

FEELING HASHEM'S PRESENCE

When a person is *zocheh* to truly feel the Creator, first he feels Him as *מלא כל הארץ כבודו* *His Glory fills the earth* or *שוייתי הי לנגדי תמיד Hashem is always next to me*. The Rambam said that this means that people can feel Hashem's existence as an actual reality and wherever one goes, he actually feels Hashem with him. After this, when a person becomes more purified, he can begin to feel Hashem's Presence living in his heart. He doesn't just feel Hashem in his physical heart, but in the inner dimension of his heart, and this is what is implied in the term *בלבבי משכן אבנה* *In my heart, I will build a sanctuary*.

One needs to designate time with Hashem in a quiet, empty place and begin to talk to Hashem, and this is an example of how one can talk to Hashem as being a child to his Father: "*Ribono shel olam*, You are really my beloved Father, and how great is my *zechus* (privilege) that I am *zocheh* to be Your child. But *Totty*, although I have feelings for You that You are my *Totty* and I am Your child, I don't feel it in my heart. Sometimes I feel it less and sometimes more, but I am not actually living with it. I can relate to my physical father, but You I cannot feel as my *Totty*. I want to feel that You are, but it is difficult for me, and I forget how. *Totty*, I'm ashamed to say, that I don't feel this way. Even when I do remember, I don't really feel it and it's just a thought in my mind. *Totteh*, I am asking of You one thing: that I should feel that You are my Father, that I am Your child. I am not asking of You anything else – just this! *Totty*, how much pain would I have if my own son would forget that I am his father, the one who brought him into the world and raised him, how much pain I would have if he were to forget his own root. Therefore I don't want to cause You pain by forgetting how I am Your child. So I need to feel it in my heart. *Totty*, it pains me that even as I talk to You, I still do not feel like You are my *Totty*. Who can help me with this? Who can help me feel that You are my precious *Totty*? Only You!! Therefore I ask of You and beg of You that You take pity on me, that I should be able to feel You, that I should feel that You are my *Tatte*, and that I shouldn't forget this, and that I should relate to You no less than I do to my own physical parents."

May Hashem help all those who truly seek Him, who are seeking their Father. If one does this on a consistent basis, every day, then his Father will surely reveal Himself to him, and one will feel Hashem's Presence as no less real and enjoyable than when a child enjoys his own father's presence. (*from sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Part V*)

I Will Dwell Amidst Them

In Creation, there exists a powerful current of movement which is churning and leading everyone in the direction of the most depraved depths, the *She'ol*. Most people have already fallen into there! This is currently where the entire Creation is moving towards, like the *possuk*, "*They have descended into the grave (she'ol)*". If a person does not secure for himself a reality that is independent of the rest of the world, he, too, will be swept away with the rest of the world's current! Understandably, some people will be swept away quicker, and some a little slower, but either way, there is a powerfully moving current in Creation today that is moving everyone with it very fast. To separate from the way that the world is going today, one needs to create his own inner place of refuge, similar to what happened with the sons of Korach, who landed in a place on top of *Gehinnom*. Meaning that even when we are surrounded by a *Gehinnom*, we are able to make for ourselves a place of refuge within it. We do not have to follow the way that our surroundings are headed. For most people, this is very difficult, because by nature, people are like-minded with others (*daato m'uereves im haberiyos*) and therefore they find it hard to be different from everyone else. And, by nature, people are drawn after their surroundings, as the Rambam said. People will naturally think, feel, and do like everyone else around them, with whatever's the style and trend of the day. When people want to know if something is right or wrong, they look around and see what everyone else is doing, and that is how they decide. If everyone has a carefree or permissive attitude about something, then a person will also tend to think that it's fine.

In our generation, the situation today obligates one to form an **internal world** of his own that is not dependent on how anyone else thinks. These words are a matter of life and death, in the absolute sense, because it is about the situation of our *neshamah*. It is the only option that can save a person today: To build an inner place of respite for himself, a life of his own which doesn't look at how others are living. Most people cannot live like this completely, and therefore, anyone who truly seeks Hashem needs to find any truthful individuals he recognizes whom he can bond with, who are able to separate themselves from all of the entire surroundings. And it is those individuals whom

he should bond with and form a deep connection with. The generation is moving in an unprecedented direction. Everything is changing in front of our eyes. The world is constantly changing, both externally and internally. If a person doesn't see it, he is like a blind person stumbling his way through the dark.

How should our lives look like? There is an external as well as an internal part to this. In everything that one encounters today, one should not think about what everyone else in his surroundings are doing. Because if he does, then he will fall into the same place that the rest of the generation is moving in. Instead, he should think about what the world looked like at least 20 years ago, how people behaved then, how life was so much more normal then. If one can go deeper than this, he can also reflect about what the generation before the Holocaust looked like, and then he can wonder what several hundred years before that looked like. But in no circumstances should a person look at the world from where it is today and assume that the world today lives okay. Of course, we do not live in the previous generations, and we need to deal with the way the world is today. *"Do not say what used to be, that the original days were better than these, for not from wisdom do you ask on this."* (Kohel 7:10). One must deal with whatever is in front of him, the lifestyle that exists on the outside world today. But what is the way by which we should be examining each thing and knowing what's right and what's wrong? If something isn't written explicitly in *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Poskim*, then how do we know if it's right or not? The true barometer that measures this is: To think and wonder how people behaved 20 years ago and earlier, when the world was a purer place than it is today.

In order to deal with the current reality, which is not like how things used to be, one needs a certain wisdom about life, together with *davening* to Hashem for help and clarity. But at the very least, one needs a certain inner sense of *yashrus* (logical thinking) in order to examine anything. To give an example, when difficult questions would come before Rav Shach zt"l, how would he decide? He would try to think to himself: If this question would have come before the Chofetz Chaim zt"l, what would the Chofetz Chaim have said? This is a very subtle thing to know. How is it possible to know what the Chofetz Chaim would have thought? But we are just using this as an example, and it is very clear: One should try to view the world from a perspective of 20 years ago and earlier, as if he is viewing the world before it has fallen to where it is now. What does the world look like, from that viewpoint? When one views the world from there, he will gain a sense of *yashrus* to some degree.

The other part we need to do is more internal: A person needs to open up his internal world (*olam pnimi*), become

connected with it, and live in it. The stronger that one has built his own *olam pnimi*, the clearer it will be to him, and the more he will become truly connected to Hashem and His Torah. Then he will be able to feel what brings him closer to Hashem, as well as what doesn't. When a person is truly connected with Hashem and to the Torah, he has access to an *ohr pnimi* (inner clarity) in his *nefesh*, which offers him a clearer perspective. He won't understand how others can be in doubt about certain things, because to him, it will be clear that certain things are the complete opposite of Hashem's will, the Torah. Hashem's Presence fills all of Creation, and one who has purified himself internally can feel it, and this gives him a clear view on reality.

If one doesn't yet have a connection to his inner world, he must at least do the external task mentioned earlier, which is to reflect on how the world looked just two decades years ago and earlier, and view the world from that perspective. That perspective can lessen the spiritual difficulties of today, to some degree, but it doesn't solve the issues. This is because there are many new things today which distance a person from Hashem. Various new things keep appearing on the scene and we don't know what the proper perspective should be about them. But the more that a person lives an inner, truthful kind of life, the more that the entire world will seem to him like a strange, distanced, far-removed place, because all of it is the total opposite of *kedushah*. The first thing one can notice is that there are things today which are considered normal and accepted, but which actually contradict *halachah*. Then one can be able to recoil from anything that goes against the purity of our *neshamos*. Our *neshamos* can feel out something and sense if it's okay or not – each person on his own level can do this. The more that a person lives in this way, he can slowly distance himself from all that's found on the outside world today.

In order to truly disconnect from the outside world, it is necessary for one to build an inner world for himself that is expansive, rich, and deep. If the soul is not filled with a bond with Hashem and with a deep connection to Torah, then it will be like *"The pit is empty, it has no water – it has no water, but there are snakes and scorpions in it."* It will not be possible one to fulfill *"And I will separate you from the nations"* unless a person has a space where he can fill himself with *kedushah*. We cannot only be involved in a "war" with the outside influences and with distancing ourselves from it. Perhaps we can put up posters each day decrying certain things that are unacceptable for our people, and we can wage wars of *kanaus* (protesting the breaches to the Torah) against things which we should oppose. But that alone won't be enough to give us a true life. It will help us run away from the fire that is raging today, but we need more than that. In order for us to really survive spiritually, **we need to build a rich, internal world (*olam pnimi*) of our own.** Each per-

son needs to be truly prepared to join with the *tzaddikim* and have a **true, earnest bond with Hashem and with His Torah...**

Of the *Beis HaMikdash* it is said, ושכנתי בתוכם "And I will dwell amidst them", and *Raboseinu (the Alsbich HaKadosh)* interpreted it to mean that Hashem dwells "within each person." When one traverses the path of truth and he becomes opened to his inner world, the third *Beis HaMikdash* will begin to shine for him even now. The *ohr* (light/revelation) of the *Geulah* will not arrive suddenly - although the external event of the *Geulah* will come suddenly, the inner revelation of the *Geulah* is an *ohr*, a spiritual light, which is gradually descending onto our world and intensifying with the closer we get to Mashiach. In previous generations, in order to get to this light, one needed great exertion to get it. But in our generation, any efforts for this will not only be rewarded, but will also yield a revelation here on our world. One who separates himself from the lifestyle of the world today and connects himself, truly, to Hashem and to His Torah, will be *zocheh* to have his *olam pnimi* become opened to him.

One can see the reality of the inner dimension of life, the true life. "All the *Chachomim* and *Neviim* (Torah sages and prophets) did not desire the days of Mashiach in order to have any control over the world...but to be free to pursue the study of Torah and its wisdom." That is the main revelation of the days of the *Geulah*: The clarity of the words of Torah - the revelations of Torah - and the revelation of its Giver, Who is within it.

This is the spiritual power found in our generation. We are found in the End of Days, and we have no idea when the actual time of the *Geulah* will come, but the *Gra* wrote that the six centuries of history correspond to the six days of Creation, and the day divides into 12 hours, so according to the 'Divine clock', we are in the sixth hour, after midday, after the time of *plag Minchah*, close to the time of "*Kabalas Shabbos*" of the future - the future Shabbos, which will be the seventh millennium. As with every *Erev Shabbos*, the closer we get to *Shabbos*, the more intensely we can feel *Shabbos* approaching. On the first day of the week, we feel furthest from *Shabbos*, and as the week continues we can begin to feel that *Shabbos* is coming. At the fourth day of the week, it is three days before *Shabbos*, and many *halachos* of preparing for *Shabbos* begin to take effect. On *Erev Shabbos*, the preparations for *Shabbos* are the most intense....

When one traverses the true kind of life, on one hand he realizes that he faces an awesome war with all of the influences found outside, but at the same time, there is a new light beginning to radiate, which shines within him, and this light can connect him to the depths of an eternal life. It is a revelation of *Shechinah* within the person, but even more

so, it gives one the power by which one can deal with all that takes place on the outside world today.

To the degree that one separates himself from the world of *chitzoniyus*, from the external world of superficiality, and he connects himself with the *olam pnimi*, with the internal world, one will be *zocheh* to the "gates of the intellect and heart" to become opened to him (as the *Chazon Ish* describes in a letter), to become one who is destined for *Olam HaBa*, and to become a person who will have the spiritual energy to be saved from the raging storm winds that are threatening to blow away the entire generation. May Hashem merit all of us to stand together and be *mekabel pnei Mashiach*, to greet Mashiach with the complete *Geulah*, speedily in our days, *Amen*.

Q&A

QUESTION Should a *yungerman* make *shidduchim*?

ANSWER When you try to approach any subject, first take apart all the factors that it involves. Let us think a little about what it means to be a *shadchan*. (1) If you will become a *shadchan*, you will be hearing information all day about people, both boys and girls. You won't only be hearing their names, you will be hearing everything they do, their personalities, etc. (2) As a *shadchan*, you will need to convince both sides that the boy and girl are compatible with each other. But many times, when the details are given over, they are not accurate. Sometimes certain information isn't conveyed, and sometimes the information is changed a bit or more than a bit, leading to misinformation that is being given over to any of the sides. (3) Becoming a *shadchan* will mean that he will need to be having long, extended conversations with all kinds of men and women, and sometimes these are not just conversations but they lead to emotional connections that are formed. (4) You need to be prepared at any given moment of the day to give of your time and be available to both sides before a date and afterwards, to discuss it with both sides. (5) There are many other factors as well to consider, which are subtle.

A *Kolel yungerman*, and any *ben aliyah* who is immersed in his learning, is really far away from doing the work of a *shadchan*. It is better that women should be involved with active *shadchanus*. A woman's husband can help her a bit by giving her some ideas, but he should not get more involved than that.

QUESTION When can a person know if the time has come for him to spread and teach Torah to others?

ANSWER A person is comprised of three parts: 1) What he receives from others. 2) His own self. 3) What he gives and influences upon others. Those are three stages of a person's life. At first a person needs to receive from his parents and teachers. After that, one can gradually build and develop his own character. When one grows up and matures, he can eventu-

ally be of influence to others. Compare it to the difference between a child and an adult – a child cannot bear child, but when he grows up and becomes an adult, he can bear children. A person is considered to be like a child as long as he relies on his parents for support, when he is still in the first stage, being a “receiver”. So a person needs to see if his first stage, “receiving”, was traversed properly. If it was, then a person’s main task now is to build and develop his character, outwardly and inwardly. On the outward level, one needs to be consistently immersed in Torah study, firmly planted in the world of Torah learning. On the inward level, a person needs to develop a deep connection within himself to the holy Torah and to its Giver. After that, one can be of influence to others, from the immense spiritual light that he has gained. When a person is helping and influencing others, he also gains personal blessing from this.

There is a famous analogy of the Maggid of Dubna that illustrates how one can be of influence to others only after he has developed himself first: When a cup isn’t yet filled to the top and we pour it into another cup, the second cup will become filled but the first cup will lose some liquid. Instead of making the first cup lose some liquid, we should fill the first cup all the way until it is overflowing and it spills into the next cup, so that it will still be a full cup, even after spilling into the next cup. [So too, one should only influence others if he is first spiritually ‘full’, where he can then be beneficial to others without compromising on his own growth, as opposed to influencing others before one is spiritually ‘full’, where he will stop growing if he tries to influences others]. However, sometimes a person did not yet complete the first part of his life – the necessity to receive from others – and in many cases, a person also did not yet develop his personality yet. He may seek various teaching positions, though, because he is feeling peer pressure – he will feel that he is one of those

“unsuccessful” people in the eyes of his friends, if he doesn’t get a position. Or, alternatively, he may not be finding *chiyus* (vitality) and *sippuk* (satisfaction) from within himself, and he hopes that by teaching others, he will find that vitality or satisfaction he is missing. Or, sometimes he may be seeking a teaching position because he is really running away from his own self. It may also stem from a desire for honor, power, money, or other self-serving factors. Therefore, a person needs to examine his motivations deeply, when he seeks to teach and influence others: Why do I want to do this? Then, he can know how to act accordingly, depending on the circumstance. When a person has not yet developed his character – whether it is because he hasn’t received enough [knowledge] from others or whether he has not yet built his personality – if he tries to teach and influence others in this deficient state, it is a sign of a flaw in his character, and he will not be able to influence correctly. However, there does exist a need in the soul to influence others. Sometimes, even a very deficient person can help his situation by teaching and influencing others, because he is inspiring and strengthening himself by helping others learn. This is a very common occurrence nowadays.

Without going to teach others, a person may find it too hard to work on himself and overcome his weaknesses. It is within his *bechirah* to choose, if he will be very devoted to working on himself, or if he will begin influencing others. If one does choose to influence others rather than work hard on himself, one will need to balance his daily schedule. He will need to set aside time of the day where he tries to fix his weaknesses. One needs to be very careful that he shouldn’t run away from himself in the name of influencing others. Firstly, a person who is involved with influencing others may become bombarded by all kinds of responsibilities, as part of his job. Even more so, he may stop growing, because he may no longer want to receive more

knowledge from others nor work on developing his character any further. This does not only apply to one who began to teach and influence others without first working on himself enough. It is also true for someone who was properly developed before teaching others. Such a person also needs to set aside time every day to continue his personal growth. This must be done for all of his lifetime. A person always needs these three aspects – receiving from others, building his own character, and influencing others. It is just that the balance between these aspects is different with each person, and also depending on the particular *tekufah* (life stage) a person is at. But the common denominator between all people is that a person should never be in a position of teaching and influencing others in a way that totally uproots him from his own inner world, *chas v’shalom*.

The secret of the success of those who are very in touch with their inner world (*pnimiyus*) is because on one hand, they are deeply immersed in their own inner world, but they also know how to [leave their private growth and] be of influence to others, giving others all their best. Practically speaking, generally a person should not actively seek out a place where he can teach and be a *mashpia*. Rather, one needs to *daven* to Hashem from the depths of the heart: that if he feels a need to teach and influence others, and if the need arises for him to do so, that Hashem should enable this to happen, in a way that is pleasant, and not in a way which causes *machlokes* (dissension) among others. For if there is any *machlokes* involved in trying to get any position, a person should run from it as if he is running away from a fire. In the meantime, a *kolel avreich* should be immersed in his soul in the world of Torah learning and *avodas Hashem*, along with *davening* to Hashem, as explained above. One should try as much as he can not to think about this [gaining a teaching position], on his own level (as each person is on a different level).

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