

ETERNAL

In *Parashas Chayei Sarah*, Avraham Avinu mourns Sarah and grieves his loss. He had spent a large part of his life together with Sarah, and the time had now come for them to part ways.

There are external and inner kinds of loss. External loss is when we lose an object or possession that was valuable to us. Some people take these losses very hard, if it was something that was very dear to the person. Sometimes people have a hard time leaving behind the house that they liked so much. Going deeper, a young boy might feel homesick when he has to leave town for *yeshiva* and he misses the home and his family. Sometimes a person has to leave behind his friends whom he had been close with. But more painful than anything is the loss of a loved one, to lose someone we were very close with.

There are all kinds of connection we have on this world. We start out in life as children, where our first connections with people are towards our parents and our siblings. At that point, however, we have no *daas* (mature understanding) to be aware of these connections. We are born into these connections, but we are not initially aware of the connection. When a loss of a loved one finally arrives, it can hit a person very hard and he suddenly feels the loss of the connection.

But there are other connections and relationships which we choose on our own to enter. When we get older and we gain some *daas*, we become aware of our ability to have a connection and a relationship with another. We think of how we can form a friendship with another, how we can cultivate a relationship with another and keep it intact, etc.

But we must be aware that almost all of these connections and relationships that we feel with others will not be forever. They are temporary. Just as we entered into a relationship with another, so will we have to take leave of the relationship one day. Whenever we become connected to anything, such as moving into a house or buying new clothes or some other important possession, as well as when we form internal connections with another human being, such as our friends and family members, we must be aware from the start that just as we can become connected with others, so can there be a disconnection from others. Sometimes a relationship ends forcibly, and sometimes it ends willingly. But any connection or relationship that we have with anything or anyone is not forever, because it is all part of the transient situation of This World, which is only temporary and it is not our eternal situation.

How much time will the connection last? Usually, we do not know how long, and we cannot predict when a relationship with another will end. But what we do know is that any connection to something that we feel, or any relationship with another that we have, is usually not forever. The time will come one day when our connection with something, or when our relationship with another person, will end at some point. Only a mature *bar daas* can understand this.

Chazal said that a person was created for companionship. Every person needs to feel connected to something. But the true, perfect level of connection is only attainable when we connect to **Hashem** and with His wisdom and will, the **Torah**. An additional important connection we have on this world

is towards our very **self**. Some people hear about this concept and they are puzzled: What does it mean to become connected to your *self*? Do we need to piece ourselves together and become connected to our self? But the answer to this is because we are comprised of a *guf* (body) and a *neshamah* (soul), an outer layer and an inner core. The outer layer of is more revealed, but our inner layer is hidden from us, when we start out in life. But with exertion in Torah and *davening* and becoming clearer about what's inside us, a person gradually enters more and more into his true self, and he finds his true *ani*, his "I", which is at first very hidden from the person. When one finds his true and pure "I", which is not a place of selfishness but a place of selflessness, one discovers a very deep connection to himself which is constant. The true connections that we need to form on this world are: To have a deep connection to Hashem, to His Torah, and to become connected to our true self.

If one does not solidly have these three connections, what happens? He will look for connection elsewhere. He becomes drawn outward, to things that are outside him that are superficial and external. He might become very connected to the various desires that are on This World. If he is a deeper kind of person, he might become connected to his friends, neighbors, and to his entire extended family members. But since he is not connected to his true self, the quality of his connections with others will usually not be genuine. Instead, he will become somewhat dependent on others hanging onto them in order to have some kind of connection, because he doesn't feel secure and connected within his own self. When one is not anchored enough to Hashem, to

Torah, and to one's inner self, he will connect to whatever is on his outside, because he has no inside that he is connected to.

When the day comes where he experiences a loss of another whom he had been closely connected with, he will feel like his entire existence cannot continue, because he had made his existence dependent on the other. He had attached his reason for existence to factors that were outside of him, and he turned this into his very foundation by which he based his whole life on. He becomes dependent on others, on his surroundings, on his friends, or on his family members. When he loses whatever he had attached his existence to, whether it is an object that was dear to him, or whether it is a close friend or a family member, he might feel that his life isn't worth anything.

Grieving over the loss of a close friend or beloved family member might feel to the person like a high level of "*ahavas Yisrael*" to the person, but most of the time, it is not coming from deep *ahavas Yisrael*. It is usually stemming from an absence of a secure, deep connection to Hashem, to Torah, and to his inner self, and it is just that he had replaced this void by connecting to that which is outside of him and trying to fill his emptiness with others.

In contrast, the proper way for a person to fulfill his need for connection is by having a deep connection to himself, and *within* himself, and to be connected to his root: his intrinsic connection to Hashem, and his connection to learning the Torah. One also needs to have a deep connection to another Jew's soul, and that is *ahavas Yisrael*. It takes time and effort to acquire each of these connections, and each of them requires a separate discussion, but this is the outline: One needs a deep connection to Hashem, to Torah, and to his inner self (and from being connected to one's own self, one can deeply connect to others and have true *ahavas Yisrael* towards them, instead of

simply using others to fulfill his emotional needs).

The basis of our connection that we feel with others must not be based on the fact that the person sits in the same row of the *beis midrash* that we learn in, or on the fact that he is our *chavrusa* or any other external factor. Those are all just external, superficial reasons to love others. Of course, if that will lead to an inner connection with the other person, then it certainly has its place. But the root of our connection to others needs to come from pure *ahavas Yisrael* - to feel connected to the general whole of *Klal Yisrael* on a collective level, and also to each Jew separately on the individual level.

When that is the basis, genuine connections with others can be formed. Connection to others needs to be securely based on connection with Hashem, Torah, and oneself, and pure *ahavas Yisrael* to others, and then our relationships with others can thrive and they are real. If these conditions are met, the external aspects of our connection to others are then joined with their root. Our *nefesh hebeheimis* (the animalistic layer of the soul) becomes joined together with the *neshamah* with the, deeper and truer dimension, and that is the true way life is supposed to look like.

Avraham cried over Sarah, but it was not like how the average person cries over such a loss. Even as Avraham cried over the loss of Sarah, he was not mourning in the individual sense; it was not simply that Avraham was crying on a 'private' level over the loss of the individual who was "Sarah". Rather, Avraham and Sarah were connected to each from the depths of their *neshamos*, from their innermost. Since that was the quality of their connection, even when Sarah took leave of the world and Avraham had to bury her, it was not simply the end of their relationship. The outer level of their relationship had ended, the part that was temporary had now gone, but their inner connection

to each other remained forever. Whatever separation that occurred between them after Sarah's death was only temporary. When there is genuine connection with another, it doesn't end on this world. It continues in the next world, and later it can return on this world as well, with *techiyas hameisim*.

From this deep perspective, we can understand that our relationships with another are either temporary or eternal depending on what kind of connection it was. If our connection to the other was only external and superficial level, the connection ends on this world, either with death or with the relationship being severed. But if our connections to others were inner and truthful, then even if we lose those connections on this world, it is only the outer level of the connection that we are losing, and not the connection itself. The loss is only temporary. We may have to wait until *techiyas hameisim* and *Olam HaBa* until the connection returns, but it will definitely return, and on a more purified and inner level.

How much suffering people go through due to severed relationships with others! The pain is tremendous. Every day, there are severed connections, either through loss or through a severed relationship, and this is all part of the *alma d'piruda* (world of separation) we live in ever since Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. The feeling of *pirud* (separation) which we experience on this world is one of the deepest forms of pain that a person can go through, both physically and emotionally. But a person can be *zocheh* to partake a bit of the "*Eitz HaChaim*" on this world, which contains eternal life. This is by connecting to Hashem, "*the Almighty, the King, Who lives forever*", and by connecting to *Toras Chaim*, the "*Torah of life*", and by connecting to the deep part of himself that he draw inner *chiyus* (vitality) from and when a person connects to the root of the *neshamos* of *Klal Yisrael*, which never ceases – when one is connected to there, he is partaking of the *Eitz HaChaim* on this

world, on some level. An entirely new perspective will be revealed to him, on how he will view connection with others and loss of others.

The more we elevate our power of connection and we use it as it should, a person becomes closer and closer to Hashem, to the holy Torah, to his own self, and to the depth of all other *neshamos* in *Klal Yisrael*, in his love for them. Then even the external aspects of our relationships with others will be improved. May we be *zocheh* to the time when Hashem will remove death forever and wipe the tears away from all our faces, so that the deepest and most complete connection can become revealed, when all the *neshamos* of *Klal Yisrael* will become attached, together, to Hashem and to His Torah.

A TASTE OF THE NESHAMAH

❑ I find that it is on Shabbos specifically when I get into bad moods and I am thinking thoughts that aren't good, and I have explosions of babyish behavior and anger. This is very difficult both for me and my family. I have davened much about this and I have tried to deal with this situation. What can be the reason(s) for this and what can I do to fix this issue? **A** Sometimes there can be external reasons for this. One reason may be because a person is found with his family on Shabbos and he is not as involved in his orderly routine of growth and learning that he may have during the week. Sometimes it can also be because of what Chazal say, "Whoever is greater than his friend, his evil inclination is stronger." (This is true on two levels – it is due to a person being on a higher soul level than his friend, who will get tested more, and it also refers to more auspicious times when we get tested more.) And sometimes it is because a person wants to grow higher and learn more Torah on Shabbos, and when that aspiration doesn't happen, a person becomes sadder, whether consciously or subconsciously. It is worthwhile to

organize a routine for Shabbos, and also to learn about what Shabbos is so that you become more connected to Shabbos. For example, learn *sefer Shabbos Malkesa* or any sefer on the topic of Shabbos that you have an interest in. Also, view Shabbos as the time of *raza d'echad*, the time when we are given the ability to reveal the "secret of oneness" – to be "one" with the family, to show love, kindness and joy with them.

❑ How can we make Shabbos more elevated and to utilize it properly? **A** By becoming strongly to what the concept of Shabbos is all about. You can learn about this in sefarim such as *Shabbos Malkesa* and *sefer Daas Shabbos*.

❑ The beginning of *Mesilas Yesharim* says, "Chazal taught us that the purpose of the world is to come to the spiritual bliss of becoming connected with Hashem." Where is this Chazal? **A** The Torah says "And you shall cling to Him", and *Raboseinu* (our teachers) explained that *d'veykus* (clinging to Hashem) is through the pleasure that comes from being close to Hashem. It is written "Then you will find bliss in Hashem", and this is referring to the level of the future (the World To Come), but on This World we have the concept of *oneg Shabbos*, which is called *me'in olam haBa*, a semblance of the World To Come.

❑ On Shabbos Kodesh when a person desires to eat a certain food he is supposed to stop himself and say "L'Kavod Shabbos Kodesh" before eating it. Isn't he fooling himself by saying that he's eating out of honor for the Shabbos? Isn't he just eating to satisfy his craving? How can one know if he's doing the ratzon Hashem by eating it or if he's just listening to the yetzer hora? **A** The advice of the *Shelah HaKadosh* is that one should just taste a bit of the food in honor of Shabbos.

❑ The *Shelah HaKadosh* says that on Shabbos one should taste good food,

does this mean to taste each of the foods on the Shabbos table or to just at a little more than the rest of the week? **A** He should act according to his physical and emotional needs. ❑ What is the proper way to go about going to an *Oneg Shabbos*? How can a person know if he grew more in his *ruchniyus* from an *Oneg Shabbos*? How can a person know before he goes if he will grow from it or if he is just wasting him time going? **A** When Shabbos is over, try to discern if you grew or didn't grow, from an *Oneg Shabbos*.

❑ If our true self is our *neshamah*, then what is the meaning of the הנשמה שנתת היא , "The soul that you have given me is pure?" **A** From the perspective of This World, where there is free will, man is identified with the "*Ruach*" level of the soul [as the *Gra* explains]. But from the perspective of the Next World, a "day that is entirely Shabbos", man is a *neshamah*, because Shabbos is called *yoma d'nishmasa*, the "day of the *neshamah*". Now that we are in the *Acharis HaYomim*, the end of days, and we are "after midday of Erev Shabbos", as the *Gra* discusses, the radiance of Shabbos and the level of the Next World, is shining (and it shines stronger when the "time for *Minchah* arrives). Thus there is a level radiating in our times where we are getting closer to the end, a spiritual light (*ohr*) that is revealing our existence as being more than just free will (*Ruach*), but as a *Neshamah*. One needs to absorb this perspective well. That is also why the "*Neshamah*" level of the Torah – the secrets of Torah – become more revealed in the end of days, as the *Leshem* writes. That is why our *avodah* today is more about revealing our *Neshamah*, for one to say "I am a pure *Neshamah*!", and this causes the radiance of Shabbos to be shined within a person. One should absorb this perspective and let it penetrate, and gradually it will become more revealed to him, until he can actually sense and feel it.

Q How I can identify myself more as a *neshamah* as opposed to being a mere *guf*, a physical body. Which sefer can I learn which will help me relate to myself more as a *neshamah*? A *Shaarei Kedushah* of Rav Chaim Vital. See also sefer *Michtav M'Eliyahu*, in the section called *Maamar Guf V'Neshamah* (Essay on the Body and Soul).

Q In a recent booklet from the late Rav of Tehillos Yisrael, HaTzaddik Rav Aharon Tzvi Rumpler zt"l said (a few weeks before he was niftar, which was shortly before the coronavirus began), "From the year 5760 until 5780, it is already 20 years that have passed [since 5760, which the *Leshem* said is the final time that the *Geulah* can come, which the *Leshem* explains can really extend for another 20-30 years after that as the time for the *Geulah*], and I can't fathom that things can continue like this anymore for even another year, 2 years, or 3 years. But the preparations for the complete *Geulah* are certainly going to begin this year - I don't know how and in what way, but it is going to have to start this year [5780]!" These words were said on Hoshana Rabbah 5780, a few weeks before he passed away and shortly before corona began. The question is: According to his words, 2 years have already passed, so there can only be 1 year left in which Mashiach has to come in his preordained time of arrival. Does that have to be the case? Or can Mashiach be prevented from coming *chas v'shalom* even after this year? A (1) **From the year 5780 and onward, a his-pore-rus (crumbling) of the world has begun.** The root of this is because Chazal said that the world will be for 6000 years followed by *chad charuv* (lit. 1000 years of destruction), of being destroyed, and since we are very close to the time of *chad charuv*, the world is already beginning to be destroyed. This is because we are past the cosmic "9th hour" of Erev Shabbos and close to the time period of "*plag minchah*", and that is why ev-

everything is beginning to crumble. Any sensible person can see that more and more things are falling apart and being destroyed. A (2) It is known that when many *tzaddikim* saw the *Geulah* before they were *niftar*, they were really seeing their own personal *Geulah* but they thought that they were seeing the collective *Geulah*. We are awaiting Mashiach's arrival every day and we should not be making any calculations about when he's coming!!

Q Now that all the possible times for Mashiach's arrival have already passed (as Rava said in the Gemara *Sanhedrin* 97b, "All the ends have already finished"), is it permissible to think about what will be in the end and to talk to others about this? Shouldn't we at least be telling people that Mashiach is coming soon and therefore we need to be prepared for his arrival and do *teshuvah*? A **A person has to search for *emes* (truth) and keep to it simply because it is the truth, and this has nothing to do with Mashiach coming soon or not.** Sometimes a person can use the fact that Mashiach is coming soon as an incentive of believing that he might be coming today, but a person cannot build base his entire perspective on this. Rather, we must simply await for his coming every day.

Q Don't we need to know when Mashiach is coming so that we can properly prepare for his arrival? If we would know that Mashiach has to come by a certain time this year on a certain date, then all of Klal Yisrael would be motivated to prepare for Mashiach and to stop living superficially. If we would know the time when Mashiach is coming then it would be so much easier for everyone to do *teshuvah* in order to greet Mashiach properly! A **HaKadosh Baruch Hu doesn't want us to know when Mashiach is coming. Instead, it will be sudden,** פתאום, אדון יבא בהיכלו, "*Suddenly the master will come to his sanctuary.*"

Q The Zohar says that there will be 15 days of darkness in the world before Mashiach comes, and that a certain star will be visible 45 days before his arrival. Is this all literal or does it mean something more mystical? A Any matters of *agadta*, especially statements of the *Zohar*, are not necessarily meant to be understood in the simple and literal sense.

Q Will the "*Erev Rav*" – the Israeli government – first disappear before the war of Gog and Magog? A We are already found within the war of Gog and Magog [it is taking place on a spiritual level], and it is also called the "war with the *Erev Rav*" [as explained in the *Kisvei HaGra*].

Q The Midrash in *Heichalos Rabasi* explains the entire events of the final days before Mashiach, and there the Midrash gives a frightening and detailed account of what will happen, how it will be the very final sorting process of Klal Yisrael, how there will be 45 days in the desert which will be the hardest challenge ever for Klal Yisrael and people will lose *emunah*, and only those who remain with *emunah* will survive this final test and ~~at the end of the 45 days, Eliyahu and Mashiach will come.~~ So the very last test for Klal Yisrael will be *emunah*. Is there any way we can prepare already now for that challenge? A We are already in middle of that process!

Q Will all those events prophesied in the Midrash come true in the actual sense, or is it all a metaphor and it will take place on a spiritual level? A It does not have to happen as it simply sounds (in the physical sense). We are already within it! The 45 days in the desert are a hint to the word *adam* (man) which is equal to 45, meaning that all of *tzuras adam* (design of man) will cease. This is the secret of the 45 souls who perished on the *yahrtzeit* of *Rashbi*. Understand this.