters, the point is not to fully understand. The point is to get used to learning how to think, which, in turn, will refine your understanding along the way.

There are very subtle points presented in these shiurim, which will seem at first to be of no practical relevance to you when you hear them. But the point is not to see how it is of practical relevance right now in your life, because as we said, the very first point of listening to these shiurim is to learn how to think when it comes to these topics.

At a later point, you will be able to understand how everything said here is of relevance. You will have acquired a way to think by then, which will enable you to become interested and to explore all of the matters in-depth, and then you will be able to feel the matters in your soul.

So the first step here is to acquire the way to think. Just as "lomdus" in Gemara is acquired through learning the sefarim of Reb Shimon Shkop and Reb Chaim Brisker, so does learning about avodah require a person to develop a way of thinking.

In these shiurim, we are not implying that this is the only way of thinking when it comes to avodah. There are many methods in avodah, as is the way of Torah, which are all true. There are many true ways, and each person needs to choose the way that is for him, with Hashem's help.

## IN SUMMARY

So the first step is to get used to hearing these matters, in order to learn how to think. This helps you absorb the general method of avodah here. Even if you work to implement these shiurim week by week and there is no planned seder to your

## PART 1: EARTH-OF-FIRE Introduction

### THE 4 GENERAL TYPES OF FIRE-HATRED

Hatred stemming from earth-of-fire is where the heaviness in the element of earth causes a person to be drawn downward, and the person feels, "I'm down below, while that other person is higher than me", and he is pained at the fact that his place is down below.

Hatred stemming from water-of-fire is where a person loses his chiyus (*vitality*) as a result of his hatred. And sometimes, a person even derives a bit of energy from the hatred itself.

Hatred stemming from wind-of-fire is where a person wants to bring down another from the other's status and thereby lower the other person.

Hatred stemming from fire-of-fire is where a person wishes to destroy another person, just as fire destroys. This is not merely a wish to bring another person down and cause him to be lowered, but to seek the other's total destruction.

We will now go through each of the branching subdivisions of hatred, beginning with hatred stemming from "earth"-of-fire and its four subdivisions.

## ארבעת היסודות בלשון רבותינו - מדברי הרמב"ם

[מבאר שכל הבריאה הגשמית מורכבת מד' היסודות, ושכל אחד מד' היסודות שונה בטבעו - ביחס לקור וחום, להות ויבשות, קלות וכבדות, וכיוון תנועתו. עוד מבאר שכל גוף וכל חלק מכל גוף ממוזג מכל ארבעת היסודות, אלא שיש שנוטה יותר ליסוד אחד ויש שנוטה יותר ליסוד אחר]

"ארבעה גופים הללו, שהם **אש ורוח ומים וארץ**, הם יסודות כל הנבראים למטה מן הרקיע. וכל שיהיה מאדם, ומבהמה, ועוף, ורמש, ודג, וצמח, ומתכת, ואבנים טובות ומרגליות, ושאר אבני בנין, והרים, וגושי עפר, הכל גולמן מחובר מארבעה יסודות הללו... דרך האש והרוח להיות מהלכם ממטה מסבוב הארץ למעלה כלפי הרקיע, ודרך המים והארץ להיות מהלכם מתחת הרקיע למטה עד לאמצע... ואין הילוכם לא בדתם ולא בחפצם אלא מנהג שנקבע בהן וטבע שנטבע בהן. טבע האש חם ויבש והוא קל מכולם, והרוח חם ולח, והמים קרים ולחים, והארץ יבשה וקרה. והיא כבידה מכולם, והמים קלים ממנה לפיכך נמצאים למעלה על הארץ, והרוח קל מן המים לפיכך הוא מרחף על פני המים, והאש קל מן הרוח. ומפני שהם יסודות לכל גופים שתחת הרקיע ימצא כל גוף וגוף מאדם ובהמה וחיה ועוף ודג וצמח ומתכת ואבן גולמו מחובר **מאש ורוח ומים ועפר**. וארבעתן יתערבו ביחד וישתנו כל אחד מהם בעת העירוב עד שימצא המחובר מארבעתן אינו דומה לאחד מהן כשהוא לבדו. ואין במעורב מהן אפילו חלק אחד שהוא אש בפני עצמו או מים בפני עצמן או ארץ בפני עצמה או רוח בפני עצמה, אלא הכל נשתנו ונעשו גוף אחד. וכל גוף וגוף המחובר מארבעתן ימצא בו קור וחום לח ויבש כאחד. אבל יש מהם גופים שיהיה בהם חזקה מייסוד האש, כמו בעלי נפש חיה, לפיכך יראה בהם החום יתר. ויש מהן גופין שיהיה בהן חזקה מייסוד הארץ כמו האבנים, לפיכך יראה בהם היושב הרבה. ויש מהן גופין שיהיה בהן חזקה מייסוד המים, לפיכך יראה בהם הלח יתר. ועל הדרך הזה ימצא גוף חם יתר מגוף אחר חם, וגוף יבש יתר מגוף אחר יבש. וכן ימצאו גופים שיראה בהן הקור בלבד, וגופים יראה בהן הלח בלבד, וגופים יראה בהן הקור והיובש כאחד בשוה, או הקור והלח כאחד בשוה, או החום והיובש כאחד בשוה, או החום והלח כאחד בשוה. לפי רוב היסוד שהיה בעיקר התערובת יראה מעשה אותו היסוד וטבעו בגוף המעורב". (רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה, פרק ד' הלכות א-ב).