



BILVAVI FOUR ELEMENTS

ISSUE 002 ♦ 5784

BACKGROUND:

Last week, Yaakov mentioned to Tzvi that ever since their long discussion about how the עבודה of our generation is to live with Hashem, he is struggling to figure out how he can practically live this way on a constant basis. In response, Tzvi suggests to Yaakov that they learn about the ארבעה יסודות of the middos as a means of connecting the details of daily life to the yearning for קרבת אלקים...

FRIENDS SCHMOOZE EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

Tzvi: Yaakov, I'm very excited to begin learning the ארבעה יסודות together. And I'm davening that one day we'll be able to look back at today as the starting point of a whole new time period in our lives, when we started to look at life through the lens of the ארבעה יסודות. Now let me ask you, do you have a preference which one of the ארבעה יסודות we start with?

Yaakov: I don't know all that much about them, but I would think we should start with the most basic one. I would assume that most basic of the ארבעה יסודות would be עפר. Is that right?

Tzvi: I was also thinking to start with the most basic יסוד, but actually, according to how the ארבעה יסודות are explained in Chazal, the most basic יסוד is considered to be רוח, not עפר.

Yaakov: How is that? I mean, just from looking at the physical ארבעה יסודות in the world, you would certainly think that the most basic יסוד is the physical earth, whereas the water, wind, and fire in the world are all secondary to the earth itself.

Tzvi: Excellent question, and try to remind me to get back to that later. But before we discuss the physical ארבעה יסודות, let me ask you a different question: What do you think the more natural position of a person is, to move around and do things, or to stay in one place?

Yaakov: As far as I understand, a person only moves around if he has a reason to. When a person has no need to do things, he stays in place, so it would seem that a person's more natural position is to stay put. But what does this have to do with anything?

Tzvi: Let me explain where I'm going with this: The question whether a person's natural position is to move about or to stay put is

exactly the same question as whether the more fundamental יסוד in a person □□ יסוד העפר or יסוד הרוח. The יסוד העפר in a person is what makes him stay put, like earth which naturally stays put in place, whereas the יסוד הרוח in a person is what makes him move around, like the nature of wind. So when Chazal teach us that the most basic יסוד in a person is רוח, Chazal are teaching us that a person's most natural state is to move about, and not to stay put.

Yaakov: I'm following your train of thought, but I can't say really understand what you're saying. I mean, how can you say a person's most natural position is to move? It seems simply illogical – like I said, every time a person moves, he is going somewhere. It seems obvious that a person's natural position is to be at rest unless there is a need to move!

Tzvi: You are asking a very good question, and on a simple level you are right. But Chazal here are teaching us a deeper perspective, which is fundamental for truly understanding yourself through the ארבעה יסודות. It's just not true that every movement of a person is done for a reason. Chazal are teaching us that there is a natural drive which a person has for movement in of its own, and not as a means to get somewhere or accomplish something.

Yaakov: Can you give me an example of such a type of movement?

Tzvi: Yes – it's very simple. Just try to sit still for a few minutes without moving. After a while you'll start going crazy. Some people will start going crazy faster than others, but anyone who is forced not to move for too long will find it unbearable. This is because a person has a natural need for movement, due to the יסוד הרוח within him.

Yaakov: You're for sure right that people can't sit still for too long, but I would think that that's simply because they find sitting still uncomfortable for them. This doesn't mean that they are moving for no reason. On the contrary, they are moving for a good reason – because it's uncomfortable for them to continue sitting still.

Tzvi: Precisely here is the difference between the deeper perspective of the ארבעה יסודות and the superficial, natural perspective. Superficially, a person is only aware of the fact that he becomes uncomfortable when sitting for too long, so he decides to move around. But the deeper perspective of the ארבעה יסודות is to realize that this discomfort is not simply a random feeling that all of a sudden popped up from nowhere. There is a system and pattern to our inner feelings! The reason that we feel uncomfortable when sitting still for too long is because we have an inner power of רוח, which demands that we move and accomplish. Or, in other words, the discomfort from sitting still is merely a symptom, but the root issue is that inside, we ourselves really want to be moving!

Yaakov: If I understand you correctly, you're saying that a deeper person, instead of feeling uncomfortable sitting still and therefore deciding to move, will instead right away perceive in himself an inner desire for movement?

Tzvi: Exactly. You can see this even in a baby. Everyone knows that when an infant cries, it could be because he is hungry and wants food or because he needs his diaper changed, but it could also be simply because he wants to be rocked. Where does this come from that a baby wants to be rocked? Why does a baby find it calming to be rocked to sleep?

Yaakov: I once heard that there is a theory that it's because when the baby was in his mother's womb it got used to moving around...

Tzvi: I guess that's all the scientists were able to figure out, since they weren't able to get down to the deeper reason... But

according to what Chazal are teaching us, the answer is very simple: This is a perfect example of the simple, inner need for movement of the יסוד הרוח, which expresses itself from an infant's very first day.

Yaakov: I hear what you are saying, but I still can't say that I can really relate to it. The bottom line is that whenever I move, at least I think I'm moving for reason. You may be right that deep down, the reason it's more comfortable for me to move may sometimes be coming from some sort of inner desire for movement, but I don't think I ever felt that desire...

Tzvi: Listen Yaakov, we are just starting out now, so don't get discouraged if you

the person want to move? Is there not a rule that every desire aims for a goal?

Tzvi: Tell me, Yaakov – Why does the wind blow? Where is it trying to go? The wind blows in all directions all the time without any noticeable goal or purpose. And on a deeper level – wind is caused by the spinning and the orbit of the earth. But what makes the earth revolve and orbit the sun?

Yaakov: I don't know...

Tzvi: Very simple – because that's how Hashem created it. The movement of the wind and the orbit of the planets are not like premeditated movements of a person which are done to achieve a specific result. These are natural movements, which were set in motion by Hashem at the time of the creation of the world. And that exactly is what the יסוד הרוח in a person is – it's a natural desire for movement which is inborn in a person, and was set into motion by Hashem at the time of his creation.

Yaakov: I have a question – this whole concept of an inborn desire for movement sounds a little bit strange. Doesn't a person have free will to decide what he wants to do with himself? What exactly does it mean that a person has an inborn desire which he didn't choose to want?

Tzvi: This is a very important principle – a person's free will does not mean that he can decide whatever he wants to do with himself from scratch. All of a person's desires are inborn in his very nature, and were created by Hashem. These desires take on an exact pattern based on the person's inner makeup and his specific balance between the ארבעה יסודות which make up his נפש. A person's free will is only to decide how exactly he wants to channel these forces.

If a person chooses properly, he will use his mind to become aware of his inborn desires, which are naturally pure and good, and he will thereby use them properly. However, a person is also given the free will to make the wrong choice, which is ultimately to follow the tendencies of his body and imagination,

SUMMARY OF SCHMOOZE

- ◆ יסוד הרוח is the most fundamental יסוד and not עפר like I thought.
- ◆ The natural state of a person is to be moving, not to stay still like I thought.
- ◆ Proofs: You can't sit in place for too long. You feel a need to move just for the sake of moving, and not to accomplish anything. Also babies enjoy being rocked for no purpose.
- ◆ בחירה הפשית vs. inborn desires: What came out – our בחירה is how to direct these desires, but you can't create new desires or get rid of existing desires - all you can do is purify them.

can't relate to every point at first glance. The first step is to understand logically what the ארבעה יסודות are and how they work. Right now just take Chazal's word for it that the deepest and simplest force within the ארבעה יסודות is a desire for movement for the sake of movement. As we go along, you'll start seeing the bigger picture of how all the ארבעה יסודות come together, and it will become more alive and down to earth. The main thing right now is just to understand the concept.

Yaakov: Okay, so tell me if I got it right – in short, you're saying that the first יסוד is the יסוד הרוח, which creates in a person a desire for movement. But I still don't really understand – why does

which distort a person's inborn pure desires and channel these inner forces in an external and perverted way.

But the bottom line is that a person cannot create desires which he doesn't have within him, nor can he get rid of desires that he does have. He can definitely work on himself and purify the way he channels his desires, but all of a person's desires were created exclusively by Hashem.

Yaakov: Well, then I guess it's no coin-

idence why the scientists are not aware of this phenomenon. Secular scientists certainly do not want to admit that there are inborn desires which a person was created with! Their whole philosophy, at least of those who even believe in **בחירה** in the first place, is based on the premise that a person can decide to do whatever he wants, without there being any absolute right or wrong...

Tzvi: Certainly. In any case, I hope we got some sort of picture of what the **יסוד הרוח** is. Right now things are still quite

abstract, but we have only covered the first and most subtle of the **ארבעה יסודות**. Hopefully, as we continue, the picture will get a little bit clearer...

Yaakov: Don't worry – there were certainly a lot of concepts here which give me plenty of food for thought, and I'm looking forward to continuing next week!

Tzvi: **בסייעתא דשמיא**, so am I!

FIXING YOUR MIDDOS

QUESTION: A little while ago, I got inspired to learn **נ"ך**, and I decided to make myself a seder every day to learn a certain amount. However, as time goes on, I keep finding that I'm not being successful at keeping up my seder. How can I work on this issue using the **ארבעה יסודות** method?

ANSWER: Your inspiration to learn **נ"ך** is certainly very commendable, and you are very fortunate to be working on channeling your energies in such a positive way. That being said, if you see that practically you are not being successful in keeping up your commitment, this probably indicates that you must analyze your plans a little bit more deeply. While your inspiration and commitment certainly stem from a very good place inside of you, then you may need to further develop and tweak your plans in order to arrive at a learning schedule which truly befits your personality and situation. Most often, when a person takes a commitment based on a sudden inspiration, he is lacking the **יישוב הדעת** to think through the different sides of his personality and develop a fully well-balanced plan of how to reach his goals. This does not take away from the worthiness of the inspiration.

To the contrary, this is the nature of inspiration, and it's fine for starting out if your seder was not perfectly planned out to the last detail. Nonetheless, as you continue, you

this goal is to you in relation to the other factors which compete for your time. In other words, you need to decide how much of your time and energy you think you should devote to it vs. other areas of learning, your family, your other involvements, etc. This will help you develop a clear and precise goal for you to aspire to. [This parallels the **האש יסוד**, which is the source of the powers of aspiration and yearning to grow and be elevated].

B. You need to look and see how you can connect to and enjoy this area of learning. As **חז"ל** say, **לעולם** - a person should always learn [the area of Torah] which his heart desires. In order for your commitment to last for the long term, it's not enough merely to aspire to know **נ"ך** and to value it. For a seder in learning to last, you have to connect to it, and to feel like it's yours. [This parallels the **יסוד המים** in a person, which creates a connection.]

C. You need to set yourself the proper pace of learning, so that you'll have the right balance to both be covering enough ground to keep you feeling like your accomplishing, while still having the **יישוב הדעת** to learn and understand the material well. [This is a balance between the **יסודות** of **רוח** – movement and **עפר** – calmness.]
הצלחה רבה!

מקורות ומקבילות לשיחת חברים

מקורות ומקבילות למדור זה:

שהיסוד הכי בסיסי הוא רוח - ספר יצירה [פ"א, טו],

ספר דע את נפשך [ריש פ"ג] (מהרב שליט"א).

הבחנה האם המצב הטבעי פעולה או מנוחה -

שיעור א' מ"תיקון כח העצלות" (מהרב שליט"א).

המחשת כח התנועה שבאדם - ספר דע את נפשך

[פרק א' אות ד] (מהרב שליט"א).

המודעות לתחושות הפנימיות ולא רק

לתופעותיהם - תיקון כח הריכוז [סוף פ"ג] (מהרב

שליט"א).

השלב הראשון זה להבין את הסוגיות בשכל -

ספר הכרה עצמית והעצמת הנפש [פ"ה] (מהרב

שליט"א).

כל רצון חותר למטרה - קל"ח פתחי חכמה

לרמח"ל [ריש פתח ג'], וע"ע מו"נ ח"ג פכ"ה.

תנועת הרוח מיוחסת לה' - מו"נ ח"ב פ"ל [וע"ע שם

פ"ד ביחס לסיבוב כדור הארץ], **חובות הלבבות** [שער הבחינה פ"ה],

דע את נפשך [פ"א אות ד].

כח הבחירה לא מתחיל מאפס - מכתב מאליהו

[ח"א], **קונטרס הבחירה** [ח"א], **עלי שור** [ח"ב עמוד לח].

often need to tweak and perfect your plans as necessary in order for them to last long term.

In your case, there are several factors to take into consideration to develop a properly balanced program of learning:

A. You need to decide how important

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR MIDDOS

[FROM THE INTRO SHIUR OF FIXING YOUR MIDDOS]

The Torah is entirely Hashem's wisdom. Just like the rest of the Torah, the subject of our *middos* – its beginning and its end – needs to be understood, even before we work on them. We can't work on our *middos* unless we understand them. Just like "a wise person's question is half the answer", so is the understanding of our *middos* already half way toward working on them.

After understanding what our *middos* are, we can work on them. "Learning Torah is great, for it brings one to do actions". If our wisdom doesn't affect us practically, it is a lack in our actual wisdom; like the Sages say: "Anyone who says, 'All I do is learn Torah' doesn't even have the Torah."

The first part of working on our *middos* is understanding their roots, and then we can reach their practical applications. Understanding the roots of the *middos* isn't quick. It is a great, deep wisdom and it needs a lot of introductions to explain it. First we need to know about the roots, and then we can learn about its branches.

We will attempt, with the help of Hashem, to start from the roots and slowly continue onward with this, as much as Hashem gives us the strength to.

THREE GROUPS OF MIDDOS

We are commanded in the Torah "to go in Hashem's ways." From here our Sages learn that must cling to His *middos*. We are supposed to resemble Hashem, who is merciful and compassionate. The Sages have thus essentially revealed to us in this that just like all of Creation is rooted in Hashem, so are our *middos* rooted in the *middos* of Hashem.

There are three groups of *middos*: the root *middos*, the soul's *middos* and the body's *middos*.

The root *middos* are Hashem's *middos* -- the 13 Attributes of Mercy. We are commanded to resemble these *middos* of Hashem. These are the root *middos*.

The second group of *middos* are the soul's own *middos* – Kindness, Justice and Compassion. Just like Hashem has *middos*, He created the soul with its own *middos*. Each of our Avos personified each of these *middos*: Avraham personified kindness, Yitzchok personified justice, and Yaakov personified compassion. These *middos* are not *middos* of the body – they are *middos* of our very soul.

The third group of *middos* are what we are generally referring to in this sefer. They are the *middos* which come from our *nefesh habehamis* – our animalistic part of our soul, which is the lowest part of our soul. They are also called our body's *middos*. They are our negative emotions we know of: anger, jealousy, desire, honor, and so forth.

It is only these middos which we need to fix

So there are three groups of *middos*: *middos* of Hashem, *middos* of our soul, and *middos* of our body (or lower part of our soul). The first two groups of *middos* do not need to be fixed. Hashem is perfect; all his *middos* are good, and so is our soul only good *middos*; our soul is pure, and its *middos* are pure.

It is only our body's *middos* which need to be fixed. Since Adam ate from the tree – which was mixed with good and evil – our *middos* have become a mixture of good and evil. (to be continued in the next issue)

FIXING YOUR FIRE

PART 1: EARTH-OF-FIRE Introduction

Rav Chaim Vital in Shaarei Kedushah writes that hatred comes from the element of fire, and that it is a branch of the trait of gaavah (*conceit*). The opposite of hatred (*fire*) is love, which comes from the element of water, and as it is well-known, fire and water are opposites.

The Hebrew word for hatred is *sinah*, א-נ-ש, which contains the letters Shin, Nun, and Aleph, which contains the word Aish, אש, "fire".

Gaavah (*conceit*) is where a person wants to enlarge himself. Hatred, a branch of conceit, is where, in the words of Rav Chaim Vital, "A person views himself as lowly as a result of seeing the other's higher status." Hatred branches out from conceit, and the difference between them is, that conceit is where a person focuses on his own [perceived] elevated status, while hatred is where a person feels inferior to the other as a result of seeing the other's elevated status [and this inferiority causes him to hate the other].

Love is to be one with another, while hatred is when a person is "two" with another – when he views the other person as a separate entity from him, so that there are "two" separate entities here instead of one soul. As a hint, the word hatred, *sinah*, is from the word *shnayim* (*two*) followed by the letter aleph (*which equals the number one*), implying that hatred takes "one" and turns it into "two".

Since each of the four elements contain aspects of all of the four elements, there is a hatred that stems from earth-of-fire, hatred that stems from water-of-fire, hatred that stems from wind-of-fire, and hatred that stems from fire-of-fire. And since each of the subdivisions branch out into an additional subdivision of all 4 elements, earth-of-fire has 4 divisions (*earth, water, wind, fire*), water-of-fire has 4 divisions (*earth, water, wind, and fire*) and so forth. (to be continued in the next issue)