



BILVAVI

# FOUR ELEMENTS

ISSUE 013 ♦ 5785 ♦ THE BOTTOM LINE

## FRIENDS SCHMOOZE EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

### BACKGROUND

Last week, Yaakov and Tzvi began learning about the **יסוד העפר**, and discussed how it can be used in a negative way, to identify with physicality...

**Tzvi:** Yaakov, are you ready to continue learning about the **יסוד העפר**?

**Yaakov:** Yes. I'm actually very curious to hear how the **יסוד העפר**, which seems to be the most physical of all the **יסודות**, can be used in a fully pure and good way...

**Tzvi:** Actually, not only can the **יסוד העפר** be used in a fully good way, but in a certain way, the **יסוד העפר** is actually higher than all of the other **יסודות**.

**Yaakov:** How's that?

**Tzvi:** Well, if you remember, we

discussed last week the question of why a person was created as a combination of two parts, a body and a **נשמה**, as opposed to simply being created as a single entity.

**Yaakov:** Sure. And we said that the reason is so that he should have **בחייה** if he wants to follow his body or his **נשמה**...

**Tzvi:** Very good, and that is the simple answer. However, the truth is that the Ramchal gives us a deeper answer as well 'קוב' is that Hashem created the body in such a way that it pulls us away from **רוחניות** and hides Hashem's presence. Therefore, our job is generally to stay away from physicality as much as possible, and only use it as much as necessary for **עבודת השם**, with a **כוונה לשם שמים**. However, the Ramchal explains that ultimate goal is that by doing so, our body itself becomes purified, and it

itself will bring out the true depth of our connection to Hashem. This means that in a certain way, the highest level of **רוחניות** is for the **קדושה** to reach all the way down to the body.

**Yaakov:** So you're saying that our **יסוד העפר** is our body, and that the highest level is for even the body to connect to **רוחניות**?

**Tzvi:** Well... not exactly. Let me explain a little more: When we're talking now about the **יסוד העפר**, we're talking about the **יסוד העפר** within our **מידות** and our **נפש**. We're not actually discussing the **יסוד העפר** of the body vs. the **יסוד הרוח** of the **נשמה** here. Everything we're talking about is within our **מידות** and **נפש** itself. For example, like we'll soon see, the **מידות** of the **יסוד העפר** do not necessarily have to do with the body at all...

**Yaakov:** One second - but what about

*our whole discussion last week that the יסוד העפר is the most physical of all the יסודות, and therefore it can make a person identify with physicality and cause him to be lazy or sad?*

**Tzvi:** When we say that the יסוד העפר of our מידות can make someone identify with גשמיות, all we mean is that since the four spiritual elements of the נפש parallel the four elements through which the physical world was created, the result is that the מידות which come from the יסוד העפר can very easily identify with the physical body, since they both stem from the same יסוד, of עפר. Therefore, they share a similar nature. However, in truth, it is just the יצר הרע which makes these middos feel connected to the body, because the truth is that מידות of the יסוד העפר are an essential part of our נפש itself, and don't stem from the body at all! The מידות come from a spiritual יסוד העפר with which the נפש was made, while the body was created from four physical יסודות, just like the rest of the physical world.

*Yaakov: So what did you mean when you said that the יסוד העפר can be seen as being the highest level, based on the Ramchal who says that*

*the goal of השם עבודת השם is to bring the רוחניות down to the body and the physical world?*

**Tzvi:** What I meant was as follows: When it comes to the מידות of the יסוד העפר, the יצר הרע tries to use them to get us to identify with the body and physical world, like we explained. However, the real way to use them is just the opposite. These מידות are precisely the tools of the נשמה, through which the נשמה is meant to connect to our body and influence its רוחניות aspect, thereby purifying the body not to oppose רוחניות!

The מידות of the יסוד העפר are sort of like a go-between between the נשמה and the body. The נשמה itself is spiritual, while the body is physical. How do you bring the רוחניות down to the body? That is the job of the מידות of the יסוד העפר, like we'll soon see בעזרת השם.

Therefore, since the goal of all of our עבודה is to purify our body in the physical world and bring them to רוחניות, it follows that the מידות of the יסוד העפר, which are the tools which actually accomplish this goal, can be seen as the highest level within us. All of the other מידות are somewhat like a הכשר מצוה, whereas the

מידות of the יסוד העפר are the ones which actually accomplish this goal itself.

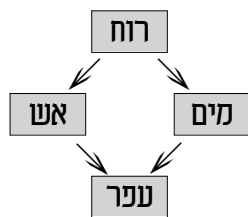
*Yaakov: But I have a question: This level which you're talking about, for the body not to oppose רוחניות, seems to be a very high מדריגה! Maybe משה רבינו got to this level when his נשמה shone out on his face, but otherwise, I think we'll get there only after תחיית המתים... לכאורה in this world the body opposes the נשמה, and our job is just to choose between them, like you said last week!*

**Tzvi:** You're talking about reaching the perfect level, where the body doesn't oppose רוחניות at all. So you're right - due to the חטא of הראשון אדם, we won't reach this level until תחיית המתים. However, this doesn't mean that until then, the body has to remain the antithesis of all רוחניות. The truth is that our whole life, aside from growing in רוחניות, we are also supposed to be constantly purifying and perfecting our bodies more and more. This is something we certainly can do - this is one of our main עבודות! It is just that even with all of our עבודה, we cannot achieve perfection. Therefore, there will always remain some level of resistance

where the body opposes רוחניות, and this will only be resolved by תחיית המתים.

*Yaakov: I hear... So maybe you can explain how all this works in simple terms? What does it mean to purify the body so that it will "bring out the depth our connection to Hashem"? And how do the מידות of the יסוד העפר come in over here?*

**Tzvi:** Well, this is exactly what we were supposed to be discussing today, so let's get started: What is the good way for the יסוד העפר within us to express itself? Let's bring back out the diagram we've already used a few times in order to explain the relationship between the היסודות. So here it is:



*Yaakov: The main thing that you see here in the diagram is that the יסוד העפר is on a whole different level than the מים of יסודות and אש...*

**Tzvi:** Exactly. Just like the יסוד העפר was above the מים and אש, and it supplied the general force which drove both the movements of the מים and the אש, the opposite

is true about the יסוד העפר. It is on a lower level, beneath both the יסוד המים and the יסוד האש. And here's the key: The role of the יסוד העפר is to practically carry out both the desires of the יסוד המים and the יסוד האש.

*Yaakov: What exactly do you mean when you say to "practically carry them out"?*

### מקורות ומקבילות שיחת ברים

תכלית העבודה הוא לטהר ולקדש את הגוף - דעת תבונות ח"א אות סט ואילך, קונטרס האדם ביקר [הרב וולבה] "בעקבות תורתו" אות ו-ז. הנפש נוצרה מארבעה יסודות רוחניים והגוף מארבעה יסודות גשמיים - שערי קדושה ח"א פ"א. יסוד העפר שבאדם כמתווך בין הנשמה והגוף - האדם ביקר שם. אחר חטא אדה"ר א"א לנו לטהר את הגוף לגמרי - דעת תבונות אות פו, דרך השם ח"א פ"ג אות ט'. הקושי להגשים את הרצון הוא כי א"א לעשות הכל בבת אחת - מורה נבוכים, ח"א, פרק לד. ביאור

is not all about sitting back and doing nothing, and he feels an inner drive to get up and make something out of himself. When he sets out to see what to do with his life, he is directed mainly by his מידות of the יסוד המים and the יסוד האש. The תאוות of the יסוד המים make him want all kinds of things which you can only buy if you have money, and the מידה of the יסוד האש makes him want to outdo his surroundings and not have less than them. However, even after all these steps, the person's desires are still "floating in thin air". Just because a person wants to become rich, does not mean that he's actually ready to go do what it takes על פי דרך הטבע to become rich. What's he missing?

*Yaakov: Apparently what he's missing is that he might be lazy and simply not do what he really wants to do...*

**Tzvi:** Let me try to explain. Let's take a simple example of a person who is not on a very high level of רוחניות at all. His goal in life is to become rich and he invests all of his life pursuing this goal. How does the process of him actualizing his aspirations work? The way it works is as follows: First, the יסוד הרוח within him gives him the feeling that life

**Tzvi:** Very good - that's one side of the coin of the יסוד העפר, where you have all of the other יסודות in place, but things just get stuck and held up when it comes to the stage of the יסוד העפר - of carrying them out. But now we're talking about the positive usage of the יסוד העפר, which is there exactly to counteract that problem. The whole idea of the positive usage of the יסוד העפר

is to figure out how practically actualize your desires.

*Yaakov: But why do you need a whole new יסוד to practically do what you want to do? If you really want to do it, then what's stopping you?*

**Tzvi:** Excellent question! Here is a major principle which we learn from the ארבעה יסודות - even after you want to do something, putting it into practice is a whole new step!

The underlying reason for this is because a person can never really put his whole desire into practice at once. If a person was able, in one second, to accomplish everything he wanted to accomplish, he would have no problem doing so. The problem is that it doesn't work that way. Let's take our friend who wanted to become rich. If all it took was to buy what he knew was the winning lottery ticket, he would have no problem doing so. But in real life, in order to fulfill his dreams, he had to build up his business slowly, slowly, slowly. He had to go step-by-step, first starting off very small, and then building up one tiny step after the other. And all along the way

there were setbacks, and he had to be persistent and keep going. What gives a person the ability to limit all of his aspirations and transform them from big, abstract dreams to small, daily activities? This is the secret of the יסוד העפר.

*Yaakov: So I guess it's called the יסוד העפר because it's "down-to-earth" - it transforms abstract dreams into "concrete" reality.*

**Tzvi:** Yes, certainly but on a deeper level, the main thing which the יסוד העפר does is that it holds back much of the forcefulness of the other יסודות and stabilizes their desires in order that they should be able to come to fruition. Just like we saw in the example of becoming rich, in order for someone to be successful at something, he usually needs to follow a step-by-step, practical, and systematic course of action.

Aside from being motivated, this takes a great deal of the מידות of patience, consistency, reliability, orderliness, & paying attention to minute details. All of these מידות share the common denominator of limiting the רוח - movement - of a big desire, and transforming

it into small, calm steps, and this is the role of the מידות of the יסוד העפר.

*Yaakov: Wow, sounds amazing: I think I got the main idea, so let's stop here, and maybe let's try to finish up...?... with the יסוד העפר next week...?...*

**Tzvi:** ה'בעזרתך... Can't wait!

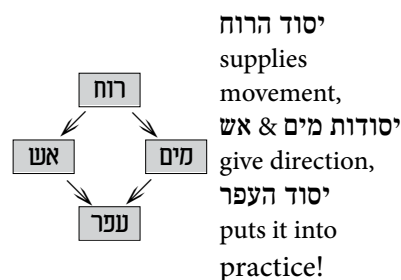
### SUMMARY OF SCHMOOZE

The middos of the יסוד העפר of our personalities act as are the "bridge" between the body and the נשמה, because they are the most similar to the body, which was mainly made from the physical יסוד העפר.

Since they associate closely with the body:

**In a positive way:** They are the channel which can bring רוחניות to the body, purify it, and be מקדש it.

**In a negative way:** The יצה"ר tries to make them identify with the body, and be pulled down to גשמיות.



**Question:** What is special about the יסוד העפר which gives it the ability to put things into practice?

**Answer:** The יסוד העפר has the ability to limit and break down a big dream into small, detailed tasks which can then be carried out in practice.

# FUNDAMENTALS OF MIDDOS IMPROVEMENT

## LEARNING ABOUT THE SOUL PRACTICALLY

In the previous class, we said that just as we are used to learning Gemara in the way we are used to from our youth, so do we tend to approach learning about our soul with the kind of thinking we are used to from our youth. However, there is a big difference between learning Gemara and learning about the soul.

When learning Gemara, if you don't get to the next page of Gemara, you need to be patient. When you learn about the soul, and you become aware of certain concepts, you might also think that it is upon you to remain patient before you get to learning about the next step. But it isn't quite like that.

When learning about your soul, you might wonder how you can make the concepts practical, and then you become impatient; but it is not merely upon you to become patient. According to what we have been explaining in the previous chapter, the entire path we are taking here in working on our middos is a path that deliberately requires a gradual process. It is simply not possible to work on all of the advice within these pages as soon as we hear about them.

## IDENTIFYING SOUL CONCEPTS

When you become aware of concepts that have to do with the soul – whether the information is coming to you via learning a *mussar sefer*, or because you heard a *mussar shmues*, or because a thought or feeling came to you, or because you feel a concept from within yourself – in either case, you are coming into contact with various aspects of the soul.

Therefore, you can become aware of a feeling in your soul as soon as you feel it, and your job is to simply recognize it and acknowledge it. You don't have to learn what to do with it right now and how to work with it.

Understandably, if you find yourself sensing ten new things about your soul, you won't be able to register so much information and identify with it at all, because of information overload. But let's say you notice something new about yourself once a week, or twice or three times a week; you can take note of it and simply learn how to recognize it in yourself, as follows: (1) Ask yourself if what you are sensing is a good *middah* or bad *middah*. (2) When you hear or learn about a certain

good *middah* or a certain bad *middah*, try to discern how it is personally found in yourself.

## BASIC AWARENESS

This is not referring yet to the ability of acquiring conscious and palpable awareness of the *middah*, [which is a deeper ability that we discussed in the previous class]. It is something else entirely that needs to come way before that- to simply ask yourself how the *middah* is manifest in your life.

For example, if you hear about *zerizus* (alacrity), try to recognize how there is *zerizus* in yourself. If you hear about *simcha* (happiness), ask yourself where *simcha* is found in your life. This slowly gets you used to acquiring information and how to recognize it within yourself.

We are not talking about simply 'amassing knowledge' of these matters when you have no connection to it. A person might learn about *simcha* or about the topic of fixing desires, but he is simply hearing it for the sake of inspiration, and he isn't even attempting to recognize how the matters are manifest in his own personal life. So we are not speaking about simply acquiring information for the sake of amassing knowledge.

Nor is the intention to acquire the art of conscious awareness. It is a stage that must come way before that: to simply identify in yourself the concepts that you are learning about, whether you are learning about a good or a bad *middah*. This is a general kind of recognition you need to acquire.

As an example, if you hear about *simcha* (happiness), ask yourself if you can remember three times this past year in when you felt *simcha*. If you hear about *zerizus* (alacrity), try to recall if you recently acted with *zerizus* in anything. There are many more examples as we can give. The point is to learn how to identify aspects of the soul you hear about, in your own life.

## DISCOVERING NEW THINGS

By getting used to this, week after week, month after month, you slowly will gain an overhaul of perspective towards yourself and towards life. Instead of merely becoming inspired for a few minutes before *tekias shofar* (when you were far from any *avodah*) or from the superficial inspiration you were used to from trying to learn *mussar* passionately during *mussar*

*sefer*, you will suddenly begin to recognize yourself.

As time goes on and you continue like this, you will see a new person in yourself. It will feel like you are experiencing your soul, as opposed to just amassing knowledge about what the soul is.

When you are happy, for example, you will be able to discern what exactly is making you happy. When you are sad, you will be able to discern what is making you sad. You will begin to experience your emotions; it will be a change that happens from within. It is hard to explain this in words; it is a path of deep, inner change that a person experiences within himself.

A person then slowly begins to see the world differently, to see his life differently, and to see himself differently; he gains a new lens on reality. After you become clearer about your soul comes the next step we will soon describe. Some are already there as we are giving this lesson, and some haven't even begun the first stage.

## IN SUMMARY

To summarize briefly, the first step is for one to identify the concepts within himself, as much as he can, until he sees that inner changes are taking place in himself - to the point that this ability comes to him naturally.

Of course, reaching this stage does not mean that one has reached the complete depth of knowing his soul. If one thinks that he knows the entire depth of his soul, he has fooled himself, and it is a sign that he doesn't recognize his soul at all. The sensible approach is for one to keep revealing more depth about his soul, becoming aware of the many faculties of the soul, subtly upon subtlety.

The point is that a person acquires a whole new perspective towards himself. He begins to see things in himself he never knew about until now. He begins to see beyond the superficial layer of things. As opposed to viewing himself from a mirror, he begins to see himself from within himself.

This ability is developed slowly, as a person gets used to the process of inner change we are describing.

## FIXING YOUR MIDDOS

We are now coming to the summer, which brings along difficult נסיונות in שמירת עיניים. How can I use the ארבעה יסודות perspective to help me overcome these נסיונות?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, these נסיונות fill the world today not only in the summer. In general, ever since אנשי כנסת were הגדולה עבודה זרה for יצה"ר מבטל the strongest area of מלחמת היצר always was in עניני קדושה. The famous ברייתא of מסילת בני איר is based, begins quoting the words of the *passuk* which warns us to watch ourselves from improper thoughts. The ברייתא then continues that in order to combat this איר בני איר came up with his entire מהלך in עבודת השם to get until קדושה, at which point one can be saved completely from these נסיונות. Until then, however, we must constantly work to get closer and closer to קדושה, and at the same time, we must certainly look for עצות how to minimize and overcome these challenges.

Based on the ארבעה יסודות, we can give four general pieces of advice:

1. **יסוד העפר** - On a most basic level, one aspect of the יסוד העפר is to make boundaries. Just like the sand acts as a boundary for the water of the ocean, the יסוד העפר in a person can set boundaries for his תאוות of the יסוד המים. This type of boundary needs to be used before a person is in a state of נסיון, and he has to figure out how to make the right boundaries so that he will not put himself into a situation of נסיון.

On a deeper level, there is another property of the יסוד העפר, which can

help a person even when he is in a נסיון, and that is the מידה of focus. Just like you can set a peg into physical earth and it will remain stuck in place, you can similarly get used to using the מידה of focus of the יסוד העפר to fix your eyes on a given point in space, and you can have them remain focused on that point even when something would otherwise catch your attention and make you look. This is a habit and מידה which a person can acquire which can help him very much in שמירת עיניים - to get used to being able to focus your eyes on something and not take your eyes off of it for a while.

2. **יסוד הרוח** - the יסוד הרוח is one of the main ways to overcome נסיונות of שמירת עיניים, and that is by having your mind preoccupied. The best thing is to be occupied with thoughts of תורה, like the Rambam says, אין מחשבת עריות מתגברת, אלא בלב הפנוי מן החכמה - improper thoughts only fill a mind which is empty of החכמה. But even if it won't be תורה, the first step is that you shouldn't be bored. Find something useful and positive to keep yourself busy with! The most dangerous thing when a person is faced by such נסיונות is for him to be bored, as הבטלה מביא לידי זימה - boredom leads to improper thoughts.

3. **יסוד המים** - the יסוד המים can create in a person either תאוות, or true אהבה and relationships with others. In our context, this is another way to weaken the נסיונות of תאוות. The more "full" a person feels of true relationships, beginning with עצמו - אהבת עצמו - feeling true fulfillment from his own strong points and successes - and extending to, אהבת ה', אהבת ישראל, and אהבת התורה

a "vacuum" there will be for the נסיונות to set in.

4. **יסוד האש** - the יסוד האש gives a person the power of מסירות נפש - to be מתגבר and fight the יצה"ר head-on not to do something wrong. This can sometimes be a very difficult battle, but if a person reminds himself that Hashem put him here and is watching his actions, and that Hashem believes in him and will help him win if he only does his best, then he can awaken his inner power of מסירות נפש for Hashem's sake, and with Hashem's help he can overcome. In such cases, it is important to remember that every second is its own battle, and you shouldn't get discouraged because you feel like you will end up giving in after a few seconds. For two seconds you can be מתגבר? So for now, fight for the two seconds, show Hashem your מסירות נפש which He is hoping to see, and forget about what will be later. In general, the hardest part of the מלחמת היצר is only a few seconds. Once you can awaken your מסירות נפש and break out of his grip for those few seconds, you have already done most of the work.

There's no question that the difficult נסיונות which we face in our generation are a part of the חבלי משיח. It seems that in order for us to be זוכה to greet משיח, Hashem forced us into a situation where every Yid who wants to remain loyal to Him has to sometimes show מסירות נפש for His sake. Let us be מתחזק to rise up to the challenges when we face them, and daven to Hashem that we should be successful!

בלבניפדיה עבודת ה' יום ג' רה' הרב בלוי 33 ירושלים 20:30

בלבניפדיה מחשבה יום ד' רה' קדמן 4 חולון 20:30



## THE SYMPTOMS

**Earth** is the most stable element and therefore it is the less reactive of all the elements. When hatred comes from earth-of-wind-of-fire, a person hates the other without any reason, and the hatred is also steady, since the two people are different from each other, each of them being in a very different direction than the other. This awakens fire, hatred. This is seemingly not a hatred based on “He’s higher than me, and I’m lower than him” which comes from the trait of *gaavah*/conceit, rather a feeling of separation from one another (*and more of this hatred is explained later by wind-of-wind-of-fire*).

**This** kind of hatred is like the hatred of anti-semitism, which the Maharal describes: “An intrinsic hatred and opposition which the nations have for Yisrael, and just as Esav had intrinsic hatred for Yaakov.”

**This** hatred first manifests without a particular reason to hate the other, and in fact, it can even be present before there is

anyone to feel the hatred for. The element of wind can awaken the hatred and thereby allow the hatred to be expressed towards a particular person. This is called *sinas chinam*, a hatred which is intrinsic and for no particular reason.

**The** Maharal says that *sinas chinam* causes one’s entire soul to become contaminated. The essence of the soul includes all of the soul’s faculties and unifies them together, but when there is hatred, there is separation and division in the soul, which goes against the soul’s essence which unifies all of the soul’s faculties.”

**The** Hebrew word for hatred, *sinah*, comes from the word *sheini*, two. Hatred creates separation within one’s own soul. Hatred does not begin being manifest towards another person, who is the “second”, rather, hatred begins in one’s very own will.

## THE REMEDY

**Our** Sages explain that all opposites bear the same root above in the Higher World, and it is just on This World that they become split into opposites, where they appear to be in contradiction with each other. When the two opposites fall particularly low, hatred ensues between them. The root of the remedy is therefore to have the perspective that the two opposites really bear the same root, and, unless one of the opposites unites with the other, it will remain deficient, for it is only completed when it unites with its opposite.

**This** concept is how a person goes free from the perspective that something opposite from him is in contradiction with him and goes against “Me”, allowing instead for a person to realize that his very being is deficient if he doesn’t unite with his opposite. That which is opposite from him is not really a contradiction to him, rather it completes him.

**When** one absorbs this perspective, in his mind and heart,

he will want to unite with anyone who is the opposite of him. Finding another to be his opposite will no longer be a reason for tension/hatred with another, and instead a reason to love the other.

**Hatred** is not the same emotion as separation, which the Maharal describes as intrinsic hatred, or baseless hatred. These are actually opposite emotions from each other. With baseless hatred, a person will hate anyone who isn’t “Me”, and he loves only himself.

**There** is also holy hatred, which is when one is connected to the Oneness of Hashem, he hates all that which is opposite from This Oneness – all the forces of *tumah* (impurity) which wish to prevent the Oneness of Hashem. In contrast to this holy hatred, the detrimental hatred is when one is only connected to his own personal self and he hates anything which is opposite from him.

יום שני טו' כסלו תשפ"ה  
רח' הרב בלוי 33 ירושלים  
20:30

צורת אדם  
בנושא גרון

