

## הלכות יסודי התורה • פרק רביעי

Complete Word-for-Word Interlinear • Navy &amp; Gold Edition

## CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam takes us on a deep journey into the physical makeup of the world below the sky, showing us how Hashem created everything from four basic elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. We will learn how these elements combine to form every single physical thing in our world, from simple stones to the complex body of a human being, each with its own unique nature and balance of warmth, cold, dryness, and moisture.

We will also see how these elements are in a constant state of movement and change, always returning to their roots and shifting from one to another. Through understanding this beautiful, orderly cycle of creation, a Yid can come to a profound appreciation of Hashem's wisdom and the wondrous way He sustains the universe every single moment.

*All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.*

ה"א

## ארבעת היסודות של כל הנבראים תחת הרקיע

Halacha 1 • The Four Elements Composing All Creations Below the Sky

אַרְבַּעָה גּוּפִים הֵלְלוּ שֵׁהֶם אֵשׁ וְרוּחַ וּמַיִם וָאָרֶץ הֵם יְסוּדוֹת כָּל  
all are the foundations of they and earth and water and wind fire which are these bodies Four  
הַנִּבְרָאִים לְמַטָּה מִן הָרָקִיעַ. וְכָל שִׁיְהִיָּה מֵאָדָם וּמִבְּהֵמָה וְעוֹף  
and fowl and from beast from man that exists And everything the sky from below the creations  
וְרֶמֶשׂ וְדָג וְצִמָּח וּמִתְּכַת וְאֲבָנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמִרְגָּלִיּוֹת וּשְׂאֵר אֲבָנֵי  
stones of and other and pearls precious and stones and metal and plant and fish and crawling creature  
בְּנֵי וְהָרִים וְגוֹשֵׁי עֶפֶר הַכֹּל גָּלְמָן מִחֶבֶר מֵאַרְבַּעָה יְסוּדוֹת הֵלְלוּ.  
these foundations from the four composed their matter is everything earth and lumps of and mountains building  
נִמְצְאוּ כָּל הַגּוּפִים שְׁלֵמָה מִן הָרָקִיעַ חוּץ מֵאַרְבַּעָה יְסוּדוֹת הָאֵלּוּ  
these foundations from the four except the sky from that are below the bodies all It turns out  
מִחֲבָרִים מִגֵּלָם וְצוּרָה. וְגֵלָם שֶׁלָּהֶם מִחֶבֶר מֵאַרְבַּעָה יְסוּדוֹת הָאֵלּוּ.  
these foundations from the four is composed of theirs and the matter and form from matter are composed  
אֲבָל כָּל אֶחָד מֵאַרְבַּעָה הַיְסוּדוֹת אֵינוֹ מִחֶבֶר אֶלָּא מִגֵּלָם וְצוּרָה בְּלֻבָּד:  
alone and form from matter except composed is not foundations of the four one each But

*This halacha explains that all physical creations below the sky are composed of the four basic elements: fire, wind, water, and earth.*

ה"ב

## ארבעת היסודות והרכבת הגופים

Halacha 2 • The Four Elements and the Composition of All Physical Bodies

דֶּרֶךְ הָאֵשׁ וְהָרוּחַ לְהִיּוֹת מִהֶלָּכָם מִמַּטָּה מִטְּבוֹר הָאָרֶץ לְמַעְלָה  
upward the earth from the center of from below their movement is to be and the wind the fire The way of

כְּלַפֵּי הָרָקִיעַ. וְדָרָךְ הַמַּיִם וְהָאָרֶץ לִהְיוֹת מִתַּחַת הָרָקִיעַ

the sky from under their movement is to be and the earth the water and the way of the sky toward

לְמַטָּה עַד לְאֲמָצֵעַ. שְׁאֲמָצֵעַ הָרָקִיעַ הוּא הַמַּטָּה שָׁאִין לְמַטָּה מִמֶּנּוּ.

than it lower that there is no is the bottom it the sky for the middle of the middle until downward

וְאִין הֵלֹכֶם לֹא בְּדַעְתָּם וְלֹא בְּחִפְצָם אֲלָא מִנְהֵג שְׁנִקְבַּע

that was established a pattern but by their will and not by their knowledge not their movement and there is no

בָּהֶן וְטִבֵּעַ שְׁנִטְבַּע בָּהֶן. טִבֵּעַ הָאֵשׁ חֹם וְיָבֵשׁ וְהוּא קָל מִכָּלָם.

of all of them is light and it and dry is hot the fire The nature of in them that was imprinted and a nature in them

וְהָרוּחַ חֹם וְלֹחַ. וְהַמַּיִם קָרִים וְלֹחִים. וְהָאָרֶץ יְבֵשָׁה וְקָרָה. וְהִיא כְבֵּדָה

is heavy and it and cold is dry and the earth and moist is cold and the water and moist is hot and the wind

מִכָּלָם וְהַמַּיִם קָלִים מִמֶּנָּה לְפִיכָךְ נִמְצְאוּ לְמַעַלָּה עַל הָאָרֶץ. וְהָרוּחַ

and the wind the earth on above they are found therefore than it is lighter and the water of all of them

קָל מִן הַמַּיִם לְפִיכָךְ הוּא מְרַחֵף עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם. וְהָאֵשׁ קָל מִן

than is lighter and the fire the water the surface of over hovers it therefore the water than is lighter

הָרוּחַ. וּמִפְּנֵי שֶׁהֵם יְסוּדוֹת לְכָל גּוֹפִים שֶׁתַּחַת הָרָקִיעַ יִמָּצֵא כָּל

every will be found the sky that are under bodies for all are foundations that they and because the wind

גּוֹף וְגוּף מֵאָדָם וּבְהֵמָה וְחַיָּה וְעוֹף וְדָג וְצֶמַח וּמִתְכַּת וְאֶבֶן גְּלָמוֹ

its physical matter and stone and metal and plant and fish and bird and beast and animal from man and body body

מִחֻבֵּר מֵאֵשׁ רוּחַ וּמַיִם וְעָפָר. וְאֶרְבָּעָתָן יִתְעַרְבוּ בְּיַחַד וְיִשְׁתַּנּוּ כָּל

each and change together mix and the four of them and dust and water and wind from fire combined

אֶחָד מֵהֶם בְּעֵת הָעֲרוּב עַד שִׁימָצֵא הַמְּחֻבֵּר מֵאֶרְבָּעָתָן אִינוֹ דוּמָה

similar is not from the four of them the combined that is found until the mixing at the time of of them one

לְאֶחָד מֵהֶן כִּשְׁהוּא לְבֵדוֹ. וְאִין בְּמַעֲרַב מֵהֶן אֶפְלוּ חֵלֶק אֶחָד שֶׁהוּא

that is one part even of them in the mixture and there is not alone when it is of them to one

אֵשׁ בְּפָנֵי עֲצָמוֹ אוֹ מַיִם בְּפָנֵי עֲצָמוֹ אוֹ אֶרֶץ בְּפָנֵי עֲצָמָה אוֹ רוּחַ בְּפָנֵי

by wind or itself by earth or themselves by water or itself by fire

עֲצָמָה אֲלָא הַכֹּל נִשְׁתַּנּוּ וְנִעְשׂוּ גּוּף אֶחָד. וְכָל גּוּף וְגוּף הַמְּחֻבֵּר

the combined and body body and every one body and became changed the whole but itself

מֵאֶרְבָּעָתָן יִמָּצֵא בּוֹ קָר וְחֹם לֹחַ וְיָבֵשׁ כְּאֶחָד. אֲבָל יֵשׁ מֵהֶם

of them there are but as one and dryness moisture and heat cold in it will be found from the four of them

גּוֹפִים שִׁיחֵיהֶם בָּהֶם חֲזָקָה מִיְסוֹד הָאֵשׁ כְּמוֹ בְּעָלֵי נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה.

living soul possessors of like the fire from the element of strength in them that there will be bodies

לְפִיכָךְ יֵרָאֶה בָּהֶם הַחֹם יָתֵר. וְיֵשׁ מֵהֶן גּוֹפִין שִׁיחֵיהֶם בָּהֶן חֲזָקָה

strength in them that there will be bodies of them and there are more the heat in them will appear therefore

מִיְסוֹד הָאָרֶץ כְּמוֹ הָאֲבָנִים. לְפִיכָךְ יֵרָאֶה בָּהֶם הַיָּבֵשׁ הָרַבָּה. וְיֵשׁ

and there are much the dryness in them will appear therefore the stones like the earth from the element of

מֵהֶן גּוּפִין שִׁיְהִיָּה בָּהֶן חֲזָקָה מִיִּסּוּד הַמַּיִם. לְפִיכָךְ יֵרָאֶה בָּהֶם  
in them will appear therefore the water from the element of strength in them that there will be bodies of them

הֵלֵךְ יֵתֵר. וְעַל הַדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה יִמָּצֵא גּוֹף חֵם יֵתֵר מִגּוּף אֲחֵר חֵם.  
hot another than a body more hot a body will be found this the way and on more the moisture

וְגּוֹף יָבֵשׁ יֵתֵר מִגּוּף אֲחֵר יָבֵשׁ. וְכֵן יִמָּצְאוּ גּוּפִים שִׁירָאָה בָּהֶן  
in them that will appear bodies will be found and so dry another than a body more dry and a body

הַקָּר בְּלִבְדוֹ. וְגּוּפִים יֵרָאֶה בָּהֶן הֵלֵךְ בְּלִבְדוֹ. וְגּוּפִים יֵרָאֶה בָּהֶן הַקָּר  
the cold in them will appear and bodies alone the moisture in them will appear and bodies alone the cold

וְהַיָּבֵשׁ כְּאֶחָד בְּשׂוּהוֹ. אוֹ הַקָּר וְהַלֵּךְ כְּאֶחָד בְּשׂוּהוֹ. אוֹ הַחֵם וְהַיָּבֵשׁ  
and the dryness the heat or equally as one and the moisture the cold or equally as one and the dryness

כְּאֶחָד בְּשׂוּהוֹ. אוֹ הַחֵם וְהַלֵּךְ כְּאֶחָד בְּשׂוּהוֹ. לְפִי רֹב הַיִּסּוּד  
the element the majority of according to equally as one and the moisture the heat or equally as one

שֶׁהָיָה בְּעֶקֶר הַתַּעֲרֻכָּת יֵרָאֶה מַעֲשֵׂה אוֹתוֹ הַיִּסּוּד וְטַבְעוֹ בְּגּוּף  
in the body and its nature element that the action of will appear the mixture in the essence of that was

הַמְעֻרָּב:  
the mixed

*This halacha explains the natural tendencies of the four fundamental elements—fire, wind, water, and earth—and how they combine to form all physical matter.*

ה'ל"ג

### הַתַּפְרָקוֹת הַגּוּפִים הַמְרֻכָּבִים לְאַרְבַּעַת הַיִּסּוּדוֹת

*Halacha 3 · The Ultimate Decomposition of All Combined Entities into the Four Elements*

וְכָל הַמְחֻבָּר מֵאַרְבָּעָה יִסּוּדוֹת אֵלּוּ הוּא נִפְרָד בְּסוֹף. יֵשׁ שֶׁהוּא נִפְרָד  
separates that it there is in the end separates it these elements from four entity combined And every

לְאַחַר יָמִים אֶחָדִים. וְיֵשׁ שֶׁהוּא נִפְרָד לְאַחַר שָׁנִים רַבּוֹת. וְכָל  
and everything many years after separates that it and there is few days after

שֶׁנִּתְחַבֵּר מֵהֶם אִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁלֹּא יִפְרָד לָהֶן. אֲפִלּוּ הַזָּהָב וְהָאֶדָם  
and the ruby the gold even into them it will separate that not is impossible from them that was combined

אִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁלֹּא יִפְסֹד וְיִחְזֹר לִיִּסּוּדוֹתָיו. וְיָשׁוּב מִקְצָתוֹ לָאֵשׁ.  
to the fire a portion of it and return to its elements and return it will decompose that not is impossible

וּמִקְצָתוֹ לַמַּיִם. וּמִקְצָתוֹ לָרוּחַ. וּמִקְצָתוֹ לָאָרֶץ:  
to the earth and a portion of it to the wind and a portion of it to the water and a portion of it

*The Rambam explains that every physical compound, even the most durable like gold, must eventually decompose back into its four constituent elements.*

ה'ל"ד

### חֲזֵרַת כָּל הַנִּפְסָדִים אֶל אַרְבַּעַת הַיִּסּוּדוֹת

*Halacha 4 · The Return of All Decomposing Entities to the Four Elements*

הוּאִיל וְכָל הַנִּפְסָד יִפְרָד לִיִּסּוּדוֹת אֵלּוּ לָמָּה נֶאֱמַר לָאֶדָם  
to Adam was it said why these to elements will separate decomposing entity and every Since

בראשית ג יט "וְאֵל עָפָר תָּשׁוּב". לְפִי שָׂרָב בְּנִינּוּ מִן הָעָפָר. וְלֹא

and not the dust is from his structure that most of because you shall return" dust "and to 19 3 Genesis

כָּל הַנִּפְסָד כְּשִׁיפָסַד מִיָּד יִחְזֹר לְאַרְבָּעָה הִיסּוּדוֹת. אֲלָא

rather the elements to four will return immediately when it decomposes decomposing entity every

יִפָּסַד וְיִחְזֹר לְדָבָר אֲחֵר וְדָבָר אֲחֵר לְדָבָר אֲחֵר וְסוֹף הַדְּבָרִים

the things and the end of other to a thing other and a thing other to a thing and returns it decomposes

יִחְזֹר לִיסּוּדוֹת וְנִמְצְאוּ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים חוֹזְרִין חֲלִילָה:

in a cycle returning the things all and they are found to the elements it will return

The Rambam explains why man is said to return to dust specifically, and how the cycle of decomposition eventually leads back to the four elements.

ה'י ה

הַשְׁתַּנּוּת אַרְבַּעַת הִיסּוּדוֹת זֶה לָזֶה

Halacha 5 · The Constant Transformation of the Four Elements into One Another

אַרְבָּעָה יְסוּדוֹת הָאֵלוּ מִשְׁתַּנִּים זֶה לָזֶה תָּמִיד בְּכָל יוֹם וּבְכָל שָׁעָה

hour and in every day in every constantly into this this change these elements Four

מִקְצָתוֹ לֹא כָּל גּוּפָן. כִּיצַד. מִקְצָת הָאָרֶץ הַקְּרוּבָה מִן הַמַּיִם מִשְׁתַּנִּית

changes the water to which is close the earth A portion of How so their body all of not a portion of them

וּמִתְפֹּרֶרֶת וְנִעֲשִׂית מַיִם. וְכֵן מִקְצָת הַמַּיִם הַסְּמוּכִים לָרוּחַ מִשְׁתַּנִּין

changes to the wind which is close the water a portion of And so water and becomes and crumbles

וּמִתְמַסְסִין וְהוֹיֵן רוּחַ. וְכֵן הָרוּחַ מִקְצָתוֹ הַסְּמוּךְ לָאֵשׁ מִשְׁתַּנָּה

changes to the fire which is close a portion of it the wind And so wind and becomes and dissolves

וּמִתְחַלֵּל וְנִעֲשֶׂה אֵשׁ. וְכֵן הָאֵשׁ מִקְצָתָהּ הַסְּמוּךְ לָרוּחַ מִתְחַלֵּל

transforms to the wind which is close a portion of it the fire And so fire and becomes and transforms

מִשְׁתַּנָּה וּמִתְכַּנֵּס וְנִעֲשֶׂה רוּחַ. וְכֵן הָרוּחַ מִקְצָתוֹ הַסְּמוּךְ לַמַּיִם מִשְׁתַּנָּה

changes to the water which is close a portion of it the wind And so wind and becomes and condenses changes

וּמִתְכַּנֵּס וְנִעֲשֶׂה מַיִם. וְכֵן הַמַּיִם מִקְצָתוֹ הַסְּמוּךְ לָאָרֶץ מִשְׁתַּנָּה

changes to the earth which is close a portion of it the water And so water and becomes and condenses

וּמִתְכַּנֵּס וְנִעֲשֶׂה אֶרֶץ. וְשְׁנוּי זֶה מְעַט מְעַט וּלְפִי אֶרֶץ הַיָּמִים.

the days the length of and according to by little is little this And change earth and becomes and condenses

וְאֵין כָּל הִיסּוּד מִשְׁתַּנָּה עַד שִׁיעֲשֶׂה כָּל הַמַּיִם רוּחַ אוֹ כָּל הָרוּחַ אֵשׁ.

fire the wind all of or wind the water all of there will be made until changes the element all of And not

שְׂאִי אֶפְשָׁר שִׁיבִטֵּל אֶחָד מִן הִיסּוּדוֹת הָאַרְבָּעָה. אֲלָא מִקְצָת יִשְׁתַּנָּה

will change a portion rather the four the elements of one that there be nullified impossible for it is

מֵאֵשׁ לָרוּחַ וּמִקְצָת יִשְׁתַּנָּה מֵרוּחַ לָאֵשׁ. וְכֵן בֵּין כָּל אֶחָד וְחֵבְרוֹ

and its fellow one each between And so to fire from wind will change and a portion to wind from fire

יִמָּצֵא הַשְּׁנוּי בֵּין אַרְבַּעַתָּן וְחוֹזְרוֹת חֲלִילָה לְעוֹלָם:

forever in a cycle and they return the four of them between the change will be found

This halacha describes the physical process of the four elements changing into one another in a continuous cycle without any element ever being completely destroyed.

ה'י

## התחברות היסודות ונתינת הצורה על ידי המלאך

Halacha 6: The Combination of the Elements and the Bestowal of Form by the Tenth Angel

וְשֵׁנוֹי זֶה יִהְיֶה בְּסִבִּיבַת הַגִּלְגָּל וּמִסְבִּיבָתוֹ יִתְחַבְּרוּ אַרְבַּעַתָּן וְיִהְיֶה  
and will be the four of them will combine and from its revolution the sphere by the revolution of will be this And change  
מֵהֶן שָׂאָר גְּלָמֵי בְּנֵי אָדָם וְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה צֶמַח וְאֶבֶן וּמִתְכַּת.  
and metal and stone plant beast and the soul of man sons of the physical matter of the rest of from them  
וְהָאֵל נוֹתֵן לְכָל גֶּלֶם וְגֶלֶם צוּרָה רְאוּיָה לוֹ עַל יְדֵי מַלְאָךְ הָעֲשִׂירִי  
the tenth the angel the hands of by to it appropriate a form and matter matter to every gives and God  
שֶׁהִיא הַצּוּרָה הַנִּקְרָאת אִישִׁים:  
ishim that is called the form which is

This halacha explains how the movement of the celestial sphere causes the four elements to combine into physical creations, which then receive their specific forms from the tenth level of angels.

ה'י

## החבור בין הגלם והצורה והשגת הצורות הנבדלות

Halacha 7: The Connection Between Matter and Form and the Perception of Formless Beings

לְעוֹלָם אֵין אַתָּה רוֹאֶה גֶלֶם בְּלֹא צוּרָה אוֹ צוּרָה בְּלֹא גֶלֶם. אֲלֹא לֵב  
the heart of but matter without form or form without matter see you not Forever  
הָאָדָם הוּא שֶׁמִּחֲלֵק גּוּף הַנִּמָּצֵא בְּדַעְתּוֹ וְיוֹדֵעַ שֶׁהוּא מְחַבֵּר מִגִּלָּם  
of matter is composed that it and knows in his mind that is found the body that divides it man  
וְצוּרָה. וְיוֹדֵעַ שֶׁיֵּשׁ שָׁם גּוּפִים שֶׁגִּלָּמָם מְחַבֵּר מֵאַרְבַּעַת הַיְסוּדוֹת.  
elements of the four is composed whose matter bodies there that there are and knows and form  
וְגּוּפִים שֶׁגִּלָּמָם פָּשוּט וְאֵינוֹ מְחַבֵּר מִגִּלָּם אֲחֵר. וְהַצּוּרוֹת שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם גֶּלֶם  
matter have that do not and the forms another of matter composed and is not is simple whose matter and bodies  
אֵינָן נִרְאִין לְעֵין אֲלֹא בְּעֵין הַלֵּב הֵן יְדוּעִין. כְּמוֹ שֶׁיְדַעְנוּ אֲדוֹן  
the Master of we know just as are known they the heart with the eye of but by the eye seen are not  
הַכֹּל בְּלֹא רְאִית עֵין:  
the eye seeing of without everything

This halacha explains that physical matter and form are inseparable in reality, and that formless spiritual entities can only be perceived through the intellect.

ה'י

## צורת האדם וההבדל בין הנפש לתאר

Halacha 8: The Form of Man and the Distinction Between Soul and Physical Appearance

נֶפֶשׁ כָּל בָּשָׂר הִיא צוּרָתוֹ שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ הָאֵל וְהַדַּעַת הַיְתֵרָה הַמְצוּיָה  
that is found the extra and the intellect God to it which gave its form is flesh all The soul of

בְּנִפְשׁוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם הִיא צוּרַת הָאָדָם הַשָּׁלֵם בְּדַעְתּוֹ. וְעַל צוּרָה זֹאת  
this form and concerning in his knowledge who is perfect the man the form of is man in the soul of  
נֶאֱמַר בַּתּוֹרָה נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ כְּלוּמָר שֶׁתְּהִיָּה לוֹ צוּרָה  
a form to him that there will be meaning in our likeness in our image man Let us make in the Torah it is said  
הַיּוֹדֵעַת וּמִשְׁגָּת הַדְּעוֹת שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם גִּלְם כְּמוֹ הַמַּלְאָכִים שֶׁהֵם צוּרָה  
form who are the angels like a physical body have that do not the ideas and comprehends that knows  
בְּלֹא גִלְם עַד שִׁידְמָהּ לָהֶן. וְאֵינוֹ אוֹמֵר עַל צוּרָה זֹאת  
this form concerning speak and it does not them he resembles until a physical body without  
הַנִּכְפָּרֶת לְעֵינַיִם שֶׁהִיא הִפָּה וְהַחֲטָם וְהַלְסָתוֹת וּשְׂאָר רִשְׁם הַגּוּף  
the body the outline of and the rest of and the cheeks and the nose the mouth which is by the eyes which is recognized  
שֶׁזֶּה תֵּאֵר שְׁמָהּ. וְאֵינָהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַמְּצוּיָה לְכָל נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה שֶׁבָּהּ אוֹכֵל  
eats with which it soul living in every that is found the soul and it is not is its name appearance for this  
וְשׁוֹתָהּ וּמוֹלִיד וּמְרַגֵּשׁ וּמְהַרְהֵר. אֲלֹא הַדְּעָה שֶׁהִיא צוּרַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ  
the soul the form of which is the intellect rather and thinks and feels and reproduces and drinks  
וּבְצוּרַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַכְּתוּב מְדַבֵּר בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ. וּפְעָמִים רַבּוֹת תִּקְרָא  
is called many and times in our likeness in our image speaks the verse the soul and concerning the form of  
זֹאת הַצּוּרָה נֶפֶשׁ וְרוּחַ. וּלְפִיכָּךְ צָרִיךְ לְהִזָּהֵר בְּשִׁמוֹתֵן שֶׁלֹּא יִטְעֶה אָדָם  
a person will err so that not with their names be careful one must and therefore and ruach nefesh the form this  
בָּהֶן. וְכָל שֵׁם וְשֵׁם יִלְמַד מֵעֲנִינּוֹ:  
from its context is learned and name name and each with them

*This halacha defines the true form of man as his intellectual soul, which is created in the image of God, distinguishing it from physical appearance and basic biological functions.*

ה'ל"ט

נִצְחִיּוֹת צוּרַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְהַכְּנָתָהּ אֶת הַבּוֹרָא

Halacha 9 - The Eternity of the Form of the Soul and Its Separation from the Body

אֵין צוּרַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַזֹּאת מְחֻבָּרֶת מִן הַיְסוּדוֹת כְּדִי שֶׁתִּפְרֹד לָהֶם, וְאֵינָהּ  
and it is not into them it will separate so that the elements from composed this the soul the form of Is not  
מִכֹּחַ הַנֶּשְׁמָה עַד שֶׁתִּהְיֶה צָרִיכָה לְנִשְׁמָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁהַנֶּשְׁמָה צָרִיכָה  
needs the neshamah just as the neshamah needing that it would be so the neshamah from the power of  
לְגוּף. אֲלֹא מֵאֵת ה' מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם הִיא. לְפִיכָּךְ כְּשִׁיפְרֹד הַגִּלְם שֶׁהוּא  
which is the physical matter when separates therefore it is the heaven from Hashem from rather the body  
מְחֻבָּר מִן הַיְסוּדוֹת וְתֵאֵבֵד הַנֶּשְׁמָה מִפְּנֵי שֶׁאֵינָהּ מְצוּיָה אֲלֵא עִם הַגּוּף  
the body with except found it is not because the neshamah and perishes the elements from composed  
וְצָרִיכָה לְגוּף בְּכָל מַעֲשֶׂיהָ לֹא תִכָּרֵת הַצּוּרָה הַזֹּאת. לְפִי שֶׁאֵינָהּ צָרִיכָה  
needing it is not because this the form will be cut off not its deeds for all the body and it needs  
לְנִשְׁמָה בְּמַעֲשֶׂיהָ. אֲלֹא יוֹדַעַת וּמִשְׁגָּת הַדְּעוֹת הַפְּרִיּוֹת מִן הַגִּלְמִים  
physical matters from separated the intellects and comprehends it knows rather for its deeds the neshamah

וְיִדְעַת בּוֹרֵא הַכֹּל וְעוֹמֶדֶת לְעוֹלָם וְלְעוֹלָמֵי עוֹלָמִים. הוּא שֹׁאֵמֵר

that said it is eternities and for eternity of forever and endures everything the Creator of and knows

שְׁלֹמֹה בְּחֻכְמָתוֹ קֵהֵלֵת יב ז "וְיָשָׁב הָעָפָר עַל הָאָרֶץ כְּשֶׁהָיָה וְהָרוּחַ

and the spirit as it was the earth upon the dust and shall return seven twelve Koheles in his wisdom Shlomo

תָּשׁוּב אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר נָתַנָּה:"

gave it Who God to shall return

*This halacha explains that the higher form of the soul is divine and eternal, surviving the decomposition of the physical body and the cessation of the lower life force.*

הל"י

הַגְּדֵרֶת מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית וְהָאִסּוּר לְדַרְשׁוֹ בְּרַבִּים

Halacha 10 · The Definition of Ma'aseh Bereshit and the Prohibition of Expounding It in Public

כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֹּו שֶׁדִּבְּרָנוּ בְּעֵנִין זֶה כְּמֵר מְדִלֵי הֵם וְדְבָרִים

and matters they from a bucket are like a drop this concerning the subject that we spoke these the matters All

עֲמֻקִּים הֵם. אֲבָל אֵינָם בְּעֵנִין עֲמֻק פָּרָק רִאשׁוֹן וְשֵׁנִי.

and second first chapter the depth of like the matter of they are not but they are deep

וּבִאֵוֹר כָּל אֵלֹּו הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁבְּפָרָק שְׁלִישִׁי וְרִבִּיעִי הוּא הַנִּקְרָא

is that which is called it and fourth third that are in chapter the matters these all and the explanation of

מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית. וְכֵן צִוּ הַחֲכָמִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים שֶׁאֵין דּוֹרְשִׁין

expound that we do not the early ones the Sages commanded and thus Creation the work of

בְּדְבָרִים הָאֵלֹּו בְּרַבִּים אֶלָּא לְאָדָם אֶחָד מוֹדִיעִין דְּבָרִים אֵלֹּו וּמְלַמְּדִין

and they teach these matters they make known single to a person rather in public these on matters

אוֹתָן:

them

*The Rambam defines the topics of the third and fourth chapters as Ma'aseh Bereshit and explains that these deep matters may only be taught to individuals privately.*

הל"י

הַהֲבָדֵל בֵּין מַעֲשֵׂה מֶרְכָּבָה לְמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית

Halacha 11 · The Difference Between Ma'aseh Merkavah and Ma'aseh Bereshit

וּמָה בֵּין עֵנִין מַעֲשֵׂה מֶרְכָּבָה לְעֵנִין מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית. שֶׁעֵנִין

that the subject of Bereshit Ma'aseh to the subject of Merkavah Ma'aseh the subject of between And what

מַעֲשֵׂה מֶרְכָּבָה אֶפְלוּ לְאֶחָד אֵין דּוֹרְשִׁים בּוֹ אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן הָיָה חָכָם

wise he was unless on it expound we do not to one even Merkavah Ma'aseh

וּמִבֵּין מִדְּעָתוֹ מוֹסְרִין לוֹ רִאשִׁי הַפָּרָקִים. וְעֵנִין מַעֲשֵׂה

Ma'aseh and the subject of the chapters the outlines of to him we transmit from his own mind and understanding

בְּרֵאשִׁית מְלַמְּדִין אוֹתוֹ לְיַחֲד אֶף עַל פִּי שְׂאִינוּ מִבֵּין אוֹתוֹ

it understand that he does not though even to an individual it we teach Bereshit

מִדַּעְתּוֹ וּמוֹדִיעִים אוֹתוֹ כֹּל מֵה שֶׁיָּכוֹל לֵידַע מִדְּבָרִים אֵלּוּ. וְלָמָּה אֵין  
do we not and why matters of these to know he is able that all him and we inform from his own mind  
מִלְּמַדִּין אוֹתוֹ לְרַבִּים. לָפִי שָׂאִין כֹּל אָדָם יֵשׁ לוֹ דַּעַת רַחְבָּה לְהַשְׁיִיג  
to grasp understanding broad has man every not because to the public it teach  
פֶּרוֹשׁ וּבְאוֹר כֹּל הַדְּבָרִים עַל בְּרִיָּתוֹ:  
their depth to the matters all and explanation of the interpretation

This halacha contrasts the strict transmission rules of Ma'aseh Merkavah with the more accessible study of Ma'aseh Bereshit.

ה'ל"ב

הַתְּבוֹנָנוֹת בְּבְרִיאת הָעוֹלָם לְהַגִּיעַ לְאַהֲבַת הַשֵּׁם וְיִרְאַתוֹ

Halacha 12 - Contemplating the Creations to Achieve Love and Fear of Hashem

בְּזִמְנֵן שֶׁאָדָם מֵתְבוֹנֵן בְּדְבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ וּמִפִּיר כֹּל הַבְּרוּאִים מִמֶּלְאָךְ  
from angel the creations all and recognizes these on the matters meditates that a person At the time  
וְגִלְגַּל וְאָדָם פִּיּוּצָא בּוֹ וְיִרְאָה חֲכָמָתוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּכָל  
in all is He blessed the Holy One of His wisdom and will see to it and the like and man and sphere  
הַיְצוּרִים וְכָל הַבְּרוּאִים. מוֹסִיף אַהֲבָה לְמָקוֹם וְתַצְמָא נַפְשׁוֹ וְיִכְמָה  
and will yearn his soul and will thirst for the Omnipresent love he increases the creations and all the creatures  
בְּשָׂרוֹ לְאַהֲבַת הַמָּקוֹם בְּרוּךְ הוּא. וְיִירָא וְיִפְחַד מִשְׁפָּלוּתוֹ  
from his lowliness and he will dread and he will fear is He blessed the Omnipresent to love his flesh  
וְדִלּוּתוֹ וְקִלּוּתוֹ כְּשִׁיעָרִיף עֲצָמוֹ לְאַחַד מֵהַגּוֹפּוֹת הַקְּדוּשִׁים  
the holy of the bodies to one himself when he compares and his insignificance and his poverty  
הַגְּדוּלִּים. וְכָל שֶׁפֶן לְאַחַת מֵהַצּוּרוֹת הַטְּהוּרוֹת הַנִּפְרָדוֹת מִן הַגְּלִמִּים  
the physical matter from the separate the pure of the forms to one the more so and all the great  
שֶׁלֹא נִתְחַבְּרוּ בָּגֶלֶם כָּלָל. וְיִמְצָא עֲצָמוֹ שֶׁהוּא כְּכֵלִי מָלֵא בּוֹשָׁה  
shame full of like a vessel that he is himself and he will find at all with physical matter were joined that not  
וְכִלְמָה רֵיק וְחֶסֶר:  
and lacking empty and disgrace

This halacha describes how meditating on the vastness of the physical and spiritual creations leads a person to love Hashem and feel humble before Him.

ה'ל"ג

הַקְּדָמַת לַמּוֹד הַהֵלֶכָה לְעֻנְיֵי הַפְּרִדָּס

Halacha 13 - Precedence of Halachic Study to the Esoteric Pardes

וְעֻנְיֵי אַרְבָּעָה פָּרָקִים אֵלּוּ שֶׁבְּחֻמֵּשׁ מִצְוֹת הָאֵלּוּ הֵם שֶׁחֲכָמִים  
what the Sages they are these mitzvot which are in the five these chapters four And the matters of  
הָרַאשׁוֹנִים קוֹרְאִין אוֹתוֹ פְּרִדָּס כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ אַרְבָּעָה נִכְנְסוּ לְפְרִדָּס. וְאֵף  
And even the Pardes entered four they said just as Pardes it call the early ones  
עַל פִּי שְׁגִדּוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיוּ וְחֲכָמִים גְּדוּלִּים הָיוּ לֹא כָּלָם הָיָה  
was all of them not they were great and Sages they were Yisrael that the great men of though

בְּהֵן כֹּחַ לֵידַע וְלַהֲשִׁיג כָּל הַדְּבָרִים עַל בְּרִיָּן. וְאֲנִי אוֹמֵר שְׂאִין  
that it is not say And I their clarity upon the matters all and to comprehend to know the strength in them  
רְאוּי לְטִיֵּל בַּפָּרְדֵּס אֶלָּא מִי שֶׁנִּתְמַלֵּא כִּרְסוֹ לֶחֶם וּבָשָׂר. וְלֶחֶם וּבָשָׂר  
and meat And bread and meat bread his belly with who has filled one unless in the Pardes to stroll proper  
הוּא לֵידַע הָאֲסוּר וְהַמֵּתָר וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָהֶם מִשְׁאָר הַמִּצְוֹת. וְאִף עַל  
And even the mitzvot from the rest of of them and the like and the permitted the forbidden is to know it  
פִּי שְׂדֵבָרִים אֵלּוּ דְּבָר קָטָן קָרְאוּ אוֹתָן חֲכָמִים שֶׁהָרִי אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים דְּבָר  
a matter the Sages said for behold the Sages them called small a matter these that matters though  
גָּדוֹל מַעֲשֵׂה מְרֻכָּבָה וְדְּבָר קָטָן הִוִּיתָ דְּאֲבִיִּי וְרַבָּא. אִף עַל פִּי כֵן  
so though even and Rava of Abbaye the debates small and a matter the Chariot the workings of great  
רְאוּיִין הֵן לְהַקְדִּימוֹ. שֶׁהֵן מִיִּשְׁבִּין דַּעְתּוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם תַּחֲלָה.  
first a person of the mind settle because they to give them they are fitting  
precedence  
וְעוֹד שֶׁהֵם הַטּוֹבָה הַגְּדוֹלָה שֶׁהִשְׁפִּיעַ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְיִשׁוּב  
for the settling of is He blessed the Holy One that bestowed the great the good that they are And furthermore  
הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה כְּדִי לְנַחֵל חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וְאִפְשָׁר שִׂידָעִם הַכֹּל  
everyone that may know them And it is possible the coming the world the life of to inherit in order this world  
קָטָן וְגָדוֹל אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה בַּעַל לֵב רָחֵב וּבַעַל לֵב קָצֵר:  
limited mind and one of broad mind one of and woman man and great small

*The Rambam explains that one must first master the practical laws of the Torah before delving into the deep secrets of the Pardes.*

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Rambam explains that all physical creations below the sky are made of a combination of fire, wind, water, and earth, which are themselves combinations of matter and form. Each element has its own natural weight and characteristics—fire being warm and dry, wind warm and moist, water cold and moist, and earth cold and dry—which determine how they combine and how the resulting bodies behave. Ultimately, every combined entity must decompose back into these four elements, though this often happens through a gradual cycle of changing into other entities first. Furthermore, these four elements themselves are in a constant state of flux, with portions of them continually transforming into one another in an unceasing cycle driven by the revolution of the sphere.

The Rambam teaches us a profound truth about our physical existence: everything in this world below the heavens, including our very bodies, is a mixture of the four basic elements of fire, wind, water, and earth. These elements are in a constant state of flux, shifting and changing from one to another, and ultimately, every physical structure is destined to decompose and return to its source. Even the most precious physical things, like gold and rubies, cannot escape this reality.

When you realize that your physical body is made of these shifting, temporary elements, it changes how you look at yourself. The Rambam explains that what truly makes you a human being, the "tzellel Elokim", is not your physical form, but your neshama, the spiritual form given to you by Hashem that is capable of knowing Him. Your body is just a temporary vessel, a combination of dust and wind that will eventually return to the earth, but your spiritual essence is eternal.

This understanding is a powerful tool for your daily avodah. It helps you put your physical desires and worries into perspective. When the yetzer hara tries to make you overly anxious about material comforts, physical beauty, or worldly possessions, remind yourself of this sugya. These things are just temporary combinations of the four elements, constantly changing and destined to dissolve. Your real focus must be on nurturing your neshama, which connects you directly to the Creator.

Today, when you find yourself getting upset or overly invested in a physical frustration or material desire, pause for a moment. Remind yourself: "This is just temporary matter, but my neshama is eternal." Redirect that energy into a spiritual act, like learning a line of Torah or saying a brachah with deep kavana.