



BILVAVI

# FOUR ELEMENTS

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## BACKGROUND

: After having discussed the first two יסודות of רוח and מים, Yaakov and Tzvi are now ready to start discussing the האש...

## מקורות ומקבילות שיחת חברים

דברי השערי קדושה - חלק א' שער ב'.  
 דברי הרמב"ם בהלכות דיעות - פרק ב' הלכה ג', ושם פרק א' הלכות א', ד', וה', ופ"ב הלכה ב', וע"ש בלחם משנה.  
 שאין אומרים מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה כלפי יסוד האש - תוס' פסחים נ: ד"ה וכאן.  
 שיתכן שמתוך תאוה שלא לשמה יבוא לתאוה לשמה - אבן שלמה ד' ד', ספר דע את ילדיך חלק "דע את תלמידך" פרק ב', דע את עצמך חלק ג' פ"ח.  
 שיסוד האש תמיד תולה את עצמו ב"לשם שמים" - תיקון כח הכעס פי"ב.  
 התיאור הכללי של יסוד האש - ספר דע את נפשך פרק ב', תיקון כח הכעס פרק ט'.

## FRIENDS SCHMOOZE EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Tzvi:** Yaakov, are you ready to finally start learning about the האש?

**Yaakov:** Sure - let's get started! I think you should first just give me an overall picture on your own, and afterwards we'll see how well I understood it...

**Tzvi:** Sounds good. So here goes: We already learnt that the first overall יסוד is the הרוח, which is what supplies the general force of movement and רצון in a person. This movement then generally takes on one of two forms - either that of the יסוד המים or that of the יסוד האש. The movement and רצון of the יסוד המים is what we've already discussed - a movement and רצון which draws a person to connect to things, to unite with them, and to enjoy them. And when it comes to the יסוד האש, the כלל גדול is that fire and water are opposites: This is a movement in a person to disconnect from what's outside of him and to oppose his surroundings. Ultimately, this כח in a person can go as far as causing him to fight with and destroy his surroundings, just like the destructive nature of physical fire.

**Yaakov:** This sounds a little dangerous...

**Tzvi:** Well, physical fire is obviously dangerous, and in the same way, the יסוד האש in a person is the most dangerous of the יסודות - most of the extreme issues and imbalances of middos come from the יסוד האש. However, there is also the flipside: Nobody would say that because physical fire is dangerous, it should be abolished and outlawed. While it's true that fire is dangerous, it is also extremely powerful and necessary. Just to help you picture this, try to include the power of electricity in the

category of fire, and imagine to yourself how much you come on to the physical יסוד האש in your daily life, and what you would be able to do without it...

**Yaakov:** I hear... But how does all this apply when it comes to the יסוד האש of our מידות?

**Tzvi:** Let's start with the dangerous side of the יסוד האש, which is the most apparent. Like you said last week, שערי in ר' חיים ויטאל, קדושה writes that the יסוד האש is what's responsible for the מידות רעות of נאווה and כעס. And indeed we see that when compared to the other מידות רעות, these מידות are indeed considered to be the most dangerous ones...

**Yaakov:** You're referring to the Rambam that says that you need to always choose the middle path in regard to every מדה except for כעס and נאווה?

**Tzvi:** Exactly. Here we clearly see this differentiation between the מידות of the יסוד האש and the other מידות - that the מידות of the יסוד האש are more dangerous, and you have to stay further away from them.

**Yaakov:** But the Rambam sounds like he's saying more than just that you have to stay further away from these מידות - he says that you shouldn't use them at all! I think he says there that even when you need to get angry for a good reason, you should just put on a show as if you're angry without actually getting angry at all... It sounds like he's saying not to use these מידות at all.

**Tzvi:** You're right, but this is a somewhat complicated sugya. A commentary on the Rambam already asked that he seems to

contradict himself in those same הלכות multiple times as to whether there is a good way to use the מידות of גאווה and כעס or not...

**Yaakov:** So what comes out, is there or isn't there?

**Tzvi:** This much is for sure - גאווה and כעס are certainly not essentially bad, as we find that Hashem himself uses these מידות. The problem clearly only starts when a person uses these מידות towards himself, instead of towards ה'. It is then that these מידות turn into bad מידות, and we need to analyze whether they can be used for the good. And like I said - this is a bit of a complicated sugya, and we have to differentiate here between כעס and גאווה. Let's take כעס first, being that it is the מידה which symbolizes the destructive nature of the יסוד האש. The general rule when it comes to self-centered כעס is that it cannot be made use of at all, even when it seems to be directed "for the good".

**Yaakov:** Isn't that obvious? Why would I think that self-centered [?] can be used for the good?

**Tzvi:** It's not obvious at all - this constitutes a major difference between the מידת הכעס of the יסוד האש, and let's say the מידה of תאוה, and the מידה of המים. With the תאוה we have a rule that although תאוה is a bad מידה, there is still a way to use it for the good, through the concept of "מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה". For example, a person can make himself an incentive that if he finishes a מסכתא, he will make himself a tasty סיום. Even though what's giving him the incentive to learn right now is really his תאוה for the food by the סיום, since this תאוה is being utilized to help him do what he is supposed to be doing, we can apply the rule of "מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה".

As a side point, this rule has to be used carefully - sometimes what happens as time goes on is that the person just digs himself deeper into his שלא לשמה instead of slowly weaning himself off of it...

**Yaakov:** How do you make sure that that won't happen? And בכלל, aren't Chazal promising that it won't happen when they say "מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה"?

**Tzvi:** In order for the rule of מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה to work, a person has to have a clear differentiation between his goal and his incentive. A person's goal is what he decided that he wants to accomplish בעצם, even if there would be no incentives.

## SUMMARY OF SCHMOOZE

The יסוד האש - the power to disconnect from your surroundings and to oppose them.

- ◆ In a negative/dangerous way - fighting with your surroundings and destroying them
- ◆ "מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה" - only if the objective is the לשמה and the לא לשמה is just there to motivate you and help you get there. The middah of anger of the יסוד האש - must only be used לשם שמים. If it's not לשם שמים, you need to only put on a "show" of anger, without getting emotionally involved.

- ◆ In a positive/controlled way - the ability to work hard - overcoming opposition.

When a person sets out to learn, his decision to learn needs to be made for the sake of finding his personal share in the תורה, and not as a way to get a tasty meal. Once he reached the proper decision as to what he wants to accomplish, if he feels like he is temporarily lacking the motivation and energy to carry it out, he can add an extra incentive of שלא לשמה to help him out. The problem becomes when the לא לשמה incentive is too strong, and it takes over and becomes the whole goal in the first place...

**Yaakov:** So what about when your kid is begging you to take him to אבות ובנים, and we all know that all he is interested in is just the treat at the

end... Is it wrong to bring him to get the treat?

**Tzvi:** It depends - if that's what makes him excited to go, but once he gets there he is really learning on his own level, and the learning is enjoyable for him and makes him feel good, then it's not necessarily a problem. But if the whole time he's just trying to follow the rules so that he'll get his candy at the end, then what did you accomplish? Instead of being something intrinsically good and enjoyable in its own right you just turned learning into something that has no taste on its own. In order to get him to learn you need to give him candy!!! Of course, sometimes there may be other השבנויות, and you need to judge each case for itself - but take it as food for thought...

**Yaakov:** Okay, I hear. And I assume it goes without saying that the same is true when it comes to a yungerman and his kollel check...

**Tzvi:** Well said...

**Yaakov:** Fine. But anyways, how does this all connect to our topic of the יסוד האש...

**Tzvi:** Because here is where there is a major difference between the מידת הכעס of the יסוד האש and the מידת תאוה of the יסוד המים. When it comes to תאוה you can say that if it is being utilized towards a proper goal, it becomes a דבר שבקדושה and doesn't drag the person down. However, when it comes to the מידת הכעס, this rule doesn't apply. A person can't say that he's going to get angry at someone who did something wrong, שלא לשמה, and hope that מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה. If what's really bothering you is just that the person stepped on your own toes, this is a bad anger, and it can't be koshered just because the person actually did do something wrong which makes him deserve that we be upset at him לשם שמים.

**Yaakov:** But what if you are actually upset just because of what the person did wrong, לשם שמים...

**Tzvi:** Here there is a concept of קנאות לשם שמים. This is a כעס similar to כעס of מידה ה"ש, and you can't say that there's no place for such כעס. Of course, we need to learn exactly when the right place for קנאות is, as it also needs a גבול. But as far as the question we discussed above of whether these מידות can be used for the good or not, the general answer seems to be that when they are being used לשם שמים they are good, but when they are being used שלא לשם שמים, they cannot be koshered through "מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה".

**Yaakov:** Very interesting... Well, that definitely makes a lot of sense - there's a well-known vort on the Mishna of כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים סופה להתקיים that when you have a fight, and each side comes up with an explanation of why it's a לשם שמים, then you know that they'll never stop fighting... This is like you're saying, that it's not enough to have a justification of why the fight is לשם שמים - that has to be the motivation behind the whole fight in the first place.

**Tzvi:** Exactly. As a general rule, the יסוד האש almost always hinges itself on חשבונות of לשם שמים: A person either tells himself that he is fighting for the אמת, or for the sake of justice, or for כבוד שמים... But often it's really his own כבוד or personal benefit that's what's motivating him. And there's usually a pretty easy way to tell - you just need to look and see whether the person is really just as critical of himself as he is of others. If he is just as exacting with himself, when it comes to his own faults, as he with others, then this may be a true קנאות for the אמת. This also needs a limit, as I mentioned earlier, but at least there may be a good starting point. But if when it comes to his own faults, he is not so קנאות'דיק, and it is only when it comes to someone else's faults that his קנאות is suddenly awakened, then it should be quite clear that there are other factors involved which are really causing the כעס...

**Yaakov:** But למעשה, what happens if someone is wronging someone else, and there's nobody who cares enough לשם שמים to defend the נרדף? If there is a fight that truly needs to be fought,

*should I not do it just because I won't be doing it לשם שמים?*

**Tzvi:** Here is where the Rambam's rule comes into play - you need to act with כעס הלב, without כעס הפנים. You need to decide calmly and logically how the situation has to be handled, and you have to do whatever it takes חומר הדין to exact the full ע"פ תורה. However, you need to make sure not to get emotionally involved and awaken the מידות of the יסוד האש, because what's motivating you is not a true מידה of לשם שמים.

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

**Tzvi:** So to sum things up, we discussed so far the destructive side of the יסוד האש as a כח which causes מחלוקת and כעס, and we explained that this is only a positive כח when it is truly used לשם שמים, such as for the sake of upholding the אמת or עשוק מיד עושקו, or to save כבוד שמים. However, it's important to keep in mind that this is only one side of the יסוד האש - a destructive אש, and that's not the only side to the יסוד האש.

**Yaakov:** I'm picturing it as if someone would say that what's good about physical fire is that it can be used to incinerate garbage. It's true that incinerating garbage may be one of the good uses of fire, but it gives the wrong connotation that all fire can do is destroy, only that sometimes it can be used to destroy things that need to be destroyed...

**Tzvi:** Exactly - as if in an ideal world, where there was nothing that needed to be destroyed, you wouldn't need fire at all. But the truth is that the יסוד האש has a major place in life aside from destroying bad things. Like we mentioned before, fire and electricity can be harnessed for cooking, to make light, and to provide energy to fuel just about anything you need to do. And it's the same exact thing with the יסוד האש within a person: As a very short and יסודות'דיק definition, the יסוד האש in a person is what gives him the energy to do anything which takes hard work.

**Yaakov:** Why's that?

**Tzvi:** Because as we mentioned, the יסוד האש is what gives a person the ability to oppose and fight his surroundings, and the definition of working hard means fighting opposition. This doesn't have to be any major fight - even simply getting up in the morning when you're tired means that you're fighting against opposition - your body is tired, but you decided that you're going to get up, so you're going to get up anyways. It takes effort, and the power to exert yourself and put in that effort comes from the יסוד האש.

**Yaakov:** In that case, the יסוד האש is more commonly used than I thought it was... which I guess is exactly what you're trying to bring out...

**Tzvi:** 100%. The ארבעה יסודות are the most basic building blocks of the world, and they can be found in every situation in life. For example, when it comes to hard work: Everything in life has two sides to it - a pleasurable side, and a challenging side. Even the most enjoyable parts of life come along with challenges, and even the most challenging parts of life come along with some good side to them. In the terminology of the ארבעה יסודות, the enjoyable side of something creates an emotional connection - through the יסוד המים, and the challenging side of something awakens the יסוד האש, which can give a person the power to overcome his challenges.

**Yaakov:** Well, I guess this is what happens with each יסוד - at first they sound far-fetched, but then as you go on, you all of a sudden see how they touch on your whole entire life!

**Tzvi:** I see that you are picking up on these concepts very fast! For most people this is a process which takes time - they need to slowly digest and internalize the material, until they can slowly start identifying where they notice each יסוד within their daily lives. But either way, I think we should stop here for now, and I'm looking forward to אב ירצה ה' continuing the יסוד האש next week...

**Yaakov:** So am I...

**Q1: Is this true only with regards to learning the Rav's sefarim [and shiurim]?**

**A:** In order for a person to succeed at understanding anything, he needs to amass a general picture of the information of the subject. First, one needs to learn the information simply without trying to analyze it, and after going through all of the information on a superficial level, he should then try to understand what he has learned. Chazal say that there must first be "ligmar" (learning) and then "lisbar" (analysis).

For example, right now in the *Kolel* we are learning *Sefer Nefesh HaChaim, Shaar Daled*. It would be a good idea to go through the entire *sefer* during the upcoming *Bein HaZemanim* and just see all of the words, without trying to understand them yet. The point is to first acquire a "tzurasa d'shmaatsa" (body of knowledge), a general understanding of the information. Just read through the *sefer* quickly, from the beginning of the section until the end of the section.

You can do the same with *sefer Mesillas Yescharim*. First go through the entire *sefer* from beginning to end and read through it quickly, so that you can at least get a general picture of it. After that, you can delve more in-depth into the *sefer* and try to understand each thing you have learned about.

**Q2: How much should one try to understand material when he's first reading it?**

**A:** The first time you read about something, your understanding towards it cannot go further than a child's understanding. "Tzurasa d'shmaatsa" doesn't mean that you are trying to delve into the words in-depth.

**Q3: How does it work that each person has one particular negative character trait that stems from a dominance in one of the four elements?**

**A:** Each person has one element that is his strongest, an element that is second-to-strongest, and element that is third-to-strongest, and fourth-to-strongest. It is different with each person's soul makeup. The worst character trait of a person is found in his strongest and most dominant element. By some people, their best character trait and their worst character trait is found in one element. With others, their best character trait is located in one element and their worst character trait is located in a different element – that would mean that their souls are more complicating to understand.

**Q4: Does one need to be on a high spiritual level in order to determine what his most dominant element is?**

**A:** One cannot identify what his most dominant element is if he hasn't studied the four elements of the soul. As we have said here, the very first step is to amass the

information about the four elements of the soul, and after that one can attempt to identify which element is most dominant in his own soul. There are a few people who have penetrating insight into themselves and they are able to begin at the second stage, but most people are going to have to go through the first stage.

**Q5: Why is it that there are almost no sefarim that mention the four elements of the soul?**

**A:** We must know something very fundamental about *mussar sefarim*. There are all different types of *sefarim* written by our previous Gedolim. *Sefer Orchos Tzaddikim* talks about the *middos*, but there is no order of what to work on first. Each *middah* is explained about in a separate chapter, but there is no order. It is unclear why this *sefer* was written this way, but there is no orderly path of what to work on first when you learn that *sefer*. The Vilna Gaon said that all the *mussar sefarim* are good, but *Mesillas Yescharim* is the best *sefer*, because it is arranged in an orderly fashion. However, we emphasized here in this *shiur* that even *sefer Mesillas Yescharim* can be problematic to learn, because it is a ladder of ten steps based on the Ten Expressions, and we will not be able to navigate through these steps without knowledge about our four elements of the soul.

The truth is that there is no one *sefer* (order) to follow when it comes to *avodah*. We are not either implying that one must work on himself on the order of these *shiurim* which explain to us about the four elements of the soul. We are coming to explain here what we have to work with as we work on ourselves, and it is this area which we seek to clarify and understand. There is no one set *sefer* (order) to follow in *avodah*; it's an entirely different matter to discuss. What we are emphasizing here is that if a person never becomes clear about his own soul, he will never be able to be clear about what the *sefer* of his *avodah* should be.

**Q6: Is it worthy for a person to work on the middos based on the system of the four elements?**

**A:** Not only is it worthy, it is absolutely necessary.

**Q7: Why isn't this spoken about in our sefarim?**

**A:** The *sefarim* speak about the *middos*, but most of the *sefarim* do not discuss our *avodah* in a step-by-step manner, so there is no *sefer* that tells us what the *sefer* (order) of one's *avodah* should be. The Torah was not written in chronological order either. There is an argument amongst the Sages if the *Mishnayos* have a specific order to them. In most places, the words of our Rabbis that discuss *avodah* are not arranged in a step-by-step manner; thus there is no *sefer* to their words.

For example, open up the Alter of Kelm's

*sefer, Chochmah U'Mussar*. Do you see any *sefer* to the words there? It is a collection of all hundreds of his talks and there is no way to know which area to work on first. Some of the talks have *sefer* to them and you can see how one talks leads into the next talk, but most of this *sefer* is not arranged in an orderly and step-by-step manner.

Take a look at Rav Dessler's five-volume set of *Michtav M'Eliyahu*. Is there an order of what to work on first in that *sefer*? There is no order there to follow.

*Chovos HaLevovos* is the one *sefer* that is arranged with some order. He writes in the introduction that he has specifically arranged the chapters according to the specific order that it's in, but this doesn't apply to all of the chapters of the *sefer*; there are some chapters which are meant to be learned consecutively, but a large part of the *sefer* has no specific order to it. Additionally, the ladder of steps presented in *Chovos HaLevovos* is not necessarily the order that everyone must follow in their *avodah*.

What about *sefer Shaarei Teshuvah*? Is there a *sefer* to his words? Are his words arranged in a step-by-step manner? Does one have to work on himself starting with the matters discussed in *Shaar Aleph* (Gate I) and ending with *Shaar Daled* (Gate IV)...?

Even the Talmud Bavli was not arranged in an orderly fashion. The Rambam came and attempted to give order of what to learn to learn first in the Gemara. The *Tur* and the *Shulchan Aruch* followed suit and also gave order to the *halachos* found in the Gemara. But the Gemara itself has no order to it. Both *Agadta* and *Halacha* parts of Gemara are not arranged in any specific order. The Rambam and others who came after him were the only ones to give any kind of order to the Gemara, but when it comes to our *avodah*, there is no *sefer* that has arranged what the order of our *avodah* should be.

**Q8: Does that mean that there is no sefer which discusses any topic completely and perfectly?**

**A:** There is no *sefer* which we can tell anyone to learn that will provide him with the answers he is looking for. Because nothing is arranged in a completely step-by-step manner, there is no *sefer* that can completely calm you.

Let me ask you a question. Let's say you are trying to learn the *halachos* of *borer* (the laws of mixing on Shabbos). If not for the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, would you know where to look in the Gemara in order to learn these *halachos*? Would you just look at the *Ein Mishpat's* commentary? If we have no Rambam and no *Shulchan Aruch* on it, where will you find these *halachos*? If a person wants to learn the *halachos* of *netilas yadayim* or *tefillin*, where in the Gemara is it discussed? The *halachos* are spread out all over the place. Some areas

in the Gemara are more concentrated and you can find all of the *halachos* there, but other *halachos* of the Gemara are spread out in ten different places in the Gemara.

Just as we can understand that was no *sefer* given to the Gemara before the Rambam came along and gave *sefer* to it, so can we understand that there is no *sefer* given of our *avodah*. The Rambam only arranged the *halachos* of the Gemara in an orderly fashion; he didn't do this was the *Agadta* parts, which explain to us about matters of *avodah*. Therefore, we are left without a *sefer* in our *avodah*.

**Q9: How can a person have a *sefer* to his *avodah*?**

**A:** A person needs to become clear about what the four elements of the soul are, within his own soul. Then he should slowly begin to study the words of Chazal that discuss matters of *avodah*, and gradually he will be able to amass all of the words together and see what the order should be. This is a very difficult task to do, of course. It is the depth of exile.

**Q10: If it is so important to know about the four elements of the soul, why doesn't *sefer Mesillas Yeshtarim* talk about it and emphasize it?**

**A:** *Sefer Mesillas Yeshtarim* is a path that is based upon working our ways upwards, from the bottom up. The author of *Mesillas Yeshtarim* is not writing a *sefer* that describes anyone's personal *avodah* on this world. Rather, the author of *Mesillas Yeshtarim* has presented a general path of growth that applies to us in a more general sense. The four elements of the soul are a personal and private matter with each person, because the order of the four elements is arranged differently in each person's soul.

*Mesillas Yeshtarim* is the *sefer* written for the collective of *Klal Yisrael* and it is our general path of growth, but there is a private map of our growth which is not explained in *sefer Mesillas Yeshtarim*. There is no *sefer* that can guide a person in his personal makeup of his soul. Thus we have no *sefer* that tells us what the *sefer* in our *avodah* should be.

Why is this so? It is because each person needs to begin at a different point. So there is no *sefer* that can tell each person what he should work on first and what he should work on next. We can give order to the four elements themselves, but there is no *sefer* that will tell us what the *sefer* of our personal *avodah* should be. It is simply impossible for such a *sefer* to exist.

**Q11: The *Mesillas Yeshtarim* states where we all need to begin: "Torah leads to *zerizus*, etc.?" [so obviously that is where we all need to start from]?**

**A:** Let's ask a simple question. If someone's strongest element is earth, does that mean that learning Torah will lead him to have more *zehirus* (alacrity) and then to have more *zerizus* (zeal), in the same way for a person whose most dominant element is water or wing or fire? Surely the Torah has the power to bring a person to the level

of *zehirus* and then *zerizus*, but does that mean each person will be acting the same with regards to this? The fact that Torah brings a person to *zehirus* is not going to have the same exact effect on all people equally, because since the soul makeup is different with each person, the *sefer* of each person's *avodah* is not the same.

Surely the stage of learning Torah must come first in the *avodah* of all people, but *how* a person succeeds in this stage, is different with each person, depending on which element is most dominant in his soul.

**Q12: The Rav has said that a person might be making a mistake if he's working on a certain negative trait he wants to fix, when he lacks knowledge about the elements of his soul. But didn't the *yeshivos* always have a *Mashgiach* who would give *mussar Vaadim* (discourses on self-improvement), which focused on one *middah* at a time?**

**A:** You are asking a very good question. Certainly it would be the best thing if each boy in *yeshiva* and each man in the *Kolel* had a private *vaad* with his *Mashgiach*. Now, if there are 200 boys in a *yeshiva*, the *Mashgiach* would be able to give a private discourse to most of the boys of the *yeshiva* at least twice a year. But a day or two of the year wouldn't be nearly enough for a person to really work on himself. The Chazon Ish that it used to be that there was one *Mashgiach* for 100 boys in the *yeshiva*, and today there is one *Mashgiach* for 1000 boys in the *yeshiva*, and that there should really be 100 *Mashgichim* to oversee each boy personally! If there were 100 *Mashgichim* available in each *yeshiva* for each of the boys, then he would be able to get a *vaad* with a *Mashgiach* once a day for every day of the year. But Hashem made the world in a way that this does not happen.

**Q13: So is the Rav saying that it's pointless to give *mussar vaadim*?**

**A:** This is the reality of things. It doesn't result in that much improvement. The question is, however: is giving a private *mussar vaad* to each person better than nothing? Or perhaps it would be better to give one *vaad* to a bunch of people and they will work on themselves together?

This issue was brought before the *Gedolim*. In Kelm they would join a *vaad* together and work on themselves together, and not one-one-one with a teacher. However, a person must consider the following. If he doesn't know his own soul, he will not know how to imply all that he learns about. If he joins a *mussar vaad*, he will be a like a sheep following the herd.

Surely we need to work on ourselves together and strengthen each other in self-improvement, but a person needs to first know his own soul, what he can work on and what he can't work on. Ten boys in *yeshiva* and ten *Kolel* men cannot all work to improve on the same character trait all on an equal level. Each person

reacts differently to the subject material being taught. Each person has his own background and personality – you can't expect all the people in a *mussar vaad* to all work on the same trait equally. It's not like a *sukkah* where a bunch of people can sit underneath one *sukkah* and fulfill the *mitzvah*. Each soul is very different and built very differently.

If you have a suggestion of how *mussar vaadim* can be made more practical to accommodate each person's particular personality, to the contrary; go ahead with it.

**Q14: If a person has a certain negative character trait that he has a hard time fixing, does that mean that this situation is being sent to him from Heaven as his *tikkun* (rectification) on this world?**

**A:** Not only is his difficulty with his character being "sent to him from Heaven", but he was born that way to begin with, to complete his life's mission.

**Q15: After a person gets to understand his soul, will he require help in improving himself?**

**A:** Most people cannot deal with their problems by themselves and they need someone else to help them. There are a few rare individuals who are both with sharp self-awareness and they can work on themselves without confiding in another person. There are also some people who were born with a natural power to act *lishmah* (for the sake of Hashem) and they are capable of great *mesirus nefesh* (altruism), which enables them to penetrate deeply into their souls, without the assistance of others. But most people are not capable of acting *lishmah* and with *mesirus nefesh* and they do not have that much self-awareness; therefore, most people require help from others in order to understand themselves.

**Q16: Is there any *sefer* one can learn which teaches him about how to use his soul's abilities?**

**A:** Part of this study can be attained through the *sefarim* that explain the [four] elements of the soul.<sup>1</sup> But as for knowing one's personal soul, one will never know it through any *sefer* that is found in the world. One has to pray to Hashem to reach self-understanding. Either he can pray to Hashem that he merit to understand himself from within himself, as the Gemara says that the "two kidneys of man are his advisors", where one can learn Torah from within himself; or one can pray to Hashem that he merit to be guided by someone who will help him understand his soul.

If one prays for this, truthfully and earnestly, and he cries to Hashem from the depths of his heart, Hashem will surely guide him to success. How? That is up to Hashem. But if someone is truly searching for this and he is sincerely trying very hard, Hashem will guide him and he will attain what he desires.

1. Refer to *sefer Shaarei Kedushah* of Rav Chaim Vital

# FIXING YOUR MIDDOS

I have this thing where I have a hard time sticking to something for very long. For example, in Avodas Hashem, what happens is that I get into a certain author, and for a couple of weeks I get attached to his derech. During this tekufah I'll spend plenty of time learning his sefarim and working on myself using his derech, and I feel like I get a to'eles from it. However, after a few weeks it rubs off a little, and I end up getting drawn after a different author and derech, and the process repeats itself again. How can I understand this phenomenon based on the four elements system?

**Answer:** From the perspective of the ארבעה יסודות, this phenomenon of constantly switching derachim can come from different יסודות depending on the exact nature of how it happens, but the root of the solution is usually the same - to balance out whatever koach is causing this phenomenon with the יציבות מידה of the יסוד העפר.

Here are some reasons why a person would keep switching his derech:

A. His connection to his derech and growth was mainly through the תענוג he got from it, through the יסוד המים. Therefore, since the nature of the תענוג is that as a person gets used to something, the pleasure he gets from it starts to wear off, this can cause a

person to lose interest in his derech and look for something new.

B. The person may have an unbalanced koach of inspiration of the יסוד האש. The יסוד האש creates a perspective of "black and white", "all or nothing", just like fire which converts everything into either energy or ash. This is the nature of inspiration: When a person with an unchecked koach of inspiration gets inspired by a derech which is different than his previous derech, his emotional inspiration causes him to get carried away completely by the new derech and disregard his previous derech totally. He right away decides that whatever he had until now was worthless, and now will start the real תקופה of growth in his life. But the problem is that this inspiration is not checked by his logic, and while there may be some new aspect of truth in his new derech, there was likely also plenty of good in his old derech. But instead of trying to find a proper balance between the two, he ends up basically discarding his old derech and going all the way after the new derech. And therefore, after a while, he comes to face the reality that his new derech is also not perfect. Then when he comes across something new, which is different than both of his previous mistakes,

he is sure that here is finally the solution, so he leaves behind both of them completely and goes after the new derech... and so on and so forth.

C. The person may have a nature of אחוז מזה ומזה, פוסח על שני הסעיפים of יסוד האויר. This comes from the יסוד הרוח, which blows in all different directions all the time. Therefore, at one time he will get into one derech, but when he feels he is getting too "stuck" in that derech, he will switch to another one, and so on and so forth.

But the bottom line is that none of these methods ultimately bread success. In order to be successful and to really accomplish something, a person needs to build himself using the יסוד העפר - step-by-step, consistently, and steadily.

The way to awaken this koach of permanence is by using another koach of the יסוד העפר, the koach of דיוק. The person needs to go back and review all the different derachim he felt connected to, and be מדויק to try to find the exact נקודה in each derech which he had a to'eles from. By doing so, he can come to find the right balance and the דרך המדויק which he needs, and the more מדויק his derech is, the more he will be able to stick to it consistently and permanently, **בסייעתא דשמיא!**



## 2 WEEKLY PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH

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### THE SYMPTOMS

The nature of fire is to jump and skip. Fire-of-earth-of-fire is where fire is jumping and skipping between the states of earth and fire. Such fire has nowhere to rest - not in the state of earth and not in the state of fire.

In addition, such movement is an unpleasant experience, because it is of a jumpy and skipping nature that makes a person turbulent. When a person hates another for being of higher status which makes him focused on how he is lower - this is the hatred stemming from earth-of-fire - he keeps moving back and forth, turbulently, between the states of "fire" (*"That other person has higher status than me"*) and "earth" (*"I, though, am down below"*). He finds himself "jumping" and "skipping" back and forth between these two extremes, and it resembles the words of Rashi (*Shemos 15, 5*) that "The wicked are like straw, they are tossed around, going up and down."

This is the hatred that the nations have for the Jewish people. Chazal taught that ever since the Torah was given at Har Sinai, a "hatred" descended into the nations for the Jewish people. There are many explanations why (*see Maharal's Tiferes Yisrael ch.26, and Panim Yafos commentary to Bamidbar 1,1*) but Rashi explains that the hatred began because the nations did not receive the Torah. Due to receiving the Torah, the Jewish people had been raised to elevated status above the nations, whereas the nations were punished for choosing not to receive the Torah, where they now descended into a lower status.

### THE REMEDY

Serenity is derived from accessing the element of earth, which is the most serene element since it doesn't move. When a person is jumping and skipping between the two extremes of earth and fire, instead of trying to

immediately jump from his earth to the state of fire, he needs to learn how to stay a bit in his earth - accepting his current level - without trying to go higher. By having this self-acceptance even momentarily, he allows himself to experience some serenity. To the degree that he can succeed at being able to stay a bit with himself, he is able to derive some serenity (*even if only a bit*) from his state of "earth". The more he does this, the more serene he will become. This is the root of how he can be healed.

However, it must be emphasized that included in this self-acceptance is, that while staying in your "earth" - accepting yourself and your status right now, however low/unimportant/ unsuccessful you may be - you have to be careful not to even think about your friend's (*or another's*) higher status right now. Because if you are found down below in your earth and you are looking upward at the "fire" of your friend, your hatred for him will only increase, because you will keep magnifying your pain that he has higher status than you and that you are found at a lower status than him. You must be able to momentarily stay in your earth (*accepting yourself no matter how much lower you are than another*) without looking at all at another's success or higher status. You can only be serene with your earth if you are not looking to go upward right now - not trying to access any fire/ambition.

To the degree that one can stay in his earth, he is able to stay with himself and not focus on trying to rise higher to another's high status - he can stay down below without looking upward. This will make him become more serene [*for he has become more self-accepting*], and to the degree that he does this, he will be healed of his hatred for the other.

## ארבעת היסודות בלשון רבותינו

[מבאר איך שכל פרט קטן שבכריאה ובאדם מושרש בשינוי התמזגות ארבעת היסודות. כמו כן, מבידיל בין ג' יסודות הראשונים הפועלים, מול יסוד העפר המתפעל מהם.]

כידוע דשרשין הקדמאין דכלא הוא שרש ה' יסודות, אש רוח מים עפר, ועיקר הפועלים הם הג' יסודות, אש מים רוח, נקראים בספר יצירה פ"ג מ"ג ג' אמות א' מ' ש', שהם אמות דכלא, ופעלתם של אלו הג' הוא על ידי יסוד העפר, שהוא מתפעל ומקבל מהם, והם ג' אותיות יק"ו של השם ברוך הוא, וה' אחרונה כפולה... וכל שנוי טבעי כל הנמצאין שבעולם מתהוה ארעא עד שמי רום, הכל הוא משנוי התמזגות הד' יסודין שהן השרשין קדמאין, והתמזגותם הן פנימיות נפש כל דבר. ומאיכות התמזגותם בפנימיותם נמשך הבדלי הפרטים רבים בכל דבר, בתמונת ממשו וגוון מראיתו בדוממים, וכן שנוי הצמחים בטעמים ותמונתם וגוונם, וכן שנוי טבעי כל הבעלי חיים תמונת איבריהם מראיתם וצורתם ופעולתם משתנות לפי התמזגות נפשם ודמם מד' מרות דאינון הד' יסודין... גם כל כחות האדם בטבעו ונטיית שכלו ונטיית רצונו משתנים לפי השתנות מזג ד' שרשין דיליה, וכמבואר ברעיא מהימנא פנחס רל"ד ע"ב... (מדברי הגהת המהרי"ץ ריש נפש החיים שער א' פרק א').

**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
PARSHAS KORACH 5784 • ISSUE 001

**BACKGROUND**  
Yaakov and Levi are two idealistic youngsters, 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 Metron to Nereshayim, 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...  
**Levi:** Of course...  
**Yaakov:** The whole concept of seeing our lives as a mission, and not just as a job, is something that I don't have enough of. I can't seem to get into it. I know it's important, but I just don't have the energy to do it. I know it's important, but I just don't have the energy to do it. I know it's important, but I just don't have the energy to do it.

**LEVI'S POINTS**  
1. The concept of seeing life as a mission...  
2. The importance of having a clear goal...  
3. The need for a supportive community...

**YAKOV'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**CONCLUSION**  
Both Yaakov and Levi have valid points. It's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. The concept of seeing life as a mission is also important.

**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
ISSUE 002 • 5784

**BACKGROUND**  
Last week, Yaakov and Levi discussed the concept of seeing life as a mission. This week, they continue their discussion about how to achieve this goal.

**FRIENDS SCHMOOZE**  
EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Yaakov:** I'm really excited to begin discussing this. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**Levi:** I'm also excited. I think it's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**LEVI'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**YAKOV'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**CONCLUSION**  
Both Yaakov and Levi have valid points. It's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. The concept of seeing life as a mission is also important.

**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
ISSUE 003 • 5784

**BACKGROUND**  
Last week, Yaakov and Levi discussed the concept of seeing life as a mission. This week, they continue their discussion about how to achieve this goal.

**FRIENDS SCHMOOZE**  
EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Yaakov:** I'm really excited to begin discussing this. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**Levi:** I'm also excited. I think it's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**LEVI'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**YAKOV'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**CONCLUSION**  
Both Yaakov and Levi have valid points. It's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. The concept of seeing life as a mission is also important.

**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
ISSUE 004 • 5784

**BACKGROUND**  
Last week, Yaakov and Levi discussed the concept of seeing life as a mission. This week, they continue their discussion about how to achieve this goal.

**FRIENDS SCHMOOZE**  
EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Yaakov:** I'm really excited to begin discussing this. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**Levi:** I'm also excited. I think it's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**LEVI'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**YAKOV'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**CONCLUSION**  
Both Yaakov and Levi have valid points. It's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. The concept of seeing life as a mission is also important.

**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
ISSUE 005 • 5784

**BACKGROUND**  
Last week, Yaakov and Levi discussed the concept of seeing life as a mission. This week, they continue their discussion about how to achieve this goal.

**FRIENDS SCHMOOZE**  
EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Yaakov:** I'm really excited to begin discussing this. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**Levi:** I'm also excited. I think it's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**LEVI'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**YAKOV'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**CONCLUSION**  
Both Yaakov and Levi have valid points. It's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. The concept of seeing life as a mission is also important.

**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
ISSUE 006 • 5784

**BACKGROUND**  
Last week, Yaakov and Levi discussed the concept of seeing life as a mission. This week, they continue their discussion about how to achieve this goal.

**FRIENDS SCHMOOZE**  
EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Yaakov:** I'm really excited to begin discussing this. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**Levi:** I'm also excited. I think it's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**LEVI'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**YAKOV'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**CONCLUSION**  
Both Yaakov and Levi have valid points. It's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. The concept of seeing life as a mission is also important.

**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
ISSUE 007 • 5784

**BACKGROUND**  
Last week, Yaakov and Levi discussed the concept of seeing life as a mission. This week, they continue their discussion about how to achieve this goal.

**FRIENDS SCHMOOZE**  
EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Yaakov:** I'm really excited to begin discussing this. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**Levi:** I'm also excited. I think it's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**LEVI'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**YAKOV'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**CONCLUSION**  
Both Yaakov and Levi have valid points. It's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. The concept of seeing life as a mission is also important.

**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
ISSUE 008 • 5784

**BACKGROUND**  
Last week, Yaakov and Levi discussed the concept of seeing life as a mission. This week, they continue their discussion about how to achieve this goal.

**FRIENDS SCHMOOZE**  
EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Yaakov:** I'm really excited to begin discussing this. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**Levi:** I'm also excited. I think it's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**LEVI'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**YAKOV'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**CONCLUSION**  
Both Yaakov and Levi have valid points. It's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. The concept of seeing life as a mission is also important.

**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
ISSUE 009 • 5784

**BACKGROUND**  
Last week, Yaakov and Levi discussed the concept of seeing life as a mission. This week, they continue their discussion about how to achieve this goal.

**FRIENDS SCHMOOZE**  
EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

**Yaakov:** I'm really excited to begin discussing this. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**Levi:** I'm also excited. I think it's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. I want to see how we can put it into practice in our daily lives.

**LEVI'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**YAKOV'S POINTS**  
1. The importance of having a clear goal...  
2. The need for a supportive community...  
3. The concept of seeing life as a mission...

**CONCLUSION**  
Both Yaakov and Levi have valid points. It's important to have a clear goal and a supportive community. The concept of seeing life as a mission is also important.

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**BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS**  
EARTH ♦ WATER ♦ WIND ♦ FIRE