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With *siyata d'shmaya*, we have the merit to reflect and understand a bit more about the *tafkid* (role) of the daughters of Sarah, Rivkah, Rochel and Leah.

Generally speaking, a person consists of four parts:

- 1) There is a part **above** a person,
- 2) A part that is to the **side** of the person,
- 3) The **self** of the person,
- 4) And the part that is **below** the person.

Each person, on a general level, has all of these four parts to his\her existence. We will explain each of these in detail, so that we can have clarity about each of these areas of our life.

1 - Above

The part 'above' us includes Hashem, Whom there is none other besides and Who is above all. Additionally, the Torah is above us; the Torah is the root of all creations. Additionally, our parents are on a plane that is above us, for they are our physical roots. A *rav* or a *rebbe* (Torah teacher) is also at a plane that is 'above' his student, for the student receives spiritual guidance from his Torah teacher, which places the *rebbe* above him. Anyone whom we receive from, whether physically or spiritually, is at the point 'above' where we stand.

2- To The Side

Moving downward, the next point is those who are to the '**side**' of our self, in our direct surroundings. This includes the husband-wife relationship. A husband and wife are helpmates to each other, who live together side by side. Additionally, our close friends whom we love are also to the 'side' of our self. Our love for the rest of *Klal Yisrael*, which is the *mitzvah* of *ahavas Yisrael*, is also included in this side.

3 - Our Inner Self

The third point is the relationship that one has with himself – with his *pnimiyus*, his inner world; with his very *havayah*, his true, inner self.

4- Below

After that is the part '**below**' us. This includes our children, as well as anyone whom we give to, whom we are *mashpia* (providing) to.

Balancing These Four Parts of Our Life

These four parts to our existence correspond to four parts of the body. Our relationship with Hashem and the Torah corresponds to the head, which is 'above' the rest of the body. Those who are to the 'side' of us correspond to the hands. Our relationship with our self corresponds to the body. The part below us, the relationship with our children and to those whom we give to, corresponds to the feet.

Every person has all of these four parts, but the percentages vary, in how well a person is connected to each of these four aspects. The balance is different in each person, and each person has the personal *avodah* to balance out these four parts. Let us see how there can be a lack of balance between these four parts, and how we can attain a balance.

Imbalance In One's Relationship With Hashem

The first part to our existence we will analyze is the point 'above' us – our relationship with Hashem.

Obviously, our bond with Hashem is a wondrous part to our existence. It is the purpose of man, for a person to bond with the Creator and revel in the bliss of His presence, as described in the beginning of *Mesillas Yesharim*, to reach *d'veykus* (attachment) with Hashem.

However, our relationship with Hashem is good only if it is balanced with the other three parts to our existence. The Torah commands a man to leave the home of his parents and cling to his wife, so that he can build a family. The will of Hashem is that we should get married and have children, and if a person only wants to have a connection with Hashem but he does not want a relationship with family, he is missing a relationship with the other parts of his existence. When that is the case, not only will his relationships suffer, but even his connection to Hashem will be sorely lacking.

The following is an example of this problem (it doesn't happen often, but it is a good example which clearly illustrates the issue). A woman may be very motivated in building her relationship with Hashem. She is connected with the spiritual and she says Tehillim whenever she can, saying the words with fervor and out a true desire to connect herself with Hashem. That, itself, is wonderful. After all, Tehillim was written by Dovid HaMelech. But she may go too far with this. She might be saying Tehillim all day in her home, even when the children are around and they need to be fed, spoken to, and looked after. But she may be saying Tehillim instead, choosing to ignore her family's needs.

Although it is important and wonderful for her to say Tehillim, because she is connecting with Hashem, the problem here is that she is taking it too far. Her relationship with Hashem becomes imbalanced. Although she is certainly connecting with Hashem during this time, it is not a true relationship with Hashem, because it is not balanced. While this problem is not that common, and it is extreme, it is still a good example that illustrates the problem we described: when one's connection to 'above' (in this case, to Hashem) isn't balanced out by the other areas of relationship in a person's life.

Imbalance In The Relationship of Child To Parent

The following is a more common example of the problem. One might be enjoying a close relationship with his\her parents, but which may be too unhealthy, negatively affecting her other relationships. The Gemara says that a newly married woman has the nature to return to her parents' home often. When this is done properly, it is wonderful. But it can happen that a person feels an inner emptiness in her life, disconnected from her true self and out of touch with her soul, and therefore she is pursuing a close relationship with her parents which does not come from a deep place in her soul, but from a sense of emptiness.

The relationship will be imbalanced [and therefore unhealthy]. Since she lacks a relationship with her own self, she may be placing too much emphasis on her relationship with her parents, because she is trying to fill her internal void by going back to her roots, her parents – since she can't get it from her own self.

By contrast, the more a person is connected with his\her own soul, though, the more he\she will be balanced in his relationships with others. A person will not need others as much in order to feel fulfilled, because the person has a good, healthy relationship with his or her own self. He\she will certainly want to have relationships with others, but the relationship will be balanced and healthy, and not as a means to fill an internal void.

In other situations where a person doesn't have a good, solid relationship with his\her own self, the person will stop trying to fill the void through the parents, and will instead turn away from the parents and seek a fulfilling relationship with her children.

In the first scenario, trying to fill her void from her parents, she is seeking fulfillment from the point above her, and in the second scenario, where she is trying to get it from her children, she is turning to the point below her to fill her void.

We have so far given two examples of an imbalance in a relationship – one where there was an imbalance in the relationship to the point 'above' a person, and one where there was an imbalance in the relationship to the point 'below' a person.

Imbalance In The Relationship With A Rebbi or Rav

An additional example of the relationship that one has to the point 'above' him is the relationship that a *talmid* (student) has with his *rebbe*. The *rebbe* is spiritually above his student, and the student turns to the *rebbe* for advice.

One kind of person will seek advice from his *rebbe* when he is in doubt about something. As the Sages state, "Make for yourself a teacher, and remove yourself from doubt." However, there are people who consult with their *rebbe* way more than it is necessary, who will ask their *rebbe* for advice on every small issue they have.

Rav Shach once said that in our times, people ask much more questions to the *Rabbonim*, and this seems as if the generation today has gotten better than the previous generations, but the truth is that it comes from a lack of thinking. If people would think more, they would be able to decide better, without having to always to ask advice from a *Rav* about every matter. Therefore, people today are asking their *Rav* about even the smallest issues, because they feel like they are not confident enough to decide anything on their own.

When people do decide on their own and they never consult others for advice, either it is out of arrogance, or it is out of stupidity. But when one is not connected enough with his own soul and he has no inner world of his own, he will turn to his *Rav* about even the smallest question he has, because when he has not yet reached a connection with his inner self yet, there is a sense of

emptiness in himself and therefore he is easily consumed by doubt.

Thus, while it is virtuous for one to have a connection with his *Rebbi* and to seek advice from him, that is only if one already feels inwardly complete, with a developed self. But if one is inwardly empty and he tries to always connect with his *Rebbi* for every issue in his life, it comes from his own emptiness, which causes him to be very doubtful about everything, so he tries to throw all of his doubts on to his *Rebbi*. His relationship with his *Rebbi* is imbalanced. This is another example of an imbalance in the relationship that one has to the point that is 'above' him.

Imbalance In The Husband-Wife Relationship

The next part to consider is the relationship we have with others around us. This includes the relationship between a husband and wife.

The Sages state that "a kosher wife does the will of her husband". This means that she nullifies herself to his will and connects herself to his will, and that is what enables her to always do his will. However, this is only good if they have a proper, healthy relationship with each other – and not if their relationship is that of a dependency.

When a husband and wife are close to each other because they feel so emotionally dependent on each other, because they do not feel fulfilled without the other, there is an imbalance in their relationship. If the husband and the wife are each fulfilled with their own life, meaning that they each have an inner world of their own which is independent of the other one's life, they will have a healthy, balanced relationship with each other. But if not, they will simply become dependent on each other in order to feel a sense of fulfillment, which is an unhealthy way of connecting with each other.

Certainly, we do not mean that a husband and wife should each feel independent of each other to the point that they feel like they have no need for each other at all, which would make them feel distant from each other. Rather, we mean that each of the spouses needs to have a good relationship with his\her own self, each building and developing an inner world of their own, and then they can have a proper relationship.

In many cases, if one of the spouses has a sense of inward emptiness in his or her life, their relationship becomes that of a dependency, and not a healthy one. For example, if the husband is having a hard time in his *Kolel* and he is having difficulties in his learning, or if he is having a hard time at his job, he might seek fulfillment from his wife, seeking to come home to her at the end of the day so that he can feel good about himself, and he is getting his main satisfaction in life from her. The same can happen with the wife: she can't find a job, and she sits at home all day bored, waiting anxiously for her husband to finally come home so that he can take away her boredom and her lack of fulfillment. This does not stem from a deep connection to her husband, but simply from her own emptiness, which she is seeking to fill.

A true bond between a husband and wife cannot happen when each of them lacks an inner world of their own. They simply become dependent on each other and seek a relationship with each other so that they can relieve their emptiness. Chazal say that when a man marries, he is marrying his *palga d'gufa*, his "other half" - but first, the other 'half' must be present, which is his own self!

A person once asked about what to look for in a spouse, and he was told that he should first find 'his own half', and then he will be clear about what his other half is. If one isn't yet clear about what his own half is – when he is out of touch with his own inner world - he won't know what to look for in his other half.

When people have not yet developed an inner world of their own, they aren't aware of their internal

world, and all they only know of the external layers to themselves. As a result, when looking for a spouse, they will only seek externalities in the other person which are superficial. Since they don't know what their own inner qualities are, they don't know what inner qualities to look for in another which would build upon their own qualities and complete them. They do not know what to look for in a spouse, since they haven't found their own 'half' yet.

By contrast, the better one knows himself and the more he is in touch with his soul, the better he will know what to look for in a spouse, as opposed to seeking superficial qualities.

Imbalance In The Parent-Child Relationship

The next step for us to consider is the relationship we have with our own self. That is a broad discussion, and we will skip it for now, and proceed to the fourth part – the relationships we have with those who are 'below' us. These include our children.

Hashem has given all parents a nature to love their children, to feel happy for them and to feel distress for them. This is a deeply rooted love which Hashem has implanted in parents for their children. This is a true and inner bond, but when the relationship becomes imbalanced, it becomes a relationship of dependency on the children, where the parents seek emotional fulfillment from their children. This is a common occurrence.

The happier that a parent is, the more inwardly fulfilled that he/she feels, the less he or she suffers when the children are away from home or when they go on to build a home of their own. But in many cases, a parent does not feel fulfilled with his or her own life, and the parent really suffers when their child is away from home.

This does not stem from a deep connection to the child. Rather, the parent feels terribly empty from his or her own life, and seeks to fill the void through the children, in order to relieve the emptiness. As the children get older and enter different stages of life, the parents may seek to fulfill their own emptiness from the children at each stage of life, to the point that the relationship becomes unhealthy – on the part of the parents.

This is a very fundamental example of an imbalance in the relationship to the point that is 'below' us, our children – where the relationship is not built upon a healthy relationship with our self, but from an inward sense of emptiness, which turns the relationship unhealthy and which throws it off balance.

Connect To Your Self, In Order To Connect With Others

We have seen so far how this problem can affect all of our relationships – to the point above us, to the point that is to the side of us, and to the point below us. The general idea is that the further a person is from his own self, this will have a negative impact on his relationships. In contrast, good relationships happen when we have a good relationship with our own self. That creates the root of balance.

Our goal here is to build a good relationship with our own self, so that we will have feel so fulfilled with our own individual inner world that we will never have a need to connect to others out of any sense of inner emptiness, of trying to fill any internal void in our life.

We are each made up of our inner layer and external layer. We leave our inner layer in order to connect outward to the external layer. If the inner layer to us is weak, we live on the outside, and we connect too much to what is outside of us, and that is where we will be found. But if we develop an inner world of our own, we will be able to connect properly to that which is outside of us. We need a deep connection to our own self, and then the relationships outside of us will thrive.

Practically Implementing Our Goal: Writing Down What Your Relationships Are Like

In order for us to practically gain from these words, let us see how we can actualize them. The Ramban says that after a person learns something, he should seek to actualize the lesson, so that it can have a practical effect on his life, or else it remains as mere knowledge to him which he doesn't act upon. One needs to seek ways of how to act upon what he learns. Therefore, we will provide an exercise of how we can work on the lesson here.

Write down a list of the relationships you have with all those who are outside of you – starting with those who are 'above' you, then with those who are to the 'side' of you, and those who are 'below' you. The first list includes the relationship you have with your parent or teachers or role models. The second list includes the relationships you have with your spouse and with your close friends, and with those in your direct surroundings. The third list includes the relationship you have with your children.

Go through each of these areas and think about what kind of relationships you have with others, how intense they are or how weak they are, etc. Next, write down what you think your strongest area of relationship is, from the above three lists. Finally, write down if any of these areas of your relationships are balanced out by a good, healthy relationship with your own self.

At this point, we are not yet seeking how to actually improve the relationships. Here we are at the initial state, of just clarifying how you relate and connect with others.

In Conclusion

May we merit from the Creator to understand this matter well, and that each of us should be able to understand our own individual souls, and to progress, step after step, with *siyata d'shmaya*. Good evening to all of you.

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