



# BUILDING A SANCTUARY IN THE HEART

## The Secret Of All Growth

Avraham Avinu's test of the binding of Yitzchok, which required him to show *mesirus nefesh*, was a fundamental lesson in how to acquire all levels of *avodah*. The *Mesillas Yescharim* says, "Sanctity is at first exertion, and in the end, a gift." This is not only true of the level of sanctity, but it is true of all the levels after that, which includes even *ruach hakodesh* and *techiyas hameisim*.

This is a rule that applies to anything spiritual we want to acquire, even the most basic level. Any spiritual attainment requires *mesirus nefesh* on our part – if not total *mesirus nefesh*, which only a few individuals attain, we at least need the minimal level of *mesirus nefesh*, which is: To exert ourselves just a little bit beyond our regular level.

When one is clear about this and he puts this into practice, he can enter into a life of going beyond his natural capabilities, and herein lays the success in life. If one is not clear about this, he may try hard his entire life and he may attain much, but he will remain in his normal human limitations. A life of practicing *mesirus nefesh* enables one to reach above his natural level.

The spiritual tasks in our life are daunting. A Jew may have the aspiration to know all of the Torah, which is wider than the sea

and longer than the earth – this includes all five books of the *Chumash*, *Nach*, all of *Mishnayos*, the *Talmud Bavli* and *Talmud Yerushalmi*, the *Sifra*, *Sifrei*, *Tosefta*, and more - with all of the commentaries of the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*! In addition to this, one also has the 613 *mitzvos* to keep. Even though we do not fulfill all the 613 *mitzvos* today, we have plenty of them to keep. And in addition, one is also a husband and father, and he has to provide for his household. He is busy from various responsibilities in life. He has to do *chessed*, spread Torah to others, and set side time to prepare for *davening*. When is there time to live and finish everything?!

The true answer is that there is no time! **We really do not have enough time to finish everything. What is possible for us, however, is to enter into an inner world (our *olam pnimi*), which takes us beyond the limitations of This World.** When it becomes opened to a person, only then can one reach much more than what he is naturally capable of.

May Hashem enable us that Avraham's act of the binding of Yitzchok on the Altar should radiate within the depths of our souls. ■ excerpt from the sefer *Bilvavi on the Parshah*

**7** CONTINUATION

No one is interested in a broken table or chair. No one wants to sleep on a broken bed. All the more so, deep down, no one wants to be a broken person, but rather, a complete person. (There is a concept of a broken heart, but that is not relevant here.) What is a complete Jew? One who doesn't lack hands? Who doesn't lack legs? No, that is only superficial physical completeness. True perfection, namely, the inner completeness of the soul, is derived from closeness to Hashem. As the Ramchal wrote in Mesillas Yesharim (Ch. 1), "The truth is that the only true perfection (the true perfection of every single person without exception) is *deveikus* to Hashem." And he concludes, "Anything else considered good by people is vanity and deceptive emptiness."

This is all a Jew really has in life — closeness to Hashem and *deveikus* to Him. The entire essence of a Jew is to be close to Hashem and to cleave to Him. It is not only in the World to Come that a man's ultimate purpose is to cleave to the Creator. Even here in this world, man's task and purpose is to achieve *deveikus*. Any moment that a person does not cleave to the Creator, he is for that moment, an incomplete human being. He lacks true completeness, which is *deveikus* to Hashem.

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A sincere person, who hears these words and truly accepts them in his soul, must take these words of the Ramchal and write them

on a sheet of paper and place the sheet in his pocket. About every fifteen minutes he will remove the paper from his pocket, and contemplate its contents well, (so that these words will be before his eyes at all times). He will remind himself constantly: Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? The answer is: *deveikus* to Hashem. He will read the words again and again until they stand alive before his eyes and he no longer needs to look at the paper. He will live with a clear inner conviction of the purpose of life and will constantly seek ways to actualize the true objectives of his very existence.

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The time during which a person recalls the purpose of his life is the time in which he is truly alive (other than the time in which he is learning Torah, as will be explained later, with the help of Hashem). Those times, during which he forgets the Creator, the individual cannot be considered fully alive. A person needs to be revived from this death-like existence at all times. The revival will be by remembering why he is alive and what his purpose is in this world. Even when a person fulfills mitzvos, he must remember that the essence of a mitzvah lies in its connection to the root — *tzavta*, companionship, as the *sefarim hakedoshim* explain. That is to say, the ultimate purpose of mitzvos is to become a companion (*tzavta*) to the Creator, to be close and attached to Him. Without this realization, the inner essence of the mitzvah is lacking, and it is like a body without a soul. ■

**QUESTION** Since we are now in a process that is leading towards the *Geulah* (the Redemption), with Hashem's help, I have a question that is bothering me very much. Although every Jew wants the *Geulah*, I am afraid of it, just as I'm afraid of dying. After all, after the *Geulah* people will no longer have free will to choose between good and evil, and then it won't be possible to do *teshuvah*. Even through all my attempts to improve, any success that I have is very minimal in comparison to the huge overhaul that I really need to undergo. There's no way I will become a completely different person before the *Geulah* arrives. I'm not becoming a totally G-d fearing person who dedicates his entire life to serving Hashem. Is it okay that I'm afraid of the *Geulah* no less than I'm afraid of death, *chas v'shalom*?

**ANSWER** Yes [fear of the *Geulah* is appropriate], and such fear is called "*Pachad Yitzchok*", the fear of Yitzchok Avinu, which is a fear that spurs a person to change, but only if this is a fear accompanied by a sense of joy [of striving to do Hashem's will], and it should not be a phobia or anxiety which is destructive to a person. ■ from the Q & A archive [www.question.bilvavi.net](http://www.question.bilvavi.net)

When the parents are aware that every person has a *neshamah* and that it is merely our body which covers it, and they internalize that we mainly exist as *neshamos*, they will have an easy time relating to their children in this way and seeing them as equal to them.

The *neshamah* dimension is what unites all of *Klal Yisrael* together, which gives us all the title of "brothers" to each other. From this deepened perspective, we can understand that our own *neshamos* have been appointed by Hashem as the ones who will raise a part of some of the other *neshamos* in *Klal Yisrael* - who "happen" to be our own children.

Furthermore, when the parents begin *chinuch* on their children with this perspective, and the children are aware that the parents place emphasis on the *neshamah* as an important, central aspect in their lives, they will lead their entire lives differently. When they eventually get married, with help from Heaven, and when they have children of their own, they will treat their spouses with the awareness that the other is a *neshamah*, and they will relate to their children as well as *neshamos*. They will understand on their own that their children should be honored for who they are, for they will be aware that their children are also *neshamos* of the Creator. ■ Chapter Six - printed for the first time from the *sefer* ילדך וילדך

In the generation of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, many people were bogged down by having to engage in *parnassah*, and that was the reason why most people then weren't learning Torah. In our generation as well, this problem also exists, but we will focus here on a different problem: Even those who learn in the *beis midrash* are not always developing an ongoing connection to Torah, where their connection to Torah is getting stronger and stronger with time as it should be. Only when a person clarifies what Torah is and what his personal connection to Torah is, does his connection to Torah grow stronger each day.

We have explained that the root motivations in learning Torah are: To learn Torah for the sake of Torah, to learn Torah for the sake of *nachas ruach* to Hashem, and to learn Torah to teach it to others. Yet this is barely scratching the surface of our inner reflection that we must make. The more a person reflects into these concepts, and he purifies his heart and he focuses his mind on what it means to have a true connection to Torah, his connection to Torah will get stronger within him as he begins to connect it inwardly.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* continues, "Those who chose to mainly learn *sefarim* of *yirah* and *mussar* all day, without setting fixed times to learn Torah and *Halachah* – they did not reach the light of Torah. Hashem should forgive them, for their intentions were for the sake of Heaven. But this is not the way in which the light of Torah can reside."

As it was explained above, the *Nefesh* ■

*HaChaim's* words are not only referring to those who couldn't learn Torah due to making a *parnassah* or because they simply chose to learn *mussar* all day; it can also apply to someone who learns Torah all day, when he is not aware of why he learns Torah. He is also one who will never reach the light of the Torah.

Let's say a person spent his whole life learning Torah. 10 years ago he was learning the *halachos* of *kashrus* and *shechitah* (kosher slaughter), and now he is immersed in learning *Choshen Mishpat* (the monetary laws). His actual approach towards learning Torah though still hasn't necessarily changed from all of his learning, and he is at the same level of learning he was 10 years ago. He may have more Torah knowledge now since then (or he might have forgotten a lot since then), and he might even have increased his hours in the *beis midrash* since 10 years ago, but his actual level of Torah remains as it was since 10 years ago, unchanged, for he has not necessarily connected more to the Torah during this entire timespan. He doesn't reach the "light of the Torah" as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes; he doesn't even touch upon it.

When one reaches the "light of Torah", only then is he connected to the Torah day and night which he learns. We all have things that deter us from learning Torah, but if one has reached the "light of Torah", through inwardly connecting to Torah, he is at least connected to the Torah even when he can't learn it. That is the basis which all people need.

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