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## Understanding Your Middos - 03 Laziness 2

*(Summary: So far, we have learned that our middos\character traits are just the products of our elements, so if we really want to improve our middos, we need to understand our elements that are behind them and then improve those elements. There are four elements - fire, wind, water, and earth. We have started to learn about the lowest element in the soul, earth.*

*We have so far seen one of the natures of earth - to be non-moving and non-changing. This is evil when we act simply lazy, avoiding the mitzvos or to take care of what we need to do.*

*But even laziness can be used for good, like when we act indifferent to an impulse to sin. We can also access our power to be non-moving for good purposes when we are silent during an argument.*

*Now we will study more about the natures of the element of earth, and continue to discuss the middah it produces, laziness.)*

### **Laziness Can Be Rooted In Any of the Four Elements**

We have begun to discuss the element of earth, of which the *middah* of laziness stems from.

The truth is that none of the four elements stand alone; each of the elements thrive on each other, and they each have the other elements within them! For example, earth is also made up of some fire, some wind and some water.

If so, from which part in the element of earth does laziness stem from? Is it coming from the “fire” aspect inside earth, the “wind” aspect inside earth, the “water” aspect inside earth - or the “earth” of earth? The simple understanding is that laziness comes from the “earth” of earth, since laziness is the *middah* produced by the element of earth.

But to be sharper, as we mentioned before, the elements stem from each other in a certain order. Wind came first in Creation, and then fire and water were created from wind. From where did earth get created from?

Our Rabbis had two approaches to this. One approach is that the water was made into snow, and then Hashem formed snow into earth. The other approach is that earth was taken from all three of the

other elements - fire, wind and water. In either case, earth came last of the elements.

Therefore, if laziness stems from earth, then it is somehow related as well to the other three elements, because earth borrows some traits from the other three elements.

To spell it out more clearly: in the element of earth, we can find in it the earth of earth, the fire of earth, the water of earth, and the wind of earth. Laziness can be rooted in any of these, because since laziness comes from earth, and earth has in it the other three elements as well, we get four distinct kinds of laziness that can manifest in a person.

In the previous chapter, with Hashem's help, we clarified the laziness which comes from the "earth" of earth. Now we will try to understand how laziness can come from either the fire of earth, from the water of earth, and from the wind of earth.

### ***Laziness Coming From "Fire" or "Water" of the Earth***

Earlier, we brought the words of the sage, Rav Moshe Kordovo (the *Remak*), who explains the essence of each of the four elements: fire is hot and dry, wind is cold and moist, earth is dry and cold, and water is hot and moist.

Which element is the opposite of earth? Wind is everything that earth isn't. Earth is dry, while wind is moist. Earth is naturally cold, while wind is naturally warm. So wind is the complete opposite of earth, unlike fire and water which have some natures of earth.

Earth is made up of dryness, which comes from fire. It is also made up of coldness, which comes from water.

Therefore, there is a kind of laziness which can come from either fire or water. Either the laziness is coming from the fire-of-earth, which means that the "dryness" is the source of the laziness; or it can be coming from water-of-earth, which means that the "coldness" is what is causing the laziness.

If both the dryness of fire and the coldness of water are combined, we get complete laziness - the laziness which comes from the earth-of-earth, because earth is a combination of dryness and coldness.

That is the outline of what is to come. Now we will attempt to understand the depth behind this, with the help of Hashem. We will first examine how the laziness is coming from coldness\water, and then we will see how the laziness can be coming from dryness\fire.

### ***Earth - Cold and Dry***

Heat (or warmth) is associated with enthusiasm - when people are enthusiastic for something, they feel warm about it. Enthusiasm creates a warmth - and what brings on enthusiasm? Action.[\[1\]](#) When a person performs an action, he can bring on enthusiasm as he does it, and the enthusiasm results in certain warmth. This is clear and simple - only something active causes warmth; we see this because when something doesn't move, it doesn't become warm.

By contrast, coldness is the source of non-activity. When a person feels a warmth for something, he is active about it, but when he feels cold toward it, he doesn't act. As a result, his coldness breeds on his laziness. Shlomo HaMelech describes the epitome of a lazy person, who doesn't want to leave his house in the winter because it's cold outside[\[2\]](#); because the lazy person feels cold, he'd rather stay inside the warmth of his home rather than go out into the cold.

Coldness\water is the source of the coldness in the element of earth, so laziness coming from the element of water-of-earth is coming from the coldness of water.

There is another kind of laziness, which comes from fire. This laziness comes from the dryness of fire, which is the root of the dryness of earth. Moisture in the soul would cause a person to be active, while dryness in the soul makes it harder to perform.

We can see this from the fact that when a person is enthusiastic about something and then his enthusiasm dries up, it's harder for him to perform. When there is a rush of adrenaline, though – which is really an increase of moisture in the soul – suddenly he finds it easier to get something done. This is human nature. The drier a person feels toward something, the harder it is for him to do it, because he feels cold and indifferent toward it.

However, although the dryness of fire is a recipe to become lazy, fire also contains warmth\enthusiasm, which can be used to make a person become more active and counter the laziness. Water contains coldness, which breeds laziness – but it also has in it moisture, which can also increase the activity. So both earth-of-fire and earth-of-water have in them the possibilities to either increase laziness - or prevent it.

Earth, though, is helpless to deal with laziness. It gets its dryness from fire, and it gets its coldness from water. The combination of dryness and coldness is a complete cause for laziness, because there is nothing here to increase activity. When laziness is coming from earth-in-earth, it is thus the strongest kind of laziness.

### ***Laziness Coming From Wind-of-Earth : Wanting To Finish Too Quickly***

However, as we have mentioned, the root element of all the elements is wind. Let us understand how laziness can also be coming from wind.

We know that earth and wind are complete opposites, as we said before. If so, how can laziness ever be rooted in wind? Earth has in it both the dryness and coldness that come together and produce the complete laziness. Wind is the opposite – it has neither dryness in it nor coldness. It is moist and warm. How, then, can laziness ever come from wind?

To answer this mystery, there is a deep statement of the Kotzker Rebbe zt"l. The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l asked: What is the difference between some who is enthusiastic to do a *mitzvah*, and someone who is too impulsive? Isn't acting with *zerizus* (quickness) a kind of impulsiveness?

He answered that there is a simple difference. A person acting with *zerizus* does the *mitzvah* because he feels dedicated to the task, and thus he is very motivated to get going. But a person who is doing this out of impulsiveness doesn't have this motivation, and he is doing it rather so he can "get it over with" already, and that is why he rushes to do the *mitzvah*.

Creation consists of six days of the week, which is work, and Shabbos, which is *menuchah* (serenity), rest from the work. Both are necessary. Some people have a problem, though – they don't want to work, and they only want rest. Therefore, they'll get all their work done, but only because they want to finish up already so that they can rest already. This isn't *menuchah* -it's laziness.

This problem stems from wind in the soul. Wind that moves too quickly can break things, and such kinds of winds are not desirable. This kind of imbalanced wind results from when a person wants to finish too quickly, even before it's the time to rest.

This is the kind of laziness that comes from wind-of-earth.

However, sometimes a person wants to finish too quickly for a different reason that we have said. For example, it could be he doesn't know how much time he is supposed to take out to do something, and therefore he wants to finish already, because he didn't know it would take so long. This isn't laziness.

We are discussing someone who is acting quickly because he wants to finish already so he can return to his laziness, which is a problem that stems from earth-of-wind. (It can either be coming from earth-of-wind, or wind-of-earth).

(However, there is another kind of laziness which can be rooted in wind, and it called *leitzanus*, scoffing, a trait stemming from wind. A scoffer is someone who talks inappropriately about comes to make fun of serious matters. What is really happening in his soul as he does this? His power of speech loses its vitality, and then his inner movements cease, which causes him to become non-moving and thus lazy.

On an even more subtle note, laziness can come from wind as follows. There are four directions of the world, which are called the four "winds" (*arba ruchos*) of the world, and they each oppose each other when they cross paths. The opposing winds from each direction then weaken each other, and when the movements weaken, the result is non-movement, which is laziness).

Thus, laziness in the simple sense comes from earth, but when we have the deeper understanding we have learned here, laziness can come from either fire, water or wind. So there is laziness which comes from earth-of-earth, water-of-earth, fire-of-earth or wind-of-earth.

Laziness which comes from earth-of-earth is when a person is unmoving, and it is the total laziness, because the person doesn't move at all. (This was dealt with in the previous chapter).

Laziness which comes from water-of-earth is when a person is cold and indifferent towards doing something, which will make him do things slowly. (It is not as slow-moving as the laziness of earth-of-earth, because at least the person is still moving. But it is still a form of laziness.)

Laziness which comes from fire-of-earth contains some more movement than one has laziness of water-of-earth, because here the person will still act a little faster than the one has laziness from water-of-earth. This is because his fire will increase warmth towards the action and get him to be more active.

Laziness coming from wind-of-earth, though, is a subtler, deeper kind of laziness, because the person is acting quickly, and it seems that he isn't lazy at all. But although this is the quickest moving person than the above three kinds, it's still a form of laziness, as we explained.

We have thus seen how laziness can come from each of the four elements.

### **Another Root Cause for Laziness: Lacking True Wisdom**

To complete this discussion, we will mention that there can be an additional root cause for laziness, besides for what we said until now.

Shlomo HaMelech says, "Go to an ant, lazy one, and see her ways and you will become wise."<sup>[3]</sup> Shlomo HaMelech is advising a lazy person to improve himself by observing an ant, who moves quickly to do its tasks.

This is odd. If Shlomo HaMelech is trying to help the lazy person stop being lazy, why doesn't he tell him how to act with *zerizus*, enthusiasm? Why is he instead telling him to learn wisdom from the ant? Is that what his problem is - that he's not wise enough? Ask a lazy person why he's not getting things

done; it's not because he has formed an erroneous belief in his head that he must act lazy. He is simply complaining, "I just don't have the energy..." Fine, that's his problem - he's simply being lazy! So why are we telling him that he needs to become wiser?

The lazy person might know good and well that he's lazy. His problem doesn't seem to be that he's not wise enough - it would seem that his problem is just that he's feeling heavy, a dominant trait of earth.

However, Shlomo HaMelech has taught us here that there is an additional root to laziness: **he's lacking wisdom.**

Rashi<sup>[4]</sup> equates laziness with foolishness. Laziness - and foolishness - have a lot to do with each other. Why?

The depth of this is because a person has a soul and a body. The soul itself - the *neshamah* - has no element of earth in it, and it has no trace of laziness in it. The four elements are only applicable to the **physical, bodily** part of our existence, just as the physical world is made up of the four elements. Laziness, which is rooted in the element of earth, is rooted in the **body** - not in the soul.

This is the meaning of the statement of Chazal we brought earlier, "Women are lazy." Man is generally called *neshamah* (soul), while woman is generally called *guf* (body). Chavah, the first woman, was created from Adam's body - to be even more precise, she was created from the rib, which is called "*tzela*" in Hebrew, a word which has the same letters as "*atzel*", "lazy one."<sup>[5]</sup>

Laziness is thus rooted in the body, while the ability to act comes from our soul. The angels are praised for their energy (*Tehillim* 103: 20), because they are totally spiritual and thus energetic. The soul in us, our spirituality, also contains the source of our ability to act energetically. It is only the heavy nature of the body which allows for laziness, because the body is "*dirt, from the ground.*"

This shows us that all laziness is really a sign that one has abandoned his soul. The more we shine the light of the soul upon ourselves, the less of a hold our body has on us, and we will chip away at the body's laziness.

We have seen here another way how one's element of earth can become dominant: besides for a lack of balance in the elements, it can also be because the soul's light isn't being exercised. The intellect of the soul - *seichel* - is called *seichel d'kedushah*, holy intellect; the wisdom of Torah is essentially the wisdom of the soul. The more we reveal our soul - by learning the Torah's wisdom - the more we distance laziness from ourselves.

Torah scholars are constantly moving, from one spiritual plateau to the next<sup>[6]</sup>. This is because they are constantly connected to the light of their soul, and the soul moves. They are disconnected from the darkness of the physical body, which is the root of laziness.

If so, the power of wisdom (*chochmah*) is the solution to laziness. In turn, laziness is the antithesis to *chochmah*, the wisdom of the soul - Torah. That is why Shlomo HaMelech tells the lazy person to go learn wisdom from an ant, because if he gains wisdom, he will be able to leave his body's hold and let the soul's light shine. When one exits the body's hold, now he can perform, because he isn't being weighed down anymore by the body's heaviness.

We have altogether seen five causes for laziness: earth-of-earth, water-of-earth, fire-of-earth, wind-of-earth, and a lack of *chochmah*.

**Stopping Evil Desires Through Holy Laziness**

If the earth in the soul has become dominant, then it must mean that it has overpowered the water, wind, and fire in one's soul.

As we brought earlier from the words of Rav Chaim Vital, desire is rooted in water. A lazy person, whose earth has become dominant, has weakened the water in his soul due to his strong earthiness, and as a result, his water\desires have weakened.

Earlier, we explained how the power to be non-moving can be a holy kind of laziness. Now we will add onto this point – we will see how this power can be used to eliminate evil desires.

When earth dominates the water of the soul, the water gets colder due to the earth's presence, which is cold. It also dries up some of the water, because earth is dry. In doing so, earth can weaken evil desires, which are rooted in water.

Fire as well can be used to eliminate evil desires. Fire is hot and dry, and fire can be a root cause as well for evil desires, due to its warmth (which is a factor in increasing evil desire, because the heat in the action increases one's excitement towards the action). Earth increases the dryness of fire, (which was already dry to begin with and now becomes even more dry due to the increase of earth), but at the same time it weakens the heat of the fire, since it is cold. What will happen? The evil desires will lose its heat and excitement, because the desire has been cooled.

We have just seen now how evil desires can be eliminated – using the power of holy laziness, which can be used to dry up the moisture of a water-rooted desire, or to cool off the heat of a fire-rooted desire.

As we explained before, the essence of laziness is to be non-moving, and this power can be put to good uses when we use non-movement to refrain either from a sin or from anything improper. Now we have just learned how to use earth to eliminate evil desires which come either from water or fire – by using its coldness (which stops desires from fire) or by using its dryness (which stops desires from water).

The same goes for the converse problem, in which a person's earth has become imbalanced, resulting in laziness. If we increase the warmth (fire) and the moisture (water), we balance out the earth, and this is the root of how we fix an impaired element of earth. This is with regards to correcting the kinds of laziness which stem from fire or water.

But if we want correct the total kind of laziness, which is laziness that comes from earth-of-earth, then we need to use wind. Earth is non-moving, while wind is all about movement.

### ***The Three Main Evil Traits, According to the Vilna Gaon***

In order to go deeper into this topic, we will try to make the matter more clear, and for this, we need the following brief introduction.

According to the Vilna Gaon<sup>[7]</sup>, there are three roots of evil in a person: anger (which is from fire), desire (which is from water), and *leitzanus*, scoffing (which is from wind).<sup>[8]</sup>

Anger is rooted in fire. Does anger come from the dryness in a fire, or from the heat in a fire? We would simply answer that anger has to do with the heat of fire, and that a person who loses his temper is having an outpouring of his fire. But this isn't correct, and let us explain why.

We brought from Rav Chaim Vital that fire is the root of two traits: anger, and *gaavah*\conceit.

Conceit comes from the heat of fire – while anger comes from the dryness of fire. How do we know this?

When a person is conceited, he enjoys the feeling. However, when a person is angry, he doesn't find this to be enjoyable at all. This shows us that conceit stems from the heat of fire, which is life-giving, while anger stems from the dryness of fire.

“An angry person has nothing in his hands except anger.”<sup>[9]</sup> When a person loses his temper, he breaks things, and the meaning behind this is because he feels no vitality, just dryness – and because he has run out of vitality, he breaks things. Dryness in the soul prevents a person from rising spiritually, descending him to the lowest element – earth.

Desires come from water in the soul. Which aspect of water does desire come from – from the moisture in the water, or from the coldness in water? Clearly, it comes from the moisture of water, because coldness is the antithesis to desire. Only a warmth towards something can cause a person to have a desire – no one ever gets a desire for something when he feels cold about it.

So anger comes from the dryness of fire, while desires come from the moisture of water.

*Leitzanus*\scoffing comes from wind, because scoffing is speech, which is rooted in wind. We see this from the fact that man had a *ruach memalelah* (talking spirit) breathed into him, so speech comes from *ruach*\wind. What is this *ruach memalelah*, from which *leitzanus* stems from?

A scoffer comes to belittle something with his words, so his words themselves are considered belittled and worthless. His words are empty from dignity. His element of wind is impaired – when wind doesn't connect with the other elements, it becomes *devarim betailim*, idle speech – words that are considered worthless. (We will explain this more, with the help of Hashem, when we get to explaining the element of wind).

These are three general evil traits in a person – anger, evil desire, and scoffing.

### ***Amalek: A Combination of Esav and Yishmael***

All of this is an introduction about *leitzanus*\scoffing. We will explain.

In *sefarim hakedoshim*, it is brought that Avraham Avinu personifies the element of water when it has been totally elevated. Yishmael is the root of evil water. Yitzchok Avinu is the root of the elevated element of fire, while Esav is evil fire. Yaakov Avinu is the elevated element of wind.

From Avraham Avinu came “water” that is only cold – Yishmael. Yishmael is the root of evil laziness, which comes from the coldness of water. From Yitzchok Avinu came a ruined fire, a “fire” that was only dry – Esav. Esav is the root of the evil laziness which comes from the dryness of fire.

The nation of Amalek is a combination of the evil inherent in both Esav and Yishmael.<sup>[10]</sup> Amalek has both evils – it has dryness and coldness. It thus represents the total laziness, the laziness which comes from earth-of-earth.

In addition to this, Amalek's power is that they represent a combination of the heat of fire and the moisture of water to produce its evil trait, *leitzanus*. Where can we see this?

Amalek is called “A rebellious one, an arrogant one, a scoffer is his name.”<sup>[11]</sup> Anger\evil fire\Esav is one extreme, while desires\evil water\Yishmael are on the other extreme, with *leitzanus* being in between the two extremes. In other words, Amalek combines the negative aspects of both fire and

water, and this gives birth to *leitzanus*.

Amalek uses not only the element of earth to do this, but also the element of wind. Earth combines dryness of fire with coldness of water, while wind combines heat of fire with moisture of water. When dryness of fire and coldness of water are combined, evil earth is produced. Amalek connects the fire and water using the coldness in the water, and this we can see from what is written by Amalek, “*who met you along the way*” – the word *korcha*, “met you”, comes from the word *kerirus* – coldness.

When Amalek combines fire and water using wind, it does so using its trait of *gaavah*\conceit. Amalek is personified with the trait of *gaavah*, since they are called “*The first of the nations, Amalek*”, hinting to their conceit. Amalek combines the heat of fire with the moisture in water.

The Hebrew word for “lazy” is *atzel*, which contains in it the letters of the word *letz* – a scoffer. This shows us that laziness not only can come from a combination of fire and water, but from *leitzanus* as well, which is rooted in wind. There are seventy nations (besides for the Jewish people) – Yishmael and Esav are the two root nations, with Amalek being the root of these two.<sup>[12]</sup> Amalek combines the dryness of fire and the coldness of water to produce its *leitzanus*, and it also produces *leitzanus* by combining the heat of fire with the moisture of water, creating wind\scoffing\idle speech.

Laziness, when it is complete, is a combination of all the worst traits found in the world! It includes *leitzanus*, which is evil wind, and it contains as well dryness\evil fire and coldness\evil water.

### ***The Correction for Laziness: Become Close to Hashem***

We have explained until now, with much *siyata d’shmaya*, the root concept of laziness - how it stems from each of the four elements, and how it can come from an absence of the soul’s light (which is a lack of *chochmah*\Torah wisdom), as well as how we can balance it out through the other elements.

To complete this topic, we will mention another remedy to laziness – a higher form of a remedy than anything we have said until now. It will not apply to most people, but it is worth mentioning so we can complete the picture here.

Hashem created the world with 22 letters of the *Aleph Beis*. The first letter is *aleph*, but at the beginning of Creation, the actual root of Creation wasn’t even yet revealed. For this reason, the Torah only began with the second letter, *beis* (*Beraishis*). At the giving of the Torah, however, the root of Creation became revealed, and then the Torah began with *aleph* – the first letter of the Ten Commandments was *aleph*, in the word “*Anochi*”.

Let us explain what we are talking about out. When something in Creation becomes corrected, the rule is that it must return to the letter *aleph*, a hint to Hashem – who is the *Alufo shel olam*, “Ruler of the world.” By contrast, any ruination comes from a disconnection and distance from the letter *aleph*. When a ruination of any concept occurs, its *aleph* is damaged, and it becomes instead the letter *ayin*.

We can see an example of this from the words of Chazal that Hashem made Adam with *kosnos ohr*, protective skins to protect him from damage. Before the sin, the Torah spells the word “skin” with an *aleph* in the word “*ohr*.” After the sin, the spelling of the word *ohr* in the Torah is changed from *aleph* to *ayin*, to show that the *aleph* became demoted to *ayin*. This is a rule – when a ruination (*kilkul*) occurs, it causes *aleph* to become *ayin* – and when a correction (*tikkun*) occurs, it returns the *ayin* to its source, *aleph*.

This applies to our discussion about laziness, as follows. Laziness is really a disconnection from the *Alufo shel Olam*, the Ruler of the world – Hashem. The way to fix laziness – which is *atzel*, spelled with an *ayin* - is to turn its letter *ayin* into an *aleph*, which is the word “*aitzel*” – which means “near”, a hint

to how one has to become “near Hashem”, close to Hashem.

This is the secret of fixing laziness. How does a person accomplish this?

The element of earth, which is heavy, is responsible for laziness. Any action we do on this world is somewhat heavy, because since everything on the world is made up of the four elements, everything has some earth\heaviness in it. But when Hashem made the world, He had no laziness – respectively so. His Creation was, of course, an act that contained no laziness.

If so, a person needs to reach a situation in which there is no laziness. How can one do this? We will explain.

We mentioned two ways so far to fix laziness. One way is by balancing out the four elements, and the second way is by getting in touch with our soul, which can shine its wisdom onto our body’s laziness. There is a third, higher way – to connect ourselves to Hashem’s handiwork, which is absent from any heaviness\laziness. (We will explain more what this is.)

Chazal say that there are certain actions one can do which make him a “partner in Creation” – for example, when one recites *Kiddush* on Friday Night with concentration. What is the depth behind this?

The actions that a human performs on this world are always somewhat heavy, due to our materialism. Hashem, however, does things which contain no heaviness in them, for His actions are perfect, and nothing holds Him back. “He is a true Worker, for His actions are truthful.”

What we mean from all this is that if we truly connect to the Creator, we can merit a total correction to laziness.

We do not mean that it is unnecessary to use the previous methods we brought. Rather, we are saying that there are three parts to the process of fixing laziness. First, we need to balance out our element of earth with the other elements, as we explained before; then we need to reveal wisdom, which is by getting in touch with our soul (through learning the wisdom of Torah). Finally, we must attach ourselves more to Hashem.

If a person only does the first part of fixing laziness (and if only we should do even this), and even if he has shined his soul onto his body (this too, if only we should all merit it) – one’s laziness still hasn’t yet been completely fixed. The true correction to laziness can only occur when one is really connected with Hashem – he stops being “*atzel*” (lazy) and is instead “*aitzel*”, “near Hashem.”

### **Connecting To Hashem, Via Prayer**

The Gemara states that one should not pray if he is in a sad or lazy mood.[\[13\]](#) Let us explain this matter as it pertains to us.

Chazal say that “prayer does half”.[\[14\]](#) Prayer gets us halfway through what we need to do. And who does the other half? The Creator.

It’s not that I do “my” part, and the Creator does “His” part, and that we have no connection, like when you send one of your children to the store to buy bread and another to buy milk. If “prayer does half”, then it means that we are becoming a partner with Hashem in this.

How can it be that one becomes “a partner in Creation”? Hashem has no element of earth, while humans do have an element of earth! If so, how does a human work together with Hashem to become a partner in Creation?

For this, Chazal teach us that one must not pray if he is in a lazy mood. In other words, when one prays as he's lazy, his prayers are mixed with the element of earth, and he won't be able to connect to Hashem's work. His prayers will not accomplish his half of the job. Only when a person is connecting to Hashem and he is not being held back by his element of earth, can his prayers do half the job.

If someone is lacking *chochmah* Torah wisdom, or if he lacks a balance in his elements, then on him it can be said the statement in Chazal, "One who is lazy to give eulogy over a Torah scholar deserves to be buried alive."[\[15\]](#) The depth behind this statement is that a Torah scholar has increased his wisdom over his body's hold, while a lazy person who hasn't eulogized the Torah scholar has basically remained at his element of earth – and a person is buried in the earth.

A person is buried after he dies, but a lazy person (in this case, one who did not eulogize a Torah scholar) is considered to be buried alive – he failed to connect to *chochmah*, and instead chose to be connected to his element of earth.

### **Holy "Earth" - Shabbos**

Finally, there is an even higher way to correct laziness\earth. The most complete way to fix our element of earth is through Shabbos. On Shabbos, we abstain from labor. It is a holy kind of earth\non-movement.

This is a deeper kind of earth than what we have discussed until now. Until now, we only discussed how to work with our natural element of earth – the heaviness within which produces laziness, which we discussed how it can also be used for holiness. An example we gave of this was to hold back from speaking in front of someone greater, which is how we can exercise the power of non-movement for holiness.

We described two ways of fixing that lower element of earth. One way is through balancing out our earth through the other elements, and the higher way is through elevating the element of earth. Either way involves our natural kind of earth – the kind that weighs us down when we don't fix it.

But there is another, higher kind of earth in us, and it is completely holy – it is the kind of earth Hashem used to create the world with. Hashem did not use a "heavy" kind of earth, but a whole different kind of earth. Chazal say that all earth in existence, even the sun, comes from earth and will eventually return to earth.[\[16\]](#) This is "holy" earth – and it is actually the secret of Shabbos. Shabbos comes from the word "*sheves*", to return – on Shabbos, all of Creation returns to its root, and thus there is rest. This is the holy, perfect kind of earth\non-movement. Even more so, we abstain from work on Shabbos, which is the deeper kind of rest – reflecting how Hashem rested on Shabbos.[\[17\]](#)

Let us expand a little more upon what we are saying.

Until now, we only dealt with the lower kind of earth in us, which needs to be balanced with our other elements; we discussed how we fix an impaired element of earth. But that is all the lower kind of earth. Now, we are speaking of a spiritual kind of earth – holy earth (*afar d'kedushah*).

Whenever we speak of the four elements (in this *sefer*), we are speaking about the **physical elements** (which stem from our body, the outermost layer of our soul), not the spiritual elements (which are deeper within our soul). For example, heaviness is a nature of earth, but only our materialistic earth contains heaviness.

Shabbos, however, is also the element of earth – but it is completely holy, and it is not the element of earth we have been discussing until now. (We will digress from discussing the usual four elements

that this sefer comes to explain, which are the lower elements, and describe one of the higher elements – the spiritual element of earth, Shabbos, which is completely holy.)

From where can we get the holy kind of earth – Shabbos, which is a total abstaining from work?

The element of earth is not meant to be just for itself. Its purpose is to act as a container for the other three elements. Earth is meant to nurture the other elements and build them. When earth isn't serving to help the other elements develop, the earth isn't doing anything – and that is its downfall, because it isn't fulfilling its purpose. The way to fix it is by giving it balance, which will allow the earth to produce balanced movements. That is the purpose of our **materialistic** element of earth.

But our **holy** element of earth – Shabbos – is for a completely different purpose: to simply rest.

During the six days of the week, we use our materialistic element of earth, which needs to become fixed and perfected. We need to work with it in order to do this. But on Shabbos, work is forbidden – “All your work is done.”[\[18\]](#)

The depth behind why work is forbidden on Shabbos is because work implies that something here is lacking and needs to get fixed. Shabbos is to be inactive from any work, because since all the work is considered done on Shabbos, there is no necessity to work – nothing is lacking. This is holy earth – an absence of work, due to the fact that there is perfection here, with nothing lacking.

During the week, we can fix our element of earth by working with it. This helps us go from “*atzel*” to “*aitzel*” – to connect to Hashem. But we have a higher mission than this as well: after the weekdays comes Shabbos, which is the deeper kind of earth, the ability to be non-active for a holy reason. We are inactive on Shabbos because this reflects closeness to Hashem – Who lacks nothing. This is the source of all holy laziness – I'm not doing anything, because I already have everything.

Understandably, one should not live with this concept all the time and adapt an erroneous attitude that he must never do anything - *chas v'shalom!* We are only referring to Shabbos, in which a person can reach a deep, inner chamber of his heart and reach the holiest laziness. Each person, according to his own level, can reach it.

As soon as Shabbos ends, we must return to the six days of the week – and we return to this world of action, each according to his respective situation in life (and then we have to work with our regular kind of earth, balancing it out as we have learned here).

This deep power – to be totally inactive, from a feeling of contentment – is the ultimate holy kind of laziness; but it is only meant to be accessed for a temporary amount of time, and that is what Shabbos is for. We are meant to connect to this holy laziness on Shabbos, and then to return to action – carrying out the 613 *mitzvos* we are obligated in, which involve action.

During those moments of utter connection with Hashem through the holy laziness of Shabbos, we resemble in some way the *Kohen Gadol* (high priest) in the *Kodesh HaKodashim* (Holy of Holies), who had a complete connection with the Creator then. It is an inner place in the soul which a person can return to, where laziness becomes holy – entirely a *Kodesh HaKodashim*.[\[19\]](#)

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[1] Raavad.

[2] See Mishlei 26: 13

[3] Mishlei 6:6

[4] Kerisos 18b

[5] *The author here does not mean, chas v'shalom (G-d forbid), to offend any women with this; and certainly Chazal did not intend to make fun of women in saying that "Women are lazy." There are many such similar statements in Chazal which, when not understood properly, can be taken in the wrong way, these matters have to be understood and explained well by a competent Torah authority, just like all of Torah. It also cannot be that women are seen as having more negative traits than men, because there are plenty of statements in Chazal as well concerning the problems unique to men, which their women counterparts do not have. In addition, it is written in the famous "Aishes Chayil" liturgy (Proverbs 31:1), "An accomplished woman, who can find? Far beyond pearls is her value", which extolls the values of a G-d fearing woman. Women are also praised by the Sages as having more spiritual depth and intuitiveness ("binah yesairah").*

[6] Berachos 64a

[7] Gra, Mishlei 1:11

[8] **Author's Note:** *Leitzanus is when a person talks inappropriately and comes to say things that are meaningless. In essence, leitzanus is to take something that exists and speak about in a way that negates its existence. Why? The existence of something depends on the honor and importance we give it. Leitzanus is the antitheses to honor, because by making fun of someone, the person is belittling his honor. The evil nation of Amalek is known for its negative trait of leitzanus - they came to attack the Jews precisely after Aharon died, when the Shechinah left; in other words, they attacked when honor had left us, hinting to their leitzanus.*

[9] Kiddushin 40b

[10] Zohar II: 120b

[11] Mishlei 21: 24

[12] See Gra to Yeshayahu 11:1

[\[13\]](#) Berachos 31a

[\[14\]](#) Yalkut Shimeoni, Tzav, 512.

[\[15\]](#) Shabbos 105b

[\[16\]](#) Beraishis Rabbah 12: 11

[\[17\]](#) Yerushalmi Shabbos 15:3

[\[18\]](#) Yalkut Shimeoni Yisro 296

**[\[19\]](#) Editor's Summary of Chapters 1-2:** So far, we have learned about one of the natures of earth, which is to be non-moving. When a person is non-moving and indifferent to mitzvos or his various responsibilities, we call this evil laziness.

Evil laziness can be fixed in three stages. Step One is by increasing our element of wind\movement. Step Two is to access the light of our soul, which is attained with the more Torah wisdom we learn. Step Three is to connect more to Hashem – via prayer.

Laziness can be holy when we use it to overcome evil desires (water) and passions (fire), or when we use it to overcome haste (wind). This uses the power of non-movement for holiness.

There is a higher kind of earth, accessed through the holy laziness of Shabbos, which is when we connect to the contentment we are supposed to feel on Shabbos that we don't work. This feeling of contentment is not supposed to be used during the week, but only on Shabbos.

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/understanding-your-middos-03-laziness-2>