

# Bilvavi

בלבבי  
משכן  
אבנה

## RELATIVES & BEYOND

*Parshas Emor* talks about the *halachos* of the main *kerovim* (relatives), whom a Kohen may become ritually contaminated by. In addition to blood relatives, we also have relationships with others whom we live nearby with, as well as those in our community. We all have certain friends whom we are more closely connected with, and even more so, those who we share a Torah connection with.

Closeness to Hashem is the all-inclusive level of closeness. It contains every aspect of all our close relationships, and more. Just as we can be connected to others by living nearby them, by feeling close with them, and by connecting with others when we learn Torah, so can we feel the very same aspects of connection with Hashem.

One can become aware of how Hashem's glory fills the entire world which is how we can feel that he is next to Hashem all the time. The *Mesillas Yescharim* says that a person can talk to Hashem as if he is talking to a friend in close proximity. A person can discover that he is a child of Hashem, who can turn to Him whenever he wants. In this way, a person can always be connected to Hashem in every place.

One can also feel an actual bond of closeness to Hashem, with the feelings of love and awe from Him. And one can also become connected with their *da'as* to Hashem, by learning His Torah, which aligns one's thinking with the *da'as* of Hashem. And finally, going even further, a person can uncover the deepest level, which is being "one" with Hashem.

The depth behind the entire concept of all of our relatives and those whom we are close with is to lead us into discovering Who is truly the closest to us. We should first recognize that there are levels of priority in our relationships [i.e. family first, then siblings, then one's own community, etc.], and then we discover deeper levels of closeness, those whom we share a *kesher nafshi* (an inner connection) with, and even more, those whom we are connected to in our *daas*, by being connected in Torah with them.

Finally, we should discover the deepest closeness of all: being close to Hashem. Dovid HaMelech said, "As for me, closeness to Hashem is good" – which includes every element of closeness, for only Hashem is our truest *Karov*, our true "Relative." קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו. (from *Bilvavi On The Parsha*)

How should we view our home? What is the home all about, and what does it mean to us? Whether people learning all day or they are working, everyone wants to come to home to a relaxed atmosphere and find some *menuchah*. But often we find that when we come home, not only don't we find *menuchah*, but the very opposite. Is there a way for us to find *menuchah* in our homes? Actually, there is.

I want to ask you the following question: Does everyone here love their family? (If anyone here answered "No", then there is nothing here to discuss.) We can all say that we love our family. But can all of us say that we express that love to them? That is the question. Do we love our family? We will all say, "Yes". Do we want express love to them? Most people will also say "Yes". But the question is, how much time of the day do we actually express love to them? Most people are unable to answer that question. It is this unanswered question, though, where all the problems in the home begin.

The love that we have for our family is always there, but it is mostly hidden, and not openly revealed enough. If we want to reveal love in our homes, and we are really prepared to do this every day, then we will have a successful home. Of course, this does not mean that you will have a 100% perfect home if you do this, but you will definitely have a general recipe for success

in the home. There are also certain issues that come up in the home which cannot be solved through merely expressing love to them. But the basic recipe for a successful and good home is: to express love to your family, every day.) Remove all of the masks covering all your love for your family, and let the love flow from you. Don't just love your family in your heart - reveal that love to them! Express it!

This is not some lofty level of *avodas Hashem*. Although it's part of serving Hashem, many people will feel like they cannot do it if they view it as '*avodas Hashem*.' Instead, view the home as the place where you express your love. That will sound a lot better to people, and that's something we can more easily accept.

What is the most important thing you can give to your child? To buy him clothes? That is of course very important, but there are even more important things than this. Hiring a good tutor or mentor for him? Even the best teacher cannot replace the love you can give to your child! It is true that giving love to your child is not everything, and that the child also needs to learn and be neat, etc. He needs all of that. But what are his basic emotional needs? This has to come way before we think what his *ruchniyus* needs are. A child needs to feel loved!! Any sensible person knows this. Making our children feel loved must become the basis in our home. ■ *from the*

*hebrew shiur* דע את משפחתך\_002\_התחלה בנין

**QUESTION** How I can achieve a relationship with Hashem even though I don't have the analogy of the father-son relationship from my own life? Also, what can I do to create a relationship with my father? Am I supposed to just "let go" of this need that I feel?

**ANSWER** (1) There are many different kinds of relationships with Hashem: both open and hidden ways of connecting to Him. For example, a Kohen's relationship with Hashem is connected with the uniqueness of being a Kohen. The same goes for a Levi, and the same goes for a *melech* (king). It's the same thing when it comes to relating to Hashem as a "Father" - not everyone has this kind of connection with Hashem. For example, someone who doesn't have a father, or someone who feels like an "orphan" in his father's lifetime, is not able to relate that well to having a "father-child" relationship with Hashem. Therefore, if someone didn't have a father, or if he is missing a relationship with his father, there are still other ways for him to connect to Hashem, other than relating to Him as a Father. In fact, such a person can connect to Hashem even more powerfully. It is well-known that when a person is weak when it comes to a certain personality trait, he will be unusually stronger when it comes to a different trait. It's the same when it comes to not having a father. Since it's harder for you to have a "father-child" relationship with Hashem, there are other aspects in which you are able to able a very strong relationship with Hashem. (2) However, in no circumstance should a person let

go of the need for a fatherly presence in his life. There are different ways of how a person can gain it. (a) By connecting to the *Avos* (Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov). This is a more abstract kind of relationship, but we are able to have a more personal relationship with them somewhat, such as by *davening* by their burial place (*Me'aras HaMachpeilah*). (b) Or, when feasible, try to have a relationship with your grandfather on your father's side, because the father of one's father is sometimes referred to as one's own "father". (3) A *rebbe* (Torah teacher) is also referred to as one's "father". (4) One can also gain a little bit of a "fatherly" connection with his father-in-law, who resembles a father on some level. (c) It is also possible for a son to rise above the father [in which the father is receiving a relationship from the son], as we see from Yaakov and Yosef. At first, there was a natural father-son relationship between Yaakov and Yosef, in which Yaakov taught Yosef. But later, in the 17 years when Yaakov lived in Egypt, Yosef supported Yaakov. From here we see that there comes a point where the son gives to the father. Therefore, practically speaking, a son needs to be giving something to his father, and this develops their relationship. And when a son awakens this kind of relationship with his father in which he is giving to his father, the natural relationship between father and son is also rekindled, where the father returns to his role of being the giver towards his son. (d) It is important for you to discover any aspects in which you did have with your father, and emotionally connect to that. This

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will enable the relationship with your father to slowly open up, more and more. Practically speaking, you need to first remember any times in which you did enjoy a relationship with your father, even if it was only a little, and then you need to become inwardly connected to that. (e) Finally, you can connect to your own “pure child” in you, the part of you that is called a *tam*, the pure and innocent child, which receives a warm and natural relationship from a father. In that inner space within you, you can find your inner child’s connection to your father. Awaken it and become connected to it.

**QUESTION** I didn’t get any emotional warmth or love as a child, and this makes me very needy towards others. I feel like I grew up dysfunctional. How can I heal from this...?

**ANSWER** 1) Discover any love that you did receive, even if it was only a little. Although you are saying that you “did not get any emotional warmth or love,” you need to re-think that and see how you certainly did receive some love, even if it may have only been a little. But you certainly received a little bit. Then, focus on the little bit of love you received, and open yourself further towards it, so that this emotion becomes alive. This will be a seed which you can use to open yourself up further, as will soon be explained. 2) Open yourself up to Hashem’s love for you, and from that you can receive some pure love.

3) Open yourself up to the ability of healthy self-love which is love that comes from your true, inner self. You can access your inner self-love and extend it to yourself. From your inner self-love, you can also develop the ability to feel loved by Hashem. This is an ability which comes from within you and not from outside of you. When a person receives loves from outside of himself [i.e. from family or friends], it is all a means to a greater end, which one can use in order to reach his own genuine and pure self-love. However, many times, a person remains with this “means” without reaching the greater end of it all. The person feels fine receiving love from others, but he never reaches his own inner self-love, for the most part. When one is missing love from others (i.e. when he did not receive love from any source outside of himself) he is missing the path to access his own self-love. However, if he wants to, he can choose a good path for himself where he will be a lot closer to reaching pure self-love, without using any outer means to get it. The more inward a person becomes, the less he will be needy of love from outside sources, and it will suffice that he has a self-love that comes from within, as well as the love that he feels from the Creator. One needs to love others, using this approach [of first discovering his own inner self-love]. One should identify his wish to love others, and then extend that love further. ■ *from the Bilvavi Q & A archive*

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