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This sefer, *Da Es Middosecha* (Getting To Know Your Middos), is as its title implies – it is about how we can improve our *middos*. However, this is not your typical sefer. It is a deep journey into our soul, and it is recommended to read this only after becoming familiar with the author's previous sefarim, most notably *Da Es Nafsecha* (available in English as *Getting To Know Your Soul*).

It is based on the beginning words of Rav Chaim Vital's sefer, *Shaarei Kedushah*, which state that there are four elements in the human soul, and that these elements are the roots of our "*middos*" (behavioral or character traits). They are: earth\laziness and sadness, water\desires, wind\evil speech, and fire\conceit.

The basic idea is that each of the four elements manifest themselves in our *middos*, so if we want to improve on our *middos*, we need to work with its root element and understand it.

Chapters 1-30 are about **earth**, Chapters 31-65 are about **water**, Chapters 66-88 are about **wind**, and Chapters 89-103 are about **fire**.

The author begins with our element of earth – the *middos* it produces (laziness and sadness), as well as the various other traits that earth is responsible for, such as constriction, hardening, dryness, containing, nullification, lowliness, heaviness, descent, and other natures. The traits of despair, brazenness, cruelty, hatred, forgetfulness and silence are also discussed within these chapters. The element of earth – its *middos* it produces, as well as its various natures – are the subject of Chapters 1-30.

Chapters 31-65 explains the element of water and its resulting *middos* (desire, pleasure, envy and jealousy), as well as the other traits of water, such as inner "coldness".

Chapters 66-88 explain the *middos* of the element of wind (evil speech, scoffing, mockery, falsity, and bragging), as well as its others nuances, such as the four directions of wind.

Chapters 89-103 explain our element of fire, its *middos* (conceit, anger, grudges, honor, control, and fiery hatred), and its other various traits (such as ascension), which help us understand our soul and work with it.

Da Es Middosecha is the largest in the "*Da Es*" series, numbering over 100 classes\chapters. This is a deep and challenging series. As mentioned before, it is best to learn sefer *Da Es Nafsecha* of the author before embarking on *Da Es Middosecha*. It is also helpful before this to learn *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Vol. V, Chapter Nine: *Working On Your Middos* (Available in English at www.bilvavi.net [1].) as

well as *Da Es Yichudecha* (also available in English at the Bilvavi website), chapters 11-19.

How should one learn this sefer? *Da Es Middosecha* serves as a database for the knowledge about our *middos*, and we can use this information to help learn about ourselves. It is recommended to first peruse each chapter on a superficial level, even if you can't understand it fully right away. Then you can go back to review each chapter and attempt to understand the concepts by deeply reflecting into the words, slowly and carefully.

Don't forget to *daven* to Hashem for help in this – learning about your *middos* is only the *hishtadlus* (effort) part, but it's not everything! The author has reminded us that we need to involve Hashem throughout this entire journey toward self-improvement (See Bilvavi Part 5-“Working On Your Middos”).

Hopefully, the study of this sefer will help each person improve his *middos* and come to perfect his character on this world, so we can all reach our *shleimus* – and to ultimately reach closeness to Hashem through all of this.

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

Links

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