



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR SOUL ROOT

English translation based on original Hebrew shiurim
<http://www.bilvavi.net/sugya/worlds>

[BILVAVI MISHKAN EVNEH]

Editor's Preface.....	2
Q & A Figuring Out My Soul Root.....	4
Q & A Which Sefarim Explain Soul Roots?	4
01 Asiyah - Action	6
02 Yetzirah – Connecting.....	15
03 Beriah – Thinking	23

EDITOR'S PREFACE

WHERE ARE WE ON THE MAP OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE?

To date, the Rav has given so several different series of *shiurim* (classes) which explain how a person can attain self-knowledge. Let us clarify here the different aspects of self-knowledge, and the corresponding shiurim and sefarim of the Rav which explain those different areas of self-knowledge.

Before we begin any self-work, we will need a proper self-image, a healthy self-concept, a basic source of inner happiness and pleasure, and a healthy sense of self-esteem, so that we can have a positive attitude towards ourselves throughout all that we do (whether we are trying to understand our souls or improve our service to the Creator). This is explained by the Rav in “*Da Es Atzmecha*,” “Getting To Know Your Self.”

After we have been through “Getting To Know Your Self” (and hopefully acquiring the proper attitude towards ourselves, from it), the next step is for us to know our *neshamah*, our soul – to know the “root” of our soul, so that we can identify the strongest part of our personality and come closer to attaining our life’s mission. There are four possible soul roots – *Asiyah* (Action), *Yetzirah* (Connection), *Beriah* (Thought) and *Atzilus* (Spirituality). The Rav explains about this in the series called *Olamos*, which is now adapted into English as “*Getting To Know Your Soul Root*”.

The journey within continues with *Da Es Nafshecha*. The Rav explained that after clarifying your soul root, the next step is to know your “bodily forces,” otherwise known as the very natures and “elements” of your character: the four elements of earth, water, air and fire. The nature of the four elements is explained on a general level in “*Da Es Nafshecha*,” “Getting To Know Your Soul.”

After studying the elements, the next step is to study the actual character traits (*middos*) and to see how we can repair them. This is explained in the Rav’s series of *Da Es Middosecha*, *Understanding Your Middos*. This series is mainly for the purpose of gaining more understanding, however, as opposed to practical hands-on action.

Correspondingly, and more practically, we can also engage in repairing our personal soul, which is explained in the “Four Elements” series, which explains many different details about the four elements and how they can be manifest. Through this series, one can come to know his personal

soul, and what his most dominant element is, and accordingly, one will then know what his personal inner work should be.

Practically speaking, a person may not be able to identify his primary element, and one can refer to series on *Self-Recognition* as an alternative, simpler approach to repairing one's character.

(Based on various Q&A With The Rav and "Getting To Know Your Soul")

Q & A

Figuring Out My Soul Root

QUESTION

Is there a way to know which “world” my soul comes from?

ANSWER

The world of “*Asiyah*” corresponds to action. The word of “*Yetzirah*” corresponds to emotion. The world of “*Beriah*” corresponds to intellect. The world of “*Atzilus*” corresponds to *d’veykus* (attachment to G-d).

Each of these four “worlds” also has its own four subdivisions. For example, in the souls that are rooted in the world of *Yetzirah* (emotion), there are souls who are mainly (1) *Asiyah* within *Yetzirah* – their emotions are mainly expressed in their actions, for example, by doing acts of *chessed* (kindness) and love. (2) *Yetzirah* within *Yetzirah* - people who are entirely emotional. (3) *Beriah* within *Yetzirah* – people who are aware of the wisdom within their feelings and *middos*. (4) *Atzilus* within *Yetzirah* – people who have *d’veykus* (attachment) in Hashem by way of their *middos*, becoming attached to the *middos* of Hashem.

The other “worlds” can also be divided into any of the 4 worlds. One should clarify where his soul comes from, based on the above. One can know this by identifying what his soul is mainly drawn towards, at his current level. There is a series of 3 shiurim on this topic called *Olamos* (Getting To Know Your Soul Root).

Q & A

WHICH SEFARIM EXPLAIN SOUL ROOTS?

QUESTION

I would like to learn about the concept of *shoresh haneshamos* (soul roots). Can the Rav recommend any *sefarim* on this topic that I should learn so that I can know this part of Torah? I am aware that

sefer Shaar HaGilgulim of the *Arizal* discusses the different soul roots of people. Is there anything else besides this that I need to learn?

Also, I heard from the Rav that some souls are mainly rooted in the dimension of “place,” some souls are mainly rooted in the dimension of “time,” and other souls are mainly rooted in the dimension of “soul.” Where can I learn more about this?

ANSWER

Besides what you mentioned, also make sure to learn the *sefer Shorshei HaNeshamos* authored by the *Rema m’Pano*. To organize this information better, it is recommended to learn the *sefer Toras Nasan* which organizes together all of the information of *sefer Shorshei HaNeshamos*. See also the commentary of *Bnei Aharon* to the *sefer Shaar HaGilgulim*.

As for the different soul roots that come from place, time, and soul, this is a concept that is barely explained in any of the works of our Sages in terms that apply to the soul.

01 | ASIYAH - ACTION

THE FOUR ELEMENTS CORRESPOND TO THE FOUR REALMS

Our *sefarim hakedoshim* explain about many different faculties in the soul, but there are essentially four “heads” to the soul, from which all other abilities in the soul branch out of. There are two different systems which describe these four roots of the soul. According to one system, there are four elements in the soul: fire, air, water and earth.¹ Every creation contains these four elements. These four elements exist in every person’s soul, and the only difference between each person is in the distribution of the elements in one’s personality. Every person has one element which dominates, an element which is second-to-most dominant, an element which is third-to-most dominant, and the element that is least dominant. Each person is different when it comes to this distribution of the elements in the personality.

There is also another system of four roots to the soul, termed as the four *olamos* (worlds, or realms), which are known as *Atzilus*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. The *Sefer Yetzirah*² says that everything that exists in the *olamos* is in the soul. In this series, we will not be studying the definitions of these four realms, only how they are manifest in the soul. We will therefore explain, in terms of the human soul, of how these four realms of *Asiyah*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Atzilus* manifest.

The four elements (earth, water, air and fire) correspond to the four realms (*Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah* and *Atzilus*).³ One’s personal soul is rooted in any of the four realms. There are souls that are rooted in *Asiyah*, souls that are rooted in *Yetzirah*, souls rooted in *Beriah*, and souls rooted in *Atzilus*. The four elements, however, are not the root of one’s soul, but the roots of one’s character traits.

Let’s begin with these “four worlds” in the soul, and what they are.

¹ as explained in *Sefer Shaarei Kedushah* (2:1) of Rav Chaim Vital, and which are first mentioned in *Sefer Yetzirah*. The Rav explains more about the four elements in the book “Getting To Know Your Soul” and, more recently, in the “Four Elements” series.

² attributed to the authorship of Avraham Avinu

³ Fire (the most spiritual element) corresponds to *Atzilus* (lit. “Emanation”, the most spiritual realm, associated with *d’veykus*, attachment to G-d). The element of wind corresponds to *Beriah* (lit. “Creation”, associated with the power of deep Torah thought). The element of water corresponds to *Yetzirah* (lit. “Formation”, associated with the power of emotion). The element of earth corresponds to *Asiyah* (lit. “Action”, associated with the power of action). The four realms are described more in detail in *Hagahos Maharitz in sefer Nefesh HaChaim* (shaar aleph), and also in *Sefer HaBris*.

HOW THE FOUR REALMS MANIFEST IN OUR SOUL

The lowest of the four realms is called *Asiyah* (lit. action). This is the soul's power of *laasos*, to do action. Next is the world of *Yetzirah*, which means "to form". This power is not about forming ideas, but about a power of connection. If one already has a connection to something, one can create something as a form of self-expression. Otherwise, one is not really using the power to create (*Yetzirah*). For example, if a person comes up with a creative new way to make money, he is not accessing the power of *Yetzirah*, because the person is just using this creativity as a means to another end - in this case, to make money. *Yetzirah* is when one makes things because it is his nature to make, create, and form certain things, because he has a connection to it and therefore he creates those things.

Next is the world of *Beriah*, which is about looking at things, thinking and reflecting and deepening one's understanding of something. *Beriah* is from the word *l'bar*, outside, to view something as if one is an outsider to it. In order to see something accurately, you need to go "outside" of it. For example, in order to view Earth, you need to view it from outer space and then you can see all of it. This is also known as the power of *chochmah*, collective knowledge: to know something by enveloping it and encompassing it. To know all of everything, you need to go outside of it, so that you can gain a more encompassing view of the matter. This is the power of *chochmah*, as described in the verse, "*All of them You made with wisdom.*"

The highest realm in the soul is *Atzilus*. To describe it briefly, this is when one connects to something out of a recognition that it simply exists. In summary, *Asiyah* is the ability to do things, *Yetzirah* is to form things out of a connection to something, *Beriah* is to see it from the outside by having a collective view of it, and *Atzilus* in the soul is to connect to something because it exists.

These are deep concepts. We need to first be clear about their definitions on a purely intellectual level, so that we can go deeper into this discussion and make these concepts more tangible to us. Now we will explain about them in greater detail.

ASIYAH - DOING

The concept of *Asiyah* seems simple: the ability to do things. But let's explain how it's not that simple. A person gets up in the morning and goes to work, but *why* does he go to work? Why is he doing what he does? Most people go to work simply because they need livelihood. Does anyone go

because they love working, because they love what they do? Only a few people actually enjoy working and have a nature to love working. Most people work simply because they have to, because they need livelihood. So most people are doing what they need to do, using their actions as a means to get to a greater goal. But this is not using the power of *Asiyah*. We shall explain why.

A person can work and do things for many hours a day, yet he isn't using the power of *Asiyah* at all. A taxi driver can drive people the whole day but he doesn't enjoy what he does. An astronaut can go into outer space but he's doing this just because he needs to make money. This is not using the power of *Asiyah*. The power of *Asiyah* is only used when one is doing something and he is being himself, when he is being "who I am".

For example, when a person does *chessed* because he loves to do *chessed*, this is using the power of *Asiyah*. It is about doing things when you love to do it, when you have an affinity for what you do, when what you do is in sync with who you are and what you love to do.

The question is what type of deed you love doing. A person builds houses or is a contractor, but is he doing this because he loves doing it? There are also levels of how much you love doing it. But in any case, *Asiyah* is never about doing simply for the sake of doing. It is about doing something from within yourself, doing it because you want to do it and you enjoy doing it.

Everyone has the power of *Asiyah* in the soul. One needs to see how he can act from within himself and not for any other external reason. That is the first step in beginning to use the power of *Asiyah*. One needs to look for something he likes doing, and begin doing it. We will later explain how this can also be used on a more spiritual level, for learning Torah. But the first step is to uncover this basic step of *Asiyah*.

YETZIRAH - CREATING

Yetzirah in the soul, the power to form and create, can only be a result of something else that precedes it. If one loves to form and create, he can create. Hence, if one is missing the desire to form and create things, he is not using the power of *Yetzirah* when he makes or designs things.

Yetzirah is used when one realizes the *tzurah* (design) of something. These people tend to love beauty, art, and certain pictures (We should note that this needs to be analyzed where it is coming

from. Why does the person enjoy looking at certain images? Perhaps there is a certain factor that is motivating him to be drawn towards certain images. So we will need to rule out that factor first).

Yetzirah is a perspective of having a visual, physical image of something. When using this power in the soul, a person sees a room and he doesn't just see the size of the room, he also notices what's in the room, in detail. It is a power to give detailed physical and visual expression to something.

BERIAH - ENCOMPASSING

Beriah is when one searches to understand something. On a deeper level, it is when one gains a collective understanding of something, by circling and enveloping it, which leads a person to have a general, encompassing perspective of the matter.

With most people, this perspective is rarely accessed. Most people will not finish what they begin. They don't fully enter what they do, and therefore they never fully 'encircle' a matter (because without completing it, they don't arrive at the complete picture of it). This shows that most people lack the perspective of *Beriah*. A person with a perspective of *Beriah* will enter something and make sure he finishes it. It is the power to take one area, begin it, follow through with it until the end, and complete it.

This is also called the power of *chochmah* (lit. "wisdom," the encompassing knowledge of a matter). It is not just talent. *Chochmah* is about having a collective perspective of something, from beginning until end, an expansive view of a matter.

ATZILUS – CONNECTING TO THE ESSENCE

The perspective of *Atzilus* is when one grasps the very existence of something. Most people can be aware of the idea that actions can have greater or lesser quality to them (which is *Asiyah*), they can understand the design of something (*Yetzirah*), and they may be able to deeply understand a matter (*Beriah*), but this is not yet grasping the essence of a matter. *Atzilus* is to when one sees the very existence of something, whereupon one grasps the very essence of a matter.

To illustrate the idea, an infant is dependent on its mother, and this is not just because the infant feels its mother's love, but because it feels that its entire existence is its mother. The infant doesn't know anything else other than its mother. It doesn't know anything about the world. When one gets a bit older he usually loses this perspective, of attaching our existence to something because it is

all we recognize. One feels connected to life when his life is endangered, because he realizes that his entire reality is his life, when his life is in danger. So too, one can connect to something because he recognizes that it is his existence. Most people, though, do not recognize this perspective.

So far we have only briefly explained the concepts. Now we will go more into detail.

SUBDIVISIONS OF THE FOUR REALMS

These four worlds divide into another four realms.

There is *Asiyah*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Atzilus* within the realm of ***Asiyah*** (So there is *Asiyah d'Asiyah*, *Yetzirah d'Asiyah*, *Beriah d'Asiyah*, and *Atzilus d'Asiyah*).

There is also *Asiyah*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Atzilus* within the realm of ***Yetzirah*** (so there is *Asiyah d'Yetzirah*, *Yetzirah d'Yetzirah*, *Beriah d'Yetzirah*, and *Atzilus d'Yetzirah*).

There is also *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah* and *Atzilus* within the realm of ***Beriah*** (so there is *Asiyah d'Beriah*, *Yetzirah d'Beriah*, *Beriah d'Beriah* and *Atzilus d'Beriah*).

And there is *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah*, and *Atzilus* within the realm of ***Atzilus*** (so there is *Asiyah d'Atzilus*, *Yetzirah d'Atzilus*, *Beriah d'Atzilus*, and *Atzilus d'Atzilus*).

We will now try to explain these matters. These are deep matters, and it is a study to learn about. At this point, we have only briefly described them, and they will sound vague and unclear. Slowly as we learn about it, we will gain more clarity of these matters.

[We will begin by studying *Asiyah* and its subdivisions. In this lesson, we will be explaining all 16 subdivisions that are within *Asiyah*. So, for example, when we are describing *Atzilus D'Beriah*, we are describing *Atzilus D'Beriah* that is within *Asiyah*.]

THE FOUR BRANCHES OF ASIYAH D'ASIYAH

Asiyah is about doing. Since *Asiyah* divides into four more categories, there is also *Asiyah* within *Asiyah*, there is *Yetzirah* within *Asiyah*, there is *Beriah* within *Asiyah*, and there is *Atzilus* within *Asiyah*. Let us begin with the first branch, *Asiyah* within *Asiyah*.

What is “*Asiyah d’Asiyah*” [of *Asiyah*]? This is when a person does something for a reason, because it is one’s nature to do it. It is not simply that a person does something because he loves to or because he has decided to, but because it is his nature to do it. He is acting out of his nature.

Yetzirah d’Asiyah [of *Asiyah*] is when a person is doing something in an original, unique way. If ten cows are plowing a field, they are all doing the same act, and there is no difference between what any of the cows are doing. But if two different workers are carving out a table, they are each doing something else, even though they are given the same job. Each worker is being asked to carve a different object. They are all working, but each is doing something else. It is not just about acting, it is about acting in a way that is creative and original. It is when one is acting from his “I,” and his actions are a physical expression of his physical creativity. His creativity is revealed through his work, he is connected to what he is doing. It is about giving creativity to what I do. The more one accesses this power, the more unique the act will be, and the more originality we can see in the act.

Beriah d’Asiyah [of *Asiyah*] is when one is acting and working with a collective perspective. Consider the difference between those who give *tzedakah*, with others will give *tzedakah* to specific people based on knowing everyone who needs. The person responsible for giving out the *tzedakah* is not just giving *tzedakah*, he is giving it because he has a collective perspective of the community’s needs, so he is aware of who needs it more and who doesn’t need it as much. He is more drawn towards a collective perspective, and he would rather not get involved in details. He is more interested in the general, collective perspective on something, rather than getting caught up in certain details. He usually cannot focus that long on a detail, and if he does, he is not acting according to his nature.

Atzilus d’Asiyah [of *Asiyah*] is when one realizes that the reality of something is to act. He is acting from a very deep place in the soul. For example, when eating or sleeping, most people are not conscious of this. But if a person eats or sleeps and he is aware as he does this that he needs to do this in order to survive, he is accessing *Atzilus d’Asiyah*.

If a person wouldn’t walk, his body weakens. If a person is aware as he walks that he needs to do this in order to stay healthy and survive, he is aware of the reality of his act. He is not acting robotically or because he has no choice. There are some people who think that their very existence is acting. Most of the time, this is just being superficial. People usually act and do certain things because if they don’t, they will be bored. This is not *Atzilus d’Asiyah*. This power is only accessed when one is doing something because one recognizes the need to do it, because the reality necessitates it.

THE BRANCHES OF YETZIRAH D'ASIYAH

As mentioned, the realm of *Yetzirah* also divides into the four categories of *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah* and *Atzilus*.

Asiyah d'Yetzirah [of *Asiyah*] is when a person acts because he wants to see results. He acts because he wants to see the completion of something.

Yetzirah d'Yetzirah [of *Asiyah*] is when one acts because he loves the very act, the very performance involved in getting there. He enjoys the work itself, not just the results of his work. Compare this to the difference between a person who is halfway finished building his table. If one's soul is primarily based in the realm of *Asiyah d'Yetzirah*, he is not content until he sees it finished. If his soul's perspective is primarily based in *Yetzirah d'Yetzirah*, he is happy even before the table is complete, because he enjoys the work itself.

Beriah d'Yetzirah [of *Asiyah*] is when one has a collective perspective on what he is creating. The Remak explains that a person may build something by building step after step, or a person may build something by first drawing up a plan of how it will look in the end. Some people build a house slowly until they get to how it looks in the end, and others draw up a plan first of how it will look in the end. It is a collective perspective of something that one creates. It is about combining together many different pictures in order to see the collective picture. You can design a nice bookshelf, but how will it fit together with the other chairs and tables in the room? That is the perspective from *Beriah d'Yetzirah*.

Atzilus d'Yetzirah [of *Asiyah*] is when one sees that without a structure to a certain action or thing, the action or the thing doesn't exist. A person like this would not buy material to make clothing with, because he doesn't see the structure of something. If he doesn't see a structure to something, he doesn't attribute any existence or worth to it. If something lacks structure, he doesn't see it.

THE BRANCHES OF BERIAH D'ASIYAH

Asiyah d'Beriah [of *Asiyah*] is when one thinks about the collective perspective of something and he quickly thinks of how he can practically actualize it.

Yetzirah d'Beriah [of *Asiyah*] is when one knows how to actualize his collective perspective. For example, if you want to build a city, do you have a plan of how to make it work out? Do you have

plan of how to do it? It is more than having an idea or picture, it is to actually have a plan. Even if you can design an entire city, do you know the exact measurements and location of where each building and park needs to go? Without this plan, you can know how to create things, but you don't have a plan of how it will fit it in with everything else.

Beriah d'Beriah [of *Asiyah*] is when you have a collective perspective towards your own collective perspective. It is to compare your own collective perspective with a different perspective. For example, if you have a way of managing a city, do you know of a different way to run a city? Are there several ways to manage it? How do other cities manage? These are all factors in the perspective of *Beriah d'Beriah*.

Atzilus d'Beriah [of *Asiyah*] is when you see every detail as part of the bigger picture, and there are no details per se, only the whole picture. It is when either you see the whole picture, or you see nothing.

THE BRANCHES OF ATZILUS D'ASIYAH

Asiyah d'Atzilus [of *Asiyah*] is when you see action as an expression of the entire reality you see. Whereas *Atzilus d'Asiyah* is about viewing oneself as a reality of action, *Asiyah d'Atzilus* is about seeing all of reality as action. It is the perspective that acting is reality itself.

Yetzirah d'Atzilus [of *Asiyah*] is when one sees all of reality as one picture.

Beriah d'Atzilus [of *Asiyah*] is when one sees that the reality is the collective perspective. It is not seeing one detail as reality, but to see the collective perspective as reality. Reality means the collective perspective.

If you have understood the above, we can proceed further. The concept of *Atzilus* is very far from us at first and it remains hidden in our soul. The more we enter into this perspective the more we can understand it.

Atzilus d'Atzilus [of *Asiyah*] means the existence of something as its reality. The existence of something is its reality. This sounds simple but really it is not. If you ask someone "Are you okay?" and he says "Yes," he really may not be okay. If you ask him how he'll manage, he'll say "I'll manage," but he doesn't know how. He is unaware of reality.

IN CONCLUSION

We explained these concepts briefly, so we can gain our initial perspective on these concepts. There are some people who will not connect at all with these concepts. They will wonder: “Of what use are all these definitions??” But the more a person is searching to understand himself, he will be interested in these perspectives and knowing where he fits in to all of this. These definitions are each offering us a way to know how we should align our lives, accordingly. In the next lesson, we will explain more about these concepts, G-d willing, and with *siyata d’shmaya*.

02 | YETZIRAH – CONNECTING

PREFACE

In the previous lesson, we discussed the world of *Asiyah*, which had 16 subdivisions. At first, it is difficult to hear about these concepts. We will slowly gain an understanding of it as we go along. When we get used to thinking about these concepts, it will be easier for us to understand. We will try to go further, but it will be based on the concepts of the previous lesson.

We discussed all of the subdivisions of *Asiyah* in the previous lesson. Now we will speak about *Yetzirah*, and its 16 subdivisions. Some of this will be a review of what we discussed in the previous lesson, but bear in mind that in the previous lesson we discussed *Asiyah*, and now we are discussing *Yetzirah*, so there will be differences.

YETZIRAH – WHENEVER THERE IS CONNECTION TO SOMETHING

Yetzirah in the soul is about creating, the power to give *tzurah* (design) to something. The main use of *tzurah* is not when it comes to doing (*Asiyah*), but when it comes to *Yetzirah*, as will be explained in this lesson. The Maggid of Mezritch said that the word “*chatzotzros*” are from the words *chatzi tzurah*, “half a form,” implying that everything in Creation contains is a *chatzi tzurah*, half a form, which is completed by something else. We always need to combine each creation with something else.

There is an ability to form physical *tzurah*, physical designs and creations, which was discussed in the previous lesson. This is *Yetzirah D’Asiyah*. But here we are discussing the primary use of *tzurah*, which is used on a “soul” level, as opposed to the material world. The “soul” use of *tzurah* (or *Yetzirah*) refers to the *middos*, the character traits of the soul.

There are seven roots of the *middos*, which are: *ahavah* (love), *yirah* (fear), *hispaarus* (pride), *nitzachon* (victory), *hodayah* (admitting), *hiskashrus* (connection), and *shiflus* (lowliness). In this series, we will not discuss the *middos*. A separate series is required to explain about the *middos* in further detail. However, the common denominator between all of the *middos* is that they are ways of connection to something.

For example, *ahavah* (love) is a connection between people. *Yirah* (fear) is also a form connection. When one fears someone, he is connected to him through the fear. When one feels prideful over someone else (*hispaarus*), this is also a way of connection. When one feels *netzach* (victorious) over another, he is also connected to him, by way of feeling victorious. When one thanks another (*hodayah*), this is a way of connecting to him. *Hiskashrus* (connection) is by definition a connection to someone, and even *shiflus* (lowliness) from another person is a connection to the other, because when feels lowered to another, he is also connected to the other.

Thus, the realm of *Yetzirah* in the soul, which refers to the *middos* of the soul, is always a connection in the soul to something. The defining characteristic of *Yetzirah* is called *tzurah* (design), and since *Yetzirah* is always about connecting, the concept of *tzurah* is always a form of connection to something. This is not a physical kind of connection, but a soul kind of connection.

That is *Yetzirah* - it is a realm where there is no material or physicality, only spiritual design.

We have explained so far what *Yetzirah* in the soul is. Now let us see it in further detail. First we will explain the four main divisions of *Yetzirah*, and then we will go through each of them in further detail.

THE FOUR SUBDIVISIONS OF YETZIRAH

Asiyah D'Yetzirah is when we activate the potential of any of our *middos*. When a person gives a gift to a person, he is actualizing his love towards that person. Instead of silently loving the other person, he has done something for the person that shows that he has a liking towards him. This actualizes the love, because the giving of the gift is an expression of the love.

Yetzirah D'Yetzirah is the very *tzurah*, the particular design or way, of how a character trait or emotion is expressed. For example, when it comes to the emotion of love, each person has a certain *tzurah* (design) of how he expresses love. Two people can love each other, but they will each express their love in different ways. Each person has a different way of how he expresses his love to another. Just as a physical object has a certain design, so does love have a certain design to it. There is a way to love someone, and each person has different ways.

Beriah D'Yetzirah is the development and process of a character trait. When it comes to love, for example, there is a certain way to develop love to another. It is never limited to one way. There is a certain process. At one time, a gift is appropriate, and at another time, there must be a different

expression of love. The love must be nurtured and developed, over a certain amount of time, in order for it to last.

Atzilus D'Yetzirah is the very reality of the particular character trait or emotion. When one considers the fact that he is a soul, some people think of their souls as their base desires, such as their physical desires of the body, the desire for food, and the desire for money. Others perceive themselves in emotional terms, identifying their existence based on their emotions. Sometimes this is a positive emotion and sometimes it is a negative emotion. For example, a person may live off the fact that he is victorious about something. It may be something positive or something derogatory. The person lives his character traits and emotions, and identifies his reality based on these emotions and character. That is *Atzilus D'Yetzirah*: when one feels that his main vitality in life is coming from a certain emotion.

ASIYAH D'YETZIRAH

Let us now explore *Asiyah D'Asiyah* (within *Yetzirah*), the actualization or expression of an emotion or character trait.

When one actualizes love, it doesn't have to be a physical act of love. It can also be expressed in speech, or by nodding at the other person, or by giving a facial expression - anything that further actualizes the love.

Yetzirah D'Asiyah (within *Yetzirah*) is how the love is expressed. Two friends meet each other, they shake hands, and, at certain times, they hug. When they shake hands, this is a certain level of connection. (Maybe not in our times, but that is the way it is supposed to be.) Later when they hug, they are using a different form of connection. Each of these ways of connection is a different way of actualizing the feeling of love. At a different time, if one of them gives a gift, this is another form of actualizing the love, a different way of connecting to each other. So there are different ways in which people will express their love. This is *Yetzirah D'Asiyah* of *Yetzirah*.

Beriah D'Asiyah (within *Yetzirah*) is when there is organization to one's emotions. One doesn't give a hug and then give a handshake. There is a certain order of steps to follow, when one is expressing love. One does an act of love (*Asiyah D'Yetzirah*), and then one expresses it (*Yetzirah D'Yetzirah*), and one also must know how to give order and organization to this expression of love (*Beriah D'Yetzirah*).

Atzilus D'Asiyah (within *Yetzirah*) is when one views himself as one who expresses emotion to another. The Sages state that “One who smiles at another (showing him his white teeth) is greater than one who gives another [a cup of] white milk.” This personifies *Atzilus D'Asiyah* of *Yetzirah*. There are a few people who connect to people based on expressing what they feel. They view life as connection to people. This is very hard to find in our times. We can see it a lot with children, but very few adults today view life as a way to constantly connect with people. This is especially because there is a lot of self-absorption today. It is a perspective that life is about expressing my personal feelings to another and thereby connecting to another.

When people meet and they start talking, either it is because they are trying to get somewhere in their conversation, and there is some agenda or purpose they are trying to get. Or, they enjoy talking. Perhaps it is because they enjoy giving their opinions. But they are usually not doing this in order to connect to the other. They are rarely talking as a means of expressing their feelings to another in order to form a connection.

YETZIRAH D'YETZIRAH

We have so far explained the four divisions of *Asiyah D'Yetzirah*. Now we will proceed to explain *Yetzirah D'Yetzirah*, and its subdivisions.

Let's begin with *Asiyah D'Yetzirah* of *Yetzirah*. This is when I personally find something to have physical expression, before I have actualized it.

To illustrate, there is a plan to build a house before building it. One first visualizes the house and then gets to work on planning it and building it. *Asiyah D'Yetzirah* (of *Yetzirah*) is how something personally looks to me. Sometimes this can be imagination.

Yetzirah D'Yetzirah (of *Yetzirah*) is the power to actually create this physical image that one has visualized. Earlier we mentioned the concept that all of the *middos* have a certain *tzurah* (design and structure). However, many people don't understand what the concept of *tzurah* to *middos* is. They don't understand that there are many different dimensions to our *middos*. But if we deepen our perspective, we can notice this subtle concept.

For example, we can see that there are different ways of connecting to people. There are different tones of voice we use when we speak to different people, and these are signs of how well we are connected to the other. We have a superficial connection to someone or a deeper connection to someone. Each relationship with another is unique. With others, we are more open. With others,

we are more reserved. We speak about certain topics with some people and with others we don't say certain things. Sometimes this depends on the talker and other times it depends on the other, but usually it depends on both. In any case, there is a certain way that each relationship looks.

Beriah D'Yetzirah (of *Yetzirah*) is when one gives organization to the connection or to what he does. For example, if we tell a person to connect the dots between six different points, each person will do it in a different order. Some people will connect and relate to others first by talking to them and getting to know them, then doing things for them and with them, while others will first spend time together or do things together and only later will they talk to each other and develop a relationship with each other. In either of these cases, the person doesn't have a clear-cut approach in developing his relationships. *Beriah D'Yetzirah* (of *Yetzirah*) is when one has developed an approach to his relationships, and he follows a certain path, with a certain order to steps, when creating relationships with others.

Atzilus D'Yetzirah (of *Yetzirah*) is when one grasps a connection based on the *tzurah* of the connection. One who tends to imagine will understand this idea well, because he is used to imagining what the connection or relationship should look like. Such a person can understand well that there is a certain way to connect, and that this is what defines the connection. For example, if a person has a relative he has never met, he may imagine how he would like to relate to him and what the relationship should look like, even though he doesn't know the relative. He imagines what the relationship should look like, like if it should be a heavier or lighter kind of connection, and he visualizes the relationship.

As mentioned before, many of these concepts will be foreign to most people when they first hear of them. This is because most people do not view life as a way to constantly connect. Even though most people can have feelings and they can understand relationships and the nature of connecting, it is rare to find anyone who grasps how life itself can be a means of connection with people. A person whose soul is rooted in *Yetzirah* needs to always be connected to what he does whenever he is involved with something. Most people cannot identify with this.

BERIAH D'YETZIRAH

Let us proceed now to discuss *Beriah D'Yetzirah*. As mentioned, *Beriah* is about giving organization and order to a connection of relationship.

Asiyah D'Beriah (of *Yetzirah*) is when one has a clear structure of how to organize a connection or relationship, when one is personally clear of how to form a relationship or connection. This is when one has a personal understanding of how to relate and connect, and not because one has simply learned about it and gathered information about it. It is a relationship borne out of one's personal understanding.

Yetzirah D'Beriah (of *Yetzirah*) is when knows how to give *tzurah* to his organization. Even if one is clear about what the order of steps should be, when connecting to someone, one needs to know how to do this. To illustrate the idea, there is a certain way to make a table, and there is also a certain order of steps to take when making it, but what exactly has to come first and what exactly needs to comes second? Can one part of constructing the table ever be done before doing another part? There is a certain way to organize the building of the table. Even when you know how to build the table, you need to know what the exact plan is. In relationships as well, even after you know how to have a relationship, do you know which steps to take first, and which steps to take after that, in order to maintain a relationship? That is the power of *Yetzirah D'Beriah* (of *Yetzirah*).

Beriah D'Beriah (of *Yetzirah*) is the power of organization itself, to organize how to organize. As an example of this, there are those who can tell others how to build and organize something, who are responsible for organizing an event. There are organizers of an event, but who tells them how to organize it? The ones who show others how to organize things are only able to do so because they have the ability to organize and give order to their own ability of organizing. This is *Beriah D'Beriah* of *Yetzirah*.

Atzilus D'Beriah (of *Yetzirah*) is when one defines a relationship based on its *tzurah* (the structure). For example, some people will go to a wedding and they can go to sleep that night without thinking about what happened at the wedding, but others will recall all of the details at the wedding before they go to sleep, such as by thinking about everyone who was there, who was talking to whom, and in the order of events that all of this took place in. Some people overdo this, to the point that they become emotionally ill from this. That is clearly a detrimental use of this power. In any case, when one continuously reviews the *tzurah* (the structure) of something, it is the power of *Atzilus D'Beriah* of *Yetzirah*.

Here is another example, from the physical world. A person is in middle of designing a house that he will move into, and he keeps reviewing the plans for the house, and what needs to be built first,

and what will be built after that, etc. He visualizes all of the details of the house, and what he wants it to look like, and in the exact order that it will need to be built in.

ATZILUS D'YETZIRAH

Asiyah D'Atzilus (of *Yetzirah*) is when one does something because he grasps the *tzurah* of something. There is a *tzurah* (structure) to everything. When one understands and sees the *tzurah* of something, this is *Asiyah Atzilus D'Yetzirah*. When one sees a picture, either he will just see a nice looking picture itself, or he will see the *tzurah* that is contained in the nice picture. He is not focused on the picture itself, but on the *tzurah* contained in the picture. When one sees something and all he notices is the *tzurah* in something, this is *Asiyah D'Atzilus D'Yetzirah*.

(We are using examples from the physical world in order to relate to these concepts, because it is difficult to picture the *tzurah* of *middos*, whereas we are able to relate to the design of physical and material things from the world of *Asiyah*).

Yetzirah D'Atzilus (of *Yetzirah*) is when one grasps something based on how it is built and developed. For example, if an artist sees a picture, either he sees just the picture itself, or he sees different pictures coming together to form one picture. If he has a better eye, he can see the different shades and the different pictures within one picture. He sees a different picture, the different parts that make up the picture.

Beriah D'Atzilus (of *Yetzirah*) is when one recognizes the exact process and order of steps when it comes to connecting and relating.

To illustrate, a person orders a fridge to his house and when the delivery comes, the fridge doesn't fit through his door. He should have asked them first what the size of the fridge is and then see if it will be able to fit through his doorway or not. He forgot about the logistics. If the company who sent the fridge is very professional, they will know all of the logistics involved, and they will make sure first that the fridge can fit through his door, or perhaps through his window.

Here is a more spiritual example. How did Moshe Rabbeinu develop his way of developing his relationship to Hashem? Can anyone visualize what order of steps he took, in order to reach his level of closeness? Of course, we cannot know exactly how Moshe Rabbeinu did it, but if try to have some idea, we are using the power of *Beriah D'Atzilus D'Yetzirah*. This is an extreme example,

but the point is that *Beriah D'Atzilus of Yetzirah* is when one grasps the process of how to connect to something. When one immediately wants to get to the goal or purpose of something, but he doesn't know how to get there, he is lacking the perspective of *Beriah D'Atzilus D'Yetzirah*.

Atzilus D'Atzilus of Yetzirah is when one grasps the reality as a reality of *tzurah* (structure), meaning that he perceives all of reality as a reality of nothing else but *tzurah* (structure). Understandably, this concept will be very difficult to relate to.

IN CONCLUSION

Let's summarize and conclude our words about the realm of *Yetzirah*.

Much of the concepts here were difficult to understand. This is because we usually see the realm of *Asiyah* (action) as reality, but our emotions (which are rooted in *Yetzirah*) are naturally not as real and tangible to us than our actions are. Emotions are usually unclear and vague to us, viewed as a side factor, and often we push emotions and feelings aside, as if they have no bearing on reality. When we see the reality of emotions, we will have an easier time relating to the concepts of *Yetzirah*.

The subject of this lesson, which was about connecting to our emotions, *Yetzirah*, is certainly harder for us than becoming more connected to our actions (*Asiyah*), which was the subject of the previous chapter. But the more that we recognize the reality of emotions, the better we will be able to relate to the ideas described in this lesson, namely, the concept of *tzurah* (structure) to our emotions.

03 | BERIAH – THINKING

BERIAH - THINKING

Let us review so far a bit what we have discussed. There are four levels in the human soul: *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah* and *Atzilus*. We have so far discussed *Asiyah* and *Yetzirah*. Now we will try to explain how *Beriah* manifests in the soul.

As mentioned earlier, *Beriah* corresponds to the power of thought.

There are different abilities of thought. One kind of thinking is when we learn about the laws of the Torah, such as by learning *Mishnayos*, *Gemara*, and *halachah*. Another kind of thinking is when we learn about the nature of the *middos* (character traits) and emotions, which the Rambam refers to as *hilchos de'os* (the laws of conduct and proper behavior). But there is also another kind of thinking: the ability to think in the abstract. This is not about thinking what to do or thinking how to behave and feel. It is an ability to think in the abstract, and it does not involve any thinking about action, behavior or emotion.

Certainly we must learn about what to do and how to act, for the Sages state, “*Learn in order to do*”. But here we are explaining how to think in the first place: to think for the sake of thinking. Most people do not relate to this kind of thinking. Most people will think about what to do and how to do something, but it is rare for people think in the abstract. Only a few people will use this kind of thinking. Such thinking exists, but it is rare.

FOUR SUBDIVISIONS OF BERIAH/THINKING

Within *Beriah* (thinking), there are also the four levels of *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah* and *Atzilus*.

Let's first describe the first level, *Asiyah D'Beriah*. The power of *Asiyah D'Beriah* is not about thinking of what to do. If it is, then it is not classified as *Beriah*, it is classified as *Asiyah*, because it is action-oriented. Rather, *Asiyah D'Beriah* is more of an abstract kind of thinking, and it is not about what to do or how to do something. An example of this is when one thinks about why the world was created. This is a more abstract kind of thought. *Asiyah D'Beriah* is whenever one is thinking for a purpose.

There is a verse, “*All of them You made, with wisdom*”. The verse is not simply saying that the world was made, but that the world was made with purpose, with wisdom. When one thinks about the purpose of the world, is this mere thinking, or is it thinking for a purpose? It is purposeful thinking, though it is not about anything practical. *Asiyah D’Beriah* is about purposeful thinking.

Yetzirah D’Beriah is when there is a certain way of thinking. When one learns the words of the Sages, he can see that there are different ways of thinking. When learning Chumash, there are many commentaries: the *Ibn Ezra*, the Ramban, the *Ohr HaChaim*, and the *Kli Yakar*, etc. Each of them has a certain way of thinking. When one gets used to learning each of these commentaries, he can see that each of them has a certain way of thinking. The Maharal and the Ramchal have different ways of thinking. When one is familiar with a certain approach of thinking, this kind of thinking is *Yetzirah D’Beriah*. When the *Acharonim* are giving different responses to one question, each of them is a different viewpoint, a different way of thinking, not just a different answer.

Beriah D’Beriah is to think of the root of a matter, as opposed to thinking of the branch of a matter. When approaching a matter, do you think of the various details involved, or do you try to get to the root of the matter? When you think of the root, that is the thinking of *Beriah D’Beriah*. This kind of thinking gives further structure and organization to a specific way of thinking.

Atzilus D’Beriah is when one views life as a reality of analytical thought. The Sages lived in a world of thought. This does not mean that one escapes into the world of thought. It is to live in a world of thought: to view thought as life itself.

We will now go through each of these in greater detail.

ASIYAH D’BERIAH – PURPOSEFUL THOUGHT

Asiyah D’Beriah is purposeful thinking, as explained earlier. This also divides into four parts: *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah* and *Atzilus*.

Asiyah of *Asiyah d’Beriah* is when a person has purposeful thinking and afterwards he has formed a conclusion from his purposeful thinking. What does he have from his thinking? The conclusion that he lives with after he has done his thinking is the *Asiyah* of *Asiyah d’Beriah*. Whatever conclusions he remains with from his thinking, that is *Asiyah* of *Asiyah d’Beriah*.

If you ask a person what he has concluded with, he may say, “I thought about it a lot. I have different possibilities I’m thinking of, I’ve thought it through a lot...” But he has not actually arrived at any conclusive approach, after all of his thinking. He is not using the power of *Asiyah d’Asiyah d’Beriah*. Although we cannot come to a perfect conclusion, because we are human beings, we still have the ability to lean towards a certain conclusion and go with it, even if we are unsure.

Going further, *Yetzirah* of *Asiyah d’Beriah* is when one sees his thinking patterns as part of his purposeful thinking. This kind of thinking is not only about coming to a conclusion, it is also about the very thinking process itself. For example, when one learns the *sefarim* of the Maharal, it is not just about learning about all of the fundamental insights of the Maharal, it is also about learning the way of thinking of the Maharal.

Atzilus of *Asiyah d’Beriah* is when one seeks an organized way of thinking. When one lives in this way, he seeks to give organization to each thing he comes across. It is a perspective that all of life is about purposeful thinking. A person like this will usually think about death and *Olam HaBa*. The Sages encourage this kind of thinking, in which one engages in purposeful thinking all the time, always thinking about the purpose of our life. A person might know the purpose of life, but does he view this as the essence of his life? Only when he views this as the entire reality of his life is he accessing the perspective of *Atzilus* of *Asiyah d’Beriah*.

YETZIRAH D’BERIAH – A DEVELOPED WAY OF THOUGHT

Yetzirah D’Beriah, as mentioned, is when one has a certain way of thinking. In some of the works of our Sages, we can see a certain way of thinking, and in other works of the Sages, this is not as apparent. *Yetzirah D’Beriah* divides into four areas of *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah* and *Atzilus*.

Asiyah of *Yetzirah d’Beriah* is when one views his life as a way of thinking. This is when one learns anything and he is learning it to sharpen his own way of thinking.

Yetzirah of *Yetzirah d’Beriah* is when one gets to the root of his way of thinking. There are different ways of thinking. If one learns different ways of thinking and he can answer a question according to these different ways of thinking, he is using this power of *Yetzirah D’Yetzirah D’Beriah*. He can tell you different answers based on different ways of thinking that he recognizes.

For example, Rav Chaim of Brisk was shown a sefer and he began answering the questions based on the author's way of thinking, because he recognized and absorbed the way of thinking of the author. It wasn't his own way of thinking, it was that particular author's way of thinking, and Rav Chaim recognized that other way of thinking and he was able to give an answer according to that way of thinking. There are people who can think, they can know a lot of the sefarim of the Ramchal and Maharal and other sefarim, but they don't know how to think according to these ways of thinking. They know all of the information, but they don't know the style of thinking.

Beriah of *Yetzirah d'Beriah* is to give organization to the particular way of thinking. If one is learning with deep thought, he may begin with deep thought, or he may begin with simple thought and later deepen his thinking. He may begin with general thinking and later with detailed thinking, or he may first see the details and later think generally.

Atzilus of *Yetzirah d'Beriah* is when one sees analytical thought as the main part of life, the reality of life itself. It is not yet his entire life, but it is definitely a reality in his life. You may speak to people who can think very deeply and they can say insightful words, but two minutes later they are back to the routine in their life, as if they were not discussing anything beforehand. One minute they are saying something deep and insightful, and a minute later they are speaking about nonsense. This happens because don't view their thinking as their life itself. They know how to think, but they don't view thinking as life itself.

BERIAH D'BERIAH – ORGANIZED THOUGHT

Beriah d'Beriah is the power of organized thought. Let us now explain the four levels of *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah* and *Atzilus* within *Beriah D'Beriah*.

Asiyah of *Beriah d'Beriah* is when views all of his life as organized thought.

Yetzirah of *Beriah d'Beriah* is when one has organization in his ways of thinking, and this is the very reality of his life.

Beriah of *Beriah d'Beriah* is when one has organization within his organized thought. It is the power to give order and rearrangement to one's thoughts after the thoughts have already been organized. For example, when speaking in front of a crowd, a person can think of different ways to convey the messages that he wants to give other. In either case, he has the same thoughts to convey, but he can

describe the same point from different angles, and he can switch the order of what he wants to say, based on what the crowd needs to hear.

Many times people ask questions in the middle of the *shiur* and this throws the speaker off track, because he loses the organized flow of his thought. Another kind of person will know how to remain on track, because he has different ways to organize his thoughts, and he is not limited to any one way, so he is not thrown off course from a question. He can quickly re-organize his thoughts in different ways. That is an example of *Beriah* of *Beriah d’Beriah*.

Atzilus of *Beriah d’Beriah* is when organized and structured thought becomes one’s entire life. For example, the Sages were able to organize the Talmud in a very specific order, of which tractate should come first and which one should come after that, which chapter should be placed before another, and which particular *Mishnah* or *Gemara* should come first and which should come later. The Rambam also organized all of his *halachos* together in *sefer Mishnah Torah*, in a very specific order. This was not only a power of the Sages to give organization to their words and wisdom, but because organization in their wisdom personified their entire life.

ATZILUS D’BERIAH – A LIFE OF THINKING

We will now progress to discuss *Atzilus d’Beriah*. As mentioned, this kind of thinking is when one views life as analytical thinking [and later we will explain its four subdivisions].

There are very few people who live like this. These are people who never stop thinking, even for a moment, and this is because thinking is their very existence in life. All of reality is viewed as thought, according to this perspective.

The verse says regarding Torah study, “*And you shall immerse yourself in it, day and night,*” and this can only happen when one is able to think naturally all the time about Torah, no less than he finds it natural to breathe all the time. A person breathes naturally and he doesn’t need to force himself to do this, because the act of breathing upkeep his existence. A person is able to have the very same attitude towards Torah: thinking about words of Torah fuels and upkeep one’s very existence.

To illustrate, Rav Baruch Ber Lebowitz zt”l once heard someone speaking to a crowd about the importance of the Torah, and he heard the person say, “Torah is like the oxygen that we breathe.

Without it, we cannot live our life.” Rav Baruch Ber objected, and he yelled out, “No! The Torah is not our oxygen, it is our life itself!”

When a person views Torah thinking as his very reality, he doesn't view Torah learning as a matter of exertion and as a *mitzvah* to learn Torah - he views Torah study as reality itself. Of course, Torah study certainly requires exertion, and the person is certainly willing to undergo exertion in studying Torah. But with the perspective of *Atzilus d'Beriah*, one doesn't view Torah as a matter of exertion, but as reality itself.

Most people are thinking all the time about various things that are bothering them and which cause them to be preoccupied, so understandably, most people cannot relate to the concept of viewing Torah thinking as our very life itself.

THE FOUR SUBDIVISIONS OF ATZILUS D'BERIAH

Atzilus, as we explained, is about viewing thought as reality. Let us now go through the four subdivisions.

Asiyah of *Atzilus d'Beriah* is when one views all of his life as a way to achieve purposeful thinking. To give an idea of this, there is a story told of a certain *Gadol* who said that if he would be placed in a room for a hundred years without any *sefer*, he would keep analyzing one thought alone. There are many points contained in this story, but with regards to our current discussion, we can say that this is the power of *Asiyah d'Atzilus d'Beriah*. There is purposeful thinking (which is *Asiyah D'Beriah*), and then there is a higher level, where one essentially views all of his life as purposeful thinking, where he keeps thinking without pause, resembling a tree firmly planted in the ground, which doesn't budge.

Yetzirah of *Atzilus d'Beriah* is when one views reality through a certain way of thinking. According to his viewpoint, the way of thinking that one has is the way to live life and it is everything. He cannot think for too long about anything else other than his particular way of thinking. Even if someone tells him a joke and he laughs, he will quickly revert back to his own way of thinking. He takes his way of thinking very seriously, and it is all he will keep his thoughts on.

Beriah of *Atzilus d'Beriah* is when one views all of his life as deep, analytical thoughts that are all organized. To give an idea of this, let us contrast the difference between the sefarim of the Maharal

and the Ramchal. The Maharal clearly had a deep way of thinking, which was very organized and which followed a certain pattern. However, there is no specific order to the Maharal's teachings. They are dispersed throughout the many different sefarim of the *Maharal* and in his commentary to *Pirkei Avos*. The Ramchal, however, organized all of his wisdom and gave an order to it in his *sefarim*. It is rare to find sefarim like the Ramchal's, which organize together many different principles. When one's entire life is mainly about giving order and organization to a way of thinking, this is the kind of thinking of *Beriah* of *Atzilus d'Beriah*.

Atzilus of *Atzilus d'Beriah* is when one bases his life on the very root, the "first thought," of his thinking, and he views his entire life through the prism of his root thought. This is a very subtle kind of thinking, so we shall elaborate more on it.

When one views thinking as life itself, he can keep going from one thought to another, with ease. He can keep thinking of different thoughts, and he is a natural thinker. We have explained that this is the "*Asiyah*" level of *Atzilus d'Beriah*. A higher level is when develops a certain way of thinking and he views everything in his life through that way of thinking. This is the "*Yetzirah*" level of *Atzilus d'Beriah*. A higher level than this is to organize one's way of thinking, and to view life through an organized, specific way of thinking. But the highest level is when is constantly thinking through the root of his thought – through the "first thought" that is unconsciously motivating all of a person's other thoughts.

This is a very deep kind of thinking. It is an ability to base all of one's life on one thought alone. Consider the following. If a person constantly engages in purposeful thinking and he views all of life as a means to engage in purposeful thinking (which we described before as the "*Atzilus*" level within *Asiyah d'Beriah*, a far lower level than what we are describing now), he may go through all of his life thinking that life is always about contemplating death, *Gan Eden*, *Olam HaBa*, etc.? These are all examples of purposeful thinking, and they are all truthful, but it is not yet getting to the root. What is the root behind all of these thoughts? When one is thinking about the very reality of the Creator. Without the reality of the Creator, none of these concepts have any meaning. So the thought about the very reality of the Creator is the root of all purposeful thinking, because without it, there is no greater goal to all of one's purposeful thinking.

When we are aware of the reality of the Creator, all other thoughts (such as contemplating death, *Gan Eden*, *Gehinnom*, *Olam HaBa*, etc.) are based upon this root thought. When one lives his life by such a thought, this is the *Atzilus* level of *Atzilus d'Beriah*. In contrast, if one is not thinking all

the time about the existence of the Creator, even if he is thinking all time about the meaning of life and death and Next World, he is not thinking from the root. His purposeful thinking is on the level of *Asiyah d'Beriah*, not *Atzilus d'Beriah*.

Here is an example to relate to it better. When a young person who hasn't yet gotten married thinks that the purpose of life is all about marriage, or when a married person without children thinks that the purpose of his life right now is to have children, although these are all examples of purposeful thinking, because the person is taking one important thought and living his life by it, the person is not thinking through the root, because his purpose in life keeps changing, depending on the current stage of life. By contrast, there is a way to live life with a root thought.

When a person thinks regularly about the purpose of life, what does this mean? For example, if one realizes that life is all about the fundamental concept of revealing more and more *emunah* (belief and faith in G-d), does he consider *emunah* to be the very starting point and ending point of life, or does he merely see all of his experiences in life as means to achieve *emunah*? A person with purposeful thinking will think about *emunah* a lot, but only from his experiences. His grasp of *emunah* will be weaker than the person who views *emunah* as the beginning and end of life. When one views *emunah* as the beginning and end of life, everything else in between (all of his life experiences) will be included in this as a result, but his *emunah* will not be limited to his own experiences. He will be accessing *emunah* on a much steadier basis, and on a much deeper level.

This kind of deep thinking can be accessed by getting used to one thought alone, such as by having thoughts all the time about *emunah*. But the question is: Does one activate thoughts of *emunah* all the time by thinking about the existence of Hashem, or because he thinks that all of his life is meant to bring himself closer to achieving *emunah*? While either way of thinking is commendable, there is a big difference between the quality of these two ways of thinking. The second kind of thinking scatters one's thinking, because when one is trying to make sense of his life and seeing how it all brings him to *emunah*, there will be much that he is not clear about. He will become "scattered" in his thoughts whenever he thinks of anything which he can't make sense of.

By contrast, when one views all of life as a revelation of *emunah*, because he is aware that *emunah* is at the beginning and end of life (it is the basis of life, and it is the goal of life), he is getting to the root of his thinking about *emunah*.

This is a very subtle point to understanding. By thinking of one thought alone, (i.e. *emunah*), as opposed to any other factors, one is placing his thinking all the time in the realm of *Atzilus* within *Atzilus d'Beriah*. He is connecting himself all the time with the root of all purposeful thinking. By thinking about *emunah* (the root), he is connecting himself with the root and purpose of all purposeful thinking (contemplating death, the Next World, etc.)

ATZILUS

We have so far explained the four realms within *Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Beriah* in our souls. As for *Atzilus*, we cannot even speak about it. The Arizal says that there are very few souls who are rooted in *Atzilus*, and even these few souls don't even know it is their soul root.

Once a person came to Rav Mordechai Sharabi and told him that he has certain fears. Rav Sharabi told the person that he has a very high soul, rooted in the realm of *Atzilus*, which causes him to have these fears that he can't explain logically. From this story, we can see that a person can have a very high soul yet he isn't even aware of it. There is very little spoken about this particular subject, and therefore most people never discover it.

IN CONCLUSION: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR SOUL ROOT

Every person should find which particular area discussed in these lessons described him the most. One should try to understand which of the descriptions are depicting his primary trait. Otherwise, a person will try to involve himself with all kinds of details in *avodah*, but he is not connecting to any of it from his true self, because he hasn't yet identified his primary aspect.

After one discovers his primary aspect, he should then make it into the main emphasis throughout all of his personal inner work and *avodah*. Otherwise, the person's soul is not really connected to whatever he will be involved with.

Knowing your primary aspect (which tells you what your particular soul root is) takes a lot of learning about the soul, and it doesn't come to you quickly. After you have spent a lot of time and energy learning about the soul in general, and after having amassed a lot of information about the soul, you will eventually discover the primary aspect of your soul. By uncovering your primary aspect – which is also your strongest and most positive aspect of your personality - you will then be able to bring it out and access it more. You will then be able to traverse life properly and succeed in

your life's mission. You also will be gaining vitality from your inner self, because it will become a source of immense inner pleasure to you, when you become aware of the strongest part of your personality.

Of course, there will always be difficulties in life, but it will be made much easier, once you discover your primary aspect and you know how to use it.

May we merit from the Creator to achieve the proper perspective.



English translation based on original Hebrew shiurim
<http://www.bilvavi.net/sugya/worlds>