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## Understanding Your Middos - 001 Author's Intro

The principle of “Know today and return it to your heart . . .” applies to every aspect of a person’s service of Hashem and specifically to the refinement of *middos* (character traits).

The work on *middos* essentially involves the heart —“return it to your heart” — rather than the mind —“know today.” Our teacher, the MaHaral, in his book, *Netivos Olam*, provides us with an intellectual approach to studying middos through the analysis of various sections of the Talmud. With this knowledge, we can acquire the ‘know today’ aspect of this service from which we can then fulfill the commandment to “return it to your heart.”

In contrast to the MaHaRal’s *sefer*, which provides deep and extensive coverage of the views of our Sages with regard to each and every *midda*, this *sefer* provides a summary of the consensus that was reached by our Sages together with examples that illustrate each *midda* without extended discussion.. A broad and deep explanation of the teachings of *chazal* with regarding middos, together with a practical instruction in how to apply these teachings to the development of good *middos*, would require an entire *sefer* dedicated to each *midda*, which, if Hashem wills, is my dream for the future.

Rav Chaim Vital in his book, *Gates of Holiness*, taught that although a person may have many middos, they are however, rooted in the four fundamental elements of fire, wind, water and earth. We have therefore organized our book in accordance with this basic four part structure. This volume explores the element of "earth," and represents only a fraction of the classes taught in this subject.

With acknowledgment to Hashem Yisbarach for the past I *daven* that in the future I may merit to complete this work for all four of the fundamental elements. I further ask that this teaching be received in the minds and hearts of the readers and that it reveal within them the kind of character development that is expressed in the admonition that we are to resemble Hashem such that it can be said of us in the fullest of ways that as He is, so are we.

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/understanding-your-middos-001-authors-intro>