

THE DEPTH OF BRIBERY

BRIBERY SWAYS THE MIND AND THE SENSES

Parashas Shoftim contains the Torah's commandment of "Do not take a bribe, for a bribe sways the eyes of the wise" - a judge in Beis Din may not take shochad (*a bribe*) from anyone.

The Torah explains the reason why a judge may not take a bribe: it "sways the eyes of the wise". A bribe doesn't allow a person to see something objectively as it is. It overpowers the rational intellect.

A bribe overpowers even the physical senses. It can even cause him to see the matter in an entirely different light, now that he has taken the bribe and he has become biased. When a person is bribed, he will hear the facts differently, and even his physical vision will show him something else; he doesn't even see accurately, now that he has become bribed\biased, in how he views the situation. A person might even be told what the facts are, yet he continues to see the facts differently and he hears what he wants to hear, because the bribe that he has taken is distorting the reality that he sees.

THE DEPTH OF OUR BECHIRAH (FREE WILL)

It is a halachah of the Torah that a judge may not accept a bribe, but we are taught by the Sages that each person must view himself as his own judge. Thus, just as a judge in Bein Din must avoid a bribe - so must we avoid bribery in our souls.

How can a person be his own judge? Every person has situations where he must judge and decide what the correct course of action is. Not only must we "judge" others favorably, but we must always see two options in front of us, what truth is and what falsity is, and decide between them. That is a judge's purpose: to see both sides, to see which of them is true and which is false, and decide upon the truth.

On a personal level, man must know how to decide between good and evil, when he uses his power of bechirah, free will. Our bechirah is enabled by the fact that we are each our own judge. If a person chooses something simply because he wants it, this is not called making a proper judgment. But if a person has chosen to do something because he has decided between true and false - as the Rambam describes our bechirah - this is what it means to be our own judge.

Sometimes we are faced with total falsity, and sometimes we must discern subtle falsities that are contained even in truth. There are levels and levels to truth and falsity. Our avodah of bechirah is to see what truth is, where the falsity is, and to decide upon truth.

This is how a person makes himself into his own judge. It means to pit truth against falsity and decide between them. There is a lot that we have to decide, and this is where a large part of our avodah on this word is.

Q&A

1. BIRTH CONTRACTIONS PRECEDING THE GEULAH 2. MASHIACH BEN DAN

QUESTION

It has been told to me in the name of the Rav shlit" a that until now we have been experiencing the birth contractions of the birth pains (*chevlei Mashiach*) preceding Mashiach's arrival and now "the head of the baby is in the middle of coming out." Can the Rav elaborate on this? Does this mean that the Geulah has actually started and that there can't be a "stillborn" now that the birth of Mashiach has started? Does the Rav mean that the Geulah is imminent and not in a long time from now since the birth has started? The Rav wrote a few weeks ago that the war can drag on for a few more decades chas v'shalom if we are not zocheh now to the Geulah – is the Rav now saying that the Geulah is definitely imminent?

Also, can the Rav please explain the role of "Mashiach ben Dan"?

ANSWER

PART 1 – THE BIRTH OF MASHIACH'S ARRIVAL

A human pregnancy lasts 9 months which climaxes in birth contractions that can take a few hours or a few days. The pregnancy of the Divine clock of the 6000 year era we are in climaxes in a birth that is able to last several years – but the birth has begun!

The time of birth is a time of danger which can either usher in another life, or it can bring about a death, chas v'shalom. The wars taking place now as well are a time of danger, and it can either usher in more life, or it can bring death, chas v'shalom.

PART 2 – MASHIACH BEN DAN

The beginning of the war is waged through Mashiach ben Dan, and this is the depth of the words of Chazal that "In the seventh (*Shemittah*) year there are wars" – it is a Redemption brought about through Mashiach ben Dan. This began with Chushim the son of Dan who killed Esav, and it continued with Shimshon who came from the tribe of Dan, and it will be completed by Sherayah (*from the tribe of Dan*), as stated in the Zohar (*Balak 194b*). Refer also to the words of the Ramchal in Otzros Ramchal (*Yeshayah 9, 5*) and Kinas Hashem Tzevaos (*98a*). See also Beraishis Rabbah 91:10 where Chazal said that Yaakov thought that Shimshon (*who comes from Dan*) will be the Mashiach.

In Yaakov's blessing to Dan he is compared to a lion. Chazal (*Yalkut Shimoni Beraishis 49, 160*) said that this refers to Mashiach ben Dovid, who will come from two different tribes – the father of Mashiach comes from Yehudah, and the mother of Mashiach comes from Dan. Both Dan and Yehudah are compared to a lion in Yaakov's blessing.

The root of Mashiach's maternal roots in Dan is Chushim the son of Dan. The word Chushim, without the letter Vov, is the same letters as the word Mashiach. (*See the commentary of Ben Yehoyada to Talmud Bavli Sotah 13a, sefer Koheles Yaakov on Mashiach, cited in Yalkut Reuveini parshas Mikeitz, and see Pardes Yosef on Beraishis 46:23.*) Rav Yehudah HaChassid says that the verse "Dan is a serpent lying on the road" is equal in gematria to the word Mashiach.

The mission of Mashiach ben Dan is described in the Zohar (194b) [following is a summary of the Zohar not a translation]: Mashiach ben Dan has the role to assist Mashiach ben Yosef in the final war. Dan is compared to a serpent which bites the horse at the heel and causes the horse and its rider to fall backwards. This is what Mashiach ben Dan will do in order to aid Mashiach ben Yosef in the war. His name is Sherayah, and he comes from the tribe of Dan, and he will come together with Mashiach ben Yosef, and he will take revenge on the nations of the world.]

He is compared to a snake because he is a spark of the soul of the Mashiach that was concealed within the Serpent. The gematria of the word "Nachash" (*Serpent*) equals "Mashiach". He is the Serpent on the side of holiness to counter the Serpent on the side of evil. See Heichal Beracha (*Kamarna*) to parshas Vayigash.

The Arizal (*Sefer Likutim, Vayakhel 35*) says that Mashiach will come from the tribe of Yehudah, and Sherayah will come from Dan. Sherayah will have a special connection to Mashiach ben Dovid who comes from Yehudah, since both Dan and Yehudah are compared to a serpent. There is also a special connection that Mashiach ben Dan will have with Mashiach ben Yosef. Moshe Rabbeinu said "And this song will answer me forever", and this is the power of Dan who gathers together all the camps. Mosheh is the unification of the two redeemers – he is the middle line between them. Dan (*Sherayah who comes from Dan*) is also a unifying point between the two redeemers by being a vessel, or the Malchus, through his role of gathering together all the camps. Malchus is connected both with Hod and Netzach, and the Malchus within Hod is where Mashiach ben Yosef is found, and that is also where Sherayah, the Mashiach ben Dan, is found. (*See Pri Tzaddik (Chanukah 25) and sefer Koheles Yaakov (on the topic of Mashiach ben Dovid and the topic Zaisim).*)

Sherayah, the Mashiach who comes from Dan, is equal in gematria to 515. This is the amount of tefillos which Moshe davened in order to enter Eretz Yisrael. On a deeper level, Moshe was really davening to become connected with Sherayah, the Mashiach ben Dan. This is because Moshe is the secret of the upper Daas on the masculine side, while Mashiach Ben Dan is the secret of the lower Daas on the feminine side. Thus, Mashiach ben Dan is connected to Yehudah, Yosef, and Moshe.

It is through Mashiach ben Dan that the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt. Mashiach Dan is equal in gematria to Bayis, "home" (*referring to the Beis HaMikdash*). Now that we are found in a degree of a war that is the beginning of the Geulah, this is all through the power of Mashiach ben Dan, and the beginning of the war is started through him, as Rav Tzadok HaKohen teaches.

We should become connected to the concept of Sherayah in our avodas Hashem by way of accessing the power of Sherarah [*princely status of being the chosen people of G-d*] and Shirah [*song – singing to Hashem as a strong expression of emunah*].

ISRAEL-HAMAS

QUESTION What is the root of Galus Yishmael? It is not counted as one of the four exiles (Bavel, Paras-Madai, Yavan, Edom) but some views consider it as part of Galus Edom, the Maharal views it as part of Galus Paras-Madai, while others say it is a fifth exile. Since we can see that right now the Arabs (Yishmael) waging war are from Iran (Persia, Paras) does this prove that the Galus Yishmael is really part of Galus Paras-Madai?

ANSWER The hidden inner root of it is in the Eirev Rav. For this reason they are called Arabs, from the word Erev. But in the revealed aspect of Torah, they are rooted in the Amalek that became revealed through Galus Madai-Paras as in the times of Haman *[who was of Amalek]*.

QUESTION Why is it that the irreligious Arabs (*who don't pray to G-d*) don't hate Jews whereas the Arabs who pray 5 times a day to G-d are the ones who hate Jews and wish to kill Jews in any way they can?

ANSWER "A craftsman hates his competitor" *[hence it is only the religious Arabs who hate the Jewish people, because they see the Jews as their competition, since they both pray to the same G-d. The secular Arabs though who don't pray to G-d don't see the Jews as competition]*.

QUESTION Why do the Arabs hate the Jewish people? Is it because they inherited the jealousy of Yishmael towards Yitzchok, and as they claim that they suffer because of Israel? Or is that just an excuse for their hatred and really they hate Israel as all the other nations do, just as Esav hates Yaakov?

ANSWER The root of the Arabs' hatred is because they are rooted in the Eirev Rav, and there are good parts of the Eirev Rav that can be discerned amongst them.

QUESTION What is the source of the barbarism of the Arabs? Wasn't it Esav who inherited the way of "By your sword you shall live"? Did they learn this from Eisav, when Eisav married Yishmael's daughter? Or are they in essence barbarians because they are called *pereh adam (wild man)*?

ANSWER See above answer. They are Eirev Rav, which is Esav and Yishmael together.

QUESTION Hamas claims that they don't hate Jews in essence, they just hate the State of Israel. As proof, there are some Jews living in Iran and Lebanon whom they leave alone. Are they telling the truth when they say this, or do they really wish to kill all the Jews whom they have taken hostage, and it is just that they are temporarily allowing the hostages to live for political reasons? Is there anything substantial to what they say?

ANSWER There is nothing substantial to what they say.

QUESTION When Hamas kills Jews, is it because they want to kill Jews just as all other goyim deep in their hearts wish they could kill Jews (*and it's just that they need a good excuse to do it*), or is it all because of nationalistic reasons they have?

ANSWER It is because they are from the Eirev Rav which opposes the Jewish people for being a "nation that dwells in solitude".



BILVAVI

FOUR ELEMENTS

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BACKGROUND

Last week, Yaakov and Tzvi began discussing the יסוד האש, which they defined as giving a person both the power of opposition and destruction, as well as the energy to work hard...

מקורות ומקבילות שיחת חברים

דברי ר' חיים ויטאל - שערי קדושה
שער א' פ"ב.
מהות מידות הגאווה, הענווה, והשפלות
- רמב"ם שמונה פרקים פרק ד', שיעור
"ג מסדרת "תיקון כח הגאווה", הכרה
עצמית והעצמת הנפש פרק י"ב.
הדרכה לצעירים לא לעבוד על גאווה -
עלי שור ח"ב פרק "גאווה" וועד א'
הצבעים העיקריים ע"פ חז"ל -
שערי רמח"ל עמוד תיד.
מושג ארבעת היסודות הפרטיים של
יסוד או פרט מסויים - קל"ח פתחי
החמה לרמח"ל פתח ל"א חלק ג'.
שכל נברא בנוי ממיזוג של כל היסודות
- רמב"ם יסודי התורה פ"ד ה"ב, זוה"ק
שמות דף מב.
שיש הבדל כלפי "מתוך שלא לשמה בא
לשמה" בין מידת הכעס למידת הגאווה
- ספר "שלום בניך" ענף ג' באריכות.
[הוספה ממו"ר שליט"א - יש
לציין שיש כעס של ת"ח, שעליו
אמרו "ת"ח דרתח אורייתא קא
מרתחא ליה, ואפילו הכי בעי
למילף נפשיה בניחותא". והיינו
שזהו כעס מתוך מידת האמת, ולא
אש טבעי, התנגדות לאדם, אלא
התנגדות לאמת. אולם לא שייך
בוז מתוך שלא לשמה.]

FRIENDS SCHMOOZE EXTENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS

Tzvi: So how's it going, Yaakov? Are you ready to move on with the יסוד האש?

YAAKOV: Sure! Is there something specific you want to add to what we spoke about last week?

Tzvi: I think so. If you remember, we started off last week talking about the fact that the יסוד האש is more dangerous than the other יסודות, and we discussed the fact that the כעס can only be used for the good if it is used fully לשם שמים, and not if it is used שלא לשמה.

YAAKOV: Yes, exactly. And then we went on to say that כעס is not the only usage of the יסוד האש - the יסוד האש can be used in a much more balanced way as well, to help a person overcome his laziness. When channeled this way, the יסוד האש awakens within a person the energy to invest himself in something and work hard.

Tzvi: Very good. But there's another aspect of the יסוד האש which we started off discussing last week that we never got back to...

YAAKOV: I know what you're talking about - גאווה. I was actually wondering what ever happened with that, and where it fits into our whole discussion...

Tzvi: Okay, so let's try to cover it now. Like we mentioned last week, there's a bit of a subtle point here. When Rav Chaim Vital lays out the bad middos of the יסוד האש, he mentions two primary categories, כעס and גאווה, and four subcategories: resentment

and hatred, which are similar to כעס, and seeking כבוד and power, which are similar to גאווה.

YAAKOV: Okay... that's quite a bit of information to process at once...

Tzvi: Take it slowly... The main point I want to cover right now is just to understand the two main categories of the יסוד האש, which are גאווה and כעס. The subcategories help bring out a little more clearly what these two categories are, so that's why I mentioned them, but they're not crucial for us to memorize at this point. The main thing is that we have two main מידות here, כעס and גאווה, and we have to figure out what's the same about them and what's the difference between them.

YAAKOV: In other words, you mean to ask that if כעס and גאווה are really two separate מידות, what makes them both be included under the umbrella of the יסוד האש?

Tzvi: Yes, that's one side of the question, but then there's also the flipside - once we understand why they're both included in the יסוד האש, we have to understand what differentiates between them to make them two separate subcategories. But let's start first with step one - what makes גאווה and כעס both be categorized as מידות of the יסוד האש?

YAAKOV: Well, כעס we already discussed at length - it's destructive, it's forceful, it comes from opposition - it seems to fit right in with אש.

Tzvi: And גאוה...

YAAKOV: As far as גאוה goes, I think the reason it's under the category of אש is because גאוה בעל האש thinks that he's important and elevated, and this makes him feel "lofty", which is somewhat like fire that rises up.

Tzvi: Very good. But on a deeper level, just like the יסוד המים is all about connection, the יסוד האש is all about opposition. So on a deeper level, the definition of גאוה is that a person feels good about himself by contrasting himself with his surroundings. There is a point of opposition here - it's like there's competition between him and those around him who's more חשוב, and if he feels he's winning over them, that makes him feel good about himself. There is also a more extreme type of גאוה, where a person feels like he is so far ahead of everyone else that there's not even any competition between them. But even this still comes from the same perspective of looking at himself and valuing himself as opposed to others, in contrast to them.

YAAKOV: Very interesting... The truth is that there's something I never really understood about the whole topic of גאוה, which maybe you're somewhat answering, but I'll ask the question anyways - it's the whole struggle between גאוה and having low self-esteem. It's well-known that many משגיחים and רבנים advise בחורים today not to work on the middah of גאוה, because they find that when a בחור works on גאוה, it often leads to עצבות and to him not believing in himself, and this gives him a lack of סיפוק and connection to his learning and all of his עבודת ה'. But I never understood - how is it supposed to work? Obviously there's a way to work on גאוה without having these problems...

Tzvi: Okay, so one step at a time - let's first explain the difference between גאוה, and having a low self-esteem. גאוה we already explained -

feeling חשוב by contrasting yourself with others and highlighting the strong points that you have over them. And the truth is that having low self-esteem often comes from the same root as גאוה - comparing yourself to others. If a person's self-value is based on comparing himself to others, then if he feels that people around him are better, more

and this can sometimes be even when he's not comparing himself to others...

YAAKOV: I guess when we get up to the יסוד העפר we'll have to discuss that point again...

Tzvi: Sure. I'm just mentioning it because it came up now, but don't worry - we'll get back to it later. Either way, now it's time to define which is ענווה is when a person values himself not for who he is superficially, compared to others, but rather for who he really is. Every person has tremendous כוחות which were given to him by Hashem, and when a person discovers these כוחות within him and comes to identify with them, then he can feel true elevation and self-worth from within his very self. He feels how he has a body which is מן האדמה, but he also feels how he has a נשמה which is אלוקי ממעל, which, in a very tangible and practical way, bestows him with extremely valuable כוחות. When a person feels how his positive כוחות are an inborn part of him, and he comes to appreciate how much these כוחות can help him soar above the lowliness of this world and be truly elevated, this gives him a true sense of self-worth.

YAAKOV: And what does having a true sense of self-worth have to do with ענווה?

Tzvi: When a person's self-worth comes from the true good that's inside of him, then he can feel elevated, while at the same time he can remember that he and all that he has all really belong to Hashem, who is the One who gave him this present. Therefore, this feeling of elevation doesn't make a person forget about Hashem, but to the contrary, it reminds him of Hashem. This is the exact opposite of גאוה, about which the passuk says "ורם לבבך" - that if your heart will

SUMMARY OF SCHMOOZE

GAAVAH - a feeling of self-worth which stems from comparing yourself to others and stressing your strengths over theirs.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM - feeling lowly because you compare yourself to others and stress your weaknesses over theirs [or can come from יסוד העפר, which we'll soon get too...]

ANAVAH - a feeling of self-worth which stems from valuing your inborn strengths which were given to you by Hashem

Mashal for the יסודות - the primary colors. Just like you can mix the primary colors to make an endless amount of colors, you can mix the יסודות to make an endless number of middos. Everyone has all the יסודות, just in different proportions and amounts, which changes their personalities.

יסוד האש - When used negatively, makes two main middos:

ANGER - Opposing surroundings.

Can only be used לשם שמים.

G'AVAH - Competing with your surroundings. If you are trying to put down the other person, it still can't be used לשמה. But if you are just trying to feel good about yourself, it could be used לשמה as a method of reaching לשמה.

gifted, or more successful than him, he'll end up with low self-esteem. Additionally, the more a person identifies with his body, which is the source of the יסוד העפר within him, he will naturally feel low about himself,

become haughty, you will forget Hashem. And the same way, he can also continue to look positively at his surroundings and appreciate the good that they have as well, without always being afraid that maybe they are "outdoing" him, because there's no competition here - each person has their own elevation within themselves, given to them by Hashem.

YAAKOV: *Okay, very clear. So basically, the more a person knows his strengths, the more he can work on ענווה without compromising on his self-esteem...*

Tzvi: Exactly. So now, getting back to where we were, we explained how כעס and גאוה are both rooted in the יסוד האש, because they both come from opposition. כעס is when a person actually opposes his surroundings, and גאוה is when one looks at himself in his mind in contrast to his surroundings, and feels good when he feels like he is better than them.

YAAKOV: *So now, we have to explain the difference between גאוה and כעס...*

Tzvi: Right, and it's not so complicated. If you noticed, even though both of these מידות stem from a sense of opposition. They each focus on a different aspect of the opposition. כעס focuses on the negative side of opposition. The desire to destroy the opponent, whereas גאוה focuses on the positive side - the enjoyment of feeling a sense of victory. This is ultimately why the sefer שערי קדושה does separate these into two subcategories of the מידות of the יסוד האש - because they stem from two opposite sides of the יסוד האש itself.

On a deeper level, the יסוד האש itself can be broken down into two parts. The מידה of כעס is the essence of the יסוד האש - it is all about opposition itself. The מידה of גאוה comes from a desire to feel the enjoyment of winning a fight. This is really like the nature of the יסוד המים, which is

the source for a thirst for enjoyment.

YAAKOV: *But doesn't the שערי קדושה say that יסוד האש is from the גאוה?*

Tzvi: This is why I started off saying that we're getting into a bit of a more subtle sugya, so take it slowly. יסוד האש definitely is from the גאוה, because it all starts from a sense of competition. If someone has a perspective of trying to connect to his surroundings, he won't come to גאוה in the first place, because he's not in the whole sugya of contrasting himself vs. others. On the contrary, he's busy doing the opposite - he's comparing himself to others and befriending them. So the whole basis of גאוה is from the opposition and competition of the יסוד האש, like the sefer קדושה says. That's step one. But then comes step two: If a person looks purely from the perspective of the יסוד האש, then his whole outlook on opposition is just about how to disconnect and oppose his opposition. Where does it come from that a person uses the sense of opposition to enjoy and feel good about himself? This aspect comes from the יסוד המים. So in other words, this is a subdivision within the יסוד האש, which takes on an element of the יסוד המים.

YAAKOV: *I don't understand - so ארבעה causes גאוה? It's a mix of two? To make my question clearer, I think there's a bit of an issue here: If every מידה would come from one of the ארבעה יסודות, then I understand that there's a point of trying to work with ארבעה יסודות to understand your מידות. But if a מידה can come from two יסודות at once, then maybe there are מידות that come from three or four יסודות... בקיצור, the whole science of ארבעה יסודות goes out the window, because everything is really a combination of everything...!*

Tzvi: I understand your question loud and clear, so let me try to explain. Superficially you can understand the יסודות ארבעה as if a

person was made out of four distinct inner parts, which each stand totally separate from one another, and every מידה stems completely from one or another of these יסודות. But in reality, the way to picture the ארבעה יסודות is, for example, like we picture the primary colors. The common perception is that all colors in the world are really various shades and combinations of red, yellow, and blue. As a side point, the sefarim really bring down that the primary colors are red, green, blue, and that these correspond to the יסודות ארבעה, and this is really how scientists look at colors today... But either way, whatever the primary colors are, we can all understand very easily that these colors are obviously not the only colors in the world. These are the building blocks of color, but everyone knows that when you mix blue and yellow paint you make green, and if you add a little drop of red it starts turning brown...

YAAKOV: *Of course. So how do you want to explain this? Meaning, if there really are an endless amount of colors in the world, then what's the point of identifying three colors as being the primary colors?*

Tzvi: Because this is the key to understanding a color. Once you identify primary colors, you now have a tool which you can use to label and classify any given color and shade. For example, when you see two shades of brown, you can identify that one is closer to red and the other closer to green...

YAAKOV: *I hear. I guess if we had just an endless number of sub-colors, then no color would ever have a name... It's only because we have a few main colors, that each color becomes either a primary color, a secondary color, or some lower-level derivative of these... So you're saying that it works the same way with the יסודות ארבעה as well?*

Tzvi: Exactly. The Rambam writes clearly that this is how the ארבעה יסודות of the physical world work,

using various blends of the ארבעה יסודות. Every item is made from some amount of each of the יסודות, but in each item, there is one of the יסודות which is most dominant. For example, drier physical things have more earth in them, whereas wetter physical things have more water. And the sefarim explain that the same is true about the inner makeup of a person and his middos. Every person has all ארבעה יסודות within him, and everyone has all the various מידות, but still, there are people whose personality leans more towards the מידות of the יסודות, and there are those who lean more towards the יסודות, and so on. And the same is true about each מידה individually: Every מידה itself stems from and makes use of all the ארבעה יסודות. Practically speaking, at first you need to focus mainly on figuring out what the most dominant side of each מידה is. Eventually, when you have a basic understanding of all the מידות and where they come from, then it's time to move on to the more subtle nuances of the מידות and analyze what secondary יסודות are at play.

YAAKOV: And it's possible to figure out all this with each מידה?

Tzvi: Technically, this is a חכמה which can go on forever, getting deeper and deeper as you go along. For example, even when it comes to the same exact מידה, such as the מידה of כעס itself, not everyone reacts the same way when they get angry. Some people scream and yell at everyone around them, whereas

others clam up and lock themselves in their room... All of these subtler differences are based on the exact blend of the ארבעה יסודות within the person. For example, a person with more יסוד הרוח is more prone to moving around, while someone with more יסוד העפר is more likely to stay put. This can cause a difference in how the person's anger, which itself stems mainly from the יסוד האש, expresses itself. Someone with a lot of יסוד הרוח who gets angry may get very involved in trying to do something to fight his opposition. On the other hand, someone with a lot of יסוד עפר may just get very resentful inside, and clam up without necessarily even expressing his anger on the outside.

YAAKOV: Wow! I see that there's a lot to learn here...

Tzvi: Of course, but again - we're taking it one step at a time. While it is important to have an eye on the big goal, we have to also make sure not to run too far ahead of ourselves. So getting back to our discussion, the main point to remember is that while כעס and גאוה both stem mainly from the יסוד האש, still - כעס represents the epitome of אש itself, whereas גאוה is a type of enjoyable feeling which stems from the יסוד האש, but which a person mainly pursues for the sake of his own enjoyment.

YAAKOV: Got it. Is that all you were trying to bring out the whole time?

Tzvi: No - I was trying to get to the next step, which is based on this.

The next step is, that since a person pursues גאוה mainly for his own good, the rule of שלא לשמה בא can hold true to some extent even with גאוה. When it comes to כעס, a person can't say that he'll use כעס to help him accomplish something good, because such כעס is itself bad and harmful. Like we said, כעס can only be used for the good when it is used לשם שמים. [An example of this is what the Gemara (תענית ד) calls "the anger of a חכם", which is when a תלמיד חכם identifies so strongly with the אמת that he gets angry when someone opposes the אמת, even though he himself is not being personally opposed in any way. However, even such anger is dangerous, and the Gemara says that a תלמיד חכם needs to learn how to curb even such anger.] When it comes to גאוה, though, it depends. If a person is actively trying to outdo and put down his friend in order to feel good about himself, this is also the negative side of אש, which cannot be used for the good. But if a person is merely looking to feel good about himself in order to do good things, and he doesn't yet get this feeling from a pure place inside of him, then it is at times acceptable for him to use this fake feeling of worthiness as a stepping-stool to feel worthy and grow, which will in turn help him discover his true inner חשיבות.

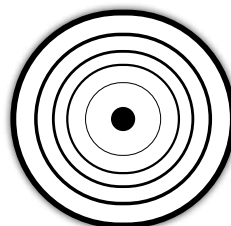
YAAKOV: I guess that makes sense... Either way, I have a lot to think about, so what if we pick up from here next week?

Tzvi: Sounds great!

צורת אדם

יום שני יג' אלול תשפ"ד
רח' הרב בלוי 33 ירושלים

20:30



בנושא מצח

FUNDAMENTALS OF MIDDOS IMPROVEMENT

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS LESSON Previously, we began to discuss the prerequisites we will need [before embarking on this series of fixing our *middos*.] Now we will mention some more points which complete the discussion, so that we can get to practical outcomes which is the purpose. We will briefly review the previous lesson.

There are three steps we need throughout this series of fixing our *middos*.

The first step is to get used to learning how to think, through hearing these lessons. Just as we need to acquire a way of thinking in order to learn Gemara, so do we need to acquire a way of thinking when it comes to the *avodah* of working with our soul.

The second step we need is to acquire the ability of putting together all of the information, becoming aware of all the different aspects of a topic, so that we can become clear in these matters – to live in a “clear world.”¹ (*Although we cannot attain perfect clarity, we can still become clearer and clearer about these matters with the more we seek to clarify.*)

The third step is to develop self-awareness towards these concepts, becoming palpably aware in our heart of the information we are learning about with our mind. Unlike learning Gemara, where you are learning about things that do not relate to you personally (*whether it's an abstract kind of Gemara or a Halacha-focused kind of Gemara*), when you learn matters of the soul, you need to see how the information about the soul relates to you on a personal level.

These are the three steps we explained previously. We also explained two root reasons behind the *avodah* [of knowing our soul's *middos*]: We each need to fix our personal worst *middah* (*character trait*), based on knowledge of the four elements; and we also need to balance our soul's elements even when they are not producing any bad *middos* in particular.

We explained this briefly, but we didn't yet get to how we can work on this practically. We hope to explain now how we can practically work on the concepts.

ALL INNER WORK BASED IS ON THE FOUR

ELEMENTS The following important point must be explained. Why must we work on our *middos* specifically according to the system of the soul's four elements (earth, water, wind and fire)? Let's expand upon this question a bit more.

Anyone who is familiar with the methods of *avodah* that exist knows that there are many different approaches, especially in our

generation. There are many different and valid approaches of how we can do inner work with ourselves. Can we say that there is one specific way which everyone must use? The answer is clearly “No.” So why is it, then, that these classes are always based on the system of the four elements?²

The answer is: the system of the four elements is brought in a *sefer* attributed to the authorship of *Avraham Avinu*.³

So if you were wondering if the system of the “four elements of the soul” comes from our generation or if it came before our generation, you should know that it has been around since the times of our *Avos*. It is the system which Chazal based their words upon, as well as the system used by our many wise leaders who came after them.

However, not every *sefer* written in previous generations openly dealt with this system. But the system of the four elements is the backbone behind all of inner wisdom of Judaism. The four elements are rooted in the four letters of Hashem's Name of *havayah*. The name of *havayah* is the root that Hashem used to create everything, and from it came everything else that we know of.

Therefore, all of the other systems [of *avodah*], besides for the system of the four elements, are considered to be ‘partial’ systems, which are not all-inclusive. The only system which is all-inclusive is that of the four elements. The other systems [of *avodah*] are of course rooted in holiness. In addition, there are also other systems that do not stem from any holiness at all, which people in our generation are using.

Thus, the fundamental way of how we work with our soul is based on the system of the four elements, which comes from our *Avos*. Since it is the root system, I try to mainly work with it when I teach about *avodah*.

MAKING ORDER Therefore, we must know the following. When you open a *sefer*, you should know that not every *sefer* is openly working with the system of the four elements. Rather, there are certain details, based upon the system of the four elements of the soul which each *sefer* tells you; but the system is not being presented in any specific

2 *Editor's Note: For those unfamiliar with the Rav's approach in using the system of the four elements of the soul, refer to the previous works of the Rav: Getting To Know Your Soul, & series Understanding Your Middos &, more recently, the 'Fixing' series: Fixing Your Earth; Fixing Your Water, & Fixing Your Wind, Fixing Your Fire, etc.).*

order. Therefore, there is no *sefer* which tells you how to go from A to B, from B to C, etc. It is up to each person, as his personal *avodah*, to give order to all of the details - using the system of the four elements.

The difficulty with this, which you have raised, is that there is no *sefer* which gives you an exact order of what to work on. Our world is called “*olam*”, as our Sages state, from the world “*he'elam*”, concealment; everything is concealed from us. We cannot tell a person to learn a certain page of one *sefer* and a certain paragraph of another *sefer* until a complete picture forms. The inner world, as our Sages describe it, is scattered throughout the pages of many *sefarim hakedoshim* that describe it: “a little here and a little there.” It is like fruits scattered all over the place.

The first difficulty involved in it is that one would have to know the order to all of the information. And even if a person would have that order, to know how to connect all of the details is daunting. Therefore, there is no *sefer* which we can recommend that each person should learn so that he can see an exact order of what he needs to do.

The approach that I use is based on the system of the four elements, which is described in the beginning of Rav Chaim Vital's *sefer, Shaarei Kedushah*. The words there briefly describe an orderly system based on the four elements, but it is only a small amount of content in comparison to the many words of our Sages that describe *avodah*. Rav Chaim Vital briefly describes what we need to do based on the roots of the four elements, but there is much order that is needed after that.

The matters are spread out all over the words of our Sages, like scattered fruit. If a person has the structure to work with, he can use it as a compass to guide him that will enable him to connect all the details he comes across. He knows how to connect all the details to the root. But when a person is missing the structure, he sees a myriad amount of details, and he sees the details, without knowing how to connect them. He gets the false impression that our *avodah* is to work on a bunch of random details, with no structure to it. As we are explaining, though, all matters of our *avodah* are based on the system of the four elements.

(Of course, this doesn't mean that all of the *Gedolim* in the past used the system of the four elements.)

1 *Pesachim 50a*

3 *The “Sefer Yetzirah”*

FIXING YOUR MIDDOS

I have this issue, where I have a very hard time dancing. In general I think I'm a pretty happy guy, but when it comes to a chasunah, or sometimes even when there's dancing on Chanuka or Purim, I just can't take it. Somehow, I just can't let go and "have fun" dancing, and all of a sudden, I start doubting if I'm really happy or not... How can I understand this situation using the four elements perspective?

Answer: To better understand this situation, let's try to analyze the sugya of שמחה. When it comes to the מידה of שמחה, this middah itself can be broken down into four parts, based on the ארבעה יסודות.

The first part, coming from the יסוד העפר, is שמחה בהלקו. The nature of the יסוד העפר is to remain in place, and one of the sides of this nature is to be content and happy with what you have, and not to always be looking for more. This is a calm happiness, like the calm nature of the יסוד העפר. It means feeling content and satisfied with your חלק and deriving pleasure from what's yours.

The second part, coming from the יסוד המים, is an overflowing שמחה. The nature of the יסוד המים is not to stay in place but rather to flow outwards, and this is a type of שמחה where a person feels overflowing, like he was given more than he needs and he is looking to express his happiness.

The third part, from the יסוד הרוח, is

an ongoing happiness which stems from a constant sense of achievement and accomplishment. When a person feels like he is moving forward on the path of his life, [like the יסוד הרוח, which sets the course of movement of one's life], and he feels overall that he is working towards the goals which he deep-down really wants to be pursuing, then his life is accompanied by this inner constant happiness.

The fourth part, from the יסוד האש, is an enthusiastic שמחה. This is the most extreme type of feeling of שמחה, where a person gets all into the שמחה and can jump and dance with all his energy, forgetting about everything else. [This is like the יסוד האש, which also jumps around, releases an extreme amount of energy, and consumes everything inside of itself.]

In your case, you mentioned that you have no issue of lacking שמחה on a constant basis, and you only have a hard time dancing. The understanding of this would seem to be that your שמחה comes mainly from one, two, or all three of the first three types of שמחה, whereas you have a hard time awakening the more extreme שמחה of the יסוד האש.

That being said, it is likely this is not an issue at all. In the vast majority of cases, people who express this level of שמחה at a chasunah, or other situations where there's dancing, don't really feel this level of שמחה naturally. Rather, it is the booming music and

other such stimuli around them which awaken the יסוד האש within them, and many times this is really a שמחה of הוללות, which is not really befitting for a בר דעה. Therefore, if you feel like you have a real, ongoing source of שמחה in your life, you need not be overly concerned that you have a hard time participating in these extreme expressions of שמחה, and you should understand that your ongoing שמחה is simply more real and less superficial than what you are seeing in others. When it comes to a time of שמחה, such as Yom Tov, you can try to find some similar חברים who are also interested in a more פנימיותדיק type of שמחה, and you can organize together calmer, quieter music, in a more פנימיותדיק setting, and you will likely find that you connect much more deeply to the שמחה and have a much easier time dancing.

At the same time, there is still the possibility that something may be holding you back from getting into the true שמחה of the יסוד האש, and it is worthwhile to consider some of the following possibilities: Perhaps you are feeling too heavy to allow yourself to be light and happy [this comes from an improper use of the יסוד העפר], perhaps you are too tense to "let go" and be happy [a lack of using the "go with the flow" nature of the יסוד המים], and perhaps you are lacking the necessary amount of movement in your life [a lack of the nature of the יסוד הרוח].

בהצלחה!

בלבביפדיה עבודת ה'

יום שלישי ז' אלול
רח' הרב בלוי 33 ירושלים
20:30



בנושא בן

FIXING YOUR FIRE HATRED STEMMING FROM EARTH-OF-WATER-OF-FIRE

THE SYMPTOMS

The element of earth is the place where I stand (*below*) whereas my element of fire is the place which I wish to ascend to, and the element of water is where I get my *chiyus* (*vitality*) from. Earth-of-water-of-fire, in its repaired state, is when one derives vitality (*water*) from the fact that "The other is above me, while I am down below". That is the perspective that repairs *gaavah* (*conceit*), as well as repairing hatred – when I am to derive vitality from being humble.

But when earth-of-water-of-fire is impaired, one hates the other for being above him and for looking down at him – especially because he knows that the other is deriving vitality from this. He hates the other not just for being below him, but especially when he sees that the other derives vitality from his conceited state. And since the rule is that "As water reflects one face to another, so does the heart of man reflect to another", the feelings are reciprocal. This makes him become more connected to his earth, and then he feels a dearth of vitality.

THE REMEDY

The repair for this is to gain a perspective of compassion on the other [*to feel sorry for the other that he is inflicted with the trait of gaavah, since he feels so superior over me*].

There are good character traits and there are bad character traits which people have. If someone is *zocheh* (*meritorious*), he has better character traits, and if he is not *zocheh*, then he has poor character traits. When we meet a person and we see that he has a certain bad character trait, there are two possible ways of reacting to this. (1) **Focusing on his deficiency** – "This

person is so low. He has such low character." When we focus on another's flaws, we are really focusing on who's higher the other here: Is he better than me and I'm worse than him, or am I better than him and he's worse than me? (2) **Compassion**: "How much this person needs to be pitied, for having such bad middos!" After all, a person with good middos has a good life in This World and in the Next, while a person with bad middos is in a pitiful situation. With this perspective, instead of seeing another's flaws and weaknesses as a sign that he is a lowly person of low character – we instead feel pity for him.

When one sees that "My friend is superior to me, and he enjoys the fact that he's superior to me", he has a superficial perspective. He will feel pained when he considers the status of the other. How "I'm lower than him" and "He thinks he is better than me", and especially when he sees that the other is enjoying his elevated status. Instead, he needs to see that the other is in fact below him – for enjoying his *gaavah/conceit* is an indicator that he is actually on a low level, being that he is deriving energy from a negative character trait.

However, it's not enough to view the other as lowly, since it is still within the superficial perspective that focuses on comparing one's status with another and honing in on another's faults. The main remedy is when one leaves that superficial perspective (*of being focused on who here has higher or lower status*) and he is instead able to feel compassion for the other for deriving vitality from his being conceited. This not only uproots the actual hatred that he feels towards the other, but it uproots the root of the perspective which brings on hatred.

ארבעת היסודות בלשון רבותינו

[מתבאר בדברי המגיד ממזריטש שיש באדם מידה הנקראת "אין", שבכחה הוא יכול לחבר גם בין היסודות ההפכיים שבו כמו אש ומים, וזה היה עומק נסיון העקידה].
איתא בזוהר על הפסוק וירא והנה איל אחר וגו' אותו איל נברא בע"ש בין השמשות... ויש לפרש ע"פ מ"ש רז"ל בין השמשות לא הכריעו בו חכמים אם כולו מן היום או כולו מן הלילה או חציו מן היום וחציו מן הלילה. פירוש, על דרך משל, יש בכל דבר ד' יסודות אש רוח מים עפר. והנה אש ומים הם נגדיים זה לזה, ואיך יכול להיות נכללים זה בזה? רק צריך לדעת שיש דבר המחברם שלא יבטל ויכבה האש ממים או להיפך... והדבר הזה המחברם נקרא "אין"... וכן יש בעבודה אלוקית. יש אהבה ויש יראה, והם נגדיים זה עם זה, כי איך יכול להיות אהבה ויראה כאחת? למשל, יראת האדם מהנחש אין בזה היראה שום אהבה, או כדומה בדבר טוב, אין בו אלא אהבה, אבל אם הוא אהבת הבורא או יראת הבורא יכול להיות שניהם כאחת. ואהבה נקרא יום ויראה נקרא לילה, והדבר המחברם נקרא בין השמשות שלא הכריעו בו חכמים מה הוא, ונקרא אין... והעקידה שאלקים ניסה את אברהם פ' שמדת היראה היה עליו עם מדת אהבה... (תורת המגיד פרשת יירא).

