



BUILDING A SANCTUARY IN THE HEART

Staying Connected Forever

In *Parashas Chayei Sarah*, Avraham Avinu mourns Sarah and eulogizes her. He had spent a large part of his life together with Sarah, and the time had now come for Sarah to leave the world. It was now time for them to part ways, and there was eulogizing and weeping over her.

In our own life, we need to reflect truthfully: How must we view loss? How should we react to losing our loved ones and our close friends? Sometimes a relationship ends forcibly, and sometimes it ends willingly. But any connection/relationship we enter is not forever. How much time will the connection last? Usually, we do not know how long. We usually cannot predict when it will end. But what we do know is that it is not forever. The time will come one day when the relationship or connection will end.

We need to have a love for *Klal Yisrael*, and upon that, we can base our relationships with others. The basis of connection we have others must not be based on the fact that the person sits in the same row or bench of the *beis midrash* we learn in, or on the fact that he is our *chavrusa*, etc. These are all external, superficial reasons to love others. Of course, if that leads to an inner

connection with another, then the external aspect of the connection certainly has its place. But the root of our connection to others needs to come from pure *ahavas Yisrael*. This means that one needs to feel connected to the general whole of *Klal Yisrael*. Connection to others needs to be securely based on connection with Hashem, Torah, and oneself, and pure *ahavas Yisrael* to others; then our relationships with others can thrive and they are real.

When we make sure to form a spiritual connection to another, it will always remain, and even when the other takes leave from us, it will not be a total parting of the ways [because the inner connection formed between *neshamos* lasts forever].

Herein lays the deep perspective towards life. Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and weep over her. *Chazal* say that it takes time to grieve, cry, and mourn. But if a person did not yet develop the areas of connection which we explained until now [to Hashem, Torah, to one's own *pnimiyus*, and *ahavas Yisrael* to others] and he is trying to mourn the loss of another, as Avraham did for Sarah – it will be too difficult for a person to digest the pain of the loss. ■ excerpt from the sefer *Bilvavi on the Parshah*

“Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael are one” (*Zohar* 3:73a). That is to say, the Torah, – its learning, and the fulfillment of its mitzvos – must be kept in a manner that brings to unity, in a way that enables man to cleave to the Torah and to the Creator. This is the purpose of one’s life: attachment to the Torah and to Hashem.

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“Closeness to Hashem is my good.” This is not merely a piece of information or a slogan; it is the reality of life. It does not merely apply to Pesach or Shavuot or Succos. It applies to every moment of one’s life, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day (for someone who merits cleaving to the Creator even in his sleep), 60 minutes an hour. This is the entire existence of man — to be close to the Creator and to cleave to Him, to feel that, “closeness to Hashem is my good.” Certainly, to live this way, one needs a clearly-defined method in his *avodas Hashem* in order to attain *deveikus* to the Creator literally every moment. But before we describe this method, the purpose of life must be absolutely clear to a person, beyond any shadow of a doubt. It must be clear to him that the purpose of life is to feel close and attached to the Creator literally every moment — an inner attachment with every fiber of one’s being. In other words, before we begin to describe the method, it must be absolutely clear which path we are in fact seeking, and where we want it to lead us. There must, therefore, be absolute clarity that the goal is “closeness to Hashem is my good.” This is the point that each individual must completely clarify to himself, until he really feels in his soul that this point, the purpose of life, is clear without any doubt.

■ reprinted from the sefer *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh* Part One

QUESTION Why didn’t the Rav tell the *talmidim* coming to the *shiurim* to wear masks? Although doctors can’t be fully trusted, we still need to be careful and take precautions.

ANSWER I do not give *halachic* rulings. More specifically, I almost never tell people what to do. My entire place on this world is generally to give clarity on topics, and more specifically, to reveal the wisdom of Hashem in each thing, and most importantly, to show how each thing can bring us closer, more attached, and integrated, with Hashem.

QUESTION What message did Hashem send us through everyone having to wear a mask over their face because of corona?

ANSWER There are a few perceptions to it. (1) It is to remind us of the “mask” [that Moshe had to wear] as a result of the sin of the Golden Calf [which brought down the spiritual level of the people and didn’t them to see Moshe’s face directly]. (2) The mouth covers the nose and the mouth specifically, because the nose and mouth correspond to the level of the six centuries of This World which precede Next World, and it is a hint that the state of “This World” is now becoming “covered” over, revealing the state of the Next World.

QUESTION I lost my taste and smell

due to COVID and I still didn't get it back yet. I keep wishing that I will get my taste and smell back but on the other hand I know it's an opportunity to accept a bit of suffering (and also it's a degree of overcoming the lust for food, because right now I barely have any desire for good since I can't taste it anyway.) What should be my attitude about this?

ANSWER It is a gift from Hashem which is showing you what a life without *taavos* (lust) for food looks like. It enables you to work on your *taavos* and all that results from it, and accordingly you can learn the proper attitude towards *taavah*.

QUESTION Are the closing of yeshivos and shuls in Eretz Yisrael, and also in America (in New York and other places) all a *gezeiras shmad* (decree of genocide on the Jewish people)?

ANSWER In some places and in some situations, it is *shmad*, and in other places and situations, it is not. However, the epidemic itself is an outcome of *Keser D'Kelipah* (the highest point in the side of evil), which manifests on our world as a *gezeiras shmad*.

QUESTION Do we need to see the closing of shuls and yeshivos as a "decree of the Erev Rav" against us? Or is it all coming from the hidden *rachamei Hashem* (as the Rav implied)?

ANSWER Both. ■ from the Q & A archive
www.question.bilvavi.net

A popular topic amongst many educators today is the topic of refraining from criticizing children, and that the parents need to be very careful not to slight the honor of a child or insult him in any way. Many lectures and books have been compiled on this subject, because, from the view of modern psychology, criticizing a child is known to have long-term effects on the overall self-esteem of a person.

I am not negating that conclusion, but we must know that there is an altogether different reason of why the parents should be careful with their child's honor. It should be coming from a totally different perspective than the above view, as follows.

If the parents view the child as a *guf* – a physical body - then indeed, it would be logical to make the parents aware of the view of psychology that damaging the child's honor will impact on his entire self-esteem. In that way, the parent will think twice before he says something that may slight the child. But if the parent is aware as he has conversations with his child, that he is speaking with a *neshamah* contained inside a physical body – a *neshamah* that is a piece of the Divine – when that is his perspective, he will surely not slight his child's honor.

Any Jewish parent who wishes to raise his child properly must have the general attitude that "I am a *neshamah*, my spouse is a *neshamah*, and the children that were born to us are *neshamos*." When a parent constantly remembers this, he will find no better reason to refrain from slighting the honor of his child. ■ Chapter Six - previously unpublished from the sefer ילדך דע את

This is not merely a matter of always utilizing our time for Torah study. It is not an issue of becoming more of a *masmid*. It is about inner connection to the Torah, where one attaches the depths of his soul to the reality that is the Torah.

May Hashem give us the strength to awaken our hearts to clarify the root 'sugya' of all 'sugyos': the *sugya* that is the Torah; that these words become clearer as each day goes on, and that we actualize these matters, each person on his own level as much as he can muster; that our connection to Torah should grow more and more, day by day and hour by hour. May we all merit that the light of Torah should be revealed onto the hearts of all *Klal Yisrael*.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* (Gate IV, Chapter 1) explains that in earlier generations, there was no need to learn *sefarim* that explain *yirah* (fear of Hashem), for they were so immersed in Torah that "the love of Torah burned in their hearts, like a burning fire, with love and fear of Hashem that was pure. Their entire desire was to increase the Torah's honor. Thus they taught Torah to many proper students, so that they could fill the world with knowledge of Torah."

Here in the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, it is explained that in previous generations, they were mainly immersed in the study of Torah. Their minds, hearts, and mouths spoke mainly of Torah. Besides for their diligence in learning Torah, the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that a love for Torah burned in their hearts, like a burning fire. The previous generation had powerful hearts: their hearts were filled with a burning love for Torah.

Our psyche is comprised of *seichel* (intellect) and *lev* (heart). When a person is learning Torah, it appears to be only an intellectual field of study, which makes use of the mind. The heart seems to be in the background, when it comes to Torah study. In contrast, when it comes to the study of *mussar*, though, it appears that it is entirely involving the emotions of the heart, and not the intellect.

But the true perspective is entirely different. In the study of *mussar*, there is great wisdom involved, which makes heavy use of the intellect. The Ramchal in the beginning of *Mesillas Yesharim* says that "fear of Hashem is wisdom", therefore, it takes great wisdom to know what fear of Hashem is. So *mussar* is not just involving the emotions\heart. It requires in-depth analysis just as when we learn Gemara.

It appears to be that Torah study only makes use of our intellect, for the discussions of Abaye and Rava require in-depth analysis to study, not emotion or inspiration. But this was actually the mistaken notion that caused many people to slacken off from Torah study in the times of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, for the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that this was the very argument the *yetzer hora* used in order to sway people into learning *mussar* all day and thereby neglect Torah study. People were only learning Torah for the sake of intellectual analysis alone (*pilpul*), thus many people began to look at Torah learning as a purely intellectual pursuit, with no heart involved. Thus they turned to learning *mussar* all day, so that they could be in touch with their heart; but they gave up Torah study with this. ■

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