



Published on www.bilvavi.net

[Home](#) > Four Elements Self-Awareness - 003 Tangibly Relating To The Inner World

Four Elements Self-Awareness - 003 Tangibly Relating To The Inner World

This is a translation from the original audio class.

Relating To Our Inner World

In the previous chapters, with *siyata d'shmaya*, we explained about the need to understand our souls, which is our inner world. We explained that the entire Creation, as well as our inner world, is comprised of the four elements. In this chapter, we will explain and try to understand what the concept of this “inner world” is.

Everyone has heard of the concept of the “inner world”, but there is less awareness as to what exactly the nature of this inner world is. Since we are learning here about how to try entering it, we need to understand at least a little of what exactly we are trying to enter, before entering it.

There is an outer, external world, as well as an inner world. The external world we all recognize. Our Sages refer to it as the “world of action”, the “*olam hamaaseh*”. In other words, it is essentially about action. The “world of action” is not only called so because it is a world much action takes place. It is because it is the very attitude we have towards This World, which we live on. It is action which we mainly perceive as our existence on this world. The “world of action” is therefore perceived by us as an absolute reality, whereas our “inner world” is not perceived of by most people as an absolute reality.

The “inner world” contains our emotions, thoughts, and deeper aspects of the soul. We can relate tangibly to our actions, but we usually do not relate to our emotions and thoughts as an absolutely existing reality.

The reason for this is because we can clearly see the results of actions. For example, we turn on the lights and then the room is lit up. A person plants a bomb, G-d forbid, and the bomb explodes. With actions, we can clearly see the results. We can therefore perceive of actions as an absolute reality. In contrast to this, our feelings and thoughts are not something we can tangibly relate to, because we do not see any of their results.

We are all familiar with our feelings of course, and we know we have many of them, but we do not see how our feelings cause anything tangible to happen, unlike our actions, which clearly produce

tangible results. We are familiar with our thoughts, and we are aware that many thoughts pass through our head, but we relate to it only a very subtle level, and not as a tangible reality. At best, we can relate to our feelings and our thoughts only with regards to how they affect our actions, but to relate to our feelings as they are, and to relate to our thoughts as they are, is not something we can tangibly relate to. Therefore, we do not see the results of any of our feelings and thoughts.

Feelings That Are Not Attached To Any Action

Here is an example from our world, in order to help us understand what we mean.

Every person is prepared to spend money on acquiring something tangible, such as a car, house, furniture, food, and clothing. But how many people are prepared to pay for simply having a good feeling? People will perhaps pay for good feelings if they result in something in the world of action, such as the good feeling from going to a park. Here, the feeling is attached to an action, so we can all understand the value of such a feeling. But if the good feeling would just be by itself – just a feeling, with no action attached to it – would we relate to this and give any value to it?

Another example: Many times, when we see a person who looks happy, we may think that he's happy either because he has money, good children, a good marriage, a comfortable house to live in, etc. We will quickly attribute his happiness to something he must have in the world of action. In truth, though, a person can be happy just from good feelings that come from the inner world, such as a happy inner emotional state, etc. But a person will tend to have the attitude that any happiness must be stemming from something external in the world of action, such as a good career, a major accomplishment in life, etc. This attitude is saying that the inner world of a person, his inner feelings and thoughts, can only be defined by something in the external world, but that there is no inner world for one to actually enter.

The truth is, however, that we have our external world, the "world of action", by itself; and we also have our inner world, in and of itself; and we also have a point that bridges these two parts together.

We have explained what the inner world is, and why people often have difficulty understanding its concept. It is because people only relate to the inner world if they can attach it to the external world somehow. If they don't see the results of the inner world in their external world, they will not relate to the inner world.

That is often why if you try to tell someone about the inner world, the other person may seek to know how it can apply practically in his life. He will want to know immediately how to act upon it, if it's "*I'maaseh*" (of practical use). Although this argument is understandable, it is only a partial step into the inner world.

When is this argument valid, and when isn't it? It is valid when a person's feelings and thoughts indeed do not bring any changes in one's actions. When is it invalid? It is invalid because in order for a person to know how to act correctly, he first needs to properly build his inner world, his feelings and thoughts.

Building Our Inner World Before We Know What To "Do"

After one builds his inner world, of course, he must be able to apply it practically to his "world of action". But he first needs to build the inner world by itself, as it is, without any emphasis on action yet. For as we have explained, the inner world of a person is a world of its own, independent of the external "world of action" that we relate to.

This is the fundamental understanding which we need in order to enter our inner world. It is the

understanding that our inner world, our feelings and thoughts, are an absolute reality, just as real as our external world, the world of action.

Our external world is built through learning Torah, observing *mitzvos*, and maintaining basic *derech erez*, and our inner world is built through acknowledging the reality of our feelings and thoughts within us, even when they are not necessarily connected to any actions. The perfected state of existence is when we fuse the reality of our external observance of Torah and *mitzvos* together with a developed inner world. But even before we reach this integration, we first need to build the inner world by itself, acknowledging our feelings and thoughts as they are, even when they do not involve any effects on our action.

The following example illustrates to us this difference, of whether a person builds his inner world in and of itself, unrelated to any actions - versus building the inner world only one connects it to action.

One day, we will all leave the world, at the time when we are supposed to leave it. We will be leaving behind this "world of action", so what do we remain with? We will remain with the feelings and thoughts (and any of the deeper parts of the soul than this) we have reached. If someone was only able to relate to his feelings based on their effect on his "world of action", when he leaves This World, he will not be able to relate to anything! He only learned to relate to feelings when they are connected to actions, but now that there are no more actions, there is nothing for him to feel.

But if a person during his lifetime made sure not only to connect his feelings with his actions but also to build his feelings as a reality that is independent of action, when he leaves This World, he will be divested of actions, but he will remain with his feelings. (He will then be able to reach the "lower Gan Eden" that is on This World.)

On some level, such a person is called by our Sages as a "*ben aliyah*" (one who rises spiritually).^[1] A *ben aliyah* is one who has several levels of existence within his soul. He has his "world of action" that he can relate to, but he also has more inner levels in his soul he can go to. In different terminology, he has "higher" levels of existence in himself - his inner feelings and thoughts.

It can be compared to a person who has a house with a first floor and attic. There may be several floors between the first floor and the attic, which are connecting together all of the floors of the house, but each floor is seen as its own, independent of the others. A *ben aliyah* has his first, lowest 'floor' - his world of action - as well as his upper floors, which house his feelings and thoughts; and he has levels in between them which connect together his actions with his feelings and thoughts.

Thus, entering the inner world is really to enter the world of feelings as it is, by itself, acknowledging this reality as it is, even without acting upon these feelings. Then a person can rise to the world of thought, with the same attitude.

Relating To Your Inner World As Inner "Forces" As They Are

Now let us explain the subtlety of this inner world.

The external world is perceived by us through our physical senses - by what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. Our inner world, however, is perceived by us as inner "forces" (***kochos***), or "movements" (***tenuos***), as they are. The way to perceive the inner world is through recognizing the inner *kochos*\forces, or the inner *tenuos*\movements which are constantly moving within the inner world. That is how we should view the inner world.

In the world of action, we can also see potential forces, but only in relation to how they having some bearing on the world of action. For example, if we see a hammer, we will see it as a potential - it can

be used to bang in a nail. We can view a car as something that has the potential to move and get to places, etc. **Our inner world, though, is entirely comprised of *kochos*\forces as they are - and that is how we must perceive them.**

We can all recognize the inner *kochos*\forces in ourselves. These include the powers of love, hatred, joy, and sadness in ourselves. We usually do not relate to these powers as tangible, but as some kind of inner movement that can result in something in the world of action. But the truth is that the forces contained in our inner world are absolutely a tangibly reality. They are no less tangible than anything in the physical world such as the sun, moon, stars, earth, and the seas, which are all a tangible reality. The *kochos*\forces contained in our inner world are no less real and tangible.

Example 1 - Seeing Love As Connection, and Hatred As Separation

Here is a fundamental example that can help us understand this concept.

In the world of action, we find attachments and connections between people, such as the marriage between husband and wife, and there can also be detachment and separation on this world, such as divorce; or death, when the soul separates from the body. In the inner world, however, all of these events represent the various *kochos*\forces. In the world, attachment to another person is known as the “force” of love, and separation from another person is the “force” of hatred.

Therefore, we can understand that a person who arranges marriages between people is a person who connects people together, whereas a person who brings strife between couples or between people, or one who causes another person to die, G-d forbid, is a person who causes separation between people.

If we see a person who loves another, we will most certainly view it as a virtue, and if we see someone who is hateful, we view this as negative character. But we usually do not value love in the sense of how we value a couple getting married, and we usually do not view hatred in the sense of someone who has caused a divorce or death. This is because we live on the world of action, and therefore we can easily relate to marriage as a positive thing, and divorce and death as a negative thing. But how do we relate to the feeling of love, or to the feeling of hate? We certainly will attribute importance to these feelings, but we do not attribute any tangibility to these feelings.

The more a person realizes, though, that feelings are an absolute reality, he will find himself attributing more value to the emotion of love itself, in the same way he values the idea of getting married and building a home. He will also view hatred as a reality no less real and tangible than the reality of a person who causes hate and strife between people, or who has caused divorce between a couple, or who has caused another’s death.

Example 2 - Relating To Happiness as a Force of Expansion

Here is another example from the physical realm. If a family was living in a small house, and they have been blessed with several children, and now they have moved into a bigger house, they have really gone from a situation of “contraction” into a situation of “expansion”. In the same way, when it comes to the world of our feelings, there is also a concept of “expansion” - in the emotion known as happiness. When a person is happy, he is in a state of expansion.

Most of the time, if a person moves his family into a new and bigger house, his siblings will be happy for him in his new move (as long as he is on good terms with them). But if his siblings would meet him when he feels an inward feeling of happiness, would they also be happy for him? Usually, it will be difficult for any of his siblings to feel included in his happiness, because they do not see a physical factor associated with this happiness. They may even wonder why he is happy at all! People identify more with physical reasons to be happy, such as feeling happy for a person who moves into a new

house, because this is tangible, and they identify less with internal reasons to be happy, which they can't see and tangibly sense.

A Change of Perspective

We have given several examples of the conceptual difference between our outer world and our inner world. Let us now summarize this.

The inner world, as we have explained here, is all about inner *kochos*\forces, namely, the movements (*tenuah*) of these inner forces.

Let's now proceed to understand the following fundamental point. Entering the inner world is not enabled through any guidance and advice to get there. It requires a **change of perspective**. One first needs to accept this change of perspective on an intellectual level, and then he must recognize this matter through a perception of his heart. It is therefore not only about practical change of action, nor is it about understandings which produce changes of action (though this is certainly needed as well).

This change of perspective must take place before you enter any inner work. When you have this change of perspective, you will be able to better enter the inner world, and this change of perspective will then gain greater clarity as you go along.

What is this change of perspective? First let us define it, and in the next lesson with the help of Hashem, we will try to understand it better. It is when one begins to stop and reflect: *"What are the inner forces that are contained in this thing I am encountering? What is this thing made of up of? From which forces?"*

Here is one example to get us started. A person sees fire. If we have a simple perspective, we see physical fire. But if we are examining the inner forces contained in something, what do we see in fire? We can see something that is destructive, or radiant, or warm, or elevating, and other characteristics of fire. Either we can see it as physical fire, or we can "see" the inner forces contained in fire, which are its properties of destruction, light, warmth, elevation, etc.

We have only given one example of the concept, but the point is that when we encounter anything, we can stop to consider what forces are contained in it. This is not for the purpose of intellectualizing the matter alone. That can be a starting point, but the point is to enter into a different perspective, where you are not focused on the surface layer of something, but on the inner forces contained in it. The forces contained in something are its inner layer, its "inner world".

When we get used to looking at things in this way and when we get used to seeing ourselves in this way as well, this is the gateway to entering the inner world (with assistance from Heaven). This shall be further elaborated upon in the next lesson.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

Q1: Can the Rav further elaborate upon this concept that the inner world are entirely made up of *kochos*\forces?

A: We so far gave the example of fire. From a physical viewpoint, fire is physical fire. From the inner viewpoint of our soul, fire can be seen as a force of elevation, light, destruction, dryness, etc. The four elements of fire, wind, water and earth are not just the 'elements' per se, but they contain *kochos*, forces. That is our study here, and that is how we can begin to enter our inner world, which is made up of the four elements.

Q2: Are our feelings always present even when they are not being activated, just like the sun and moon are always there even when we don't see them?

A: They are always present and they are always working. The only issue is how aware a person is to them and in what way he is using them. The more a person lives with awareness, the more he can become aware of what is taking place in his subconscious.

Q3: What is the connection of this lesson with the previous lesson which discussed the four elements?

A: The previous lesson explained that the entire Creation is made up of the four elements. There are different "worlds" within Creation, where the four elements appear differently. In the physical realm, the four elements appear as the physical earth, water, wind and fire as we recognize. In our inner world, the elements are not the simple forms of earth, water, wind and fire. Rather, they appear as forces. They are the forces that are contained in earth, in water, in wind, and fire. That is how this lesson is the continuation of the previous lesson.

Q4: If I focus on the love I have for my children, regardless of how this pertains to the actions of love, is that what it means to understand the power of love simply as an inner "force" unrelated to any action?

A: That is a good example of the concept we explained here. Either you can love a child by focusing on what you do for the child, or, you can just focus on the love for the child as it is, as in the example you gave.

Another example of the concept would be that when you see that a child is succeeding at something and he is happy, you are happy for him for his achievement, but if you have a small child or baby who has nothing to succeed at, you can't be happy for him for succeeding at anything, because there is nothing for him to succeed at. What, then, can you be happy about for the child? You can just focus on your child's happiness whenever you see that he is happy. You are not happy for anything the child is doing, but simply because he is happy, and this makes you happy when you focus on it. That is a good example of relating to an inner force simply when it is not related to any action.

Q5: Can this apply to negative feelings as well?

A: The concept we are describing should only be used with positive feelings. If you focus on what is contained in the negative feelings – the fact that they are comprised of certain inner forces – this will only be detrimental to you. There is a method that people use to access their inner world by going deeper into their deepest and most painful feelings that they have. We are not taking this path here, and it focuses on working with our positive feelings, not our negative feelings.

Q6: What is a list of some of these inner forces?

A: One who wishes may listen\read the original series we have given about the four elements, which is called **Da Es Middosecha-Mahut HaMiddos** (*Understanding Your Middos*), which explains the *kochos*\forces that are contained in the four elements. In this series, several of the forces in each of the four elements have been explained. The first half of the series on the element of earth was published in Hebrew as **sefer Da Es Middosecha**, and the rest of the series is available only in audio format.

Q7: What should a person do if he is filled with negative feelings?

A: Focus on your positive feelings. My hope is that you have at least a few positive feelings and not only negative feelings. A few positive feelings are enough to start [entering the inner world] with. May

Hashem help you continue to find more positive feelings.

Q8: Does the Rav mean that focusing on positive feelings causes our inner forces to become activated from their potential state? What was the goal here?

A: Very good question. The first step is to become aware that the inner world is entirely made up of *kochos* - inner forces. The second step is to activate them from their potential state, and the third step is to integrate them into the "world of action". Here in this lesson we have explained the first step, of becoming aware that the inner world is entirely *kochos* forces, because the point here was to help bring a person from the outer world into the inner world.

Q9: What is the connection between thoughts and feelings?

A: We have not touched upon this yet, but since you asked, I will try to answer it briefly. In most people, their thoughts either are for the sake of action, or they are fantasies. However, as one builds his inner world of thought, he can reach a level where he can tangibly relate to his thoughts - either because his thoughts are connected with his feelings, or because thought is a reality unto itself. For example, in the concept of *hekdesh* (consecrating property for the use of the *Beis HaMikdash*) we can see how the thoughts have tangible effects on reality. Just like a person can understand that feelings exist on their own, unattached to action, so can a person learn to understand that there is a world of thought on its own, unattached to action.

Q10: Can a thought generate a feeling?

A: Yes, thoughts can activate feelings, and they can also clarify one's feelings, as it is written, "*And you shall know today and you shall settle it upon your heart.*" When you fix your thoughts strongly upon a matter, it becomes "*daas*", and when this *daas* becomes palpable, your thoughts can then clarify what is in your feelings and thoughts.

Q11: Do fears come from emotions or thoughts?

A: Usually, fears do not begin from thoughts, but from an inner fear the person had, which can come from various reasons, and the fear awakens the thoughts, which in turn increases the fear. The fears do not come from a thought itself, but either from an inner fear itself that awakens a thought, such as from something a person has heard or seen, which awakens his fear (and which then awakens the thoughts).

Q12: But when you love another person, such as your child, your emotion of love is always attached to something in the outer world, such as another person...?

A: There are a few points here to understand. There is the force of love itself which is used with regards to oneself, and there is the outward expression of the love, and there is the point where the love is clothed upon something\someone in the material world. Love can be an inward feeling before it has any outward or material expression, just as one can be inwardly happy and also be happy for others when they are successful with regards to something material. Thus there is the force of the love as it exists in the abstract, within oneself, and there is also an outward expression of love, and there is also the material expression of love.

Q13: When Rabbi Akiva was being tortured and he was still happy, his happiness must have been coming from this inner force of happiness since there was no material factor for this happiness?

A: True, and this is a very fundamental concept. Since you have mentioned it, we shall elaborate upon it. There are feelings that find outward expression, and there are feelings that remain on an inner

level, within oneself. Rabbi Akiva's feeling of happiness in spite of being tortured by iron combs is a happiness attached with the material factor, whereas his joy of being ready to die *al kiddush Hashem* was an inner level of happiness. He was so concentrated on this inner joy of being ready to die *al kiddush Hashem*, a feeling that was totally removed from any physicality, and thus he didn't feel the iron combs, because he was totally detached from anything of this material realm.

Q14: The Rav explained that it will be not be an easy task to enter the inner world. Is this in relation to the above point - that it is difficult to separate from feelings attached to the outer world and to make the transition to inner feelings that are not attached to the material?

A: Exactly. Since we are in a material world, a world of action, it is an *avodah* to learn how to acquire abstract kinds of feelings which are removed from this physical world. That is why it contains a challenge.

Q15: What should be our *avodah* for the next few weeks until the next lesson?

A: The current *avodah* for now is not to be worked on in the practical sense, for that is the exact concept we have explained here. The lesson now is to gain **awareness** to these concepts. You can take a few things, or at least one thing, and contemplate: What are the forces contained in this? This is not about what you are seeing or touching. Just analyze what *koach* (force) is contained in something. We so far gave the example of fire, and this can be done with all of the other elements as well, and this will be the backbone of what we will be explaining in the coming lessons. As mentioned before, you can take a look at the **sefer Da Es Middosech** which lists these forces in the elements. That is a starting point, and we will expand upon those points further, with Hashem's help.

ADDENDUM:

The following is a list of the כוחות (inner forces) behind the four elements, which the Rav mentioned in the Q&A session at the end of the 3rd class of the Introduction to Middos series, based on the series **מהות המדות - דע את מידותיך** (a series of 103 shiurim of which the first 16 were printed in the sefer **דע את מידותיך - עפר חלק א**), and which are adapted into English as "Understanding Your Middos" (first 16 classes and some others in the series) available on www.bilvavi.net [1]).

עפר-Earth

עצב - *etzev* - "formation". (see Understanding Your Middos #05)

יציבות - *yetzivus* - stability

צמצום - *zimtzum* - "limitation." (see Understanding Your Middos #06)

קושי - *koshi* - "hardening." (see Understanding Your Middos #07)

יובש - *yovesh* - "dryness" (see Understanding Your Middos #11)

כלי - *kli* - container (see Understanding Your Middos #012)

כיסוי - *kisuy* - covering (see Understanding Your Middos #013)

ביטול - *bittul* - nullifying

כבידות - *k'veidus* - heaviness

שפלות - *shiflus* - lowliness

שינוי - *shinuy* - changing

ריבוי - *ribuy* - multiplying

מחיצה - *mechitzah* - separating

חומר - *choimer* - material

פשיטות - *peshitus* - simplicity

בנין - *binyan* - "building"

מדמה - *medameh* - comparing\imagination

יציאא מכה אל הפועל - *yetziah m'koach el hapo'el* - actualization of potential

ירידה - *yeridah* - descent

משיכה - *meshichah* - pulling

מנוחה - *menuchah* - serenity

אבק - *avak* - dust

מים-Water

תאוה - *taavah* - desire

אהבה - *ahavah* - love

תענוג - *taanug* - pleasure

קרירות - *kerirus* - coldness

התגררות - *hisgarerus* - dragging

זרימה - *zerimah* - flowing

רוח-Wind

דיבור - *dibbur* - speech

תנועה - *tenuah* - movement

הנהגה - *hanhagah* - direction

פיזור - *pizur* - spreading

אש-Fire

הארה - *he'arah* - illumination

'עלי - *aliyah* - ascent

השחתה - *hashchasah* - destruction

חמימות - *chamimus* - heat

ניצוץ - *nitztoz* - spark

קפיצה - *kefitzah* - jumping

התלהבות - *hishlahavus* - enthusiasm

[1] Bava Metzia 45a

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/four-elements-self-awareness-003-tangibly-relating-inner-world>

Links

[1] <http://www.bilvavi.net>