

דרשות | דע את משפחתך | דע את ביתך

# Getting to Know Your Home & Family



Collection of Drashas from the  
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# 1

*from the  
Hebrew sefer*

דע את ביתך

## 1.0 | *Author's Introduction*

The topic of the Jewish home/marriage is of interest to many aspiring people.

It is only natural to seek ways of “what to do” and “what not to do” in marriage, “what to say” and “what not to say”, and “how” to say it, “how” to express oneself, etc.

But those are all ‘branches’ of the ‘root’. It is written, “*With wisdom (chochmah), a home is built.*”<sup>1</sup> This *posuk* teaches us that the root of building a home is to use a certain *chochmah* – wisdom.

This sefer is not here to give practical tips and advice for a good marriage. Rather, it is mainly coming to explain the wisdom of building a Jewish home, as explained according to our holy Sages and from our leaders who came after them.

This sefer is meant for those whose are willing to think and build their thoughts, and from there, to be able to act upon those thoughts. One who seeks advice alone will not find what he is looking for in this sefer.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mishlei 24:3*

*Part One Chapter One**1.1 | The Goal of Marriage: Intrinsic Love**The Deep Perspective On Marriage*

Within the pages of this sefer, we will try, with the help of Hashem, to attempt and understand with more of an inner perspective, the concept of the “Jewish home.”

“*Sof maaseh, b’machshavah techilah*” – “The end of actions, is first with thought” - it’s better to understand all of this before you get married. But even if you didn’t, it’s never too late.

It should be clear and simple to the reader that this sefer is not coming to give practical tips. It is giving an inner perspective. We will try to make the concepts practical, but as a rule, “*Each man shall rule in his home*”; first one has to recognize his place, his home, and from understanding that, a person will be able to draw forth practical conclusions from there.

*Returning To Our Point of Origin*

It is written, “*B’chochmah yivneh bayis*” - “With wisdom, a home is built.” From learning the “wisdom” of marriage, a person will know how to build a marriage/family.

The word *chacham*, “wise one”, is equal in numerical value in Hebrew to the word *chaim*, life. It is written, “*See the wisdom with the woman whom you love.*”<sup>2</sup> The reality of life is based on *chochmah* – “wisdom”; building a home is also built on “wisdom”.

It would seem, then, that it would be enough to just learn what this *chochmah* is, and then one will know how to build a true Jewish home. However, there is more to it than just *chochmah*. Where does *chochmah* come from?

It is written, “*V’hachochmah, m’ayin timatzei*” – “Wisdom, from where (*m’ayin*) does it come from?” The *possuk* gives the answer: wisdom comes from the source that is called “*ayin*” (*nothingness*).<sup>3</sup> So before we learn about the wisdom of marriage, the *possuk* says we need “*ayin*” (“nothingness”). What does this mean?

The home is built on certain *chochmah*, but it must be preceded with “*ayin*.” Without knowing how to draw forth *chochmah* from its deeper source, “*ayin*”, will be half the picture.

Since *chochmah* “wisdom” comes from *ayin* “nothingness”, a certain feeling of “nothingness” must precede the wisdom. There is a rule that wherever something spiritual begins, that is also where it ends, because “the end is contained in the beginning” somehow.

Thus, a feeling of “nothingness” must be the “beginning” – and “end” – of a home. We will explain what we mean.

Creation is like a circle. Everything in Creation starts out from a beginning point, leaves the beginning, and eventually returns to the beginning point. We can see this from the planets and the

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<sup>2</sup> *Koheles 9:9*

<sup>3</sup> *Iyov 28:12*

stars, which all revolve in a certain orbit. So, too, in marriage, first we leave our beginning point, which is our original state of nothingness, and from there we can reach *chochmah*/wisdom. Then we eventually return to our original state of nothingness.

That is the inner way to view the home.

### *Ayin/Torah Vs. Chochmah/Human Wisdom*

Chazal said, “*Chochmah b’goyim, taamin*” – If there is wisdom among the nations, believe it; “*Torah b’goyim al taamin*” – If there is Torah among the nations, don’t believe it.”<sup>4</sup> If the basis of a Jewish home would be *chochmah*/wisdom alone, then it would be enough to know the *chochmah* of marriage and build a home from that knowledge. However, trying to build a Jewish home based on the wisdom about marriage alone is a gentile approach.

According to the Torah, wisdom has an earlier source to it. All *chochmah* is drawn from a higher source: *ayin*. The *ayin* is the source of the *chochmah* that teaches us how to use the *chochmah*. It is essentially the Torah itself, which guides us. We must be prepared to nullify ourselves to it. Our point of *ayin* is when we nullify ourselves to the wisdom we are learning about.

Thus, the root of wisdom is not in wisdom itself, but in a higher root: the Torah. And of Torah, our Sages said, “*Torah b’goyim, al taamin.*”

### *Unifying The Disparity of Creation*

Earlier we brought the verse, “*See life with the woman you love.*” The Hebrew word for “love”, *ahavah*, is equal in numerical value to the word *echad*, “one”.

The structure of Creation is that we are all one unit, and then we become separated, and our task is to return to our original, unified state. Before the world, Hashem was One and His Name was One, then He divided His oneness and created *ayin*, nothingness, also called *hiyuli* (matter). This continued to subdivide into further and further divisions. Part of our task as well is to bring in our own ‘divisions’, and thus we have a *mitzvah* to bear children, which creates more and more ‘divisions’ of the original unity. But on the other side of the coin, it is also part of our task to do the opposite: to strive to unify.

Chazal say that since Hashem stopped creating the world, He arranges *zivugim* (marriages).<sup>5</sup> This doesn’t simply mean that Hashem is the Matchmaker. It means that He creates *achdus* (unity) through pairing couples together.

The *Midrash* states that a person’s *bashert* (spouse) is announced forty days before he is conceived.<sup>6</sup> Why it is announced before he is conceived? Why not afterwards?

The answer to this is to show that there must be a concept of *achdus* already present even before the future couple is split up. All of this splitting by Hashem is done with the agenda of coming back together again one day.

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<sup>4</sup> *Eichah Rabbah 2:13*

<sup>5</sup> *Vayikra Rabbah 8:1*

<sup>6</sup> *Sotah 2a*

Thus, the depth of Creation (and marriage especially) is to unify that which has become separated. Of marriage, the Torah writes, “*And they shall become one flesh.*” Before a couple gets married, there was an *achdus* (unity) that preceded the marriage – and it is their task is to return themselves to that original *achdus*.

### *The Purpose of Marriage: Unity*

When a person is getting married, for what purpose is he getting married? The superficial answer that people have is, to become happier. We cannot say that this is totally incorrect, but there is a more inner perspective.

There is always an outer and inner layer to everything in Creation. So it is upon us to understand what the inner reason is in getting married. One should ask himself: “Why am I getting married?” In deeper terms - “Why am I living??”

The answer is, as we began to explain: so that husband and wife can become unified together. The unity between husband and wife is the main kind of unity that you need to accomplish on this world.

We can also unify with our friends, and we can also unify with anything in Creation. Whatever we come across in life, we can unify with it. But it is nature for a person to look at everything as coincidental, and not to see the inner perspective towards what he comes across. Whatever we encounter, good or bad, can be a way for us to achieve unity.

If something is good, we can connect to it, and if it is bad, we cannot connect to it right now, but in the future, when all evil will be broken and rectified, all will be unified under the unity of Hashem. So in concept, all of Creation is meant to become unified, both the good and the bad. In order for the universe to come to its completion, all must be unified eventually, as it is written, “*And then Hashem will be King over all the earth on that day, Hashem will be One and His Name will be one.*”

What is the purpose of marriage? Besides for a person’s physical and emotional needs (which we will address in the later chapters<sup>7</sup>), it is: to reach *achdus*. How does a person reach this *achdus*? Generally speaking, it is through learning the Torah and keeping the mitzvos. Both man and woman have their respective *mitzvos* which generally brings them to achieve *achdus* in Creation. But the goal of marriage is that they strive to reach *achdus* with each other.

In whatever a person does, there is the action he does, and there is the inner perspective behind it from which the action stems from. The act of building the home is to build the home according to how we must build it. But what is the reason that we must build it? It is because we were created for a goal, which is to come to achieve *achdus*. Each person who builds his own home is having a share in that universal *achdus*.

This is the concept of *ayin* – “nothingness”- which we were referring to in the beginning of this chapter. A person needs this “*ayin*”: to come into marriage knowing the reason of why he is getting married. It is to know why we are coming to build a home. *Ayin* is the concept of *echad*, the unity of the universe, to have no divisions.

This is not a novel concept. It is a *possuk*: “*And they shall become one flesh.*”

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapters Six through Eleven

If a person realizes that building the home is about becoming one with his spouse, to reach *echad* with each other, then this will be the underlying expression that accompanies him throughout his entire marriage. When a person is married for many years, *Baruch Hashem*, he has to look at this as all being an expression of how to unify with his spouse.

Of course, we always have ups and downs in our marriage; successes and failures. But the goal can still be very clear: to reach the unity with each other, to return to their beginning point. In that way, the outlook towards the home is vastly transformed and infused with inner, spiritual meaning.

The goal which they should be heading towards is: oneness. Man is given the task to reveal the oneness of Hashem, first by unifying with other creations and then through the creations unifying with the Creator. How does a person reveal unity within creation? How can each person do it in his own life? One of the main ways to do this is, through the home: “*And they shall become one flesh.*”

This is what it means to start from nothingness, leave it, and then return to the nothingness. We were originally one, we became disparate, and it is currently upon us to lead ourselves back to our beginning point, which is that we were all one.

### *The Three Levels of Love In Marriage*

We will now delve into the ramifications of this concept.

In the words of *Chazal*, as well as in the works of philosophy [brought by the Rambam], there is an argument about what true love is. Do you love someone who is similar to you, or do you love someone who is different than you?

In actuality, both reasons are true: there is love for similarities/similar attraction (*ahavas hadomeh*), and there is also love for differences/opposite attraction (*ahavas hashoneh*).

However, there is another kind of love, which is deeper than the above two. It is not about loving someone who is similar to you, and it is not about loving someone who is refreshingly different than you. It is to love another person intrinsically (*ahavas etzem*).

Similar attraction or opposite attraction are both due to external factors. A person can love another because he sees similarities between them, or he loves another for being different than him, so he realizes that marrying that person will complete him. But when you love someone for just being who he is, this is not due to any similarities between you, nor is it due to any opposite attraction. It is simply a kind of love that has no rhyme or reason to it.

Thus, there are three kinds of love: to love another when he is different than you (*ahavas hashoneh*), to love another when he is similar to you (*ahavas hadomeh*), and to love another person intrinsically, for no reason (*ahavas etzem*).

The first kind of love, *ahavas hashoneh*, is a logical kind of love: a person can love another who is different than him, because he realizes that unifying with him will improve his deficiencies, so he sees the other like his “missing puzzle piece.” The second kind of love, *ahavas hadomeh*, is also logical: you are attracted to each other because you are similar to each other. But the third kind of love, *ahavas etzem*, has no logical reason motivating it. It is to love another person for no reason - just as you love yourself for reason.

It is written [concerning the creation of Chavah], “*For from man this woman was taken, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, thus she is called woman, for from man this one has been taken.*” The *possuk* shows

us the three kinds of love in a marriage (1) “*Bone of my bone*”; (2) “*Flesh of my flesh*” and (3) “*For from man this one has been taken.*” These three terms are each parallel to the one of the three kinds of love that we spoke of.

“Opposite attraction” is a love based on externalities; you are loving the person for being different than you, so there is still an acknowledgement here of a separation between “you” and the “other.” If the other person is different than you, he/she is [somewhat] your opposite. The differences can of course be a catalyst to unite the two of you together, but the love itself here is still based on external factors, so it is not intrinsic.

Man and woman have opposite natures, as is well-known. There are many ways how we see it. The well-known difference between them is that men work with rational intellect, whereas women are more inclined toward emotion. There are many other differences as well. But the point is always the same: they are natural opposites.

The part of the *possuk* that says “*For from man, this one was taken*” refers to the love that comes from opposite attraction: man’s body was divided into two, forming the creation of woman. Man and woman are like two puzzle pieces that need to come back together. They are not similar to each other; their very difference is what clicks the two pieces together. This is the concept behind the opposite attraction that husband and wife can feel to each other.

The second aspect of marriage is, “*flesh of my flesh*” – similar attraction. When something is similar to me, I feel like it is part of me. However, it is still not yet intrinsically part of me. It is only ‘flesh of my flesh’ – it is a part that is similar to me, and that allows the two points to unite, but it is still not yet an intrinsic part of me.

But the third kind of love is, “*bone of my bone.*” When Adam said this, he was saying that my love towards Chavah is because “she is *me.*”

It is these three kinds of love which we must become familiar with in marriage: (1) *ahavas hashoneh* (opposite attraction), in which husband and wife see how they are each different, and their differences complete each other; (2) *ahavas hadomeh* (similar attraction), in which husband and wife are attracted to each other due to their similarities they discover in each other; (3) *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love), which stems from the fact that man can identify his wife as being “one” with him – “*bone of my bone.*”

### *All Three Kinds Of Love In Marriage Must Be Present*

Now we will emphasize the following point which must be clear: These are not three different “options” of how you can love your spouse. You need all three kinds of love, together, in your marriage.

When a person is engaged to become married, he/she will always notice how the other is similar to him/her in certain ways, as well as being different in certain ways. One kind of person will enjoy the fact that he/she is marrying a person with a different nature, because it will feel refreshingly different, whereas the similarities will not seem exciting, because maybe he/she is not looking to marry someone who has the same qualities as himself/herself. Another kind of person will only feel attracted towards similarities, and does not find the differences in the other to be appealing.

The true perspective towards marriage, though, is that there must be both aspects of similar attraction and opposite attraction towards each other; and in addition, they will also need to develop a third kind of love, which is to love the other person on an intrinsic level.

The truth is that nobody can survive marriage if they would only love the other based on being different or similar. Opposite attraction cannot be everything. If a person were to marry someone who is 100% different than him, his marriage simply will not last. (In fact, one of the reasons given for the prohibition in the Torah that one may not cohabit with an animal, is because animal is the total opposite of man, and one cannot bond with something that is totally different than him). There must be aspects of similarity between them, in order for them to bond. It is impossible for one to feel any mutual closeness with a person who is totally different than him.

The same goes for similar attraction: it is impossible for marriage to thrive on similar attraction alone, when there is no appreciation of differences in the other's personality. *Chazal* say, "Just as no faces are similar to each other, so are no *de'os* (ways of thinking) similar to each other." No two people are exactly the same; there will always be differences. There is no table or chair that is exactly the same, and surely no two people can ever be the same. (If someone else is the same exact as me, he wouldn't be "him" – he would be "me").

Therefore, either one of these two kinds of love, by themselves, cannot be enough to sustain marriage. A person loves something only when he sees similarity to himself, as well as differences to himself, in it. The only question is in the percentages, but both kinds of love must be present, in order to form a loving connection.

Either of these two kinds of love are both logical kinds of love; there is human gain involved in both of these kinds of love. But they are not intrinsic kinds of love.

Opposite attraction involves our analytical thinking process. In order to love someone who is different than you, you need to understand your opposing viewpoint, which takes some wisdom on your part. (*Chazal* say that even understanding how a fool thinks takes wisdom to understand, because a fool also has a certain way of thinking, and one has to be wise to know how to understand him.) Similar attraction is pretty obvious, and it doesn't involve any deep thinking. But both opposite attraction and similar attractions are logical kinds of love, which are arrived at using human intellect.

It is written, "*With wisdom, a home is built*" – when one has wisdom, he knows how to love another whether the other is similar or different. However, with wisdom alone, a person won't be able to love another person intrinsically. Why not? To illustrate, imagine we place a painting in front of a person, and the person likes the painting. If we ask him why he likes the painting, he will say, "This painting is about a certain kind of scenery, and I love to see this kind of scenery." Or, if a person says that he likes a certain table, and we ask him, he will say, "Because I love its color." He can identify clearly what exactly he loves about it.

But what about the love that a person has for himself – is there a reason that one can give for it? Why does a person love himself? Can he explain it or give a logical reason for it? There is no logical explanation. We are simply born with a nature to love ourselves. The *sefarim hakedoshim* describe self-love as "love that is above reason and intellect."

With similar attraction or opposite attraction, the love is conditional, because you have some reason of why you love the object of your love. If that reason would vanish, you would no longer love that object. But when you love yourself, you don't love yourself based on any conditions. If someone loves himself based on certain conditions, we all recognize this as a deep emotional issue. An emotionally healthy person loves himself whether he is successful or whether he fails. He might have his highs and lows, joyful times and sad times, but his self-love never changes. He accepts himself as he is, and he loves himself without any specific reason.

When a person feels that he loves his child or his spouse, he might say that it is because he finds them to be enjoyably different than him ["My wife, and my children, are so unique and special - they are everything that I am not. They have all the qualities I wished I had"]. Or, he might say that he finds them to be similar to him ["I see myself in them"]. But there is a deeper kind of love towards a spouse or a child, which cannot be explained: it is a love that has no reason to it!

It is the kind of love which is often concealed from the spouses. We will try to explain about it.

### *Changing Our Motivations In Marriage*

All of us, when we get married, are not going to get married to a spouse who steps out of a packaged box when we get to the *chuppah*; we cannot get married if we have never seen or spoken to the person whom we are marrying. We do research, we get to know each other, we find what we are happy with, and then we decide to get married.

Whether we get married due to similar attraction or opposite attraction, we are all getting married because we have felt some kind of attraction to the other person. We might feel attracted to his/her physical qualities, or to the emotional or spiritual qualities that we see in the other.

That being the case, the marriage will become conditional, and our love in turn for our spouse will be conditional. If he/she is what I had in mind, then good, and if not - one feels that he has been duped into the marriage. Usually, all of us realize that we made some mistakes about our future spouse, and we see that he/she is not what we imagined. And then we are faced with a dilemma: we feel like we never would have gotten married to this person we married, had we known that he/she is not what exactly what we thought.

Did we get married because we loved the other for just being who he is? We can all answer, absolutely, "No." As proof, if we would get married to another out of an intrinsic love for him/her, we would have married the first person we met without doing any research, because intrinsic love does not depend on personality or looks.

None of us can say that we got married out of an intrinsic love for our spouse. We got married because we found some elements of opposite attraction and some similar attraction, and based upon that, we have built our marriage.

We must know that both of these kinds of love – similar attraction and opposite attraction – are meant to bring us to a greater goal. They are meant to get us motivated to uncover the deeper aspect of marriage – *ahavas etzem*, the intrinsic love.

If a person goes his whole marriage and only knows of either similar attraction or opposite attraction, he has missed the goal of marriage, and the goal of life, as well.

*Chazal* say, "A person should always study Torah and do mitzvos *shelo lishmah* (not for the sake of Heaven), for from *shelo lishmah* comes *lishmah* (for the sake of Heaven).<sup>8</sup> The meaning of *shelo lishmah* is explained as seeking what's comfortable for us. With regards to marriage, the *shelo lishmah* aspect is that we are comfortable marrying someone who is different than us, because it is refreshing. But the *lishmah* aspect of marriage is to arrive at an intrinsic love for the other spouse.

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<sup>8</sup> *Pesachim 50b*

Our *avodah* is always to start with *shelo lishmah* and then we can be lead towards *lishmah*. There is a well-known interpretation of the *Nefesh HaChaim* on this concept, that a person “always” has an element of *shelo lishmah*. (For example, when a person is getting married, he is getting married for some ulterior motive: either because the other is similar, or refreshingly different). But the eventual purpose which the couple must strive for is to reach a kind of love between them that is *lishmah*: to love each other for no reason – *ahavas etzem*.

[Earlier, we mentioned the concept of how man leaves his original point of *ayin* (nothingness) and must eventually return to his point of *ayin*, and now we can see how this manifests in marriage]. Marriage enables a person to leave his original state of *ayin* and then come back to *ayin*: he first leaves himself, by joining with another, and then he returns to his essence, by arriving at oneness with each other.

This, of course, will entail challenging and inner work. To be even more specific, it is the work of a lifetime. This is because the less challenges a person faces in his marriage, the further he actually is from achieving unity with his spouse, and then he is further from reaching the goal of life.

### *Marriage Is Part Of The Bigger Picture Of Life*

Of course, that does not mean that one should only choose a spouse who will be very challenging to him, so that he can have a better chance at reaching the goal of life. The opposite is true: because you want to get to the goal of life, you need to choose someone whom you will find it easier to bond with so, so that you will have the motivation to work together to the goal of unity. For this reason, you need to feel some similar attraction and opposite attraction towards the person whom you are marrying, to start out with.

There is a well-known story (I don't know if it really happened or not, but this is how the story goes): Once a boy came to ask advice from a Gadol about a prospective *shidduch*. The girl was reputed to have all the qualities in the book. But he had never seen her before, and he knew that *Chazal* say that it is forbidden for a man to betroth a woman until he sees her, because he might find her to be unattractive. Therefore, he wanted to listen to *Chazal*, so he went to go take a look at the girl, so that he could see if she was attractive enough for him. He found out that all of the descriptions about her were true, all except for one thing: she had a limp.

He asked the Gadol, “What should I do? Should I marry her even though she has this fault?”

The Gadol said, “Marry her.”

He said, “Why? Will all her qualities help me overlook this one fault she has?”

The Gadol said, “No, that is not the reason to marry her.”

“So why should I marry her?”

“Because nobody else will marry her.”

From the Gadol's response, we can see something that comes close to the concept of intrinsic love. We can't know for sure if it was intrinsic love, because perhaps he is merely performing a kindness in marrying her, but in the end of the day he is being told to get married to her not because she is similar and not because she is refreshingly different.

Practically speaking, most people cannot get married based on this reason, and they wouldn't either be able to get along with their spouse based on this. But the point of the above story illustrates to us what our plan in marriage needs to be. We need to know from what point we are beginning at, and to where we are supposed to return to: we leave *ayin*, then we return to *ayin*.

The point we are supposed to take out from this is that although we already married, we need to look at our marriage as being part of something bigger. Marriage is not just marriage – it is part of the bigger picture of life.

The problem with most people is that they do not see how all the areas of life connect. There is the workplace, there is marriage, there are physical needs to be met, etc. All of these aspects of life are usually seen as separate from each other, and a person usually doesn't see the connection between all of them. But the true perspective for one to have is that all details he comes across in life are really supposed to lead him all to the goal of life. Nothing is happenstance.

If a person views his marriage as being something so major that it must be something else to deal with, he won't succeed in marriage. Marriage is a central aspect of our life, but it is part of a bigger picture; it must not be seen as some other separate part of our life that we need to pay attention to.

To illustrate this concept, let's say a person is listening to a lecture about marriage. He must have the mentality that when he hears about marriage, he is not just hearing about how he can build his private marriage. He must realize that he is hearing about how to view life as a whole; and marriage must be seen as part of that whole.

The truth is that it would be better if boys would be taught guidance for marriage when they are still in yeshivah, before they are married, when they are of age to be married. It needs to be taught to them what their role is as an individual, and how marriage is a part of that.

Thus, marriage should not be seen as some goal unto itself. Marriage is one of the major components of life – which is about leaving *ayin* and then returning to *ayin*.

### *Dealing with Disappointment In Marriage*

We are always making use of 'similar love' and 'opposite' love each day, and we are also making use of intrinsic love every day. We all love ourselves for no reason [as long as we are emotionally healthy]. But when it comes to how we love others, often we are not making use of this kind of intrinsic love.

Before marriage, a person is already familiar with a love for things that are similar to his tastes or different from what he is used to. For example, each of us is attracted to certain kinds of music, certain kinds of food, and certain kinds of clothing. But when it comes to the idea of having intrinsic love, we only know of it towards ourselves, not towards others. We are used to loving *ourselves* for no reason, not *others*.

What happens when a person gets married? Intrinsic love usually remains towards himself, and he doesn't know how to expand that love towards his spouse. How does he love his spouse? He takes the powers of loving similarity and loving differences and uses those abilities in his love for his spouse.

The result from this is clearly recognizable to all of us: it will mean that the deepest love that spouses know of towards each other – as well as the love for the children – will be based on similar attraction or opposite attraction. If any of these kinds of love lose their appeal – like if he finds the differences in his

wife to now be unattractive, or if he realizes that his wife wasn't as similar to him as he thought she would be – he will now find himself in a deeply troubling issue.

If you buy furniture in the store and you come home and realize that it's not what you really wanted, you can return it. In America, usually you can return it as long as you have a receipt. Over here in Israel, there is no policy like that; at best, some stores allow you to return it 14 days within the purchase. If it is 24 days later and you decide you don't like your purchase and you want to return it, it's too late. You're stuck with the piece of furniture that you don't like. You have no choice but to buy a new one. You are disappointed that you wasted money, and that you made a mistake.

With marriage, each of the spouses expects that their spouse will be appealing; they each saw differences in each other that were refreshing, as well as similarities in each other which attracted them. Then when they get married, they notice differences in each other which are not refreshing. Some couples have more differences to deal with in each other than other couples do.

In any case, how can a person deal with the frustrating situation?

A superficial response that a person might have is, "I made a mistake. I have arrived at the wrong 'address'." Some people even react in a more extreme manner – just as they are used to returning an item in the store they didn't like, so do they think that they can give back their spouse. This might happen after two months, after two years, or even after 20 years of being married. He wants to return his "purchase." He talks it over with lawyers about how much it will cost him to get divorced, and if it's worth it or not to stay married and endure an unhappy marriage.

A more inner kind of person will feel: "Had I known how different she is from me, I never would have married her." So he stays with her, and learns how to deal with her personality, and he makes sure not to get into fights with her. This is a better reaction than the first kind of person, and it might even enable him to leave peacefully with her, but with such a mindset, has he reached the goal of marriage?

The issue every person in marriage must face is, if he realizes where he is going in his marriage. If he got married solely due to similar attraction or opposite attraction, he will meet up with disappointment after he is married, realizing that he made certain mistakes. Either he will seek how can get out of the marriage, or, he will stay in his marriage and learn how to survive it. But in either reaction, he will view his decision to marry this spouse as a terrible mistake.

But if a person would be aware that marriage contains three kinds of love – similar attraction, opposite attraction, and intrinsic love – then even when he is met with disappointment in his marriage, he can still love his spouse *intrinsically*.

Intrinsic love is to love the essence of your spouse; the essence of your spouse always remains, because it never changes. Maybe he will still feel that he could have had it easier and that now he will have it harder, but he will still remain with the mentality that will help him reach the goal of marriage.

### *The Balance Between Purpose and Pleasure*

There is a deep point about people, which is contained in this.

There is no person who gets exactly what they had in mind when they get married. There is no such thing. Some people have it easier and some have it more difficult, and no one has the same situation. But what all marriages have in common is: that it is not at all what we had in mind.

In order to deal with this disappointment, a person has to know the proper perspective towards life, and marriage specifically: we need to acquire a shift of gear, between two different needs we have. We all got married so that we could enjoy our spouse, and we also must be able to deal with challenges.

If we are given a choice before we get married if we want a spouse who will challenge us and make us suffer, or a spouse who will make our life easier, most people would pick the second option. The average person needs enjoyment in life and wishes to avoid suffering. Most people are not on the level of the Sage Rebbi, who prayed for suffering. The average person cannot handle this. We must know that we did get married for some kind of pleasure, and we need it. We must be able to contain in ourselves these two opposing natures.

However, when it comes to the need for enjoyment, some people take this to an extreme and they feel that life is mainly about enjoyment. They view marriage as being something that will further their enjoyment in life. Others are aware that life is about a purpose that is deeper than just enjoyment, and they view enjoyment as rather being a tool that can help them get to the purpose.

Let us emphasize again, that one cannot get to the goal of life without any enjoyment. Nobody can live like that. Even if a person is very truthful and idealistic, he needs some degree of relaxation and enjoyment in his life.

However, let's take a look at the other extreme. If we come to a person and we tell him, "If you get married, you will enjoy a marriage for the next 50 years that is 100% enjoyable. There is just one catch: there will be no goal at all of your marriage. You will be allowed to just enjoy yourself, for the sake of enjoyment alone. And, you won't even go to Gehinnom for it. It will not affect your reward in Gan Eden either. Just do whatever you wish." Would a person be interested in such a life?

If the answer is "Yes", then this *sefer* is not for him. That person has a mentality that life is about enjoyment alone, and that all goals of his life lead to the goal of enjoyment. He is living totally superficially.

But if a person is deeper, he knows that we have both of these needs. He is very motivated to get to the true purpose of life, but he also knows that he has a physical body, with certain physical needs that require enjoyment. Such a person knows that marriage is about heading towards the goal of life, and he also makes sure to leave some space for relaxation in his life. He is aware that he needs to get to a certain goal in life, and he will seek different tools that can help him get there, which will involve enjoyment. But his purpose is to get to the goal - not the enjoyment.

A person who is mainly seeking enjoyment in life is unable to enter the inner depth of life. It is a childish and imaginary notion for one to think that he can live totally for enjoyment. But if someone seeks the inner goal of life, the goal of his *neshamah* (Divine soul), of the truth that is within him - then he understands that he was born to reach a certain purpose. At the same time, he also understands that he has a physical body which also has its needs, and that it is upon him to learn how to balance his physical needs with his inner needs; that marriage requires both external factors as well as internal factors, in order for it to succeed.

### *In Summary*

The inner goal of marriage which one needs to strive for is *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love). It is for one to feel, "I got married in order to reveal *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love); not just towards myself, but towards another." And the first person whom you need to extend your sense of intrinsic love for, is your spouse. The husband must extend it first to his wife [before he seeks to extend it to another

person], and the wife must first extend it to her husband [before she learns how to extend it to any another person].

The more the external kinds of love dominate in the marriage, the more of an opposition there will be towards revealing *ahavas etzem*. However, as Chazal say, “from acting *shelo lishmah*, comes *lishmah*”. So even though we start out acting *shelo lishmah*, by loving our spouse due to either similar or opposite attraction, our underlying intention should be to get to *lishmah*, which is intrinsic love; and then it will be easier to reveal the intrinsic love.

However, if one does not even feel similar or opposite attraction in his family, like if he hates his spouse or child, *chas v’shalom*, then he is very far from *ahavas etzem*.

Thus, Hashem designed us in a way that we need to first get married with external kinds of love, similar attraction and opposite attraction; and they are there to motivate us to get us to reveal intrinsic love. When the external kinds of love are working properly, a person has better tools to help himself reach the goal of intrinsic love. But even if the external kinds of love are losing their appeal, a person can learn to see this as a more difficult path he will need to traverse in order to reach the desired goal of marriage, but never should this situation be seen as a failure on the person’s part.

We cannot get by life without certain tools that help us reach our goal. We live in a world in which we need to make use of externalities in order to get to the inner dimension of life. The external kinds of love - similar attraction and opposite attraction - must therefore be seen as tools that can help us reach intrinsic love. But they are tools we use, not a goal unto itself.

We get married because marriage is part of the goal of life; marriage is meant to help us reach *ahavas etzem*, intrinsic love for a spouse, and after that, towards other Jews as well. At first husband and wife need to reveal *ahavas etzem* towards each other, then towards others, and after that, towards the Creator.

*Part One Chapter Two**1.2 | Revealing Intrinsic Love – With Your Self and Spouse**Getting To The ‘Root’ of Marriage, Before We Deal With the ‘Branches’*

As it was explained in the previous chapter, there are three kinds of love that exist: *ahavas hashoneh* (love for differences/”opposite attraction”), *ahavas hadomeh* (love for similarities/”similar attraction”) and *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love). The first two kinds of love – similar attraction and opposite attraction – are actually branches of the root kind of love, which is intrinsic love.

Everything in Creation has within it roots and branches. A root is always hidden, while branches are revealed. We can see this even from the physical world – the roots of a tree are always hidden, while the branches are visible.

For this reason, most people only see the “branches” of love, and they never see the “root.” The branches of love are more obvious, whereas the root of love is hidden. Therefore, most people are not involved with the “root” of love - only with the “branches”. As a result, people are missing the source of the love. Even the “branches” of love that they know of will also not be fully reached, when they are missing the root.

In addition to this point, even when people do hear about the “root” kind of love, they tend to think of this as something a bit esoteric, some lofty spiritual idea contained in Heaven, which cannot be made practical. But the truth is that the root kind of love is not a Heavenly matter. It is really planted deep into the “earth” that we stand on.

Compare this to the following: a person would rather stand on top of the “tree” and only partake of the “fruits” that grow on its “branches”, and all he does is pick the “fruits” of the tree, forgetting to plant his “tree” so that it will continue to survive. Perhaps he thinks that the tree will remain on its own, and that he doesn’t have to plant it on his own. We all know that this is impossible, for one has to go plant the tree himself.

The lesson is that if we want to gain a clear and true picture of life in general, and the Jewish home specifically, we must touch upon the root of the matter, and from there we can explore the branches. Although we may not understand clearly what the roots of marriage are when we learn about them, being that they are very hidden matters from us, we will be able to understand the roots better when we begin to learn about what the branches are.

Usually, most people, when they seek to improve their homes, want to hear actual advice of “what to do” and “what not to do”, “what to say” and “what not to say”, etc. Although the advice can be truthful, we must know that those are just the “branches” of marriage, and in fact, they are the very last of the branches. The “branches” can only be strong when they stem from a firm “root”. If we build the root very strong, then even the last of the branches will be firm. But if all we do is emphasize the branches of marriage, like “what to say” and “what not to say”, then we will be missing the root. A home cannot be built when the foundations are not built firmly.

In this chapter, with the help of Hashem, we hope to get to the inner root of marriage. Firstly, we will point out that that it will be hard at first to understand the root, being that we have not seen the branches. However, because it is the root, we cannot skip discussing it.

We will try to explain it, and then we will begin to understand it slowly as we learn about the branches of marriage, which will be discussed later. Understandably, this will require patience on your part. It is our hope, that with Hashem's help, that these words become clearly understood, by the time we have reached the end of this discussion.

### *Circumstantial Factors and Intrinsic Factors*

As we mentioned, there are three kinds of love: love for similarities, love for differences, and intrinsic love.

Love for differences works like a puzzle. Two people, who are different from each other, can see how they each complete what the other one doesn't have, and in this way, they connect with each other. They are like two different puzzle pieces, which can connect together to complete the picture of the puzzle.

With love for similarities, although the two people are similar to each other, they are still not yet one with each other. As we have said previously, there are no two people who are exactly alike, nor are there two people who are totally different.

Intrinsic love for another (*ahavas etzem*) is the absolute kind of love. The word "love" in Hebrew is *ahavah*, which has the same *gematria* (numerical value) in Hebrew as the word "*echad*," one. We are familiar with love for similarities and love for differences from the various things or people that we have a liking towards, and we are familiar with intrinsic love from the love that we have towards ourselves; as we explained before, it is our *avodah* to extend our intrinsic love for ourselves to include others.

The Vilna Gaon writes of two viewpoints one can have on life: to see the "branches" of a matter, which makes everything seem like happenstance, and to see the "root" of a matter, which reveals the essence of a matter. On a deeper level, this is the difference between Amalek and the Jewish nation. Amalek is the attitude of coincidence, "*mikreh*," the opposite perspective of the Jewish people, which can see how nothing is a coincidence, but rather, intrinsic.

When one lives only the branches of life, the branches of life are subject to change, for they are coincidental. The root never changes, however, because it is intrinsic, thus it is not subject to any change.

Thus, there is a way to get to the root of a matter, and this is where the concept of intrinsic love can be developed. The coincidental parts of life are where similar attraction and opposite attraction stem from. The three kinds of love are not to be viewed in the sense of being all part of the same 'pyramid'. Rather, two of these kinds of love are one kind of system, whereas the third kind of love works as a different system: similar attraction and opposite attraction are the coincidental factors in life, whereas intrinsic love is from a non-changing, non-circumstantial part of life.

Now we will explain these concepts.

### *Love Based On External Factors Can Change*

With "opposite attraction", a person loves something or someone for being different than him, and he finds this difference to be refreshing.

For example, if a person is very quick and energetic, and he is aware that he possesses this quality, he might be in awe of a person who is slow-paced and calmer, because he knows that sometimes he tends to be chaotic, whereas a slower person is always calm. He respects the person who has his opposite personality, and he comes to love that other person who is slower-paced than he. If he marries a spouse who is slow-paced, he feels that this contributes to the development of his personality, and allows him to be able to slow down and think calmly. If he has a child who is slow-paced, he admires the child for his calmness.

However, when he becomes 40 or 50 years older, he is now calmer, and now he doesn't need a slow-paced person in his life to show him how to be calm. In addition, he finds the slowness of his spouse to be burdensome to him, especially now that his spouse is older and even slower-paced than when he married her. Their opposite natures are now magnified, and now he finds her slowness to be a burden upon him, not something to admire.

When he was younger, he had admired her for it, because he was very quick and rash, while she was slow and more methodical, so he enjoyed the difference between him and her, seeing how it completed what he lacked. But now he doesn't need her for that anymore, because he has already learned how to be more methodical. Now, her slowness is just preventing him from doing many things he wishes to do.

Thus, "opposite attraction" at some point will lose its appeal. The variables change, and you stop feeling attracted to the opposite of your personality. So "opposite attraction" is an example of a kind of love that is coincidental. The love might be there when he is 20 years old, but not at the age of 50 or beyond.

Now let's see how "similar attraction" as well can dissipate. Let's say a person has a liking towards a certain thing when he was younger. When he gets older and more mature, he gains a new perspective on life, and even his physical enjoyment changes with this. Now he loves other things than the things he loved when he was younger and more immature. As an example, all of us can remember things that we loved when we were 15 years old, and by the time we turned 18, we already had less of a liking towards it, and by the time we reach the age of 25 or 30 we didn't even remember that we ever liked it.

Thus, either opposite attraction or similar attraction are both subject to change, for they are coincidental, not intrinsic. So if a person loves his spouse or child for being very different or similar, his love will wane at a certain point. He will feel a strong love for the spouse or child when he is younger, and when he is older and some variables of his life change, his love for the spouse or child will lose its fuel. Or, his tastes will change, because since he has changed in the interim, there are different things which attract him.

But intrinsic love never fluctuates. One's love for himself never changes, because it is an innate nature of the soul for a person to love himself, and it is a love that goes above human logic; so if he loves the other on an intrinsic level, the love also will not change.

Similar and opposite attraction are kinds of love that are circumstantial, and even if these kinds of love can endure in a marriage for 20 years, and even if they remain present until the end of the couple's lives, all of this love is circumstantial; whereas intrinsic love for each other is never-changing.

### *Oneness In Marriage: Through Loyalty*

Generally, the concept of intrinsic love is also known as *emunah*, "trustfulness". Of Moshe Rabbeinu, Hashem said, "*In all of My house, he is trustworthy.*" We learn from this that the "house" [marriage] is based on being "trustworthy" to each other.

The loyalty of a couple towards each other is not limited to never abandoning each other, as is written in the *kesubah* (marriage document). When they are loyal to each other, it is a result of something deeper between them. The loyalty between them is a perspective which they each have towards their marriage, and that is why they don't leave each other.

*Chazal* say that a person's *bashert* (destined spouse) is announced forty days before he is conceived<sup>9</sup>. The lesson of this is to show that there is a love that must remain unchanged between them, and that is why it is announced before he is even conceived. If it would be announced after a person is conceived, it would imply that he needs to become one with his spouse, but that she is not a part of his intrinsic essence. But she is destined for him already before he is conceived, which shows that she is already a part of him by the time he is conceived; so she is really a part of his essence, rather than another being whom he must annex onto his existence.

That is the root of the love between husband and wife, but it might very well remain in its hidden state, never becoming revealed in the marriage. A couple can live together for 50 or 60 or 60 years, as much as they merit to have long life. There are thousands of situations they go through together which involve the two of them. But if a person is not aware of the 'intrinsic' area in life, he won't be able to reveal it in his home. It has to start outside the marriage – with *oneself* - and then it can be brought into the marriage and further developed.

### *Emunah: No Such Thing As Coincidence*

Thus, if one wants to reveal the intrinsic love towards his spouse, he will first have to reveal it within himself, towards his own self, so that he can relate to it in the first place. After that he can extend that love into his marriage, being able to love his spouse on an intrinsic level. But if he does not reveal intrinsic love first towards himself, he will not be able to reveal it in his marriage. The reason for this is because one cannot give to another that which he does not possess.

Your intrinsic essence is not something that you 'annex' onto yourself; it is already a part of who you are, even before you have actively revealed it. The intrinsic love for your spouse is not to be understood as something you make into a part of yourself; rather, *your spouse is really a part of you to begin with* - and it is upon you to reveal that perspective.

Our existence is one piece; man is not comprised of different parts. Although our Sages state that the soul has five names – the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah*, and *Yechidah* – these are really all five different perspectives towards the same existence. It is not like a house with five floors, in which each floor is a separate part of the house. Rather, the soul is all one piece. It has five different forms of self-expression, but it is all one piece.

So when we say that the root of life is *emunah* (trustfulness), it means that nothing that happens in our life is due to any circumstance (*mikreh*); everything we go through in life is somehow a part of our essence. (In the future, when Hashem's Name will be one and all of creation will be unified, we will all have the full understanding of this concept.)

### *Our Inner Contradictions*

When a person understands that everything in our life is really an intrinsic part of our essence, the discovery that will follow with this is, that all contradictions that we know of, are not really 'contradictions'.

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<sup>9</sup> *Sotah 2a*

As we all know, there is no person who does not have any inner contradictions. This is because no one completely accesses the ‘intrinsic’ areas of life. So when we speak of living a life of ‘intrinsic’ concepts, we mean for one to shine the light of this concept upon our life; obviously, we cannot live totally in its perspective.

We can only access it at certain times of our life, and we can try to let it become more manifest in our life on a daily basis, hour to hour; to try to reach the state of absolute oneness (*echad*) with our spouse. In the future, we will be able to reach the total level of intrinsic love, because there will be no more contradictions in life anymore. In the current state we live in, though, we live with inner contradictions.

Most of the marital problems that exist today are not due to clashes between the spouses, but because of the internal contradictions within one of the spouses. For example, one day a spouse will complain about something that is bothering him, and sometime later, he claims that something else bothers him. The spouse asks him, “What changed since the last time? Why did you change your mind?” He has various answers: “Oh, I wasn’t really thinking then”, or “I didn’t mean what I said when I said it.”

In most instances, there are layers in the soul that a person is not aware of, so at a later point, the layer of the soul that he was unaware of will surface, magnifying a different area that now bothers him. This is really where all of the ‘differences’ between spouses are stemming from: a lack of understanding towards oneself, which results in contradicting needs and desires, causing friction between the spouses.

The reason why a person keeps discovering that different things bother him at different times is because he doesn’t recognize himself that well. So the first thing one must become aware of, in order to gain awareness of marriage, is to realize that there are three factors of love in marriage, which are in contradiction with each other: similar attraction, opposite attraction, and intrinsic love.

When a person lacks proper self-recognition towards himself, he becomes confused at himself. For example, he will see in himself tendencies towards sadness and lowliness, which stem from the element of earth in the soul, and he also notices in himself times in which he desires to grow spiritually, which stems from the element of fire in the soul.

Other times, he feels down again, and then the cycle repeats itself. This leaves him bewildered, and he wonders what is going on inside of himself. Sometimes the elements in the soul are in contradiction with each other and they clash, and sometimes they are in balance with each other.<sup>10</sup> Either way, a person notices many kinds of inner contradictions in himself.

It is easy to identify the contradictions that one notices in himself: Sometimes he feels a certain way, and another time he feels himself pulled in the opposite direction; clearly, he is aware that there are contradictory forces within his personality. It is also easy to recognize the parts of the personality that are similar to each other.

One can figure out both of these out by writing down on a piece of paper all of the parts of his personality that he recognizes in himself, and then compare them, seeing which parts of his personality are similar and which parts his personality are in contradiction with each other.

But when it comes to identifying the intrinsic love one has for himself, this is harder to identify in oneself.

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to “Getting To Know Your Soul”

### *Proper Self-Love*

The intrinsic love that one has for himself is found in the subconscious. With most people, it is not revealed in one's conscious state.

For this reason, if the average person would be asked "Do you love yourself?" and he is a refined kind of person, he will probably recoil from being asked such a question. He might say that self-love is a form of selfishness, because one must not be self-absorbed and should only be involved with worrying for others' needs.

He is somewhat correct if he says this, but it is only half the truth. This is because in order to be able really love another person, first, you must develop a proper love for yourself, and then you can give that love to others. Rav Shimon Shkop zt"l said that you love for others can only be achieved when you wear your own "glasses" of proper love for yourself; through those "glasses" you are wearing, you can then love others.<sup>11</sup> So before one can love others, he must first have a proper self-love towards himself.

It is obvious to many people that one cannot love others if he doesn't love himself. Nor he can he make other people happy if he has no happiness within himself. The reason for this is simple: it is because a person cannot give to another something which he doesn't have.

Rav Shimon Shkop explained, furthermore, that the point of loving other Jews is to reveal that he and I are really "one." In order for a person to reach oneness with another, he first must go through the stage of revealing his own "I" [in a healthy manner], and after there is a properly developed "I", the "I" can then know how to unify with another.

In most cases, the love that a person knows of in his life, in his conscious state, is either "similar attraction" or "opposite attraction." For example, if a person enjoys tasting extreme kinds of foods, such as very spicy food or very sweet kinds of food, or a very salty kind of food, he loves the food the more extreme it is, because he loves the challenge. This is a kind of "opposite attraction". An example of self-love experienced through "similar attraction" would be if a person is emotionally drawn towards something, such as if he enjoys a certain song to listen to, and he feels himself connecting to it when he enjoys it.

But where can we find a revelation of intrinsic love in a person's life? When does a person ever experience it...?

If we think deeply about this, we can see that such a problem does not begin with marriage; it is not a problem that begins with not knowing how to love one's spouse on an intrinsic level. It is a problem that started before marriage, with oneself. If a person enters marriage and the only love he knows of are love for similarities and love of differences, and he no real love for his own self yet – it's as if there was no "I" which married the woman he has taken into marriage. It is only when a person has self-love for himself that he can bestow true love on another.

This concept might sound very strange the first time one hears of it, but it is the truth!

When a person really loves himself in a proper way, he reaches the source of love in himself, and from there he can extend love towards others and unify with them. But if a person only knows of the superficial kinds of love, such as love for similarities and love for differences, then he is not connected to the source of love in himself, and then he has nothing to give to another. Maybe he will be able to buy gifts for his spouse before Yom Tov and thereby lighten the atmosphere in the home, but he has not reached his inner source of love, so he won't be able to nourish others with it.

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<sup>11</sup> *Shaarei Yoisher, hakdamah*

Thus, before we explain how one can come to unify with his spouse and reveal a state of oneness with each other, we must first make sure that we reveal a love towards ourselves. Let's explain how we can do this.

### *How To Awaken True Self-Love*

First, identify the superficial kinds of love you already know of from your life: love for similarities and love for differences.

Start with identifying "love for differences"; first, start with the physical areas, such as which kinds of foods you like and which kinds you don't like. Then continue to the emotional and spiritual areas: identify who your friends are, what sefarim and books you like to learn and read, and the way that you think; and ask yourself if you enjoy hearing another person's view when he argues on you. Do you enjoy hearing the opposite opinion of yours, or not?

The next step is to get to know your "similar attraction" areas. Think about which things you are attracted that are similar to your tastes. Start with physical areas, then the emotional areas, and then the spiritual areas.

After you have identified all of these aspects, now you can proceed to the third stage: identifying your "intrinsic love" of yourself. You will need to set aside time every day in which you are alone, in which you are in quiet surroundings, and concentrate with yourself.

Many times throughout marriage, **a spouse will need time alone to himself/herself, and just sit quietly and to be alone**, so that he/she can do some soul-searching.

Often the spouse will react negatively to this idea of spending time alone in solitude: "So what did we get married for?!" But the answer to this is, because in order for husband and wife to be able to love each other – or to love anyone else, for that matter - there must be times of solitude with oneself, so that one connect to his/her inner source of self-love. Without times of solitude, a person will not have time to reflect on his own self-love, and then he will not be able to extend love to another.

Furthermore, it is emotionally unhealthy for two people to always be together and to never have time alone to themselves. We see this apparent both from the *halachos* of Jewish marriage [which require times of physical separation], as well as from the practical sense, which does not allow a couple to always be together. A husband and wife each have different places they go to every day when they leave the home, which does not allow them to be together.

The inner reason behind this is because our soul needs both times of "alone" as well as times of "connection" with another. We each need to alone to ourselves so that we can connect to the source of love that is within us, as well as times in which we are together with another, so that we can take our love we have reached within ourselves and reveal it outwards towards another.

In addition, the Vilna Gaon taught that if a person wants to truly love his child, he should keep him a distance from him sometimes.

Thus, in order to reveal intrinsic love for another, there must first be intrinsic love towards oneself, and after that, a person can extend the love he has reached, towards another.

However, we must point out that if this is being done out of egoistic concerns, it will only serve to enhance one's personal ego, and it will not develop his love for another. It will only prove effective if one is developing his self-love because he wants to learn how to give love to another.

### *The Need For Solitude*

If a person does not awaken his self-love, it can result in terrible feelings of low self-worth, lack of self-esteem, and misconceptions about himself. This all results when the self-love is not accessed. If a person would love himself properly and sensibly, none of these emotional problems would ever be developed.

If all a person loves are things that are to his taste as well as things which challenge his tastes, and he has never focused on how to love himself simply, then he has no source of love within himself. The kinds of love that he knows of are all subject to change, because our tastes change with time; and then the person will be left with no love for anything, which will result in a shaky self-image.

When there is an inner source of love revealed inside a person, it can allow the other external kinds of love to flourish, even when his tastes change. But if there is no source, and he only has the external kinds of love, he has no source to provide him with vitality, and then he will be stuck when he needs it.

We find that all of our great leaders, beginning from our Avos all the way down to the Sages of the Talmud and after that, had two alternating directions in their life. On one hand, they learned together with others; as *Chazal* say, “Either a friend or death.” On the other hand, they had times of being alone, where they could reflect in solitude. If a person were to sit all day with his *chavrusa*, and he never has time alone, he is forfeiting the meaning of life.

We see this already from the first marriage in Creation: Adam and Chavah. When Hashem created Chavah, Adam was put to sleep. So there was a point in time in which both Adam and Chavah were alone.

This is an essential concept, not a side point. We are meant to unite with others, and that is the goal, but unity with others can only happen when our own self is properly developed. So if a person only enjoys being around friends and he is never alone with himself, he has an incorrect approach to life. The desired approach is for a person to have times in which he is with friends, as well times in which he can be alone.

### *“Alone” Time*

In order for a person to spend time “alone” with himself, we must emphasize that this does not mean to sit alone in a room and read or listen to various pastimes. If a person does that, he is still not being with ‘himself’.

Although he is disconnected from others in the social and physical sense, he is still not going within, because he is still connecting outward of himself. Although it can serve to create a calming atmosphere which enables a person to begin entering within, it is not the preferred method of beginning the process. The preferred method is for one to use his “alone” time to live and experience his actual existence. [Of course, this is not the goal, and it is only the means to a greater goal].

### *Beyond Intrinsic Love: Loyalty In Marriage*

After a person succeeds in revealing self-love within himself, comes the next stage: *emunah*, the trustworthiness and loyalty, that is within a Jewish marriage.

In the *kesubah* (Jewish marriage document), it is written “Do not abandon and do not run away from each other.” A Jewish couple needs to see each other not merely as two separate parts that happen to be living together, but as one unit.

If a couple does not achieve this sense of oneness with each other, they might be able to stay married, but they might also contemplate divorce one day. There is a tractate in the Talmud called *Kiddushin*, which explains the laws of betrothal and marriage - but there is also a tractate called *Gittin*, which explains the laws of divorce. The possibility of divorce exists so long as a couple hasn't achieved oneness with each other.

But in the ideal Jewish marriage, the marriage reflects the bond of the Jewish people with Hashem, which is inseparable. The relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people are compared to that of a bride and groom. Hashem said, “And I betrothed you, with *emunah* (loyalty).” The betrothal between us and Hashem is forever.

In one of the books of the Prophets, the prophet laments over how the Jewish people feel “like we are a widow”, being that Jerusalem was destroyed and we were exiled. But the Sages explained that we are only “like” a widow, “as if”, but not that we are actually widowed from Hashem. This reflects the ideal Jewish marriage: it must be permanent.

A superficial person will say, “In the end of the day, the *possuk* says that we are like a widow. A widow can remarry to another person...” But the true perspective is that the Jewish people felt “like” a widow, not that we are actually widowed. This is because from the perspective of *pnimiyus* (the inner, spiritual dimension), it is not possible for the Jewish people to become separate from Hashem.

We see that there are marriages today which do not last. This is because it is often the external kinds of love which dominate; either “similar attraction” or “opposite attraction.” Such love will end at some point, because it is subject to external factors.

In the future, when Hashem's oneness will be revealed to the world, it will be revealed that all is one unit. It will be revealed to all that just as a person cannot run away from himself, so it is impossible to really run away from the bond of marriage.

Thus, altogether, we have seen how the concept of “intrinsic love” has several applications – love for oneself, love for the Creator, love between spouses, and love for all other people, on an all-inclusive level.

Our bond with the Creator cannot be severed. Although it appears in our current state that it can be severed, it is only “like a widow” - it is as if the “husband” has “died” and that we are left “widowed.” But in the inner dimension of reality, the “husband” has never died. We are rather “abandoned” by our husband, and we appear to be like a “widow”, but in reality, the inner layer of our bond with the Creator still remains. It is intrinsic.

### *Dealing With Marital Challenges: The Process of Self-Perfection*

Let's expand upon this concept.

Every person, throughout life, encounters many events which challenge him, as well as events that are not that challenging. We are usually fine when we deal with the small challenges, but it is the ‘challenging’ times which really challenge us. How do we deal with those times?

If a person has already gotten used to the concept of ‘love for differences’ (*ahavas hashoneh*), it will be easier to deal with, if it’s a minimal challenge. But if the challenge is a lot more than we are used to, we still feel like we cannot deal with it.

Should we just have *emunah* (faith in G-d) and accept that everything is decreed upon us in Heaven? Or should we just think that “all that the Merciful one does is for the good”, as *Chazal* say? These are both correct reactions, but it still being processed superficially.

It is written, “*It is not good for man to be alone; I will make for him a helpmate, opposite him.*” It is “not good” for a man to be unmarried, because then he lacks connection with another; thus, it is “good” when he is connected with a wife. The simple meaning of this is that an unmarried is in a situation which is “not good”, whereas a married man is in a “good” situation. But the deeper meaning is as follows: “All that the Merciful one does, is for the good” – whatever a person encounters in Creation, is always “good”, because everything that happens to you is really connected with you.

On a deeper note, everything you go through is really shaping your perspective on life.

When a person encounters a situation of suffering (may Hashem save him), usually his first reaction is: “This situation is so not for me to deal with! What did I do to deserve this?!” Maybe he feels that there are evil forces upon him. He tells of his woes to others, and indeed, his suspicions are confirmed: he is told that there must be an evil “*kelipah*” (husk) that has latched onto him that is causing all the troubles.

But the deeper reason of why we go through suffering and challenges is so that we can acquire a fundamental perspective about life: everything that happens to us is an intrinsic part of our life! (Let us emphasize that such a perspective cannot be accessed all the time. We are simply not able to live all the time from this deep perspective. We live in a world in which the external kinds of love are required. Rather, our point is that instead of remaining only with the external kinds of love, a person should also make use of the intrinsic love.)

Just as our bond with Hashem is intrinsic, so can we view all that happens in our life as an intrinsic part of who we are. It can also be extended to our marriage - all that happens in our marriage is because it is supposed to become an intrinsic part of who we are.

When reacting to marital challenges, a person might remind himself that “*From Hashem, comes woman to man*”, and that his marriage was destined for him already 40 days before conception, as *Chazal* say; these concepts certainly form the root perspective towards marriage. But it won’t help him deal with all the many nitty-gritty issues that come up on a day-to-day basis with his spouse. How does a person deal with a challenging aspect in his marriage?

This is a question about life in general, as well as marriage in particular. How does a person deal with challenges in life, and how does a person deal with challenges in marriage? He needs to be aware that each detail in life he comes across is really an intrinsic part of life.

First, a person needs to come to terms with this concept intellectually, and then he can seek to internalize it in his heart: “This situation is for me. It *is* me. This is what I was designed for.” In this way, all circumstances in life are not seen as ‘circumstances’, but as events which must happen, for they are really intrinsic.

The *Gemara* recounts that one of the Sages, Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas, needed a source of livelihood, and he sought to change his situation. Hashem sent him a message, “If so, I will have to create you again anew, so that your situation will change.” The deep lesson of this is that one’s livelihood is not a situation that is upon a person; it is rather an intrinsic part of his life that is inseparable from the

person. This is also the depth behind why “the righteous endear their money”; they are careful with their money because they realize that their money is an intrinsic part of their allotted portion in life.

Thus, whenever a person goes through varying kinds of situations he must deal with, whether pleasant or unpleasant (if it is pleasant, he probably won't feel a need for this perspective, because he is comfortable and he just goes with the flow of the situation), he first needs to deeply realize this perspective: “This was all supposed to happen. It is not something outside of me, rather it is something that is a part of me.”

We will repeat, and emphasize, that this perspective is not the sole approach which one should use to deal with his difficult situations in marriage. He will surely have to deal with the differences between himself and his spouse on a practical level, by making use of the external kinds of love. It is just that in order for the external kinds of love to thrive in marriage, a person first needs to develop intrinsic love (with himself and with his spouse).

Living in this way transforms the entire orientation of one's life in general, and his marriage specifically.

There are people who react very strongly to their disappointments in marriage, regretting their decision to marry the person they married and feeling like they made a mistake. A person might conclude that in the long run it was good that he got married, because most of his marriage is okay, with only a smaller percent of his marriage being not okay. He'll also console himself that his marriage wouldn't have been better had he married someone else, because maybe he wouldn't have been able to find a better wife than the one he married.

But we are describing a deeper perspective which one can have towards his marriage: A person has to reach his own root of love, which is the intrinsic love one has for himself, and then extend that love to another, so that he can love his spouse on an intrinsic level. In this way, he is more consciously aware of all the experiences he goes through in his marriage, and he knows in the back of his mind that it is all shaping and building his life.

When this perspective is realized and it is allowed to shine forth upon the soul, a person will receive a deep, calming feeling towards his life and marriage.

### *Dealing With All Challenges: Through The Power of Emunah*

If one has never felt this concept before we are describing, he won't be able to comprehend it even intellectually, and even if he does, he won't connect with the concept. Someone who is already in touch with the concept, though, recognizes how it provides us with a calming perspective towards life, and that it enables us to feel connected and unified with all that we encounter.

There is not one of us who does not traverse the waves of difficulty; some of us go through more, and some less. There is no one who has a completely calm and serene life in which everything goes as he likes. This does not exist. How do people do with their difficult situations?

One kind of person will take his mind off it, in all kinds of ways. Another kind of person will try to deal with it as best as he can, while another person will escape, by falling into melancholy. But the inner solution to all our anxieties, as we all know, is *emunah*. In deeper terms, *emunah* says that all events a person goes through are an essential part of himself.

Maybe one will hear this and ask: “How that does help me? I am still in a difficult situation.” But the answer is that all personal anxiety is only created when you feel challenged and attacked. To illustrate, if a fire touches a person, he yanks his body away from the fire, because it burns; he feels like he has been attacked. If fire wouldn’t be seen something that challenges us, we wouldn’t be scared of it; but since we see it as a challenge and as something that hurts us, we pull away from it.

In the depths of your soul, there exists a part of you which can see everything in life as one unit. In that place in yourself, there are no oppositions, and there is no pain there. The point of knowing about this concept is not so that we can learn how to avoid pain in our marriage. The point is to gain this perspective towards life in general.

The more we access and reveal the concept of the ‘intrinsic’ – which is also known in deeper terms as the light of *emunah* – the better we enable ourselves to have a new perspective towards things, and then we are empowered to endure all kinds of difficulties.

Of course, as we said before, it is impossible for a person to live completely in this inner state of unity. But the more a person reveals it and lets it shine, the less he will be pained at the challenging situations of life, and he comes closer to the purpose for which we all came into the world for; and to the purpose of marriage specifically.

### *Coming From Nothingness, Leaving It, and Returning To Nothingness*

In the previous chapter, we explained that the purpose of marriage is to return to our original state of oneness, which is called *ayin*, “nothingness.” This is because it is written, “*With wisdom, a home is built*”, and the root of wisdom is the inner source which it comes from, “*ayin*”.

The point of *ayin* is one point, and there are no two points in it to allow any opposition. If so, how is it possible for there to be opposition in marriage? It happens because we leave our *ayin*, which is a point (*nekudah*), and we move from the point to become a “line” (*kav*) whether it is a “long line” (*kav aruch*) or a “wide line” (*kav rachav*), thus, as soon as we leave the “one point”, there is room for opposition. But if we remain in the “one point”, there won’t be any opposition, because there is only one possibility, not two.

The Mishnah states, “Know from where you come from.” We come from a state of oneness, in which there was no opposition. “Know to where you are going” – we must return to the place where we come from, which is the state of oneness.

Adam was first created alone; this was our state of oneness, for Adam was the only one in the world. Then we left that oneness, when Hashem created Chavah out of Adam’s body, for now there were two people in creation. After that, Hashem brought them together, and they were unified again.

The *possuk* says that man and woman shall become “one flesh.” Why does it say “one flesh” and not one “bone”? It is because right now, we are after the sin of Adam, so we cannot completely access the level of “bone of my bone”, which represents the intrinsic connection between husband and wife. Had Adam not sinned, we would have gone into the eternal Shabbos, and there would have been oneness forever. But we live after the sin, and we are heading towards the era of Moshiach, in which it will once again be revealed the state of oneness, when Hashem’s Name will be “one.”

We left our point of *echad*, and we are meant to return to *echad*. And before the creation of the world, there was only Hashem; He was one, His Name was one. Hashem created human beings who

are disparate from each other, who are given the task to unify with each other and thus reveal the original state of unity.

The main path to achieve that unity is through marriage. The roots of Creation are in man and woman; it is upon us to return to our state of oneness.

How? We can make use of both the inner and external kinds of love. The inner layer of love in marriage is to access our inherent oneness with each other, which is a power deep in the soul; and at the same time, on the external surface of reality, we can use the external kinds of love, which are love for similarities and love for differences.

When we dig a tunnel from two ends, eventually we can meet in the middle - and with Hashem's help, we can eventually penetrate and reach *echad* on its most absolute level.

### *In Conclusion*

As we explained in the beginning of this chapter, the words here are only addressing the “roots” of marriage; we have not yet explained the “branches.” But now we can understand that all of the “branches” of marriage are really all of the coincidental events that we go through, the day-to-day events and various details that we go through all the time.

When we understand the root - of life in general and marriage especially - then when we arrive at the branches/details that go on in life and in marriage, it is the root that can shed light upon all the details and show us a broader perspective. But when the ‘root’ is skipped and ignored, the ‘branches’/details we encounter will just remain as random ‘details’ we go through.

When the ‘branches’ are cut off from their ‘root’, we are left with ‘branches’ with no ‘root’ – we will go through many details in our life without being aware of the root of them, and then we won't know how to properly deal with them.

For this reason, the many branches/details we face in our life are fluctuating, sometimes being easy for us to deal with and sometimes being a challenge. This the meaning of the ‘world of exchanges’ that depicts This World we live on.

The more we return to the root, to our ‘intrinsic’ aspect, the more we can see how all that we go through in life is an intrinsic part of who we are. What we will gain from this, firstly, is that it will be easier to deal with physical hardships, such as the many challenges we are family with; our challenges will become illuminated by the knowledge that we got married for a goal, as opposed to seeking comfort and pleasure.

We came onto this world for a purpose, and marriage is one of the great systems in our life which enables us to get there. When we know how to view marriage and how to build it, we use our marriage for the purpose it is meant to be - as a tool to draw ourselves closer to the all-inclusive level of unity.

*Part One Chapter Three**1.3 | Unifying The Body and Soul In Marriage**The Snake Was Jealous of Adam and Chavah*

Man is comprised of a *guf* (body) and a *neshamah* (Divine soul). Before marriage, a person already has to deal with two ‘partners’ – his body and his soul. After he gets married, now there are two bodies and two souls that he has to deal with. Let’s explain the depth behind this and how it actually affects us.

There is love which stems from our physical body, and there is love which comes from our soul. Each of these loves is vastly different from each other.

Before the sin of Adam, when he was in Gan Eden, he was only a soul, covered with *kosnos obr* (skin coverings). After the sin, the physical body which we recognize came into existence, which resembles the *kosnos obr* of Adam that covered the soul.

The root of the sin began with the act of the Snake to tempt Chavah. The sin did not begin with Adam, nor did it begin with Chavah. It began with the Snake. What did it want with Chavah? The Sages state that the Snake was jealous of Adam and Chavah [so it desired to take her for itself, as a mate]. Thus, the roots of the physical body began with the jealousy of the Snake.

The rule is that the ‘roots’ build the ‘branches’ - whatever is in the ‘root’ becomes transferred to the ‘branches’ that grow from it: since the root of the sin began with the Snake’s jealousy, its result, which is the physical body, is then also connected with the Snake’s jealousy.

There is a well-known question: what was the Snake thinking? If it wanted to cause Adam to eat from the tree and die, Chavah will also die. So either way, it will be left without a mate. What, then, was it trying to do?

Understandably, the words of *Chazal* are not to be understood simply. The Snake did not want to simply “marry” Chavah. Rather, it wanted to cause Chavah to think like it. It wanted her to have its perspective, the perspective of the Snake, which is associated with cunningness (*armimus*), as the *possuk* says, “*And the Snake was cunning, from all of the beasts of the field.*” By contrast, the holy kind of thinking, *daas d’kedushah*, is about *achdus*, unity. The Snake, which had the opposite agenda, wanted *pirud*, disparity, in Creation.

Thus, the jealousy of the Snake was rooted in its desire to cause disparity, between Adam and Chavah. The physical body we know of, which came into existence as a result of the sin, is thus stemming from the Snake’s jealousy: a desire for disparity.

*The Snake’s Effect on Marriage*

We are speaking about how to build the Jewish home, and in other words, of how husband and wife can attain *shalom* (peace) in marriage.

When we want to get to the deep understanding of a matter, we need to get to the root of it, and from the root we can see the branches. The first marriage in the world was the marriage of Adam and

Chavah. The first attempt at disparity that took place in the world was the Snake's attempt to cause disparity between Adam and Chavah.

After the Snake tried to carry out its agenda, disparity entered, and ever since then, the entire bond of marriage has never been the same. *Chazal* state that after the sin, Adam separated from Chavah for 130 years. This was all a result of the Snake's doing. It succeeded in causing disparity between the first couple of the world, Adam and Chavah – enough to cause them to separate for 130 years.

Before the sin, when Adam lived as a soul in Gan Eden, there was no physical body yet. He had some kind of garment on top of his soul which was spiritual, not physical. It was a point in time in which *achdus*/unity was solely achievable through the soul, and not through the body, for there was no body yet. The disparity that entered creation, caused by the Snake, from its jealousy of Adam and Chavah, is what began all physical orientation. In fact, the very fact that Adam and Chavah received physical bodies after the sin, was already a kind of disparity, in and of itself – enough to cause them to be separated for 130 years.

Thus, before the sin, Adam and Chavah were united entirely through their souls, and after the sin, a new [and lower] level of unity was created: unity through body and soul together. There is also a lower kind of unity than this, which is when there is nothing but connection through the body and not through the soul; but such a unity is an animalistic kind of connection to another. (An animal can also connect with its mate. There is a concept of marriage by animals, as we see from the fact that the animals came in coupled pairs, to the Ark of Noach.)

So altogether, there are three levels of unifying: **(1) Unity before the sin**, in which there was only union of souls; **(2) Unity of the physical body**, which is an animal's level of unity. **(3) Unity after the sin**, in which both the body and the soul are involved in achieving unity.

Unity of animals cannot achieve an absolute level of unity. The reason for this because an animal is entirely physical, and all physicality is rooted in sin; and sin began with the Snake's jealousy. The jealousy of the Snake began the concept of disparity.

The Snake wanted to cause disparity between Adam and Chavah, and it also had the agenda of uniting with Chavah. So its first agenda was disparity, and after that, it wanted unity. Had the Snake gotten what it wanted and Adam would die right away, it would be able to unite with Chavah; such a unity would have been based on its desire to cause disparity. It would have never achieved real unity with Chavah, because its desire for unity with her was all stemming from disparity; and such unity cannot be real unity.

Thus, when a connection to another is entirely physical, there cannot be real unity. Although we know that animals can also bond with each other and unite, that unity is entirely rooted in the Snake's cunning perspective; the Snake began a unity that is entirely physical and animalistic in its nature – a unity that is based on disparity.

### *Unity Before The Sin: Soul Connection*

Let's return to discussing man himself. Before the sin, there was unity only through souls. It was clearly a deeper and more inner kind of unity than the kind of unity that can be achieved today, in which we live after the sin. After the sin, we can also unify, but it will always involve both body and soul.

When it comes to our physical body, for all practical purposes, there is no difference between a person and an animal. When testing any medicine or treatment, animals are first tested before the treatment is applied to humans. *Chazal* said regarding the human body, “I and my animal eat from the same source.”<sup>12</sup> Animals and human beings have mostly the same physical properties.

Of course, there are still physical differences. There are physical differences between animals as well. But the basic structure of the human body bears the same physical characteristics as that of animals.

Therefore, being that we have a physical body in us right now, just as an animal cannot achieve absolute unity, so does our physical body not allow for us to have absolute unity, in our marriages.

And we find in *halachah* as well that our physical unity in marriage is never total. Before the sin, there was no *tum'ah* (ritual impurity), and after the sin, Chavah's curse was that she will have to endure the impurity of *niddah* (menstruation). The concept of *niddah* does not allow for a husband and wife to always have physical connection. Uniting on a physical level is not always possible, so even when they do unite on a physical level, it can never be absolute, because its entire essence is temporary.

How, then, can a couple have complete unity (both with themselves, and then towards others)? It can be only done through their *neshamos* (Divine souls).

### *Unity After the Sin: Body and Soul*

Based on the above, we can now understand that the purpose of marriage, which is to “become one”, is essentially about achieving *achdus*, to unify. If we attempt *achdus*/unity with our spouse entirely through the physical body, there is no possibility of ever getting to the purpose of marriage. But if we make sure to add the dimension of “*neshamah*” into our marriage, besides for the physical aspects which are involved – through that, we create for ourselves a tool which will allow us to build unity through it.

This does not mean that having a physical relationship alone never brings any *achdus*. There can definitely be a revelation of *achdus* there, because even animals can unite, and the Snake as well wanted to unify with Chavah. But such a unity is based on the force of evil in the world, the *Sitra Achara* (Evil Side of Impurity), which begins with unity and ends in separation. (When it comes to the side of holiness, it works the opposite way: at first there is separateness, and then we can unify the separateness.)

Through the physical body alone, there can never be absolute unity with another. Thus, if one bases his marriage through a bodily perspective, there will never be true unity and connection in his home. He might try very hard to be a good husband, and he might have wonderful thoughts all the time about his spouse, and he might even do everything possible which his body is capable of doing – but it will all be fruitless. It is because he is attempting something that cannot be done.

But if a person makes sure to use the *neshamah* (soul) in his marriage, he will have a basis for achieving *achdus* in his marriage. The soul is all one unit; at its deepest level, the soul is called “*Yechidah*”, which means “individual”, for it is all one unit. Through it, one can unify with his spouse.

We must emphasize here that the point is **not** to live entirely through the *neshamah* and to ignore the physical aspect. This cannot be done now, for we are not on the level of Adam before the sin when he lived in Gan Eden. We live on This World, and we are a soul within a body, so we live a double

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<sup>12</sup> End of Talmud Bavli: Tractate Kiddushin

kind of existence: soul and body. **It is necessary for one to connect with his spouse both through the soul as well as through the body.** It is not possible in our current state to achieve a union of souls alone.

But the other extreme, to unify only through the body alone and to ignore the *neshamah*, is not either a feasible option. It would resemble an animal's union. There would be no revelation of unity at all, in such a connection.

We will now explain the soul connection one needs in marriage.

### ***“A Man And Woman, If They Merit It - The Shechinah Dwells Between Them”***

The words of *Chazal* are well-known: “A man and woman, if they merit it, the *Shechinah* (the presence of G-d) dwells between them.”<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew word for “man” is “*ish*”, which contains the word “*aish*”, fire, and the word for “woman” is *ishah*, which also contains the word *aish*/fire. A man has the letter *yud* in his name, and a woman has the letter *hey* in her name. The letters *yud* and *hey*, together, form a name of Hashem, representing the *Shechinah*.

This famous statement of *Chazal* is usually said over in a negative way: If they do not have the name of Hashem between them, they are missing the letters *yud* and *hey*, and they are left with nothing but *aish* and *aish*, fire and fire. This is in line with the rest of the statement of *Chazal*, that “If they do not merit it, a fire destroys them” – their marriage will be destroyed. This is a true interpretation, but let us instead focus on a positive dimension of this statement in *Chazal*.

Of Hashem it is written, “*For Hashem, your G-d, is a fire that consumes.*”<sup>14</sup> There is a negative connotation of fire, and there is also a positive connotation of fire; we will explain this.

The Sages say that when a husband and wife merit it, they have the *Shechinah*; the superficial meaning of this is that it is a great merit for them when they have *Shechinah* in their home. But the inner meaning of it is that the *Shechinah* will connect them together. Not only have they merited the *Shechinah* (which, in and of itself, is obviously a great thing), but they have merited to purify themselves internally, and that is why the *Shechinah* can come into their home and connect them together.

The converse is true is as well: if they do not have the *Shechinah* between them, *chas v'shalom*, there is no connection.

If the marital bond and the *Shechinah* would not be two interdependent matters of each other, then husband and wife would be connected to each other regardless if there is *Shechinah* or not in their home. But since their whole bond can only come when there is *Shechinah* between them, because it is the *Shechinah* which connects them, their connection is dependent on *Shechinah*. An absence of *Shechinah*, *chas v'shalom*, will mean that there is a lack of connection between them.

The connection which the *Shechinah* forms between husband and wife is obviously a connection of souls, not a connection of two physical bodies. When the husband is like a “fire” and the wife is like a “fire” - when they are both living through their souls - then there will be *Shechinah* between them, enabling them to connect.

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13 *Sotah 17a*

14 *Devarim 2:24*

Thus, being that all Jewish souls are a “portion of G-d above”; and since “*Hashem is a fire that consumes*”, the souls of both man and woman bear a resemblance to this “fire”. When they are like a “fire” together [when they both live through their souls and not through their bodies] – the “light” (*ohr*) of their fire will be able to settle upon its “vessel” (*kli*). But if they won’t resemble this “fire” and they are just living a bodily kind of existence, they do not become a “vessel” that can hold onto the “fire” of Hashem.

### *The Role of Physicality In Marriage*

Thus, the marital bond between husband and wife must emanate from a connection of *neshamah* (Divine soul) between them. However, the **nature of their Divine connection is revealed as well through the reality of the physical body.**

There is a concept of shining the light of the soul onto the physical body, in which the physical body is infused with the spiritual reality of the soul; there is also a concept of using our physical body to get through to the soul. But in whichever way we take, there must always be a degree of *neshamah* (soul) between husband and wife in order for the marital bond to be formed.

When we say that the physical connection alone does not form a connection and that only their souls can form a connection with each other, this is not to be understood in the same way we understand that fire and water cannot be united, in contrast to magnets which are pulled towards each other. Rather, their two souls are each a “portion of G-d above”, each of their souls are made of the “*Yechidah*” in their souls which allows for unity. The physical body, however, is a product of the Snake’s jealousy, which resulted in disparity, and that is why it cannot create unity.

Thus, the bond between husband and wife must be formed through the proper root of their connection, from their *neshamos*, from the inner source of “*ayin*”. If they have revealed the root, they can reveal *achdus* (unity) between them. If the root never becomes revealed, that *achdus* between their *neshamos* cannot become revealed either.

So we can now understand, clearly, that the *achdus* with which we want to build our home with, has a root, as well as branches, to it. The root of the *achdus* is because all souls are united, being that all souls are “a portion of G-d above”. The branch of the *achdus* is when this unity is manifested even in the physical union. But it is the final of the branches; if the “root” has never been accessed yet, one cannot get to the “branches.”

Let us now focus, then, firstly on how the root of *achdus* can be accessed and allow itself to shine in marriage. After explaining that point, we will continue, with Hashem’s help, to explain the details that branch out from this - all the way until the ‘final’ branch.

### *The Five ‘Partners’ In Marriage*

In the opening words of this chapter, we said that before a man gets married, he has two “partners” to deal with: his body and his soul. After he gets married, now there are four “partners” – his body, his soul, his wife’s body, and his wife’s soul. And even if we look deeper, we can see that there is really a ‘fifth’ partner: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, Who connects their souls together. As we explained before, the *Shechinah* is what connects the souls of husband and wife together; this refers to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

As we know, when you have a business partnership of five partners, one of the partners is not able to sign on a deal without the consent of his other partners. All of the partners have to be given equal ownership; there is not one of them who is completely in charge. The five partners must have a meeting together and come to an agreement before anything in the business is decided between them. If three of them decides one way and two of them do not agree, perhaps the majority will override the minority and then it is decided what to do, but the point is, that in a partnership, they must all involve each other.

Compare this to the “partnership” of marriage, in which you also have “five partners”: the two souls of husband and wife, their two bodies, and Hashem. What happens when their two souls and the will of Hashem are not in agreement with the desire of their two bodies? The “majority” should win – the will of their two souls, together with the will of Hashem, should be the deciding factor over the will of their bodies, being that it is three against two. This “partnership” in marriage must be acknowledged.

In day-to-day life, **before** a person gets married, he is dealing with the desires of his body, versus the desires of his soul. A person needs to realize that he has two minds going on within his head! Before he decides to act a certain way, he must discern what his body wants and what his soul wants, and then decide between the two of them.

If a person only thinks he has one mind, then either he thinks he is a body without a soul, or a soul without a body. And usually what happens is that he will decide upon what his body wants.

The correct approach is for one to acknowledge both the needs of his body and his soul, the two “heads” which disagree with each other – and then decide which of them takes precedence right now.

This is the meaning behind the words of *Chazal* that “With the righteous, their good inclination (their soul/spirituality) rules them”, whereas “With the wicked, their evil inclination (their physical desires) rule them.” And when it comes to “the *beinonim* (the average people), both inclinations rule them”<sup>15</sup>; meaning, with the average person, both the soul and the body are acknowledged.

In other words, one kind of person is mainly dominated by his soul, and his physical body subordinates itself to the will of the soul. These are represented by the righteous. By them, their ‘partnership’ can be seen as entirely owned by one owner: the soul. When it comes to the wicked, it is the opposite: their soul is enslaved to their physical body. Their ‘partnership’ is also be ruled by one owner: the body.

The average person, however, has to deal with both body and soul as equal forces. It is always our *avodah* to acknowledge the view of both ‘partners’ within us – our body and our soul<sup>16</sup> – and to see what they are each “saying”. That’s all concerning *before* a person gets married. But when a person gets married, there are now five ‘partners’ to contend with!

### *Practically Applying This Concept*

This might sound absurd when a person first hears this concept. Let us try to conceptualize this with the following practical example.

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<sup>15</sup> *Berachos 61b*

<sup>16</sup> *Editor’s Note: The source of this is the sefer Tanya, in which it is explained that each Jew needs to view himself as a beinoni, the level in between the righteous and the wicked; one who recognizes that he needs to deal with his good and evil inclinations as equally opposing forces.*

Let's say a couple is deciding if they should buy a bookcase. They are sitting and thinking: "Should we buy it? How much is it worth it for us to spend on it?" Let's think about this: How many viewpoints are going on here? It appears that there are only two opinions – that of the husband, and that of the wife's. It does not seem like there are four or five opinions involved in this.

This is how it really should be (of course, you won't find any couple doing this, because nobody is used to this kind of thinking):

- (1) Firstly, the husband could think to himself, "What does my wife's *neshamah* want – to have this bookcase, or not to have this bookcase? And what does her body want – does it want the bookcase, or not?"
- (2) Then, he can think, "What does my *neshamah* want – to buy this bookcase or not? And what does my body want?"
- (3) Then, he should decide between those four opinions: if they should buy the bookcase or not.
- (4) Then he can think the following (and in fact, he really should have thought about this first): "What does Hashem want from both of us in this situation?"

In fact, two *neshamos* do not always agree, even when it comes to spiritual matters. The *neshamah* of the husband might want one thing, while the *neshamah* of the wife wants something else. Just as their physical needs differ and they can clash with each other, so it is possible for each of their *neshamos* to have different needs that are in contradiction with each other.

For example, in a case where one of the spouses needs to live a more comfortable lifestyle than the other and needs to spend some more money to make this happen, and the other spouse needs to live frugally, their soul needs can clash. How? If the one who needs a comfortable lifestyle is depressed, and he needs to spend some more money to buy certain things that will take him out of his depression, this is a soul need which clashes with the need of the other spouse, who needs to live frugally.

Here is another example that is more common on a day-to-day basis: If they both want to go on a vacation together. The wife might feel that it's not worth it to take a vacation and leave the house, because she does not feel that much of a need to get out; she feels a sense of freedom on a daily basis. Therefore, she feels that going on a vacation will be detrimental to her soul. The husband, though, might feel a little sad for whatever reason, and thus he feels a need to get out of the house a little and go somewhere, so he feels that going on a vacation will uplift his soul and make him feel more refreshed, which will enable him to shake off his stress and thus come to serve Hashem better.

If we want to define what marriage involves, it is this: there are always five "partners" that need to be dealt with in their decisions! First it should feel clear to them that there are always these five "partners" involved, and then it should be figured out what each "partner" is saying. Then we need to see how we can come to a decision. But first, it should be clear to them what each opinion is saying.

### *Getting Used To Thinking Before Acting*

To illustrate, before a person embarks on any business venture, he first thinks about what possible gains or losses can incur. He thinks into it and takes the matter apart, and then he decides what to do.

When it comes to spirituality as well, we also need to weigh out the scenario beforehand: “Think of the gain of a *mitzvah* versus the reward, and think of the gain of a sin versus its loss.”<sup>17</sup>

With most people, they think only about what physical gain they will have in something. If a person is a bit spiritual, he also thinks about some of the things that his soul wants: To learn Torah, to do a *mitzvah*, and to *chessed*. These things are obviously attributed to the desires that come from the *neshamah*. But when it comes to the mundane things we do, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and other physical needs, we usually do not connect these things with the *neshamah*.

But such a mindset is really splitting apart one’s identity. This is because our *neshamah* cannot live on its own without the body; and the body cannot be alive without our *neshamah* in it. If the body and soul separate for even a moment, there is death. We are always living with both our body and soul. Sometimes our soul dominates and sometimes our body dominates, but we are always living with both.

So when a person is about to do a *mitzvah*, he should clarify to himself: “Which part of me is going to do the *mitzvah* – my body, or my soul?”

The Kotzker Rebbe zt”l told one of his *chassidim*: “When you get up in the morning, don’t run to daven. First, think to yourself the following: Maybe it’s better if I eat now? Why shouldn’t I eat before davening? Does my *neshamah* want me to first *daven* and then eat, or the other way around? And what does my body want to do?”

It is to learn to recognize what your *neshamah* wants and what your body wants, and decide which of them will be in control. His point was that a person first needs to become aware of what’s going on inside himself, so that he can have a clear perspective.

### *Decisions From Thought*

When a person is not clear about what is going on inside himself, he lives with deep internal contradictions, and he will go into marriage like that as well. When the spouses are not clear what each of them wants, destruction ensues.

In worse scenarios, the spouses each get used to making major decisions without consulting the other. In some cases, there are even husbands who take all of their savings and invested it into stocks, and the deal cannot be taken back. He comes home and informs his spouse of his grand new deal he has just struck...

Those are more extreme examples that are not so common in most marriage. But what is more common is, when the spouses make various small decisions without each other. Even though the decisions are not that major, the problem is that the spouse has made the decision on his/her own without including the other spouse.

Of course, this cannot mean that every single last decision must be made by both of them together. Certainly he can make his own decisions when it comes to private matters that are not relevant to both of them. But if it is about something that is relevant to both of them, it is unfair to the other spouse if one of the spouses makes a decision without including the other.

True, it’s not always easy to enjoin the other in decisions. Many times it is difficult to include the other in a decision. But the alternative is worse. If he decides everything by himself and he never

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<sup>17</sup> *Avos* 2:1

includes his spouse in his decisions, this will create difficulty between them - no less of a problem to deal with than if he were to include the other in his decisions.

Therefore, before one is married, he has to already have gotten used to discerning his body needs and his soul needs in act, before he engages in an act. Otherwise, it will be very hard when he is married to suddenly learn how to include his spouse in his decisions. He hasn't even learned how to make decisions with himself, because he is not used to thinking before he does something. Without getting used to thinking before a person acts, he sees something in the store and immediately buys it, as soon as he falls in love with the item he is buying.

A large cause for marital discord, especially in the beginning years of marriage (and later on as well), stems from the bad habit of not including the other spouse, when it comes to making decisions.

Here is an example: The husband, let's say, was used to always spending his money on whatever he liked, as long as he had the money; whether it was his parents' spending money they gave to him, or from some other source he received it from. He always felt, "I decide what to do with my money. If I want to take a vacation, I go; if not, I don't go. If I want to buy something I want, I buy it. If I don't want it then I don't buy it." He gets married and suddenly he realizes that now he has to include another opinion in his financial situations,

So if a person wasn't used to thinking before he does things, he will have a very hard time in marriage deciding between his and his wife's interests, which, as we explained, are really four opinions going on at once; including a fifth opinion [asking themselves what Hashem wants from them]. It is very hard to suddenly make this adjustment! But if one was already used to thinking before he did things before he got married [and he can still train himself to do so after he is married], then he can be successful.

Of course, decisions in marriage can still be more difficult than the decisions you made before you were married, when you only had to deal with your body and soul alone, and not the body and soul of another. But it will still be much easier to handle, when you have become used to thinking before you do something and discerning your own body and soul needs in the act.

### *Incorporating Body and Soul Into Marriage*

Now we will need to explain the following point which must be made clear: When we speak about living with the *neshamah*, we must clearly define what this means.

There are two levels: to actually live with the *neshamah* revealed in your life, or to aspire for it. When a person actually lives with his *neshamah* in his life, it is because he has revealed it. He is someone who is able to live with both body and soul incorporated into his life. But most people have not actually reached their *neshamah*, and when they do identify with their *neshamah*, it is rather a desire and aspiration to live with it: "What does my *neshamah* want? How can I reveal it more...?"

There are two different orientations in life with which we can live: the path of the physical body, and the path of the *neshamah*. The body is tangible and revealed to us, so we identify with it clearly. But the soul seems to be something esoteric, something that seems more like a source of aspiration in life.

Therefore, in order to reveal it more, one needs to get used to thinking about both his body and soul, before he is about to do something. [To start, he should try this once or twice a day, and then slowly increase this practice]. Before he is about to do something, he should think: "What does the

body want and what does the soul want?” Then he should extend this into marriage: “What does my body and soul want, and what does the body and soul of my wife want?” Then he needs to think (or he can do this as the first stage): “What does Hashem want me to do?”

By getting used to this, a husband and wife can slowly begin to see that there are always “five partners” involved in all of their acts. This is how a person harmonizes the body and soul - both with himself and with his marriage.

When we reflect, we can discover that all of us really know that we have a soul. We all know that our spouse as well has a body and soul. It is just that we tangibly feel our bodies, because it can be seen, whereas our souls are invisible. Therefore, the soul seems like something esoteric to us, and it seems like we cannot relate to it on a day-to-day basis – in our own selves, and surely with how we view our spouse.

Thus, the first idea we need to acquire, in order to counter our initial perception, is to become aware that there are always five “partners” in our marriage. Upon that awareness we can then act practically upon that knowledge.

### *Seeking Unity With The Soul of Your Spouse*

As we said previously, marriage includes four beings – two bodies and two souls.

We can see clearly that there are two bodies coming together in marriage: A man decides he will go marry a certain woman. He has certain criteria he is looking for in a spouse with regards to her physical appearance. Indeed, our Sages said that it is forbidden for a man to marry a woman until he has first seen her, lest he find something unattractive about her appearance and then be repulsed by her. According to *halacha*, he must see her before he marries her, so that she should be beloved to him; he needs to feel like he is compatible with her.

After he marries her, a husband will still have certain criteria he is looking for in his wife. He usually is interested in what he would like from her, according to what suits his nature. We are all familiar with this.

But since their union will be including two souls that are coming together, they will also need to unify their souls together. When it comes to unity between two souls, there is what to look for before marriage, as well as after the marriage, as follows.

Before marriage, when a person is looking for his prospective match, he/she needs to find a spouse that will “be on the same page” when it comes to *ruchniyus* (spirituality). This cannot be clearly spelled out, because every person thinks differently; *Chazal* say that “Just as all faces are all different from each other, so are all ways of thinking different from each other.” There is no such thing as two people who are the same exact in their level of *ruchniyus*. But in order to be married with each other, they must be able to think along the same lines.

It is a misconception when people think that as long as the other one feels “attractive” to you, then he/she must be “the right one”. Rather, what is needed in finding the right one is to see if the other one shares a similar kind of thinking to you.

A similar misconception that people have today is that they think that as long as the other one is physically attractive, even if he/she doesn’t think like you at all, it can work. The reason why people make this mistake is because they think that marriage is a union of two physical bodies alone.

If they would be aware that there is more to marriage than just the physical attraction, that there is something more inner and deeper than this, they would have the correct perspective. Although there are always disagreements between every couple, they can know very well that the basis of their marriage is still centered around achieving unity with each other, and that is what will glue them together.

*Achdus* in marriage is not some esoteric concept that cannot be made practical. It is the basis of marriage which is expressed through their everyday interactions. To illustrate, when a person learns how to become an electrician or a carpenter, if he wants to make a livelihood from this, it is not enough if he just has the title. In order for him to make money, he has to actively use his skills, every day. So too, when it comes to the unity between two spouses, it exists in potential; the only issue is, if it is actively expressing itself on a daily basis.

We are familiar with the common scenario that goes on in many homes: it is after a long day of hard work. The job takes up most of the day and keeps a person busy with it. He comes home tired and drained from the whole day, and he would like to relax. If he's a "good husband", he makes sure to buy something special in the store for his wife before he comes home, and then he eases up the atmosphere in the home, so that he can bond with his spouse on a physical and emotional level, according to his natural abilities. This is a wonderful thing, and we do not mean to invalidate it, G-d forbid; but we must remember that unity in marriage is not created solely through the physical aspect. It must also involve a union of their souls.

Unity based on physical connection alone between them does not last; unity between spouses is only achieved when their souls come together. If their marriage is based on physical appearance and personality attraction alone (which is also a kind of physical attraction), and this is the only thing they experience together, their union is based on a perspective of disparity - the perspective formed by the Snake.

It is for this reason that we see, to our horror, that there are spouses who abandon their marriage simply because they fall in love with another person, who seems to be more attractive than what they have in their own marriage. Why does this happen? It can only happen when the marriage was based on physical factors alone. As soon as one of them finds another who comes across as more attractive – whether it is in how the person acts, or due to how much money he/she has, etc., the marriage is abandoned in favor of this more attractive person.

We find something peculiar. There are couples who get divorced, yet they can still remain on good terms with each other afterwards. How do we explain such a thing? The true answer to this mystery is because this couple must have never understood the nature of their relationship when they had been married. Therefore, the relationship between them is still able to continue.

### *Incorporating Spirituality Into Practical Life*

We all believe and know that we possess a Divine soul in us, and we all know in our minds that husband and wife are two souls meant to become one in marriage. But when it comes to making this concept practical in day-to-day life, we find these matters to be somewhat esoteric, as if it is more like a lofty speech that you hear before you get married.

After marriage, the idea of a "spiritual bond" between husband and wife often becomes a forgotten topic, pushed away in some back corner of the mind. It is not made practical in their daily interactions, and the connection that a husband and wife feel to each other is then based entirely on the physical.

Here is a common example of what the average conversation looks like in a non-spiritual marriage. It is dinner time. What are the husband and wife talking about with each other? It is usually about the bank account, what to buy and what not to buy, how to raise the kids, etc.

Why are the conversations like this? It is simple. If a person lived a totally “body” kind of life before he got married, then he doesn’t suddenly transform when he gets married and become spiritual. (There are no open miracles performed these days). When a person is involved all day with his physical concerns, when he comes home as well at the end of the day, he returns to discussing his physical concerns: the bank account, the papers in his filing cabinet, writing down important events on his calendar, etc.

But if a person is already used to the concept of identifying the two aspects to his existence – his body and his soul – then when he comes home at the end of day, he is also involved with both body and soul. If a person is already identifying his existence throughout the day as being both body and soul, he will know that when he comes home he is not entirely a body. The correct identification a person must have for himself, in marriage, is: “I have a soul, and my wife has a soul. I have a body, and she has a body.” Together, they are acknowledging that they each deal with this double kind of existence.

**We do not mean** a couple must only talk about *ruchniyus* (spirituality) together. That is not the point; in fact, there were only rare individuals who were capable of living on such a level. We are describing a far simpler and more basic point: that when a couple gets married, they should know that their union will be including not only their bodies, but their souls as well.

The soul dimension should be given at least 2% of their attention in marriage. They can do more than that too, but as a basic minimum, they must know and be aware that they will need to unify with their souls.

If they do not build together any unity of the soul with each other, and it is merely a physical connection with each other, then their entire sense of unity with each other will be built on a perspective that creates separateness, the “jealousy of the Snake.” In some extreme cases, there are couples who even come to feel jealous of each other’s successes! One of them gains a promotion, and the other spouse feels like he is now inferior to his spouse, which he cannot handle.

Why do such things happen in a marriage? It is when their entire bond is physical, which means that it is rooted in the “jealousy of the Snake.” And the bond they feel to each other begins to weaken and fall apart.

But if the union between them is built on truth, even if they feel jealous of each other sometimes, the basis of their marital bond will remain and keep their bond strong.

### *How To Build The Soul Connection In Marriage*

In today’s generation, marital counseling is a big practice. There is much being taught about “*shalom bayis*”, “marital peace.” Indeed, there are many problems in marriage today, and counseling is needed for many people. But the issues do not actually begin with “*shalom bayis*” (marital peace). The issues begin with a lack of understanding towards oneself.

If one is aware of his body and his soul and he is used to identifying with both of them, he can be helped in marriage as well. But when there is a lack of awareness towards **body and soul** within oneself, it will be even more difficult to get along with the body and soul of another.

This is true whether one is leaning towards more of a very physical orientation in life, or even if he leaning towards a very spiritual one. When he is lacking proper awareness of *either* his body or soul in his own life - he won't be able to build the home either.

If most people look deeply into their marital issues, they would discover that the spiritual bond between them is sorely lacking, almost non-existent.

[Let us point out the following misconceptions about the spiritual bond in marriage, however]. There are some couples who think that becoming spiritual together means to learn two *halachos* every day with each other. We don't mean to degrade this, *chas v'shalom*; it is very constructive. But learning together every day is not enough to form a soul connection with each other.

Why? Because they are merely doing external actions together. Of course, they might feel a connection to each other from it, because they are doing something together. But we can compare this to a father learning with his child. They might be doing something together, but it won't be enough to form an inner connection between them.

We can understand that if a person learns two *halachos* every day, this alone will not bring him to discover his own soul and live with it. As proof, there are people who learn much more than two *halachos* each day, but it doesn't cause them to reach their soul. It is a long way to get to the soul – it is a task that takes hard work and perseverance, on a continual basis.

In marriage as well, forming a soul connection with each other does not happen in a day or two, generally speaking. It takes many years. Just as physical growth spans several years, from infancy to adolescence, then comes marriage, children, and marrying off his own children, *b'ezras Hashem* – and then becoming a grandparent – so, too, the deep bond between a couple takes time to develop. When a couple gets married, at first there are no children yet; and later comes the children, which further develops their bond.

If a person is married for 10 or 15 years and he works for a living, his home becomes nicer looking as he brings in the money to afford renovations. He has children in between, and he makes sure to take care of their needs. But the question is, is he also building a soul connection with his spouse? If he is, he is someone to be praised. But if all he has done in all those 10-15 years is that he earned a living and brought up the children (and he has a nice pension waiting for him), but he didn't work hard at building a soul connection with his spouse – it's as if he's holding onto a bunch of 'branches' that are disconnected from their 'root.'

Rabbi Akiva Eiger<sup>18</sup> told over after his wife was *niftar*, that he would speak with her about spiritual matters, from early in the night all the way through midnight.

Let us repeat and emphasize that the point is not that one speak with his wife only about matters of the soul. Not at all! What we mean is that just as a husband needs to take care of his wife's physical needs (and she must take care of his physical needs), so must he help her in her spiritual needs.

This does not happen in a day or two; it takes many years of first getting to know each other's different natures, slowly becoming familiar with each other's personalities, until the spiritual dimension of their relationship can begin. It takes time.

Eventually, the spiritual bond between them must become a topic of interest to them; and it should become the central topic between them. The spiritual side of their marriage must become as important as a topic to them no less than the other important topics that are discussed in their home.

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18 One of the greatest scholars and Torah leader of the 17th century

It doesn't mean that they should advise each other in what to do in their respective lives. When each of them is coming home from a long day of work or from anywhere else, they want to relate their experiences to each other, and they are not seeking advice. They each want to be heard by the other one. That is part of their "partnership" – each of them is not just looking for "advice."

Their spiritual situations must also include the other. Of course, a wife cannot become included 100% in her husband's spiritual work, just as it is not possible for them to be physically included with each other 100%. A man cannot come home and tell his wife every last thing that happened to him that day for the last 8 hours. But what he can do is to give her a basic outline of what he experienced that day, and to that extent, he includes her in what goes on in his life.

Along with this, they need to **talk** with each other about their spiritual bond. They must not do this in a forced manner; it should feel natural for them, like anything else in life they do.

They must speak of their experiences with each other. If a person was away the whole day on a trip, and he comes home and doesn't tell her anything about his trip, clearly something is wrong. If he is not relating his experiences to her, either he has no experiences, or it is because he there is a deep blockage between him and his spouse [which must be discovered and addressed] that is preventing him from having conversations with her.

### *In Conclusion*

To summarize what we have been through so far, man is comprised of body and soul. The union of marriage is that two souls and two bodies are coming together.

If the soul of husband and wife are revealed in the marriage and they are included in each other's spiritual lives, they have the deep root for unity between them. Even the physical aspects of marriage will then become more meaningful. Instead of being affected by the Snake's jealousy, the body will be able to take on the light of the soul, which is the source of unity.

By contrast, if marriage is focused solely on the physical aspects, it becomes a connection that will lead to disparity between them, as is the nature of physicality. Such a marriage can never succeed.

It is our hope that the words here are slowly receiving more clarity. As we said earlier, we first planned to address the roots of marriage, and then we will get to explain the 'branches', and hopefully, we will cover all of the 'branches'.

*Part One Chapter Four**1.4 | How To View Your Spouse's Faults*

Until now we addressed the roots of marriage; now we will try with Hashem's help to explore the details. But we must remember throughout, that all these details are contained in the root; so in every detail of marriage we come across, we need to see how the root of marriage is what shines light on it. It is the root which allows us to better understand a particular detail of marriage.

The general root concept in our life - and marriage in particular - is: "*And they shall become one flesh.*" Therefore, in every situation we meet up with, whether it is in marriage or in any of life, the perspective we need to have is to see how we can unify with it.

In this chapter, we will discuss how one can deal with a particular topic: the "faults" that one discovers in his/her spouse.

*Discovering Faults In Each Other*

All of us, after getting married, discover faults in our spouse. We are all familiar with this. The first question we need to ask ourselves, however, is not about how to *deal* with them. Rather, the issue depends on *how we view* the faults. *Dealing* with the faults in our spouse will already be the second step. The first step we need is to know *how to view* the faults.

Our first reaction, when we discover a fault in our spouse, is superficial: We have a problem now to deal with! A person got married thinking that his spouse had certain qualities, and then after he marries her he discovers faults in her that he did not know about beforehand. He sees an issue in front of him which he feels like he must now deal with.

But that would be starting from the middle of a story. He is not aware of what came before this "middle" point he is starting from.

Imagine the following scenario. A person sets out on a six-hour trip with no water. After four hours, he begins to get thirsty, and he discovers that he has no water on him. He is thinking, "What should I do? I have no water!"

Did his problem start now, or four hours ago? It really started four hours ago, before he left for his trip. His problem is not starting now. Had he thought before his trip that he will need water, he wouldn't have run into a problem after four hours. So the root of his problem really began before, not now.

The lesson from this is clear. Most people are beginning to think based on the middle of a situation, and then they wonder how to solve their problem, beginning from the middle of the story. They enter something without thinking into it beforehand, and then they run into problems later and they discover that they cannot solve it. They look for solutions to their problems only after the problems hit them, and they did not bother to think beforehand about what the solution will be.

When people only begin to think after the problem has started, the solution they come up with will only be addressing the current issue, not what came before it. It is no wonder, then, that after a week or two, the same problem will come back, in a different form. The issue hasn't really been solved, it has

merely been dodged, until it comes back again. It might not come back exactly as the first time around, but it will still resurface somehow.

Why not? It is because the problem is not the problem that we see. The problem is when a person is lacking the proper perspective: when he does not see the root of things. If we see what lead to the problem, the solution to the problem will be very different. It will be a more inclusive solution. If we only focus at the issue from the current point we are at, then all we will be able to uncover is a superficial solution, which only takes care of the issue at hand, and not the root of the problem. It won't really solve the issue.

When we try to deal with the issues in our spouse, it is the same way. We might able to uncover a solution that solves the issue at hand we are facing, but this would be starting from the middle of the story, without getting to the root. For example, if the other spouse is impatient, or has a temper, or is gluttonous, etc., it seems that the solution lies in fixing the impatience, or in fixing the other's tempers, or in curbing the other's habit of gluttony. After all, that is where the problem lies.

But what really needs to be done is to get to the root of the problem which is manifesting. We need to understand that all faults which we discover in our spouse – as well as all imperfections that exist in Creation – are all rooted in the very first fault which took place in Creation.

There are many people in the Creation, but we all had one father: Adam HaRishon. All of us come from him; he is the root of all created human beings. Everything in Creation has many subdivisions, but it is all rooted in one root.

So too, in the various faults that we all have – and there are many – there is an earlier root to all of them. If we can identify the faults at their root and we discover the purpose and the avodah for us that it implies, we can then go from the root to the branches. But if we only see the faults at their branches and we don't get to the root, we won't know how to properly identify it.

### *Faults: A Way To Achieve Unity*

Firstly, as we explained, everything which we come across, in life and especially in marriage, can be a root of *achdus* (unifying).

The positive attributes we discover in our spouse are obviously a tool to reveal *achdus* with each other. That is pretty clear and simply. But even the faults we discover in our spouse are also a tool for *achdus*. Faults in our spouse are thus not a problem to be dealt with – they are rather part of the plan in revealing *achdus*.

Compare this to the following. Before we can build a building, we first have to dig a ditch. If a person walks by and he doesn't realize that a building is supposed to go up there, he thinks, "What is this ditch doing here?" He has no idea that the reason why there is a ditch here is to enable a building to be built on it. He sees the hole as it is, as a mere deficiency, and not as something which allows for building.

So too, when we notice a fault in our spouse, our initial reaction might be to see it like the ditch in the ground, a mere deficiency that serves no greater purpose. What we need do is to re-define our perspective towards it. The deficiency that we see is really a piece in the puzzle of *achdus*. All we need to do is understand how exactly it fosters *achdus*. But the very fact that there is a deficiency here is part of what will make the *achdus* happen.

This is the outline of the definition. Now we will try to understand, with Hashem's help, how we can implement this view into our life.

### *If You Are Ready To Think Deeply*

First of all, before we continue, we need to make the following introductory point.

There are some people who do not use their minds that much. When they run into a problem, they look for practical suggestions on what to do. This kind of person does not build his own way of thinking; he is always borrowing ideas from others. As soon as he runs into something he cannot deal with, he learns which magic buttons to press that will tell him what exactly he needs to do, so that, *Baruch Hashem*, he doesn't have to exert his mind that much, and that everything works out.

But a person who lives internally and truthfully is a person who uses the mind that Hashem gave him.

If one is seeking practical advice alone, the words to come will not be of much help to him. But if one is the kind of person who considers his thinking mind to be a central aspect of his life, he is already halfway towards his answers. He has the proper perspective that will enable him to build upon it.

If one seeks practical advice alone and he is not willing to exert his mind at all, the words to come are not for him. The words here are suitable for one who is looking for advice that is built upon inner thinking, which makes use of our minds.

### *The Faults of Your Spouse Complete You*

In the previous chapters, we mentioned that there are three kinds of love in marriage: love for differences, love for similarities, and intrinsic love. Let us try to see how deficiencies in a spouse that we discover can be a catalyst for both 'similar attraction' as well as 'opposite attraction'.

As we have mentioned in the past, the word *ahavah* (love) has the same *gematria* as the word *echad* (one). When we want to unify, we need to see how differences contribute to building *achdus*, and how similarities contribute to *achdus*.

Let us examine a case in which one of the spouses has a particular weakness. Sometimes the other spouse has the very same weakness, but in most cases, it is one of the spouses who will have a particular weakness that the other one does not have, for the most part. Examples include one of them being impulsive and the other spouse being more of a calm thinker, or one of them having more of a joyous nature when the other one is more melancholy.

Whether one of them has the weak spot or whether they both have it, either way, it is a situation which can bring them closer to *shleimus* (self-perfection). How?

When one of them has the fault, it's clear that this can bring him closer to *shleimus*, because he's being completed by his missing puzzle piece. Hashem created the world so that we can all unify; we give and receive from each other, which completes the process. The wealthy gives to the poor; the poor receives from the wealthy. Each of them needs the other to complete the process of unity.

If a person seeks only what is comfortable, then it is more comfortable for him if his spouse has the same qualities as him. When a person seeks an easy life, he will never get anywhere. “*Man is created to toil*” – life requires some hard work on our part.

But when a person is living with purpose, knowing that the purpose of creation is to come to unify with each other, then he realizes that this will require pieces of a puzzle coming together; he will understand that one person’s quality is another person’s weakness, thus, the weakness of one of the spouses is what contributes to their unity.

When we see a fault in our spouse, the superficial reaction is for a person to react negatively: “I can’t deal with this, I have no patience for this.” But the inner and truthful perspective is for one to say, “I came onto this world to fix certain deficiencies in myself. Some of them are inside me and it is upon me to fix them from within myself. In marriage, a certain quality I possess may be lacking in my spouse, and in that way my spouse is completed by me; and vice versa. We are completing each other.”

To understand this deeper, viewing a fault in your spouse as a “problem” is a form of disparity between you and your spouse. It is separating “you” from your “spouse”. But if one gains a more inclusive perspective towards himself and his spouse, he can see that together, they are not deficient, for their faults are each needed to complete each other.

When we focus on the deficiencies in our spouse, this itself creates disparity between oneself and spouse. But when we realize that self and spouse must become unified, this itself is how we can fix the deficiency.

Of course, this does not mean that a couple will not have to actually work on fixing their weaknesses. It is just that the root of their perspective should be about unifying with each other, that husband and wife are meant to become one, and therefore, a deficiency in one of them should not be seen as a mere deficiency. Their personal weaknesses were given to them so that they can be used a tool to work on revealing their unity with each other.

It also does not mean that we need to live in denial of our spouse’s deficiencies. We need to acknowledge it, but we just need to redefine our perspective towards it and view it from a broader angle. Husband and wife need to realize that their qualities, as well as their deficiencies, can both serve as a tool to complete each other. We all only see ‘deficiencies’ when we do not realize that husband and wife need to become unified.

So each of the spouses must come to the point where he/she feels, “We are unified.” How? Through being completed by the other spouse, who has the certain qualities that I lack and who does not have the deficiencies that I have, that is how we unify with each other.

We have explained how unity can be achieved when we through the differences we see in our spouse. It uses the “love for differences” (*ahavas hashoneh*) which we spoke of earlier. Now we need to think how “love for similarities” in their deficiencies can also complete them.

### ***When Both Spouses Share The Same Fault***

In many marriages, Hashem arranges it that one of the spouses has a particular weakness that is other spouse’s very strong point. For example, if one of them does not know how to manage finances, and the other one is very good at it. Or if one of them can cook very well, while the other one cannot cook at all. In this way, they complete each other, for the one who has the deficiency is completed by the one who does not have it.

But sometimes, this is not what happens. Instead, it can be that they both share the same weakness. One of them might have a lesser degree of the weakness, but for the most part, they both have the weakness. This can be even more distressing to both of them than in the previous situation we have been describing. For 20 years or more, one of the spouses has been struggling with a certain issue, and he/she had waited to marry someone who would not have the same problem. And then it doesn't happen – lo and behold, the spouse has the very same exact issue.

On one hand, this is to their advantage, because each of the spouses can be more understanding to the other, being that each of them is familiar with the particular weakness. On the other hand, it is doubly as disappointing to marry someone who has the same fault as yours, because you had hoped all these years to marry someone who would not have your issue.

How can they deal with such situation? How can it be that having the same weakness will unify them together, being that one of them is clearly not 'completing' the other?

### *The Root of All 'Faults'*

We believe with *emunah* that everything has its source in the *Ein Sof* (Endlessness) of Hashem. By knowing more about the source of everything, we can extend the source to our own marriage and build it.

Hashem is perfect and complete, while we humans are not. In this way, Creation is completed by its Creator.

When we recognize our good qualities, it is clear that they are rooted in Hashem, for Hashem is the root of all perfection. *Chazal* say that we should "become similar to Hashem – just as He is merciful, so should you be merciful."<sup>19</sup> It is clear where our good traits stem from: the endless perfection of Hashem. But so our deficiencies also stem from Hashem? The answer would seem to be "No." Hashem is perfect, so He has no faults. It seems that all deficiencies begin with human beings, not in Hashem.

However, there is a rule that all details of Creation have their source in the *Ein Sof* of Hashem. In fact, only when we attribute Hashem as being the source of our deficiencies can we hope to complete ourselves.

It is upon us to understand, then, how deficiencies can be a catalyst for completion; and to take that understanding and bring it into how we view marriage as well.

### *The First 'Deficiency' In Creation*

Before Hashem created the world, He filled the whole universe. In order to create the world, He made a *tzimtzum* (contraction) in the universe and pulled back some of His strength, so to speak. (This is described in *sefer Daas Tevunos*).

Without getting into the depth of this matter, there was some type of contraction – some type of "deficiency" – that Hashem made in Himself in allow a space to create the world. If so, the first moment of Creation all came from a deficiency of some sort. The root of our creation began with deficiency.

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<sup>19</sup> *Yalkut Shimeoni*: 245

This shows us that we are imperfect by essence; it is not a mistake that we aren't perfect. Our weaknesses don't come from us, nor were they inherited genetically. They did not even start from our first ancestor, Avraham Avinu. The deficiencies in mankind have already existed at the root of Creation.

Now that we are aware of the root of all deficiencies, we can look at all other deficiencies that came after that as being the branches. If we don't understand the root, we will not be able to see how all deficiencies in marriage can bring husband and wife to unity, because we would be missing the root where unity is drawn from.

### *Three Ways To Completion*

Our *Chazal* say that when there is an "exclusion following an exclusion", the exclusion is not coming to exclude, rather, "it is only coming for an inclusion". We can apply this to marriage as well: when there is an exclusion/deficiency in one spouse, followed by the same deficiency in the other spouse, instead of seeing this as a double deficiency, it should be seen as a catalyst that can help them attain something greater.

In order to become attached to the Creator, there are three ways: (1) From using our qualities to come to resemble the *middos* of Hashem, such as becoming compassionate like Him; (2) From meriting perfection from Hashem to our faults, and (3) from our very faults themselves.

The first two ways are well-known, but the third way is not so known. The first two roads to completion are logical to understand. Is like pieces of a puzzle: we are lacking, and the perfection of Hashem is what completes us. But the third form of reaching completion – our faults – is a lesser known concept. However, it is not my own novelty. It is really based on the statement we quoted before from *Chazal*, that "an exclusion after an exclusion is only coming for an inclusion."

Our bond with the Creator reflects the marital bond. The relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem is like a bride and groom, and the Jewish home reflects that relationship. Thus, in our homes, there are three aspects to the marital bond: (1) Bonding together through our common qualities, (2) Bonding together through appreciating the qualities of our spouse that we do not have, and (3) Bonding together through our common faults.

With the first way alone (bonding together through our common qualities – the method which most people favor), or with the second way alone (bonding together through completing each other's faults – this is enjoyable for only one the spouses, but not for the other) - we cannot reach a complete Jewish home; all three aspects mentioned are needed to complete the picture.

Let us try to understand the third aspect in the completion of a Jewish home, which is difficult to understand: how the common faults between the spouses can serve to unite them.

### *Imperfections Are Necessary*

As we mentioned before, Hashem, Who is perfect, made a contraction in Himself, so to speak (this was called the "*tzimtzum*") to allow a space for Creation to be formed. This allowed for us to be able to connect to Him precisely through our human imperfections.

We are all human and thus imperfect. In order for us to connect with the Creator, we need to do the *mitzvos*. There are two kinds of *mitzvos* – 248 positive commandments, and 365 negative

commandments. The 248 positive *mitzvos* are actions we do to connect with the Creator. The 365 acts that we refrain from are ways of connection to Him precisely through *not* acting. If so, we see that “not” doing something is also a way that enables perfection.

Simply we understand that the 365 negative commandments connect us with Hashem because we are refraining from evil, and that we are simply avoiding negativity. But the deeper way to understand it is because by not doing those acts, we reach another degree in our process of self-perfection.

This is not my own innovative idea. Why do rest (desist) from labor on Shabbos? It is so that we can come to resemble Hashem, Who rested on the seventh day. Thus, we can connect to Hashem through “not doing” action. Of course, we also connect to Hashem through action, which we do during the six days of the week. But we also connect to Him through “not doing”.

So it is clear that there is a way of bonding with Hashem through “not doing.” Since our bond with Hashem teaches us about the marital bond as well, it must be that in marriage as well, husband and wife can connect to each other precisely through what they lack together.

We can see that all of us contain deficiencies in ourselves. But we must know what to about this reality – how, exactly, we can use our common deficiencies we share with our spouse, to grow closer together through them.

In fact, this concept is the basis of building a proper marriage. Most of the problems in marriage are stemming from the fact that husband and wife see deficiencies in each other, and they find it very difficult to deal with. The question of all questions is: How do we deal with the faults that we discover in our spouse?

Let’s reflect about this and try to understand. First, let’s delve into the root behind the concept of all “faults” that we notice in each other.

### *How Deficiencies Can Serve To Unify*

There is a parable brought by the holy Baal Shem Tov, that once there was a craftsman who was trying to glue together two pieces of wood in order to make a chair. He had to first clean off all the dust and splinters from both pieces and smooth out the wood, and after both pieces were clean and smooth, he smeared them with glue and then stuck them together. What is it that glues the two pieces together? It seems to be that two pieces of wood have been put together.

Says the Baal Shem Tov: No! It is the splinters that were removed which enables the two pieces of wood to come together. The two pieces of wood remaining are not what is connecting them together – rather, it is the material removed from them that enables them to connect.

In marriage, one of the aspects which make a couple feel connected with each other is, the children. Superficially, this is because they both work for their children and give together to their children. But the deeper reason is because a child was once a part of its parents; the child begins with the father, and is developed in the mother’s womb, so before birth, this child was a part of each of them/ After the child is born, it is as if a part of each of them is now missing, for the child has taken parts from both of them and has emerged with those parts. If so, a “lacking” on each of their part has actually contributed to the growth of their child, who connects them together.

So a couple builds their unity together in two ways. One way is through actively building together their marriage, by investing energy together in the home, which builds the home. These are the actions

they do together which bind them. But they also become bonded together through what they give up together.

To explain the depth behind this, there is a rule that “Just as all faces are different, so are all ways of thinking different.”<sup>20</sup> When husband and wife are each giving of their energies, each of them has their qualities, and they will each express different qualities, for no two people are the same. But there is one thing that is always a common denominator between them, no matter how different they are: When each of them is lacking somewhat, it is like a “hole” in each of them, and then they both have a “hole.”

To illustrate this further, if you have two closets that are fully stuffed with many items, they will not contain the same contents. But if you have two empty closets, they are both equally empty. Two full closets will always be different, whereas two empty closets are the same.

In the blessing of *Asher Yatzar*, we say that Hashem created “holes” (*nekavim*) and “deficiencies” (*chhalalim*). What is the depth behind this?

[It is as follows]. Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest man ever is, was humble. The idea of humility is to feel deficient. From feeling how deficient you are, you become more attached to Hashem. It is the situation of realizing how much we are lacking and missing, which is precisely what connects us, with Hashem.

We can see this from war. When there is a war, suddenly the country becomes united, and all kinds of people from different backgrounds put aside their differences, to fight for a common cause. Everybody gets together and helps each other. How is this possible? It is because the common deficiency is what unites all of them together.

Here is a simple example of the concept. When we feel lacking, we naturally seek to fill what is lacking. However, *Chazal* say, “Who is wealthy? One who is happy with his lot.” In other words, we need to learn how we can see perfection in a situation that is lacking. We simply understand the concept of being “happy with our lot” as someone who is happy with what he has, even though he doesn’t have other things; he focuses on the positive, on what he does have. That is true, but there is more depth to the concept. It is because we have an *avodah* to recognize that the very things we lack are what complete us.

When we feel lacking in something, our initial reaction is, “This is a problem.” If someone has no talents, this seems to be a problem. If someone is missing a limb, this seems like a problem. (I am not implying that it is not a problem. Rather, I am trying to point out that it is only one kind of reaction, and that there is a deeper perspective towards these situations.)

We are all missing certain things, and there is not one of us who has everything. Does this mean that something is wrong with all of us, then? *Chas v’shalom*. If every deficiency in our life is defined as a “problem”, that would mean that our entire life on this world is one giant faulty situation. But we know this is not true, for the *posuk* says, “*All was made well.*”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, somehow, even deficiencies allow for a person to come to completion.

In the next step which we will explain, we will try to see how exactly we can benefit from our faults, on a practical level. But the first thing we must understand, before that, is to have the root perspective towards it. It is to view all faults [in our spouse] as a root for furthering the unity [in marriage].

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<sup>20</sup> *Berachos 58a*

<sup>21</sup> *Koheles 3:11*

The main aspect of the problem, when it comes to the faults we know of our in spouses, is that we see the faults in our spouse as “problems” we need to fix. This is already forming a separation. If we look at our deficiencies though as a way to further unify with each other, then we have arrived at the root of the unity – and we will have the key to building the unity.

Now we will see how this works. First we will see how this concept can be applied to the more superficial aspects of marriage, and then we will see how it can apply to the more inner layers of marriage.

### *Seeing Behind The Faults In Our Spouse*

When do the faults in each of the spouses build the marriage, and when do they harm the marriage?

We can compare this to digging a ditch in order to build something on it. When the earth is removed from the ground, it appears to be creating a void in the ground, while in reality, this is helping it.

As long as the deficiency is a catalyst for enabling completion, the deficiency is not a ‘problem’, rather it is a part of the process towards completion. Now let us apply this to marriage. In marriage, the couple was already unified; they are not two becoming one – rather, they were one, then they become split into two, and through marriage they can become one again. That being the case, they are really one at their root, and it is just that they are clothed in different ‘garments’. If so, their common faults are actually what unify them.

Thus, we can view the ‘hole’ of deficiency as rather an ‘opening’ to what lies within it. Deficiencies/faults that we see in our spouse can make us think and cause us to realize the inner perspective we are describing. But if the deficiency/fault is just as seen as a mere ‘deficiency’ and nothing more than that – nothing but a “problem” - then indeed, it will not serve as an opening to anything.

Now let’s apply this practically on our level. When we see a person in front of us, we see a person with who contains good as well as bad parts to his nature; we pick up on his good *middos* and certain bad *middos*. The good *middos* we see in him are pleasant to deal with, whereas his bad *middos* make it hard for us to deal with him.

But if we understand that beneath the surface is a *neshamah*, a Divine soul – and if it is our spouse, then he/she is one with our own soul, at our deep root – then we can realize that instead of viewing ourselves as apart, we can see ourselves as being one, at our root.

Therefore, when we see something that is lacking in our spouse, what is it indeed that is lacking? The superficial perspective is that it is a fault which needs to be fixed. If that is the case, then we need to call the technician to fix it. We see a ‘gap’ that needs to be filled in. If so, we would have to call many technicians to fix all the gaps, and that would be an endless job.

Rather, our faults that we discover in ourselves and in others must be seen as a catalyst for something greater, not as mere weaknesses that we need to get rid of. We only view them as being mere ‘faults’ that we need to get rid when we think that the ‘faults’ are pointless and don’t get us anywhere. But in reality, the faults we see in ourselves and in others are needed. Although it seems as if negative traits such as anger and arrogance are entirely detrimental to us and that they are pointlessly getting in our way, in reality, we need to see how these faults are needed to get us somewhere.

Of course, this does not mean to say that arrogance needs to be developed and seen in a positive light. Not at all! Rather, what we mean is that the very fact that there is a fault here is a positive thing. When we notice a fault, it can open us to the inner perspective we are describing in this chapter.

Thus, when there are common faults in both of the spouses, they need to see this as a way to remove the superficial perspective that we normally view faults with. It is for this reason that the common faults are here: so they can arrive at the inner perspective towards their common faults. The inner perspective is, to see what lies behind the faults [their *neshamos*, which are really unified together at their deep root].

The words here are describing a deep perspective, and they are not limited to how we understand marriage. It is really describing a perspective that should come way before marriage: how one views the soul [his own soul, as well as the souls of others].

If one views his faults as being ‘faults’ and nothing more than that, all he will see is darkness in himself. He does not see the spiritual light that is contained in his weaknesses. And a person cannot deal with darkness.

So one must acquire a ‘double’ perspective towards his faults: it appears externally to be a fault, and it certainly is, and one must work on himself to fix his weakness. And if he sees faults in his spouse, he must deal with the faults. But he must also be aware that the inner essence behind the fault that he sees (both in himself and in his spouse) is positive.

Thus, every fault has an outer and inner layer to it. The outer layer of a fault is the part of it which is not good, which we must try to remove. But the inner layer of it is a great and precious opportunity. It becomes a catalyst to enter a very great and inner perspective. Even more so, the root of the fault is always positive.

This concept might sound illogical. It is upon us to learn how we can make it practical in our day-to-day life. We will provide an example of how we can practically use this perspective towards the faults of ourselves and of others.

### *Impatience: Good or Bad?*

We are all familiar with impatience. There is probably nobody who thinks that anything good can be said about a lack of patience. It is clearly a fault and a very negative trait. Is there a way to view it in a positive light?

Impatience is clearly a human fault. At its root, though, it can be a positive trait. How?

Imagine a person who becomes complacent, and we ask him, “When you are planning to grow?” and he responds, “I’m being patient about it...” Such a person might also be the type to push off putting on *Tefillin* until the latest possible time of the day. He is laid back, and he feels that there is always more time.

Or, a person might be 35 years old and he’s not married yet, and when asked “Why aren’t you getting married?” He responds: “Don’t worry. I still have more time. There’s no need to rush.” If a person has this attitude that “there is always time...”, then he will never get anywhere in life.

So if patience is not always a good thing, clearly there is a plus to being impatient. In this light, impatience can be seen in a positive light. It is only when impatience is taken to an extreme that we can say that it is bad. For example, being impatient with the children is clearly a negative use of impatience.

So we can define impatience as being evil whenever it is applied in a situation which requires patience; there, it is clearly a negative trait.

If a spouse realizes that his/her spouse is impatient, the first reaction is usually something like, “Here comes another difficult fault about my spouse that I must deal with.” This is not a wrong way to react, because we cannot say that it’s easy to deal with an impatient spouse. But according to what we have explained above, impatience can be viewed as something more like an unpolished diamond. If you receive an unpolished diamond, would you give it back because of its blemishes?

One of the Sages composed a prayer: “[*May it be the will, before our Father in heaven,*]...*that we should only see the qualities of our friends, and not their faults.*” What does this mean? We should never see other people’s faults and only see their qualities? Must we become disconnected from reality and naïve, denying the faults we see in others? Clearly, this is not the meaning. It means that when we do notice the faults of others, we need to see its source: it is rooted in the *neshamah*, as we explained earlier in-depth. The outer layer of the ‘fault’ is being manifest improperly, but in essence, there is nothing wrong with the fault we see.

This is exactly what we meant at the beginning of this chapter, that we can learn how to view things from our soul, just as we can view from our body. In our case, the view of the soul here means to view faults as being rooted in the holy *neshamah*, to see beneath its surface and not to just view it as face-value.

The truth is that all ‘faults’ we see in another are like a ‘crack’ that enables an opening towards the *neshamah*. Man is comprised of body and soul; his body can be seen, but the soul cannot, for the soul is within, while the body is the outside that can be seen. How can we see the soul, as revealed through the body? In the case of impatience, the soul can be viewed through noticing the impatience, but it is still a revelation of the soul. So a lack of patience can be viewed as an opportunity to view the *neshamah* of the other, through this ‘crack’; it serves to reveal the soul outward from its hiding place.

The words here are very deep, and now we will try to explain them in simpler terms.

### *How We Should View People*

There is a nature in a person to view everything he comes across as “black-or-white”. Either another person is considered to be a “good person” or a “bad person.”

A person who is a bit more mature understands that there is no such thing as an entirely “good” person or an entirely “bad” person, because every person is a mix. We can find something positive in even the worst person, and we can find some fault even with the best person.

Many times a person meets someone and he is impressed by certain qualities he sees in the other, and then after some time, he discovers a fault in the person, and then he loses respect for him. He thinks to himself, “If he has *this* particular fault that disgusts me, he is worthless.”

This is such a misconception about people! There is no one on this world who is 100% perfect. Only the Creator is perfect. The most a person can become is perhaps 98% perfect, and in order to get there, he would have to work very hard on himself. If only everybody could get even there!

So the first thing we need to get used to is to realize that no person is one-sided. There are qualities as well as shortcomings in every person. In fact, even a murderer has some positive aspects to his

personality. He has an extreme issue, without a shadow of a doubt – he is a murderer – but it’s still very possible that he possesses some good point which other people do not have.

We need to get used to realizing that a person we see is not “either, or.” Every person we meet is multi-faceted. A painting always contains many colors; it is boring to place a painting on the wall with only one color. The beauty of a painting is its many colors and how all of the colors come together. So too, in every person you meet, there always many colors going on in his personality, and that is his beauty; nobody is “one” color.

There is no such thing as a person who is not complex. There are some people who possess more good qualities and some people who have obviously less qualities, but nobody is perfect. In the best person there is always some fault, and in the worst person there is always some quality.

This is a basic perspective a person needs. Taking this further and deeper, every deed can also be taken apart, and you can find good and evil present in every act you come across. In every aspect of the human personality, you can also find both good and bad. There is no such thing as an action that is entirely bad, for there is always a good point contained in it. There is always a hidden light contained in the root of each thing. The bad things we see are clearly bad, but there is an inner point contained in it which is good, which we cannot see openly.

Having this perspective is an issue of how a person views life; how a person views each thing he comes across.

### *Seeing The Good and The Bad In Each Thing*

If we get used to this perspective that we are describing, we will discover that nothing is one-sided. We can also see two opposing views on each thing we come across. Let’s give an example that helps illustrate the idea.

Let’s examine the idea of the ‘State of Israel’. Is it a good thing, or a bad thing? There are clearly bad results of it, but at its root, it was a good thing.

First of all, the fact that so many Jews returned to the land of Israel was clearly a good thing. There is no doubt about that. We pray for this every day in *Shemoneh Esrei*, that the exiles be returned. There was clearly a Higher Power that orchestrated all of this and allowed Jews to choose how they would run their country. It was a reflection of the *possuk*, “*And with the nations, they do not consult.*” We received a power to decide for ourselves, to make our own decisions in our own land, which is clearly a good thing. For this reason, many of our *Gedolim* saw the creation of the state of Israel as being a light of the imminent redemption. Indeed, it was. However, it was only a **light** of the redemption, clothed in an impure ‘vessel’ – a government which uproots the entire Torah, from beginning until end.

Some people felt that since the “vessel” was impure, it must be that “the entire state of Israel is evil.” They viewed it as worthless. Others went in the other extreme: they argued, enthusiastically, that it is a light of the redemption, and that we should connect entirely to it.

They were both wrong. It was really a ‘light’ of the redemption, but it was being covered with a dirty ‘vessel’. We can compare this to a candy covered in dirt. We cannot put such a candy in our mouth; we first have to clean the dirt off it. So too, there was a spiritual light that was behind the State, but it became ruined by a dirty ‘vessel’.

This is an example which illustrates the idea of misconceptions, in which a person sees either ‘one side’ or the other. (The words here do not apply to the situation of our current generation, and it is only referring to two generations ago, when the State was formed).

### *Seeing Beneath The Surface Of All Faults*

Thus, when we want to know how to properly view the faults we discover in our spouse, we need to acquire a double lens: the view from our body, which sees the surface of things [we already have it], and the view from our soul [which can see beneath the surface of things; this we need to develop and get used to].

When we are dealing with a common fault that is present in both of the spouses, they must learn how to view this situation with a ‘double lens’: the outer layer of the fault appears to be a ‘problem’ which must be ‘dealt’ with, while the inner layer of the fault can always be seen as a quality. In this way, the spouses can bond with each other in spite of the faults they see in each other, because they are aware that the faults are not problems; rather, the fault contains much good at its essence.

Every fault we see is just a negative manifestation of something that is good at its root, and it is upon the spouses to connect to the ‘root’ of the fault, which is good, as well as to deal with the negative ‘branches’ of it. In this way, we deal with both the ‘root’ and the ‘branches’.

As we explained before, a fault in our spouses is like a crack in the body that enables us to see through to the *neshamah*. Of course, we would prefer to see the *neshamah* through a quality in our spouse and not through a fault, but now that we have seen the fault, we can use it as an opportunity to see the good root of it, which is the *neshamah*.

Hashem ‘faulted’ Himself in the beginning of Creation, so to speak, which is the root of all faults and sins in Creation that came after that. We are all lacking somewhat, because this is one of the roots of Creation which we were created with. Dovid HaMelech said, “*I and my son, Shlomo, have sinned.*”<sup>22</sup>

### *A Practical Exercise*

Here is a practical example we can use that goes in the home which illustrates the idea here very well, so that we can walk away with something practical from all of this:

Let’s say a husband suddenly notices that his spouse has a certain fault, and he becomes bothered by it. Instead of immediately losing control of the situation and reacting with anger like he normally would (or if it’s already after he got angry, and now he is trying to settle his thoughts), he can take the time and think: “What have I just discovered here? I have discovered such-and-such.” Then he needs to realize that what he sees is just the ‘branch’ of what he sees. He should now think: “What is its root?” He can then remind himself that the root of the fault is always good, because all faults are rooted in the *neshamah*. He can identify that what he sees is only the ‘garment’ of the fault, becoming manifest in an evil way, but at its root, it is good.

This does not mean to imagine and pretend that the fault is not there. One can recognize very well the fault he sees in his/her spouse, but he/she can see it as a way to deeply connect to the soul of his/her spouse.

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<sup>22</sup> *Melachim I: 1:21*

This is an *avodah*, which requires calmness of mind, so that one can reflect deeply. It is not something which can be learned quickly. Rather, it enables a person to remove the superficial view he has towards his/her spouse, and to instead connect to the inner layer of his spouse. It enables a person to see how each fault can really be transformed into a vehicle that allows them to the deeper dimension of his spouse [the *neshamah*].

This does not mean for example that if one of them overspends, the other spouse should view this as being generous and expansive, and that he should deliberately let the overspending spouse be in charge of the money in the house. No, that's not recommended. Practically speaking, we need to recognize the reality of the problem, but it is just that we need to see its deeper root. In every fault we come across, we need to see its inner root, which is always good, and connect to it.

### *In Conclusion*

It is our hope that the words here are not just understood as intellectual '*Hilchos De'os*' (the ideal ways of Torah behavior), rather, that through knowing about these concepts, we can cause ourselves to reflect on how we can act practically upon this knowledge. In that way, two spouses can use this concept here to bring themselves closer to each other, to the inner point of true and deep *achdus* with each other.

*Part One Chapter Five***1.5 | Marriage and Completion***Creation and Man*

Of Adam HaRishon and his wife Chavah, the Torah writes, “*Man and woman they are created; and He [Hashem] blessed them, and He called their name as man.*”

We know that there are four kinds of organisms: non-living things (i.e. rocks), growing organisms (plants), living beings (animals), and social creatures (people). Non-living things, plants, and animals are not on the level of people; only a social creature can be a person.

This is the simple perspective, and it is correct. As proof, if we destroy a rock or a plant, or even an animal, it is not called killing. It is prohibited by the Torah of course to destroy things (*bal tashchis*), but it is not murder. Murder is only applicable to people.

However, from a deeper perspective, all of Creation forms man. This concept is elaborated upon in sefer *Nefesh HaChaim*. In fact, there is nothing in Creation except for the formation of man.

Let us now explain this concept to apply it to our own level, as much as our souls can understand.

***The ‘Puzzle Pieces’ That Comprise the Makeup of Man***

If we view Creation superficially, we see ‘many’ things: many people, **many** animals, many plants, and many rocks. It seems that there is nothing to learn from a rock, and that a rock is just a rock and nothing more. Maybe it has some beneficial uses, but there is nothing to learn from it. That’s how it seems – superficially.

But if we reflect a bit, we can examine the properties that are present in a rock, or in a plant, and in all living things, and learn human lessons from them. *Chazal* say that had the Torah not been given, we could learn certain good traits from animals, like modesty from observing a cat.

If we look even more deeply into things, we can see that the entire Creation is a formation of man. Anything in Creation can teach us about what the ideal man is supposed to look like.

There is a deep point about life contained in this concept. We will provide an example. If a person is learning about computers, can we say that he is learning about mankind? If he is learning about architecture or carpentry, is he learning about man? It seems that he is learning about whatever field he is studying, and that this has nothing to do with learning about man.

We think that the only people who study mankind are doctors, who deal with the human body, and psychologists, who study the human soul. Besides for those professions, it seems that there is nobody else who is studying mankind. All others are learning about things that are perhaps helpful to mankind, but none of them are studying about man himself.

For this reason, most people are living with a viewpoint towards life that is very disparate, thinking that each of the subjects are independent studies of each other: mankind, the human body, the soul and all its layers; and in our personal life, there is marriage, and what we do outside of our homes.

It seems that the rest of Creation is here to serve and help man. But it is actually more than that. From a deeper perspective, all of Creation is really shaping the makeup of man (*tzuras adam*).

This can be compared to the following parable: if a person's hand is severed, G-d forbid, and we look at the severed hand as being nothing but a body part, we do not see it as a part of a person. It is no different to us than animal flesh. If it decays, it is nothing more than a bone. But that is only when we are not aware that it was once a human hand. Once we realize that it was a part of a person, it is viewed differently: it is part of the makeup of man, and it is not some random part lying around.

In essence, everything in Creation are parts of man, but the parts have become spread apart, and that is why the original form has become lost. We can compare this to a table that is cut into many pieces and its parts are scattered all over the world. All of those parts used to make up a table, but we cannot recognize this, because all of the pieces are now separate.

In a puzzle, you can see how the pieces connect. One piece in the puzzle can be perfectly aligned with another piece, and you see the picture slowly starting to form. But Creation is a more complex kind of puzzle, and you can't see how all of the puzzle pieces become aligned. We see each thing as separate, therefore we do not know how to connect the pieces of Creation together. Even more so, we usually cannot see how all of the pieces in Creation are related to man.

Compare this to a person who is holding puzzle pieces in his hand, and he thinks that he is holding a puzzle that forms the picture of a scenic view, such as a forest, or a sea; while in reality, the picture is really something else entirely. It will be very hard for him to put all of the pieces together and connect them, because he does not know what picture he is supposed to be forming.

### *Married Life: Pieces of A Puzzle*

It is written, "*Man and woman He created them.*" Husband and wife are a puzzle! By becoming aligned with each other, a certain picture of life is formed.

The question is, what are those 'puzzle pieces' which we must connect together on This World? What is the perspective which we need to form towards our life on This World?

We know that marriage does not end with husband and wife alone. Husband and wife are just the beginning, for there is more that comes after that. We have to worry about finding an apartment and we need to buy clothes. When we have children, *Baruch Hashem*, there are more things to buy for the home. The children need various things, and they need proper schooling and education, along with endless other details.

What does all of this have to do with "*Man and woman He created them*"? It seems as if all the above-mentioned details involved in the home have nothing do with this *possuk*. It seems that all of the responsibilities in running the home just "happen" to come along with marriage. But from a deeper perspective, it is possible to see how it's all part of the picture that forms *tzuras adam*.

Most people do not know what they are missing if they are not aware of this concept. When a person lives superficially, he sees everything as face value, and he never sees the depth in anything. He comes across much knowledge in life, many events, many images, and he sees them all as separate and random.

### *Conceptualizing The Ideal Man*

Now that we have understood that what lies behind all of the details in Creation is one form alone – *tzuras adam* – we need to conceptualize this in a real way, and see it in front of us. It is hard to express this concept in words.

If an artist wants to paint a lifelike picture of what he wants to draw, he will sit next to the real-life scene and paint there, so that he can fully analyze the details. He has the image in front of him, which gives him the best possible picture. So too, when it comes to envisioning the ideal design which man is supposed to look like, we need to see it in front of our eyes, so that we can conceptualize it best.

It is written, “There is no rock like Hashem,” and *Chazal* expound this to mean, “There is no artist like Hashem.” We are commanded to emulate Hashem’s ways, therefore, it is also upon us to be like an “artist”, forming our image, and thereby come to resemble Hashem. There is a higher and perfected form of man which we need to conceptualize before us, so that we can align ourselves with the ideal design of man, as much as we can.

For this, we will need to place a vision before us to strive for, in which we can see what the ideal kind of man is supposed to look like. We are not referring to a painting. Rather, we can see a puzzle picture of it, by seeing how all of the ‘pieces of the puzzle’ can connect to form the picture of the ideal man. In order to connect together all of the pieces in Creation and see how it comes together to form the picture of the complete man, we need to have that vision of the ideal man in the first place.

As we said, this does not mean to draw a picture of that ideal man and then try to imitate what we see in the picture. What we mean is as follows. The makeup of man (*tzuras adam*) is a certain structure. To illustrate, in the medical field, the human body is studied, in all its detail. A picture of the human body is laid out in front of them and studied, to see how it is built and designed. The point of studying the body is to see how it is designed, not just to see how it looks.

So too, if we want to have a picture in our minds of what our *tzuras adam* is supposed to look like, we need to know what the perfected kind of man looks like, and then we can align the ‘lower’ picture to the ‘higher’ picture. However, as we said, in order to do this, we need the higher form of man to be in front of us, so that we can strive towards it.

We need to have a design in front of us in order to know where we are heading and what we are trying to build. Hashem revealed all of the heavens at *Har Sinai*, to show us how it is all designed, so that we can know the design of what we want to achieve. Without having a real picture in front of us of what we would like to achieve, we will have no idea how to get there. We need to have the picture first.

There are artists who draw images of things that no one can ever see, such as a scene of the angels coming to greet Avraham Avinu, or how Eliyahu HaNavi went up to Heaven in a fiery chariot. But these are all images based on imagination. One of these artists was once asked, “Have you ever seen an angel?” He answered, “No, I didn’t.” Of course he never saw an angel. (If he would have seen an angel, he wouldn’t be painting.)

People are drawing pictures of things they have never seen; they have no actual picture in front of them, and they are just working with what they imagine. There’s no doubt in the world that any drawing of an angel does not come close to how an angel actually looks like. The reason is simple – angels are spiritual, while a painting is physical. But even if a person were to draw a painting of something on this world that he never saw, it still wouldn’t come close to how it looks in real life. This is because one needs to have the real picture in front of him.

Why is it that ignorance of this concept does not bother most people? It is because most people do not realize that life is really all forming a certain picture, and are used to seeing everything in life as random, disparate parts. People are doing what they have to do and are fine with that: Get up in the morning, daven, eat breakfast, bentch, and then off to what he has to take care of. Life is not being seen as a certain picture; rather, it is being experienced as a bunch of random details.

When we realize that Creation was meant for man to come to resemble Hashem, we know that there is a higher image of ourselves, of man, that we must try to conceptualize and strive for. Then we will be able to understand why it is necessary to have that picture in front of our eyes.

Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l once said that the idea of evolutionism – the idea that people originate from gorillas - can only be considered by a person who never saw a 'person' in his entire life. If a person would see even one 'person' in his life, he never would have conceived any notion that people evolved from gorillas.

What did he mean? Do we not see people all the time? Don't people see themselves in the mirror all the time? But what he meant was, that the only people who could think of evolution are people who have never seen what a true *tzuras adam* is.

In anything a person sees – whether it is various material pursuits, business, or to become famous, or even to become a kinder person – these are all parts of the picture that is life. One has to see the bigger picture of it all. The bigger picture is, that everything in life are pieces of the puzzle that form the picture of *tzuras adam*.

It is a very big issue of how a person views life: either he just sees the details of life, or he sees the larger picture that the details form.

This perspective, to understand that all of life is forming a picture of our *tzuras adam*, is necessary for marriage. Without this perspective, it is most difficult for a person to realize the meaning of the *posuk*, "Man and woman He created them, and He called them man." He can only understand it when he is looking to put together his 'puzzle'.

### *Seeing The General Structure Vs. Knowing Random Details*

Soon we will explain, with Hashem's help, how we can actualize this concept. Firstly, though, we need to make sure that we have understood the root of this matter.

There's a very big difference between someone who is smart and brainy, with someone who is wise. A smart person can amass tons of information in his head, and he knows an impressive amount of information, but he does not see how it all connects to form *tzuras adam*. A wise person, by contrast, sees how all of the information connects, to form *tzuras adam*.

There are in fact people who know a lot and have acquired much wisdom, but in their actual life, they are no different than those who know little. A person can know a lot, yet that doesn't mean he knows how to connect all of the information. His brain might be able to process lots of information, and he can have a great memory too, and he might even be able to answer any question you ask him. But that still does not mean that he has acquired inner wisdom, which would allow him to combine all of the details and see the big picture of it all – *tzuras adam*.

Of course, lacking the information in the first place will prevent a person from reaching any inner perspectives. But the point is that true and inner wisdom is not acquired through amassing knowledge

alone. Wisdom is to see the structure and inner workings of all the details, and then to align himself with the structure he has seen.

To illustrate further, today there are doctors who are experts in one part of the body, but not in other parts of the body. When a patient comes to such a doctor, he might be prescribed a pill that helps the part of his body which is suffering, but it can end up harming the other parts of the body. This is because the doctor does not know the entire body – he only specializes in one part of the body, so he is unaware of how it will affect the rest of the body; he does not see the big picture.

### *Learning About The Soul*

Now we will explain the simple outcome of these concepts, which is more relevant in our daily life.

All people have a *nefesh*, a human soul, which we must learn about. Learning about the soul is to study the makeup of man, the *tzuras adam*. First a person needs to learn about his own soul, and then he needs to learn about the soul of his spouse, and then they can unify their souls. This completes his *tzuras adam*.

Some people, when learning about their soul, begin to encounter problems with themselves when they come to a certain point. They discover parts about themselves which they do not understand, and they become overwhelmed, because they don't have the emotional strength to deal what they find out about themselves. Indeed, not every person is cut off for this kind of study, which includes both a journey of self-knowledge as well as knowing how to deal with the weaknesses that he discovers in himself.

However, this should not turn one away from studying his soul. Some people are born with a natural inner sense for what they learn about, while others are not born with this inner sense. Those who are not born with an inner sense for learning about the soul will have to work harder at knowing the soul.

We can see this as well from the business world. Some people focus their energies on one particular profession, while others are multi-talented, even though they have never been educated about their particular jobs. How do we explain this? It is because there are certain people who are born with a natural inner sense for being good at certain things.

In fact, usually the ones who are very successful at what they do are people who did not go through the usual system. How can this be? It's because those who had to be educated about their professions were missing an inner sense for what they did, whereas those born with the inner sense for their professions didn't have to be educated about it. The ones who have a natural sense for what they do are the most successful.

If one does not have a natural inner sense for learning about the soul, this does not exempt him from studying it. He will just have to work harder at understanding it. [However, there are some people who should not be learning this kind of study at all].

### *Experiencing The Knowledge About The Soul*

The question is: how much should a person study his own soul? Should he learn about it for 20% or 30% of his life? The answer is: For 100% of his life! Life is understood based upon recognizing our

soul. The purpose of life is to recognize the Creator, and the way to reach Him is through understanding oneself.

A person should not become extreme with this, though, and put a hold on his whole life so he can learn about the soul, refraining from eating, drinking, and from going anywhere. Rather, a person should understand his soul as he is conducting his daily activities. Only experience gives you actual wisdom about life – “There is no one as wise as one who has experience.” Without actually experiencing these matters in our daily life, the wisdom about the soul cannot be acquired.

There is a story told of the Vilna Gaon that he once told his student, Rav Chaim Volozhiner, that he exiled himself for two years, to identify with the pain of the *Shechinah* in exile. Rav Chaim Volozhiner asked him, “Should I, too, exile myself?” The Vilna Gaon said to him, “No. I tried to do it, and it ended up being detrimental to me.” Rav Chaim Volozhiner said, “If so, I also want to go into exile and see how it will be detrimental to me.”

What was depth behind Rav Chaim Volozhiner’s answer? If his teacher had told him that it will be unsuccessful if he does it, why did he still wish to do it? It was because he wanted to discover this knowledge himself, from his own experiences. He didn’t want to rely on the fact that he knew about it; he wanted to experience it himself, which would give him a whole different level of awareness.

In order to understand the soul, a person cannot try to do this by closing himself in a room and deeply reflecting about his soul. Doing so might enable him to understand certain parts about himself, but he won’t be able to get to the general structure of the soul, being that he hasn’t actually utilized the abilities of the soul yet.

In essence, the entire Torah is built to reveal the *tzuras adam* of man. The *tzuras adam* is not only revealed through learning the mystical teachings of the Torah which are entirely devoted to the study of *tzuras adam*. It can be revealed, in both its inner and outer layers, throughout all of the 613 mitzvos, which are parallel to the 613 limbs and sinews in man.

The Torah is entirely a study of *tzuras adam*. The Torah contains the 613 mitzvos, parallel to the 613 limbs and sinews of man, thus the Torah is entirely the study of the human makeup. But there is a way to learn about the soul through learning the wisdom of it, and there is a way to learn the soul by utilizing its potential in day-to-day life.

The wisdom about the soul is the root of learning about the soul, whereas the branches of this wisdom lie in carrying out all of the *mitzvos*. So when a person fulfills the *mitzvos*, he is really learning about his soul. What is he learning about? He is learning about the *tzuras adam*. He is slowly getting the picture of what it means to come to resemble the Creator, whom man is commanded to emulate.

### *Awareness When We Do The Mitzvos*

But what usually happens? People look at life as a bunch of various details, so they don’t see how their Torah learning and *mitzvos* connect to build the *tzuras adam* of man.

A person puts on *Tefillin* on his head, but he isn’t thinking that the *mitzvah* is doing something for his head. He puts on *Tefillin* on his arm, but he’s not thinking that the *mitzvah* is sanctifying his arm. He can do all of the *mitzvos*, and each of them are parallel to a different part of the body, as our Rabbis teach, yet, he does not see these acts as contributing to his growth. He sees all the mitzvos as random acts that he does, not as pieces that come together to build him. If he wants to understand his soul, he goes to a psychologist....

What results from this? When he gets married, he has never yet learned about *tzuras adam* yet, so he is not aware that marriage is another step in the building of *tzuras adam*. In essence, all of the *mitzvos* are meant to build the person, but the root *mitzvah* that builds a person in marriage, for marriage is what completes the person: “*Man and woman He created them, and He called their names ‘Man.’*”

But if a person hasn't yet learned how he can reveal his *tzuras adam*, he surely won't come to reveal it; something cannot be revealed if it hasn't been learned about.

### *The Goal of Marriage*

When a person gets married, what should he be trying to build?

A superficial answer is, “*Shalom Bayis*” (marital peace). This is not incorrect; if there is no peace, there cannot be a home. It would be a destruction of a home, if there is no peace in the home, just as the *Beis HaMikdash* was no longer a *bayis* after it was destroyed. But what is the inner perspective one needs to build through marriage?

It is the *possuk*, “*And He called their names ‘man’*” – to build one's *tzuras adam*. However, we will repeat and emphasize as we have done in the past, that marriage is only a part of this. It is not a goal unto itself.

When one is aware of the concept of *tzuras adam*, he can view marriage as another step in the process of building his *tzuras adam*. But if he has a scattered perspective towards life, in which he does not see how doing the *mitzvos* contributes to his *tzuras adam*, marriage will be no different for him; he will not see it as a goal that leads towards *tzuras adam*. He might have other goals in his marriage, whether it is concern for his own needs or even for his spouse, but he will be missing the true goal of marriage. With such a perspective, he will never reach the intended goal of marriage.

There must be a goal to something, or else it cannot withstand. If we have a true goal in marriage, there is hope that the home will be built properly. If our goal in marriage is not the true goal to have in marriage, there is no hope for such a home to be built properly.

All of life contributes to building our *tzuras adam*, and marriage is the central goal which can help us get there. But if we are not that interesting in building our *tzuras adam*, marriage will not either help us get there. We would be missing a quarter of the “puzzle.”

Usually, the problems in marriage are because a person doesn't have a goal in his marriage. People therefore look for “tips” on marriage and what to do *l'maaseh* (down-to-earth, practical instructions), but not beyond that.

Compare this to someone hiring a contractor to build an apartment, and he doesn't tell the contractor if it will have one floor or two floors, and if it's a one-family apartment or a two-family apartment. The contractor has no idea what to build, because the plans have not been told to him. If a person does not know what he wants to build and he has no plan, no clear goal, then even if he has the best workers and the biggest experts at his side, he cannot build the home that he wants.

### *Marriage: Two Complicating Beings Coming Together*

Earlier, we explained at length that marriage is a conglomerate of two bodies and two souls coming together, including Hashem in the process. That was just a general description, and now we will analyze this matter more in detail.

When it comes to the soul union between husband and wife, this will include all of the layers of their souls coming together: their *Nefesh HaBehaimis* (the ‘animal’ layer in soul), the *Nefesh Elohis*<sup>23</sup>, the *Ruach*, the *Neshamah*, the *Chayah*, and the *Yechidah*.<sup>24</sup>

If one did not recognize his own soul before he got married, is it possible for him to build a true marriage? The answer, clearly, is no. If one does not know himself and his spouse, there is no way to ever succeed in marriage. Before a man is married, he is called *palga d’gufa*, “half a body”, as the Zohar states. But if he gets married without any self-recognition, it can be said of him that does not even have that half! Knowing oneself is at least half a home. If one did not build his own self yet, there is no way for his soul and the soul of his spouse to bond with each other.

Compare this to the business world. If two businesses are joining together, is it possible for this to happen if each of the businesses are not familiar with their own goals, or at least with a large percentage of the details involved in each business? You can imagine all of the lawsuits that will come out of this. Of course, they can’t know all of the details, but they need to know most of what is involved, if they wish to succeed.

Thus, the first step is for one to realize that all of life is supposed to contribute towards the building of his *tzuras adam*, and he must be aware of this before he gets married – and that he cannot complete it before he is married. Marriage is what gives a person the opportunity to complete his *tzuras adam*.

### *The Growth Process of Marriage*

However, this does not mean that as soon as a person gets married, he is now complete. If that would be true, a person has reached the pinnacle of life as soon as he gets married, as if he’s at the end of his life (*Baruch Dayan Emes!*). We know this is not true. A person goes on to live many years after he is married, for his *avodah* is not yet complete. It is just that now that he has gotten married, he has received the tools with which he can be enabled to reach his completion.

Marriage is a great step in the process of building one’s *tzuras adam*, but it is not the end. It is like an investment, in which you only see the results a few years later. One has to go take the money out of the bank at the time when he is allowed to take out the money, or else his investment was all for nothing, no matter how much money he made. So too, marriage is a great investment, and it is worth a lot, but after marriage, a person must utilize the potential that lies in his marriage, or else his great investment is for naught.

In marriage, each of the spouses will need to learn about their own selves, and the soul of their spouse, as an ongoing learning process. It will take an entire lifetime, until their last day on earth, and even then, that doesn’t mean they’ve arrived at the end of knowing themselves enough. This is because the human soul is the deepest thing possible.

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<sup>23</sup> These are the two layers that make up the lowest part of the soul, the “Nefesh.” These two forces are greatly elaborated upon in *Sefer Tanya*.

<sup>24</sup> These five layers of the soul are mentioned in *Sefer Derech Hashem* and *Nefesh HaChaim*.

The outer layer of the marital bond is the physical layer, while the emotions of the soul are the more inner layer. There are even more layers to the soul that are beyond the emotions. In order to harmonize with each other and build their marriage, each of the spouses must try to recognize his/her soul, then the soul of the spouse, and after that they will be able to bond with each other and build the home.

### *The Soul Keeps Changing*

Another point about this, which is no less important, is as follows.

A person does not stay the same his whole life. When we are young, we use various energies, which utilize parts of the soul. When we get older and more mature, there are changes, and as we go through life, there are more changes. *Chazal* list all the different stages of life: At 30 years we are energetic, at 40 we are understanding, etc.

That being the case, even if one has worked to understand certain parts about himself, it's very possible that two years later, he has become a whole different person in the interim. Sometimes a person goes through trauma, or he has worked on himself in a methodical manner, step-by-step. Either way, anyone who knows himself a little is aware that he is not the same person anymore as he used to be.

Compare yourself now to how you were 10 years ago. The things that interested you then were different, and now there are entirely different things that occupy your mind. Your entire way of thinking, and the way you process information, can be entirely different altogether, than how you were 10 years ago. Of course, your actual essence does not change. But the outer layers of your soul definitely go through changes. They can go through deep, massive changes.

The more a person has worked on himself internally, the bigger internal changes he has gone through. The less a person has done inner work with himself, he will only know of superficial and external kinds of changes that he has gone through.

The various aspects of the personality in the soul, even after they are discovered by the person, can undergo changes. Anyone married for 20 years is not the same person he was when he got married, and neither is his spouse. There is a well-known statement of Rav Shimon Shkop zt"l that marriage is being renewed every moment. The spouses can almost claim that they each married the wrong person...! They are totally different many years down the line. They are not the same people they were when they got married – both in body and in soul. Everything has changed. It is just that they don't always realize this.

### *The Changes In Children*

When it comes to the relationship between parents and children, this concept is very obvious. Often the parents cannot digest the fact that their little children have gotten older and are now adults; they continue to relate to their children as when they were a baby in the crib.

Here are some examples: The parent is still giving orders to his 17-year old teenager as if he's a 5-year old: "I said, *don't* go there!!" or "When are you coming back already?!" The parent thinks that the child is still in his jurisdiction. He remembers the child as he was when he was a little baby, and he is so used to that image in his head that he cannot stomach it when he realizes that his child has 'suddenly'

become so independent, and he feels, “He’s running away from me!” But it’s not that he has run away. He has simply grown up.

The soul is never staying the same; it is one of the most fluctuating things there are in existence. Marriage is surely more of a fluctuating situation, being that their situations are always changing with time.

### *In Summary*

Thus, we have laid out two reasons of why it is necessary for one to learn about his soul, as a lifelong task:

1) Being that the soul is so deep, it takes a long time until one can get to its innermost layers, and this is true even if the soul would stay the same his entire life.

2) Even if after you have greatly understood your soul, your previous knowledge of the soul can no longer be enough, because you have gone through different experiences since then that have reshaped you. So you need to keep learning about the soul.

### *The True Way To Prepare For Marriage*

Therefore, let’s understand that searching for various ‘tips of advice’ in marriage, is not a plan.

Compare this to the following. If a person does not own a business, and he is not sure if he should open up a new business, there is no one who can decide for him if he should do this or not. It is his decision alone, because there is no business here to be given advice about. But if someone already has an active business, and something comes up in which he needs to ask advice about, he is someone who can seek advice in his business, because there is what to give advice about.

When a person says, “I’m looking for advice about marriage”, this is an empty statement. What is a home, anyway? Is it a place where a bunch of beams are put up, then a floor and a roof? When a couple gets married and they are “setting up their home”, and they run into problems with each other, so they seek advice on how to have “*Shalom Bayis*” – is that what it means to build a home together? Such a marriage is possible even between two animals!

A person who acknowledges his soul understands that in order to have a “home”, he must build it. The proper ‘material’ must go into it and everything needs to be molded properly.

As it was explained in the previous chapter, we can’t start anything from the middle of the way. When it comes to preparing for marriage, we can’t prepare for it before we are 13 years of age, because a child cannot be married. At age 18 and on, a man is eligible to get married, as *Chazal* teach in the *Mishnah in Avos*. It is because a person needs a certain maturity to get married, and this requires 18 years of developing the soul. If those 18 years of development are missing, he is not ready for marriage.

To our chagrin, many people are mature only with regards to physical growth, such as being of proper height. At age 18, if a boy is tall, he is considered by onlookers to be “mature”. But this has nothing to do with spiritual maturity.

What is the true view? Marriage must be seen as the middle of our way, not the beginning. Life begins [for a boy] with *bris milah*, not with marriage. Perhaps it begins a new step in life, but it is

essentially the middle of a path that began before it. We had at least 18 years of preparation for it – the time of life when we are not yet married.

When a man and woman get married, it is the culmination of at least 18 years of development in their own personal lives. If he developed his soul in the 18 years that came before marriage, and if she developed her soul during those 18 years, they are ready to unify, and it would then be a true union of man and woman coming together in marriage, completing each other. But if the husband and wife make the mistake of thinking that maturity in life begins with marriage, then they are each like two little children getting married to each other! *Mazal Tov*. Nothing will ever come of such a marriage.

In marriage, each of the spouses really has a two-fold job: each of them must know his/her own soul, and each of them must then include the other in this process, so that they can unify. Only when they understand that life is about building man, and through learning about their souls, and then through unifying their souls with each other – only then, does the marriage truly “begin”.

Of course, anyone can get married, as long as he/she is of age, according to *Halacha*, and be called a “couple”. The wife would still have a *Halachic* status of being a married woman. But this alone does not define the marriage as being that of two people coming together to build a home.

### *Marriage – A Course Worth Studying!*

Whenever we are about to become involved in any practice, we know that first we must learn about it for a few years. Anyone who wants to become skilled and familiar in any given topic needs to first learn about it, and it can span several years.

When it comes to marriage, people are taking crash courses right before they get married and learn about marriage. This is better than nothing, but it will not be nearly enough. Getting married means you are going to be involved in a career that can span several decades. It is a career which must be learned about like any other. For some reason, when it comes to marriage, most people think that they are intelligent enough to know what it’s all about. When people go into marriage trusting this mindset, the chances of divorce are very high.

We need to see marriage as a step in life which has an earlier stage to it. Marriage is the next step to take in life – the next step that we take towards reaching self-perfection.

Firstly, we need to conceptualize for ourselves what the ideal kind of man should look like, and strive for that as our goal that we are heading towards. In order to reach it, we need to put in effort into learning about the human soul, as Reb Yisrael Salanter, the Alter of Kelm, Reb Yeruchem Levovitz, the Alter of Slabodka, and other *Gedolim* did. All of their understandings were reached through deeply understanding the human soul.

### *Talking About The Soul – With Your Spouse*

The next step is for one to bring the soul dimension into marriage. If a couple does not speak together about matters of the soul, there is no way for the home to be a good home, and good manners alone will not do it.

But one cannot talk about things with his spouse which he has no idea about. If one does not consider the soul to be a major topic of life, it will be very hard to speak about it with his spouse. The

words will come out confusing, and talking about the soul will then not serve to unify them. This is clear and simple/

If a person is working on himself and he is becoming aware of himself, and he lives clearly with his soul – he considers the soul to be a topic of interest to him, like anything else he is learning about to know, and he is someone who will find it easier to talk with his spouse at it.

Most conversations that a couple has are superficial: what to buy and what not to buy, are we going away for Shabbos or not, etc. If they are a bit deeper than this, they mainly discuss what bothers each other. But before they know what bothers each other, they need to learn about the *soul* in them which gets bothered!

Understanding the soul is the roots of building the home. After they work to understand their souls they can understand deeper and deeper things.

What does a wife really want from her husband? That he should buy all her groceries for her? No. She wants his soul. If the husband does not recognize what his soul is then he has nothing to give to her. The same is true vice versa – if she does not know her own soul, she cannot give of it to him.

A marriage is successfully built on each of them knowing their own souls, and the ability to harmonize with each other, as they talk about self-knowledge together; through talking about self-knowledge together, they get to understand themselves better. Of course, this is not all they should talk about together. But it should be a very prominent topic in their conversations.

It should be noted, however, that there are some people who are the type to get very confused when they learn about self-knowledge, because they do not have the mental capacity to understand the soul. They only get more confused with the more it is explained to them. For such people, it is better if they avoid getting into conversations about self-knowledge. But with many people (it is not possible to say the exact percentages, but it is a very prominent amount), the topic of self-knowledge is vital to their life to speak about.

### *Learn How To Build The Home*

It is our hope that the words here have caused you to gain a new perspective towards ‘problems’ in the home. Most of the ‘problems’ are not really ‘problems’ per se.

Compare this to a street which has not yet been paved yet. A car cannot drive on it. When you walk on unpaved ground, you are not walking on a street – you are walking on a rocky road.

In most marriages, the issues are not the ‘problems’ in the marriage. To put it in deeper terms: it’s not that there are problems – rather, there is no home there! After there is a home set up there can be problems that come up; after all, there are always problems in any undertaking. But what we must first understand is that what is often missing is not marital guidance, nor should it be blamed on a lack of good intentions or on not knowing the proper advice. It is the very ‘home’ which is often missing.

This happens as a result of knowing how to build the home. When we try to pass through our life and we don’t know how to build it properly, this is like a child trying to get across the street so that he can go to the store. He knows a little how to cross the street. If we merely know how to get across life, this does not build.

With the help of Hashem, we hope to explain the root perspective of what a home is, and then we can get to recognize this matters deeply, being willing to invest in studying these matters. From there, we can apply the matters practically, and merit to build a *bayis neeman b'Yisrael*.

*Part One Chapter Six**1.6 | Uniting the Emotions with the Intellect**Men Follow Their Intellect; Women Follow Their Emotions*

There exists a fundamental difference between men and women: Men naturally follow their logic and intellect, whereas women, as a rule, naturally follow the drawing of their emotion.

There are some exceptions to this rule. There are some couples where both the husband and the wife follow their intellect, and there are some couples where both the husband and wife follow their emotions. Sometimes, their roles are exchanged, and the husband is the one who is following his emotions and the wife is the more rational and logical thinker. However, in the majority of marriages, it will be the husband who will see the world through the prism of his intellect and the wife will view the world through the prism of her emotions. Let us therefore focus upon the fundamental dissimilarity that exists between them.

Which aspect of character is more important, the intellect or the emotions? This is like asking which one a person needs more, bread or water? Everyone knows that a person cannot live without bread or water, so obviously both are equally important and essential.

Similarly, when we are discussing personality and character strengths and we want to determine which strength is more important-- the emotion or the intellect-- it really isn't a question at all, because both factors are essential. Everyone needs to employ both aspects in order to be a well-balanced, functioning person. There are situations where the intellect should play a more prominent role in helping us reach our decisions, and there are situations where the drawings of the emotions should play the more prominent role, but there must always be a synthesis between the two, because life is essentially a fusion between the perception of the emotions with the understanding of the intellect.

Many times, however, the emotion-intellect ratio is incorrect, present in the wrong proportions and unbalanced. An improper balance of intellect and emotion will always create a problem. If too much importance and credence is given to the intellect, then everything is judged according to the bare facts and exact data and conclusions will be entirely based upon these factors, excluding feelings and emotions from the decision-making process. *Chazal*<sup>25</sup> say that the approach of "Let the law pierce the mountain," is to consider the situation as it is solely by concentrating upon the bare facts and thereby to reach halachic conclusions.

But then the *Gemara*<sup>26</sup> says: "Why was Jerusalem destroyed? Because they judged according to the laws of the Torah!" The *Gemara* asks: "Would it be better if they would have judged in a non-Torah manner?" To this, the *Gemara* answers: "The problem was that they never went beyond the letter of the law."

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<sup>25</sup> *Sanhedrin 6b*

<sup>26</sup> *Baba Metzia 30b*

Similarly, if too much strength and credence is given to emotions, one's viewpoint can become skewed and unrealistic. About this approach, *Chazal*<sup>27</sup> say: "Whoever has mercy upon the cruel, he will ultimately be cruel towards those who deserve mercy."

How can we understand this? Someone has mercy upon a murderer who is sitting in jail, so he pleads on his behalf that he should be freed immediately. His emotions tell him that the murderer should be freed immediately, because otherwise, the murderer's poor wife will have to live many years alone like a widow, and the murderer's children will grow up fatherless. However, when we consider the situation in a more comprehensive and all-encompassing way, taking the intellectual aspect into account, we understand that to free the murderer would be a grave mistake, because the lives of others would be endangered.

So, why do the emotions dictate that the murderer should be freed? It is because the emotions perceive only part of the picture, only relating to the feelings which emerge at first glance.

### *Encompassing Perception Vs. Perception Of Detail*

The main difference between the intellect and the emotions is that the intellect takes in the big picture, while the emotions only see things as they appear at the moment.

When a person learns Torah and his intellect is engaged, it doesn't make a difference to him whether the topic that he is studying actually occurred or is merely theoretical. For example, when a person learns the *sugya*<sup>28</sup> (Talmudic subject) of "The ox that gored a cow," he doesn't need to see the goring actually taking place in order to understand the laws. Even if the student never visited a farm, and the situations he is studying never actually occurred and never will occur, this will not disturb him from enjoying and understanding the subject, because he is involved in intellectual exercise and concepts which transcend all boundaries of time and place. *Chazal* tell us that the laws of *ben sorer u'moreh*<sup>29</sup> (the rebellious child) "never occurred and never will occur. So why does the Torah tell us these laws?" The Gemara answers, "In order that we should learn the laws and receive reward."

The rational and intellectual mind doesn't require discussion on matters taking place in the present because an intellectual concept is true in the past, present and in the future. This is why the understanding of the intellect is more conclusive and complete, because it is not limited by time or space constraints.

Emotions, on the other hand, are inextricably bound to time, place and circumstance. A person can look at something and become immensely emotional about it, and then find a couple of weeks later that the emotions have vanished without a trace. This is because the emotions react to the present, to the sight and situation which is presently before him. The intellect never changes. The same halachic decision which was arrived at last week, month, year, or century will remain the same today (unless the circumstances the decision was based on had changed) because the intellect and logic remain consistent at all times.

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<sup>27</sup> *Yalkut Shmuel Aleph Remez 121*

<sup>28</sup> *Sanhedrin 71a*

<sup>29</sup> *Sanhedrin 71a*

It says: <sup>30</sup> “This Torah will never be exchanged.” The holy Torah is *chochmah* (knowledge). As the Zohar says: “The Torah comes forth from *chochmah*.” Unlike the laws and practices of the non-Jews, which are liable to change at any time depending upon the times and opinions of the masses, the laws of the Torah are eternal and unchanging.

Pure wisdom and knowledge, therefore, have set rules. The laws of nature, such as the astronomical cycles of the sun, moon and stars all have set and known patterns, because their laws are not based upon emotions, and therefore their patterns are fixed and unchanged.

Although the sun cycle does vary occasionally, and it may appear that there are differences occurring between the past, present and future, these variations are part of the original path and cycle of the sun, which was set to change and modulate over time. Similarly, the concept of *yeridas hadoros* (the spiritual decline of the world, resulting from the passing of generations) should not be viewed as a change in the pattern of the world, rather, that the world was originally created with this pattern of decline built into it as part of the encompassing pattern of the world. Emotions, however, do not have a complete, encompassing view. Each event is seen as it appears at the moment without taking the entire picture into account.

This explains why men generally pay less attention to details than women and tend to focus more on the entire picture. *Chazal* tell us: <sup>31</sup> “*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* gave extra *bina* (understanding) to the woman,” while the man has more *chachmah*-knowledge. *Chachmah* represents encompassing knowledge, and *bina* represents understanding based on concentration on details.

### *Unifying The Two Concepts*

Regardless of their attention to details or lack thereof, neither approach will ever present a full picture on its own.

Every home requires that specific attention be paid to its various functions. The house should be livable, and there should be adequate *parnassah*. But a home that is lacking even the smallest details, such as hangers in the closet, can destroy its entire atmosphere.

Some people think in an encompassing manner and some people think in a more detailed and meticulous manner. Both manners of thought are essential. The goal and the perfection is when both forms of perceptions unite.

The problem is the broader way of thinking often appears to contradict the detailed way. Instead of complementing each other and working together, they often appear incompatible.

We will give a practical example to understand this concept: A person earns a set amount every month. The broad thinker will say: Life isn't over today, and it will not be over tomorrow. It would be a wise idea to save some of the money for the children's weddings, for their own old-age, and for other future needs.

This is an example of a person who views life in an encompassing manner. He sees his entire life before him at one glance, including the expenses which he expects to have in the distant future. He

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<sup>30</sup> *Rambam 13 Principles of Faith*

<sup>31</sup> *Niddah 45b*

tries to apportion his present wages so that part of the money he earns will provide for the present, and part of it will remain for the future, ten, twenty, even forty years away.

This type of thinker is willing to cut corners from his current needs in order to save for the future. Even if it is winter and it is cold, he is not willing to spend his money to buy a new coat, because he needs the money for the future. In the meanwhile he will use his old, worn-out coat.

The person who thinks in a detailed manner, on the other hand, focuses on the present. If it is cold outside and it would be more comfortable if he would have a new, warm coat, then he will pay the extra couple hundred dollars. He will disregard, at the moment of his decision, any expenses and needs that may be coming up in the future.

The encompassing thinker is not a fool. He is well aware that he cannot pass the winter with only the shirt on his back. The difference between the encompassing thinker and the detailed thinker emerges when deciding how much one should invest in the present when it is in contradiction to the desires and needs of the future.

There are extreme examples of detailed thinkers who are prepared to buy everything they find in the store and think they might need, with total disregard for the future. These people will not only end up without a pension, and without money to marry off their children, they will also be unable to finish out the month. They may even lack money for tomorrow. There are people who take out their credit card, and as long as there is credit, they will use it. Where does this spendthrift attitude come from? It comes from people who only see the details – the present – but not the entire picture.

But even this nearsighted individual will understand that he must, at least, include the entire month into his plans and budget his money accordingly.

Most conflicts and disagreements which occur between husband and wife are actually debates over the encompassing view versus a detailed view.

For example: One of the couple expresses a certain opinion, only to have the spouse answer, “True, but yesterday it was different....” One of them is concentrating upon one small block of their life, while the other is seeing the broader picture.

Although in general the husband will be naturally inclined to view life through the prism of his intellect and the wife through the emotions, there are times when their roles are exchanged. This happens when the issue at hand is particularly disturbing or important to the husband. When this occurs, his deepest emotions are aroused, and he will react according to his emotions, while his wife may still remain intellectually inclined. In these situations, the husband will only see the present, while his wife will be able to include the entire picture into her vision.

There are many examples of these types of arguments. The goal, therefore, is to combine both visions together, to strive towards an encompassing view and to understand how details become part of a larger picture.

When a person’s sole focus is on the wider picture, he will automatically disregard the details. We see this happen all the time. There are fathers, for example, who invest large amounts of money to help their children succeed in the future, but at the same time, the children are wearing unclean clothing. The father is only concentrating upon the future, and his desire for his children to grow into successful adults, but he neglects the child’s present needs entirely.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are parents who dress their children in beautiful and clean clothing, but when the children become older they are lacking basic life skills, because no one ever thought to prepare them for the future.

So we see that it is essential to master both the encompassing view and the detailed view and to unite them together.

### *One Comes At The Expense Of The Other*

The encompassing, future-oriented view will often oppose and contradict the detailed and present focus view in almost every area. Every person has immediate needs and future needs. This is true in regards to all areas of life, including the home budget, the national budget, time management, etc.

Whether a person invests in the future or the present, the concentration of one interest will conflict with the other need. We live in a world that has limitations, and it is impossible to invest in all areas at once. Focus upon the future will sacrifice one's present needs, and focus upon the present will sacrifice meeting future needs.

A person who sets aside a certain percentage of his money towards his retirement will not have that extra money to use for his present needs. But the person who has an encompassing and future oriented focus will claim that it is still worthwhile, so he can have a steady income in his elder years.

This is the most basic and most frequent contradiction that we deal with every day and every hour. This contradiction and battle of interests exists within every single person, and it exists within the husband/wife relationship as well.

### *The Loss Which Occurs When One Doesn't Pay Attention To The Details*

When a person is naturally inclined towards seeing life in an encompassing manner, he will naturally consider the details to be far less important, and he will neglect them. This negligence will ultimately be to his disadvantage.

For example: A person wants to sell his apartment. The apartment is large, comfortable, and airy, and it should sell easily. But there are full garbage bags in every corner of the house, and the floor is cluttered and dirty with the air-conditioner leaking, so even if everything is tidy, it gives an overall messy impression on the potential buyer who comes into the apartment.

The seller will emphasize the qualities of the apartment: "Notice how large the apartment is! Look at the wonderful view," but he will not make the sale because he overlooked some small details that he didn't think were important to correct before bringing the potential buyer into his home.

Even if we would tell him that it is worth fixing and correcting the minor problems in the apartment before bringing a potential buyer to look at it, he probably wouldn't listen. He would say that it is not necessary. The reason why he is not interested in the details is not only because concentration upon the details will take away his time and focus from the encompassing needs, but also because he doesn't consider the smaller details to be important or relevant.

We discussed the common conflict which exists between the encompassing and the detailed view, and how too much emphasis placed on one will detract from the other. Both are essential for living a balanced life. If this concept would be clear to us, most disagreements in the home would be resolved,

because both the husband and the wife would see the truth and importance of the other one's view. The problem is that, generally, the person who naturally sees the details has difficulty seeing the encompassing picture. If we would try to explain to him the importance of focusing upon the future he would answer: "There is a long time before we have to worry about the future. When the time comes, everything will be alright..."

And if we would try to speak to a person who has an encompassing view of life about a certain detail, he would respond: "The details are not important. They will work out on their own in the end. The important thing is to focus on the main goal."

For example: A contractor is hired to build a house, and he invests a lot of energy in preparing the plans. He hires an assistant contractor and workers, he orders the required material, and he's only left out a few small details. However, because of those few small, missing details, the home wasn't ready to be inhabited until four months later. If the contractor was building an apartment building that had 26 apartments, and he had to pay their rent for four months because of the delay, then his negligence over the small details would end up costing him tens of thousands of dollars.

If he would have originally taken the small details into account, he would have saved himself this great expense. The contractor's view however was: Building is such a large undertaking! There are so many things to take care of. I will take care of the small details later. But those small details that he pushed off resulted in the delay of the entire project.

The contractor's original disregard of the small details was not because he didn't want to remove his focus from the more important, encompassing plans, so he chose to sacrifice some minor details for the sake of the overall project. His mistake was in disregarding and pushing off taking care of the minor details because he didn't understand that the minor details are also immensely important.

A correct view of life is to take into account the broader, encompassing view together with the details, to recognize that they are both important, and then to find the correct balance between them and to measure how much should be invested in the overall picture and how much in the details.

### *Do Not Neglect Developing Your Emotions*

The person who is intellectually inclined and views life in an encompassing manner will tend to view emotions as fleeting and unstable feelings. The truth is, emotions often do change, from positive to negative, back and forth.

He sees that emotions are temporary and often unrealistic, and comes to the conclusion that it is impossible to base one's life's view upon the impressions of the emotions. As a result, he chooses to ignore his emotions entirely. He doesn't see any importance in emotions, and therefore he only utilizes his mind and intellect.

There are many people who live this way, without emotion. But the negative side-effects of living without emotion become immediately clear when he tries to deal with his fellow man, and even in the way that he will relate to his Creator.

Some people have a relationship with Hashem that can be called, “a rational relationship.” These people almost never cry. The *passuk*: “Hashem will erase all tears from upon all faces”<sup>32</sup> has already been realized in him... He simply never cries.

Why?

It is because his relationship with people is rational and logical, while his emotional feelings barely exist. In the best scenario, when his children are still young he may be able to express a drop of compassion and feeling, but among adults, especially in the Western world, his relationships will never become emotional because it appears disgraceful and frivolous.

The repercussions of this attitude are very severe. Turning off his emotions entirely will affect his relationship with his children and his spouse. It will be difficult for him to relate to them. His rational mind informs him that there must be some expression of emotion in marriage, so he creates for himself something like a split personality: in his daily life his emotions are stored away, as in a storage room, and he doesn't use them at all, but since he understands that he has to show some emotions towards his spouse, he tries to take them out of storage.

But if his emotions are kept in storage and only taken out occasionally he will have to clean off the dust the dust that has accumulated due to lack of use, and sometimes he will also have to scrape off the rust – in short, his emotions will not function properly. If he suppresses his emotions in the course of his daily life, he cannot expect them to automatically appear when he returns home. Even if he will try to arouse and reveal the emotions and the feelings which are concealed within him, he will not be able to change suddenly and become a different person.

But if he acknowledges his emotions in his daily life, then when he will return to his home he will continue to feel the same series of emotions. He must obviously be careful to show his emotions in a positive manner, and not negatively.

We must understand the root of the problem. There are experts who claim that the problem is that men have difficulty expressing their emotions.

However, Reb Chaim of Brisk had a very deep and true thought: “If a person cannot express himself it is because he doesn't really understand.”

Similarly, in regards to emotions, the problem doesn't begin with the fact that it is hard for men to express their emotions. It begins with the reality of a husband who doesn't acknowledge his emotions, which are therefore murky and unclear to him. Just as a person cannot express an intellectual idea which is not clear to him, an unclear emotion is also difficult to express. He doesn't give importance and value to his own emotions.

If a person wants to express an emotion, it first has to begin growing within him. When it is mature, it will emerge.

If a person lives without any emotions developing and growing within him in the course of his daily life, then it will be hard for him to express emotions in the home. If he does express some emotions, they will likely be generated from his logical and rational understanding that it is now proper to express some emotions, but they will not emerge from his heart.

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<sup>32</sup> *Yeshayahu 25:8*

The preferred and correct manner to develop emotions therefore is to first recognize that emotions are important, to value them and to live with them. This understanding must come first, and then he will be able to express them in the home as well.

Emotions are actually half of the person. There are two kings residing within a person – the mind and the heart. The mind is the intellectual power, and the heart is the emotional strength.

Emotions are considered negative when they are not connected to the intellect. However, when the mind is connected with the heart, when the intellectual faculties are connected to his emotions, then the emotions become an essential part of the puzzle that completes the *tzuras ha'adam* (human being).

### *Emotions – A True Reality*

There is a deep lesson that is concealed here that we have to fully understand.

Would we consider a table to be real? Definitely! Just as we consider a house to be real. No rational person will ever consider driving a car into a house because he knows that he cannot drive through because the house that is in front of him is a true reality.

Now let us apply this to our emotions. If we consider our emotions to be unreal, we are basically uprooting a true reality from existence. We must know clearly and perfectly that just as a table is real, so too are our emotions. They exist on a deeper plane, but they are real and existing.

People naturally view emotions to be a non-realistic existence, because they come and go. We see that the earth stays forever and that emotions come now and disappear only a couple of minutes later, so it is easy to conclude that emotions aren't real and we don't need to view them as such.

Emotions disappear quickly when they are not connected to the intellect. If we would connect our emotions to our intellect and understanding, then the intellect would shine its understanding on the emotions, and give them more permanence.

The relationship between husband and wife, even when there are healthy emotions, often experience many ups and downs. These occur when the emotions are only experienced in the detailed, limited view, without the light of intelligence and encompassing view integrated with the emotions.

Emotions are no less of a reality than a table! If a person would steal a table from his friend, it would certainly be considered theft. Likewise, if a person degrades the emotions of his friend, he is sinning severely. If a person would “embarrass his friend in public,” he is harming another person's emotions. *Chazal* consider this sin to be a sub-category of murder, even when there is no physical damage involved.

According to some opinions, a person is obligated to sacrifice his life rather than to embarrass his friend, just as one is obligated to sacrifice his life rather than to murder another person.

Why? The emotions are no less real than the physical reality that we see and touch. When a person understands that emotions are a reality equal to all other matter of life, then he is on the right road towards developing healthy and successful relationships.

As long as he will view physical existence as real and the emotions imaginary, then there is no way that this person can succeed in building a true relationship in his marriage.

### *Genuine Love*

The love between the husband and wife must reach the level which is called *ahavas etzem*, a genuine love that is not dependent upon other factors. What is the difference between the love which is dependent upon other factors and the love which isn't?

When love is dependent upon other factors, the relationship is based upon what we called earlier a detailed view. Only love which isn't dependent upon any external factors is a continuous, eternal love. This kind of love develops when intelligence and emotion are united.

We learned earlier that there are three forms of love: the love which is built upon the attraction that people have for the differences (in nature) that they see in their spouse; the love which is built upon the fact that they are similar; and the love which does not depend upon any external factors – “genuine love.” The “opposite attraction” love is not eternal, because they may not be opposites from one another forever. The “similarity love” is also temporary, because their similarities may change and they can become dissimilar. Only genuine love can be called eternal.

The forms of love that most people experience are the “opposite attraction love” and the “similarity love.” In the same manner that the husband loves other parts of life, such as food, he loves his wife. A person might love a certain food and after a half year despise it, because the love was temporary and not genuine. A person could love his spouse this way.

If the couple only experiences love in these temporary and artificial ways, it will be impossible for them to truly love one another. The love that they are familiar with is merely a temporary sensation, a passing phase in life, not something which lasts forever. Even if the couple will never divorce, G-d forbid, they will still never consider their love to one another as being eternal, because they know that their love is being built upon unstable and altering foundations.

This is true in all areas of life. People do not give credence to anything which is not built upon solid and firm foundations.

For example, a person is striving vigorously to grow spiritually. As is expected, he experiences ups and downs, as it is written: “The *tzaddik* falls seven times, and he stands himself up [again]”<sup>33</sup>. Sometimes he experiences lofty, uplifting moments, and other times his emotions are not aroused; sometimes his heart is open, at other times it is closed.

If he will not merit to stand up after his seven downfalls and reach the eighth level, the level of spiritual stability, the level upon which it is written “Who can *stand* in the place of His holiness,”<sup>34</sup> then he will not experience a continuous spiritual reality and he won't even know what it is. Deep in his heart, he will not value his spiritual experiences, because he knows they are temporary in nature and not everlasting. They are like a drying-up well which doesn't have a live fountain to replenish it. He doesn't consider his experiences to be real, because they do not remain with him.

We can compare this to the person who starts his own business. He never knows how much money he will earn because his earnings fluctuate from week to week. This person will have a hard time setting a budget and planning his life based upon his profits because they are unstable and constantly changing. The person who is working for him, on the other hand, receives a steady wage and knows

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33 *Mishlei* 24:16

34 *Tehillim* 24:3

how much he will earn. He has stability in his life, and he is able to plan his life and expenses according to his salary. So we see that whenever something is instable, it is hard to consider it as a true reality.

The love which comes from the attraction to opposites or the attraction to similarities is not eternal, and therefore it is impossible to build upon it. When a person only experiences these two forms of love, in his heart he may be upset because he knows that his love is not genuine. This is like a person who loves a certain food. He eats it and enjoys it, even though deep down in his heart he feels a certain disgust in his love towards the food. He knows that the love he feels for it is external and shallow. A couple can love each other, but deep down realize that their love is lacking depth.

That is why it is important to connect the emotions with the intellect, to give the emotions an enduring and everlasting existence. The mixture of intelligence with emotions is not like making a salad from cucumbers and tomatoes and tossing them together in a bowl... Not at all! The mixture of intelligence and emotions gives the emotions their permanence. Just as everyone understands that two plus two equals four, because that is the obvious reality, with the same clarity and truth, when the emotions are connected to the reality of the intelligence, they become eternal as well.

The intellect is compared to the sun and the heart is compared to the moon. The sun shines brightly and nonstop every day, but from the middle of the month, the moon appears to wane.

When only a portion of the moon is shining, it appears to our physical eye that the moon has become smaller and it is not the same as it was before. When a child who hasn't yet studied the moon, sees the moon when it is small, he believes that that is its true and unchanging size.

This is the way the intellect views the emotions of the heart. When the emotions change and subsequently diminish, the intellect thinks that the emotions which were previously there are now non-existent. Therefore, the intellect distrusts the emotions. Even when the emotions are present, the intellect doesn't consider them to be real, because the intellect knows that they will soon pass.

### *Women Also Understands Her Emotions Are Unreal Without The Integration Of The Intelligence*

It may appear that our discussion is only to teach men to value their emotions as a reality, whereas women naturally trust their emotions and do not need to be convinced that they are real. But that is not the case.

A man considers his intelligence as his primary guide in his life, and the wife follows her emotions. Who is right? The answer is that they are both wrong, because life should be viewed through both prisms simultaneously.

The perspective of the emotions without the intellect is an incomplete view. Even a woman who follows her emotions knows deep down that she cannot completely trust her emotions without the guidance of her intellect, because emotions are unstable. Today she is angry, or she is happy, but she knows that tomorrow everything can turn around and become just the opposite.

So, it is not only the man who may not take his emotions seriously. Every intelligent woman is well aware that her emotions are unstable and that they fluctuate and vary. She also doesn't take her emotions seriously without the integration of the intelligence.

The role of the husband in the marriage is not only to understand that the wife is more in tune with her emotions and therefore he should respond to her emotions according to her needs. It is important,

but it is not the primary goal. The goal is for both of them, together, to reveal their genuine love; the result of a combination of heart and mind.

They didn't get married only to reveal the love derived from "opposite attraction" or the love derived from "similarity attraction." Their goal is to develop genuine love, founded upon their union of the encompassing mind and the detailed heart; the union between the intellect and the emotion, creating a third dimension that neither the husband nor the wife can attain by themselves; a dimension called genuine love.

### *Adjustment Built Upon Stability*

The genuine love and deep connection that exists between husband and wife is comparable to the love and relationship that they both have with their Creator.

"A Jew remains a Jew, even if he is a sinner."<sup>35</sup> The relationship a Jew has with Hashem is a relationship built upon a consistent and unwavering foundation. Regardless of what the Jew will do, he will still remain connected.

The inner dimension of man is to connect to reality, to connect to the areas where there is consistency and stability. As it is written: "The world stands eternally."<sup>36</sup>

But daily life in our generation constantly teeters towards instability. The economy is unstable, national security is unstable, health, for most people, is also unstable, and people have accustomed themselves to live in this unstable world.

How do they do this?

They've learned how to be flexible, to adjust to and live with the situation that is around them, regardless of how hard it may be. During tranquil times people learn how to live with tranquility, during turbulent times people learn how to live with turbulence. Sometimes there is more parnassah, sometimes there is less. Sometimes there is peace, sometimes there is less peace. In order to succeed in life one needs to be able to adjust according to the times and needs.

Sometimes, however, adjustment and flexibility can be a sign of a very serious emotional condition. The negative form of flexibility occurs when a person has no goals or opinions of his own. He accepts every struggle that comes his way, because he doesn't care anymore. Water also conforms itself into whatever shape container it is poured into, because it has no form of its own.

Nowadays, because of the general instability in our society, it is very difficult to anticipate the future and to build upon it. There are many variables which can change our present reality, and therefore people don't want to build anything upon it.

For example: A company begins to work on a project. A month and a half later, the owner of the company tells his workers to discontinue the project and to begin a different project. Three weeks later, the second project is also stopped because there aren't enough funds to finance it. A person quickly gets the message that he is unable to build anything. When a person is forced to readjust himself and his

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*35 Sanhedrin 44a*

*36 Koheles 1:4*

expectations again and again, he can end up losing all ambition to grow and to build, and he just floats along with whatever is happening to him.

When is there a positive form of adjustment?

A person who is not hungry for wealth, and only seeks to live comfortably will not be worried if the dollar falls ten percent, or even twenty percent, if he had a million dollars in his bank account. He feels secure that he has enough money to live comfortably until his final day and to support his children and even his grandchildren.

However, if the fellow is a paid worker barely able to cover his monthly expenses, if he will lose ten or twenty percent of his income he will feel like the floor is being taken out from under his feet. This loss will destabilize his entire life.

A person can only feel stable when he is certain he is standing upon firm ground, and the aspects that he is lacking and losing are peripheral to his main foundation.

### *Genuine Love: The Stable Foundation*

Now we can understand how flexibility and adjustment can exist between a man and wife.

After all, there are many things which he/she is displeased with in the spouse. Not everything flows smoothly with the spouse (and later with the children). How can one possibly adjust and overlook these unpleasant issues?

If a person will only develop within his personality the love which is derived from attraction to opposites or the love which comes from similarities, then he will never be able to adjust to the changes and difficulties that occur in the marriage. If one moment there is love based on an opposite attraction, and the next moment there is love based on their similarities, then it will be impossible for him to ever adjust to the things that he doesn't appreciate. If he does adjust at all, it is really lack of interest and loss of destination instead of actual adjustment to the reality.

Whenever a person adjusts himself to the challenging experiences that occur to him in his marriage, it can only be explained with one of the following two possibilities. Either he has completely lost interest in his marriage and his life, so he adjusts because he really doesn't care anymore; or he has developed a deep and genuine relationship with his spouse so he is able to adjust himself and overlook their differences. He bends himself and adjusts to the situation because the changes which are occurring are external and do not affect the foundation of their marriage.

Why do so many marriages fail and collapse? If the love between them is based solely upon their attraction to the opposites or their attraction to the similarities, then the moment that this weak balance changes even slightly in either direction, the entire foundation of the home is affected.

However, when their relationship is based upon genuine love, then even if there will be sometimes disruptions between them in their external levels of love, the main and primary foundation of their marriage is still firm. Their relationship is established upon a much deeper dimension.

Their love can be compared to the love that parents have for their children. Although at times the children are not bringing their parents *nachas*, rather the opposite, there will always be deep love between the parents and children, because the love is genuine and real. In the exact same manner, the love between husband and wife is genuine and eternal, and cannot be changed and altered. However, if

there isn't genuine love between them, and their relationship is based upon shaky foundations, then there is the Talmudic tractate on *gittin* (divorce) which explains very well what to do.

We have to reveal, within the depths of our souls, emotions which aren't at all related to the passing and temporary form of love. The love that a person has for himself is an eternal love, an everlasting love. This is the same dimension of love that a person should have for his spouse, who is "... a bone from my bones, flesh from my body..."<sup>37</sup> He must reveal a love that will never change because it is genuine and real. The economy can go up and down, because it is not a reality, but something which is real and eternal will never change.

As long as their relationship is based upon fluctuating attractions, they will not be able to build a strong relationship. The relationship of marriage must pass through the filter of the emotions in order to exist. Every relationship in this world unites through emotions. People can connect and relate with one another on an intellectual plane, but they will not unite and become like one from the intellect alone. Even if they will have similar ideas and thoughts, they will not have a perfect connection without emotions.

### *Genuine Love: Finding The Oneness From Within*

There is a deep point here which needs to be understood.

External love, so often mistaken for the real thing, is a complete falsehood. It is actually a self-centered involvement, or a slightly deeper love. However, genuine love is from the most hidden items of creation.

Genuine love is when a person reaches his inner core, and he reveals his deepest emotions.

Everyone loves himself. For hours, every day, people are involved in their love for themselves. Psychologists categorize a person who is involved with his love for himself as being emotionally ill, an egoist who only thinks about himself.

But that is only when a person is interested in himself at the expense of others: He cuts in front of other people who are waiting at line at the bank, or when he is driving he makes sure that he is the first to cross the intersection... This is an obsessed and unhealthy individual, and it is not the genuine love for oneself that we are referring to. When a person genuinely loves himself, and experiences and discovers his uniqueness and oneness, he is revealing the depths of his personality.

For a couple to unite in a deeper realm, a person must first reach the point of depth that is in his soul, to reveal this true point and from there, to connect with his spouse.

### *The Goal: To Reveal The Eternal*

In conclusion, the purpose of expounding upon the differences between the emotions and the intellect and their combinations isn't merely to understand that a woman, who is usually more emotional, will express herself in one way, and the husband, who is usually intellectual, will express himself differently.

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<sup>37</sup> Bereishis 2:23

This is all true, but there is a far deeper point. The purpose of connecting the emotions with the intellect is to create a third and new dimension, a dimension of emotions which will never change or vary, an emotion of love which isn't dependent upon any external variables, a genuine love.

The smaller details and the external emotions are also beneficial, because they will help lead the couple towards this eternal and genuine love. First, a person has to know the encompassing goal and the direction he is headed towards, and then he can utilize all the details to reach the greater goal.

*Part One Chapter Seven**1.7 | The Foundation – The Emotional Connection**Actions, Emotions And Thoughts*

The human personality is comprised of three dimensions: actions, emotions, and thoughts. The realm of actions is limited. If a person wants to take something, he can only extend his arm as far as it will reach. When the daughter of Pharaoh stretched out her arm to take the basket which held Moshe *Rabbeinu*, the arm extended miraculously.<sup>38</sup> In the natural course of things, however, the reach of the arm is limited.

This is true of all our limbs. A person can walk for days, weeks and months, but the distance that each step can achieve will always remain limited.

The emotions, however, are unlimited. A person can be on one side of the world and his friend on the other side, and yet, they can still love each other immensely. The distance between them doesn't detract from their love.

Their love may weaken because they don't see each other for long periods of time, but the love itself isn't affected because of the distance.

A person has the potential to love another who is physically distant from him; he can even love a person who has left this hemisphere and is in outer space. Astronauts on the moon can still be immensely in love with their families back on earth. Sometimes the love even increases because of the distance, because they miss and yearn for one another more.

When a close relative (like a father, son, or spouse) leaves the world, even though the soul rises to heaven, the love between them still remains. There is a concept that the deceased are forgotten after a twelve month period passes, but this refers to forgetting some of the pain and sorrow. The love remains forever. Therefore, a husband and wife reunite in heaven (if they are worthy) because the love and relationship between them is eternal.

*Emotions Are Not Hindered By Location Or Distance*

The dimension of thought goes even further than that of emotion. A person's thoughts are not bound to the place where he is. On the contrary, the Baal Shem Tov taught that a person is where his thoughts are.<sup>39</sup> When a person thinks about a distant place, he is, in essence, there.

There is an added dimension to thoughts which doesn't exist in the realm of emotions (and certainly doesn't exist by the dimension of actions). The emotions relate to things which exist. A person cannot love something which doesn't exist, even if it seems real in his imagination. In the realm of thoughts, however, a person can think and connect to things and concepts which do not physically exist.

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<sup>38</sup> *Shemos 2:5*

<sup>39</sup> see *Degel Machane Efrayim, Shemos 2:23*

### *Marriage Creates The Broader Dimension*

Where do these ideas lead us to? We discussed at length in the previous chapter that we must consider emotions to be a reality. What is the importance of this perception? The main benefit of this outlook will be felt in the depths of the relationship. The couple cannot unite and become one by actions alone; they need the emotions to unite them. But there is a deeper significance as well.

All things seek to return to their origin. A person is created from the *Ein Sof* (the infinite Creator) Baruch Hu, and therefore every person's ultimate perfection and purpose is to return to eternity. The soul naturally yearns and constantly desires to break through all the barriers and to reach the higher levels in order to come closer to our original source, to the *Ein Sof*.

We see this development and progression occurring in the physical realm as well. When a child is born, he has very limited abilities. He can move his eyes and mouth, but he cannot walk or move around on his own. He is entirely dependent upon others during this stage.

As the child matures, his limitations begin to lessen, and he is able to move around on his own. He still cannot walk with wide strides as an adult does, but he is constantly maturing and growing and his limitations are slowly diminishing. The limitations of his mind are also lessening as he grows older. His mind is maturing and developing together with the growth of his entire being.

The institution of marriage is the vehicle which enables a person to broaden his scope, to leave behind the limitations and barriers which confine him, and to enter a broader dimension. Through marriage a person can reach his primary goal, to return and unite with the perfectly endless and boundless; to the *Ein Sof*.

"G-d returns individuals to their home. He frees them from their bondage."<sup>40</sup> Every person is in bondage. The bondage is his limitations. The literal translation of bondage refers to a person who is placed in a tiny cell of four by four cubits and his captors tell him that this will be his existence for the future. "Walk around the cell," they tell him. When he is finally released, he is a free man. He was previously bound and limited and now his dimensions and possibilities have broadened greatly.

Before a person marries he is also in bondage, in a certain sense, because he is living in the confines and limitations of this world. Marriage enables him to connect to the realm of emotions, to enter into dimensions which are not limited by time and place.

### *The World Of Emotions – Breaking Through Boundaries*

Based upon these ideas, we can understand why it is imperative to view emotions as reality.

If a person will only consider the material matter of this world to be real and emotions as unreal, then he will never be able to surpass his barriers and limitations. His hands cannot reach longer than their natural length, his feet cannot walk quicker than their natural, limited abilities, and he will not be able to pass any boundaries which are placed before him because he is not connected to the realms which reach beyond the scope of time and place.

This mistaken understanding, essentially restricts him from attaining a broader perspective where there are far fewer limitations.

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<sup>40</sup> *Tehillim* 68:7

So, to assess emotions as reality is to broaden one's potential and to escape the confinement which limits him. The dimension of emotions (which commences with the emotion of love), enables us to break through the physical boundaries that we are aware of.

*Indeed, Chazal* tell us:<sup>41</sup> "Love pushes [aside] the flesh." In other words, it annuls the physical boundaries of our natural flesh and blood limitations.

Physically, a person cannot unite with someone who is living in a different location than he is. But on an emotional plane it is possible, because the emotions break through barriers, and through the emotions a person can connect to anyone, regardless of where they are.

### *The Misunderstood Physical Dimension Breakthrough*

Until approximately a hundred years ago, man was very limited in the physical realm of the world. His accomplishments were acknowledged not much further than the specific place where he lived. With the great advancements in science and technology, it is now possible for a person to do something in one place and the results will be seen in a distant land. Automobiles, trains and aircraft have all substantially lessened the distance between cities and countries. A missile is launched in one country, and within a few moments it lands in a different country, thousands of miles away. The primary example of this phenomenon is the internet. A person can sit in his home and immediately affect the entire world.

Where does all this come from? Concealed in this phenomenon is a very profound concept which is regularly misunderstood.

The source of the breakthrough of physical barriers which is occurring in our generation is not from the physical realm of this world. The physical dimensions of the world have remained the same. It is impossible for a person to do something here and its effects to be felt somewhere else. That is the opposite of the nature of physicality. Rather, the breakthrough of the physical boundaries which we see in our generation is derived from the emotions, which have the strength to break through all barriers. When the emotions shine and influence the physical, they infuse the physical realm with the potential to stretch beyond its boundaries, and this is the purpose of creation.

If it weren't for the miracle which occurred, the daughter of Pharaoh wouldn't have been able to extend her arm past its actual, physical length. How did it happen that her arm extend so far?

In the presence of love, "the flesh is pushed to the side." In other words, the emotions have the ability to overcome the limitations of the physical boundaries and to extend beyond.

The emotion of love needs to shine and influence the physical (obviously in a holy manner; not as it often happens today, that the love is used for unsacred purposes). Let us understand the depth of this concept.

The physical essence of the world will always remain the same. Places and things are limited entities and it is impossible to break through their physical boundaries. The outstanding breakthroughs that we are witnessing in our generation is not the physical world breaking through its known borders, rather it is the world of the emotions and the intellect influencing the physical realm.

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<sup>41</sup> *Baba Metziah 84a*

If a person considers only the physical and material aspects of life to be real, and the emotions as unreal, then he will remain and be confined within the limitations of this world. However, if he will see this world together with his emotions, with the understanding that his emotions are a reality, and even more so, that his mind and intelligence are a reality, then this person will not be limited by the boundaries and barriers of physicality. This person will be able to reach and discover his inner self.

### *The Way To Breakthrough And Attain Genuine Love*

We discussed earlier that there are three types of love: love based on opposites, love based on similarities, and genuine love. Opposite and similarity love have their limited boundaries. Just as there are limitations and barriers of time and place in the physical world, there are barriers in the soul. These limited forms of love, therefore will also have their boundaries and impassable borders. Genuine love, on the other hand, has no obstructions. It is a reality that can never be limited.

How does one break through all boundaries and attain genuine love? As long as a person will view the physical world as a finite reality and the emotions as fleeting and unreal, he will never be able to attain genuine love. This can be compared to a person who ties his arms in iron chains, and then tries to move them. As long as his arms are tied, he cannot move them.

The iron chains represent the understanding and assumption that this world is a finite reality; to remove the iron chains is to realize that the emotions and even more so, the intellect, are a true reality. To attain this perception is to fundamentally enter into a different world. This person will discover limitless dimensions which will extend to the physical realm as well. As *Chazal* say:<sup>42</sup> “Love changes the rules,” and, “Love pushes the flesh aside.” In other words, he will discover that the barriers of the physical are annulled.

### *Emotions - The Foundation Of Marriage*

Marriage, as we all know, is more than just a partnership whose purpose is to divide and share life's chores and obligations together. Marriage is also more than merely a physical relationship. Marriage is based upon the emotions. The emotional aspect of marriage should not be understood as a coincidental addition to the marriage; rather the emotional connection is the genuine and true essence of the marriage.

There is a concept that actions influence the heart. Therefore, when a person does acts of kindness for his fellow man, he will automatically begin to truly care for and love the person whom he is benefiting. But it will not be the actions which will become the foundation of marriage. The foundation will be the love and caring which will develop between them as a result of the actions. It is also true that when they are married they will share responsibilities together, but once again, that is a consequence of marriage. Their joint ventures are not the essence of marriage.

What is the true essence of marriage? It is an emotional connection. “*Sameach tisamach reim ahuvim*, Rejoice, the friends, the lovers.”

“*Harei at mekudeshes li b'taba'as zu...* (behold you are married to me with this ring...)” *Mekudeshes*, literally translated, means to become separated. Through marriage the woman becomes separated from

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<sup>42</sup> *Sanhedrin 105b*

the entire world and she becomes united with her husband, primarily on the level of their emotions. The emotions are the beginning and essential part of their union. Afterwards, they will unite on a physical plane as well. The foundation and reality of the marriage remains: “*Sameach tisamach reim ahuvim.*”

Although it is obvious to all of us that marriage is more than just a physical union – it is an emotional union as well – people often confuse the importance of the two, and they view marriage in the exact opposite manner than its reality. They see marriage as primarily a union of the physical, which also has some emotional facets. The opposite is the truth. According to *halachah*, if the emotional facet is missing, the physical connection is also prohibited. The emotional factor is the primary and central aspect of the relationship.

“Rejoice the friends, the lovers, as You made [Adam and Chava] happy in the Garden of Eden.” There wasn’t a physical relationship in the Garden of Eden, because physicality, as we know it today, did not exist yet. The relationship of Adam and Chava was also not a joint partnership to share chores together. The relationship of Adam and Chava was built on the level of the spirit, on the level of emotion.

When we request that the *chosson* and *kallah* should rejoice together with the same joy which existed in Eden, we are essentially asking that their joy and unity should take place on the level of their emotions. Just like in the Garden of Eden, where the marriage relationship was a connection of their emotions – it wasn’t physical, and it wasn’t a partnership – so too, we request that the *chosson* and *kallah* should now also unite in this way.

Even though we are living in the era after the sin and banishment of Adam *Harishon* from the Garden of Eden, and where there are physical dimensions as well, they should not be considered the foundation and primary aspect of marriage. Marriage should be built upon the emotions.

A wife washes the dishes, does the laundry and other household chores. If she would not do those chores, the home would be unlivable. Yet, no one would assume that those chores are the foundation of the marriage. A maid could also do those jobs.

Our primary objective in marriage is to build a faithful Jewish home which is based upon emotions. On a deeper level, we want to create a marriage which brings us back to the era prior to the sin and banishment of Adam and Chava. When Adam was banished from Eden, he wasn’t only banished from the physical garden where he lived; his banishment altered his entire existence.

When he left Eden, Adam ended his dimension of being a soul, of being an emotional being, and he became instead a physical entity. His banishment from the Garden of Eden was essentially his transformation from being a soul into becoming a superficial reality.

Man changed, and his perception changed. Before the sin, man considered his emotions to be the true reality, and the emotions were clothed within a physical world.

After the sin, man viewed the physical aspects of the world to be the true reality, and the emotions as an added, secondary dimension to the real world.

Therefore, the importance of understanding that the emotions are a reality is not an added aspect of the home – it is the purpose of the home!

*In Our Generation, The Emotional Connection Has Almost Ceased To Exist*

We are presently living in a world where the majority of people have forgotten about these concepts. We are living in a world where deeds are viewed as primary, while a great majority of people choose not to deal with the emotions. They erect a barrier in their soul that prevents them from experiencing emotions. Sometimes when we speak with someone we wonder whether he is really a person. Maybe he is only a recording? It is unclear!

This is the popular attitude which is prevalent in our generation. People want to occupy themselves solely with concepts that are physical and tangible. Although there are some aspects of emotion in marriage they are usually not manifest on a daily basis. Often, however, there aren't any emotions at all. In their day to day existence they focus upon their material aspects of life, while their emotions are almost non-existent.

A person can work for his employer for five or ten years, and not necessarily create an emotional bond with him. The moment another employer will offer him a slightly higher wage, he will immediately transfer his loyalty. They do not have an emotional connection. There was a job, there was a paycheck, there was *parnassah*, but beyond that, "It has been very pleasurable, but now I'm going somewhere else."

Both the worker and the employer understand that there is absolutely nothing wrong with this behavior. Why? Because they weren't sharing an emotional relationship with one another; their relationship was purely business. That is where their relationship began and that is where it ended.

### *In Do Not "Hide" Your Emotions*

In the *kesubah* (marriage document) the couple obligate themselves: "*V'al yavrichu v'al yalimu, lo zeh m'zu v'lo zu m'zeh*, They shall not escape and they shall not hide from each other."

What is the meaning of this obligation? A superficial explanation is that the husband should not buy something without telling his wife, and the wife should not go somewhere without telling her husband. This is a correct understanding of the obligation, but what is its inner dimension? What does it mean that they shall not escape nor hide anything from each other?

We will explain this with a simple analogy: Someone has expensive jewelry in his house, but he is afraid of theft, so he hides the jewelry under the floor tiles of his home. This is one form of hiding. He knows that he has something precious – he doesn't want other people to see it, so he hides it.

But along with the hidden jewelry, there is also dirt under the tiles. Can we say that the dirt is also hidden inside his house, under the tiles? Obviously not, because this is the way the home was built; there are tiles and beneath them there's earth.

This analogy teaches us that when something is concealed, it can be considered either intentionally hidden, or its presence is coincidental, without an intentional plan to hide it.

What are we referring to?

In a worker/employer relationship, if the worker does not relay pertinent information that is related to his job to his boss, we would consider this to be improper. We would say that he is concealing information that must be shared with his employer. But if the worker doesn't tell his employer his personal feelings and emotions, no one would say that this is improper. He never obligated himself to share his emotions with his employer, and therefore he has a right to his privacy.

In marriage, the obligation “*V'al yavrichu v'al yalimu, lo zeh m'zu v'lo zu m'zeh*” does not only mean that they must share with one another their worldly chores and obligations. Concealing such matters can be considered concealing in a business relationship as well, but in marriage there exists a totally different dimension of concealment. If the couple will hide their inner emotions from one another, they are concealing in the way that the *kesubah* is referring to, and therefore acting improperly in the marriage.

If marriage would be solely a joint partnership to share chores and obligations together, or if marriage would be a physical entity and the emotions only a side dimension of the marriage, then it wouldn't be considered concealing to hide and refrain from sharing one's emotions with his spouse. It wouldn't even be considered wrong, because the primary issues of the marriage would still exist. If the emotions are not considered the primary aspect of the marriage, then to conceal them wouldn't be considered hiding important and relevant information.

This can be compared to someone who owns a property together with another person. Must he tell his partner about his other financial investments and how they are doing? Of course not. They must have complete transparency in the areas where they are partners; there they must be open with one another up to the smallest detail, but neither of them is obligated to offer any information regarding their investments which they are not partners. That is their personal business.

But marriage is not a business partnership and it is not a physical connection; marriage is a connection and relationship of the emotions. Therefore, to hide his emotions from his spouse can be considered a breach in their agreement, or even more, as invalidating the foundation of their marriage.

### *Marriage Built Upon A Firm Foundation*

There is a deep concept which is concealed here, and it needs to be well understood.

If the couple does not consider their emotions to be real and one of them hides information about his emotions, it is as if he is not hiding anything at all. If a person becomes angry, must he hang up signs all over town so everyone will know? It is sufficient that he has to deal with the matter on his own. The matter isn't anyone else's business. (Unless he hurt someone in his anger, and he must ask forgiveness, etc.)

Marriage is built completely upon emotions – not the superficial emotions that pass quickly and have neither a foundation nor a continuation. On those flimsy emotions one cannot truly build his home. A person cannot build a home upon wind, only upon solid ground. Rather, the marriage is built upon a firm foundation of true and deep love.

But, if one were to view even those emotions as just a lot of “wind,” as something that blows away and doesn't have any stability, then indeed, he will not be able to build his marriage upon it. However, if he views his emotions as a reality, then the emotions become the solid ground upon which he can safely and successfully build his home.

When a person thinks that only the physical is real, he will not be able to build his home upon emotions alone. It would be like a home which cannot withstand even the slightest earthquake tremor. Any change in the weather can destroy this home. But if the foundation of the emotions is strong and firm, then it is possible to build upon it a true Jewish home.

### *The Foundation Point: Genuine Love*

These ideas are in essence the difference between love based on opposites and love based on similarities, contrasts with genuine love.

Love based on opposites or similarities cannot be considered stable. As we discussed above, every person is subject to change, and therefore their differences and their similarities can also change. This is true in regards to both the husband and the wife. One or both of them can change and turn the entire relationship upside down. So these forms of love do not have stability. The only love that has stability is genuine love, and only upon genuine love can one build his home.

An emotional relationship which is built solely upon unstable emotions will collapse with the smallest tremor from an earthquake. It is preferable to avoid building such a home at all, because it is dangerous. But when a person builds the marriage upon genuine love, then the marriage is built upon a foundation which will never change. The ground is secure and sound and can withstand earthquakes and all troubles. It is the perfect land to build the emotions of the home upon.

Why do people disregard their emotions, refusing to trust and to build upon them? It is because the emotions which they are familiar with are usually based on unstable forms of love that they know from home and with their friends outside the home. Therefore people do not invest energy and trust in the emotions, because the emotions do not seem like they have any future or continuation. Investing in them seems like a waste of effort.

### *The Love Which Doesn't Change Has To Be Revealed*

As we discussed, love based on opposites or similarities are unstable forms of love. The only love which is stable is genuine love. Which of these types of love should be more pronounced in the marriage and which love should be less seen?

A person cannot express all of his feelings. For example, if for a moment someone felt a negative feeling towards his fellow man, he should not rush to tell him. There would be no gain from that.

When a person marries, he naturally has a lot of expectations that he hopes to be fulfilled by his spouse. If he doesn't expect or want anything from his spouse he is either on a very high spiritual level or he simply gave up hope and doesn't desire anything anymore. A regular, normal person, however, will have some amount of expectations that he hopes his spouse will fulfill.

Let's say he has a list of ten things that he hopes to find in his spouse, but once he is married he discovers that three of the ten expectations are lacking. He will be upset. But if he will see that nine of his ten expectations are fulfilled, and only one aspect is missing, he may feel some amount of disappointment in his heart, but he will realize that he should ignore it and continue onward with his life. This is an example of the kind of flexibility that a person needs in life, which we discussed earlier.

No one has a perfect home, where everything flows exactly the way he wants. When a marriage is based on unstable forms of love, it changes all the time, and therefore it is impossible for things to go smoothly. There is no area of life which flows perfectly. There will always be something which isn't perfect and easy.

If there is genuine love and the main foundation of the marriage is revealed and prominent, then the changes which occur here and there are bearable. But if the genuine love is concealed then one of two things will happen: either he will escape the world of emotions and concentrate solely upon the world

of actions, because he cannot tolerate the constant changes and instabilities which are occurring in his life, or he will learn to live with all those changes, but his home becomes an unbearable place to live.

Every one of us is affected by the things that happen to us. The only difference between people is to what extent they are affected, and in what way. But a person cannot tolerate every change which occurs to him. Sometimes the changes are internal, and sometimes they are external, but either way he cannot connect and deal with every single small disturbance which occurs to him. It is simply impossible.

So what should he do?

He should concentrate upon the genuine connection that exists within the marriage relationship, because it will always be there and it will never change. By connecting himself to the stable and eternal love, he will be able to manage and overlook all difficulties which may come.

We don't mean to say that a person should be occupied from early morning until late at night with his emotions. Definitely not! Rather, we are advising that he should build his emotions primarily upon the true connection, genuine love.

For example, if something is disturbing him about his spouse, and it is ruining the emotional relationship that exists between them, then he should take out some quiet time to clarify for himself the purpose of the relationship.

Why do I love my spouse? Is my love dependent upon a particular action? Will our entire foundation collapse if they don't do this or that? Or is there a deeper dimension of love in our marriage?

If a person merits finding this deep place of truth in his soul, then whenever he or she is upset about something in their spouse, he can immediately concentrate on and discover once again the genuine point of love that is in their marriage. The disappointing issues will not be so important to them anymore, and sometimes they will go away entirely.

It is impossible to fix every fissure in their relationship. Even if they would build the necessary bridges (which in a practical sense means that they both compromise a little bit here and there) there will always remain some issues which will not be to his liking. It is true that some people are naturally more apt to compromising, but even they will have some areas where they feel deprived. It never happens that everything flows exactly as they would like.

What should a person do so that these issues do not shake the foundation of the home?

If he hasn't discovered the genuine love that exists in the marriage, he will never be able to build the home upon the foundation of emotions, because every difficulty would shake up his entire marriage. However, if he will discover the genuine love within himself, then these difficulties will not uproot and destroy his home.

### *Building The Foundation Before Trouble Begins*

The time to reveal the 'genuine love' in the marriage is when things are tranquil in the home, not during turbulent times, when the problems abound. It is impossible to support the foundation of a building during an earthquake, and likewise, when a thirty floor apartment building is on fire, that is not the time for the fire department to purchase another fire engine. These things need to have been done prior to the calamity.

If the foundations were built properly beforehand, then when the fire or earthquake occur it is possible to deal with it with the tools which were prepared in advance for these types of calamities. But it is very hard to deal with a problem after it has begun.

Most couples who go to marriage counselors do so after their homes have already fallen apart. But if a person is wise, he will build his house the right way the first time around. If subsequently some cracks will be discovered, they will be tolerable, because he built the structure in a way that it would be easy to fix the cracks when they occur.

It is impossible, when a problem arises, to begin to search for the genuine love to reestablish and balance their marriage if its foundation was built on unstable forms of love. The husband cannot suddenly say: “No, this issue doesn’t really make a difference to me because my love for her is genuine, regardless.” It won’t work, because he never acquired the ‘genuine love’ beforehand. During the turbulent times, it is impossible to access those tranquil inner dimensions.

The inner, tranquil dimension can only be accessed when a person is calm and relaxed and everything is going well. That is the time to build and develop the genuine love. Thinking about it and discussing it occasionally will help him reach the place of genuine love, which will be revealed in his actions as well.

### *Partnership Built Upon Genuine Love*

Jewish marriage is built upon emotions which come from genuine love. (On a sublime level, genuine love is a reality which reaches beyond emotions.)

When a person builds his marriage upon the eternal form of love, then even the types of loves based on ‘opposites’ and ‘similarities’ are automatically enhanced. That is still not a reason to extensively exploit that love, but when the genuine love is existent, the other forms of love will also be more revealed. Why? When a person lives in a solely physical or partnership-type relationship, then the realms of emotions are entirely concealed. When the marriage is built upon unstable forms of love, the communication between the couple is uncomfortable and restrained.

When the marriage is built upon genuine love, however, it is built upon healthy emotions. It is perfectly erected, and the love based on opposites or similarities can be brought to some extent into the picture.

This can be compared to a person who leaves his home in the morning and returns late at night, and then tells his wife the things that happened to him during the day. He doesn’t repeat every detail because he would need ten hours in order to repeat everything that happened to him in the last ten hours. Instead he tells her the basic outline, the important and outstanding points of interest that occurred to him during the day.

Similarly, in regards to the emotions, it is impossible to become a perfect partner to his spouse with all of his emotions. (In any case, nobody is aware of all the delicate realms of their emotions that exist inside of them). Rather, they can share their emotions with one another on a general level, built upon their genuine love.

### *Requests Emanating From A Union*

Let’s summarize these ideas in order to clarify them:

The home is built upon the concept of “*reim ahuvim*, the loving friends”; upon a foundation of stable, perfect, and unchanging emotions.

Everyone has natural tendencies towards the more unstable types of love, so these emotions will automatically exist towards his spouse as well. But these types of love cannot be the focal point of their marriage. Only on rare occasions can extreme expressions of love based on opposites and similarities be utilized in order to build their home.

They are emotions which need to be revealed occasionally, according to their need. The things which disturb someone in their marriage cannot be ignored forever. They must be revealed and dealt with, but only to the proper extent, and only when it is clear to both of them that the ‘genuine love’ is existent and revealed. At that time, when he hears from his spouse the points she wants corrected, (when the requests are reasonable) it will be heard like a request which is emanating from both of them together; from a united entity.

Let us explain: When people disagree and fight, even if one of them is right and the other one is wrong (although that is rarely the case), and the one who is right is asking something from the other person, is this request coming from a point of unity or a point of discord?

For example, Reuven stole an object from Shimon, and Shimon brings Reuven to the *beis din* to retrieve his stolen object. Is Shimon correct? Certainly! But, is his demand that Reuven return the stolen object to him emanating from a feeling of love towards his fellow man? Obviously not! His demands are emanating from anger, discord and complaint.

When a person demands and requests something, he is not trying to enhance the love between them. He wants only to retrieve his stolen object. And even if he will get it back, there will probably never be love between them.

It is different, however, in relation to marriage. In marriage, the reason people want change is because they want to improve their love. We are all just people.

We are not angels who are able to accept everything that happens to us. Perhaps there are a few unique people in the world who are able to tolerate almost everything that their spouse does to them, regardless of what, when, where and how, and they hardly ever ask their spouse to change their behavior. But most people are not on that level, and they sometimes ask their spouse to change something. There is nothing wrong with this, as long as the request is made at the right time and in the right way.

Sometimes a person requests something from his spouse when his genuine love is weak, and at that moment, the only love that he feels is the love based on opposites or similarities. When that is the case, the issue which is disturbing him and that he is asking improvement over, has already shaken the foundation and harmony of their marriage. The reason he is asking for change is because he feels that the love is lacking in the marriage and he wants to rebuild the love.

Even if the spouse will accept his request and agrees to change, it is still uncertain whether that will recreate the love and harmony in the marriage. The love and harmony of the marriage has already been affected, and it is harder to correct it. This is not the ideal way for love to be built.

Ideally, when the spouse asks that something superficial be improved in the marriage, it must be absolutely understood that true and genuine love exists between them at all times. Only afterwards should any requests for change be made. Genuine love should not prevent them from trying to make

their lives easier and more comfortable.

### *Inner Improvement*

To reach this level, one must dig deeply into his soul to understand where his requests are coming from. This is much easier said than done. Everyone has the capacity to love superficially. If someone would try to deny it, it would be like a person who denies having a head, hands and feet, claiming, “I am only a soul.” He’s imagining things. We are all dressed in a human body. Even if a person has attained genuine love, he cannot claim that he is entirely unaffected by the more superficial forms of love.

If a couple will try to build the home solely upon superficial forms of love, it may be better if they wouldn’t include emotions in their marriage at all. However, when the marriage is built correctly, upon firm foundations, and there are also elements of superficial love, this home will endure, because this is the way Hashem created us. Love based on opposites and similarity adds the dimension of “*shelo l’shmah*” the imperfect dimension of the soul, to the marriage.

However, as the *Michtav Me’Eliyahu* explains,<sup>43</sup> there has to be a spark of *l’shmah* (pure intentions) within the *shelo l’shmah* (not proper intentions).<sup>44</sup>

A person can try to improve the superficial areas of the relationship (carefully, at the right times and to the right extent) on the condition that the genuine love will also be acknowledged. If the essential love is concealed somewhere deep within the soul, he should wait before he requests improvement. He must first dig deeply into his soul and access the genuine love, and then he can try to improve aspects of the superficial love. Only then should he begin to discuss improvement and changes.

Sometimes a person is tested with anger, or with other difficult tests, and he reacts improperly. But failing a test in anger is no reason for him to lose hope. Rather it should encourage him to step forward and onward. The most important thing is that he understands what is the correct way to build the marriage, and then to work slowly but surely to attain it.

A relationship between husband and wife can be compared to two feet. Unlike the hands that can function on their own without the other, the two feet must work together. Alone, he can barely hop.

Marriage is not merely a relationship where people share chores and actions together. It is a binding of emotions, which contains some practical actions and obligations which arise as a result of their relationship.

Most couples that we see have a relationship based upon a partnership of chores and obligations, and not based upon emotions. A minority of marriages are built upon the stable and true emotions of genuine love. The marriages which fail were usually built upon superficial emotions and lacked stability.

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<sup>43</sup> In the chapter entitled “No Reward in This World”

<sup>44</sup> Nazir 23b

When we set out towards building a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael* G-d willing, we must build the marriage upon the foundation of genuine love, and then to add the more superficial aspects of love. Even then, there must be at least a minimum amount of genuine love included within them. A partnership of deeds and actions will be included as well, as together they build a Jewish home.

*Part One Chapter Eight**1.8 | Taking and Giving In Marriage**The Purpose of Giving and Taking: “And They Shall Become One”*

In this chapter, we will learn, with the help of Hashem, about the concepts of ‘giving’ and ‘taking’ that exist in marriage.

However, first, we need to know clearly what the goal of this is. What is the purpose of the roles of ‘giving’ and ‘taking’, in a Jewish home?

The purpose of the Jewish home, as we have at length in the past, is as the *possuk* says, “*Therefore, a man shall abandon his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*” Above that level is to “become one” – to become intrinsically one, which is above the “flesh” aspect of the relationship.

This concept is apparent in any aspect that takes place in the Jewish home, without exception. If it is not revealed in the marriage, this does not mean that it must have no place in their marriage. It does, and it just hasn’t been revealed yet.

Taking and giving, in marriage, are not a goal unto themselves. They exist for a greater purpose: to reveal how “*They shall become one flesh.*”

It is simple to understand that taking is not meant just so that we can take. It is harder to understand, though, why giving is not a goal unto itself. But when we look deeply, we will see that both taking and giving exist for a greater purpose: to form unity between them.

Let’s explain this a bit and then learn about the depth behind this matter.

*Three Kinds of Giving*

*Chazal* said, “One who gives a gift to his friend, must notify him [about it].”<sup>45</sup> *Rashi* says that there are two reasons for this.

The first reason is, “This is a way of respect, for he might be ashamed to receive, and in this way, he will acquiesce, and not be ashamed.” The one receiving the gift might feel like he is receiving *tzedakah* (charity) and be ashamed to receive it, but if he knows that it’s coming from his friend, he understands that it is his friend sending him a gift.

The second reason that *Rashi* says is, “If he places it in the other’s house without the other’s knowledge, he must let him know about it, that it is coming from him, so that his friend can come to love him.” When one knows one who gave him the gift, he will be able to love the person who gave it to him.

We learn a *halachah* from this *Gemara*: when you give a gift to another, you need to inform the person that it is coming from you, because by letting him know that it is coming from you, a bond can be formed between giver and recipient.

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45 *Shabbos 10b*

In contrast, elsewhere the *Gemara* says that when it comes to the *mitzvah* of giving *tzedakah* (charity), it is preferable to give it anonymously: the giver should know to where it is being given to, and the recipient should not know from whom he is getting it from<sup>46</sup>.

If so, there are two kinds of giving, which are very different from each other: the giving of a gift (*matanah*), which is accompanied with informing the receiver who is giving it, so that there can be a bond formed between the two of them; and the giving of *tzedakah*/charity, in which it is preferable if both the giver and the recipient do not know each other.

The simple difference between *matanah* and *tzedakah* is that with *matanah*, there is no reason why the recipient should not know from whom he is getting it from; to the contrary, it is better if he knows, because then he can be grateful to the one who gave it to him, and a bond between them will then be formed. With *tzedakah*, the recipient would be ashamed if the recipient knows who he is; this is the reason that that he shouldn't know who the giver is.

With *tzedakah*, why shouldn't the giver know to whom he is giving to? It is so that he shouldn't think that the recipient is obligated to him somehow now that he has received *tzedakah* from him. This is unlike the case of a gift, in which the giver did not give it out of any sense of obligation, but because he wanted to form a bond with the recipient.

That is the simple difference between giving charity and giving a gift.

On Purim, we find a synthesis of these two levels together: *matanos l'evyonim*, gifts to the poor, in which we are obligated to give a "gift", as opposed to an obligation to give it as charity. It is for the sake of forming a bond with the poor, through giving a gift.

If so, there are altogether three kinds of giving:

- 1) Giving a gift, in which the giver must let the recipient know who he is,
- 2) Giving charity, in which it is better if they not know to whom it is being given and who is receiving it;
- 3) Giving gifts to the poor, which is the *mitzvah* of *matanos l'evyonim* on Purim, in which a "gift", not charity, is given to the needy.

The question that arises is as follows. Being that *matanos l'evyonim* is a gift, why isn't there a *halachah* that the giver must inform the recipient that he is giving it to him?

There is a deep point contained in this matter, and we will try to explain.

### *Why Giving and Taking Cannot Be Everything*

*Chazal* state that "a good wife is a good gift to her husband."<sup>47</sup> This is linked with another statement of *Chazal*: "It is forbidden for a man to betroth a woman if he has not seen her."<sup>48</sup> The connection between the two statements is because since the wife is a "gift" to her husband, he must recognize her, so that there can be a deep bond between them.

Earlier, we have explained that there are three kinds of love: love for differences, love for similarities, and intrinsic love. Based upon what we have learned about those concepts, let us now ponder the

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<sup>46</sup> *Bava Basra* 10b

<sup>47</sup> *Yevamos* 63b

<sup>48</sup> *Kiddushin* 41a

statement of *Chazal* that “One who gifts to his friend must let him know about it”, which is for the purpose of fostering love between giver and recipient. What kind of love is this talking about? Is it aiming to form a love for differences, a love for similarities, or to form an intrinsic love?

From a superficial viewpoint, it seems at first glance that it has nothing to do with intrinsic love. It is meant to form a love for differences. If he wouldn't give the gift, there would be less love, and when he gives the gift, there is more love. This cannot be intrinsic love for the recipient. Sometimes, the giver and recipient can come to feel intrinsic love towards each other, but since this is a love that ultimately came about through an act of giving and receiving, it is a conditional kind of love.

On a deeper note, it is actually a love for similarities, [from the viewpoint of the recipient], because he wanted something, and he got it through his giver, thus he loves the giver for fulfilling what he lacks [and he comes to feel a mutual love for his giver].

We have explained that either love for differences or love for similarities cannot become the basis of our life. *Chazal* said, “Ever since there has been an increase of those who receive gifts, days have lessened and years [of life] have been decreased, for it is written, *“He who hates gifts, will live.”*<sup>49</sup>

[There is a well-known concept that] Man is called the “giver”, and the woman is called the “receiver”. If marriage does not go beyond the give-and-take relationship that is present in it, it cannot survive properly. When one receives his entire life, this will lessen his longevity of life, as the *possuk* says.

Of course, this does mean to imply in any way that the give-and-take aspect of marriage is a totally bad thing. It would be impossible to look at it that way, for giving and taking is part of daily life in marriage, and this is the inevitable reality. Rather, what we mean to point out here is that when giving and taking is all there is to a marriage, such a marriage cannot sustain. *“He who hates gifts, will live.”* Both receiving and giving, alone, cannot enable a marriage to thrive. The receiver loses longevity of life, and the giver is the catalyst which enables that decrease of life in the receiver.

Thus, the depth of the marital bond cannot be based on giving and taking alone. If it would be the basis, then the love between husband and wife would fluctuate, based on how much they are giving to and getting, from each other. Giving and taking in marriage usually results in “love for similarities” between each other, and sometimes it can form a “love for differences” (from a subtle perspective), but it surely does not create an intrinsic love between them.

### *The Intrinsic Bond Between The Jewish People and Hashem*

In order to understand these words fully, let us reflect on the root of every ‘bride’ and ‘groom’: the Jewish people and Hashem, whose relationship is compared to that of a marital bond. From analyzing it, we can learn about the nature of the bond between husband and wife.

Who is the ultimate ‘Giver’? The Creator of the world. We are all receiving from Him. He is perfect, He is not lacking for a thing, so He does not receive from us anything. We, His creations, are created full of things that we lack, and it is He who sustains all of us. Hashem is the giver, and we are the receivers.

Are we able to see our Giver? The *possuk* says, “No man can see me and live.”<sup>50</sup> Nobody has ever seen the Creator. We believe in His existence, and there are some who merit to feel His existence in the depths of their heart, but it is impossible to see Him.

When *Chazal* said that “One who gives a gift to his friend must let him know about it,” so that love will be increase between them – let us think: How can love be increased between the ‘Giver’ – Hashem – and His creations, who are His recipients?

The *possuk* says [when we stood by *Har Sinai*], “Face to face Hashem spoke with them.”<sup>51</sup> The love between the Hashem and the Jewish people is to see Him “face to face”, *panim b’panim*. When love is incomplete, it is only “face to back”, *panim b’achor*, or worse, when it is “back to back”, *achor b’achor* – the “giver” is not seen. When Hashem said, “And you shall see My back, but My face cannot be seen,”<sup>52</sup> this was referring to the lower kind of bond, in which love is incomplete, when it is not *panim b’panim* and it is rather *panim b’achor*. The true kind of bond is when it is called *panim b’panim*, “face to face”.

On one hand, we find that when Hashem spoke to us at *Har Sinai*, He spoke to us face-to-face. Elsewhere, the *possuk* says that “For you shall not see any image.” Thus, there are two layers to our bond with our Giver: there is a higher aspect in the bond, which is the “face-to-face” aspect, and there is the lower aspect in the bond, which is “You shall not see.”

What does it mean that “Face to face Hashem spoke with them”, though, if it is impossible to see Hashem? The depth of the matter is, as follows. “Face to face” with Hashem does not mean that we can actually understand the essence of Hashem. All we can know about Him is how He conducts things, and that is how we identify Him and relate to Him.

In our relationship with Hashem, there are different “faces” – sometimes we are shown an illuminating “Face”, and sometimes we are shown a “laughing” Face, etc. But all of these terminologies are not describing His actual essence. The essence of Hashem cannot be seen. It is His ways, however, which we can see; on its highest level, it is called “face to face.”

Compare this to a child who has never seen his father. His father lives in a different country, and there are no ways to communicate with each other. For various reasons, the father is not able to come see his son. But the father can send his son letters, or he can send him money, and show signs of concern for his son. The child sees the ways which how his father is relating towards him, but he doesn’t see his father’s face.

So too, seeing Hashem ‘*panim b’panim*’ means that all we can see is His ways of how He relates to us, but we cannot see Hashem Himself in His full glory.

When a person lives only with “love for similarities”, and along with this he also has “love for differences” – which indeed gives him the ability to contain the tension of two opposites – then his bond with Hashem will be limited to a give-and-take relationship with Hashem. He will feel “face to face” with Hashem only when he feels that he is receiving from Hashem. But when he is suffering, he feels like he is not getting from Hashem, and then his bond with Hashem is greatly weakened. He only wants to get along with Hashem when Hashem is relating to him as “face to face”, when he feels the *he’aras panim* (illuminating countenance) of Hashem; but when is in a time of *hester panim* (concealment) of Hashem, there is no more bond, because there is no more “face.”

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50 *Shemos* 33:20

51 *Devarim* 5:4

52 *Shemos* 33:23

But when a person has a deeper bond with Hashem, a bond in which he doesn't have to feel "face to face" with Hashem always – he can get along with Hashem even when he cannot see His "face" – this represents the level of intrinsic love, which is not based on anything he receives.

*Chazal* said that ever since there has been an increase of those who receive gifts, days have been lessened and years have been shortened. The meaning of this can now be understood on a deeper level: If a person's bond with another is based on how much he receives from the other, then it will depend on if he is receiving or not. When he receives, he feels close to the giver, but when he doesn't receive, he no longer feels a bond. His entire life is based on circumstances, which will not be able to keep him going. It is only intrinsic love, which does not depend on give-and-take, that can enable a bond to last.

We have seen a little about the root of this concept: the relationship between a giver and a receiver. Now we will see how this concept affects us on a broader scale: in all our interpersonal relationships as well.

### *Giving and Taking Are But A Path That Leads To A Greater Goal*

Let's examine the nature of the love that one has for himself. Is this love based on receiving something? No. It is to love oneself, intrinsically. A person loves himself simply because this is who he is. In marriage, husband and wife are meant to become one, as the *posuk* says, "And they shall become one." How do they reach oneness with each other? Earlier<sup>53</sup>, we explained that they can start with ulterior motivations for the sake of arriving at the pure motivations: they can use the love for similarities and the love for differences that they feel towards each other, as a tool to awaken themselves to reach an intrinsic love between them.

Love in marriage cannot last if it based on the give-and-take aspect in the marriage. Rather, it is the [intrinsic] love itself which is the only thing that can build the basis of their marriage. Soon we will explain how, but first we need to simply absorb this concept, that the giving and taking in marriage is but a path, a bridge, that leads to a greater goal. The goal is to reach the intrinsic level of their bond, which goes beyond give-and-take.

We may be familiar with the concept that "man is the giver, and woman is the receiver" in marriage, but this is only scratching the surface. There is a more inner aspect to the bond of marriage. The giving and taking that is present in marriage is on the external layer of the marriage, but the inner layer is to be "one" with each other. In the inner layer, there is no giver and receiver. The giving and receiving are just a path that leads to a greater and more inner goal. Now, we will reflect, on how the acts of giving and taking can indeed lead to the intrinsic love in marriage.

### *The Limits of Giving*

With every couple, there is giving and receiving between them. Let's think about what it means to give and what it means to receive. Does a giver always give, and does a receiver always receive? No. It doesn't work like that always.

Imagine a husband who has the softest heart in the world, who is a very giving person. How much can he give already? There are limits to how good his heart can be. Even if there would be a person

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53 At the end of Chapter One

would have an unlimitedly good heart, he still wouldn't be able to give all the time, because there is not always someone who can receive what he has to give.

For example, a husband might have a desire 100% to buy his wife a \$2,000 piece of jewelry in honor of Yom Tov, but he doesn't have the money. Rabbi Akiva told his wife that if he becomes wealthy, he will buy her a "Jerusalem of gold", but for the time being, he was not able to give it to her then. They were so poor that they slept on mats of straw.

So first of all, the goodness of our heart has its limits; we do not contain in ourselves an endless kind of love. Even when we have love in our hearts, we cannot always actualize it. Besides for the fact that a receiver cannot always get what he wants, the giver cannot either give all that he wishes he could give.

Thus, in every marriage, there is a bond they have based on give-and-take, but there are also times where give-and-take will not be possible. The deeper understanding is that there is also a part of the bond in which one of them cannot receive and the other cannot give. Now we will analyze more deeply each of these two aspects in marriage.

### *Receiving In Marriage*

The lower aspect of the give-and-take aspect in marriage is, understandably, the 'receiving' aspect of it. [When a person is only receiving from the other, this puts him in an obvious disadvantage in the relationship: his entire bond with the giver will be based on receiving, so if he doesn't receive, he stops feeling close to the giver.]

However, even if the receiver is not giving anything back in return, we can still say that this allows for some unity between giver and receiver. We find that there is a certain connection formed between giver and receiver; the giving unifies them together. It is like a bribe, which is called *shochad*. The *Gemara* says that *shochad* is from the word *chad*, one, because the one who is bribed feels like he has become 'one' with whom he is involved with, and that is why he is swayed to find favor in him.

So even though the receiver is losing longevity with the more he receives [as we brought before from the *possuk*], there is still some degree of unity that is formed between him and the giver. Of course, it is a very superficial kind of unity, but we can't say that it is not unity at all.

In fact, even if it would be a case in which the giver is always giving and he never receives anything in return from the receiver, there is still a bond. *Chazal* state that a dog receives from its owner but does not give back anything to its owner<sup>54</sup>, yet there is still a connection that an owner of a dog feels to his dog, even though he has only given to the dog and received nothing from it.

So there is some kind of a connection that will exist between giver and receiver, even when the receiver is 100% a receiver, giving nothing in return. However, it is obviously the lowest form of connection that exists. Why? Because all it does is enhance the ego. It creates some kind of bond, but it blows up the ego of the receiver. It causes the receiver to be entirely concerned for himself, totally consumed by his own needs and nobody else's. The one who comes to give this kind of person what he needs is certainly going to feel some kind of connection with this receiver, so the entire connection is being enabled by the fact that the receiver is totally concerned for himself.

So we have seen how the receiver enables a connection between himself and the giver, even though he is not giving back anything. (When it comes down to practical life, though, this is usually not going

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<sup>54</sup> *Nedarim 24a*

to happen, because there is almost no one who can stand it if they are entirely giving to somebody and they get nothing back in return.)

### *How The Ego Is Present Even In Giving*

The deeper aspect of the give-and-take of marriage is obviously the giving aspect. It seems that the giver in marriage is the perfect level; after all, he keeps giving and giving. There are many people who have good hearts and they have come to a deep recognition that life is not just about taking from others, and that it is about giving to others. Therefore, their aspiration in life is to give and give, all the time, as much as possible.

This nature that can exist in a person – the nature to be entirely giving – is not necessarily a trait that is acquired by people who are very intellectually gifted, or through amassing much knowledge about life. It is not either connected with the root [of the soul], or even the “trunk” [of the soul], for that matter. It is a nature which is even present in gentiles. In any place you go to in the world, you will always be able to find good-hearted people who love to give.

[On a deeper note, however, there is a difference between Jewish giving and non-Jewish giving. Non-Jewish giving can be compared to the case that the *Gemara* brings in which a person says, “I will give charity, so that my son can live.”]

Giving seems to be an entirely altruistic act, which is far removed from any traces of the ego. The proof to this seems to be from the fact that there are people who sacrifice much of their lives and are willing to suffer, just so that they can be able to give to others. Giving seems to be something that always transcends the human ego. When people give selflessly, they feel like they are giving of their own self, to another. The *Gemara* says that stealing another’s money is tantamount to stealing his soul<sup>55</sup>; the reason behind this is because a person feels like his possessions are a part of himself.

So when a person gives money or something he owns to another person, he is really giving away a part of himself, and that is how there is a bond formed between giver and receiver.

Thus, giving money to another does not just mean that there is physical money being given away to another. It feels like he is giving of his own soul to another. We find the concept of giving one’s soul with Rachel Imeinu: when she gave birth to Binyamin, she died from her pains in labor, and the *sefarim hakedoshim* explain that she gave all up her soul to Binyamin, so Binyamin took it, and that was how her soul left her.

So there are different levels of giving, which come from the soul. The deepest level of giving is when a person gives his own soul to another. But even when one is giving up parts of himself to another and not his entire self, there is still a bond formed between giver and receiver, because the giver is giving away parts of himself to the receiver; the giver feels that a part of himself is in the receiver now, and that is why he feels close to him.

Obviously, giving forms a much stronger bond, than the receiver does. However, there is still a drawback to the connection that is formed from giving. If we look deeply into the root of the matter, we can ask: Why does a person give? Most people will say that giving makes them feel good about themselves. Let’s ask the following question: Is there anyone who is prepared to give, if he would only suffer as a result? If we would tell a person “Give a person some of your money, and in exchange, you will be put into a cage”, would he agree?

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<sup>55</sup> *Bava Kamma 119a*

Let's take it further: If we ask a person, "Will you give to your friend, even if you wouldn't feel good about yourself that you gave?" would he agree? Would any person just give *for the sake of giving alone*, even if he gets no good feeling out of it?

### *'Lishmah': Giving When There Is No Personal Gain*

The answer to this is that there is a deep place in our soul which is capable of giving totally for the sake of giving, even when we receive nothing in return. It is possible for a person to give *lishmah*, for the sake of Hashem, such as when the Jewish people were commanded to donate to the *Mishkan*, and they were told to do it "for the sake of My Name." When giving *lishmah*, there is no reason that is motivating me to give. It is a kind of giving that goes above logical understanding.

The kind of giving which we are often familiar with is self-focused. People are usually giving so that they can something back in return; and they want immediate reciprocation. If not that, they will want to receive something in the near future from the receiver, or at least to get some kind of good feeling from it. Most of the acts of giving which we see are usually done with some ulterior agenda.

Thus, we have seen how even giving is not always selfless. The ego is still involved with giving. There is a *possuk*, "I stand between Hashem and between you,"<sup>56</sup> and the *Sfas Emes* interprets this on a deeper level: the "I" in a person is what separates between oneself and his Creator, and it is also what separates one from another. So it is not only the receiver's ego which is getting in the way of a bond between them. It is the ego present in the giver which is also preventing a real bond. As long as the act of giving is not completely altruistic, it erects a barrier in between receiver and giver.

That being the case, not only is it impossible for a relationship to survive based on taking alone, but even giving alone cannot be enough, because the giver also wants to feel good about what he is doing, and this is already a trace of ego which will prevent a true bond from happening between giver and receiver. Of course, it is necessary to give and take. But the acts of giving and taking are only a path that must lead to a greater goal, and they are not a goal unto themselves.

Giving usually stems from love for similarities. People give to those whom they feel a mutual connection with. It can also come from love for differences, because there are people who are more inclined to give only towards those whom they have compassion on, for being so different than them. This is a very common occurrence that we see going on.

But there is a higher and deeper kind of giving which we need to bring forth from ourselves: to give for the sake of giving. We will explain more about this power.

### *Love That Goes Beyond Physical and Emotional Attraction*

The essence of something has no form which we can define. Intrinsic love has no form it takes on; whereas love for similarities and love for differences always take on a certain form. When we reflect into this a little bit, we can see it clearly. It is simple.

Why does there exist an intrinsic level of love, which is not dependent on giving? It is because such love does not depend on any form. When something has a form to it, it can either be a catalyst for love for similarities or love for differences. For this reason, love for similarities and love for differences are

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<sup>56</sup> *Devarim* 5:5

dependent on external factors, so if the factors change, the love goes away with this. The love depends on a certain 'form'. When the 'form' changes, the love changes. In contrast, intrinsic love is not dependent on any form, and that is why it lasts forever.

There are different kinds of 'forms' – physical and emotional. When a person loves his wife based on how she looks or because she has money, he loves her physical form. If he loves her because he feels emotionally attracted to her, because he likes how she thinks, or he likes her personality or her middos, this is a deeper kind of attraction, but it is still love based on some 'form.'

A 'form' can be physical, or it can be spiritual. Examples of a physical form are being attracted to looks, weight, money, etc. Examples of a more spiritual form are: being attracted to character, personality, intelligence, etc. These are all 'forms'.

When love for a spouse is based on her physical looks or on personality traits, this will be either love for similarities or love for differences. It will be love based on some 'form'. But if their love is based on a more inner dimension – when it is based on loving the other just as you love yourself – then such love is not subject to change, just as your actual "I" never changes. We love ourselves not because of our personalities, because even if our personality would change, we would still love ourselves. This is intrinsic love – the kind of love that has no 'form' to it.

### *Gifts To The Poor, On Purim: Revealing Intrinsic Love*

We can now understand better what we discussed in the beginning of this chapter. *Chazal* said that when one gives a gift to his friend, he needs to inform him, so that a bond can be formed between them. This is a kind of bond which is dependent on a certain 'form': the gift which is being given. The love that is formed from such giving is based on a 'form'.

But there is another kind of giving: *tzedakah*, in which it is preferable if the giver and recipient do not know who is giving and who is receiving. It seems that *tzedakah* is not meant to increase love, for it is mainly about providing another's needs, so that another can survive. However, the Baal Shem Tov revealed that when it comes to all other *mitzvos*, one has to do them with some intention of *lishmah*, even amidst his intentions of *shelo lishmah*; but when it comes the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, even if it is given entirely *shelo lishmah*, the *mitzvah* has been fulfilled, because in the end of the day, the poor person has gotten what he needs.

Thus, there is a kind of giving which is about me forming a bond with my recipient, and there is a kind of giving in which I am not giving because I want to form a bond with him: I am giving to him solely so that he can get what he needs, even if we never form a bond. The second kind of giving is the depth that lies behind *tzedakah*.

However, there is also a third kind of giving, which is a synthesis of the aforementioned two levels: *Matanos L'Evyonim*, gifts to the poor, which we give on Purim. Let us think into what lays deep within this *mitzvah*.

When it comes to the *mitzvah* of *Mishloach Manos* on Purim, in which we give presents to our friends, there, it makes sense to let the recipient know that we are giving it, because the point of this *mitzvah* is to increase brotherliness and friendship amongst ourselves. [In contrast, the *mitzvah* of *Matanos L'Evyonim*, giving to the poor on Purim, does not require the giver to inform the recipient that he is giving it]. From a deep perspective, *Matanos L'Evyonim* is not a separate *mitzvah* from *Mishloach Manos*; [it is really the inner purpose of *Mishloach Manos*.] Its purpose is to reveal a sense of oneness with each other on Purim. As Haman said about us, "There is one nation...."

The purpose of *Matanos L'Evyonim* is to reach a love for all Jews with the “intrinsic” kind of love. From that perception, one is meant to give *Matanos L'Evyonim*.

*Mishloach Manos*, though, is about revealing the lower kinds of love [which are also necessary]: love for similarities (and perhaps love for differences, as well); whereas *Matanos L'Evyonim* is about revealing intrinsic love for others.

The miracle on Purim happened because we were “one nation.” Haman wanted to destroy us, thinking he could succeed, due to the fact that we were all concentrated into one unit, so he thought he could easily obliterate us. In the end, it was the very fact that we are “one nation” which saved us.

The *mitzvah* of *matanos l'evyonim* is not included in the regular *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* that we are commanded with throughout the year. During the year, *tzedakah* cannot be fulfilled in the fashion of *matanos l'evyonim*. This is not only because of the rule that “*mitzvos* are not fulfilled in bundles”, but because they are two entirely different kinds of giving.

*Matanos L'evyonim* and *Mishloach Manos*, both *mitzvos* of giving on Purim, are two different aspects of forming a bond with others. *Mishloach Manos* is like the concept of “One who gives a gift to his friend, must let him know about it” – it is about forming a bond with another, and it is a bond which takes on a certain ‘form’. In contrast, *Matanos L'evyonim* is about revealing the intrinsic level of love towards others, for it does not depend on who receives it; as long as it is given. It is about becoming “one nation” – that at our root, we are all unified.

Within our nation, there are of course many people whom we have a hard time tolerating. We see people who have good *middos*, but we also know people with bad *middos*. We know people who say things that we find pleasant to hear, but we also hear people say things which we cannot stomach. Indeed, this is the reality we live with each day. But while it is true that we cannot tolerate certain people, we need to be able to reveal love to even those people.

This is what lies behind *Matanos L'Evyonim*.

### *The Three Levels of Giving*

As we said previously, usually when a person gives a gift, he is not interested in giving something which is of no use. He will usually give something that the receiver needs, something he is missing.

On a broader scale, all of Creation is lacking. Hashem created the world in a way that we are all lacking, and that we need Him. But for what purpose did Hashem make it that way? Is it so that we should have to need Him, so that He will complete what we lack? No. The reason why we are always lacking is because this can serve to form a bond between us, the receiver, with our Giver: Hashem. Let's explain this.

There are three powers of giving in our soul [as we mentioned]:

- 1) There is giving a gift, in which the purpose is to create love between giver and recipient.
- 2) There is giving *tzedakah*/charity, which is to give to one who is lacking; here, the purpose is to give, even if a bond of love is not formed between giver and recipient. For example, you are walking in the street and you see a pauper, and you give him some money, even though you have no idea who he is. You might not ever see him again for the rest of your life. Even so, you

give to him, because you have compassion on him. This is not about love; it is out of compassion (although on a deeper note, compassion is rooted in the emotion of love).

- 3) A third kind of giving is the level in between the above two levels: The fact that another is lacking is what can enable me to bond with him, by giving to him. Thus, the fact that a person is missing something is not simply because his lacking needs to be filled by another. If that would be the reason, it would be *tzedakah*. Rather, the reason why he lacks something is because it can act as a catalyst that will enable unity between giver and recipient.

### *Moving From Shelo Lishmah To Lishmah*

As we explained, it is not possible in reality for a person to only have intrinsic love. We are affected by various external layers in our being, being that we are human and physical, which demands some kind of superficiality in order for us to survive. However, if we take the other extreme – if we base all of our love on love for similarities or on love for differences – this is not either feasible. In fact, it is impossible.

If a person says “If so, I will only have entirely pure motivations in my love, and I will only love my spouse on an intrinsic level”, this is basically denying his physical body, which cannot be done. One day we will hopefully merit to only live through our souls with no body, when the day of the resurrection comes, with the help of Hashem; but for now, we cannot live that way.

We are bound to some physicality, so we must start with *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motivations), with the hope of arriving at *lishmah* (pure motivations). The *lishmah* aspect in marriage is intrinsic love for our spouse, and the *shelo lishmah* aspect is the love we have towards our spouse based on the give-and-take in marriage. They are interrelated. From *shelo lishmah*, we can be lead to *lishmah*.

The external layer (*shelo lishmah*) can always be a tool to help us get to the inner layer (*lishmah*); just as the body is a tool that holds our soul, although it is the complete opposite of the soul. (This is the depth of the true “wonder” of body and soul which [we mention in the blessing of *Asher Yotzar*]).

There is a theme running throughout all of Creation, that opposites unite. The body and the soul are opposites, yet they are united. *Shelo lishmah* and *lishmah* are total opposites of each other, but the rule is that “from *shelo lishmah*, comes *lishmah*.” How can *shelo lishmah* unite with *lishmah*? It is when a person reveals some motivation for *lishmah* amidst even *shelo lishmah*.

With regards to our subject – revealing intrinsic love in marriage – it is when we realize that giving to our spouse can lead us to reveal intrinsic love for our spouse. In this way, the fact that our spouse is missing something is the very catalyst that can bring the giver to awaken his intrinsic love for his spouse. But if the fact that our spouse lacks something is simply seen as an opportunity to give and to fill in what our spouse is lacking in - then even if we give and give to our spouse, it will never bring us to reveal intrinsic love.

### *Incorporating ‘Lishmah’ Into Marriage*

In marriage, and when it comes to raising the children, there is always give-and-take. Each of the family members will always be lacking in certain areas. The children are totally dependent on their parents to give them all that they lack.

When people are superficial, they give because “What else can I do? I have no choice. I got married, I have obligations that it says in the *Kesubah*; it will be impossible to function if I don’t give to them.” When a person is deeper, he will give to his family what they need because he enjoys giving. But what is the purpose that all of this giving is supposed to lead to?

If giving is seen as giving and nothing more than that, we will never reach the purpose of giving! But if we view giving to our spouse as an opportunity to reveal the root of why we give – a kind of giving that stems from our essence – then, the intrinsic level of the bond can shine forth.

Spouses are giving and taking from each other on a daily basis. They will always be missing certain things, whether it is bigger needs such as medical issues, or whether it is smaller needs such as asking for a cup of water. Marriage is an inevitable situation of give-and-take. What is being asked of us is, if we are able to be in touch with the depth behind all of this. What is the reason why we need to give, and what is the reason that we are forced to receive?

Taking, by itself, is clearly a negative trait, as we explained before. However, even giving, when it is just viewed as a desire to give, is not either the purpose. The point of the entire system of give-and-take is meant to give the spouses the tools that will enable themselves to reach intrinsic love towards each other.

This is a matter which needs to be worked on. Usually, a person will give only in a situation where he sees that other person is extremely lacking in something. For example, if a father sees that the child has torn his shoes, he will buy him shoes, because he doesn’t want his child to get wet in the rain. Or, he will simply feel times in which his heart has become more opened, and he feels like giving much more, during those times of elation.

Clearly, neither situation can be the epitome of giving. The point is not to give only when there is a pressing need for it. Nor is giving meant solely for times in which one greatly feels like doing so [because that would mean a very limited amount of giving]. We are supposed to give more often throughout the day.

How? We can give a simple example. Let’s say either the husband or wife wants to buy a present for the spouse, and it costs 200 shekel. He/she is doing so out of feeling a need to give. It would be recommended to spend a little more of the intended amount; for example, be willing to spend another 20 shekel. What is the purpose of this? It is so that you can add on a little extra amount in your giving to go for the sake of giving alone, and not for the sake of buying a present. The little amount of “giving to give” is meant to reveal intrinsic love; it is the point of *lishmah* which you can reveal in the act of giving.

Of course, do not overdo this; don’t spend double the amount of what you were planning to give, or even close to that amount. We are not on such a selfless level. The point is to do something small that is purely for the sake of giving.

Another example: Let’s say a wife wants to buy something for the house, and she asks her husband for some money [we are talking about a home in which the husband is in charge of financial affairs]. Let’s say, for example, that she asks him for 530 shekel to spend. He should give her a little more than what she asked for. In this way, he is not only giving her what she lacks, but he’s also giving her just for the sake of giving.

The point, again, is not to overdo this and give her a lot more money than she asks for. It is rather that in addition to providing for the basic emotional needs of a spouse, it should be coming from your

love; and in addition, make sure to add on a little bit which is purely for the sake of giving. Just give a little bit from yourself, with no motivation of gaining.

But in order to do this act, one has to be aware of the essence of giving in the first place. Giving must be done with this deep awareness, as you are giving. It doesn't come from the mere external act of giving.

Thus, we need to reach all three layers of giving. The first level of giving is to give when someone else lacks something; this is understandable to all. The second level of giving is to give out of love; this is also understandable to anyone, and each person tries to do this, more or less. But the third level of giving is a deeper kind of giving that not all people are aware of. It is to give from our very essence; to give *lishmah*. It can be something small, as long as it is stemming from the depth of the soul.

### *Altruistic Giving*

There is a deep point contained within this concept.

Usually, we are acting from a place in ourselves that is detached from emotion, or from a place that expresses emotion. The third level of giving we have been describing might sound like a kind of giving that is detached from emotion, being that it is not about forming love. That would be true only for someone who has never experienced it.

Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam, in *Sefer HaMaspiq*, writes of a deep point in the soul which is above the point of emotion. When a person worries about himself, this is not an emotion, but an inner sense that stems from his very self. So too, when a person gives to another, he can give of himself to another, which is a deeper kind of giving than when he gives out of emotion for another.

Hashem gives to us unconditionally, unlike people, who only give when they are in the mood. There are couples who have to wait for their spouse to be in the right mood, in order to ask for something they really want. This is the situation when there is no intrinsic level of giving in marriage, and the giving does not go beyond love for similarities and love for differences.

But there is a kind of giving which can come from one's very essence. Whenever we give, we need to get used to doing a little bit extra in the giving that will be purely for the sake of giving from our essence. It can be a small amount of money, or a small act, that expresses this kind of giving. It is to give with the mindset that "I am giving, just for the sake of giving."

A great example of this kind of giving is brought in the words of the Rambam, and soon we will try to make this practical in day-to-day life. If, for example, a person has 1000 shekel and he wants to give it to *tzedakah*, he has two choices – either he can give it all of it to one needy person, which will surely help him, or he can 1 shekel to a thousand needy people. Which is better?

Logic would dictate that it is better to give all 1000 shekel to one person, because that is helping him, whereas giving 1 shekel to a thousand people does not help even one of them. However, the Rambam says that it's better to give 1 shekel to each of the 1000 people! What is the reasoning of this? It is a deep point, and we will try to explain it and make it practical with regards to the home.

Earlier, we brought an example of a wife who asks her husband for 530 shekel. If he gives her 700 shekel, that shows that he is giving to her out of a deeper kind of giving. She needs 530, so he is giving her the 530 in order to give her what she needs, and in addition to that, he is also giving her another 170 shekel. When he gives her another 170 shekel, which is a substantial amount, he is giving it to her

because he knows that she can do something with the money. This added amount shows his love for her.

If he would give her 1 more shekel than what she asked for, though, this would seem pointless, because there is nothing she can do with 1 shekel. However, although it does not help her, there is a deep reason why he should give her that extra shekel. It is so that he can learn how to give from his essence, to just give for the sake of giving.

With giving an extra 170 shekel, he is giving it to her because he thinks she can use the money, so it doesn't reveal the selfless kind of giving. It reveals love in his giving, but it doesn't reveal the power of giving for the sake of giving, which is deeper than giving out of love.

Thus, giving her that 1 extra shekel, although it does not help her at all, can get him used to the idea of giving just for the sake of giving, even when it is not needed, and even when it does not cause more love. There is no expression of love in giving her an extra shekel, because it has almost no value. But it has a much deeper value: it represents the idea of giving from your essence.

### *The Depth Behind Giving and Taking In Marriage*

This does not mean to imply that there is no point in the simple give-and-take aspect of marriage. The point is not for a husband to leave a present for his spouse and sign a different name than his on the box so that his wife won't find out that it is him who is giving it.

Rather, what we are getting at is that a person needs to reveal a point in his soul in which he gives altruistically, for the sake of giving something. When a person gives and he does not know whom he is giving to, and neither does the receiver know who is giving it to him, this is like *tzedakah*. The external aspect of *tzedakah* is to give anonymously, so that the recipient won't be ashamed; but the deeper aspect in *tzedakah* is to get used to giving, for the sake of giving.

If I give to another because I feel that the other person needs what I am giving him, this is like *tzedakah*. If I feel that I am giving a gift, the whole purpose has been defeated, because the whole purpose of giving a gift is to form a bond, and here the giver and receiver do not know that they are giving and receiving from each other. If so, what is the purpose in giving *matanos l'evyonim*?

In every act of giving, there is always an aspect of "One who gives a gift to his friend, must let him know about it." This is the "*shelo lishmah*" aspect in the soul which is always present; the more a person gives with the proper mindset we have described, this is the ideal situation. It is the natural way which we can use to foster a sense of brotherliness and friendship with others; and in marriage as well.

But beyond this level, is the inner kind of giving: to give to another even when the recipient has no idea who is giving it to him, and he thinks he is receiving a gift! This is the deep concept that lays behind the give-and-take aspect that is so common in marriage. The inner perspective which husband and wife need to have towards giving is, to understand, that even the external acts of giving can be used as a tool, to bring us to the intrinsic love for our spouse – which is independent of the give-and-take.

### *The Roles of Being a Giver and Receiver*

In the beginning of this chapter, it was explained that there is a love that is formed through receiving from another, and there is love formed through giving to another. When it comes to day-to-day life in marriage, each of the spouses is always giving and receiving. Sometimes, we are leaning

towards one direction over the other, but we are never totally self-centered, nor are we totally giving. We are always cycling back and forth between giving and receiving.

Why is it this way? From a superficial perspective, it is because if spouses do not give to each other and they do not receive from each other, the home would not be able to survive. But the deeper reason why it has to be this way is because we are always switching back forth between the two modes, and that is how we are designed. Sometimes, we are even giving and taking at the same moment. Our marriage is purposely designed that way, so that our love will not be limited to just giving or just receiving; as we have explained, neither of these alone can fulfill the purpose of marriage.

If the purpose of marriage was to reach the love that we feel from giving, that would mean that all we should do in marriage is to just give, give, and give; and that taking is nothing but a selfish aspect of man. Being that marriage makes us always give and receive, it must be that giving is not the purpose.

To understand it deeper, as we explained before, a person cannot always give, nor should he always receive. Many times, we want to give, and we find that we cannot. What is the reason for this? The external reason is because we simply do not have what to give, in such situations. But what is the reason that Creation is designed like this?

It is because if the purpose of everything is giving, we would have to always be giving, and then we would find that we cannot always give. “More than the calf wants to nurse, the cow wants to feed.” The giver actually wants to give more than what the receiver wants.

Why is it this way? It is because we are supposed to come to the understanding that the purpose is not giving. Giving is but a tool which enables us to reach the intrinsic level of love, for our spouse.

In summary: in whatever we need to do *externally* in our marriage, it is upon us to uncover the depth of it – to reveal the *essence* that is behind it.

*Part One Chapter Nine**1.9 | Responsibilities In Married Life**Three Aspects of The Roles Between Husband and Wife*

It has been explained until now that the purpose of man in general, and the Jewish home specifically, is to reveal *echad*, “oneness”. All aspects of marriage – and on a broader scale, all aspects of our life – exist so that we can reveal a state of unity within Creation. Now we will try to learn about another facet of marriage, in which the goal is also to reveal *echad*.

It is written, “*It is good for a man to bear a burden in his youth*”.<sup>57</sup> Chazal said that this is referring to the *ol ishab*, the husband’s responsibility to carry his wife<sup>58</sup>. The wife is called עול, *ol*, a “yoke”, whom he must carry.

On a deeper note, the word עול, “*ol*” can also be read על, “*al*”, “on”, implying something which is placed “on” the person and thus “above” the person. Thus, the fact that the wife is called an “*ol*” upon the husband is only one side to the coin; there is another side to the coin here, which we will explain.

Marriage between man and woman is compared to the relationship between the Creator and His Creations; in particular, with the Jewish people. It is written, “*Open for me, my sister, my friend, my dove, my wholesome one.*”<sup>59</sup> The *Midrash*<sup>60</sup> compares this relationship to a king who had an only daughter, whom he loved very much, and he would call her ‘My daughter’. He loved her so much that he then called her ‘My sister’, and then he loved her so much that he called her ‘My mother’.

The depth behind this matter is that in every relationship between two sides, there are always three possible ways to relate:

- (1) When they are both of equal status;
- (2) When one of them is ‘above’ the other one in status,
- (3) And vice versa.

In marriage as well, there are three different aspects of the relationship between husband and wife.

There is an aspect of both of them being equal status. We find a hint to this from the concept of *ben sorer u'moreh* (the wayward child), who is only punished if his father and mother have the “same” voice, appearance, and height.<sup>61</sup> (There is an argument in the Gemara if it ever happened in history). So we find a concept of the husband and wife being the “same”; similar to the concept of “Two kings, who are both wearing one crown.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Eichah* 3:27

<sup>58</sup> *Eichah Rabasi* 3:9

<sup>59</sup> *Shir HaShirim* 5:2

<sup>60</sup> *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 3:2

<sup>61</sup> *Sanhedrin* 71a

<sup>62</sup> *Editor’s Note: This statement of Chazal refers to the sun and moon, who had ruled equally in the beginning of Creation, before the moon was decreased.*

However, we find an opposite concept from this as well. After the sin of Adam and Chavah, the curse that woman received was “*And he shall rule over you.*” For this reason, the husband is called “*baal*”, from the word “*al*”, for he is “above” the wife, in certain aspects. When someone is a “*baal*” over his money, it means he is in charge of his money. A *baalim* owner is someone who is *al* above what he owns, thus he is in charge of it.

Then we find a third possibility in marriage, in which woman is “above” the man. It is written about woman, “*A woman of valor, is a crown to her husband.*”<sup>63</sup> A crown is placed above the head, as we know. Being that woman is called the ‘crown’ of her husband, there is an aspect of the wife being “above” the husband.

So we have identified three possibilities that exist in the relationship between spouses: An aspect in which they are both equal to each other, an aspect in which the husband is above the wife, and an aspect in which the wife is above the husband.

When it comes to the aspect of the husband being above the wife – “*And he shall rule over you*” – this is the opposite of the concept of “*ol*”, because “*ol*” implies that the wife is above the husband [and that is why he must bear her as a responsibility upon him]. From the perspective of “*ol*”, it is the wife who is “above” the husband.

Let us try to understand what these concepts will imply.

### *If Husband and Wife Are Of Different Status, How Can They Unify?*

Adam and Chavah, in their original state, were unified. “*Man woman He created them, and He blessed them, and He called their names, “adam (man).”*” When man and woman were originally one, they were of equal status; neither of them was ‘above’ the other, for they were one.

After the separation that was created from sin, if they would have returned to their original state of “*one flesh*”, there would be no concept of higher or lower status between them. But once they viewed themselves as separate entities, as opposed to a unified existence, it created the possibility of each of them being ‘above’ [or below] the other.

Thus, in all marriages, there are three aspects. The inner aspect is the unified, “equal” status that they share. The outer aspect of marriage is the possibility of either the husband being above the wife, or of the wife being above the husband.

The inner point of the bond, in which they are of equal status, clearly allows for unity between them. But the external aspect of the marriage – the fact that they are different from each other, two separate beings - seems to be an obstacle to prevent their unity.

The purpose of marriage is to for husband and wife to reveal the state of *echad* between them; this makes sense when viewed from the “equal” status they both share. The fact that there is this “equal” status deep down is obviously the great catalyst that leads to *echad*. But in fact, even the external aspect of the relationship, which is their different status, can also serve to bring them to *echad*.

There is a statement in Chazal, “From the wound itself, comes the recovery.” The damaged aspect of the marriage is the fact that they are two separate beings, the fact that one of them can be ‘above’ the other at different times; it seems to totally prevent the idea of unity between husband and wife. Yet, it

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<sup>63</sup> *Mishlei 12:4*

is those differences, which contain a great spiritual light that can enable them to reach the state of *echad*.

We will need to understand this of course: How it is that their difference in status can serve to unify them?

### *Bearing The Yoke of Marriage: The Way To Arrive At Intrinsic Love*

“*It is good for man to bear a yoke in his youth*” – Chazal said that is referring to the ‘yoke of marriage’. Man has to bear his wife as a ‘yoke’ placed upon him, which places her ‘above’ him, in this sense. On the other hand, woman has to deal with “*And he shall rule over you*”, and in this sense, she bears her husband as a ‘yoke’ upon her whom she must accept.

How can the *ol* (yoke) of marriage bring husband and wife to become unified?

As we mentioned in the past, there are three layers of love in marriage: *ahavas hashoneh* (love for differences), *ahavas hadomeh* (love for similarities), and *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love). The external kinds of love, *ahavas hashoneh* and *ahavas hadomeh*, have one thing in common: they are both loves about what I find comfortable (in similar attraction, I love the other because he\she is similar to, thus more enjoyable, and with opposite attraction, I love the other’s differences because it completes what I don’t have, which is also enjoyable). Those kinds of love are the opposite of the concept of “*ol*”, [because “*ol*” is to bear the burden of responsibility, whether you find it comfortable or not.]

“*Ol*” cannot be accomplished through either *ahavas hadomeh* or *ahavas hashoneh*. If I am accepting the responsibility of bearing the yoke that marriage is, I am not doing so because it’s enjoyable or refreshingly challenging to do so. The ability of “*ol*” [bearing responsibility] is the power in the soul to deal with something even when it is not comfortable for me to do so.

It seems that “*ol*” is nothing but a burden upon us, something which we have to endure. After all, when we say that people “throw off the ‘*ol* (yoke) of Torah and *mitzvos*’, it is because they felt too restricted by the “*ol*” of the Torah, so they did not want it.

However, there is a deeper understanding of “*ol*”. The possuk says that “it is good for man to bear a yoke (*ol*) in his youth”, because if a person were to only connect with things that he finds enjoyable, that would mean that he does not connect to things which he doesn’t find enjoyable, and then he would have no concept of connecting to something on an intrinsic level. He would only know of love for similarities (*ahavas hadomeh*) or love for differences (*ahavas hashoneh*), so all of his connections would be completely based on various circumstances, and never intrinsic (*etzem*).

How, indeed, can a person reach *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love)? It is by accepting any given situation as it is, no matter what price will come along with it; whether it’s refreshing or whether it’s challenging, whether it’s a big responsibility or a small one. By always being willing to connect, through being willing to bear the “*ol*” yoke [of being responsible towards our spouse], we are able to bring ourselves closer to revealing *ahavas etzem*.

As long as a person has not yet reached the ability to accept a given situation as it is, and he can only work hard when he finds it to be refreshing or enjoyably challenging, then he doesn’t gain the resilience to handle the responsibilities of life. Anything he does enjoy and love doing is subject to change; once he stops enjoying what he’s doing, he slackens off from being responsible towards that thing.

Without the ability of “*ol*”, a person is not able to be loyal and firm towards what he is connected to. He will only connect to things that he finds comfortable and enjoyable. And since those things can always change, he will not always find everything to be comfortable, and his love falls away with that.

But when a person reveals the power in the soul of “*ol*” – to accept something *as it is* – he gains the power of loyal connection to something. He will be able to remain connected to what he is responsible for, no matter how uncomfortable it gets. This is because “*ol*” gives a person the power to always be connected. From there, a person can reach intrinsic love towards that which he strives to be connected to.

### *Responsibility Vs. Comfort and Pleasure*

It is written, “*Man was born to toil*”,<sup>64</sup> and this began after the sin; before the sin, man was not born to “toil”. Man’s original task was to stay in Gan Eden, and all he had to do was to “work it” and “protect it” – there was no hard work required. There was no work, but it wasn’t hard work.

To illustrate, compare this to a person walking to a wedding; he comes to the hall sweating from walking there. But he enjoyed walking there, because he is going to a wedding. His exertion to get there cannot be called hard work, for he was happy to do so.

The work which we see in our times is hard work, but there is a kind of work which does not involve hard work. An example of hard work is like what went on in Egyptian slavery, that the men were given women’s labor and the women were given men’s labor. When a person does something that is natural for him to do, such as an artist painting a picture, he can do so for 10 hours straight yet not feel like he is working hard. He is working, but he is not working hard.

When Adam and Chavah were originally in Gan Eden, they were naturally connected with each other, and there was no concept of “*ol*” yet. There was no need for “*ol*”. They had *ahavas etzem* with each other.

When they had to leave Gan Eden, their love became external, on the level of *ahavas hadomeh* (love for similarities) and *ahavas hashoneh* (love for differences). This was a result of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, when they sought something that was both appealing and different. Ever since then, in order to get back to the level of *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love), we need to go through “*ol*” [accepting responsibility in marriage]: as it is written of the tribe Yissocher, “*And he rested his shoulder in order to endure.*”

Our very nature is that we are drawn towards what’s comfortable and pleasant for us; towards the things we love. 99% of people pursue what’s comfortable. One who learns Torah might also be drawn towards seeking only what’s more ‘comfortable’ for him to learn, perhaps bringing proof to this from the statement in Chazal, “A person does not learn Torah except in a place where his heart desires.” All of a person’s life is centered around what he desires and enjoys.

Although there are such statements in Chazal that pleasure is necessary, that is true only if pleasure as seen as a *part* of life, not *all* of life. We were not born to only suffer and endure, but neither were we born to only have pleasure. (In the next chapter, with Hashem’s help, we will define the role of pleasure in life and in marriage).

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64 *Iyov* 5:7

A person ends up suffering when he can only connect with ‘love for similarities’ and ‘love for [minimal] differences’, because when the time comes that he will be placed in a situation that’s not comfortable, he won’t be able to handle it.

The purpose of marriage, as we have explained, is to reach the intrinsic point between husband and wife. The way to get there is through getting used to accepting situations as they are, without trying to change the situation. In fact, it is to let go of any desire to change the situation. It is for one to say, “I am accepting the situation given to me, as it is, and I will not try to change it.”

We have described here a very deep and subtle concept.

### *True Freedom Is Reached Through Keeping Limits*

The concept of “*ol*” – bearing the yoke of responsibility – is a theme that runs commonly throughout all of our life. “*Man is born to toil.*” It is especially true in marriage; as we have explained earlier, both husband and wife have to bear the other as a ‘yoke’ (“*ol*”) upon them. The husband must bear the burden of marriage upon him, and the wife must bear the fact that her husband is in charge.

However, the responsibilities of marriage are only a part of the marriage; it isn’t everything. We can all understand that a person cannot work for 24 hours, for 7 days a week. We have six days of the week for labor, and a seventh day for Shabbos, where we do not work. So too, our *soul* requires both aspects – to work, as well as the ability to “not” work. [Soon we will explain what this will imply].

But although this is true, we must understand that our responsibilities in life, which limit us and restrain us, are essential for our survival. Without accepting responsibilities, a person can only connect with situations that are to his liking or if they are refreshingly challenging; if it is neither of these, he doesn’t feel responsible.

In extreme cases of this problem, there are parents who cannot handle raising a child who is handicapped in any way, so they leave him in the street, Heaven forbid. This is a dramatic example of what happens when a person only enjoys what he’s comfortable with.

With “love for similarities” or “love for differences” alone, a person never arrives at the intrinsic level of connection to another. Intrinsic love for a spouse is only reached when a person is ready to accept responsibilities in life; that is what enables him to love his spouse on an intrinsic level.

Thus, it is the ability of “*ol*” (bearing the yoke of responsibility) that is needed in order for a person to reach *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love).

### *The Will For Freedom*

The deep essence of our soul is a place of freedom, where there are no limitations. (We can’t live in that place totally, however). In order to reach our essence, we can only get there through first accepting the limitations we need in our life.

The big mistake that many people make is that they are seeking freedom from limitations, which is actually a deep power that comes from the soul, and are using this power in the wrong place. We will explain what this is.

We see that the world enjoys vacations. Vacations are about going free from the normal constraints of life. In essence, vacations are not a bad thing. They are actually a good thing, when they are not overdone. But there is a very big mistake people make about vacations.

The need for vacation really comes from a deep desire in our soul to reach the Endless. Deep down, we all want to go free from our human limitations and soar into the endlessness of the Divine. We wish to reach a place of endlessness, where there are no limits anymore, where nothing is holding us back from anything. This is a deep desire in our soul, and it is proper and holy, but the problem is when people don't realize that they are using it for the wrong reasons.

Compare this to the following. Imagine if a man walks into the house and sees his wife cooking in the kitchen. He smells the aroma of the supper cooking, and it smells very good to him, so he quickly takes some food from the pot and eats it. He doesn't even bother to see if it's cooked or not. He has a desire for the food, he wants to eat it, and now. Not only hasn't he eaten real food, but he will get a stomachache from it. Just because the food gave off a good aroma doesn't mean he should eat it now! He has to wait until the food is fit for consumption.

The lesson we want to take out from this is as follows. The good 'aroma' which vacations give off is certainly coming from a true place. It is coming from the desire of the soul to reach the Endlessness of G-d, where there are no restraints. We came from that place of endlessness, and it is upon us to return to there. But the way to return to that place of 'no boundaries' is precisely through the boundaries which we are given.

When the desire for the endless is misunderstood, it becomes a desire to break the rules that are necessary for us to keep. When a person doesn't understand his need for freedom, he will come to use it in the wrong places, breaking all the rules, until he uproots all of the Torah, G-d forbid. After that, he'll dismiss all decent human behavior, because he has no rules anymore. He feels that his need for freedom must be expressed, being that he recognizes this deep need of the soul, but he has twisted it around for evil purposes. It becomes a false ideology in his life.

It came from a good place in himself, but it was used in the wrong place! He has realized the need for freedom and he is adamant that it be expressed. If such a person were to see his small son drinking something that is dangerous for him, according to his line of thinking, he should really say, "Why not? His freedom needs to be expressed!"

Every power is fine only when used in its proper place. The desire itself to enjoy freedom is a good desire, and it is a true need we have, and perhaps we can even say that it is the deepest of all our needs. But when it becomes used by the physical body, or by the lower layers in our soul which are closer to physicality, this deep desire for freedom will become misinterpreted and misused.

Some people will use it as an excuse to go on a trip outside Israel and make money, and some do worse things.

The need for freedom comes from our soul, and it is meant to be used with our soul, not our body. Our body needs toil. Of course, the body should not either become stifled, and it also requires a bit of freedom from restraints. But the point is that a person first needs to identify where his need for freedom is coming from. It does not come from the body – it comes from the soul.

That being the case, we are not able to survive on just *ahavas hadomeh* ("love for similarities") and *ahavas hashoneh* ("love for differences") alone. We need the harmonious blend of both freedom and limitations, and that is how we reach *ahavas etzem*.

### *Keeping Limits Can Bring Us To The Unlimited*

When the need for freedom becomes used by the physical body, it manifests as either love for similarities or love for differences, which we spoke of.

This mixes together two opposing powers and creates a contradiction: the need for freedom, which is to go free from constraints, being used by the body, which requires constraints in order to survive. The physical body in us needs to be restrained by certain limits; our body cannot withstand everything, therefore, it needs limits so that it will not go too far and be harmed.

Therefore, if a person tries to bring the power of the unlimited into his body - which is limited by its very nature – he has damaged the entire structure of his body.

Our soul, itself, has the power to reach the unlimited, to have no limits. Our body, though, needs limits. Therefore, limits allow our body to be protected, and through keeping those limits, we are enabled to reach the essence of the soul, in which there are no limits. How? It is because limits enable us to accept something as it is, without trying to change it. This gives us the power to reach the intrinsic level of love for our spouse, and to go beyond the level of love for similarities and love for differences.

This is really the message behind the 365 negative commandments of the Torah: to accept rules. The question is: how can keeping to limits bring us to the unlimited, when these are clearly two opposing concepts? We can understand that the 248 positive mitzvos bring us to Endlessness, because by doing actions, they allow us to expand endlessly. But how do the 365 negative commandments help us reach the Endlessness, when they clearly restrain us and don't let us expand?

According to what we have explained here, it actually works the opposite way. It is through the very limitations we keep to – being ready to accept our given situations, no matter what price comes along with it – that we can go beyond the level of love for similarities and differences, which reveals the ability of unrestrained spiritual light, the essence of the soul.

### *Bearing The Yoke of Responsibility: Acceptance of a Situation, "As It Is"*

Now let's think how this concept will apply to marriage.

The reality is, that there is no such thing as a home in which we do not feel opposition towards our responsibilities. However, what we need to realize is that these responsibilities are necessary for us. If a person does not have the ability to bear responsibilities, we can compare this to a farmer who plants on unfertile ground. In whatever he plants, the water will come and wash away anything he has planted, and nothing will remain of his work.

What is the 'spark of truth' which we need to start out with so that we can build our marriage? The rule is, "from *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motivations), comes *lishmah* (pure motives)"; however, even in the beginning stage, when we are involved with *shelo lishmah*, there must always be a spark of *lishmah* accompanying it. We explained earlier that from *ahavas hashoneh* (love for differences) and *ahavas hadomeh* (love for similarities), we can eventually come to reveal *ahavas etzem* for our spouse, but we must have reveal at least a little bit of *ahavas etzem* already at the start.

What is the *etzem* (intrinsic point) which we need to reveal to start with? It is the ability to accept something as it is!

To work on this practically, each person should take one thing in his home which bothers him, and accept its reality, with no attempt at trying to oppose it.

This won't be accomplished just through refraining from mentioning it to the spouse (and definitely not through the worse option, through actively fighting about it, *chas v'shalom*). The point is to take one thing in the home that bothers you and to come to terms of acceptance with it, and to feel towards it, "I accept it as it is." By getting used to this power of acceptance, a person can reach the *etzem*, the 'intrinsic' aspect, of marriage.

Hashem loves the Jewish people, even at a time when "they are not doing His will." Although the relationship with Hashem suffers when we sin, Hashem still has a love for us, accepting us as we are. So too, with regards to us, when we want to reveal the deep point in our soul of *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love) for our spouse, there is only one fundamental way to do it: by uncovering the ability to be able to accept something, as it is.

Let us emphasize again that we cannot live with this perspective 100%. It is impossible for a person to live with nothing but accepting boundaries in his life, for it would deny any sense of freedom in the person, and this would be too emotionally draining. But the other extreme is also detrimental: if a person has 100% freedom from boundaries, this is an improper way of living, and we can see in our times what results from this "no restrictions" attitude towards raising children.

A person is hopeless in life if he is raised with no boundaries. Perhaps the soul is fine if we don't place any boundaries on it, but the physical body which we possess cannot be trained to live properly if it has never gotten used to boundaries. (There is a deep point in our soul which connects to the Endless, where there are no limitations, and that part of ourselves is disassociated from any boundaries; but as for the rest of the parts in our soul, which are not bound with the Endless, there must be rules to keep to; "fear of Heaven upon them.")<sup>65</sup>

Thus, it should be clear that marriage gives us the opportunity to accept boundaries, which is a basic and necessary power. This is not merely another 'side point' to be aware of; it is essential. The less a person has acquired the ability to accept boundaries, he won't be able to reach intrinsic love towards his spouse.

### *The Joy In Accepting Boundaries*

Therefore, we can view our responsibilities in life with this fundamental change of perspective.

When a person recognizes that there are certain responsibilities of life, there are two possible reactions he might have. One way he might react is by feeling opposing towards it – "like a child running away from school." Indeed, when a person first begins to bear responsibility, he would rather not have it. But there is a kind of responsibility a person bears which he can find enjoyable to keep to.

Although we derive pleasure from our soul's power to go free from constraints, and this pleasure of the unlimited is what can spring us on to seek the Endless, there is also a kind of pleasure we can derive from keeping to limits. It is the ability to accept something as it is, without wishing we could change it.

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<sup>65</sup> For further elaboration on this concept, refer to *Reaching Your Essence #05 – The Balance Between Limits And Freedom*

This is not simply a pleasure derived from the fact that there are limitations. It is rooted in Endlessness: the light of the Endless does not oppose anything, for all is contained in it. This is the secret behind boundaries as well.

It seems that there is no pleasure to be derived from having boundaries, and that pleasure can only be received from a feeling of freedom. But when a person realizes (first in his mind and then to internalize with his heart) that boundaries are necessary for his survival, he will find that he can actually derive life-giving vitality from those boundaries.

There is a statement in Chazal, “*Even if they were to abandon Me, at least My Torah they keep*” – through studying the Torah, the light in it [of the Torah] will return them to good.”<sup>66</sup> How does keeping the Torah ensure that a person will be good? The depth of this matter is that through keeping the Torah, boundaries are created, and the person accepts those boundaries as they are; through that, a person connects to the essence of the Torah, where the Creator is revealed. By connecting to that point, a person derives pleasure from the very boundaries he is keeping to – he enjoys the *oLyoke*.

### *Marriage Enables Boundaries*

A wife is called *chomah*, “wall”, by our Sages<sup>67</sup>; this is based on the possuk, “*Woman surrounds man.*”<sup>68</sup> What is the meaning of this?

We can see this in physical terms: a single man, unmarried, has no surroundings to hold him in any given place. A boy, before he gets married, is free to roam wherever he wants, with almost no boundaries. One day he gets married, and now he finds that he cannot go anywhere he wants. This happens to every single man who gets married, and some have it more, while others have it less: he suddenly finds himself restricted. There are now responsibilities, he is tied to another’s schedule, and he cannot always leave the house.

Many newlyweds find the beginning of marriage to be very hard, when they realize that they cannot go anywhere whenever they want anymore, and it feels imprisoning. A boy before he got married was used to going various places, whenever he wanted; there were no boundaries placed on him, for the most part. Suddenly, there are boundaries upon him, which obligate him to stay where he is.

But the true perspective to view this situation is, to realize that boundaries are necessary in our life - in order for us to reach the Endless (the “*EinSof*”<sup>69</sup>). One way of how we reach the Endless is by uncovering our own endlessness that is deep within the soul, while the other side of the coin in reaching the Endless is to accept the limitations placed on our physical body.

The boundaries placed on our body are really what enable us to survive. When Hashem created the world, He first made a contraction (*tzimtzum*) in Himself, so to speak, to allow for space to make the Creation. In terms of practical relevance for us, being that we have an *avodah* to come to “resemble” Hashem (“*hevay domeh lo*” – “You shall resemble Him”), in order to reach the *EinSof* it is upon us to “contract” ourselves, as it were, by setting boundaries for ourselves. We need the boundaries which Hashem has already built into Creation, and we need physical boundaries as well – the rules of life which we recognize.

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66 *Eichah Rabbah: 2*

67 *Yevamos 62a*

68 *Yirmiyahu 31:21*

69 *Otherwise known as ohr Ein Sof, “The Infinite Light of Hashem”*

Boundaries allow our souls to thrive. When we have proper boundaries, we are contained, and we can enjoy the security of being stable and contained by the boundaries and limits which we do not cross.

When the Jewish people received the Torah, Hashem placed the mountain in the air on top of them so that they would acquiesce<sup>70</sup>. The *Rishonim* asked: why was this necessary? Didn't they already say "*Naaseh V'Nishmah*" (We will do, and we will hear), which showed that they accepted the Torah willingly? Why was it necessary to now force them? There are several answers, but the answer that is along the lines of our discussion is, that their first acceptance of the Torah was to accept limitations placed upon them by the Torah. Now that they had accepted the Torah's rules, their physical bodies could become purified and rectified.

Without purifying oneself already on this world, the body is rectified only through death, where it decays and becomes spread out into the dust of the earth that it came from [except for the "*luz*" bone]. But with *tzaddikim*, their bodies stay intact, as is well-known. Why is it that they merit this? It is because they succeeded in rectifying their body already on this world, by keeping to the Torah's boundaries so well; therefore, their body need not undergo the process of decay in order to become rectified.

### *Bearing Responsibility: The Root of A Vibrant Home*

All of this describes a very deep perspective on life, and it can affect the way we actually live our life as well.

Every person has many responsibilities – in life in general, and in marriage especially. We are familiar with all our chores we need to do. And when the family gets bigger with more children, *Baruch Hashem*, the responsibilities only increase, and the burden of the home becomes heavier.

How can we view the burden of responsibility in our home? On one hand, a burden tests our strength and causes us to groan about it; "A groan breaks half the body".<sup>71</sup> At the same time, however, the responsibility of bearing the yoke of the home is an opportunity for you to receive a great, inner, spiritual light.

Chazal said that a groan breaks half the body, which resembles death, because the Gemara says, "What is the difference to me if it is entirely dead or half dead?"<sup>72</sup> So it feels like a degree of death. But on the other hand, a person can receive life-giving vitality from these responsibilities, because these responsibilities place boundaries in his life, and a person needs those boundaries in order to live properly.

There seems to be a contradiction. On one hand, it is written, "*See life with the woman whom you love*",<sup>73</sup> and this implies that a person derives an enjoyable kind of life-giving vitality from being married. On the other hand, Chazal said that "*It is good for man to bear a burden in his youth*" that this refers to the bearing the yoke of marriage, which implies that marriage is mainly about burden, not pleasure. So the basic question we need to ask is: Is the home\marriage a source of life-giving vitality to us, which is pleasure – or is it a place to endure responsibility?

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<sup>70</sup> See *Shabbos 88a*; and *Tosafos ibid*

<sup>71</sup> *Berachos 58a*

<sup>72</sup> *Bava Kamma 65a*

<sup>73</sup> *Koheles 9:9*

The answer is, that the *'ol* (yoke) of marriage is not referring to a 'yoke' you place on a donkey or cow, which is a burden. The yoke of marriage is what can be a very source of vitality to a person! Through the yoke of marriage, the physical body is able to achieve its rectification.

The relationship between husband and wife is an emotional relationship, but it also includes the physical. Unlike other interpersonal relationships we have, in which the physical aspect is a much weaker aspect in the relationship, marriage makes heavy use of the physical aspect<sup>74</sup>. The deep reason for this is because the physical body is rectified only when we keep to its boundaries.

But if we were to view life as being solely about pleasure, on one hand this would feel like freedom, but it would be an escape from the proper boundaries which we need, and ultimately detrimental in the long run.

When we learn how to receive enjoyment from the fact that there are certain rules and limitations in our life, the home can then succeed. Sometimes, situations arise in which the home feels very stressful, and it becomes too much to bear, and in such a case, it is not practical to try and derive enjoyment from the responsibilities. But generally speaking, the responsibilities of running the home are needed for the home, and they can provide us with life-giving vitality.

### *The Shechinah In The Home: Meriting The Infinite Light of Hashem Upon Our Existence*

When a person learns to accept the responsibilities that boundaries place on him, he merits a true and deep kind of freedom of his soul.

The *ohr Ein Sof* (the Infinite Light of Hashem) must ultimately be brought into one's soul and penetrate, and it must also be allowed to spread onto the physical body as well. As long as a person has not yet learned how to accept the idea of responsibility – *kabalas ol* – then the Infinite Light of Hashem will only go so far as his soul, but it will not penetrate into his body.

It will feel like a massive, inner contradiction: he will try to shine the light of the soul upon the body by seeking to escape the body's limits, and what will happen from this is that he will come to throw off all yoke of responsibility altogether. We see this unfortunately taking place in our times, very often. It was also a problem in previous generations, but it was much less common in those times.

But when the soul is given some space to roam free, and the person also makes sure along with this to keep to the body's limits, and he is enjoying keeping the rules because he understands how important it is to keep to rules and limitations, it is then that a person will merit to have the Infinite Light of Hashem shined upon both his soul and body.

This is the secret behind the *achdus* (unity) which is at the core of the Jewish home. As is well-known, Avraham Avinu is called *neshamah* (the soul) and Sarah Imeinu is called *guf* (the body). Every marriage is comprised of "man", who is called *neshamah*, and "woman", who is called *guf*. A deep point lays in this. As we have said already, it is upon to shine the Infinite Light of Hashem upon our *neshamah*, as well as onto our *guf*. Where do we get this opportunity? In the home!

When husband and wife are unified, it is like the body and soul unifying, which reveals the Infinite Light of Hashem upon man – including his physical body.

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<sup>74</sup> *The role of physicality in marriage will be explained in the next chapter.*

A house has walls, which hints to the boundaries that define a home. A person needs a home to stay in; he needs walls, boundaries, to keep himself inside somewhere, and that is what he considers to be a 'place' that can house him. The average person cannot handle being homeless, sleeping every night on park benches, with no walls to protect him and house him.

With a physical house, its walls define it as a home, because it enables boundaries. The boundaries of a place make it into a "place". This, too, is what expresses the inner perspective towards a Jewish home: setting boundaries. It begins with marriage, and it continues into raising the children. But it is a system of boundaries which enables the Infinite Light of Hashem to shine; when that happens, husband and wife merit to "become one."

This is the depth behind the words of Chazal, "A man and woman, if they merit it, the *Shechinah* dwells between them." It is referring to the Infinite Light of Hashem – the holy *Shechinah* (His presence).

When does a couple merit the *Shechinah*? It is not only when they avoid fighting with each other. It is through accepting the boundaries which they need; it is the acceptance of those boundaries which allows the Infinite Light to shine in their home. It enables them to reach the sphere of the unlimited which their souls need, at the same holding onto the physical limits which their souls also need. With those two milestones together, the Infinite Light of Hashem is accessed and then allowed to shine onto them.

These words were not mere sayings or thoughts. It is an actual perspective towards life. These are matters which need a lot of deep reflection to think about, but in essence, they are a way of thinking that enables a person to actually live by, in day-to-day life.

Of course, we cannot reach the full level of this [the Infinite Light] 100%. As Chazal say, "It is not upon you to complete the task" – but along with this, Chazal also say, "But you may not exempt yourself from it."

This is the way, the direction which the Jewish home can take you, to bring you to shine the light of the *Ein Sof*: both in soul and in body – which allows the *Shechinah* to dwell in the home.

*Part One Chapter Ten**1.10 | Pleasure in Marriage**Pleasure (Oneg) Is Only Found In Serenity (Menuchah)*

It is written, “*And a woman shall find serenity with her husband.*”<sup>75</sup> Marriage between man and woman brings them back to their root, which enables *menuchah* (serenity). The concept of *menuchah* is when something has been returned to its root. Woman was created from the rib of man; when she returns to him, through marriage, she finds *menuchah* with him.

The possuk says that woman finds *menuchah* with her husband, because she has returned to her root, in marrying him. But the same is true for the husband: he cannot have *menuchah* unless he becomes unified with woman. The ‘branch’ finds no rest unless it has been returned to its ‘root’ - but neither can the ‘root’ have rest if it missing its branches. This is because *menuchah* is all about completion. When completion is missing, there cannot be *menuchah*.

The point in time in which we have *menuchah*, as is well-known, is *Shabbos Kodesh*. *Shabbos* is called “*menuchah*”, but it is also called “*oneg*,” pleasure. “*And you shall call the Shabbos, oneg (pleasure)*”.<sup>76</sup>

*Menuchah* (serenity) is when the ‘branches’ and the ‘root’ of something become connected. *Oneg* (pleasure) is the feeling that results from this connection. When there is no connection, there is no *menuchah*, and then there is no *oneg*.

We will try to expand upon this concept. First we will think into the concept of *menuchah* that we find on *Shabbos Kodesh*, as an example that can help us understand how marital harmony and peace can be achieved in the home.

*Complete Unity In Marriage Is Currently Not Possible*

*Shabbos* is the time of *menuchah*, but it is still not a total *menuchah*, because in our times, it is not possible for there to be a complete connection between the ‘roots’ and the ‘branches’. When the full connection can be achieved [in the future], there will be complete *menuchah*. The stronger the connection between the ‘root’ and the ‘branches’, the more *menuchah* there is, and vice versa.

Ever since the sin of Adam, when mankind has been cursed with death, there is no longer a perfect union between the body and the soul. With death, the body returns to the ground, and the soul goes back to its Source.

In the future, when there will be the resurrection of the dead, the soul and body will harmonize, and there will be a complete connection between them. That is when then there will be total *menuchah*. For this reason, the future is known as the “day that is entirely *Shabbos*, of eternal rest in the World- To-Come.” In our current state, the body and soul cannot harmonize completely. There can be somewhat of a connection between body and soul, but it can never be complete.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ruth 1:9*

<sup>76</sup> *Yeshayahu 58:13*

The same is true for marriage. Chazal compare the husband to the *neshamah* (the soul) and the wife to the *guf* (the body). Death separates the soul from the body, and so can divorce can separate husband and wife from each other, *chas v'shalom*. Since there is always a possibility of divorce, the connection between husband and wife is never complete. If they could be connected completely, there would be no possibility of separation from each other.

Therefore, even when husband and wife know of unity with each other, the unity can never be complete; even when they do unify. This is true both in *Halachic* sense, [which requires times of separation], as well as in a more inner sense. The true level of connection between husband and wife will only be in the future.

### *Complete Marital Harmony Is Impossible*

Chazal say, “There is no *kesubah* (marriage document) that doesn’t involve some disagreement” (Shabbos 130a). The message behind this is that there is no marriage which doesn’t have some fighting involved. There is always some discord that precedes it. This is because there is a rule, “The *kelipah* (shell) comes before the *pri* (fruit) – there is always something difficult which precedes a revelation of greatness.

The amount of fighting between them depends on how much a couple works on themselves, but there is no such thing as a marriage which does not contain any discord. That is the way it has been since the sin of Adam – man and woman, “soul” and “body”, are not able to completely achieve harmony with each other.

Besides for four *tzaddikim* who never sinned, who only died due to the “effect of the Snake” on mankind, the rest of us do not have complete harmony between our body and soul, and usually, it is either body or soul which dominates.

With regards to marriage, there can never be complete union between husband and wife in our times, for we were all affected by the Snake. But that doesn’t mean that the negative effects of the Snake have to entirely dominate the marriage. We might not be able to remove the Snake’s effect on our marriage, but at least we can lessen the discord as much as possible.

On one hand, we want to achieve *achdus* (unity) in our marriage. But we also have to be aware of reality as it is, in the current state of mankind that we are in, in which it is not possible to become totally unified with each other. As long as we have a physical body, we are affected by physicality, which does not allow for complete unity. We can aspire for unity, and we can take steps towards it by trying to direct our actions towards it, but the perfect level of unity cannot be achieved in our current state.

### *The Wife of Rav*

One of the Sages in the Gemara, Rav, would tell his wife to do a certain thing, and she would always do the opposite.<sup>77</sup> Chazal are not just telling us stories here; there is a deep point contained here.

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<sup>77</sup> See *Talmud Bavli: Yevamos 63a*

Just as the body and soul are opposites – they want different things – so do a husband and wife have opposite wills from each other, in which they each want opposite things. Although deep down there is a point that unifies them together, they also have differing points which pit them against each other.

By telling us of the situation between Rav and his wife, our Sages were coming to tell us that being that we live in a “world of disparity” (*alma d'piruda*), there will always be some discord between the body and the soul, for they are polar opposites. Husband and wife, who are affected by the “world of disparity”, can therefore run into clashes with each other, where each one wants the opposite of the other.

The matter behind this lays in a deep understanding, which is brought in our mystical teachings: “The higher that a spiritual light can reach, the lower of a distance it can fall to”. In simpler terms, the greater a person is, the more difficulty he will encounter, which opposes and challenges his spiritual light.

Rav contained a great spiritual light, so this needed to be opposed, in order for him to achieve his complete rectification. How, indeed, did he rectify it? On one hand, he found the opposition to be a way to connect to her, but at the same time, he must have also come to terms with certain parts in his wife's behavior that he simply could not change. It is those parts of his marriage which made him suffer, which atoned for any sins.

### *Inevitable Opposition In Marriage*

There is no person who does not suffer on this world, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* says. Some are suffering more and some are suffering less, but there is nobody who doesn't suffer. This was all a result of the curse placed upon mankind, ever since the sin of Adam, when death was decreed upon man. Death meant that the body and soul separate; a state in which body and soul cannot harmonize. Thus, there are always oppositions between body and soul, and the tension of these opposing forces is a kind of suffering.

In marriage, the goal is to reach *achdus* (unity). The *avodah* that this implies is that husband and wife need to always strive to increase their *achdus*, but along with this, comes another inevitable part of marriage: there can never be complete *achdus*. There will always be parts of a marriage in which husband and wife are in opposition towards each other, and those oppositions will never change.

Our *avodah* is to try to work out the differences, but at the same time, there will be some opposition which we won't be able to change. When it comes to those situations, it feels like suffering to us, and it is upon us to accept that suffering with love. It is those parts in our marriage which we are not able to solve as we are on This World, in which perfect unity cannot be achieved.

Thus, if a person thinks that he can have a 100% harmonious marriage, he is delusional. There is no such thing! It didn't happen with any of our greatest Rabbis of the past, and it certainly won't happen with us. There can be a percentage of harmony in our marriage, but it can never be complete and perfect.

Just like we know that we cannot live on this world in complete harmony with our body and soul together – being that none of us are Eliyahu or Chanoch, who entered Heaven alive with their physical body – in the same sense, we must know that there is no such thing as reaching absolute unity with our spouse, as we are on This World.

Even if someone says that he fulfills every single of his marriage obligations, this does not mean that he and his wife have reached a level of total unity. Can any husband say that he has never pained his wife? Can any wife say that she has never hurt her husband in some way? Can any couple say that they are totally, completely unified with each other?

Even if a husband and wife fulfill all their obligations with each other (which is quite difficult...), there is so much more about marriage that can still be left unfulfilled. Fulfilling the *halachos* of marriage are just the actions alone, but there is still emotions and deeper layers to our soul which are involved in marriage, which we are never perfect at in. It's not possible for a couple to live together their whole life and never hurt each other – it never happened, and it never will!

This is true about life in general – that nothing is ever perfect – and it is also specifically true about marriage: that there is no marriage which is a perfect bond.<sup>78</sup>

### *Where Will We Get Our Pleasure From?*

As it was mentioned, the purpose of marriage is to arrive at *menuchah* (serenity) with each other. However, in our current state, we are not able to attain total *menuchah*, for *menuchah* will only be fully reached in the future. Thus, in marriage as well, we aren't able to have complete *menuchah* either just from having found our spouse.

For this reason, there is also never complete *oneg* (pleasure), because complete *oneg* is derived from complete *menuchah*, and since we don't have complete *menuchah*, we don't have the source to get complete *oneg*.

If we would have complete *menuchah* in our marriage, we would be on the level of complete *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love) towards our spouse. Being that this is not the case, we are still involved with the lower levels of love, *ahavas hashoneh* (love for differences) and *ahavas hadomeh* (love for similarities), which, by default, are setting us up for situations in which we will suffer from.

What will a person do when he's feeling a bit down?

Usually, a person looks for some kind of fun experience to calm himself down. One kind of person, when he feels down, will go after good food. Another kind of person will want to get away a bit, another kind of person will turn on the music, and another person will look to chat with someone. Each person has his own way of how he goes after pleasure to fill his emptiness and pain.

We all are looking for *oneg* (pleasure). Pleasure is really found only when there is *menuchah* (serenity), as we said earlier. (In the future, when *menuchah* will be complete, some say that it will be a kind of *oneg*, and some say it will be higher than *oneg*). Being that we do not have total *menuchah* these days, we are not able to get our pleasure from *menuchah*.

We have either two options: either we can find pleasure even in our suffering, such by “rejoicing in suffering” as Chazal say, or, we can get pleasure from an inner source inside ourselves.

However, even when are able to accept suffering with love, there's always a part in us which cannot handle the suffering. Chazal refer to it as “kicking at the suffering”, and this place is present within the lower and unrefined parts of the soul. Therefore, we will still need to get pleasure from somewhere else.

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<sup>78</sup> Editor's Note: In the next chapter, it will be explained the proper perspective to have towards marital disputes.

We will explain this in simpler terms. If someone's soul is more actively revealed in his life, he knows how to get pleasure from an inner source inside himself; either he can get it from *menuchah*, or he can get it from rejoicing in his very suffering. But if someone's soul is less revealed in his life, or if it is barely revealed at all, he can't get pleasure from any of those options. He will seek pleasure from some outside source.

The truth is that there is no one who does not seek pleasure from an outside source. This is because we are not able to get pleasure entirely from *menuchah*.

### *The Balance Between Physical Pleasure and Inner Pleasure*

This presents a very deep problem we face in our life. We have a physical body, which is not satisfied unless it receives pleasure [because it is not able to stay put and just derive pleasure from *menuchah*]. So it must get pleasure from an outside source that comes from This World. The pleasures found on This World are all forms of pleasure for the body.

The issue that this presents to us is: How much pleasure do we need to seek? How much physical pleasure does our body really need?

We cannot live without pleasure, because that is how our soul is designed: we get vitality from pleasure. Our Sages state, "There is no good higher than *oneg* (pleasure)."<sup>79</sup> Our soul will always demand pleasure. The more spiritual a person becomes, the more he will be able to derive pleasure from *menuchah*, and the less spiritual a person is, he needs to get pleasure from various activities and from getting away; he will feel a need to get out there and enjoy the world, where his body will receive pleasure from.

The pursuit of physical pleasure creates a very dangerous situation for the soul. When a person is used to getting pleasure from the physical, he now sees two options in front of him when he gets older and more mature: physical pleasure and spiritual pleasure. He is torn between which one to choose.

If a person realizes that although he is here on This World, his source of vitality and pleasure comes from *menuchah*, then he is connected with his root, the source of his soul. Although he is involved with this world's pleasures, he realizes where true vitality and pleasure comes from: from an inner source, from the spiritual.

But when a person has already tasted of many of the pleasures on This World, he now faces a tough choice. On one hand, he is aware that there are spiritual pleasures, such as *Shabbos Kodesh*, a time to feel *menuchah*. But on the other hand, he is aware that there is another source of pleasure on this world: physical desires. He will find himself battling a difficult struggle. We can all see how difficult it is for those to avoid running after physical pleasure, whether they are in the streets or whether they are in privacy.

We all search for pleasure. If one doesn't search for pleasure, he is emotionally unhealthy. A healthy person will naturally look for pleasure. But when he finds pleasure coming from the outside, he faces a difficult struggle: How much pleasure do I need to get from the spiritual [from *menuchah*], and how much pleasure do I need to get from This World? (This issue is only faced by a person who already knows what spiritual pleasure is, and not by someone who has never uncovered it at all, as we will soon explain).

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79 *Sefer Yetzilah*

Chazal say to “eat bread dipped in salt, to drink water in a cistern, and sleep on the ground.”<sup>80</sup> The depth of this statement is that our pleasure we receive from This World should only be in small amounts, in a “cistern”, which implies in measurement. Chazal did not mean that one should not have pleasure! This cannot be, for the *Mesillas Yescharim* says that man was created for pleasure; and what kind of pleasure? “To bask in the pleasure of Hashem”, as the *Mesillas Yescharim* finishes. Hashem did not bring us into the world to suffer. Hashem created us in order to bestow His good upon His creations.

How does Hashem bestow good upon us? There are two forms of pleasure which He created (and they are really rooted in one source): there is pleasure derived from *menuchah* (which is the ultimate purpose we were all created for, to connect to our source), and there is also a kind of pleasure which the body seeks, and the body will attempt to seek pleasure so long as it is not connected completely with the soul.

If we could be able to nullify the desire for physical pleasure and dismiss it, then of course, our *avodah* on this world be easy. But Hashem has designed in a way that we need pleasure, and He indeed wants us to have it – the right kind of pleasure, that is. As one of the Sages said, “Break the barrel, but save the wine.” You must have enjoyment, but with proper boundaries.

### *Discovering Inner Pleasure*

In marriage, there is the role of physical pleasure, which we cannot avoid. Hashem has created us in a way that we need pleasure from the physical. (Dovid HaMelech said, “*In iniquity of my father I was born, and in sin my mother conceived me.*”<sup>81</sup>) However, our earlier Rabbis warned of the trap that physical pleasure in marriage can lead to; if a person indulges too much, his pleasure will become like a gravestone on him, burying him underneath it.

We need pleasure, and we all need to get some physical pleasure as well, but it is difficult to know how much we need it. In fact, it is the most difficult issue that we face as we are on This World: What is the proper way to receive pleasure? How much of an amount of physical pleasure do we need?

When we are children, all pleasure we know of is physical. A child will run after a sweet candy, but if we tell him a lofty and deep idea, he’s not interested, and he won’t even bother to listen. He is mainly interested in physical pleasure, and very rarely interested in spiritual pleasure. Of course, he knows how to have spiritual pleasure, but it is not outwardly revealed yet in his life.

When a person gets older and more mature, he begins to identify with the spiritual, and with the more spirituality he tastes, the more he sees that he has uncovered a different source of pleasure. Now he sees that he has a choice between two kinds of pleasure: physical pleasure and spiritual pleasure.

A child does not recognize spiritual pleasure, only physical pleasure. A compliment doesn’t speak that much to a child. A child enjoys food, sweets, and he also enjoys the love and warmth showered upon him, but besides for that, a child does not identify spiritual pleasure. When a person matures, he discovers deeper and subtler kinds of pleasure. He enjoys a scenic view and he has certain tastes in music, which are subtler kinds of pleasure than food. It is possible that his spirituality does not go beyond those things, however.

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<sup>80</sup> *Avos* 6:4

<sup>81</sup> *Tehillim* 51:7

If a person matures beyond that level, he can reveal an inner world that is within himself, and he can draw forth pleasure from there. If one hasn't discovered it yet, he will never know of a difficulty in life when it comes to how we get pleasure, because he will only know of materialistic pleasures.

When it comes to knowing how to enjoy physicality, there is none of us who needs guidance in this; it comes natural to us, and we already are in touch with it from the time we are young children. What we need to learn about is how to open up our ability to have pleasure from the spiritual, which comes from within.

Many people, in fact, never get there. Even when they do get there, they do not always see spiritual pleasure as being their main source of pleasure in life. They certainly experience times of spiritual pleasure, but only on a temporary basis.

Physical pleasure is recognizable to all, and it does not need to be explained to us. But spiritual pleasure is a matter which needs to be explained, in order for a person to reach it, as much as he can.

So the first step one needs to do with this is to first recognize that there is an inner world inside himself, in which he can draw forth deep pleasure from.

### *Revealing Inner Pleasure*

*Shabbos Kodesh* is identified with *oneg*, pleasure. Does everyone enjoy Shabbos? Maybe people are all enjoying the food on Shabbos, but most people do not know what the enjoyment in *Shabbos* is. Why? It is because most people haven't yet revealed their souls, so they aren't able to enjoy Shabbos itself, an enjoyment of the soul.

Shabbos is a time in which it is easier for a person to reveal spiritual pleasure, but it is our soul which ultimately must have that enjoyment; the time of Shabbos alone won't do the trick. As long as a person hasn't revealed either *menuchah* or *oneg* in his soul, he is basically drowning in physical pleasures.

If a person does not know of spiritual pleasure, and he gets married, he is placing himself in a very dangerous situation to his spirituality.

The words here are quite sharp, but it is the truth, and it is reality. When a person gets married and he has never uncovered another source of pleasure in his life other than physical pleasure, he's headed toward disaster in his marriage. He will discover physical pleasure and completely indulge in it, with no other alternative for pleasure, for he has no other source of pleasure in his life other than the physical. He cannot go beyond pleasure of the physical, and it will 'bury' him [spiritually] where he is.

But if a person has revealed a different source of pleasure in his life other than the physical, he gives himself the ability to choose between which of the two kinds of pleasures he will connect himself to, and which of the two kinds of pleasure he will consider less.

As long as a person hasn't yet revealed an enjoyment for spiritual pleasure, he has no other source to receive pleasure from other than from physicality, and if that is his situation, his self-destruction awaits.

It is written, "*And to your husband is your desire, and he will rule over you*".<sup>82</sup> When a person does not know of spiritual pleasure, and his pleasure is mainly derived from the physical, he is submerged in a

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<sup>82</sup> *Beraishis* 3:16

world of complete materialism, Heaven forbid. He is trapped there, with nowhere else to run to for pleasure.

In order to be able to survive the spiritual dangers that physical pleasures present, one has to reveal in himself a different source of pleasure, pleasure which comes from inner serenity. When a person is deeply connected to that place inside himself – and if he can go even deeper than that, he can connect to the Source of the soul inside himself, which is the Creator – there, a whole different kind of pleasure is uncovered. It is so high in its quality that it gives the person the ability to avoid getting trapped by physical pleasure, because he will know what the real thing is.

When a person reveals a different source of pleasure in himself other than the physical, he discovers that there are two options in life – a path that leads towards life, and a path that leads towards death. He uncovers a deeper kind of free will, which truly sees the two options of good and evil to choose from. Before uncovering spiritual pleasure, it's as if he had no free will, because he was only aware of evil pleasure, having never known that there was even such a thing as holy pleasure.

Of course, a person always has free will; he can always choose between good and evil. But if a person hasn't seen that there are two options of pleasure to choose between, it is almost definite that he will choose the evil pleasure, because he doesn't know of any another option to get enjoyment from. He might be able to temporarily overcome the urge for indulgence in physical pleasure. The deeper kind of free will, which is reached only when a person uncovers the concept of spiritual pleasure, is for a person to pit physical pleasure against spiritual pleasure, and choose between them.

This first step, then, is a stage of *hachmaah* (subjugation) and *havdalah* (separation) towards the physical pleasures: to disconnect from the previously known source of pleasure that a person was used to. This reveals to a person that there is such a thing as spiritual pleasure, and then comes the stage of *hamtakah* (sweetening).<sup>83</sup>

In simpler terms – when a person opens his ability to derive pleasure from spirituality, it will help him avoid the pursuit of physical pleasure, to large extent. Then comes the true *avodah* - in which it is upon him to learn the balance between these two kinds of pleasure in marriage.

### *The Way To Derive Constant Pleasure*

Most people, though, have not revealed their spiritual source of pleasure, and they view pleasure as an expression of 'getting away' from the hardships of life. There are those who go more extreme than this and they indulge in pleasure all day, imagining that life is all about seeking constant pleasure, but these are people who are not thinking properly. Their entire life is spent in a frivolous pursuit of pleasure.

Most people don't become that extreme, but they are still seeing experiencing pleasure only from vacations and trips and other forms of getting away. Each person has his own tastes when it comes to this. But this is not either a life of real pleasure. Any sensible person is aware that this cannot be real pleasure, for the reality of life does not allow for such a lifestyle to be pursued. We have a family to take care of, a job, and other responsibilities we have, which do not allow for constant vacations and trips. Clearly, then, we cannot spend a whole day in various pursuits of adventure.

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<sup>83</sup> This is a concept of the Baal Shem Tov that there are always these three stages in Avodas Hashem. This has been explained at length in *Da Es Atzmecha, Getting To Know Your Self*.

The truth is that we are able to have constant pleasure, but not in the same way that most people are thinking of how to get it. [Soon, we will explain how].

Most people are trying to get constant pleasure from the physical, which is impossible to do, if one wants to live a normal life; pleasure is therefore viewed by most people as a way to ‘get away’ from life. According to that perspective, a person is really not able to have pleasure on a normal day of the year, and in order to have pleasure, he must get away and go on a vacation, where he will recharge his batteries every so often and get his need for pleasure.

In marriage, it is not possible for a person to only have pleasure. How much can one have pleasure already? A few minutes, not more; then life goes on as usual. But the truth is, “Man was not created except to enjoy,” as the *Mesillas Yescharim* states. How much pleasure do we need? Two minutes a day, four minutes a day? Twice a week? We need *much* more than that.

When pleasure is derived from physicality alone, there is not that much time to enjoy it. It’s over pretty quickly.

The will for pleasure is built into us; when it is not understood, it is perceived as a desire to ‘get away’ from life and take it easy, but when it is understood, it is seen as something which we need to build our life with. We need to build our life upon a basis that will provide us with *constant* pleasure! (On a deeper note, it is not possible to have constant pleasure; at best, pleasure can be ‘constant, yet not constant’).

How indeed can we have a constant source of pleasure? It is when we connect to an inner source of pleasure, back and forth, throughout the day. When we are used to inner pleasure more often throughout the day, physical pleasure will look less appealing, when we compare it with inner pleasure.

The first gain from this is that we will gain more self-control over how much we pursue physical pleasure, and secondly, since we will be pursuing less physical pleasure, our main pleasure will be derived from an inner and spiritual source. Physical pleasure will then have a very small percentage in our life.

### *The Danger of Pleasure In Marriage*

The reality of marriage includes the responsibilities of husband and wife, as we explained earlier; this is one part of marriage. The other part of marriage is the pleasure side to marriage. It is this part of marriage which can be dangerous, when not understood well enough.

The reason for this is because when a person gets used to receiving pleasure from the physical, if he has no other source to draw pleasure from, the pleasure that he gets in his entire life will be derived from physical enjoyment alone. He will live a hedonistic kind of life, which has no inner meaning to it.

Living in such a way prevents a person from having any thoughts of holiness and from having a purified heart. All of his life-giving vitality is being drawn from physical pleasure, and he does not know of anything else pleasurable.

Therefore, in order to counter this problem, one has to develop an inner source of pleasure. In this way, even when he does get pleasure from the physical, the pleasure will only feel minimal, because he identifies with a greater source of pleasure in life. When he is aware that that the basis of pleasure in life comes from a deeper and spiritual source, he will pursue less physical pleasures as a result, for he is mainly drawing his pleasure from the spiritual.

### *Becoming Aware Of Our Two-Sided Existence*

With the help of Hashem, we will now make this concept more practical.

We all know of various difficult tests in life. But the truth is that a real test is when we see how we are tested with two opposing options, and then we really feel how we are being tested. When we see two sides to a situation, we can weigh our options and then decide, and then we really see what we are up against.

Compare this to the following. Someone needs to buy a refrigerator, so he walks into the appliance store, and he asks the salesman for a fridge. He is told that there are several types and that there are many sizes available, and he is shown 20 different refrigerators. He has no idea which one to buy, because he is faced with so many options, and he does not know which is the one that will suit his needs.

So too, when it comes to our own life, we all know that life is full of difficulties. But the truth is that it is only the *tzaddikim* who see the tests. They are the ones who understand the factors that are involved, and it can be very difficult to decide between the options, being that they carefully understand each option. Those who are not *tzaddikim*, by contrast, only see one option in front of them, so they don't feel like they are being tested. A wicked person decides he will do something, and is too lazy to think about the repercussions, so he acts on impulse. It is not only desire for sin which causes people to sin; it is the laziness, of not weighing out the options, which contribute to sin.

There is a statement of Reb Moshe of Kobrin zt"l that if the wicked people would know how enjoyable it is to serve Hashem, they would run after it, no less than how much they pursue physical gratification. Why don't they run after it? It is because they are simply unaware. In order to know how good it is to serve Hashem, one has to indeed work hard at this.

It's easy to say these words, but to recognize them within oneself is a difficult task.

### *Marriage: A Union Between Two Souls and Two Bodies*

A person is comprised of a body and soul; in marriage, the husband is compared to the soul, and the wife is compared to the body.

Most people are more aware of their body than they are of their soul, and therefore they go into marriage largely attuned to the needs of the body alone, with very little awareness of how to supply the needs for their soul.

Without being aware of the soul, a person lives a body-oriented life - towards his life in general, and towards his marriage in particular. It's as if he has no free will, because he is only aware of one side to himself.

When a person gets married, he must be aware that this will be a union of two souls and two bodies coming together. If a person is only aware of physical pleasure when he's getting married, he is unaware of the soul in the equation, and he sees marriage as a union between two bodies alone. His marriage will be entirely about physical needs, and such a marriage is the antithesis of a Jewish marriage; and surely, a person will never get to the inner point of marriage, if he takes that approach.

We need to understand that there is a very fundamental problem we are describing. Marriage is a union of body and soul. If there is a soul brought into the marriage, there can be a 'marriage' - but if not, they are living an animalistic kind of life together, G-d forbid. If two people are married together

and there is only emphasis on their physical relationship, this is not that much different between the union of two animals living together, in which there is no ‘marriage’. It might be considered a marriage according to *Halacha*, and the wife will have a status of a “married woman” for all regards, but in the inner sense, it’s as if they are not married.

It is only when the soul dimension is brought into marriage, that it can be called a ‘marriage’. The point of what we said here is that when marriage is missing the soul in the picture, and it is entirely a physical relationship, it is empty and devoid of meaning, and there will be nothing here to build and improve upon.

### *Marriage: The Middle of the Soul’s Development*

People search for ways to have a good marriage, but the truth is that many of the problems in marriage did not begin with the marriage. They began long before that.

Compare this to a person waiting on a road where there are no buses, and he keeps waving so that someone will stop for him and give him ride. As soon as a car drives by, he waves his hands to signal that he needs to be picked up, but no one is stopping for him. Even if he were to stand there for days and nights, weeks and months and even years, waving to others that he needs a ride, he might end up standing there forever.

In the same vein, if we wish to get down to the root of marital problems which many people have, we must know that it did not start in the marriage itself. It will be impossible to solve a person’s marital issues if we are to focus solely on the problems of the marriage. But if we see the ‘package’ he came into it with, then we have what to examine and work with.

If a person was living a blissful life before he got married, taking life as it comes, and then when he gets married he looks for advice on how to have a successful marriage – there is no way for him to succeed. In the best possible situation, he will be able to succeed in marriage as much as a good ‘business’ can succeed; as long as he doesn’t lie or do dishonest things, the ‘business’ will survive. But he will never be able to get to an inner kind of marriage, because he has not brought in the necessary ingredients to do so.

Marriage incorporates both the soul and the body. The pleasure which one can receive in his marriage is both in the spiritual and in the physical, but if the soul has never been brought into marriage, it can be said that the marriage has never even started. There is then no ‘marriage’ to improve in, even if he were to try to seek advice on how to improve it.

Marriage is really the middle of one’s way. At a certain point of one’s way in life, he meets his\her spouse. We don’t get married when we are children; we get married at around the age of 20 and on, after we have already built [or at least when we are eligible to build] our personality, having become aware of the deeper sources of pleasure than the physical.

If we come into the marriage with that ‘package’ (a source of inner pleasure), then a soul connection can be formed in marriage, with our spouse. That will enable us to receive some degree of *menuchah* (serenity) from marriage, which in turn enables us to taste of deep pleasure. When we are receiving pleasure from a deeper and more spiritual source, we will find that we are calmer when it comes to how much we pursue physical pleasure, in a way that it is not overdone.

### *Becoming Complete – Through Marriage*

Chazal said that “A man and woman, if they merit it, the *Shechinah* dwells between them.”<sup>84</sup> Chazal says that a person before he gets married, he is called a *palga d’gufa*, “half a body”. Usually, before a person is married, he doesn’t even have that ‘half’ to begin with!

The ‘half’ which a person has ideally reached before he is married is referring to reaching his own soul, and through marriage, his soul can be completed by joining with his other ‘half’: the soul of his wife. But if a person hasn’t reached his own soul yet before he gets married, he doesn’t even have his own ‘half’.

Marriage, ideally, is that both husband and wife are each bringing in their own body and soul, and they are now joining together, completing each other. It’s clear that each of them is bringing in certain physical possessions. He is bringing in his body, but what about his soul? Is he making sure to bring in his soul as well....?

If they are each bringing in their body and soul into marriage, then each of them will be able to receive pleasure from both body and soul. The spiritual pleasure will be derived from the intrinsic love which they can reach with each other, and their more physical pleasures can be derived from their ‘love for similarities’ and ‘love for differences’ which they see in each other.

But if a person has only brought his body into the marriage, the marriage cannot go beyond the level of body; they won’t grow together spiritually. They can only grow together when their souls are being brought into the marriage. If they have each entered their souls into the marriage, it is then that the inner, spiritual light of the *Shechinah* can be revealed between them.

*Part One Chapter Eleven**1.11 | Pleasure & Pain In Marriage**The Role of Physical Pleasure In Marriage*

In the previous chapter, we explained that there is an inner source of pleasure, which is derived from our soul, and there is an external source of pleasure, which is the physical pleasure of the body. It was explained that when there is only physical pleasure with no element of spiritual pleasure, a person becomes disconnected from the root.

In this chapter, we will explain more about how to understand the role of physical pleasure in marriage.

Firstly, we will repeat, once again, the point which we always emphasize: the purpose of marriage, in all its details, is so that husband and wife “become one.” Thus, not only is spiritual pleasure in marriage a catalyst that brings husband and wife to *achdus* (unity), but even the physical pleasure in marriage is meant to bring husband and wife to *achdus*.

Without being able to derive spiritual pleasure, a person remains with physical pleasure alone, and this presents a danger to the person, as we explained at length in the previous chapter; we will not elaborate upon that here. Now we will discuss what needs to happen next, *after* a person has already uncovered the ability to derive pleasure from the spiritual; when he knows of both spiritual and physical pleasure in marriage.

One must understand that physical pleasure in marriage is also a tool that can enable husband and wife to reach *achdus*.

Earlier, we addressed the fact that the physical union in marriage, alone, can be a source of disparity in marriage. But now we will look deeper into this matter. Although physicality in marriage can certainly create disparity between them<sup>85</sup>, we also know that everything in marriage can serve to bring them to *achdus*. If so, there is a way for the physical pleasure in marriage to enable husband and wife to unify.

That is the basic concept, and now we will try to explain how it can be.

*Oneg Shabbos – Two Kinds of Pleasure*

As is well-known, Shabbos is termed by our Sages as the “mate” of the Jewish people. Let’s think into what this means, and see how this “marriage” can apply to our own marriages.

Shabbos is a time for *oneg* (pleasure). It is a pleasurable time, as well as a time to bask in the spiritual bliss of Hashem. When there is pleasure, there is connection to what you are enjoying. The pleasure is coming from a feeling of connection to something. In addition, the pleasure itself creates a connection.

Which comes first? Does pleasure form connection, or does connection bring pleasure?

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<sup>85</sup> As explained in Chapter Three

It depends on what kind of pleasure it is. If it is spiritual pleasure, it is a soul connection, and here the connection itself will bring pleasure. If it is bodily pleasure, it is the pleasure which brings connection (that is, when we examine the inner layer of the connection, and not the external and physical aspect of it).

*Oneg Shabbos* is a commandment to have physical enjoyment on Shabbos; Chazal say that it is an obligation to buy good food for Shabbos, and to have clean clothes and fine tablecloths, in honor of Shabbos<sup>86</sup>. Shabbos is also about spiritual pleasure, “to bask in the pleasure of Hashem”, which is clearly not physical, for it is the soul’s connection to the Creator.

In *Shabbos Kodesh* lays two kinds pleasure. There is pleasure of the soul, in which the connection of the soul to the Creator results in a pleasurable feeling, and pleasure of the body, which we have through food, clothing, and other physical enhancements of Shabbos; this is a pleasure that enables us to connect to Shabbos.

With physical pleasure, the pleasure forms a connection. Even if it is a totally physical pleasure, the *connection* one feels to what he has enjoyed is coming from the *pleasure*. But when it comes to inner and spiritual pleasure, the person *connects* to the source of the pleasure, and he has *pleasure* as a result from this.

### *The Purpose of Pleasure: Connection*

Now we will see how this applies to marriage, to which our bond with Shabbos is compared to. In marriage, there is a spiritual connection between the souls of husband and wife, and this results in pleasure; it’s a pleasure that comes from connection, as is the nature of spirituality. But we also find an opposite aspect taking place in marriage: the physical pleasure in marriage, in which the pleasure they feel with each other increases their closeness and connection.

This shows us the difference of nature between physical pleasure and inner pleasure in marriage. With *inner\spiritual* pleasure, it is rooted in the fact that their souls are connected; their *connection* is what brings about the *pleasure*. With *physical* pleasure, it is the opposite: it is the *pleasure* here which brings about the *connection*.

Thus, Hashem has designed us in a way that in marriage, we need physical pleasure, as a means to achieve connection. It is not about the physical act alone. It is to form an emotional connection, which comes from the soul.

The purpose of pleasure is connection; but a person is not able to completely pursue pleasure with this pure intention. This is because *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motivations) always precedes *lishmah* (pure motivations), and there is always some *shelo lishmah* involved in our acts. We need to make sure that we are not acting 100% *shelo lishmah*, and try to increase the amount of *lishmah* into our acts, slowly but surely. In other words, when we are engaged in physical pleasure, we need to train ourselves to do it more for the sake of connection, and not entirely for the sake of taking pleasure from the act.

There is no way for a person to withhold himself totally from the physical pleasure in marriage. If he does so, he is denying his nature, which requires physical enjoyment. None of us are Eliyahu and Chanoch, who totally divested themselves of all physicality. We are all affected by physicality, as we brought earlier from the possuk, “*With the sins of my mother I was conceived.*” Even Dovid HaMelech

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86 *Shabbos 118b*

declared that he was born from physical desire. If anybody claims that he does the physical act *purely* for the sake of unifying with his spouse, and not for the sake of any pleasure, he is lying to himself.

So it is impossible for a person to free himself totally from this physical desire. What, then, can we do? It is upon us to introduce to ourselves a new kind of pleasure other than the physical: we can engage in the pleasurable act *with some motivation* for the sake of unifying, so that in this way, we are not entirely motivated to do it for the sake of feeling the pleasure involved.

When a person engaged in the act of physical pleasure 100% for the sake of experiencing pleasure, he is completely self-absorbed, and he's stuck in a "world of disparity"; a world of separateness. But if a person makes sure to include some motivation in the act to increase the connection with his spouse, this is what purifies a person from the negative trait of being self-absorbed and from being entirely motivated to take pleasure.

This is really what lies behind the difference between the intentions of *shelo lishmah* and *lishmah*. The implication of *shelo lishmah* is that a person is being self-serving, and his motivation is for the sake of taking pleasure for himself. *Lishmah* is that a person is taking pleasure for the sake of connecting to where he's getting the pleasure from. This does not mean that the person at the level of *lishmah* doesn't experience pleasure. He does, but he is engaging [at least minimally] in the pleasure for the sake of forming a connection.

Thus, we have learned here that physical pleasure in marriage is really given to us so that we can further connect and unify with our spouse. It is just of a different nature than that of spiritual and inner pleasure. Spiritual pleasure works in the opposite way: it comes from connection. When pleasure results from connection, it is totally pure [and in this as well, there are levels]. But with physical pleasure, it always involves some personal gain, and we have an *avodah* of turning it into an opportunity of connection, as opposed to being a completely self-serving act.

In this way, we sanctify the physical pleasure in marriage. It enables a person to use pleasure as a means of connecting to another. What would have been an entirely self-serving act is turned into an opportunity to reveal the spiritual light that is within it, a light which can unify. The more a person manages to increase his motivation for *lishmah* in this act of physical pleasure, the more he strengthens the inner light that is present in it.

This is a deep perspective contained in our soul, and it is relevant when it comes to all kinds of pleasures that we know of. It is to understand, that all pleasure is essentially a tool, which can bring us to have more connection. It is to realize that pleasure does not end with the pleasure itself. It is to take the act of pleasure, to enjoy it, and to do so for the sake of connection.

### *Times of "Oneg" and Times of "Nega"*

*Sefer Yetzirah* says that "There is no good that is higher than *oneg* (pleasure), and there is nothing more evil than *nega* ('affliction')". The words *oneg* and *nega* have the same letters, with the opposite arrangement, which implies that *oneg* and *nega* are two opposing matters. *Oneg* is about connection, and *nega* is the opposite of this: it is about separateness. We find the concept of *nega* by a *metzora* (a leper), who gets a "*nega*" (affliction) of *tzaraas* (leprosy).

There is nothing else in Creation besides for *oneg* or *nega*. The text of *Sefer Yetzirah* does not simply mean that *oneg* is above and that *nega* is below, implying that there are many things in between. Rather, all of existence is filled with either *oneg* or *nega*. Either we are experiencing *oneg*, or *nega*.

In the same sense that “the flesh of the dead do not feel”, so is it that people usually do not feel either the *oneg* or *nega* in their life. The average person is living superficially, by rote; getting up in the morning and going about the day as usual, without ever thinking into what he is experiencing.

If we examine the deeper layer of all our experiences, we are either experiencing *oneg* (pleasure) or *nega* (pain), at any given time or situation. Those who have a heightened sensitivity to spiritual feelings can sharply sense either the *oneg* or *nega* in their experiences. Whether we can sense it or not, though, we are always going through either pleasure or pain.

Understandably, there are times when the pleasure is a sharper experience, and there are times when it is felt more vaguely; there are times when we sharply feel like we are suffering, and there are times where we only feel it minimally. But we are always experiencing either of the two – pleasure, or pain – no matter how weak or strong we feel it.

As long as person hasn't yet gotten to the depth of his soul, he doesn't experience pleasure. He will feel pleasure at certain times, and it might be physical pleasure or spiritual pleasure, but he will only experience it temporarily.

Pleasure, in reality, is a very real place. And so is pain. But most people are not in touch with either of these feelings on a regular basis. When it comes to the experience of pain, there are a few people who regularly feel pain and suffering in their life. As for pleasure, it is usually not experienced on a regular basis. The average situation, in most people's lives today, is to live in the external layer of life, and pleasure is only experienced every once in a while.

A Torah scholar is called “Shabbos”, and one of the reasons for this is because a true Torah scholar lives a kind of life in which there is always [spiritual] pleasure, resembling Shabbos. If there is such a kind of life, the opposite must also be possible. So either a person is experiencing pleasure, or pain.

This fact should not just be something a person knows. It can be sensed. Just like a person inhales and exhales when he breathes, and this is not just a knowledge, but something he can feel and be aware of (some are more aware of their breathing than others), so can a person always feel either the pleasure or pain of any given situation.

If a person is connected to the concept, he feels it on a more constant basis, whereas if his awareness is disconnected from it, he will only feel it sometimes. In any case, the reality stays the same: our soul is either experiencing *oneg* (pleasure) or *nega* (pain).

Thus, the concepts of *oneg* and *nega* are not just another fact of life – it is the actual makeup of our soul - it exists, and it can be felt all the time.

### *Alternating Periods of Pleasure and Pain – In Marriage*

Marriage is also an ongoing process that alternates between *oneg*\pleasure and *nega*\pain. However, since most people are not aware to pleasure or pain they are experiencing, their marriage is no different. They are aware only at certain times to the pleasure in their marriage, and they are aware sometimes that there is pain, such as when a fight erupts with the spouse, *chas v'shalom*. So in most marriages, they are only some times in which they are clearly aware that they are experiencing either pleasure, or pain, in the marriage.

But as we explained, if we look deeper into what's going on, we can always see how there's either pleasure or pain taking place, at any given situation. Let's think into this and see how it is true.

As we have explained in the past, the purpose of marriage is, “*And they shall become one* [flesh]”, therefore, every situation in marriage is a possibility of bringing a couple to achieve greater *achdus* with each other. The day-to-day life that a couple goes through with each other, in all its events, can bring a couple closer and closer to *achdus*. How does it happen? As we have explained here, either it can be brought about through being aware to the *oneg* they are having - or even when they are in a situation of “*nega*”.

To “become one” with a spouse means, that as long as a person is married, in the 24 hours of a day, he is in a situation where he can be brought closer and closer to unity with his spouse. It is just that a person has free will to choose if this unity will be achieved through pleasure, or pain. Either situation, though, can bring them to unity.

The purpose of pleasure, clearly, is to foster connection between a couple, which brings them closer to unity. However, if a person wants the pleasure for self-serving purposes, and he has no intention of unity with his spouse, this pleasure will not connect them; instead, it will separate them.

The same is true for the pain experienced in marriage: it can either be constructive, or it can make things worse. We see this from physical suffering as well: When a person is in pain, either this will cause him to become too absorbed in himself, or it can cause him to grow and elevate himself beyond the pain, giving him a new sense of connection with other people.

A *metzora* is required to sit in solitude outside of the camp. One of the reasons explained for this is because a person can come to feel closer to Hashem when he feels faraway and distant from Him, so that his yearnings for Hashem are reawakened. When the *metzora* is alone, he can deepen his bond with Hashem. He is separated from the nation, but he can understand that this separation is necessary for him [enabling him to re-evaluate his relationship with G-d and with others.] Here we see a kind of separation that can serve to unify.

But if a person does not see unity as the goal in marriage, then he engages in pleasure for self-serving purposes, to take pleasure for himself; and disparity in the marriage ensues from this. And when he has pain, instead of seeing this as a way to further unify with his spouse, he becomes self-absorbed in his pain, and he feels even more separated from his spouse than before.

### *Connection In Marriage Is Always Possible*

Thus, the true and inner perspective is, that either *oneg*\pleasure or *nega*\pain can foster connection and unity. It is just that when *oneg* and *nega* are misunderstood, they cause separation.

These concepts are very relevant throughout the day, as follows.

If a person is at a time of pleasure in his marriage, he should realize that this is an opportunity for him to further connect with his spouse. If he encounters pain in his marriage, whether it is physical suffering from his spouse, arguments with his spouse, fighting, and other forms of stress – he needs to also understand that these times of tensions are also a tool that can bring about unity between them.

This is a very deep perspective. The simple perspective towards marital disputes is that they need to increase their *shalom bayis* (peace in the home). That is true, of course, but there is more depth to it. The reason that this fight has ensued between them is for a different reason entirely. An argument with a spouse is meant to become a tool that will lead them closer to *achdus*. Not only is pleasure in marriage a tool that enables husband and wife to further their connection and unity, but even friction between each other is a tool that can unify them.

Of course, this does not mean that one should intentionally get into a fight with a spouse for this reason. Rather, the point is, that once they are already in a situation of a fight with each other, they should see it as an opportunity to ultimately become closer, as opposed to just trying to make peace with each other so that they can get the fight over with.

There is a rule brought in our holy *sefarim* that “something which becomes damaged needs to be rebuilt from a higher point”. We can learn from this that the purpose of a couple solving their fights is not just so that they will return to what they were like before the fight, but so that they should return to a higher point than they were before.

This is the inner reason why fights break out between a couple [so that they can now work even harder at their marriage than before, which brings them closer to *achdus*].

Although they must certainly not fight on purpose for this reason, they need to be aware that fights will inevitably happen, and when those fights do happen, they need to see it as a way that will allow them to become closer. Chazal said, “There is no *kesubah* (marriage document) that doesn’t involve disagreement.” There is always some degree of strife in every marriage, but the fighting can always be seen as a way to further their unity.

This is a very deep concept, and they are very relevant to daily life in marriage. There is always either *oneg* (pleasure) or *nega* (pain) in marriage, no matter the situation. There is no such thing as a marriage in which a couple has no fights; there are always some moments of tension between them. Those stressing moments need to be seen as possible opportunities for more *achdus*, and during those times, a couple can try to think how the situation of discord they are in can somehow be a way for them to get closer.

### *Pleasure Within Pain, and Pain Within Pleasure*

There’s also a concept that everything in Creation is unified at its deeper root; this is called the *sod ha’achdus* (the ‘secret unity’). Therefore, even in *oneg* (pleasure) you can find some degree of *nega* (pain), and in *nega*, you can also find a degree of *oneg* in it.

In *oneg*\pleasure there is still some *nega*\pain, and we find an example of this from the custom at a wedding by the *chuppah*<sup>87</sup> to remember the destruction of Jerusalem, to show that even when we are happy, we are not able to achieve complete happiness in the current state of mankind.

Furthermore, all marriages are rooted in the very first marriage in Creation, Adam and Chavah, when they had perfect happiness together in Gan Eden. Before the sin, there was no pain yet. After the sin of Adam, pain began, and the “marriage” was no longer the same. When we stood at Har Sinai, our “marriage” with Hashem was complete again, until the sin with the Calf, when we were once again separated from our perfect bond. Up until this day, there is no happiness which is complete, so there is always some level of pain even within the happiness.

But the same is true with *nega* (pain): even when we are in mourning, we find consolation. On *Tisha B’Av*, when we mourn all of our destructions, we also acknowledge the fact that Moshiach is born on this day, and in fact, this affects *Halacha* as well: we don’t say *tachanun* on *Tisha B’Av*, because it will become a festival in the future.

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<sup>87</sup> canopy

So there is no *oneg* without some *nega*, and there is no *nega* without some *oneg*. They are always interconnected.

### *Why There Must Be Pain Within Pleasure*

Let's examine why there cannot be pleasure without some degree of pain. Why must it be that way?

It is because man, by nature, is comprised of two opposing natures: activity, and non-activity. Pleasure feels like something active has happened, and pain feels like something is lacking, which is an absence of positive activity. Both of these aspects in man, activity and non-activity, are needed.

If a person would only know of pleasure, he would be like a man riding a horse missing one of the ropes; he will be only to whip the horse to move forward, but he has nothing to stop the horse from running.

Thus, there is no such thing as pleasure which has no pain in it. The degree of pain involved is what enables the pleasure to be stable. Even inner pleasure wouldn't be good for a person if it was endless. At some point, there has to be limitation to the pleasure, and this is accomplished through a degree of pain.

The degree of pain that is within all pleasure is needed for a person; as the Sages state, "*It is forbidden for one to fill his mouth with laughter on this world.*"<sup>88</sup> One is allowed to laugh, but he cannot become filled too much with laughter. Even in the future, when we will be allowed to let our mouths be filled with laughter, it will still be somewhat limited.

Pleasure represents the concept of expansion, and pain is contraction. Both expansion and contraction are the two different aspects taking place all the time in Creation. Contraction is necessary so that proper limitations are ensured. If a person would have endless pleasure, whether it's physical or spiritual, he would totally leave the limitations of his body and be divested of it.

This was the depth behind the punishment given to Nadav and Avihu. The holy *Ohr HaChaim* explains that they died out of their great love for Hashem, for they had entered an endless kind of spiritual bliss, which had no boundaries to it. Their souls expanded so much to the point that they were totally divested of body, because their body could not withstand the expansion.

As far as physical pleasure concerns, if there are no limitations on a person's physical pleasure, there are a few problems created from this. First of all, being that a person needs limitations, breaking the limits will result in a feeling of rebelliousness, as the possuk says, "*And Yeshurun got fat and kicked.*" The nature of a person is that when he becomes too pampered from the pleasure, he loses a sense of authority over himself. Another problem with indulgence in physical pleasure is that it strengthens the body's physicality, and in turn weakens a person from spirituality.

Therefore, it is necessary that there be certain limitations placed on pleasure, whether it's spiritual or physical pleasure.

### *Why There Must Be Pleasure Within Pain*

Until now it was explained how there is both pleasure and pain, within pleasure. Now we will see the other side of the coin, which is that in pain as well, there is always pain as well as a degree of pleasure.

When a person sees suffering purely as suffering and nothing more than that, he misses the purpose of the suffering. He views suffering as something that is coming to destroy him, rather than as something which can build him. An example of this is that there are people who survived the Holocaust, who went through indescribable suffering, which brought them to deny the reality of G-d (*rachamana litzlan*). Their pain brought them nothing but pain; they saw the “*nega*” aspect in the “*nega*”, and they couldn’t see beyond the *nega*.

In contrast, seeing the “*oneg*” in *nega* is when a person sees that *nega* is given to him as an opportunity to increase his connection and unity with something. When a person achieves a greater understanding because of *nega*, this is the *oneg* that is contained in *nega*.

Thus, we have seen how *oneg* (pleasure) and *nega* (pain) are always interconnected. In *oneg*\pain, there is both *oneg*\pleasure and *nega*\pain; and in *nega*\pain, there is both *nega*\pain and *oneg*\pleasure.

### *Becoming Attuned To Our Experiences*

Therefore, in order for a person to reach the intended purpose of marriage, he needs to live the reality of the *oneg* or *nega* that he’s in.

The ongoing process of *oneg* and *nega* really implies that a person is always attuned to what he is experiencing. When a person doesn’t realize what he’s experiencing as he’s experiencing something, he is not aware if he is experiencing *oneg* or *nega*. He is living by rote. When a person uncovers the ability to experience, he will see that either he is experiencing *oneg*, or *nega*.

We are always going through some event, at any given moment. Why is it that most of the time a person does not see the opportunity of *achdus* in what he’s experiencing? It is because he is usually not attuned to what he is experiencing. We can compare this to a person in jail who doesn’t know he’s sitting in jail. He has no wish to go free from jail, because he doesn’t even know that he’s in jail. If he knows he’s in jail, he will be bothered by this, and he will want to leave it.

When a person doesn’t experience what he’s going through, he never comes to feel the meaning of the *possuk*, “*Release from captivity, my soul*”; he has no will to leave his situation, because he does not realize the situation that he is in in. For this reason, there are people who don’t want to get married, because they do not realize what they are missing in their life. And even when a person is married, that doesn’t mean he’s experiencing his marriage; he doesn’t necessarily realize if he’s going through either pleasure or pain.

Of course, when a person is away from home, he’s not thinking about what’s going on inside his home right now; he has other parts of his life he has to deal with. But when a person is in the home, or when he’s thinking about what’s going on inside his home, he needs to realize that these are not mere thoughts. They are experiences! If it is an experience, it is either one of two things: *oneg*, or *nega*.

Marriage is entirely a parable, which teaches us a greater lesson; as we see from *sefer Shir HaShirim*, that marriage is a parable to the bond between man and his Creator. In the next chapter we will speak more about this; right now, we are addressing the parable itself, which is marriage.

The parable which marriage serves is to show us how we can experience what we are going through. When a person goes through various experiences, his feelings will have sharpened and become more sensitive. Marriage is an *experience* of the relationship of *ahavah* (love), *achvah* (brotherliness), *shalom* (peace), and *reyus* (friendship) that it is. If there is no love present, it is a sign that there are negative feelings between them. In any case, there are always feelings involved, which need to be experienced.

To illustrate the concept, when a person is alone, and he is enjoying this feeling of solitude, this is usually a quiet and calm kind of feeling. It is an inner experience, so it is calmer. Most people, though, when they are alone, have a hard time enjoying the serenity. This is true even in people who don't hate themselves, and they have a positive self-image of themselves. The person doesn't know how to experience what he is feeling.

When a person gets married, there is a new world he is entering – a world of live emotions. There are outer and inner layers to the emotions. (There are some individuals who are very in touch with their emotions even before they are married, but with most people, it is marriage which develops their emotions.) The outer layer of the emotions in marriage is the “*ahavah* (love), *achvah* (brotherliness), *shalom* (peace) *v'reyus* (and friendship)” between husband and wife; the inner layer is when they are *experiencing* those feelings.

In order to experience the love and peace in the marriage, a person has to develop the power to experience in the first place.

### *Excitement Cannot Build A Marriage*

Now we will discuss an issue that is usually the cause for marital problems. When a couple is married and living together for several years with each other, whether it's a year, two years, ten years, twenty years, and beyond, there's going to be differences of opinion between them. Problems ensue, and a person looks for solutions to the issues that arise. *Baruch Hashem*, today, marital therapy is a big business. A person goes to a marriage counselor, and lays down all of this issue he is facing.

The marriage counselor will tell him something like, “You're not seeing the situation exactly as it is...even if you are right, you need to make peace with your situation....” Sometimes the advice will be that he has to change his personality and behavior patterns, or to become more positive, or to stop having too many expectations from his marriage. There are many different kinds of strategies that can be employed. It's possible that any of these strategies are true, but there's really a deeper root of all the issues that is usually lying beneath the surface.

Usually, when a person gets married, there are certain feelings that he has towards his spouse; if he wouldn't have those feelings, he wouldn't have married his wife. Naturally, though, those feelings begin to lose their taste after some time, and it no longer feels new and exciting. The feeling [of infatuation] that was here until now is gone, and now, there are new feelings that need to be awakened.

The first feelings that one has for his spouse are based on excitement. Those exciting feelings can certainly be enough for one to wish to get married to his spouse, but it won't be enough to build lasting feelings in the marriage. As we see from all other things, excitement usually dies down after some time.

There is a well-known story that Rav Chaim Volozhiner wanted to open his first yeshivah, and he asked his teacher, the Vilna Gaon, for advice on the matter. The Vilna Gaon told him not to open the yeshivah. Half a year later, he came back to the Vilna Gaon and asked him again for advice, and this time the Vilna Gaon told him that he should open the yeshivah. Rav Chaim asked him, “What changed since half a year ago?” The Gaon answered him, “Half a year ago, I realized that you were

excited about this endeavor. Excitement doesn't build anything. Therefore, I wanted you to wait some time until the excitement dies down, and then pursue the endeavor."

(In another version of the story, the Vilna Gaon said to him that half a year ago, I suspected that this idea of yours came from the *yetzer hora*. On a deeper note, this is really the same idea as the first version of the story!)

The point we are trying to bring out is not that a person shouldn't get married if he feels excited about his spouse. Rather, the point here is that those feelings of excitement cannot become the basis of marriage.

### *Excitement Vs. Reality*

We will explain a little about what is wrong with the mentality of excitement, and how destructive it is to one's life; what the problem with it is, and what we can do about it.

At first, a newlywed will have some feelings of excitement towards his spouse, and he feels deeply that "this is *it*". After some time, those feelings go away. They are based on excitement, so they don't last. Then he begins to feel that he has lost all his feelings. He begins to rationally approach his marriage, knowing that he has lost his emotions towards it. He starts to take apart his marriage, using his rational intellect: "Did I marry the right one?"

Whether he concludes "Yes" or "No", he is still disappointed, because he no longer feels the excitement he used to have when he became a *chosson*.

According to the statistics, most people after getting married conclude that they married the wrong person. Even those who thought they married the right one will still feel that their excitement is gone, and they wonder where the feelings have gone.

The person is left without excitement for his spouse anymore; he has lost his original feelings he once had. Married life goes on, and various issues come with it, just like in any other undertaking; and when he encounters issues in his marriage, he will seek to get out of it, just like with anything else that is unsuccessful. Even if he doesn't come to the conclusion of divorce, he will be living a divorceable kind of a marriage.

Why does this destructive attitude happen? It is because he based his marriage on the exciting feelings which first come to him at the beginning.

Excitement is not reality. Usually when a person is excited, he is not experiencing the reality in front of him; he is experiencing 'sparks', with nothing substantial in it. Even if there is something substantial in what he is experiencing, he is experiencing 'sparks' of reality, and nothing that is a tangible reality.

Thus, the feelings of excitement that one originally has, upon getting married, are not coming from reality. It certainly provides a person with emotion, and it feels sparked and alive, but when those emotions begin to fade, there are no feelings of it left.

### *Experiencing Yom Tov Cannot Come From Excitement Alone*

To give another example of this, when it comes the *Seder* on Pesach night, some people were used to a noisier *seder* when they were younger, and when they get older and are now at the age of 20, 25, 30

and beyond, they lose that spark they had as children; they find that they have lost their feelings for the *seder*.

A child can sleep for 2 hours before the *seder*, so he can come into Pesach refreshed and awake, whereas a married adult has a family to take care of, in addition to the fact that there's a lot of hard work to be done before Pesach, which do not allow him to rest on *Erev Pesach*. By the time the *seder* arrives, he is fairly exhausted, and he does not feel excitement for the *seder* that he used to have.

He might try to inspire himself by picking up a new sefer about Pesach, or by going to a *shiur* from a speaker that has come to town. But nothing works. The festival of Pesach cannot be felt properly through just hearing a nice '*mussar*' thought which a lecturer has thrown into the audience on the night of Pesach.

What is the mistake he is making? It is because excitement only works for a child. When he was a child, as long as he had a new suit, and the table was set nicely, and the *matzah* smelled delicious, he felt Pesach. As an adult, he still retains those feelings, but it doesn't help him feel the Yom Tov anymore. He is left without a taste for the Yom Tov. When he bites into his *matzah* on Pesach, it feels dry and tasteless, nothing more than the mix of water and flour that it is. That is all he's feeling...

To truly experience Yom Tov, the feelings have to come from a whole new source than from until now. It is not about a child's excitement anymore. The adult needs to experience the essence of the Yom Tov, and connect to it. There is nothing else for him to connect to.

Within this, there are two parts – there are concepts he can think about which are intellectually stimulating and cause him to think, and there are other parts to the Yom Tov which he feels emotionally connected to; but those 'emotional' aspects do not necessarily have to come from excitement.

Singing *Halel* by the *seder* at the top of his lungs, even screaming the words, will still not be enough to satisfy the adult's need to experience the essence of the Yom Tov. A person can only connect to the essence of the Yom Tov when he can feel it in his soul.

The same is true for all other things as well: A true 'feeling' for something is not an emotionally charged kind of feeling. A true 'feeling' is when it is a feeling of the reality. It can be felt on a daily basis, and throughout any given time of the day. This doesn't mean of course that a person should analyze the reality all day and write it down into a notebook in his hand. Rather, it just means that a person needs to breathe the reality that's taking place in front of him - to feel it and live it.

### *Heightened Sensitivity In Marriage*

Marriage consists of many kinds of experiences that husband and wife face together. This is not a worst-case scenario of marriage; it is the way it is supposed to be. Experiences build the marriage.

Sometimes they don't fight, but this is usually because they aren't paying attention to each other, so they aren't in touch with their own differences.

It is only when husband and wife begin to experience each other's differing viewpoints and wishes, that they become aware of each other, and then they discover problems that they never realized until now. Indeed, the possuk says, "*An increase of knowledge, is an increase of pain.*"<sup>89</sup> The more a person's

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89 *Koheles 1:18*

sensitivity increases, the more challenges he will encounter, for he is aware of reality, as opposed to living in a fantasy.

Compare this to a person who needs to get glasses. If he doesn't get glasses and he needs it, he won't be able to tell if his house is messy or not. Can we say it's better that way, being that he'll be spared the stress of seeing a messy home? If he gets glasses, he'll see the messiness in his house, which is distressing, but at least he gives himself the ability now to do something about it. If he wouldn't get glasses, he'd be living in a fantasy, completely unaware of what needs to be done in his house.

When a person becomes deeper, his sensitivity heightens, and he begins to feel more and more what's going on around him. This is going to bring some suffering with it. It enables a person to see issues and thus become aware of reality, and it is certainly distressing, because he will start to see problems that he was previously oblivious to. This will present a difficulty, but it is the way we need to live. If not, then we live in delusions, oblivious to what's really going on in our life.

Thus, the basis of marriage, the solid ground which a couple needs to stand upon and build their marriage, is to experience and feel each other. That is what enables them to develop their bond further.

When their sensitivity and feelings are heightened, they will find themselves dealing with situations that are much more emotionally charged, and it will test their love. They will be tested, time and time again, if they have reached intrinsic love with each other, or if their love is completely limited to either "love for similarities" or "love for differences".

It will all depend on how much they are experiencing the reality of each other - whether it is a situation of *oneg*, or *nega*, they need to be attuned to what they are experiencing. The desired purpose of marriage is for a person to become constantly attuned to what he is experiencing. It is not simply to arrive at love and peace in the home. Love can only be an expression of something greater: that they be able to always feel each other.

If one reaches this kind of awareness in his home, it can begin with marriage, and extend into raising the children, and then, into one's bond with Hashem; then it can be extended towards the rest of the Jewish people, and beyond that, to the rest of the Creation.

Thus, the purpose of marriage is *not* love! Love is only one step in the process of bringing a couple to deeply experience each other. The more a person is attuned to the reality he is experiencing in his marriage, the more he can deepen his love and expand it further.

An unmarried man is called *palga d'gufa* ("half a body"). What is he missing? He is missing what it means to experience another's existence. Marriage enables a person to begin to see that there is someone else in the world besides for his own existence. But that's just the beginning. The purpose is to sharpen that feeling, more and more, so that one's feelings are sensitive to the reality he goes through.

We can see this in physical terms: At the beginning of marriage, there are no children yet, and there is just the husband and wife. Then come children, and later come grandchildren. They begin as one point, and their 'end' ends at many other points which have expanded from the original point.

This parable helps us understand the inner perspective we are describing. The marital bond between husband and wife is not the end – it is the beginning! The love and peace together that they reach is not the goal. It is a means to a greater end: it enables them to have increased awareness of their experiences. The more they are experiencing what they are experiencing, the deeper their love towards each other can become.

Therefore, in order for marriage to succeed, there must be two steps that husband and wife traverse. The first step is to arrive at love with each other and to live together peacefully. This is just the external layer of marriage. The inner layer of marriage is reached when their feelings have deepened and become sharper. If their feelings haven't deepened, their feelings get rusty and old, like a sealed barrel, which remains in its place (and sometimes, the barrel tips over backwards...).

If one's feelings are not deepening as his marriage continues, this is a sign that he is not in touch with the depth of his soul, and that means that his marriage hasn't been based on solid ground yet. But if we can see on him that he has become deeper, that he is experiencing what he goes through, it shows that his marriage is built on a stable basis.

In the next chapter, we will explain, with the help of Hashem, the lesson which marriage teaches us, which expresses the entire purpose of all of marriage.

*Part One Chapter Twelve**1.12 | The Lesson Of Marriage**Marriage – A Parable To Our Relationship with Hashem*

Throughout *sefer Shir HaShirim*<sup>90</sup>, the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people is compared to the relationship between a *chosson* and *kallah* (groom and bride). The “*moshol*” (parable) described there applies as well to our own lives.

Hashem created the world with a goal – that we should all become attached to Him. All of Creation is really a tool that we can use to attach ourselves to Hashem. Marriage, especially, resembles our relationship with Hashem.

The *moshol* (parable) is the love between a young husband and wife, but the *nimshal* (lesson) is the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people. By realizing that our life and our marriage is all a *moshol*parable to our relationship with Hashem, we can come to the *nimshal*lesson, which is how we form our closeness with Hashem.

When we reflect deeply on the purpose of marriage, it is because through marriage, one can reach an intimate bond with the Creator. Through the parable, you can arrive at the lesson. We need to see the home as a parable of a greater lesson: how we must have a strong and loving bond with the Creator. And the *moshol*parable should not just be seen as a *moshol* that one merely knows about, but as a tangible lesson in life that can be palpably felt, which teaches us the profound meaning of our life.

Life on this world is all a *moshol*, a parable, of a greater lesson. If a person does not see the *moshol*parable of life, he will not get to the *nimshal* (lesson) of it all.

It is for this reason that if a man does not marry, he is called a “*palga d’gufa*”, “half a body”. The *Shechinah* (Hashem’s Presence) will not dwell upon him. The depth of this is because he is missing the *moshol* of what life is about, and therefore he does not either have the *nimshal*.

A couple that has a loving bond with each other is the *moshol* (parable), and the *nimshal* (lesson) of it is the bond of man with the Creator. If one does not have the marriage bond, he cannot have *Shechinah* either, because marriage is parallel to man’s bond with the Creator; if he is missing the *moshol* (parable) in the *nimshal* (lesson), he will not be able to get to the *nimshal*.

However, just because the *nimshal* is the purpose, this does not mean that the *moshol* is not of importance. To the contrary; we need to feel how tangible the *moshol* is, and through that, we can get to the *nimshal*. All of marriage must be seen as the *moshol* to the *nimshal*, and the *moshol* needs to be learned about and examined in all its details - all the way down to the last detail.

The *moshol* of marriage is not just something to know about, but something to experience; when we try to experience the *moshol*, we can get to the *nimshal* - by trying to align our experiences of the *moshol* with that of the *nimshal*.

We will give a few examples of how we can see the correlation between marriage and our bond with Hashem, and you can add on your own. It would be impossible to list all the details here; we will only

give a few fundamental examples, and each person on his own can come up with his own lessons as well.

### *Bonding and Talking With Each Other*

One of the well-known pieces of advice which marriage counselors advise is that a couple must find time every day to spend with each other. For example: to eat dinner every day together for 30 minutes; to be alone with each other, and to talk with each other during this set time, every day. During this quality time together, they should disconnect themselves from the rest of the world. No picking up the home phone, and no cellphones on. They need to have this “alone time” with each other, and they must have conversations during this time.

Not every couple can do it exactly like this, but all couples need to have some “alone time” with each other. The husband must make sure that his wife is his only focus now during this time, and so must the wife focus solely on her husband during this time. That should be all that is going on, and nothing else.

The custom by a wedding is that after the *chuppah*, the *chosson* and *kallah* go into the “*yichud* room”, where they are alone. [There are differing customs between the Ashkenazic and Sephardic customs on how to do this]. If someone else is in the room, it’s not regarded as *yichud* (privacy). It can only be *yichud* if they are alone together, and no one else is with them. Even if the door is ajar and someone can see into the room, it’s already not considered *yichud*.

If a husband is sitting with his wife during breakfast and the phone rings, and he picks up the phone in middle of the conversation, and she’s also picking up the phone in middle of their conversations, it won’t take long for the marriage counselor to get down to the root of their problems when they go for counseling. They never make time for each other; they are never alone with each other, which means that they are not really spending special time with each other.

Any marriage counselor advises a couple to spend a half hour every day of being alone with each other. That time they spend with each other should be regarded as the main part of their day. After they spend time together, each of them can go about their various activities, but they *absolutely must* have quiet time every day with each other! It is not always possible to have quiet time every day with each other, but they should strive to make it a fixed part of their schedule.

### *Talking With Hashem Every Day*

This is a big part of the parable of how marriage resembles our relationship with Hashem: we need to actually talk and communicate with Hashem, just like a couple needs communication in order to have a good marriage. Just like a *chosson* and *kallah* “meet”, so does each Jew need to “meet” with Hashem, and be alone with Hashem, for a fixed time of the day.

Therefore, a person has to think: “Do I have a half hour a day in which I talk to Hashem, and I do nothing else then except spend time with Him and talk with Him?”

Imagine a husband who eats supper with his wife and she is talking to him, and he opens up a *sefer* and he begins to learn in middle of the conversation. It’s a beautiful thing to learn Torah, but not now! He cannot tell her, “I cannot do anything else right now. It is only the Torah which is called ‘*aishes chayil*’ (woman of valor).” Any normal person understands that now is the time to talk to his wife.

So, too, when a person is talking to Hashem, now is not the time to open up a *sefer*. Chazal say that the time to learn Torah and the time to pray are separate times. When talking to Hashem, that should be the only activity you are doing. *What* you speak about with Hashem is another issue, but the first point is to realize, that you are setting aside time to speak with Hashem; and it is not the time for *anything* else.

It should be like when you're in the desert – there are no stores there, no restaurants, and there is not even another soul to talk to.

Just as a couple needs to have time alone every day with each other to talk, so does a person need to have time alone every day with Hashem to talk! He needs to set aside a half hour of his day for quiet time, where he can be allowed to form a bond with Hashem.

### *Marriage: An Exclusive Relationship*

Let's think into another outcome of how marriage is a parable to the relationship between man and his Creator.

The *halachah* is that a woman cannot be married to two men. A married woman is reserved exclusively for her husband. Since this is so, her thoughts should only be about him. She should not be looking outside of her marriage for a relationship. If she does so, it destroys the home, G-d forbid. The foundation of a home is for a woman to understand: "All I have is my husband! I have nobody else in my life."

Chazal warned a man not to overly converse with a woman; it was said regarding one's own wife, and surely towards another's wife. Another person's wife is foreign to him; that woman is designated only for her husband. No husband would be able to handle it if he would see his wife talking fondly with another man. It is unbearable in a marriage. It damages the essence of their bond.

That is very clear.

### *We Should Love Hashem More Than We Love Any Person*

Now let's compare this as well to our relationship with Hashem: the Creator is called our *chosson*, and we are His *kallah*. When we stood at Har Sinai, it was our wedding with Hashem; Hashem took us as His wife, so to speak. We were first betrothed by Him, and then we were officially married.

Being that we have a status of a "married woman" towards Hashem, we are not allowed to have any other "relationships" with others that come close to it.

Maybe a person will counter, "What do you mean? What about *Ahavas Yisrael*, to love other Jews? And what about loving the rest of the world?"

The answer to this is that *Ahavas Yisrael* to others must be stemming from the knowledge that we are all part and parcel with Hashem, "a portion of G-d, from above", or else it is not true *Ahavas Yisrael*. We see that there are people who are willing to forego the entire Torah, G-d forbid, all in the name of *Ahavas Yisrael*. True *Ahavas Yisrael* can only be possible when a person is aware that all Jews are one at their root. It is to love all Jews because we realize that all Jewish souls are unified by Hashem.

Ever since we stood at Sinai and Hashem forced us to accept the Torah, we have become forever married to Hashem, and there is no way for us to leave the bond. Unlike in marriage, where there is a possibility of divorce, in the bond between Hashem and the Jewish people, there is no such thing as divorce.

The *possuk* describes how after the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the Jewish people were sent into exile, and we are considered “like a widow” to Hashem<sup>91</sup>. Our Sages explained this to mean that we are only “*like*” an estranged wife from Hashem, “as if”, but that we are not actually widowed from Hashem. This is because in the deeper dimension of reality, we can never become totally separated from Hashem.

Thus, just like we understand that having a relationship with another is damaging to a marriage, so must we understand that in our relationship with Hashem, we must not betray this bond by having close relationships with others which are stronger than how we feel towards Hashem.

### *Love For Others Must Be An Extension Of Our Love For Hashem*

How, then, should we view our relationships with others? We need to view our bond with others as an extension of our bond with Hashem, and not as a purpose until itself.

Compare this to two people lifting a table. Each of them cannot lift in on his own, because it is heavy. They are carrying the table together, and that is how the table is able to be lifted.

We have to love all people, but what is the reason? It is not simply because we should be people-lovers, but because “*Man is precious, for he was created in the image of G-d.*” Every person is created as a *tzelem elokim* (in the image of G-d), and that is why we must love every person. Sometimes people realize this concept and sometimes they don’t, but this doesn’t matter as far as you should be concerned; you need to love all people, and for what reason? Just for being a *tzelem elokim* [regardless if others realize it or not]!

### *The Exclusivity of Marriage*

Marriage shows a person that he is capable of being in an exclusive relationship with another person. Betrothal is called ‘*eirusin*’, from the word ‘*assur*’, “forbidden”, because it forbids her to the rest of the world now that she is designated to this man. Betrothal is called ‘*kiddushin*’, which means to “designate.” When a man betroths a woman, she is now separated from the rest of the world, and designated to him.

But this is not imprisoning. It is a good kind of limitation. When a woman knows that she is now betrothed to a man and forbidden to the rest of the world, does she feel like she’s now in a prison? No. To the contrary, she derives vitality from the fact that she has become designated to a certain man. There is *menuchah* (serenity) that a wife finds when she finds a husband.<sup>92</sup>

So a basic fundamental understanding towards marriage is, that there should be no other bond in a married woman’s life, other than with her husband. Even a superficial relationship with another person is damaging to the marriage (Unless it is necessary for her to speak with a man, like if she has to ask

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91 *Eichah* 1:1

92 *Rus* 1:9

him a question about something; it should not be more than that!). As for having a close relationship with another person – she must know that it is forbidden.

### *We Have No One But Hashem*

Marriage is really the deepest lesson about life. Just like a husband and wife have no one but each other, so must we realize that we have no one but Hashem. “*Ain Od Milvado*”<sup>93</sup> – “There is nothing else besides for Hashem.”

Hashem revealed this to us at Har Sinai, when all of our 600,000 souls were present, and He revealed there that there is nothing else besides for Him. Why did Hashem reveal His oneness specifically when all 600,000 souls were present, together? There are many reasons to explain it, but along the lines of our discussion, it was because Hashem was showing us all that the bond we share with all other Jews, all 600,000 souls, is all for the sake of realizing one recognition alone: Hashem.

There is no other purpose to connect with other Jews, other than this reason. We must all have one bond, and one bond alone: our bond with Hashem. All other relationships that we have are to be viewed as tools that help us get there.

Although there is no sensible person who will think that in marriage it is okay to have a close bond with others, when it comes to our bond with Hashem there are those who make the mistake of thinking that it’s fine to have a close bond with other people. A person thinks, “What’s so bad about this? Am I supposed to think all day about Hashem? There’s nothing else in life? Don’t I have a wife, children, and friends??”

Yes, there is nothing wrong with being close with others. The problem is, though, that a person usually doesn’t see his close relationships with others (his wife, his children, and his friends) as being an extension of his bond with Hashem....

### *A Wife’s Nature To Find Favor By Her Husband*

The goal of what we are saying here is not to simply ponder these points we have said, but to see how our life is all a “parable” to our relationship with Hashem, and that we need to get to the “lesson” of the “parable”.

Another example of how marriage parallels our bond with Hashem is as follows. There is a *mitzvah* to rejoice on Yom Tov, and the Sages said that it is a *mitzvah* for man to rejoice his wife on the festivals by buying her new clothes in honor of the festival<sup>94</sup>. We also know that there is a concept of beauty in the Torah: “*This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him*” - “a beautiful *sukkah*, a beautiful *lulav*, a beautiful *shofar*, beautiful *tzitzis*, a beautiful Sefer Torah.”<sup>95</sup> Moshe Rabbeinu was praised for his beauty; he was given a ‘*klil tiferes*’ – a “crown of beauty.” There is something about external beauty, which is given credence by the Torah.

Why does Hashem care for beauty? Why should physical appearance be of any status to Him? Why is there a concept of looking ‘beautiful’ in front of Hashem?

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93 *Devarim* 4:35

94 *Pesachim* 109a

95 *Shabbos* 133b

The answer is, because since our relationship with Hashem is like a *kallah* towards her *chossan*, He wants us to look beautiful to Him.

With marriage, we can see this nature ingrained in a wife. The nature of a wife is that she wants to dress up and appear beautiful to her husband; this nature is very much instilled in her. That is how Hashem has designed her, and if the husband does not acknowledge this, she is insulted. She is waiting for him to look interested in her, for that is the nature with Hashem has instilled in her. It is even brought in *halachah* that a *kallah* can wash her face on Yom Kippur, (which is normally forbidden according to the Torah), so that she will still be dear to her husband.

So the nature of a wife is to beautify herself to her husband. Now we will explore the lesson we learn from this: to beautify ourselves to Hashem.

Sometimes a person will wear nice clothing, from head to toe, but not out of a desire to appear attractive to others; it is because he was dressed by another. For example, a Bar Mitzvah boy is dressed up by his mother, and he is usually not that interested in what he's wearing. (It doesn't bother her that he's not interested – all she's concerned about is that he looks good for the guests and for the pictures. She will pay a nice amount of money to dress him up nice and make him look very presentable.) He's not dressing up for others because he wants to impress others. If it was up to him, maybe he would have preferred to show up in the hall in sandals.

But sometimes we find a *bar mitzvah* boy who is concerned with how he will look, and it occupies his mind a lot. He is very specific about how he wants to look, and which particular kind of hat he wants; its color, its design, its interior design, its length, etc. He realizes the meaning of the words of Chazal, "Clothing is honor."

The first kind of boy we mentioned in not personally concerned of how he will look. He has no choice in the matter, so that's why he dresses up. But the second type of boy we mentioned is concerned about how he looks, because he is connected with the concept of appearing good.

The fact that a wife likes to dress up for her husband is not a superficial matter of what she will wear. It is solely because she wants him to think good of her.

Now, if a person doesn't understand why a person would want to wear nice clothing, he won't understand the concept we are describing. Even if someone understands why some people enjoy fashion, he doesn't necessarily understand the concept of spiritual beauty. (If a person doesn't understand why people like to look good, he's probably the type to mistreat his *Tzitzis* and other holy articles too.)

When a wife dresses up for her husband, it is not just about what to wear. It is an internal need of a wife, to find *chein* (favor) in the eyes of her husband. Part of finding *chein* is when the personalities attract, and another factor of *chein*, which is no less important, is the physical appearance. Yes, physical attraction in marriage is important, according to the Torah! A wife's clothing is meant to increase her *chein* in the eyes of her husband, both in the external sense as well as in the inner sense.

In terms of our relationship with Hashem, we also have a *mitzvah* to look beautiful to Him, through doing the *mitzvos*. Doing the *mitzvos* is meant to increase our yearning to "look good" in front of Hashem.

Of course, when physical appearance is mainly emphasized over inner beauty, this is evil. But there is definitely a prominence given to physical appearance. The *Kohen Gadol* wore eight garments and the regular *Kohen* wore four garments, *l'kavod ul'tiferes*, for honor and for beauty. If the *Kohen* does the

*avodah* without the garments, he is deserving of the death penalty. This is because clothing symbolizes the dignity and honor which must accompany one who is trying to be desired.

The lesson we can learn from this is that when a wife dresses up for her husband, she should know that this is not simply about looking good. That is not the purpose, because if it were, the husband could see external beauty by looking at a nice picture of scenery. Rather, the reason why a wife dresses up for her husband, ideally, is to find *chein* (favor) in her husband's eyes.

### *Finding Favor By Hashem*

Applying this to the greater lesson – our bond with Hashem - just like a wife wants to find *chein* by her husband, so should we always be trying to find *chein* in Hashem's eyes.

Why do we need to find *chein* in Hashem's eyes?

It is because it is not enough to do the actions that Hashem requires us to do. The bond with Hashem is formed only when we truly want to become desirable to Him, through those actions. Similarly, Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *Shaarei Teshuvah* that it is not enough for our sins to be forgotten by Hashem; we have to become desirable to Him again. It's possible that a person did *teshuvah* over his sins and he was even forgiven by Hashem, but he still hasn't tried to find *chein* in Hashem's eyes.<sup>96</sup>

We can see from this from our own world as well. When someone hurts his friend and then apologizes, he might be forgiven afterwards, but he loses his *chein* by his friend. It's not the same anymore. His friend might say to him, "I forgive you. But, do me a favor. I don't want to ever see you again. I don't want to have to be reminded of what you did to me." He forgave his friend, but the *chein* his friend once had with him is gone.

When it comes to marriage, what does a wife want from her husband? She wants to know that she is finding *chein* by him always, and she needs to know that her husband loves her. (The Steipler zt"l wrote that when a wife feels unloved by her husband, her life is close to being endangered, because her life depends on his love).

The same goes for our relationship with Hashem: we should be very concerned all the time if Hashem loves us; if we are doing anything to endanger Hashem's love for us. If we don't feel Hashem's love, this should feel frightening to us, no less than how an unloved wife feels.

There are so many people who live their whole life never feeling that Hashem loves them, and they don't even know that they are missing something in their life. As an example, there are many people who delay marriage until they're older, yet they don't feel that they are lacking anything in their life. They have hardened themselves so much that they don't even feel a need to want to connect to someone.

Marriage shows a person that he must feel a need to connect. There are many factors needed in marriage in order for the spouses to connect to each other. We must realize that just as these needs exist in marriage, so do these needs exist in our relationship towards Hashem.

If a week goes by and the wife does not see any signs of love from her husband, she finds this unlivable. [Applying this to our relationship with Hashem], if a person goes by a week without feeling how Hashem loves him, this should feel unbearable to him! It should feel just as difficult as losing a job

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<sup>96</sup> See *Tefillah* #0135 – *Finding Favor Again By Hashem*

that week, or if the price of food goes up, etc. A person must be able to see Hashem's love for him, and if he doesn't see it, it should feel bothersome to him.

Maybe one will ask, "How can I tell if Hashem loves me? If I win the lottery, then I'll know that Hashem loves me; otherwise, how do I know Hashem loves me?" But feeling Hashem's love is not limited to rare events. It can be felt on a daily basis, if one looks to see it.

When one has a keen sense of reflection, he can see Divine Providence in his life [and that is how he can feel Hashem's love for him]. But it is marriage which can give a person an idea of what it means to be in a loving relationship with Hashem. The Rambam<sup>97</sup> says that one has to pursue Hashem out of a love for Him, just as lover pursues his beloved, which is a constant pursuit.

We can all identify this from the period of engagement. When a *chosson* is engaged, he usually cannot stop thinking about his *kallah*. These days, through cellphones, the *chosson* and *kallah* can talk all day, for hours an end.

A young couple's excitement for each other dies down a little after the wedding, where the routine of life takes over and they get used to each other. But even though this is true, at least there was a bond of love that had begun between them. The engagement period (usually about three months long) is usually full of excitement and warmth for each other, and the *chosson* and *kallah* will even feel like they have a deep bond with each other. A *chosson* (usually) feels like the happiest person; that he has found what he has been looking for his entire life; that there is no one as happy as him.

This provides us with a powerful lesson about our relationship with Hashem. One should ask himself: Did I ever feel that way toward Hashem? Was there ever a period in my life where I couldn't stop thinking about Hashem for three months straight, just like a *chosson* is always thinking about his *kallah*? Did we ever feel that since we have Hashem in our life, this is no greater reason for happiness, and that there is no happiness like it in the world?

When a person deeply understands how marriage is all a parable that serves as a lesson, to how we need to have an intimate bond with Hashem, it begins to dawn on him that he simply has never started to have a relationship with Hashem! He never became 'engaged' yet with Hashem. If he would have, he would feel excited about Hashem no less than how much he is excited when he gets engaged to his *kallah*.

It is written, "*My soul is sick with love over you.*" When there is love, the lover is 'sick' with love toward his beloved. "*On my bed at nights, I sought that which my soul loved.*" Love for Hashem is something that a person is ideally supposed to long for and think about all the time.

But we see the opposite taking place. Not only is a person missing feelings for Hashem; even in one's marriage, most of the time, the feelings are missing. A few months after the wedding, the routine of life takes over, and the relationship between the couple become somewhat monotonous. When this is the situation of the marriage, a person will act the same way towards Hashem.

Therefore, learning how to build the marital bond is really a lesson of how we build our relationship with the Creator. We can find that deep bond reflected in our own home, and we can understand that the marriage is entirely a parable of how we must relate to Hashem.

If a person has ever experienced a deep relationship with another in his life, he already can conceptualize the idea. Even if it was partially imagined, a person can still have some idea of what it

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<sup>97</sup> *Hilchos Teshuvah* 10:3

means, to have a deep bond. A person has to take that idea of a deep bond in his mind that he knows of, and translate it into his relationship with Hashem.

### *The Lesson of Children*

Here is the following additional point to think about, which is also brought out through marriage.

There is no person who wants to remain childless in his marriage. Every person wants children, because children perpetuate our legacy and enable us to be remembered.

If a person understands that marriage is a parable to our bond with Hashem, the next step for him to understand (intellectually speaking, and not practically speaking) is that just as a marriage between husband and wife results in the birth of children, so must there be “results” that are born out of our relationship with Hashem.

Children usually look like their parents. Sometimes the child looks exactly like one of the parents, and sometimes there is less of a resemblance, but there is always some kind of resemblance. Why is this so? It is meant to show us that we should give birth to “children” from our relationship with Hashem: doing good deeds. “The main offspring of the righteous is their good deeds.” Our good deeds are the “children” that result from our bond of marriage with Hashem.

How can a person know if he is having a successful marriage? A good sign is when he sees that he is revealing Hashem in his life toward other people. Avraham Avinu revealed *emunah* onto the world; he had a bond of marriage with Hashem. The “children” that resulted from this were his good deeds – his revelation of Hashem upon others.

Thus, besides for marriage itself, there is also what results from the marriage. When a person wants there to be a continuation that results from his marriage, this is a sign that his marriage is good. The lesson from this is that in our relationship with Hashem, besides for the relationship itself which we must strive for, we must also want that relationship to bear results upon the world [that other people should also be taught a relationship with Hashem].

### *Practically Applying These Concepts*

We will conclude with the following fundamental point.

There are two different aspects of our life. There is the material side of our life, which is concrete and thus palpable to us. There is also the spiritual side to our life, in which we are aware of certain concepts that we attain through our intellect.

There are those who only live the material side of life, and they are far removed from the realm of the intellectual\spiritual. The wisdom about life doesn't concern them that much. In contrast, there are others who are mainly interested in the wisdom about life, but they are disconnected from the material side to reality.

[Either of these ways is incorrect]. The true way is to understand that the material side to life can enable our spiritual world to take hold and become tangible. We are comprised of a soul and a body. Our soul is in the realm of the intellectual\spiritual, while our body is materialistic. But we are not entirely a body or entirely a soul. Our task is to reveal the spiritual within the physical.

Many people hear about deep or spiritual concepts, and view them as Heavenly matters which we cannot relate to. The truth is, our soul does come from Heaven; and it needs to be sustained through learning about the spiritual. But we are not found in Heaven right now. Our soul is right now in our physical body.

All of the parables we explained in this chapter, [which serve to show us how marriage resembles the ideal relationship with Hashem], teach us how we can infuse the spiritual into the physical. The ongoing theme throughout all of the parables was that there is a *chosson* and *kallah*, a groom and a bride, a man and a woman; the lesson it represents is the relationship between the Creator (the “*chosson*”) and the Jewish people (the “*kallah*”).

If a person doesn't see how marriage reflects our bond with the Creator, then the physical reality he lives with on this world is disconnected from the spiritual reality.

All of the deep, spiritual concepts described here are meant to be applied to day-to-day living. The purpose of all physicality we recognize is leading towards something greater. It is leading towards the spiritual.

Sometimes it is hard to see it at first, and it seems very far away. But we are meant to clothe the spiritual within the physical. This is the entire idea of man, who is a soul from Heaven, clothed in a physical body.

If a person only seeks practical action in marriage, he is focusing solely on the physical aspect of marriage, and such a marriage will be a union of two bodies; even two animals can have such a relationship. It cannot be the ideal marriage, which incorporates soul within body.

In this *sefer*, it was discussed lofty and spiritual concepts. But they are concepts that can be incorporated into our physical world, practically speaking. If we look at spirituality as being merely lofty and esoteric ideas which cannot become actualized in the practical sense, this is the root of all destruction. It would be tantamount to denying that we have a soul. Although it is true that the co-existence of body and soul together is called a “wonder”, it is still the reality which we must live and grapple with.

We must be able to take even the deepest, spiritual concepts that we have learned about and recognize, and apply them practically in our physical world, into our daily living; to be able to *act* upon these matters we have learned about here. If not, then we remain with the “parable” alone, and we will be missing the lesson; and our purpose in Creation will be lost with it.

### *Connecting The Parable With The Lesson*

The *moshol* (parable) and *nimshal* (lesson) described throughout this chapter are not meant to remain as two distinct matters that are apart from each other. The *nimshal* is found only through the *moshol*. The *nimshal* cannot be fully reached unless we have the *moshol*. And the truth is, that the *nimshal* is not too far from the *moshol* – it is found within it...

To illustrate, when Esther spoke to Achashveirosh, she addressed him as “the king”, and the Sages say that she was really thinking about the Creator as she said so. In other words, she realized how the *moshol* and *nimshal* were intertwined.

A superficial person will think that it is a form of disconnection for one to always see the spiritual clothed in the physical. Indeed, this may be the case, when this concept is misunderstood. But when

seen correctly, a person understands well how the spiritual can be clothed in the physical reality that we see.

He doesn't see the physical and spiritual dimensions as being *apart* - rather, he sees how the spiritual layer of reality is *clothed* through the physical layer of reality.

### *Bringing The Spiritual Into The Physical*

To conclude, what we discussed here is not meant to remain as spiritual matters alone that cannot be actualized. They *can* be actualized in our daily life. We can live both the spiritual and the physical at once. We will explain.

Let's think about the following example. A person is sitting and eating a piece of chicken, or fish, or whatever food he's engrossed in. Does he think about it for 10 minutes straight, as he's eating his meal? If his meal is taking 2 hours, does that mean he thinks about his food for 2 hours straight, and nothing else? Of course not. The average person will think a little about what he's eating as he's eating, but his thoughts are floating all over the place, so he's not entirely focused on his food. Even if a person is eating a piece of schnitzel for 10 minutes straight, that doesn't mean he does not stop thinking about his schnitzel.

The point that we see from this is that a person has the ability to *do* "A", yet he's *thinking* about "B". His thoughts are not 100% focused on what he is doing. When it comes to the case of food, even the most gluttonous person in the world wouldn't be able to focus his thoughts for 10 minutes straight on the food he is eating. His thoughts will always be elsewhere.

Thus, a person has the ability to redirect his thoughts to think about something else, as he is in the midst of doing something.

Now that we have understood that, let's proceed to the next point. If a person can think about something else other than he's food – even while he's actually eating – why can't he also steer his mind to think about lofty concepts...? We have free choice to decide where our thoughts will go to.

In the home, a man is busy with his wife and children, and vice versa. If he's home for 3 hours, let's say, does that mean that he's thinking for 3 hours straight about his wife and children, without interruption? His thoughts are all over the place. He is not thinking the entire time about what he is doing. So a person has free will to decide where his thoughts are. He is able to choose if he will think about materialistic matters or spiritual matters, as he's amidst his day-to-day tasks.

If a person isn't used to focused thought, then his actions and thoughts are disconnected from each other. He is in his house, while his thoughts are floating somewhere outside the house. To become more inward, a person can learn how to settle his thoughts, becoming connected to what he is doing at the moment, and to be *there*.

Therefore, it would be recommended for a person to get used to avoiding doing two things at once. This is because it is impossible for a person to think two things at once. If one is doing two things at the same time, at best, he is thinking about at least *one* of the things he is doing, but not the other; the other alternative is that he is not thinking into *anything* he is doing, because his thoughts are thinking about something else entirely than what he is doing.

He gets used to fracturing his focus: his actions and his thoughts become disconnected from each other. This leads to all destruction, and it is especially detrimental to a Jewish home.

### *In Conclusion*

Man's task on this world is to unify body and soul together. Just as our soul enters one body and it cannot be in two bodies at once, so too must we be focused in our thoughts on one thing at a time, and not do two things at once. In this way, the lofty thoughts we learn about can become incorporated into how we act.

Why is it that most people do not succeed in internalizing all of the lofty concepts that they have learned about and to make them practical? There is a very clear answer: it is because the person is used to doing actions without enough deep thought involved. There is minimal thought sometimes, but not deep thought.

If we want to succeed in the system of life in general, and marriage specifically, the rule is: there must be 'one' man and 'one' woman! In other words, we need to *bring* ourselves into what we are doing, and then we can each be fully present. In this way, the lofty concepts that we learn about can then become manifest in how we act.

This is the deepest secret of the home: to have one 'light' per 'container' - to have 'one' thought within every 'one' action that we do. Through this, we can merit, with *siyata d'shamaya*, to the meaning of "*And they shall become one flesh*"; to become the complete vessel that can contain the [light of] Individual One of the world.



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*from the English sefer  
Getting to Know Your Home*

*Part Two Chapter One**2.1 | In Search of Simplicity*

We are living in a generation where the breaches in our behavior are greater than the walls which surround us. There are hardly any walls left at all! Not since the days of our forefathers has such a thing occurred. The Jewish nation is currently at such a low ebb, as well as profoundly misled – from inside and from outside – by ignorant people who mean well, and by people whose souls are not from a Jewish source. They bear the responsibility of having brought concepts which entirely uproot the holiness of the Jewish home into the Jewish community.

The basic facets of Jewish life are so distant from the way they are supposed to be. Every person, according to who he is, according to his level, according to his understanding, must try to imagine from where and from whom we descend. We are the children of Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov, the children of Sara, Rivka, Rochel, and Leah. How did our first Forefather and Mother, Avraham and Sara, appear? How did Yitzchak and Rivka appear? And how did Yaakov, Rochel and Leah appear? Does our lifestyle resemble theirs in any way?

Let us imagine a very simple thought: If we will merit that Moshiach will come now, and everyone will go out to greet him, will we be proud to do so in the clothing that we are wearing right now? Will the average man and woman, in the manner that they presently appear, be ready to greet Moshiach? And if one thinks that he is ready to greet Moshiach the way he is now, then his mistake is so great that he has entirely forgotten, or perhaps has never really known, how a Jew is supposed to appear.

If Moshiach would want to visit us at home, what would we remove from our homes before the visit and what would we leave there for Moshiach to see?

We live in a generation where the sense of touch is freely used to touch anything anywhere anytime.

I have no doubt that if one of the great rabbis from the previous generations would come and see our generation, he would faint the second he arrived. If the degradation he would be forced to witness would only be manifest by the nations of the world, it would also be a great heartache and disappointment; but the foreign ideas and lifestyle have begun to penetrate within the Jewish nation, and slowly the concepts are becoming more deeply entrenched.

The problems and misguided views of marriage are apparent from the very beginning, usually at the wedding itself. The ceremony, the clothing, the dancing, and everything else related to the wedding generally express a strong element of falsehood with hardly any truth.

The main question, which can change and vary the direction of the Jewish home, is: What does the soul really want?

Included in this question are other questions: Why marry? Why build a house? And in general, what is the purpose of life? If one's desire and yearning are for Torah, for *kedushah*, for closeness to Hashem – if this is what he is busy with and these are what his thoughts are occupied with, then he will automatically be building a true Jewish home in the path of our ancestors.

While it is true that we are living in a physical world, clothed within a physical body, with financial worries and pre-occupied with raising the children, and so many other distractions, we can still ask: What is the soul yearning for? What is the soul burning towards? What does the soul desire?

The callousness and apathetic attitude people have towards this important subject can be very disturbing. “Wake up!” we want to shout at them. “Why are you sleeping?! We are Jews, holy souls, whose feet stood by *Har Sinai*, and our desire then was only G-dliness, only Torah, only to do the will of Hashem *Yisborach*. As we heard the Ten Commandments, our soul departed with each commandment. Our desire and lives were solely to live for G-d.

For five minutes every day, it would be good for everyone to remember and recapture the moment when he stood by Mount Sinai, because every Jewish soul stood by Mount Sinai to receive the Torah; both the souls that were already created, and those not born yet. As it is written:<sup>98</sup> “Remember the day that you stood before Hashem in *Chorev* (by Mount Sinai).”

What were your desires then? What did you want then? How did the Jewish lifestyle appear during that era? And how does it appear today?

One must find time to think about these things every day, to develop deep yearnings within himself for a life rich with spirituality, purity, and holiness. Afterwards, he should consider how distant he is from these goals, and to feel the yearning and pain of the soul.

Although there are many things in life that one cannot control, we can control our ability to desire and yearn for spirituality. The deep yearning and the tears that come together with the yearning are always possible to attain.

It is incredibly difficult in our generation to develop this deep yearning, because the world is running and burning in the opposite direction. But when a person separates himself slightly from This World, and goes to a private place to be alone with his own thoughts, he can contemplate the greatness of his soul and his true yearnings. He can think about the way he appears now, then he will understand the *Mishna* which teaches:<sup>99</sup> “Against your will you were created, and against your will you live”.

When a Jew understands these truths, then if *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* would ask him whether he wants to remain here in This World or if he would prefer to go to *Gan Eden*, he would want to immediately leave this world.

*Rosh HaShanah* comes, and everyone shouts that they want to live another year. Why do they want another year? Is it so good here? A person can give lip service to the idea that he wants to be able to live another year so he can keep the *mitzvos* and gain merits. But is that the real reason he wants to live? If so, why doesn't he have these thoughts throughout the year? If his intentions are true, then his lot is fortunate.

Why should one want another year of life? It is definitely worth living another year if he can have a year with Torah, a year with the desires to serve Hashem. For such a life, it is definitely worthwhile to request: “Inscribe me in the book of life.” But to live this year like last year and like the year before that, void of spirituality and spiritual desires – what is the purpose for such a life?

One whose emotions are at least slightly alive and not entirely deadened will occasionally cry over the situation of this world today. If he doesn't cry, it is a sign that his emotions are numb. It doesn't mean that he cannot awaken them, only that his emotions are temporarily out of order. One doesn't need for something drastic and terrible to happen in order to cry. The general situation, the overall

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98 *Devorim* 4:10

99 *Pirkei Avos* 4:22

degradation which is occurring outside our windows and has begun to penetrate within us as well is sufficient reason for any person who has healthy and open emotions, to cry.

Crying over the situation, shouldn't lead us to despair; rather it should generate feelings of hope. The G-d of Israel always exists, and with His help, one can always extract himself, if he desires, from his dire situation.

In relation to our generation it is said: "When one falls to hell, G-d is there".<sup>100</sup> This verse isn't only referring to the very last generation, moments before the arrival of Moshiach, when it will be too late to do *teshuvah*. It is referring to our generation, when we are still able to do *teshuvah*. It is up to us to change. As it is written<sup>101</sup> "One goes down to hell, and then rises." We can improve and change and rise above our situation. But in order to extract ourselves from our situation, we have to change the way that we are living our lives.

When starting out to build a Jewish home, one should be asking himself: Why do I want to get married? So that my life will be easier? So that I can bear beautiful children? Why does he need it all? What is the purpose? If his intentions are proper, that he is getting married for the sake of Torah, *mitzvos*, spirituality, and truth then he will succeed in building a true Jewish home.

If, however, his goals are external, to increase his physical gains in life or pleasure-oriented, then he will not succeed in building his home according to the ways of the Torah.

Everyone has free choice, and one can act differently than the lifestyle of this generation. The lifestyle which is prevalent today does not at all reflect the lives of our forefathers. It certainly is not the lifestyle which is advised by the leaders of our generation. Every individual has free choice to change and extract himself from the lifestyle of the generation he finds himself living in, by setting aside time on a daily basis to think about how he should live with truth, and by asking himself: How did we live in the generation that received the Torah on Mount Sinai? How did the Jews live in the generation of the *Beis Hamikdash*? How am I living now? What can I do to emulate their ways?

A person may be able to excuse his improper lifestyle by saying, "What should I do? This is the generation that I am living in, and I cannot change the trend, etc. etc." I am not certain whether his claim will be accepted in heaven, or whether he will be punished. But one thing is for sure – even if all his excuses will be accepted, he will never attain the true life and lifestyle of the Jewish nation.

If a person desires something real in his life, he must separate himself from the ways of the generation, and live according to the ways of our forefathers. We are not attempting to create new trends that never existed before, G-d forbid. Rather, we are encouraging a return to the ways of our forefathers – to the way that they lived when they were alone, to the way they dressed, how they lived with their families, and how they lived with holiness and with lofty desires and yearnings.

If a person seeks truth, he should separate himself slightly from this world. Once he does this, he will find that he can connect to a more real, more spiritual world. He doesn't have to 'look to the right or to the left' to copy others. He can do what is correct. He doesn't have to be different and a laughing stock before others either, but privately, and within himself, he must change his lifestyle, and connect himself to the life of Torah, to a life of *tefillah* with truth.

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<sup>100</sup> *Tehillim* 139:8

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

He shouldn't pray with his eyes on the clock, rushing to finish the prayers, rather he should make his *tefillah* a time when he feels that he is speaking with Hashem, and that he is connecting with his *tefillos* to a life that is in a higher place than where he is now.

We have to return to a simple Jewish life, a life where a person goes to sleep and he thinks about why he is alive and what his desires are. As it is written: "*Al mishkavi bleilos bikashti es she'avah nafshi*,<sup>102</sup> On my bed at night I request that which my soul loves..." He remembers for Whom he is yearning. This is what he thinks about, this is what he speaks about with his friends and to his wife and in this manner he trains his children.

His lifestyle is not a burden upon him; on the contrary, he now merits living a true life. The life that we are living now, in our generation, is a lifestyle that creates confusion for people who do not have peace of mind and do not know where to find the truth.

Hashem should help us that we should all be burning with a desire to search for truth, for holiness and purity, to have true yearnings, to live with the true Torah, a true life for the true G-d and to direct all our thoughts, feelings and actions to always be closer and closer to the will of G-d, and to feel a deep attachment to Him. Amen.

*Part Two Chapter Two**2.2 | The Holiness of Marriage**Marriage Before And After Matan Torah*

Three days before *matan* Torah (the giving of the Torah), Hashem told the Jewish nation:<sup>103</sup> ‘Prepare yourselves for the third day, because in three days, Hashem will descend before the eyes of the entire nation upon the Mount Sinai...’ The Jews received exact instructions how they should prepare themselves for *matan* Torah. One of the instructions was to separate from their wives. Married couples had to separate as if they were divorced. After *matan* Torah, Hashem told them<sup>104</sup>, “*Shuvu lechem l’ohaleichim*” – return to your homes – as if they were remarried again.

Let’s imagine what occurred: A man we’ll call Yaakov, was married to a woman we’ll call Leah. Several years before *matan* Torah they were a standard and regular couple; everyone knew them simply as Yaakov and Leah, husband and wife. Three days before *matan* Torah Hashem commanded all couples to separate, so Yaakov and Leah separated. After *matan* Torah, Hashem commanded all couples to return to their homes, so Yaakov and Leah returned to their home and to the marriage that they shared for so many years.

Are Yaakov and Leah the same couple after *matan* Torah as they were before *matan* Torah? Externally, they appear to be the exact same couple as before. Despite the short separation interval, their marriage now seems to be an extension of their previous marriage. However, that is not the case. Now they are an entirely new couple. Before *matan* Torah, they weren’t yet Jews<sup>105</sup> so after *matan* Torah they became a brand new couple – a Jewish couple. Their new relationship wasn’t merely a continuation of their old marriage; rather it was a brand new beginning.

How did their relationship change when they remained essentially the same people? Which differences occurred from before *matan* Torah to after *matan* Torah? Before *matan* Torah they were a couple without Torah; after *matan* Torah, they were a couple with Torah. A marriage without Torah and a marriage with Torah are two entirely different marriages.

“*Shuvu lechem l’ohaleichem*, Return to your home” they are told. They will be returning to a new home with Torah. A home without Torah compared to a home with Torah is a greater distance than the distance from heaven to earth! How is a marriage from before *matan* Torah different from a marriage after *matan* Torah? What are the differences between non-Jewish marriages and Jewish marriages?

When a non-Jew wants to marry a woman, he doesn’t go under the chuppah and he doesn’t say to the bride, “*Harei at mikudeshes li k’das moshe v’Yisrael* (Behold you are married to me according to the laws of Moshe and Yisrael).”<sup>106</sup> So how does a non-Jew marry his wife, and how did marriages occur before

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103 *Shemos* 19:21

104 *Devarim* 5:26

105 according to several opinions, the Jewish nation became ‘Jews’ at *matan* Torah

106 *Kidushim* 5b

*matan* Torah? The Rambam<sup>107</sup> tells us: “Before *matan* Torah... if they wanted to marry each other, he would bring her into his house and live with her, and that is how they would become married.” Their marriage was created in a very flimsy and superficial manner. If eventually they discovered they did not “get along” with each other, he simply told her that the “marriage” was over. What began on a superficial level can likewise be terminated easily.

How does a man marry a woman after *matan* Torah? He gives her a ring under the chuppah and he says: “*Harei at mikudshes li k’das Moshe v’Yisrael.*” He marries her “according to the laws of Moshe and Yisrael.” The connection between them is a connection of Torah. If, later, he desires to divorce, he cannot simply ask her to leave his house. He must prepare witnesses and a scribe to write a divorce document (*get*) written according to halachah. Only after these halachic conditions are fulfilled can the *get* be given to the woman for the divorce to take effect.

Before *matan* Torah a man married his wife in an instant and, similarly, she was divorced in an instant. After *matan* Torah, a man marries his wife according to the laws of the Torah. The connection between husband and wife is now a perfect and complete connection with the halachic requirements and steps of marriage of *kiddushin*, *chuppah*, *nesuin*. Now, bound by Torah law, it is much more difficult to separate.

A *get* is required to separate them, because the *get* represents the area where there is no more Torah. Their connection to each other came from the Torah, they can only be divided with a *get*, which represents the absence of Torah.

It is written:<sup>108</sup> “Why is the divorce document referred to as a *get*? Because the two letters which spell *get* (*gimel* and *tes*) are never found together in any word in the entire Torah.”

The two letters of *get* (*gimel* and *tes*) which never come together in the entire Torah signifies that the reason for their separation was because there was no Torah in their marriage. A marriage that is built upon the Torah is a marriage where the connection is true and deep, and therefore can endure forever. A marriage which was built without Torah is a weak connection, and therefore doesn’t necessarily endure forever.

Every marriage that ends in a divorce is a sign that there wasn’t Torah in their marriage. Sometimes it is the husband who is lacking Torah, sometimes it is the wife. This explains the divorces that occurred among the great scholars of history. Although the great scholars themselves had Torah, if their wives were lacking Torah, their marriage would be fragile and sometimes dissolved in a divorce.

This should not be confused with or compared to the separation that occurred between Moshe *Rabbeinu* from his wife. Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s separation is based on an entirely different concept. *Chazal* tell us<sup>109</sup>: “There are three things Moshe *Rabbeinu* did on his own and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* agreed with him that he performed correctly...” One of these three things was his separation from his wife, Tzipora. Unlike other prophets, who only received their prophecy after they sanctified and prepared themselves, Moshe *Rabbeinu* was continuously prepared and ready for prophecy, and therefore he needed to separate from his wife, because he never knew when the next prophecy would come.

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107 *Hilchos Ishus* 1:1

108 *Sefer Get Mekushar* brings this observation from Rav Reuven Almaliyah

109 *Shabbos* 87a

*Chazal*<sup>110</sup> tell us that Moshe *Rabbeinu* was human from the waist downward, and a G-dly being from the waist upwards. Moshe *Rabbeinu*, therefore, had to separate from his wife, because he was above the levels of regular human beings.

### *The Spiritual Connection*

There is only one “entity” which can bring two different things together to become one.

It has never happened that two different species of animals have merged together and become like one. Never have two mountains connected and became like one, nor have two stars ever combined. So how is it that two people, so different from each other, can join together and become like one in marriage?

*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* combines two opposite people in marriage to become one. They are united through the Torah.

“*Histakel b’oraysa u’bara alma.*” *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* looked at the Torah [and through it] created the world.<sup>111</sup> The *Shamayim* (the heaven), the earth, the waters, and all of mankind were all created from the Torah. Two aspects of creation will only unite when we utilize the “utensil” which created them. There, at their source, they can merge together and become one. If we do not utilize the “utensil” which created them in order to unite them, then not only will they be *shnayim* ‘two’, but they will also be *shonim*, ‘different’. They will be two entirely different beings, unable to unite.

### *Revealing Hashem’s Honor In This World*

How are two people united by the Torah? The *posuk* says:<sup>112</sup> “Everyone who is called by My Name and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have fashioned, even perfected.” The world, with everything within it, was created for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*’s honor to be revealed. A chair, a table, a chandelier, a house, a closet, and a fork all have one purpose: to reveal Hashem’s honor in the world. How much more so does a marriage based on Torah reveal Hashem’s honor in this world.

The world was created from the four basic elements:<sup>113</sup> fire, air, water, and earth. Everything that exists in creation is derived from these four elements. Males were created from water, and females were created from fire; this explains why they are so different from one another.

It is impossible for fire and water to unite. Either the fire will evaporate the water, or the water will extinguish the fire. Since the husband is water and the wife is fire, they should also be unable to unite. If the husband’s role in the marriage is more prominent, then his element of water should extinguish and dissipate the wife’s position in the marriage, since she comes from fire. If the wife’s element of fire is stronger in the relationship, then her personality should evaporate and dissolve her husband’s water

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110 *Devarim Rabbah Zos haBracha 11*

111 *Zohar Trumah 161b*

112 *Yeshaya 43:7*

113 See the authors sefer *Getting to Know Your Soul*

element. How then do they join together in peace and harmony in marriage? Following the basic laws of nature, they shouldn't be able to unite and become like one.

There is only one place where fire and water unite in *kedusha*, in holiness, and that is in *shamayim*, in heaven. *Shamayim* has within it the words *aish* (fire) and *mayim* (water) because the heavens were created from the combination of fire and water. As *Chazal* taught:<sup>114</sup> “*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* mixed fire and water and created from them the heavens.”<sup>115</sup>

It appears that the only place where the couple can unite and become like one is in *shamayim*, where the element of fire and water unite. In this world, however, it seems impossible for them to unite.

It seems that only after their death, when they are buried in their graves and their souls ascend to heaven can they exist together without fighting and competing. But how can a husband and wife unite in this world, where fire and water are polar opposites?

### *A Husband Must Honor His Wife*

We will answer this question by raising another question. The *Gemara* asks:<sup>116</sup> “What is the proper behavior of a husband in his home? He should love his wife as much as he loves himself and he should honor his wife more than he honors himself”.

It is understood that the husband must love his wife, but why must he honor her? What is the source and reason for the honor? Generally, when people honor others (from the false viewpoint of this world) they honor their external qualities. They honor their wealth, their appearance, their expensive clothing, etc. To honor someone for their internal qualities is to honor their essence and *neshamah*<sup>117</sup> which is the true form of honor.

We are obligated to honor parents, *rabbanim*, *talmidei chachamim*, and, obviously, we are obligated to honor Hashem, but why must a husband honor his wife?

A husband is not obligated to honor his wife because of her physical body; rather he must honor her because of her *neshamah*. A husband must honor his wife *yoser m'gufo* – more than his own body, because of his wife's holy *neshamah*.

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114 *Bereishis Rabbah Bereishis 4*

115 [Author's Note: The only other time fire and water united was during the plague of hail in Egypt. Everything that is in *kedushah*, holiness, is also existent in the *kelipah*, in the impure areas. The main source of the unusual mixture of fire and water is truly only in heaven, in the spiritual realms. They have a counterpart in the impure areas as well, and it was revealed in Egypt as *makas barad* (hail) to punish the Egyptians. The rule is that impurities begin in unity (*achdus*) and end in separation (*pirud*), whereas holiness begins in separation (*pirud*) and ends in unity (*achdus*). Therefore, fire and water are together until today in the heaven, in the spiritual realms, but their union in the impurities, during the plague of *barad* was only for a week, and then they separated again. Fire and water's connection in heaven is *atzmi*, a genuine connection, whereas their connection in hail was *shcheni*, a temporary neighborly connection.]

116 *Yevamos 62b*

117 [Editor's Note: The *neshamah*, the divine soul, is located primarily in the brain.]

Every person is a mixture of body and soul, *guf* and *neshamah*. Everyone has a *neshamah*, as it is written: *V'yipach b'apov nishmas chayim*,<sup>118</sup> (Hashem blew into his nostrils the *neshamah* of life). Everyone also has a body as it is written: *V'yitzer es ha'adom afar min ha'odamah*<sup>119</sup> (Hashem created man out of earth from the ground). It is his *neshamah* which is called *kovod*, as it is written (in reference to the *neshamah*): "*L'maan yizamercha kovod*",<sup>120</sup> '...my [*kovod*] *neshamah* should praise you.

The honor that the husband must give his wife is for her *neshamah*, for her *pnimiyus* and inner qualities, and not for her external qualities.

### *Spiritual Clothing For Honor*

Nevertheless, there are a few instances where the Torah refers to the externals as a basis for honor. Reb Yochanon would call his clothing *michabdusah* (my honor) because his clean and respectable clothing brought him honor.<sup>121</sup> The four garments of the *Cohen Hedyot* (regular *Cohen*) and the eight garments of the *Cohen Godol* (High Priest) are also referred to in the Torah as:<sup>122</sup> "*l'kovod v'litifores*" 'for honor and glory.'

Do these sources indicate that there are times when we should honor externals as well, and not only the *pnimiyus* (the inner *neshamah* and qualities)? The answer is that even in these instances it is not really the clothing that is being honored, rather it is the *neshamah* and inner qualities that the garments are revealing and representing.

The word *begadim*, usually translated as 'clothing,' can also be translated as rebellious and sinful. The very first garments were created from sin. Adam *Harishon* rebelled against *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and ate from the *etz hada'as*<sup>123</sup>, the Tree of Knowledge. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* made *kosnos* or for them, clothing made from animal hides, to cover their bodies. Adam not only rebelled against *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, he also rebelled against his wife. When Hashem asked him why he ate from the *etz hada'as*, he replied 'the wife that You gave to me gave me from the tree and I ate'. *Chazal* tell us that this was being *kofei tova* (unappreciative).<sup>124</sup> Hashem gave him a wife, and now he is blaming her for his sins. After he sinned, the *Gemara*<sup>125</sup> teaches that he separated from his wife for 130 years. His clothing, therefore, was a representation of sin and rebellion.

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118 *Bereishis* 2:7

119 *Ibid.*

120 *Tehillim* 30:13

121 *Shabbos* 113a

122 *Shemos* 28:2

123 *Bereishis* 3:12

124 *Avoda Zara* 5b

125 *Midrash Rabbah* 23:4

But there is another form of clothing which isn't the result of rebellion and sin. There is clothing which, rather than concealing the *neshamah*, openly reveals the greatness of the *neshamah*. When Reb Yochanon called his clothing *michabdusah*, he was referring to this type of clothing. The honor that this clothing generates is the honor of the *neshamah*.

Did Adam and Chava wear clothing before their sin? Do *neshomos* in *Gan Eden* wear clothing? There is a spiritual form of clothing, which is worn in *Gan Eden*. *Chazal* explain<sup>126</sup> that in Reb Meir's sefer Torah, *kosnos ohr* was written with an *alef* instead of an *ayin* (denoting clothing of a spiritual light instead of clothing made from animal hides). Before the sin Adam and Chava wore the clothing with an *alef*, a clothing made from a spiritual light. After the sin they wore clothing with an *ayin*, made from animal hides. When the *neshamah* is shining, the clothing are also light and radiant and can be called *michabdusah*, because the honor of the *neshamah* is revealed through the clothing. However, when the light of the *neshamah* is hidden, then the word is written with an *ayin*, alluding clothing which conceals the light of the *neshamah*.

Only the *neshamah* and the *pnimiyus* are worthy of honor and respect. The externals, at best, reveal and help us recognize the spirituality that is within, but they are never the source for honor.

### *Marriage Based On The Neshamah*

Based upon these principles we can understand a simple, yet wonderful, idea.

We've discussed how the husband and wife are opposites from one another; how one is water and the other is fire, and that water and fire cannot unite in this world. Since their bodies were created from the earth of this world, it seems impossible for them to unite. However, the husband and wife also have a *neshamah*, and the *neshamah* comes from *Shamayim* where water and fire can unite.

If the couple views their union from a purely external, physical perspective, that he is water and she is fire, they will never be able to join and *get* along with one another. However, if they live spiritually; if he is living with his *neshamah*, and she is living with her *neshamah*, and he honors her because of her *neshamah* which comes from heaven, then they can live together in peace and harmony.

These concepts reveal the secret of and path to *shalom bayis*. It also reveals how Torah can unite the husband and wife in marriage; because Torah also comes from heaven. As it is written:<sup>127</sup> "*min hashamayim hishmeyacha es kolo l'yasreka*, (From heaven He caused you hear His voice)". When Moshe *Rabbeinu* ascended *Har Sinai*<sup>128</sup> to receive the Torah, the holy angels pleaded to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*: "Give your Torah to the heavens," because Torah is from heaven.

When people bring Torah into their marriage they bring honor for the *neshamah* into the marriage as well. Without Torah, their relationship will consist only of their physical bodies – matter from this world – where fire and water can never combine. As it says in the *passuk*<sup>129</sup> "*V'yitzar es ha'odom afer min ha'adomah* – Hashem created man from the earth of the ground." *V'yitzer* (created) is written with two

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126 *Midrash Bereishis Rabbah* 20

127 *Devarim* 4:36

128 *Shabbos* 88b

129 *Brochos* 61a

'yuds' because man was created with two elements: one creation is good (spiritual) and the other creation is bad (non-spiritual). When the husband is living a material life, and the wife is only involved with the physical, the result of this home will be divorce.

These concepts are alluded to in the *Kaddish*: "*Oseh shalom b'mromov*" Hashem who makes peace in *Shamayim* and enables fire and water to coexist there, *Hu yaaseh shalom aleinu*, He should make peace in This World as well and enable fire and water, husband and wife to live together in peace and harmony.

Now we understand the difference between marriages that took place before *matan Torah* to marriages after *matan Torah*. Before *matan Torah* the marriages were without Torah, without *neshamah*, without an aspect of *Shamayim*. After *matan Torah*, the marriages are with Torah, with *neshamah* and with an aspect of *Shamayim*. Now it is possible for them to live with spirituality in their home, and to unite their two opposing natures in marriage.

### *Practical Advice*

We live in a world of actions. In this world of action, when a husband marries a wife, he is usually striving to garner physical gains, either her beauty or her wealth. Rarely is the husband seeking spirituality. If we would suggest a *shidduch* (proposed marriage partner) to someone and tell him that she is very holy woman, with a holy *neshamah*, only she is lame, blind, or deaf, he might want to marry her in *Gan Eden*, but not here. In This World of action, he wants a healthy wife.

In This World, when a man marries a woman, what connects them? What unites them? If it is the external body which is creating their connection, then their love is an incomplete love; dependent upon external factors. Therefore, their love will eventually terminate. But when the connection and love is to the *neshamah*, to her inner dimensions and qualities, then their love is called a perfect love which isn't dependent upon any externalities, and the love can endure and connect them forever. (Obviously, we are not excluding the physical dimension, because every *neshamah* needs a body to contain it – but the primary connection should be based upon *pnimiyus*.)

### *How We Lead Our Life*

The manner in which a person leads his life is how he will conduct his marriage. When a person leads a spiritual life outside his home, he will live spiritually within his home as well. It never happens that a true, spiritual person outside the home suddenly becomes materialistic and distant from spirituality when he enters his home. Similarly, if a person leads a materialistic life outside his home, it will be impossible for him to suddenly become a spiritual person the moment that he enters into his home.

The way he lives his life outside the home is also how he will connect to his wife within the home. If his mind and actions throughout the day are constantly and solely occupied with materialistic matters, he will be unable to change his skin and suddenly become a different person once he gets back home. As the *possuk*<sup>130</sup> says: "*Hayahapoch kushi oro*, can a black man [simply] change his skin and become

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130 *Yermiyahu 13:23*

white?” He will remain the very same person, and his connection with his spouse will be a physical and external connection, and ultimately unsatisfying.

However, if he lives with spirituality and *pnimiyus* throughout the day, and if he is interested in concepts which are beyond the physical, then he will be able to attach and connect to the spirituality of his wife. If their relationship never transcends beyond the physical and external, he may desire to divorce her if the physical and external gains are insufficient for his desires. As the *Gemara* writes:<sup>131</sup> “Even if the wife once burnt his food, the husband has permission to divorce her”. If their entire connection is from the *guf* and externalities, then when the externals are not up to his liking, he may opt for divorce.

There is plenty of advice and counsel available to help people enhance their *shalom bayis*. While the advice is often helpful, it is superficial, because it only goes as far as solving the symptoms of the problem, without getting to the root. Sometimes counseling reveals that the marriage is not as bad as they thought it was, and therefore it is not advisable for them to divorce.

Sometimes, the (superficial) advice is: “Permit your spouse to have his/her way, because that will give you peace of mind, and ultimately you will only gain. If you will give in to their requests, they will give in to yours”. Sometimes the (superficial) advice may be to tell the couple that, technically, they really should divorce, but because of their specific circumstances, they should remain married. So they remain in the marriage like two prisoners in jail.

However, there is a solution which can annul the problem at its source. Living spiritually will improve the marriage. A true Jewish home with perfect *shalom bayis* shouldn't begin with finding practical advice to enhance the peace in the home. *Shalom bayis* should begin with the spouse working on himself. When he improves himself and he finds the peace and tranquility within himself, then he will be able to bring these aspects of inner self into the marriage and build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*.

### *Finding Pnimiyus Within Ourselves First*

A father came to the Steipler Gaon and said that a *shidduch* was proposed to his daughter, and he wants to know whether they should accept it. The Steipler asked: “What did you hear about the boy?” “He learns a lot,” the father replied, “and he is calm and doesn't get into arguments with anyone”. The Steipler replied: “If he doesn't fight with his *shtender*, that doesn't mean that he will be able to get along with a wife.”

For a person to be able to get along with others, he has to find his *pnimiyus*. Every person must first make *shalom bayis* with himself, and then he can have *shalom bayis* with his wife.

If he yearns for spirituality, and he connects to his *pnimiyus* which exist beyond his body's limits, and he knows himself deeply, and he has inner spiritual satisfaction in his life, then when this person comes to his home, he will seek a connection with his spouse from this deep place he has found within himself, which will endure forever.

*Guf v'guf* cannot unite; *neshamah v'neshamah* can build a very deep relationship. Like Iyov's<sup>132</sup> three close friends who felt Iyov's pain from a distance, and went to visit him, likewise, a *neshamah v'neshamah* relationship is a very close and deep relationship.

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131 *Gitten 90a*

132 *Iyov 2:11*

All relationships between two people are based either on the external connecting with external, or *pnimiyus* connecting with *pnimiyus*. A physical connection is a connection for a short interval and cannot endure. The *pnimiyus* connection is a strong and firm connection and one is able to build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael* upon its *firm foundation*.

Now we understand the concept that we began with earlier. A home where there is Torah is a home with *shalom bayis* and a deep and true relationship, whereas a home without Torah is a home lacking in true connection.

### *A Home Based On Emunah*

If we want to build a *bayis ne'eman b'yisrael*, then the house must be *ne'eman*. *Ne'eman* means something that can be relied on. *Chazal* teach<sup>133</sup> that the word *ne'eman* comes from the same root as *emunah*, belief, because when one believes in something he can rely and build upon it.

Before *matan Torah*, it was impossible to build an everlasting relationship, because *Yisrael* did not yet exist, and therefore, it wasn't a Jewish marriage. However, after *matan Torah*, amongst the Jewish nation, relationships based on *neshamah* with *neshamah*, a connection of *pnimiyus* with *pnimiyus*, could finally exist, and an everlasting *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael* could be created.

If one desires to build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*, a marriage which will endure forever, he must grow internally and develop within himself spiritual yearnings. He must develop a lifestyle for Torah, for giving, for love, for eternal life and for an inner connection with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. The superficial advice which is often available will not help him, because it is the overall goal and direction of his life that requires improvement, not just the small details.

As long as a person hasn't developed his *pnimiyus*, his focus will be on his *guf* and he will never be able to build a proper Jewish home. However, when a person connects to his *pnimiyus* he will be able to build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*. He is not worried about what is happening with his spouse when he is not around, because he will always be certain that the other side is faithful to him with their entire heart. When a person merits living with his *pnimiyus*, he lives like a Jew who has a *neshamah*. He becomes a person for whom the most important things are Torah, *ruchniyos*, love for every Jew, to every person, and a deep connection with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. He becomes a person who cares about every creation of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and he tries to help them. He becomes a person who desires and yearns for the revelation of Hashem in the world. When this person will find a wife with similar ambitions, they will have *ahava, achva shalom v'reus*<sup>134</sup> (love, brotherhood, peace and friendship).

There are many practical ways that a person can bring spirituality and *pnimiyus* into his life, and his marriage. There are two primary deeds which men<sup>135</sup> must fulfill daily in order to lead a spiritual life. The first is to learn Torah in depth, every day.

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133 *Machilta on Shemos 15:1*

134 *Rambam Hilchos Brochas 2:11*

135 [Editor's Note: The author gave a parallel *drasha* to women in the same location which emphasized the unique role of women: "Women must learn those sections of Torah that they have to fulfill. The *mitzvah* of in-depth Torah study is for men only. We see that man's portion of Torah comes from their intellect. Women's share comes from their heart since they are more sensitive to inner dimensions of life. Women need to develop the sensitivity of their heart by setting aside time daily for 'heart time.' They need to create a time

The Torah is everything and all encompassing. *Histakol b'oraysa u'bara almah*, Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world, because the Torah is everything, while the *mitzvos* are individual lights of spirituality. Therefore, Torah is primary for bringing spirituality into one's life.

The second aspect that a person must practice daily to bring spirituality into his life is to designate an hour daily for contemplation. He must set aside a quiet hour every day to ask himself the major questions of life, such as: What is the purpose of the world? Who is he and what is his personal purpose in the world? There are several other ways to live spiritually, and often they will vary from person to person. Everyone should have fixed times for Torah study and daily time for contemplations.

Becoming spiritual may appear difficult and time consuming, but when we consider how much we benefit from living spiritually, we will realize that it is well worth the effort.

People are willing to pay tens of thousands of dollars to solve a *shalom bayis* problem. Wouldn't it be worthwhile to invest in spirituality, and in finding themselves beforehand, and save themselves from all this trouble?

If someone has a serious arm ailment, he is prepared to pay a lot of money to save his arm. If someone needs \$130,000 for a liver transplant, he will find a way to raise the money and pay for the transplant, regardless whether he is rich or poor. When a person considers these matters, he should ask himself, if I am prepared to spend so much money for my *guf*, how much should I invest to save my soul, to save my *neshamah*?

When there is a partnership, they share and divide fifty-fifty. The *guf* and *neshamah* are partners. How much does he invest in the *guf* and how much does he invest for the *neshamah*? Just as he understands that he must invest in the needs of the *guf* he must also invest in the needs of the *neshamah*. When he invests in his *neshamah* and learns to live spiritually, he will have a spiritual home. When he unites with his wife, it will be a connection of *neshamah* with *neshamah*, a spiritual connection, and together they will merit to build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*.

*Part Two Chapter Three*<sup>136</sup>**2.3 | The Essence of the Jewish Home***The Body And The Soul*

The “self” has two components: the revealed component, represented by the body (*guf*), and the concealed component, the holy soul (*neshamah*). Just as a person is comprised of *neshamah* and *guf*, so too, when he marries he unites with his spouse on these levels. Both components, the body and the soul, are essential in marriage.

The *neshamah* connection in marriage is one of its most vital elements. Secular books which discuss marriage are often unaware of the spiritual connection which exists between husband and wife, and therefore lack a very important dimension in their description of marriage. They discuss the physical relationship and the emotional relationship, but they leave out the spiritual aspect of marriage, the union which takes place within their souls.

The spiritual aspect of marriage cannot exist on its own. Obviously, the physical aspect of marriage can never be ignored. Both unions are essential and they must exist together harmoniously at every step of the marriage.

*Marriage Based On The Neshamah And The Guf*

In this section, we will demonstrate *b'ezras Hashem Yisborach*, several examples of how marriage can be built upon the foundation of the *neshamah* together with the *guf*, merging the spiritual aspect of marriage together with the physical view. We will see that when the spiritual dimension is added to the marriage, many problems and issues are automatically and naturally resolved.

People who view the world through the lens of the physical must keep in mind that they are not only physical beings; they also have a *neshamah* within them which sees the world in an entirely different way. The people who view (or try to view) the world through the perspective of the *neshamah* must remember that they also have a body. We are not yet souls living in *Gan Eden* – we are living with

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<sup>136</sup> *This section was adapted from the author's hebrew sefer, Da Es Atzmecha. Rabbi Moshe Weinberger (Rav of Congregation Aish Kodesh in Woodmere, NY) introduced this chapter with the following explanation: "This section applies to all relationships but mostly, it applies to the relationship of marriage. To study this section is a great hachana (preparation) for someone who is about to get married, and it is a very important and valuable reminder to those who already have the zechus of being married. It teaches us the Torah definition of marriage. Most of us, unfortunately, haven't had sufficient exposure to the Torah definition of marriage. We may go to a few shiurim here and there, but other than that, our conception of marriage is formed from ideas which are foreign to the Torah. We must do whatever we can to give our children the zechus of experiencing the feeling of security that comes from being raised in a loving home, by parents who love and respect each other. Those of us who have been fortunate to have parents who had a beautiful marriage and truly cared and respected each other enjoy a very precious commodity. We must give this commodity to our children as well." Rabbi Moshe Weinberger, has given several hundred shiurim on the author's various sefarim. They are available as audio files at [www.ravmosheweinberger.com](http://www.ravmosheweinberger.com)*

our physical bodies in This World! A person cannot deny the fact that he has a body. Instead, he must understand the nature of his body and fulfill its needs.

It can happen that people who are very involved in Torah, *tefillah* and keeping *mitzvos* may be living solely based on the view of the physical *guf*. Even though they are involved in spiritual activities, they never acquired the essential elements of *emunah* and *bitachon* (faith and trust in Hashem). They do not see their marriages as a spiritual union, with a deep love emanating from their souls. Because they view their own lives as purely physical, they view their marriages that way as well.

We have written this section, with Hashem's help, to help people view every situation within their lives and marriage in both ways, through the physical and spiritual, and to work with both of them simultaneously.

Before reading this section, we recommend first reading the *sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh (Building a Sanctuary in the Heart, Part One and Part Two)* where we describe the *neshamah's* view of life, the view of *emunah* and *bitachon*. After we acquire a spiritual view to life in general, we will be able to apply this concept to marriage as well.

### *Combining The Two Views*

The *neshamah* and the *guf* experience the world in two entirely different ways. Only the combination of both aspects will bring success and perfection to life and to marriage. If a person is lacking the *neshamah's* perspective, he will certainly fail. And if he is lacking the perspective of the *guf*, he will also fail. When the two are combined and join together in the correct proportions, success in life and to marriage is much more attainable. We will begin with one important example.

There are two different approaches that people adapt when they are searching for their *zivug* (their future spouse). Some people adapt the view of *emunah* and *bitachon*. They are certain that Hashem will prepare for them the spouse who was destined for them from forty days before their formation<sup>137</sup>. They feel no need to search for or investigate the background of their intended *shidduch*. Other people feel that *hishtadlus* (need for personal effort) is required – they must search for their *shidduch*, and verify and clarify the personality, intelligence, financial standing, health and other matters of every *shidduch* that is proposed to them.

The *neshamah* aspect obviously takes the *emunah* and *bitachon* approach, and feels no need to do *hishtadlus*. The *guf's* view, however, is to search and clarify the *shidduch* to the utmost.

Being that a person is a mixture of *neshamah* and *guf*, he must combine both views when he is searching for his *shidduch*. He must adapt the view of the *neshamah* and thereby have *emunah* and *bitachon* that he will certainly receive the *shidduch* which was destined for him from heaven. He must also adapt the view of the *guf* and do the proper amount of *hishtadlus*. The amount of *hishtadlus* he will be required to do will be dependent upon the degree that his *neshamah* is revealed within him. For those whose *neshamah* is more revealed within them, a minimum amount of *hishtadlus* will be sufficient, but those whose *guf* is more dominant, will need to do more *hishtadlus*.

After marriage, these two diverging viewpoints reappear. Husband and wife will inevitably discover imperfections and disappointments in their spouse that they weren't aware of beforehand. These shortcomings will automatically bring forth the original view that they had when they were in *shidduchim*. From the *neshamah's* point of view, he can concentrate upon the fact that the *shidduch* was

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137 *Sotah 2b*

from Hashem, and therefore certainly for his and her benefit. If he originally believed that the *shidduch* was destined from heaven, he should continue with this belief even after the revelation of imperfections in his spouse.

The *guf*, however, the part of him where the light of *emunah* has not penetrated, does not have this faith, because it is beyond him. (There are some faults in the spouse that the *guf* will be able to endure and calm itself with its minimum level of *emunah*, but there are more severe faults which the *guf* cannot make peace with, because he lacks the level of *emunah* required to cope with them.) He will be forced to deal with the problem in a “physical” way, either by learning to live and make peace with the situation, or to concentrate upon the good qualities of his spouse and not the faults. There are ways to do this (which we will discuss), and thereby strengthen and encourage himself during these difficult times in the marriage.<sup>138</sup>

Many people, before marriage and at the beginning of their marriage, think that marriage is for pleasure and joy. Shortly afterwards they become rudely aware that marriage isn't only about pleasure and that there is hard work in marriage as well.

When someone discovers character traits in his spouse that he feels he cannot endure and handle, he is shocked and confused. He says: “I didn't think that my spouse would be like this! I was certain that they would be completely different...” Sometimes these revelations are over minor issues, but sometimes the issues are more severe. The disillusioned spouse claims that if he would have known about these faults beforehand, they would never have gone through with the marriage.

Anyone who has traversed the first year of marriage understands what we are referring to. There isn't anyone who got married and didn't discover something about their spouse which simply shocked them. When the issues are relatively minor, one can overlook them – if he naturally has the ability to overlook faults that he finds in another person. However, when the faults are greater, it can be very hard for him to overlook them.

At times like this, they say: “People deceived me with false information! I fell into their trap!” or “I was in such a hurry to marry that I didn't do enough research and checking,” or “Since I didn't have money for a dowry, I couldn't find a better *shidduch*,” and similar cliché's which are used when one discovers that his spouse is different than he had originally thought.

Other people respond differently. They say: “This is the *shidduch* which was destined for me from heaven. This was *Hashem Yisbarach*'s decree from forty days before my formation” They try to strengthen and encourage themselves with this faith to succeed in their marriage.

Although this approach is valid, the person must determine whether he is actually on this high plane of *emunah*, whose roots are found in the *neshamah*. The *neshamah* has this great *emunah* and rejoices with his faith, but the *guf* is not always on this level. Sometimes, fortunately, the *guf* also has this *emunah*, and then he can comfort and strengthen himself with the belief that everything is planned and ordained for a purpose from heaven, including his present situation. But sometimes the *guf* doesn't

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<sup>138</sup> [Editor's Note: Once again, the ideal way is to combine both approaches in the marriage. He should have the view of the *neshamah* and recognize that everything is destined. This realization should give him great encouragement and ability to overcome the difficulties. But at the same time, he must also follow the opinion of the *guf* and seek ways to improve the situation the best he can.]

really have this *emunah*; it is only being expressed in speech and in thoughts, but the heart hasn't truly accepted this faith, and he doesn't experience any true respite.

When the *guf* doesn't yet have this *emunah*, there are two possible scenarios that can ensue: Sometimes, even if the *guf* is not yet on a sufficient level of *emunah* to comfort itself, then speaking about and contemplating concepts of *emunah* can be helpful. The *emunah* will eventually penetrate, bringing the *neshamah* and the *guf* to perfectly believe that the *shidduch* was ordained from heaven, and that will calm them. But sometimes the *guf* is very distant from this *emunah* and he will not be able to calm himself with thoughts of *emunah* either because he is on a very low level, or because the situation is extremely difficult.

At times like this, he must incorporate both viewpoints. He must have *emunah*, because that is the *avodah* of the *neshamah*, but he must also find other ways to calm the turmoil which is in his heart. (We are not referring to situations when the faults of the spouse are so great that, to our great anguish, they must divorce, based on the advice of a Rav competent in these matters.)

There are several practical ways to calm the heart when turmoil has arisen in marriage. A person can: 1) Concentrate upon the many good qualities his spouse embodies; 2) Understand that nothing is perfect in life, and there are problems everywhere; 3) Understand that everyone suffers in *Olam Hazeh* (This World), and the troubles with his spouse are obviously the portion of suffering he must personally endure; 4) Rejoice with the *yissurim* (suffering) because they cleanse the person and prepare him for the next world; 5) Concentrate on and involve himself in other matters; 6) Focus on giving to others (not necessarily to his spouse), because when a person is involved in giving, he is less involved with himself and his personal issues. He will automatically and at least temporarily forget about his spouse's faults.

One must combine both approaches in his marriage. He should have the perspective of the *neshamah* and recognize that everything is destined. This realization should encourage him and give him the ability to overcome difficulties. But at the same time, he must follow the needs of the *guf* which is not always calmed with *emunah* alone, and he will need to employ other practical methods to deal with the situation the best that he can.

For a successful marriage, one must unite the aspect of the *neshamah* with that of the *guf*. If a person will lead his life exclusively through the lens of his *guf*, he will never be able to build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*, a true Jewish home. The perspective of the *guf* by itself is insufficient, because it ignores the spiritual element of marriage. Similarly, if he will only employ the view of the *neshamah*, without combining the advice of the corporal body, his *emunah* will be incomplete [having no expression in the physical world]. The correlation of the two aspects are both required in order to build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*.

A person will not succeed in bringing the spiritual aspect into his marriage if he is not already striving for spiritual growth in all areas. He cannot live a materialistic life and then expect to bring a spiritual connection and element into his marriage.

Many people search for advice and ideas on how to build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael* because they understand the immense importance of building a true Jewish home, and want to build their home upon the strong foundation of spiritual goals and ambitions. But they forget that spirituality doesn't start and end at marriage; there are other important aspects of spirituality, including Torah, *mitzvos*, *chesed*, and *tefillah*. If a person lives his life solely according to the dictates of the *guf*, then his marriage will also be little more than a physical relationship. The best advice in the world will not be able to help

him build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*, because he, with his life's view, has removed the foundation of the home from beneath him.

### *Understanding His Soul And The Soul Of His Spouse*

A person is compared to a profound *sefer*, as it is written:<sup>139</sup> “*Zeh sefer toldos Adam*”. Just as every deep *sefer* demands careful and in-depth study, so do people, in order to understand themselves. First and foremost a person must study and become acquainted with himself, and then with his spouse.

He must know himself. He must know his talents, his thinking patterns, his personality, etc., otherwise he will never be able to grow. The purpose of life is for self-improvement, but if one doesn't understand himself, how can he ever improve?

The great people of our nation reached their high levels of wisdom and understanding by investing a great deal of time and effort towards understanding themselves and their potential. Only when a person understands himself can he grow and reach his perfection.

A person who doesn't understand himself can be compared to a person who wants to build but is unaware that he already has the tools. How can he build when he thinks that he doesn't have the tools?

Similarly, if a person doesn't know himself, he will never be able to build anything true in life.

After marriage, it is even more important for him to know himself because now there is a union of two souls. If he doesn't know himself, it will be impossible for him to merge together with another soul. This can be compared to a rotting seed planted together with a healthy seed. They can never merge together to become like one.

Most “*shalom bayis*” (marriage) problems are not due to a lack of understanding of their spouse. It is more often because they have difficulty understanding themselves.

However, it is not sufficient to only know and recognize himself. He must also understand and become acquainted with his spouse. He must understand her talents, abilities, nature and personality; otherwise the marriage will fail. They must know how they are similar and how they are different; how they can unite through their similarities and through their differences (such as by compromising with each other and by learning from one another).<sup>140</sup>

When a person doesn't understand his spouse, he will also not understand their language, feelings and requests. They will be like two deaf and dumb people living together without any coherent communication.

In order to get to know each other, there must constantly be conversations taking place between husband and wife. A home that doesn't have these types of conversations will become a home of disputes, and if they don't fight, it is because they have completely lost hope for a fruitful relationship.

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139 *Bereishis 5:1*

140 As discussed in the chapter “*Uniting the Emotions with the Intellect*”.

When there are healthy conversations taking place in the marriage, then even if issues arise where they do not see eye to eye, they will not shout and scream at one another. They will have a “soul to soul” conversation, and attempt to understand each other’s point of view.

There has to be a clear rule established in the home: Every issue, physical or spiritual, large or small, must be discussed in a calm and relaxed manner. With this rule in place, they will come to understand one another, and be able to resolve every difficulty that arises. They will be able to rejoice together with every happy occasion.

When there are conversations taking place in the marriage, aside from getting to know one’s spouse, there is an added benefit – he will get to know himself. Most people have a superficial understanding of others, and even less understanding of themselves. Conversations between husband and wife will help people understand themselves, because during the conversation the spouse may reveal a certain trait or quality that he/she sees in you that you weren’t aware of.

Conversation in marriage is one of the great assets that a couple has, yet many people do not utilize this great opportunity because they don’t realize how vital it is for them to recognize themselves and their spouse.

A perfect recipe for a successful marriage is based on conversations, as well as private times for contemplating and striving to understand themselves and their spouse.

### *Intelligence And Emotions*

It is an acknowledged fact that the intellect is the man’s most prominent strength, and the emotions are a woman’s main strength. This difference between the genders is the source of many conflicts in marriage, because men and women view various important aspects of life in opposite ways.

The husband shouldn’t look down on or disregard his wife’s opinions. Although his wife’s views are different than his own, by understanding that his wife’s views and opinions are emerging from her emotions, he will understand that her opinion has validity. He must learn to incorporate the emotional aspect that she brings to an issue into his own more rigid and logical perspective, which will ultimately help him make correct decisions. The wife must also understand that the main strength of her husband and the source of his views come from his intellect.

Once this concept is understood, it brings great clarity into the marriage. While these essential differences are still concealed, it will be hard for the husband to understand the opinion and views of his wife. He will think that his wife is being overly emotional, and that she lacks intellect. Similarly, the wife will think that her husband is cold, selfish, and inconsiderate.

But, when both of them understand the viewpoint and opinion of the other, they will then understand that their opinions are not the result of bad *middos* (character traits) or a negative personality, rather that they are built differently and therefore have different perspectives.

### *Learning From The Nature Of The Spouse*

The purpose of creation, and in particular, of marriage, is unity. “*V’hoynu l’basar echod*,<sup>141</sup> they will become one (in marriage).” *Achdus*, unity, doesn’t only imply living in peace and harmony, or that they will have a deep relationship with one another. Unity is when their talents and strengths merge and each one learns from the other, until they become like one.

A man, as a rule, uses his intellect and has a natural tendency towards and interest in wisdom, but his emotions are generally dormant most of the time. Therefore, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, the Holy One Blessed be He, determined that a man must marry a woman, an emotional being, so that she can teach him what emotions are all about. She will help become more of an emotional being. The purpose of *avodas Hashem* is to strengthen the emotions as it says,<sup>142</sup> “*Rachmana Liba boyee.*’ Hashem wants the heart, the emotions. As long as his emotions are concealed and underdeveloped within him, he is lacking this important element of serving Hashem.

A husband’s acknowledgement and respect for his wife’s emotions, and a wife’s for her husband’s intellect is still not enough to create unity between them. The perfection of the marriage is when they both learn from one another. The husband learns how to be emotional, and the wife learns how to think in an intellectual manner. In this way they will truly become one.

We do not mean that the wife should strive to become a *talmid chacham* and learn *Gemara*, rather that her intelligence should test her emotions, to certify that her emotions are not being expressed in the inappropriate areas.

This is true for all character traits which are stronger for one and weaker in the other. They must understand that Hashem has placed them together so they can learn about these different traits from each other. Hashem has performed a *chesed* with him, and He brought the attribute which he was lacking into his home. He must follow the dictum of *Chazal*<sup>143</sup>: “Who is wise? He who learns from everyone,” and in particular, his spouse. When husband and wife absorb and acquire these different traits from one another, they will be united on a very deep level. It will be a perfect unity, and not the artificial unity found in casual friendships.

A Jewish home is not a place where two people just live together peacefully. It is primarily a place for learning and for growth. As it is written: *Mikablin dein min dein*,<sup>144</sup> they receive from one another. They teach each other and learn from one another. Every couple is different from one another, each in their own way. Their individual differences have many benefits. Each partner one can learn from the other and acquire the qualities of their spouse. Another benefit is humility. When a person sees a quality in his spouse that he doesn’t have, it is often difficult for him to admit it. He is not ready to accept that someone has a quality that he lacks.

The work of man and the greatest level that the husband and wife can achieve is to be able to accept that their spouse has a quality that they don’t. It teaches humility. The proud and haughty person will say to himself, “I also have a lot of great qualities of my own.” But for those who seek the truth, the recognition that the spouse has a quality that they are lacking will bring them to humility.

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141 Bereishis 2:24

142 Sanhedrin 106b

143 Avos 4:1

144 Tikunei Zohar 39a

### *Growing From Faults*

Until now, we've discussed how one can grow from the positive qualities that he finds in his spouse that are different than his own. Now we will discuss how the couple should react to the differences that they find in their spouse, when the differences are actually faults and imperfections.

Firstly, he should work toward his own improvement and distance himself from these negative attributes. *Chazal* taught, in reference to the *sota*, "A person who sees a *sota* in her disgrace will separate himself from drinking wine."<sup>145</sup> By seeing how the faults blatantly manifest themselves in his spouse, he will separate himself even further from those faults.

When one sees the faults in his spouse, he can also earn humility; one of the most important traits that a person must attain in life. We discussed above how recognizing the spouse's qualities that he himself lacks will lead him to humility. Now we will add that seeing the spouse's faults will also help him reach greater levels of humility, because when a person finds faults in his spouse, he is humbled by the fact that this flawed person became his spouse. This realization can lead him to true humility.

Another important gain is his acceptance of Hashem and His sovereignty over the world, and especially over himself. The faults that he finds in his spouse are entirely against his will and free choice. He would prefer that these faults not exist at all, but they are there. The improper reaction to this is anger: "I wanted... But I don't have..." However, when a person is wise and his life is directed towards serving Hashem, he will view the challenges and disappointments that he discovers in his spouse as a reminder that the world is not under his control, and not everything goes according to his personal plan. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* sends situations and challenges which are contrary to the person's will so he will be forced to recognize, in the depths of his heart, that Hashem runs the world, and not he.

The *guf*, which is not yet ready to accept the spiritual view, will also reach perfection through hardship. The *guf* suffers immensely without respite from the faults of the spouse. This suffering will bring the *guf* to its rectification and improvement. Just as earthenware utensils are purified by breaking them,<sup>146</sup> the *guf* is broken by the realization that his spouse is not as he expected, and this broken spirit will lead him to personal growth, correction and improvement. In the meanwhile, the *guf* can comfort itself by concentrating upon the spouse's good qualities and strong points, and by trying to ignore and overlook the faults that he sees.

When the inevitable, permanent, faults are revealed at the beginning of a marriage, a spouse will at first be shocked and plagued by dilemma. After a while, he will realize that the faults and opposite natures that he discovers in his spouse are just a challenge through which he must work and perfect himself. When a person reaches this level of developing his spiritual side, the shock diminishes and he realizes that the situation is another opportunity to elevate his soul.

Until then, his life is not a life! Every person has unwanted things in his life, and he must learn how to cope with them. A simple solution is to run away and try to escape the discomfort, but once a person is married, this option is not available. Trying to escape marriage by divorcing is no option at all (except in a few exceptional situations). In his next marriage he will only find other faults, and sometimes even the exact same faults he tried to escape from.

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<sup>145</sup> *Sota 2a*

<sup>146</sup> *Keilim Ch. 2, Mishnah 1*

Marriage accentuates the awareness that life is not always a picnic. It is a lot of hard work, of learning to make peace with unpleasant situations, learning how to compromise, overcome desire, and annul the ego. If he cannot come to terms with these truths, he may end up despairing of his marriage. He becomes depressed and miserable, and buries his life before it even begins. The wise person recognizes and understands that this world is a world of *avodah* (working on spiritual improvement), and he girds his loins to do the *avodah* which is expected from him, and he strives to do his *avodah* with joy. Every one of us has the ability to be happy and satisfied in his life, if only we will understand and accept that this world is not a world of pleasure and relaxation. It is a world of challenges and toil, and the ones who will succeed in the end will see the great light – the light of Hashem *Yisborach*.

### *Giving In Marriage*

Man's *avodah* and purpose in life is to overcome the desire to live only for himself, and to learn to be a giver to others. In this way, he attaches himself to the Creator, Who created the world to give kindness to His creations.

Although there are always opportunities to give to others, a single person is generally not in the position to give continually. When a person marries, however, the marriage state itself demands constant giving. Why do people say things like, "Give to your spouse and you will receive double," or "Give and your spouse will love you"?

A person who hasn't yet understood that the purpose of creation is kindness, is lacking a very important foundation and introduction to life. He is always checking whether it is worthwhile for him to give or not, and whether he is giving more than others are giving him.

A person who understands that his purpose in life is to give, even though he is not on the level to be a perfect giver (because he also desires to receive), nevertheless accepts his role as a giver. He gives generously, with the deep understanding that this is the purpose of life.

The purpose of marriage is to unite with ones spouse. As long as a person is interested only in himself, it is impossible for him to unite with another. Therefore, Hashem created the concept of giving, so that he can break his ego and self-centeredness. Once the ego is broken, he will be able to properly unite with his spouse. The purpose of giving, therefore, isn't only for the benefit of another, but that through his giving, he will break his ego. Difficulties that we experience are only meant to be stepping stones towards the ultimate goal of uniting with the spouse. Once we understand this, our view of marriage changes radically.

Obviously we are not implying that there is no pleasure and joy in marriage, only that there will always be difficulties alongside them. These difficulties are as important to the marriage as the pleasures, because it is through these difficulties that he will be able to unite with his spouse.

When we understand the depths of the Creation and its purpose, we come to understand the great importance of marriage, and especially giving within the marriage. Although it is true that we give because we love our spouse and want the love to increase, this is not the main purpose of giving. The main purpose of giving is to annul one's own ego. When the ego is tamed, love will grow automatically, because there will be no ego to separate them.

Through giving in marriage, we will eventually reach the level of loving every Jew, and loving every creature in Creation. Because the truth is that all Jews are one at their source. The ego, by creating separation and division, blinds us. Once the ego is annulled, love comes naturally. So the purpose of

the Jewish home is not only to create an inner union within the home, but also to summon love to all creation.

The *Gemara* says<sup>147</sup> (Sota): “A person should always study Torah and *mitzvos*, even *shelo l’shmah* [not for the sake of Heaven] because eventually he will keep the *mitzvos l’shmah* [for the sake of Heaven].” The *Michtav M’Eliyahu*<sup>148</sup> explains that a person must always have at least some elements of *l’shma*, proper intentions, within his *shelo l’shmah*.

In regards to our topic, when one gives to his spouse with the intention of receiving in return, he is giving *shelo l’shmah*, giving in order to gain. When one gives without any plan to receive, this is considered giving *l’shmah*. But even when a person is not yet on the level of pure giving, he must also have some element of *l’shmah*, pure concern and love, in his giving, even though he still has self-interests and thoughts of gain when he gives. Otherwise, his home becomes a business of give and take and not a Jewish home.

One of the primary purposes of giving is to train ourselves to disengage from our ego. When we give in order to receive, we forfeit this benefit, because our giving is really taking. Therefore, there must always be some element of purity and caring in giving to our spouse. Through this small portal of giving *l’shmah*, we can break the ego by uniting with our spouse.

### *Openness Of The Soul*

The home we grow up in has its own culture. Each one of us becomes accustomed to particular behaviors and patterns that we learn from our childhood home. When a person marries, he will often find that his spouse’s lifestyle patterns are entirely different than his own. It is very hard for him to get used to his new home and surroundings, because it is so different from what he was used to, and because he often feels that the lifestyle and behaviors of his new home are inferior in comparison to those from his childhood home.

Let us think about the depths of this concept.

The nature of man is limited, and his purpose and goal is to connect to Hashem, Who has no boundaries. Therefore, a person’s desire, both in his conscious and subconscious mind, is to overcome the boundaries of life. He wants to be able to cross rivers and oceans, to rise above the hemisphere and to reach the moon and stars and heavenly beings. All of this is derived from the inner desire to break all boundaries and connect with the eternal.

With this in mind, we can understand why *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created man with the challenge which requires him to enter into a different home and live in a place where there are customs and habits that he is not used to. The purpose is to train him to open his horizons and not limit himself. It trains him to have an open mind and soul to every situation (as long as it is not contrary to the holy Torah).

A person who is not open to these changes suffers immensely. He feels every change jabs him like a prod from a sword. He was accustomed to a certain lifestyle and he doesn’t want it to change. His *avodah* is to free himself from all negative restrictions. He should not feel tied down to anything except

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<sup>147</sup> Sota 42b

<sup>148</sup> In the chapter entitled “No Reward in This World”

*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and His Torah. He shouldn't feel bound to one particular house, to specific objects, to a certain place, to one group of people, or one set of customs. He must learn to open up and to flow with life according to the will of the Creator, and to follow its path.

A person who reaches this level of openness will feel that his soul is redeemed. Those who do not attain this understanding do not understand its potential.

There are people who will only sleep on a certain type of bed, only cover themselves with a certain type of blanket, only use a certain brand of towel, they only eat certain kinds of foods, and they only live in a neighborhood where they will have friends that are similar to them. A life such as this closes off the inner light of the soul.

*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* gave man many opportunities to free himself from this closed lifestyle. One of the powerful tools He gave is marriage, because in marriage, a person is forced to learn to get along with a different lifestyle.

An unwise person will try to explain to his spouse why his lifestyle and habits are better, and convince his spouse to follow them. But once he recognizes how limited his soul is, he will be happy to have the opportunity to open up and broaden his horizons. We are not referring to the customs and lifestyles which are contrary to the Torah and the path of our forefathers; rather we are referring to minor and insignificant changes, related to style and mannerisms.

It is not wise for a person to be stubborn and to insist upon maintaining a particular lifestyle. This attitude can be a source of tension and discomfort in the home. The more a person trains himself to be flexible in regards to all areas of life which are not of great importance, the more relaxed and comfortable his home will be. Once he has proven himself to be flexible and agreeable, if there is a particular custom from his earlier life that is very important to him, and he feels he must maintain it, he can insist on it.

Every member of a family is obligated to contribute in creating an atmosphere of calmness and pleasantness in the home, pressure-free, where not every small thing becomes a great issue. Being flexible and learning to accept changes will help bring about this atmosphere into the home.

### *The Yoke Of A Jewish Home*

*Chazal* taught: "It is good for a person to accept the yoke in his youth,' this is referring to the yoke of a wife."<sup>149</sup>

Before marriage, a person is free to do as he desires, without anyone holding him back. And even if someone is, they are not holding him back strongly and definitely. But marriage is a different story. After marriage, he is bound to his home. Building a home is a combination of joy and pleasure with responsibilities and limitations, the yoke of marriage.

A person's primary role in life is to accept upon himself the *Ol Malchus Shamayim* (Yoke of Heaven). The yoke of marriage helps him understand this awesome concept. The many responsibilities of marriage—caring for the spouse, earning a living, raising a family, leading the home, etc. – train the person to understand what responsibility means, and what it means to accept the *Ol Malchus Shamayim*.

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149 *Eichah Rabba* 3:27

The responsibilities of life may appear to him at first as disturbances. He will soon realize that these responsibilities are for his benefit, in helping him to accept the *Ol Malchus Shamayim*.

In the *sefarim hakedoshim*, the husband is referred to as *koach*, potential, and the wife is referred to as *po'al*, (realization of that potential). In other words, marriage is the arena where man's potential can be developed and revealed. It is not an opportunity for relaxation. Marriage takes work, and it is this effort that will ultimately help him develop and express his true potential.

### *Common Situations In Marriage*

Let us explore some common marriage scenarios and demonstrate how they can help the person grow spiritually and develop his potential.

It often happens in marriage that one spouse will ask the other for a few moments to discuss a matter which is bothering them. But, because life is so stressful and busy, people are often tempted to answer, "Not now. I am busy. And I already know what you want to say..."

Once it is understood that marriage is an opportunity to develop his potential, he will consider his spouse's request for conversation as an opportunity to develop his patience, to learn how to listen, and how to understand and feel for his fellow man. Marriage is a place where a person can develop his good *middos*.

Another example: Throughout one's life, a person encounters various situations which are contrary to his desires, and he is tempted to become angry. He must train himself to overcome his anger. These moments can happen anywhere, but they happen more often in marriage because of the many issues, small and large, that the couple has to deal with.

If he is impatient, and he gets angry, or worse, he yells and shouts or says harsh words to his spouse, then he is destroying the foundations of his home. He must remember that he came to the world to work on himself and to correct his behavior, and marriage is the ideal arena for growth and self development. There is no place in marriage for anger and bad *middos* (behavior).

Sometimes the wife must take her husband's place, like when he is traveling, and sometimes the husband must take over the role of the wife, like when the wife gives birth and is not able to run the home. These can be very difficult and stressful times, but they can also be an opportunity for growth. They will learn to appreciate the efforts of their spouse.

People usually do not realize how much their spouse does for them. It is hard for a husband to recognize how much effort his wife expends in caring for the children and tending the home, and likewise, the wife doesn't fully understand the great role and responsibility the husband undertakes in the home.

The majority of the problems in life, and in particular those which arise in marriage, evolve from an incorrect view of life, where people are looking for comfort, pleasure and honor. When people want others to love and appreciate them, but they are not interested in giving to others, there is no possibility of self-improvement.

However, the purpose of life, and in particular, the purpose of marriage, is for spiritual growth. When a person views life and marriage in this way, then no matter what happens to him, he will always be able to think of and find ways for each situation to help him grow.

### *Balancing The Needs Of Body And Soul*

When a person marries, the soul sees the marriage as a great opportunity to increase its *emunah*. It uses the marriage as an opportunity to constantly remind itself of concepts in *emunah*, such as: “This is my spouse, who was destined for me from heaven” and “The qualities that my spouse has, and his faults, are exactly the qualities and faults that the Creator gave me for my needs and perfection...” For the *neshamah*, the marriage is a world of *emunah*.

The body sees marriage as an open field for pleasure and enjoyment. Physical pleasures, love and romance and all other forms of pleasure and enjoyments are its goal and desire.

If a person would only accept the view of the *neshamah*, the view of *emunah* without physical enjoyments at all, he will eventually collapse emotionally. Although the *neshamah* is having great bliss and enjoyment from her pure *emunah*, the physical body and its natural needs also need fulfillment. He is after all a body, not an angel, living in heaven. Therefore, physical pleasure is also essential in marriage.

However, if a person focuses only on the physical pleasures of the body, he will bury the light of the soul, and cause the soul’s light to diminish until it will barely be seen and felt at all. Some people think that marriage is purely physical, and in this they are mistaken.

That is not at all the Jewish view of marriage. Some think the opposite that marriage is purely spiritual, but they are also making a big mistake. Those who actively seek spirituality are usually the ones who make this mistake. Sometimes, the people who have only recently accepted the yoke of Torah and *mitzvos* also think this way, and they assume that the Torah forbids and discourages all forms of physical enjoyments.

The correct way in marriage is to make the spiritual primary and to place the physical needs in their right perspective. While it’s true that man’s service in life is to continually sharpen both his awareness of spirituality and the vanity of physicality, he must remember that physicality also has an important place, and that physical needs must also be fulfilled.

Therefore, just as it is very important to build the spiritual connection between husband and wife, it is likewise important to create a physical bond. *Chazal*<sup>150</sup> tell us that the wife should make herself beautiful before her husband, and give recommendations for both the husband and wife in order to enhance the physical connection between them, because of its great importance.

However, everything must be in the right proportion, with the spiritual being the primary emphasis in the marriage and the physical secondary. When the body becomes the focal point in the marriage, it will be the destruction of the home.

Marriage has the potential to fulfill both the needs of the *neshamah* and the needs of the body. A person must know what his spiritual needs are and what his physical needs are, and then determine how to balance their fulfillment between them.<sup>151</sup>

The balance will depend upon the level of each individual. If his *neshamah* is more revealed within him, his body will automatically need less. On the other hand, if his soul is concealed within him, his

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150 *Shabbos 64b*

151 See *Reishis Chochma – Shaar haKedushah Chapter 16 Section 16 (Waldman Edition)*

physical needs will increase. When the right balance is found, the home will be built according to the ways of the Torah and the Jewish nation.

### *Marriage Is A Mixture Of Responsibility And Pleasure*

As we've mentioned earlier, *Chazal* call marriage a yoke, which is a mixture of responsibility and pleasure. This is also true, on a deeper level, of life in general. Life is a combination of toil, responsibility and pleasure. If a person will try to find only pleasure in his life, he will not succeed. But if he will view life as only work and hardships, without any pleasures at all, he will eventually collapse, because everyone needs his portion of enjoyment in life to derive his *chiyus* (spirit of life).

Some people will find pleasure from physicality, others will find it in spirituality, but everyone needs their portion of pleasure and enjoyment in life. A man who has no enjoyment at all is not really living. Although he appears to be alive, walking around the world and doing things, he is really dead inside, totally lacking *chiyus*.

Except for great *189saddikim*, even a person whose main enjoyment is from spirituality will not be completely satisfied with only his spiritual enjoyments. He will also need some (although perhaps not very much) physical satisfaction. These concepts are true in regards to all aspects of life, and especially in marriage.

Although the main *chiyus* and enjoyment in marriage should be from their spiritual connection, it cannot and should not be their entire connection. Marriage should also provide physical fulfillment, if only the minimum amount.

Let us study this more:

When a person does not enjoy something, he is not really connected to it. The importance of pleasure in creating connection is relevant to the physical and the spiritual aspects of life. If a person keeps *mitzvos* without pleasure, for example, he is lacking attachment to the *mitzvos*. Someone who prays without pleasure is not fully connected to the *tefillah* and to the Creator to Whom he is praying. Someone who derives no pleasure from learning Torah is lacking an inner connection to the Torah. Similarly, when a person doesn't enjoy something that is physical, he is not connected to it.

These concepts are also related to marriage.

As we discussed and elaborated upon before, marriage is a connection of a *neshamah* with a *neshamah* and a *guf* with a *guf*. If the couple lacks a spiritual connection, then they are lacking in their connection in their marriage. Similarly, if they do not derive any physical pleasure at all from the marriage, then they are also lacking in their physical connection.

The pleasure of the *guf* is a step towards creating and strengthening their union, and the vehicle for bringing forth the depth of their relationship.

When the pleasures are only physical, the relationship lacks holiness. When the physical connection is a vehicle for their union, then the body is a utensil of the *neshamah*, and it is a holy relationship.

There is a delicate issue which we need to add. When a person enjoys the physicality as an essence and purpose for itself, it is considered a negative pleasure. The pleasure should come from the enhancement of the relationship that is taking place on a physical level. Hashem's desire is that the couple should unite on both levels and derive pleasure from their connection.

Everyone needs physical pleasure, each according to his level, but it should never be seen as the purpose of the marriage. The purpose of the marriage is to connect and become like one.

### *Limiting The Extent Of Physical Pleasure*

One of the grave mistakes occurring in our generation is using physical relations as a means without an end, without limits and boundaries. The source of their mistake is because they do not know that the purpose for the physical relationship is to create a deep connection between the couple, and not for the physical sensation by itself.

When it is clear that the purpose for physical pleasure is to unite a couple and to make them like one, it will also be clear that the other spouse's pleasure is just as important as his own, in order to unite them. Therefore, he should be interested in giving pleasure, not in receiving.

Included within these ideas is the concept that a person must limit the extent of his physical pleasure, and use it solely for the needs of his *guf* in order to unite with his spouse and to make them like one. One must never ever exceed this boundary, which varies from person to person. The same person may have different needs at different times, and therefore there is always a very fine line, which many people don't recognize. There are those who draw themselves too far towards physicality, beyond their required need, and they lose the light of holiness in their homes, *rachmanah l'tzlan*. And there are people who draw themselves too far to the side of holiness and the *neshamah*, and thereby they loosen the connection with the body, and the physical connection between husband and wife.

### *The Inner Connection With Spirituality*

If a person is very steeped in his physical pleasures, and his soul is not connected to spirituality even though he also studies Torah most of the day, *davens* and is careful with the *mitzvos*, he will be excessively drawn to the physical aspects of marriage. He will feel perfectly justified because he doesn't find any source in *halachah* which forbids his behaviors.

He doesn't realize that his entire life is built upon a mistake. He doesn't know because he doesn't have an inner connection to spirituality. Although there is an external connection to spirituality, because he is learning and keeping the *mitzvos*, he lacks the essential inner connection of holiness. He uses physicality for pleasure and *chiyus*. He is overdoing the physical relationship in the marriage since he doesn't have a spiritual connection with Hashem, and therefore he exaggerates when he seeks physical sensations.

When a person is connected to the Torah and to the Giver of the Torah, his body is satisfied with even a minimum amount of physicality, and the minimum is sufficient to create a connection between him and his spouse. When this spiritual connection is missing, then his main enjoyment comes from different forms of physicality, and especially the physicality of the marriage.

As long as the person lacks a strong connection to spirituality, his marriage is in danger, because he will automatically be drawn towards physicality.

Some people claim that since we are living in a very low generation, and the pictures and images which are shown outside without shame arouse feelings of physicality, we have no choice but to permit the person to connect strongly to the physicality of marriage, as long as it is in a permitted manner.

It's a strong point. But the only way it can work is if there is a guarantee that he will immediately return to his strong connection to spirituality once he has calmed his inner drives. Most people, however, have a very weak connection to spirituality. If we will permit them to have a stronger connection with physicality, we have detached them even further from spirituality. How will they ever return?

When the physical pleasures of marriage are carried out properly, with *kedushah* and true unity, husband and wife will feel closer to one another and to the Creator.

### *The Paradigm Of A Loving Couple*

*Shlomo Hamelech* wrote his holy *sefer Shir Hashirim* as a *mashal* (anology) of a loving couple, because the relationship between husband and wife corresponds to the very holy relationship between the Jewish nation and their Father in Heaven.

When a couple implants spirituality into their marriage, and build their marriage with spiritual goals and ideals, then their marriage will be a constant *mashal*, a constant model of the holy marriage between *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and the Jewish nation. Their home can serve as a reminder of the great spiritual relationship (Hashem's relationship with the Jewish nation) that their marriage represents.

When the couple are very spiritual, this correlation will easily and automatically be recalled at every stage of their marriage. If their spiritual level is lower, they will have to think about it, to remind themselves of the great relationship that their marriage represents.

It is crucial to always bring the aspect of holiness and spirituality into marriage, because it is a holy and spiritual entity. The spiritual awareness they bring will aid them and direct them in almost every step of their marriage to a perfect and holy relationship, and then, through every situation, they will draw each other closer together and closer to Hashem.



# 3

*from the original  
Hebrew audio shiurim of*  
דע את משפחתך

### 3.0 | *Editor's Introduction*

***Getting To Know Your Family*** (an adaptation of the series “*Da Es Mishpachtechá*”) is a second take from the Rav on marriage and raising children, and a real “refresher course”. It is a series of 9 classes given to *Kolel* men in the summer of 5773.

Those who have read “***Getting To Know Your Home***” are familiar with the Rav’s deep approach to family life, to infuse the spiritual dimension into our closest relationships, with focus on practical growth. This is the same idea with ***Getting To Know Your Family***.

However, the approach here towards marriage is a bit different. This series was given to *Kolel* Men, geared towards those who really want to grow and strive for self-perfection. The material here is sharper, heavier, and not for the faint of heart. If you’re ready for hard-core *mussar*, this *sefer* is for you – if you seek feel-good inspiration, this *sefer* is not recommended. It is a *sefer* that requires us to really think, reevaluate our priorities and values, and ask ourselves if we really are living by what we know is correct.

Another difference between this *sefer* and ***Getting To Know Your Home*** is that this one is perhaps more “down-to-earth” and goes straight to the punch (Hope you can handle those punches!)

*(Note: These shiurim were given to men, so women are kindly asked to please not read this, and it will certainly not enhance shalom bayis if they do. Women who seek guidance in their marriage can refer to the Rav’s previous sefer on marriage, Da Es Baisecha, Getting To Know Your Home.)*

*Getting To Know Your Family: Chapter One***3.1 | Gaining A New Perspective On Your Marriage***Going Back In Time*

We will learn a little about the *sugya* (topic) of “*eizer k’negdo*” (the helpmate who is the opposite of man) - what marriage is, as seen through the pure lens of our holy *Chazal*, in an inner way.

Let’s ask a very simple question. What is the purpose of getting married? Why should a man marry a woman?

We recite in *Kaballas Shabbos*, “*Sof maaseh b’machshavah techilah*” – The end of actions if first with thought.” Before we go into anything we do, we have to first think about what it is that we are getting involved in. So the first thing we have to know is: What is the purpose of marriage?<sup>152</sup>

When we look for a *shidduch* (spouse), did we do so because we have a “*mitzvah*” to look for a wife, or because we simply wanted to have a wife? We know that we are commanded to get married, but is that the actual reason we got married? We know that we did not really get married because the Torah says so. We had some personal reason why we got married, being that we worry for ourselves and are concerned for ourselves.

There are all kinds of intellectual give-and-take discussions that exist about marriage, and all kinds of definitions that people have about it. But our question is: What, practically speaking, is the reason that each of us gets married?

If we are honest with ourselves, we know that none of us gets married for a lofty reason. When we each stood under the *chuppah* (wedding canopy), we were not thinking of any spiritual reason to get married. We were thinking about how it would somehow be good for ourselves. So we got married for ourselves - and not because it was a *mitzvah*. That is the reality.

Here is another question: theoretically, if we could have a child without having to be married, would we still get married? We would. So we didn’t just get married to have children.

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<sup>152</sup> During the shiur, the listeners were perplexed at what the Rav meant with this question, and an animated discussion ensued: “Is it because it says in the Torah, “And they shall become one flesh”? That was applicable to Adam HaRishon [who was on a very high level]. But what about us? What is the reason that we get married? Is it because we have a *mitzvah* to have children? Is getting married all about having children? Clearly not. Is it because we have to bestow good upon others, and the way to accomplish this is through marriage? If that was the reason, we wouldn’t need to get married for that. We can bestow good on our friends in the Beis Midrash. If you counter that the home is the only true place to bestow good upon others, because that is where you do it for the sake of Heaven, this is not either specific to the home. You can be kind to others for the sake of Heaven even if you’re not married. It should be clear to us that none of us got married for any of the above reasons. We wanted what is best for ourselves. We worried for ourselves – and therefore, we sought a marriage partner for our own good. We started dating because we felt that it would somehow be good and pleasant to get married – each for his own reasons. There are also many people who start dating simply because they are embarrassed of society if they don’t start.

So what is the reason that we get married? Even if the Torah wouldn't command us to get married, would we still get married? We would - why?

So altogether, we present three questions here.

- 1) What is the necessity to get married? (Write down all the reasons you think you should get married).
- 2) Why did I, personally, get married?
- 3) If I would get married today with what I know now, why would I get married?

### *Finding The Root of Marital Issues*

The root of problems in marriage can be traced to the beginning point of our problem. When we figure out what our beginning point of marriage is – the reason why we get married – we will be able to then solve problems in marriage. This is because all of the problems are really rooted in that one point. “*A wise person's eyes are in his head*” – when we get to the beginning point, we can see where all the problems began.

If we would know the reason that we got married, **90% of marital problems** would go away on their own. A person who never thinks, though, will wonder after 2 years of being married why he has problems. But a person who does think will already know beforehand what causes problems in marriage, and then he will know how to get to the root of the problems.

The problems are not because the husband and wife clash with each other. It's because something was misunderstood to begin with.

### *Why Do We Live?*

What we really need to think is: “**Why do I live?**”

This is a point that one needs to think about before he thinks about why he gets married. It is the beginning that comes before the beginning of marriage. The Mishnah in Avos says that 18 years of age is the time to get married. Before that, though, is Torah and mitzvos. We can learn from this that if a person thinks why he has to get married but he doesn't know why he is living in the first place, it's as if he's starting from the middle of the story.

One has to know, clearly, why he is living. There is a goal which we are living for, and we must know that goal. One of the major, central ways to get to the goal of life is, through marriage.

### *Getting Along With Yourself First*

Before marriage, people seek guidance for marriage, how to get along with a spouse. What about first learning how to get along with oneself? Shouldn't that come before learning how to get along with the spouse? Don't you first need to get along with yourself before you can learn how to get along with another?

People think that as long as they get the right *shidduch* and then everything will be fine. A person seeks a wife who will be pleasant to live with, someone who will make his life easier, someone who will

help him. But this is all a fantasy. It doesn't happen in any home. Problems then occur in the marriage, and the person is bewildered how this could happen.

So we have to get to the root of this. The words here may be hard to accept, and perhaps you are looking for something different to hear, such as some practical tips to help your marriage.

Maybe you want each class to end off with a nice piece of practical advice, such as how you can calm down the yelling in the house and how you can make the house clean. Each person has his own idea of what he would like in his home. But we need to think truthfully. If a person is clear in the reason of why he is living on this world, he will be able to build a solid home upon that.

There are people who don't even know why they are living at all. A person has to make sure he knows why he is living, before he begins marriage. Building a successful marriage can only happen after a person is clear in the reason of why he is living.

So our first question we need to ask ourselves, before we work on our marriage, is: "For what reason are we living?" Whether we are 18 years old or before, or whether we are 90 years old, why are we living? If we know why we are living, we can see how marriage fits into the picture.

So let's ask ourselves this very simple question: For what do we live for?

### *The Answer*

We "know" the answer: we were created to become close to Hashem. However, this takes hard work. It is *avodah*. It requires us to purify our entire being – our body, or soul, our middos, our speech, our thoughts. The goal is to reach closeness with Hashem, and the ways to get there is through a certain purification process, which spans all of our lifetime.

### *Seeking Comfort Vs. Being Prepared To Work Hard*

So the next question we need to ask ourselves is: are we realizing that we live for that purpose we know we are here for – the fact that we are here on this world to purify our souls - or are we just trying to seek comfort in our life?

For example, when we go to *shul* in the morning, are we realizing that this purifies our existence more? Intellectually we might know about this, but do we feel that way? When we learn Torah and do mitzvos, do we feel that this is purifying us more and more, or are we doing them because it's comfortable for us?

Usually, if we ask this question to anyone, there is no definite answer. Most people will not give a definite 'Yes' or 'No'. Only a few people are thinking a lot and very aware.

When a person gets married, he naturally sees that it is hard work. If he did not know beforehand that this will require hard work, and he takes life as it comes, then he will have a hard time in marriage.

How does he deal with the problems he encounters? It is most difficult when a person doesn't know why he is living and how marriage is a part of that.

The hard work we need in marriage is always changing its colors. Your personality can change, your wife's personality can change, and your children are growing up. Each of these situations brings a

different kind of hard work for you. If a person would know that before he got married, his marriage would be a lot better, because he would have mature perspective towards it.

But if a person got married and didn't realize that marriage is going to take hard work, and he got married for the sake of enjoyment – and most people are getting married for this reason – life will be very difficult.

The home is part of life. The issue is how a person understands why he is living. A person who works for a living gets up in the morning and he davens, and then he goes to work, thinking that his “work” starts when he goes to work. But “work” really began with *davening*, because everything needs to be seen as “work”!

### *The Root Perspective Towards Marriage*

When we know life is about *avodah* – inner work - we still might have questions and issues of how to make our marriage better, but at least we will have the root understanding towards marriage, that it is *avodah*.

Without this perspective, a person might ask another for advice in his marriage and he'll be told: “You want her to be nice to you? Give to her, and you'll see that she'll give you back double of what you give her. You don't lose out by giving in your marriage; you will only gain.” This is a nice piece of advice, but it makes marriage seem like a business deal! Is this what marriage is about? You are nice to me, and I'll be nice to you?

What we are getting at here is very simple, but the words here will appear foreign for one who takes life as it comes and he lives life as he sees fit, without understanding that life is about working hard. What will happen when he gets married? He won't be able to live as he was used to. No two people are the same, due to their differing personalities, natures, desires, thoughts, and ways of life. He and his wife are going to clash with their different ways of living, and he won't be able to handle it.

A person might know he has inner contradictions within his own self, but he learns how to put up with himself, more or less. He learns how to ‘go with the flow’. But it doesn't work that way in marriage. When husband and wife encounter friction, it won't be enough if the husband just decides he will nullify himself to his wife. Just because he nullifies doesn't himself doesn't mean she will nullify herself to him. He will find life with her to be unbearable, when he just tries to go along with the flow of life and not really work hard.

If one is already aware of the inner contradictions in his own soul and he has learned how to deal with his own self, he will be able to have a mature outlook towards marriage. He has realized long before marriage that life is about growth and dealing with challenges, and he views marriage as a part of this. He does not view marriage as a new concept. He views it as another step in the growth process that is life.

Of course, marriage contains many new kinds of situations that a person has never faced, and there are parts of marriage which make every person struggle, but it can still be viewed as a continuation of the challenges we must grow from in our life, as opposed to something completely new that we have never navigated before.

### *In Summary*

Thus, to summarize, before one gets married, he first has to be clear why he lives. It must also be clear to a person that life is about *avodah*, inner work. When we *daven*, learn, and do *chessed*, it is all *avodah*.

This does not mean, of course, that life is all about hard and difficult work and that there is no pleasure in life. It can definitely be pleasant, but it is just that we must see it as *avodah*. One has to realize that he is here to work on something. It is written, “*Man was born to toil.*” When this is the perspective, and when one is aware of this before marriage, he has gotten married with the correct mindset.

If not, a person thinks that life is about seeking comfort, and that is how he erroneously enters marriage. Most people are in fact getting married with this mindset.

A boy getting married may very well be living a very blissful and comfortable life: he is known as a *masmid* (diligent in his studies), as a *Yarei Shomayim* (G-d fearing), someone who *davens* with *kavanah* (prays with concentration), (and by the way, only Hashem knows what he’s really davening for); and the girl is known to have a good heart and to be modest and G-d fearing – and then they get married – and what happens? They discover about each other that it’s not quite what they were told. How do they deal with it...?

### *Marriage Involves Self-Improvement In All Areas*

Marriage is even hard for one who works on his *middos* (character traits), when he doesn’t have the right perspective we have described, towards marriage.

Now, if someone didn’t work on his *middos* before marriage, he will of course have it a lot harder when he gets married; we know many people like that. But even if a person did work on his *middos* before he got married, marriage can still be very hard for him, when he doesn’t realize that marriage will require *avodah*.

For example, if a person is always working on his trait of humility, how will he be able to restrain himself from getting angry when it’s the tenth time that his anger is tested in one day? In marriage, **all** of a person’s *middos* are tested. Things are constantly happening against our will. The children always do things their parents don’t like. Erev Shabbos and Erev Pesach are even more stressful times. These situations test all of our *middos*, not just our humility.

So ‘working on our *middos*’ is not either enough to have a successful marriage, because there is only so much that we can do to improve ourselves. At a certain point, we become flustered.

Thus, one has to realize that life is *avodah*, and that marriage is part of the *avodah* in life. The fact that life is *avodah*/hard work is not a side point – it is what life is all about.

### *Hard Work and Pleasure In The Home*

Of course, *avodah* is not all there is to life. Life also contains pleasure. *Avodah* contains pleasure as well. The home has in it pleasure and joy as well, along with the *avodah* that it requires. It is not only *avodah*. If it was only *avodah*, a person walking to his *chuppah* would feel like he’s walking towards his grave.

On the other extreme, there are those who are so immersed in the *simcha* and blissful thought of getting married that they get a false notion that marriage is entirely about joy, comfort and pleasantness. But it is not entirely *simcha*. When one doesn't understand that, he thinks everything will be fine and wonderful, and then he finds out the hard way.

But the true perspective is that life is a fusion of *avodah* together with *simcha*/happiness and *neimus*/pleasantness. Some things come across to us as totally pleasant, some things appear to be only hard work, and in each thing we need to see both the hard work and the joy. We need a balance. If we look to see only how each thing is pleasant and we don't want to agree that there is hard work too, we are fooling ourselves and we will find out the hard way. Yet, if we only see everything as *avodah* and with no joy in it, then we can't survive, because we cannot survive without joy.

When this is the perspective towards marriage, the beginning of marriage will be much different.

### 'Giving' In Marriage

Some people think that marriage is entirely about 'giving'. But how much can you give already...? Clearly, then, marriage cannot be based entirely on the *middah* of giving, though it is certainly essential in marriage.<sup>153</sup>

What is the difference between viewing the home as a place to give, with viewing the home as a place of *avodah*? Here is how you can see a difference. If you give and give and give to your family, how will you deal with it if you're not getting back in return? You will suffer at this and you won't be able to handle the disappointment.

So instead, view the home as being as place of *avodah*, and then you see everything in terms of *avodah*. When you view the home as *avodah*, you develop the ability to have *savlanus*, to endure suffering.

*Avodah* is essentially about developing the power to endure when things don't go your way. Giving is a different power in the soul: it is the ability to nurture others. They are both vital powers of our soul, but the power of endurance is more essential to the marriage than the power of giving. We see this from the fact that one can give and give in his marriage, but can he endure the fact that he gives when he doesn't get back? He won't be able to. But if he knows how to endure - because he views giving as part of *avodah* and not as a purpose unto itself - then he will be able to endure, even if he 'gives' and doesn't 'get back'.

Today there's a lot of emphasis today about the concept of 'giving' in marriage, as if it is everything, and the reason for this is because in today's times, most people are living superficially before marriage and are not used to 'giving', thus they have to be taught that in marriage you need to start giving. But although it is true that giving must become a major part of our life, we must know that life is not entirely about giving.

Our life is about *avodah*, being prepared to work hard on ourselves to improve. Giving can certainly be seen as part of the context of *avodah*, not as a separate goal unto itself.

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*153 Editor's Note: It is well-known that Rav Dessler zt"l would emphasize the importance of becoming a 'giver' in marriage (see 'Strive for Truth' vol. I, "Essay on Loving Kindness"); The Rav certainly validates this point and is in full agreement with the words of Rav Dessler, but his point is to tell us that it isn't everything, and it is part of a larger goal in marriage.*

If we are talking about a person who lives his life entirely *lishmah* (for the sake of Heaven), then perhaps he does everything in order to give to others, and he would be able to view marriage as being entirely a situation of “giving”. But if one does not live entirely *lishmah* – which is our average situation – then he cannot make “giving” into his entire life and marriage, or else he will get flustered in the process.

So in order to begin working on our marriage, let’s first erase the notion that marriage is all about “giving”. The concept of “giving” sounds like a lofty idea, and perhaps we can write about it in a *sefer*, but realistically speaking, you cannot give all day to your family 24|7. There is no such person who can give so much. You don’t suddenly transform when you come into your home and become a “giver” - even if you were doing *chessed* (kindness) all day.

But when a person views life as being *avodah*, as being hard work, he will be able to view marriage as a part of this, and this will begin a true perspective towards marriage and enable him to succeed in it.

### *In Conclusion*

Understandably, at this point, when we have just begun the discussion here, we won’t know how to take something practical out of this concept, but let it suffice as the beginning chapter to serve as the root which we will build upon in the coming chapters, with the help of Hashem.

## *Getting To Know Your Family: Chapter Two*

### *3.2 | Expressing Love in the Home*

#### *Can We Always Be In ‘Giving’ Mode?*

Let’s return briefly what we have begun to explain in the previous chapter (the concept of giving in marriage).

One of the basics of marriage is that the husband must be a “giver” to the home. He must learn the art of giving and know how to keep giving towards his home – to give, and to give, and to give.

Right before a man gets married, he is given some guidance. He is told that he must now become a giver. Until now, he was used to living for himself, but now he has to become a giver. Ideally, this is really the way it should be - after a man marries, he should become a constant giver.

But we must know the following. If he’s not a nice person outside his home, he won’t be able to suddenly be nice either when he comes home. A person acts in his home no less than how he acts outside the home; if he is not used to giving, he cannot suddenly become a giver in his home.

If one works for a living, the ideal perspective he should have is that he is working only in order to be able to provide for his family, and he shouldn’t be in it for selfish purposes. If he learns in *kolel*, he should be learning not for his own spiritual growth, but in order to give spirituality to his family.

(Of course, a person is allowed to enjoy himself in the process, but the main drive of a person should be that he is trying to give).

Now, if a person would do everything *l’sheim Shomayim* (for the sake of Heaven), he wouldn’t need any guidance to prepare for marriage. But the reality is that we don’t always do things *l’sheim Shomayim*. We go to work or we learn Torah for own purposes. We want to take it for ourselves, and we are not necessarily motivated to give. We are taught that marriage is about giving, but it is very difficult to change the orientation which we were living with until now.

Thus, we have difficulty giving in our homes. Why? All day, we are involved in ourselves. When we work, it is for ourselves. When we learn Torah, we are involved in our own spiritual growth. Then when we come home at night, we have to switch to “giving” mode – we have to be there for our wife and help the kids, feeding them, doing homework with them and putting them to bed, etc.

So because we have to keep switching “modes” every day from “taking” to “giving”, it’s hard for us to get used to the change of mode, and as a result, we have a hard time becoming givers when we come home. This is the problem we grapple with in the home: we cannot suddenly transform when we come home.

#### *The Stressful Atmosphere At Home*

What happens when we come home at the end of the day? What do we feel like? The house to us becomes like a place full of hard work – and it certainly is.

Surely we give in our homes. We give all the time to our spouse and children, by helping them each day with many different things. But there is so much to do that it feels for the most part forced upon us. We do not feel like we are in ‘giving’ mode to our family, even though we do a lot for our family.

Maybe a person can try to consciously feel like he’s ‘giving’ for about 2 or 3 weeks or a few months at best, but it is not a way to live. Nobody can live like this. Some rare individuals are on a very high spiritual level and they can do everything in the home to ‘give’ to their family, but most people cannot do it. Giving is therefore a high level, a lofty comprehension.

The words we will speak about here will describe how one can enter an inner kind of life which anyone can simply live.

### *The Inner Work Of Running Our Home*

The *Mesillas Yesharim* says that all of life is a test. This was the concept we explained in the previous chapter, that one must view the home as being a place of *avodah*, of inner work. There are many difficulties involved in the home. It’s not supposed to be easy; it is a place that takes hard work, just like all other areas of life.

What do our homes mean to us? Most of us aren’t too fond of our home. Many people don’t feel like coming home at night and would rather go shopping and take their mind off their home, saying “I don’t have any energy to deal with my home right now.”

What is the home to us? Do we understand the function and the purpose of our home?

We aren’t clear what our home exactly means to us. When we learn, it’s clear that we are learning Torah. When we go to a wedding, it’s clear that we are at a wedding. But when it comes to our home, we are surprisingly unsure of what it even is to us. What is our home?

Let’s be honest. No matter what we do – whether one works for a living, or whether he learns all day in *kolel* – we are all tired at the end of the day. We all want to come home at night and relax a little in the house. To our disappointment, we never get to relax in our homes – as soon as we walk through the door, there is so much for us to do. We want *menuchah*, serenity, and maybe a little rest – and lo and behold, we come home, and there is no *menuchah*, but only more hard work to do, even harder than the day’s work.

There is much to do in our house, in whatever stage of life we are up to. A newlywed couple faces certain struggles with each other. Young children present a different set of problems. When children get older and more mature, their issues become more challenging to deal with. When our children are in *shidduchim*, a new set of worries begin. When we become grandparents and our married children come over, we face new challenges with them. There are all different issues we go through in life, no matter what stage we are up to. There is never one answer to all of them.

So our question is, when we come home at the end of the day, what do we want from our home?

If a person only wants *menuchah*, he is expecting something that is not realistic, because life is not about *menuchah*, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* says. But the home cannot either be defined as a place of only hard work, because then when do we get to rest from all of this? If the home is entirely seen as a place of *avodah*, we cannot rest in it, so when and where are we supposed to rest, if not in our homes?!

Obviously, we need a little *menuchah* in our homes, so that we can be minimally calm. If we want a little bit *menuchah* in our homes, we need to know how to properly view our homes, and then we will have a degree of *menuchah* in it (though we might not get all the sleep and rest we want in it).

When we walk into our house at night - what is it that we should want from our house? How should we view our home?

If a person has *shalom bayis* (marital peace), he will view his home as a peaceful place, but if he doesn't have *shalom bayis*, he will have the opposite view of his home. If he has calm children, he views the home as a pleasant place, but if he does not have calm children, he does not view his home as pleasant. Each person will view his home according to his situation. But what is the inner way to view our home?

Surely our life is about hard work. "*Man was created to toil.*" We must work hard in learning Torah, in the mitzvos, in our *middos*. That is all true. But only the Gedolim are capable of working hard on themselves all day! The average person cannot work hard all the time in his life, even if he can relate to the concept. What, then, is the way for an average person to go about life? Besides for having aspirations, how must a person actually live his life?

### *Expressing Love In Your Home*

We each have a wife and children that we love. Do we love them?

Of course, we do. (If anyone here answers "No", then there is nothing here to discuss). We can all say that we love our spouse and children, but can all of us say that we express that love to them? That is the question.

(To clarify the following misconception before we continue: the home is not mainly about being '*oived*' Hashem (serving Hashem). You can't be '*oived*' Hashem as your child is screaming and the phones are ringing...)

Do we love our family? We will all say, "Yes". Do we want to 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?

Here is where most people will be unable to answer. 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 home, and we are really prepared to do this every day, we will have successful homes.

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 and coverings - and let all of the love be revealed in your home.

Don't view this as some lofty, spiritual level. It is true that it is part of serving Hashem. But 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 can express your love. This is much easier for a person to accept, especially because we

need an idea that talks to the level of our *nefesh habehaimis* (animalistic layer of the soul) which has a hard time with ‘serving Hashem’.

What is the most important thing you can give to your child? To buy him clothes? It is very important, but there are more important things than this. (Hiring for him a tutor or teacher? Even the best teacher cannot replace the love you can give to your child. It is true that giving him love is not everything; the child needs to learn, be educated, and be neat and orderly. He has all these needs. But what are his basic emotional needs?)

I am not asking you what his spiritual needs are. What is his basic need? **He needs to feel loved!** Any sensible person knows this. Making a child feel loved must be the basis of the home.

Some people think that this is called getting too emotional, and that too much *regesh* (emotion) in the home will lead to *geresh* (divorce). But the home must be viewed as the place where you express the depth of your love. It is not merely a place to sleep, eat meals, get dressed, and study and learn.

### *Expressing Love Naturally, and Not as An ‘Avodah’*

We must realize that love in the home is the basic atmosphere which the home needs, and, it must be expressed naturally. Expressing love must not come as something forced upon you, as something you have to do because if not then you will go to Gehinnom and if you do, you will go to Gan Eden. That should not be the mindset at all.

Earlier, we defined the home as being a place of hard inner work. Now, it seems that we are implying the opposite approach, that in the home you must not force yourself to do things, and in this way, you find *menuchah* (serenity) in your home. This seems like a contradiction: Is the home about hard work, or is it about finding serenity? It is because if you work on yourself to express love in the home and it begins to flow naturally from you, you will find that there can be *menuchah* in your home.

### *Misconceptions That People Have About the Home*

If one doesn’t realize that the basis of the home is expressing love, what will be the basis of his home? Which is the point he is mainly emphasizing?

There are some people who think that *dikduk hadin* (being very careful in *Halacha*) is the basis of the home, so this kind of person will mainly emphasize that the children be careful with *Halacha*. He is mainly concerned that the children be constantly taught what the *Halacha* is whenever they act. If the child doesn’t say *Asher Yotzer* right away, he is reprimanded, etc. Such parents would like their child to be on the level of Rav Elyashiv [zt”l] who was very careful with *Halacha*....

Any sensible person knows that this is a wrong approach, for it does not happen with a child. We are not saying that *dikduk hadin* does not have to be taught in the home, *chas v’shalom*. Of course it needs to be taught. But the question is, is that the main emphasis to place in the home? The home cannot thrive on *dikduk hadin* alone. It cannot become the *neshamah* (soul) of the home.

(There were some people who based their entire homes on spirituality and mainly emphasized spirituality in the home, and they were partially successful. Some of the children turned out very good, and other children felt too pressured from this and they stopped being observant).

So what is the main point that one must emphasize in the home? That is the question which we are asking. What is the kind of atmosphere you mainly need to create in your home?

If anyone reflects deeply into it, he will see that it's not so simple to answer. What, indeed, is the correct atmosphere that one needs to mainly build in his home?

Someone told me once that his child in preschool was asked by his teacher to write down, "What Is The Most Important Thing In Your House?" Of course, all the children wrote, "Torah." But the question is, what is the atmosphere of the home?

To describe the home as being a 'place of Torah' is a general description that doesn't tell us much. The children might be aware that Torah is the main part of their home, but in their viewpoint, Torah means "not to disturb our father when he is learning". They grow up thinking that Torah means, "All day, we should not make any noise or disturbances, this way Abba can learn Torah in peace." This will be how they view "Torah"....

When a person makes sure that expressing love in the home and creating a warm atmosphere in the home is his main priority in the home, he will find that the home doesn't have to a place of 'war'. He will see the home as a place to reveal love, not as a place to engage in a 'war' with his family. And this will give him some *menuchah* (serenity) in his home.

We are not speaking of a deep and spiritual kind of love. We are speaking about a more basic and physical kind of love, which is necessary for all people to have, since we all have a body, and we are not entirely souls. When there is a basic level of love in the home, upon that, spirituality can thrive. Of course, our spirituality is the main thing we strive for. But without basic emotional needs, which are more physical in their nature, we aren't able to be spiritually healthy either. It is impossible to live a totally spiritual existence with no acknowledge of our physical body and basic emotional needs. The home cannot survive on this.

So we first need to let our natural love flow from our simple emotions, before we embark on spiritual levels, in the home. There are fathers who teach their child to love others because there is a *mitzvah* of "*Vohavta l'reiacha Kamoicha*", "Love your friend as yourself." What is the problem with this approach? It is because this cannot be the basis of the home. The home needs to be developed sensibly, in steps, like rungs of a ladder. You start with the basic parts that are more grounded on the earth, not with the lofty and spiritual levels.

So the question we must ask ourselves is: What is the basis that we need to build the home upon? Should it be *derech eretz* (decent behavior)? Should it be *nikayon* (neatness)? Should it be *kibbud av v'aim* (honoring parents)? (Some people think that *kibbud av v'aim* is all that there is to the home!)

(Another misconception people have is that the emphasis in the home should be, to "always do the will of Hashem." The problem with this is that if you only love your child because it is the will of Hashem, this is a form of disconnection. You need to naturally love your child, and within that desire of love for him is the deep will of Hashem which enables that will, but in the end of the day, the love begins with your natural emotions. This is because as we said earlier, we are not entirely souls. We have a body which our soul dwells in. Thus, we first need to express our simple, natural emotions).

How many children feel that their father or mother doesn't love them! In fact, there are even parents who will admit it openly that they do not love one of their children. Deep down, we all love our children, because there is a natural ingrained love that every parent has for his child. But it can be pushed very deep into the subconscious, so it is not consciously revealed, and that is why the parent will feel like he does not love his child. (Reb Yisrael Salanter wrote about this concept.)

### *Making This Practical*

Getting back to the issue, the question is if husband and wife are aware of the basis of the home, both with regards to their marriage as well with raising the children. It is a question about living life, and it is not a mere intellectual question.

Now let's try to make this practical now. How much of the day do we spend expressing love? It's possible that an entire day goes by where one did not openly express any love in the home. A person cannot come into his home and suddenly open up his emotion of love, like the sun beginning to shine on a cloudy day. It cannot happen. The home is a place where it's easier for one to express his love, because he is used to expressing it there, but even love in the home does not suddenly appear if one hasn't already activated any love from previously in the day.

Therefore, every person, **before** he comes home, needs to take the time to think how he will express love in the home. The point is not that every day a person should tell his children, "I love you." The words have to come from your feelings! You need to first let yourself feel your love for your family, and then the words of love need to flow from that. You can't just say the words if you don't feel the love.

Surely the words "I love you" are what express your love, but the very first step is to expose the emotion of love in the first place.

(Every person feels what love is. There are some people who are very stiff and hardened, but every person has emotion. How can a person open up his emotions if he is stiff? He can practice it with himself, by saying words of love to himself. He can think about how to express love and he can practice saying the words to himself. For example, if he takes the children to the store and he buys them something, he can think to himself, "Why am I buying this for him? Because I love him." In trying love exercises like this, he can slowly but surely expose his emotion of love to them and train himself to express it and reveal it.)

### *Knowing and Then Internalizing This Perspective*

The first step is to know what the basis of the home is: it is a place to express love to your family. It should be **entirely** love! (Of course, sometimes you need to apply punishment in the home. But the general basis of the home is, love). Love is the root; being able to be kind to your family is the step that comes after that. This is because *ahavah* (love) is the inner root of *chessed* (kindness).

The love in the home must be clearly felt in the home. It is not merely a phrase of "I love you" which the father must say every day to his child. It is much, much more than that. The entire home must be seen as the place to reveal love.

### *The Problem: We Don't Have Time to Think...*

When you go away on a trip for a few days, and you come home and you are about to enter, you know the children are waiting to see you, so you feel excited to enter your home (Maybe they just want your presents they think you bought them, but they're still awaiting you). So too, if one would view his home as being the place to reveal love, he would be excited to enter it each day. But in order to feel that excitement to enter the home, one has to create the right atmosphere in the home.

The problem that most of us grapple with is that we are tired at the end of the day, and we don't have time to think about this before we come in through the door. When we don't have any time to think before we come home, we come in to the house expecting to relax, and then all the trouble comes. Just when we want some rest after a long day, our wife and children bombard us with so many things. The house then seems to us like a war zone. But this creates disaster to our homes, and that leads to a destruction of our entire life.

The more a person reveals love in the home, the fewer problems there will be. The less revelation of love there is, the more fights and arguments there will be in the home; it will become a never-ending, vicious cycle of problems that keep resurfacing.

But all of us can change and live differently. It is up to us to develop the correct atmosphere in the home, and in order to change, we need to do the following.

### *Opening Your Emotions*

First of all, as we said, a person doesn't have that much time throughout the day to express his emotions. But we need to find time every day to open our emotions. That is the first step.

The emotions that most people know are negative emotions, such as jealousy and hatred for others. But we need to learn how to develop **positive** emotions, and to learn how to express them more.

Most people are involved in a "world" of action, not in a world of thought, so it becomes hard for them to suddenly express emotion when they come home. The home then becomes a place of giving commands and telling everyone what they must do; it becomes a rigid place in which there is no emotion revealed. But if one has already revealed emotion earlier in the day, it is much easier for a person to come home and express emotions in the home, because he has already accessed his emotions before he came home.

A good way to work on this is to *daven* with emotion. When one *davened* during the day and he revealed some emotion in his *davening*, his emotions have been activated, and when he comes home, he can reveal the emotions.

### *Putting Life Into Our Life*

Let us try to understand the root of most problems that go on in the world: it is because people are caught up in life, in the "world of action", and emotions are rarely accessed, because people don't have time. The home becomes a continuation of this monotonous kind of life. The person is kind of dead, and the home will also be dead. It is a deathlike kind of life, not a vitality-giving kind of life.

Sometimes I am in others' homes, and I find no life going on there; there is nothing going on there except eating meals, laundry, and sleep, which does not provide vitality to a home. How can the home be a place to live in when this is all that goes on there? As long as the dishwasher is working and the weekly newspaper comes to the home, the home is considered to be 'functioning' and a happening place? This is a 'dead' kind of house! How can there be life in such a home? When we enter such a home, do we feel life going on there, or do we just feel like it is neat and orderly looking?

What about the Shabbos table? Is it just a program to follow – the order that the *Zemiros* is sung, the children must say *Divrei Torah*, then comes the first course, then the drinks come, then another set

of children say *Divrei Torah*, then comes dessert, then they *bentch*, clear off the table, and then the table is reset to be the Shabbos table again?

Forgive me for saying this, but the “*dvar Torah*” in such a home is *divrei chullin* (mundane talk), because it is merely being seen as part of the program that must be done. The words being said in the *Dvar Torah* are not affecting anyone for the better and nobody could care less what is being said in the *Dvar Torah*. It is being forced, so that the child should be trained to “get used to saying a *Dvar Torah*”.

This does not add life to the home! A person can say a thousand *Divrei Torah* yet not one of them is alive! There is a ‘life’ which we must ‘live’. If a father lives by the words of the *Dvar Torah* that he says, that is a true Shabbos table.

### *Coming Out of Routine*

When the home is a place of mere physical chores, such a home is ‘dead.’ Perhaps it will be hard to hear and accept this. But it is like a body without a soul.

Along these lines, Chazal say, “What has Ben Dovid [Moshiach] not come yet? Because he did not come yesterday, or the day before, or three days ago.” It is because the routine of life is going on as usual, with no change. What is our life about? It is not just about our schedule, obeying rules, gathering knowledge of Torah, applying what we learn to how we act, tests, successes, and vacations. Life is supposed to be full of *chiyus* (vitality). We must make sure that we have *chiyus* in our life, and then upon that, we will be able to build everything else which our home needs.

### *The Home Is Not A Place To ‘Educate’ Or ‘Preach’*

The home is not either a place of mussar (ethics), where the father must teach the children the entire day and tell them stories. There are homes like that, in which the father teaches his children in the morning, in the afternoon, and at night, where the father thinks he must be a ‘*mechanech*’ (educator) to them always, always explaining to them what exactly they need to do and how.

I am not saying that there is no place for this in the home, but it should only be a percentage of what goes on in the home. The basis of the home is to express love to your children. When there is love as the basis, everything else can follow. And you do need those other things that you want to incorporate into your home. But you must make sure that the basis is there. Love and vitality in your home has is like the air that the children breathe in the home.

Where does a person feel that he gets his *chiyus* from? Even a person who learns in Kolel the entire week, who learns Torah and does all the mitzvos – what does he feel like he lives from? I am not asking what he did the entire week. It is obvious what he did: he learned Torah and he did mitzvos. I am asking about *what he feels alive from*. One cannot live from the good actions alone that he does. If he lives like that, he raises his children to be the same way, and then his rigidity is continued by the next generation.

But if a person seeks to live an inner kind of life, although he will always have ups and downs, he can know that the atmosphere in the home needs to be mainly that of love and emotion, so that the home will feel alive. In this way, the home will not be seen as a warzone or as a place of just ‘*avodah*’ – it will feel like a calming place. Although there are always problems that can come up in the home and

there is work to be done there, it will still feel serene, when there is an atmosphere of love in the home; because such a home allows the soul to flourish and become more revealed.

### *The Home: The Place To Be Your Best*

Some people feel that their families should just “Accept me for who I am”, because they do not wish to work hard on their character in the home. This kind of person might even have a *mussar seder* (time of learning self-discipline) every day and he has aspirations to improve his character, but when it comes to his home, he does not want to fix his character there. He just wants to be accepted in his home for who he is, with all his faults; to be allowed to “be himself.”

The home will feel unbearable to him, due to the many challenges that arise in the home which tests his character. Rather, he needs to see the home as being a place to reveal his love. It can be the place where he can reveal all of his aspirations he identifies with. When he makes sure to always reveal his love in the home, the family will be able to overlook all his faults, for it is written, “*Love covers over all faults.*”

### *Infusing Vitality Into The Home – Through Emotion*

It was described here a way to actually live life. Some people do not feel that they are missing anything in their life if they are missing *chiyus*, and they feel fine as long as they are learning Torah and keeping all the mitzvos. When such a person hears a person getting emotional in a speech, or when he sees someone *davening* passionately, he might conclude, “This must be a very emotional person (a *baal hergesh*).”

But we must understand that if someone does not feel how a lack of emotion is detrimental to life, it is a sign that his life is kind of dead. He does everything right, but all of his actions are performed perfunctorily. He never wonders what is lacking in his mitzvos, other than wondering if “mitzvos need *kavanah*” or not.

Does a person realize that living an inner kind of life is only possible through revealing emotion? If he does, he has vitality in his life, and he will be able to continue that into his home as well, creating a vibrant and alive atmosphere in his home which enables the children to thrive. Such a house is pleasurable to enter, and the father will look forward to coming home at the end of the day. Of course, there will always be issues that can come up in the home, but he will still have the basic recipe for success, and he will thus find the home to be a calm place to enter.

### *In Conclusion*

These are not ideas. They are about how we understand life. If one feels that the words have spoken to his heart and he wants to internalize them, he will find success, with the help of Hashem.

I hope that the inner message behind these words has been realized, and not just the two pieces of advices that I mentioned towards the end. If you listened to this only to get to the ‘tips’ here, then the whole point has been missed. The words here were not coming to give tips – they are presenting a way of life.



*Getting To Know Your Family: Chapter Three*

**3.3 | *The Source of Marital Discord***

***“Eizer K’Negdo”, A Helpmate Opposite Him: Appreciating Opposition***

The Torah writes that when Hashem created a wife for man, He created woman as an “*eizer k’negdo*”, a “helpmate, opposite him”. A wife is the “helper” of her husband - precisely because she opposes him.

Besides for a wife, though, there is also another being in a person’s life who opposes him: the *yetzer hora* (the evil inclination), which challenges him.

The reason why we have a *yetzer hora* is so that it can be a kind of “helpmate” to us, because when we overcome its challenges, we become elevated.

If a person doesn’t understand that it’s it good for him to have a *yetzer hora*, he views the *yetzer hora* as a bothersome force in his life. He may think about his *yetzer hora* in terms of having to do *teshuvah* over his sins on Erev Yom Kippur, and he’s mostly bothered at his *yetzer hora*.

Such a mindset is really erroneous, because the person doesn’t appreciate the fact that he is challenged and opposed. What will happen when he gets married, with such a mentality? Now he has to deal with a person who is constantly opposing him, on a regular basis. He reacts to her with the same way he can’t stand his *yetzer hora*.

One who can’t deal with his own challenges, and would rather live life without challenges, will also not be able to survive marriage. The nature of a wife is that she opposes her husband - sometimes more and sometimes less. He might not be used to dealing with anything that challenges him, so he will recoil in disgust from the challenge.

He has never learned how to deal with opposition, so he will not either know how to deal with the opposition in his marriage; each husband will react according to his various nature, personality, and *middos* – and he will fight with her as he sees fit, acting destructive to the marriage.

If one is already used to the idea of dealing with opposition before he got married – because he knows how to appreciate the challenges of his *yetzer hora* - he will have a much easier time dealing with the oppositions when he’s married. But if he never accepted that in life we are supposed to be challenged by opposition, he will not be able to deal with the challenges of marriage either.

Thus, ideally, before one can deal with the challenges in his marriage, he has to know before he gets married how to deal with challenges in the first place! Otherwise, it’s as if he is navigating his way through an ocean without a boat; he will get lost and drown.

***Becoming Aware of Your Yetzer Hora***

Firstly, the issue is, if we are really aware of our *yetzer hora* or not. How aware are we to the fact that we have a *yetzer hora* in us that challenges us? If we wake up a person at 2 A.M. and we ask him if he has a *yetzer hora*, what does he respond? Can he say it even in the middle of his sleep?

Every man has a force inside him that is opposing him, and it sounds like an inner voice that challenges him. It's called the *yetzer hora*. It's not enough to know you have a *yetzer hora* – you have to recognize it in yourself.

### *Inner Voices*

A person always has inside himself two voices that are whispering to him: a voice telling him to do good (the *yetzer tov*) and a voice telling him to do bad (the *yetzer hora*). Imagine if a father tells his child to A, and his mother tells him to do B. *Chazal* say to listen to the father. The child has heard two voices, and he must decide which voice to listen to. That's a clear example of hearing two different voices. But do we hear **inside** ourselves as well that there are two different voices going on? The issue is, if a person is aware that he has these two inner contradicting voices inside himself.

To illustrate, once a student came to Rav Dessler zt"l distraught. He had a dream in which he had killed his son. He came to Rav Dessler shaking as to what the dream meant. Rav Dessler told him, "Sometimes your son annoys you, and for a few moments, you wish he wouldn't be in your life. Because you wished for a few seconds that he shouldn't exist, you are able to have a dream about killing him." The lesson of this story is that a person is often unaware of the voices going on inside himself, deep in his subconscious.

Most people are not aware of the two "voices" inside themselves. They only hear one voice, and that is the voice will dominate. But we really have several voices in us; in fact, both the *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hora* each have several voices. One might hear different voices inside himself when he feels very challenged and there's a lot of tension going on in his surroundings, but on a general basis, a person usually does not hear more than one voice going on inside himself. If he has never learned how to deal with two opposing views inside himself, he will not be able to deal with outer challenges either.

For example, when we need to buy something for the house, like a table, do we ever ask ourselves why we are buying the table? If we think into it deeply, we will discover that there is always more than one reason. There is never one reason that motivates us. There are always several motivations in anything we do. Most people are consciously aware of only one reason, because there is a lack of awareness to the motivations.

(If one does not understand himself and the contradictions inside him, he surely won't be able to understand his wife. He must first understand his soul, then his wife's soul, and then see how to work out the contradictions).

Most of the problems that occur in a marriage do not have to do with the actual 'marriage' itself; the problems all begin with a lack of knowledge about oneself. One who is aware of himself can sense the inner voices in himself, and he will have a lot easier of a time when tension mounts and he hears contradicting voices inside himself, because he's already used to it from beforehand.

But often, a person is used to sort of 'pushing away' the inner voices inside himself from letting them register in his conscious mind, and then he only hears them when he's in an extreme situation, such as when he's very angry or very sad. He then begins to hear several voices inside himself, (as well as the voice of his wife challenging him), and he gets confused and bewildered when this happens, because he is not used to hearing several voices all at once. He thinks that perhaps something is wrong with him, wondering why he does not know himself well. He will feel a need to go for therapy or to go to a psychologist, because he feels very confused about himself.

But if he's already used to hearing inner voices inside himself before a time of tension comes, he wouldn't get so frustrated when he encounters tension and opposition in his marriage. The *yetzer hora* is called *Tzefuni*, "hidden one"<sup>154</sup>, a force that resides in a person's heart; if a person is used to hearing its voice all the time, then he wouldn't get so flustered when he begins to hear several "voices" going on at once in his home.

Most of the problems in marriage do not begin with the marriage, but with the person. We can call it "bad *middos*" if we want, but that is generic. There's a deeper reason to it. It's because a person does not know how to deal with himself at all. 'Fixing' your bad *middos* is already the second step. The first step one needs to begin with is to simply become aware of what's going on inside you.

If one is not aware of himself, he doesn't know what his motivations are. He might do *chessed* and give *tzedakah*, and he looks like a very nice person to all who see him, but nobody has no idea what's going on inside him (and they never will) - and neither does he. When he encounters situations in his home which he cannot remain silent about and he feels a need to explode at all the challenges he is facing, the problems then begin.

### *Knowing Yourself*

So first, a person has to become aware of himself. He must learn how to recognize his soul and the nature of his soul.

If a person doesn't learn in-depth the laws of Shabbos, he won't be able to be careful when it comes to the laws of Shabbos. The same is true when it comes to relationships. We won't be able to get along with others if we have no self-awareness towards ourselves.

There is no way to get along with others - your family or your neighbors or anyone else - if you haven't first learned how to get along with yourself. Of course, you will be able to get along with others if you have good social skills, and you will still be able to get along with your wife too, but it won't be enough to **build** a true Jewish home as it should be.

Let us be very clear to the reality (Some people have a very hard time accepting this, but it is the truth). We must know who we are. We cannot go through life and live good with our wife and children if we do not recognize our own self. A superficial person will say "What is there to know? I know myself already."

Most people are like a closed bank account inside themselves, and they do not have the key to open that "bank account". It is impossible for a person to have a harmonious home if a person lacks self-awareness.

The study of *Mussar* – self-improvement – is really based on knowing about how the human soul works. The great masters who started *Mussar* were greatly involved with understanding and explaining how our soul works. It's impossible for a person to understand matters of *Mussar* and improve himself if he is unaware of his internal world. If a person doesn't know himself well, and he tries learning "*Sefer Kitzur Chovos HaLevovos*" (a summary of *sefer Chovos HaLevovos*) to get quick advice, it won't work, because advice and tidbits of wisdom cannot build our life! One has to become aware of himself – only that will build him.

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154 *Sukkah* 52a

A person has to clarify to himself who he really is, and develop an honest self-awareness towards himself. This does not simply mean that a person has to realize that he has *bad middos* in addition to his qualities. Rather, he should be aware of why he has those bad *middos* and that they are coming from the soul, which is the source of all our *middos*.

Even if a person looks into the *sefarim* for advice in matters, the advice won't help if he doesn't understand himself well.

Often people want to be helped and they are impatient: "Okay, so what should I do? Tell me what I should do, *l'maaseh*", and they don't know themselves well. This is not the way to go about things. First a person has to know himself well, who "I" am, and then he can ask questions about how he should act. One cannot know how to act if he doesn't know how to think in the first place.

### *Marital Disputes: First Understand Your SELF*

For example, a couple comes to a marriage counselor to sort out their feuding. The husband says, "My complaints against her are A, B, and C", and the wife also lists her complaints on him. The marriage counselor makes a "compromise" between them and shows them how they can come to a compromise and thus he "saves" the marriage. But does the husband really know *why* he did what he did, and *why* his wife did what she did?

Forget for a second about what he did, and what she did. Does the husband know *why* he did what he did, and *why* his wife did what she did? The issue is not what or she did. The issue is *why* each of them is doing what they are doing to each other.

The husband might of course say, "**Because she has bad *middos!***" But that is really a very superficial answer. It is because she had thousands of factors in her motivation that prompted her to act how she acted, being that the soul is so complicating. Of course, it is true that he or she has *bechirah* (free will) to work on his/her *middos* and fix them. But he/she has many reasons why he/she acted the way she did.

If a couple would just know this, that self-awareness is what needs to come before fixing bad *middos*, and then **80% of marriages** would be solved. Of course, we need to work on our *middos* and correct them. But once they realize what the source of their problems are, it is much easier to understand each other. They are much closer to working on themselves once they become aware of the reasons that are motivating them to act in the way they are acting. It should be very clear that most of the problems in marriage can be traced to their root. When you know the root of what's causing the problems in the marriage, you can then work with them to solve them.

For example: a husband doesn't understand why his wife is yelling at him. He calls up the marriage counselor, "My wife is yelling at me!!" Imagine if a person is handed a *Gemara* on page 90 of the tractate, and the middle of the page is shown to him, and he is asked, "What does it say here?" He has no idea, because he didn't see what came before it. You can't start from the middle. So too, if the wife is yelling at him, he has to discern what caused her to yell at him in the first place.

### *See The Bigger Picture*

Sometimes people ask me, "I just have a short question about something..." But there is really no such thing as a short question. Every small question is really part of a bigger question, because every

matter in life is complex, like a *sugya* of *Gemara*. Every detail that one wants to know about is really part of a bigger picture.

For example, if a 35 year-old comes to me and asks a question about a particular detail, there is an entire 35 years that are really included in his question – which is half of a person’s life - just, he doesn’t realize it. There’s always a lot more going on.

There are always many motivations in one act. One needs to think into all the possible motivations of why he acts the way he does and why she acts the way she does, and then he/she can begin to understand himself and the other. But you can’t understand the other if you don’t first try this with yourself.<sup>155</sup> So when people have “Shalom Bayis” problems (marital difficulties), it’s not really a “Shalom Bayis problem” as it’s generically called, but it is rather a problem that begins with a lack of understanding towards oneself. When a person is having difficulties in his marriage, it’s really because he doesn’t understand himself well, and as a result, he doesn’t know how to navigate the difficulties with his spouse.

Let’s say a boy in *shidduchim* hears about a girl that she has good *middos*, she’s kind, etc. They say about the boy, “He knows how to learn, he is diligent in his learning, he has a lot of *Yiras Shomayim*.” These are all general descriptions which do not really say much. If one has a poor recognition towards his own self, he does not know himself any better than what people are saying about him – which are just generic descriptions. People do not really know who you are, other than what time you get up in the morning for *Shacharis*, and if you’re basically regarded as a “good guy” and that you know how to learn. This is all a very shallow sense of self-recognition. Often a person’s true personality is very hidden from his awareness, and he relies on what others are saying about him, while in reality, they don’t know him much better than how much he knows himself (and he doesn’t know himself that well).

There’s a popular phrase, “The older you get, the more you mature”. I saw a sefer that gives advice for *shidduchim*, and one of the things it said there was, “If you want a good *shidduch*, find out if the girl is emotionally healthy or not.” Does a person think he’s so mature and experienced from life that he knows how to find about this? If one doesn’t know his own self before he gets married – and he probably doesn’t – how is he supposed to do any research on the girl and assume that he knows all about her??

This is the deep fundamental issue behind all marital issues and on many issues of life: a person usually lacks self-awareness of himself. This is an issue that comes way before any of the other issues and it is the deep source of most issues. When it goes unnoticed, a person will just take life as it comes, and he doesn’t understand why he’s having so many problems in life and in his marriage.

### *Leaving Superficial Understanding*

We understand that if someone doesn’t learn Torah and he wants to fulfill it, the first thing he must do is learn Torah. So too, if a person wants to know how to act correctly in life, he needs to learn about his soul and recognize himself.

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*155 During the shiur, the Rov explained that one can get to know himself by being aware of the four elements of the soul. He must discover what his most dominant element is, then what is second to most dominant, third to most dominant, and fourth to most dominant. Then he can see that all his failures in life are stemming from the element that is most extreme by him (there is always one element that is out of balance). Then he can begin to do the same with understanding his wife’s soul. For more details, learn Getting To Know Your Soul.*

The less a person is used to thinking, the harder of a time he will have with this. We can't totally change a person over. But one thing we can do is the following. We can realize that we complicating. We are not simple to understand. Don't ever think that you are simple.

But when a person is superficial, he thinks that he knows himself, because to him, everything in life is "simple", nothing is hard to understand, according to his perspective. This is what a person needs to get rid of. We must all come to understand that we are complicating, and therefore, we must get to know ourselves, our motivations.

For example, nothing you hear is simple. A superficial person thinks he understands everything and that he's hearing simple words, while in reality the words can contain much more depth than what he's aware of.

Once I met someone who said to me, "I know how to give a *mussar shmuess* just like Reb Chatzkel Levenstein zt"<sup>156</sup> could. I can say the same exact things he said." This person thinks he knows himself, and he thinks that he can speak just as powerfully as the great Reb Chatzkel. But he's fooling himself. Not only is there a difference between him and Reb Chatzkel in essence, but even the material that he says is different, because it doesn't even compare to how Reb Chatzkel spoke. Why? Because Reb Chatzkel spoke from a much more inner place in himself than this person can, and therefore, even if the material is the same, it's not the same *shmuess* that Reb Chatzkel gave. It's a whole different grasp on reality, even though the same words are being said.

To illustrate further, there are people who think that their Rav gives them the same *derasha* every *Shabbos HaGadol*. "He said the same thing again this year", he thinks. He didn't realize that there were new things said this time, because he thinks everything is simple and therefore he thinks he knows everything already.

"I've heard it before", a person thinks. "I know it already." A person thinks he knows what "*yirah*" is, he knows what "*ahavah*" is, what "*rachamim*" is...

There's no way to know about these things unless a person has learned *sefarim* about them for a few years. You can't know these things simply on your own. They have to be studied, thought about, and analyzed.

When a person thinks he knows himself pretty well even though he has never analyzed his personality, he will never be prepared to work on himself. But if one begins to understand himself, he has hope in trying to work on himself and improving.

The *Mesillas Yescharim* says that everything in his sefer is well-known, so why is he writing it? It is because a wise person understands that he can see new depth in the same well-known facts he always hears about. Similarly, Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt"<sup>l</sup> said that his teacher, the Alter of Kelm, taught how even things which appear simple are really very deep; he showed how depth can be contained in the most simple things.

### *The Basis*

People who are not successful in *Avodas Hashem*, usually, are not far from the Creator; they are far from themselves.

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<sup>156</sup> *Mashgiach of Yeshivas Ponovezh from 1940's to 1970's*

There is no home which doesn't have problems in it. If there is a perfect home that's scot-free from any issues, that would be a miracle! Of course there are going to be problems in a home. Something you are involved in for so many years and decades cannot be problem-free. It's not possible for a couple to live peacefully for so many years if they do not recognize each other - there will *for sure* be problems.

But if one knows how to learn about himself and he becomes self-aware, he can then begin to learn about the soul of his wife and understand her. Then when he has children, he should then try to learn about his children's personalities and understand their souls well.

Surely one needs to be guided in how one can understand himself, his wife, and his children. But the basis is for one to become aware of this in the first place.

### *In Conclusion*

The words here are based on the words of our wise Sages, and they are actually simple ideas.

In previous generations, most people also had the same issues of marriage like we have today, but they were able to deal with it easily. One reason for this is because they had more *temimus* (earnestness). But it is also because they worked hard at understanding themselves. In today's times, many marriages are failing because people are not willing to work hard at understanding themselves; they want the problems to go away, so they go for counseling, but they never really learn to get along with each other. They just learn various tactics that save the marriage, without all the hard inner work that should be involved.

If one wants to have a successful marriage, he must learn about himself and understand himself, and then he needs to come to understand his wife, and then his children, after that. Only in this way can one ever hope to have a harmonious home.

The words in the coming chapters will expand upon this idea, so if one does not implement the words of this chapter, the coming chapters will not be effective. Everything that is to come is based on this chapter. In order to solve problems, we need to understand the reality behind them, and if not, we can't solve the problems.

May Hashem give us the *siyata d'shamaya* to merit a great light to our souls.

*Getting To Know Your Family: Chapter Four***3.4 | Sensitivity and Understanding In The Home***Using Our Good Middos And Our Bad Middos*

Let us continue, with the help of Hashem, with what we have begun to discuss.

Building a Jewish home takes two people – the husband and the wife. A person has to recognize himself well, and this is the root of building the home. One cannot build upon that which he does not recognize, thus, the need for self-knowledge is the basis of building the successful Jewish home.

Let us go further with this discussion on self-awareness as it pertains to the home situation.

A person is composed of all kinds of *middos* (character traits). We each possess certain good *middos*, as well as certain bad *middos*. It is not only our good *middos* which help us reach character perfection – even our bad *middos* can aid us in reaching perfection.

In order to ascend spiritually, a person needs to ascend the “ladder of growth”, the “*sulam mutzav artzah, v’rosho magia hashomaimah*” – “the ladder which is footed on the earth, and its head reaches the heavens. Not only do we need to climb towards Heaven – which represents our good *middos* – but we must also first go through “the ladder footed on earth”, which represents our bad *middos*, our lower aspects of ourselves. So both our good *middos* and bad *middos* thus attribute to our growth.

Our worst personal *middah* is what brings us down the most from reaching our plateau. Our best *middah* is the *middah* in us that keeps us going and is the best way to reach the top of the ladder.

Our main *avodah* (mission) on this world is *tikkun hamiddos* – to perfect our character.<sup>157</sup> There are actually two parts to this. The well-known part to this is the fact that we have to mainly fix our worst *middah*. But what isn’t as known is that we also have to make use of our best *middah*, and this is also part of the process of working with our *middos*.

*Our Greatest Virtues Give Us Vitality*

We need to each recognize what our best *middah* is and work to utilize it in our life, so that we will get the most out of our potential. Our best *middah* gives us *chiyus* (vitality) - we derive a sense of vitality from our strongest point, and it enables us to keep on going through life.

Where do we get vitality (*chiyus*) from in our life? In the general sense, we get vitality out of our Torah learning, *davening*, and doing the *mitzvos*. This is true, and we all need this in order to get out *chiyus*. But where does each of us get vitality from on a personal level?

Although our *neshamah* (Divine soul) is the root of our existence, it is usually not revealed, so most people are not getting a sense of vitality from knowing that they are a *neshamah*.

What makes us feel more alive? Not everyone knows the answer to this vital question. There are those who are more superficial and get their vitality from what they know that society wants from

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<sup>157</sup> As the Vilna Gaon writes in Mishlei, “If a person doesn’t break his middos, what is the point of his life?”

them...or a person gets his vitality from what he knows his *chavrusa* wants... and even more superficial is those who get vitality from wanting certain goals in life that will give them more honor.

People are mainly getting their sense of vitality in life from any of the above factors, and are often not getting it from what they really should be getting vitality from.

Each of us receives vitality from our best *middah*. Anyone who lives an internal kind of life gets a life-giving energy from the character trait that he is best at. We all possess a certain quality that is already very refined, and one needs to discover what it is and then derive *chiyus* from it. If someone is getting *chiyus* from points in his life other than his best point, his *chiyus* will be very limited.

Many people gain vitality from the fact that they have aspirations to work on their bad *middos*, but they do not recognize the need to derive vitality from their best *middah*. When people want to feel more alive, either they gain this feeling from their general sense of motivation towards self-improvement. But this is not either enough. The person is getting vitality from his weak points, which do not give *chiyus*.

If he is working to improve himself and he is reading *sefarim* on how he can improve, he is still not getting *chiyus* from who he really is. He is getting *chiyus* from who he would like to be, not from who he is right now. This is a *chiyus* coming from a negative source, so it will not be a life-giving source of vitality.

As long as a person hasn't yet figured out his best point and his weakest point, he hasn't yet learned how to derive *chiyus* from his best point, and that means that he hasn't even started to recognize himself. He might know about the soul and he might recognize parts of it, but he doesn't recognize his own self; he has never begun. After having basic self-recognition a person can use his *daas* (mental abilities) to give inner order to his soul and improve, but without the basic self-recognition, he will never be able to start improving himself.

So every person has to figure out his best point and his worst point. Rav Chaim Vital describes the four root elements of the soul<sup>158</sup>. Each person should study those words and try to discern what his most dominant element is.<sup>159</sup>

### *Our Personal Aspirations In Our Home*

In the home, we have two kinds of desires that we would like from our home. We have desires for good, and desires that are unholy. Our Sages said that "There is nothing higher than *oneg* (healthy pleasure) and there is nothing lower than *nega* (faulty pleasure)". Man yearns for *oneg*, for pleasure, but he must seek true *oneg*, not *nega*. If he searches for true *oneg*, he avoids *nega*.

A person has a deeply rooted desire, an *oneg*, that his main weakness should not bring him down and that instead his best point should dominate and enable him to succeed.

If one isn't sure about his best point and his weakest point, he doesn't know what he wants. If we ask him what he wants and he has no personal aspirations in life, then he will say he wants a good home, a *bayis neeman b'Yisrael* (faithful Jewish home), perhaps he wants Torah in his life along with *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven) and *middos tovos* (good character traits)...which are all very general terms that don't tell us much.

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158 In the beginning of *sefer Shaarei Kedushah*

159 Refer to "Getting To Know Your Soul"

But upon reflection, one can discover that we get married with personal aspirations as well. We have an innermost desire is that we not be reminded of our weakest point. We don't want others to remind us of our weakness, because it is hurtful to us. It reminds us how weak we are. Each person has different things that bother him. This is why one thing will deeply bother one kind of person, while to another person it will be tolerable. This is because each person has something else that bothers him greatly, and it is unique with each person.

In addition, we all want our potential to be utilized, and we see marriage as a way to fulfill our potential. We reach our best through using our best point. When we don't use our best point, we suffer inside ourselves.

So there are two points involved: (1) We don't like to be reminded of our greatest weakness. (2) We want to use our best ability, which will utilize our potential.

These two factors are how we build our home and succeed in it.

### *Sensitivity In The Home*

Let's take these ideas further.

One has to know his wife's greatest virtue and he must make sure remind her about it often; and he must also know her weakest point, the thing that bothers her the most, and that part he should make sure never to remind her of.

Obviously, if a person does not really know his wife well, he won't be able to work on this point. But if one is working to understand his wife – either on his own, or together with her - he must know these two points: to know her best point and to know her most sensitive point.

Her best point is what she always will need to hear about, while her most sensitive point is the point that she does not like to be reminded of. If he brings up a point that she is sensitive to, even if he brings it up softly, she will be deeply hurt. She might suddenly start crying. The husband will wonder, "What did I do? I'm not so sensitive like this. How was I supposed to know it would hurt you? I wasn't trying to insult you."

But it's really because he is still unclear of what her sensitive points are, and that's why he didn't think there would be anything wrong with bringing up those points.

The same is true when it comes to all others we deal with: everyone has points that they don't like to be reminded of. We can relate to this very well from the following examples. If someone is childless, don't speak to him about children. It is insensitive to him. If you're speaking with a widow, don't speak about married life. (When you don't know who you are talking to, you don't know his/her sensitive areas, you might end up finding out the hard way).

It doesn't matter if it is something that bothers you or not. As long as you see that something bothers her, don't remind her of it. When you are clear what bothers her, it is easier to avoid insulting her. As long as a person has not figured out the most sensitive point of his wife, he hasn't got to the root of what bothers her, and then he doesn't understand why she is always feeling hurt by him. He will then conclude, erroneously, that his wife is being overly sensitive and unreasonable.

### *Emphasize Her Positive Points*

That is all one side of the coin. Now let's explain the other side of the coin.

A husband must wonder, "Do I really want my wife to have it good?"

Everyone will immediately answer, "Yes", but this can still be a superficial response. In order to really want your wife to have it good, you need to give her the feeling of what she is good about.

Imagine if a person wants to bestow good upon another so he buys his friend a package of fish, because he likes fish. So too, a husband might think that being nice to his wife means to buy her favorite kind of food for every Shabbos...

He has to get to the roots of her emotional needs. He must know what her main good point is and what kinds of words will make her happier when she hears about them. The point is not to merely "compliment" her superficially. He needs to tell her words that will motivate her to utilize her potential. If you tell her to try to utilize her potential in something she is weak in, you have not accomplished anything, and you have only defeated the purpose.

So if you are clear in what her best point is, and you show her how to utilize her potential through speaking to her about her best point, you are bringing out the best in her.

How to do it, exactly, will require some thinking on your own part. Each person in his home will have different kinds of advice to carry it out. But the basic outline has been said.

Each of the spouses wants to feel that he/she is equal to his/her spouse, that he/she is important, valued, and successful. If someone compliments your wife about a quality she doesn't possess, and she knows the truth – that she really does not have that quality - what does she feel like? She doesn't feel too great about herself. But if the husband clearly recognizes her best point and he praises her for it, and not only that, but he explains to her how she can further utilize her already existing potential, he gives her the ability to actualize her talents and qualities, bringing out her best.

### *How To React To Insults*

Now let's return to discussing oneself. Each person has his greatest virtue as well as his greatest weakness. Until now we dealt with noticing your wife's greatest virtue and weakness, and now we will deal with how this can be used with oneself.

One kind of person is aware of his weaknesses, but he knows that if he were to be reminded of it by others, he would not be that insulted. But another kind of person is sensitive, and he will feel pained if his weaknesses are brought up. What will happen when his wife unintentionally insults him in that area? We are not speaking of intentional antagonizing. We are speaking of a case where the wife accidentally insults him. What should he do to deal with this?

He might voice his anger at her, and she will not know why he got so angry; in the best situation, she will realize ten minutes later what she did wrong, and she will make sure never to repeat what she did again, but deep down, she thinks that her husband is overly sensitive. She has no idea what he wants from her, so she concludes that her husband is overly sensitive, and she will lose respect for him. So it's immature and unwise to get angry with her when she wrongs you.

What does a more mature person do? He will have a calm conversation with her and explain to her that he does not like to be reminded of certain things. He can ask of her, gently, not to bring up certain

topics or say certain words to him, because he is sensitive to those areas. He should not demand it of her, but he can explain to her calmly that he is sensitive to a particular area, and that he knows that she wants the best for him, and that that is why he is asking of her to be careful in this area. She will then understand that she needs to be careful not to slight him in those areas, in a way that doesn't cause her to lose respect for her husband.

### *Voicing Your Annoyance: What Is The Proper Way?*

Once a newlywed husband told me that his marriage is difficult. He said to me that he made a deal with his wife that each of them will tell each other at the end of the day what bothers them about the other. In this way, they were planning to improve on what needed to be fixed, by finding out from the other exactly what bothers the other.

Any sensible person can all understand that such a method of communication is destructive to marriage.

He said to me, "Believe me, I want my wife to have it good. That's why I tell her all the things she's doing that bothers me, and she says back to me all the things I'm doing that bother her, and that's how we can get along and run our marriage smoothly."

A wonderful idea, no? [Not quite.] We must understand one thing. There are many things we can request of our spouse and family, but the question is, if they will acquiesce. We have to choose what we will be picky about, and we cannot be picky about everything. When a person makes a request from his spouse, it should only be about something that he will be deeply bothered by if his request isn't honored. The wife, too, can make requests that her sensitivities not be stepped on.

But what happens often? Many people don't know what they are particular to and what they aren't particular to, so they make requests of their spouse in the form of demands: "You must do this." The spouse gets the impression that she must do so because she is being told, and not because the husband is sensitive to those areas.

Since every person is bothered by certain things, it is those areas which he is allowed to request that his requests be honored. But it is usually only one thing. If a person gets upset over every little thing that bothers him, it means he does not know what really bothers him the most, and he will make many requests and demands of his home.

So a person has to find out what bothers him the most and ask of his spouse to be careful in that area, and it should not be expressed as a demand. If each of them would make sure not to step on each other's main sensitive areas, most of the difficulties between them would not materialize in the first place. Each person has to find out what mainly bothers him, and it should be one thing alone; and then request from the spouse to be careful in that area.

To illustrate the idea, if a person is sick and he is laid up to rest in bed, it is reasonable of him to request that the family be kept quiet so he can sleep better. But it would be unreasonable of him to ask his family to be quiet every day, especially if he has many children. It is unrealistic. If he is sick, though, they will all understand that his request is reasonable, because they know that a sick person he needs some peace and rest.

So when it is clear that a certain area bothers him very much, he can request of his spouse to be careful in that area. The spouse will understand that she must be careful in that area, because he has made it clear that it bothers him. But if it hasn't been made clear to the spouse that a certain area is

very bothersome and hurtful to the other, then there is will be lots of clashes and misunderstandings between them.

What usually happens, though? A person is usually not clear about what bothers him the most, and then when his spouse hurts him in that area, she has no idea what she did, and the husband who was hurt feels that he has been deeply wounded, and he feels that his wife does not understand him at all if she could hurt him in that area. The wife will not know what her husband wants from her and why is he so upset at her, so she fights back to defend herself, and then the husband gets enraged at her lack of sensitivity, and then a fight ensues. It will become a vicious cycle back and forth between them, and the results will be disastrous.

### *Requests Should Emanate From Love*

Let's go back to the root of the matter. We have said that each of the spouses needs to be clear in their strongest area and weakest area, both towards themselves and towards the other. But we must emphasize the following point as well.

When making requests of each other, such as "Do this," and "Do that" (and some say this in a nicer tone of voice), often the requests just remain as nothing but superficial requests. But there is a whole different mindset one can have as he makes a request of his family members.

Let's say a father is trying to put his kids to sleep. The older children are coming home from school at about 10 P.M., while the younger kids are running around and laughing and playing, and they need to be put to sleep. How does the father put them to bed? One way he does it is by roaring at them like a fearsome lion, which will surely scare them all into bed. Or, he tells his child, "If you go to sleep on time for three days, I will give you a treat." There are all kinds of advice that exist. Let's get to the root of this, though.

When a father asks his children to go to sleep, what does the child think? The child is aware that his parents want him to go to bed, but he doesn't feel like doing that. He would rather play, listen to music, read, etc. He feels, "My parents want me to go to bed, but I don't want to."

But if the father would tell the child something like this: "I love you, and I want the best for you. It will be good for you if you go to sleep on time. You know it's good for you because if you don't, you will be tired tomorrow morning when you wake up. So it is for your good that I want you to go to sleep. I want you to go to sleep because I love you and I want you to have it good" – then everything would look different. The child gets the message and he does not see the requests being made of him as just requests, but as expressions of love towards him.

In other words, the child should not be hearing, "I want you to go bed." The message the child needs to hear is, "I want you to have it good." And when he hears that message, he will understand on his own that his father's desire that he go to sleep is being done for his own good, and out of the father's love and concern for him.

Of course, we do not do everything for our children out of love. There are many motivations included in what we do for them, and love can be in the equation. However, our main motivation is that we always want the best for our children. But the child has to get the right message in requests that are made of him. If he hears that his father loves him and wants what is best for him, he feels the words of what his father is saying, and then everything will look different.

Now let's return to discussing how we make requests from a spouse. When you ask a request of a spouse, how are you asking it? "Do this", "do that", "bring this", "buy this"? It can look totally different than just superficial requests. You can make sure to lace your requests with love. You can say something like, "Please do this for me, because I know you love me and you want what is best for me." It's a whole different request, and it becomes an expression of your love.

The point is that all the requests you make of your family members needs to be about increasing the love. When there is something that is hard for you to do, and you need your wife to do it or a child to do it, and you make the request from them that it be done, the request can either be made superficially and with just getting your needs fulfilled...or it can be laced with love. You can say something like, "Do this for me because I love you, and if you do this I will love you even more."

Here is another example. When a wife asks her husband for money, like if she needs to go shopping in the supermarket, what is the reason that he should give her money?

Is it because he wrote in the *Kesubah* that he will support and feed her? Is it so that if her husband will refuse, she will take him to *Beis Din* and make sure she gets the money (after the *get*)? What does she want money from? It is because she wants it to be good for both of them, or for the children, if she would have the money to go shopping with. So the husband should give her the money with that realization, that the request being made of him is to further the love between them, so that the entire household will ultimately have it better.

Thus, the idea is that all requests you make in your home should be laced with a desire to increase your love. That should be the underlying motivation in all of your requests from the household.

If a father asks his child to help him take down the *sukkah*, what is his motivation? Is it because if not, then the father will punish him? If that is his mainly his motivation, I pity that child. His father happens to be bigger and stronger than his child, so the father thinks that he can therefore control this little person that happens to be his child, and make him do whatever he wants.

What is the reason that the father should request anything of his child? What message does he need to make sure that his child is aware of when his child helps him?

Imagine if our child would come here and ask us, "Why should I do something for you when you request something from me?" what would we answer him? We might wish to spank him and call him a *mechutzaf*, a brazen child, for asking such a question. Or, we might think he is obligated to help us because of the *mitzvah* of honoring parents. Another father would say, "Because he will get rewarded if he respects his father."

After all is said and done and we finish complaining that this child is being brazen, in the end of the day, what is the reason that our child should honor his requests? There can be many reasons, but what should be our main underlying motivation?

It should really be, "Do as I am asking, because you love your father, or your mother, or your brother, or your sister." When a child does what we ask of him, he should be getting the message that he is doing so out of love for his parents or siblings. Although he must certainly do it because there is a *mitzvah* of honoring parents, the motivation we need to develop in him is to carry out our requests out of love for us, or for love of our spouse, or for love of his/her siblings. (A child will understand how to do things out of love.)

Let's say I come home and bring home donuts for Chanukah. What do I need to tell my children? "Come, take and make a *beracha*?" That is not nearly enough. They won't be able to feel that I love them yet. I must tell them, "I love you. I bought this because I love you."

If you don't express the love, there will be no love felt in the home. The children might know intellectually that their parents love them, but they won't feel it. When children don't feel their parents' love, when they get older, they claim that their parents don't love them. This is very common nowadays. Why does this happen? It is because although the parents loved the children, they did not openly reveal it. The love was not revealed and expressed, so it was not felt in the home.

Why doesn't the child get the message that their father obviously loves them, since he gives them so much? It is because without hearing a verbal expression of love from their father, the children do not see it as their father giving them what they want. They don't register that the "father" is giving them something – instead, they will look at what they get from their father as rather something that fell from Heaven. This is what happens when the father does not verbally express his love to them when he gives them things.

The words here must become the "*neshamah*" (Divine essence) of the home – not a concealed *neshamah*, but a revealed *neshamah*!

### *Chores and Responsibilities In The Home*

The chores that are done in the house are partially done because it is our responsibility, and partially from our love. Many chores that the children do in the home feel forced upon them. In many homes, there is a "forced" atmosphere going on, and it becomes the backbone in the home.

The mother might be doing laundry not out of love for the children, but because she has no choice. She puts the clothing to dry because she has no choice. She cooks because she has no choice. She gets up in the morning and does her various chores because she feels like she has no choice! When does she feel ever get to feel any revelation of love from her husband? When the husband sometimes buys her something she likes in the store. Then, she feels loved.

Why does all of this happen?? How does the situation in the home become like this?

It is really a sign of the deeper problem on the husband's part. The husband does not know how to express love properly to his family, because he really has the same problem in his relationship with Hashem and towards other people. When a person doesn't try to infuse love into his actions for other people, he acts kind to others only out of a sense of obligation, or because he doesn't want to get punished in the Next World, or because it will be unpleasant for him if he doesn't act nice to others, etc. He is not being motivated by love.

When he goes on to make requests of his family members, the requests are met with a bit of disgust. The family feels like saying to him, "Ah, now you are requesting things from us too?" They don't feel his love in the first place, and then they hear that he is making requests of them, and they don't feel like doing it for him. If they fulfill his requests, they do so out of a sense of being forced, and not from love.

### *'Ahavah' In The 'Chessed'*

In the same vein, there is a lot of *chessed* (acts of kindness) in the world today, but how much *ahavah* (love) is in the world? It is rare to find any *ahavah* in all the *chessed* that is going on.

It's scary. The whole essence of *chessed* is *ahavah*, but even though there is so much *chessed*, there is little *ahavah* to be found, even though that is the whole point of *chessed*. How much *chessed* do all of us do every day, with our neighbors, with our spouse, with our children, with our *chavrusa*? We do

countless acts of *chessed*, but often the *ahavah* is missing from it, and we miss the boat of it all. A person can even have a big *gemach* (a *chessed* organization), but how much *ahavah* to others does he have...?

### *Putting Love Into Your Requests From Your Spouse and Children*

Let's get back to the point. What is the message that your family members need to hear? What is it that they must hear in your requests? If they hear love in your requests, if they know you are requesting things of them because they hear your love for them, they hear a whole different kind of request from you.

If I make a request of someone who doesn't love me, there would have to be a very good reason if he does me the favor. Either he will fulfill my request so that he can get rewarded, or for some other motive that will involve some gain for him. But there would have to be a very good reason, because if he doesn't love me, there is no natural reason why he would do it for me.

But even when you make a request from someone who loves you, the one whom you love has to hear the love in your request. He has to hear that you are asking it to increase your love towards him, and not because you simply need to get your needs fulfilled.

Surely a wife can love her husband even if her husband never makes requests of her; if so, why should he ask her for anything? It is because she needs to hear the love in his requests. If she just hears him making a request of her and she does not sense that he's asking it out of a desire to increase the love between them, she will feel forced to do it, and she will not do it for him out of love.

### *In Conclusion*

To summarize the idea: when you give things to your wife or your children, **do it because** this will bring more love into the home, and **express it verbally** as you do it for them. That should become your underlying motive in all that goes on in the home. And when you make requests of them as well, do it with the same intention. This is the perspective with which one should view his home with, and it enables the home to be successful.

May we merit from the Creator that our homes should attain *ahavah*, *achvah*, *shalom* and *reyus* (love, brotherliness, peace, and friendship).

*Getting To Know Your Family: Chapter Five**3.5 | Dealing With Differences**Get To Know Yourself and Your Spouse*

Previously, we discussed that one has to get to know both the virtues – as well as the weaknesses – of both himself and his spouse. He must know his strongest point and her strongest point, and his biggest weakness and her biggest weakness.

Every couple has some areas in which they are similar in, as well as areas in which they are different. There is a fair share in every home of differences between spouses, both in the amount of differences as well as in the magnitude of their differences.

Let's think about the following point: there is always one particular virtue which both the husband and wife excel at. And along with this, there is always one major weakness that they both possess – equally.

It is distressing to find out that your spouse has the same problem as you. It might seem comforting to know that someone else in the world has your weakness, but that would only be true if your spouse was the same as you. But if your spouse is very good at something you're not good at, you will feel like your place in the marriage is being taken away from you, and this is very uncomfortable.

It is clear that differences between spouses cause difficulty and tension between them. Their differences present a problem in bonding together, because it is hard to bond with someone who is very different from you.

Here is where many marriages run into problems. It is very hard to deal with a weakness in your spouse when your personality is very opposed to that weakness.

If a man feels good that he married a wife who does not have his weakness, he will find this situation to be helpful to him. But that's only if he got married in the hope of improving and thus he appreciates seeing how his spouse is better than him in certain areas.

But if he or she did not get married to complete his weaknesses, then it is very distressing for each of them to tolerate each other.

To give some examples, if he's very frugal with money and she has no concept of saving money, this will also be very bothersome to the husband. They go to the store and he gets change of 15 shekel. She wants to take the 15 shekel and buy something for the house that will give her a bit of peace of mind. He argues with her and tells her he'd rather buy a treat for one of the kids with the money....

Or, he's very neat, and she's more laid back when it comes to neatness. He can't stand it if a spill on the floor is not cleaned right away; in the home he grew up in, the floor was always sparkling clean, while she did not grow up that way. She feels, "My parents didn't clean the floor every time there was a spill, as long as it didn't look dirty. I won't either wipe the floor every time there's a spill."

These are not unusual scenarios in the home. There are many such examples; we can bring thousands of examples, in which their personalities and weaknesses clash with each other. The points which they are very different in are one of the main sources of tension in the home between husband and wife. When they don't know how they are similar and different from each other, first of all, they

are missing self-awareness of each other and do not know each other, but in addition, they will also clash.

But, every couple can find their common qualities that they share and use those common qualities to feel a connection to each other and thus bond with each other. One has to first take note of his strongest point and then it will be easier for him to deal with the weaknesses in his spouse, because he realizes that his strong point can be his spouse's greatest weakness; so why should she be at fault for this?

(However, it should be noted that even their good qualities can present a problem in the marriage. Sometimes the husband will want to prove to his wife that he's better and more successful than her in that good quality which they both possess. His ego won't allow him to accept that they're equally good at one area; he might want to show her that he's better than her even in the area which they are both good at.)

### *The Biggest Problem Is When We Don't Know The Root Of Our Problems*

A person's biggest weakness is the source of all his problems in life. The big weak spot in each person's life always seems to keep coming back, again and again, rearing its ugly head. It always manifests in a person's life as long as he is unaware of it.

Therefore, a person has to figure out what his biggest personal weakness in his life is, and then he will be able to become aware of what's causing all his problems.

When a person feels that his home is dysfunctional, it seems to be that his home simply contains many problems. But the truth is that there is always **one** underlying problem that is causing all the trouble! The root problem is: that each of us has a particular weak point, which keeps coming back again and again. It is always one major weak point in our personality that is responsible for all of our problems.

A very large problem in the home (I can't say most, but certainly it is not a small percentage) are because a person doesn't see the problem as it is, and he only sees the problem through how it appears to be. Really, the problem is that a person doesn't see the **root** of all his problems! That is the whole problem! A person tends to see all kinds of various "problems" in his life, without tracing them all back to the one single root which they are branching out of.

That is the entire problem: when a person doesn't see the **root** of all his problems. He has to get to the root of all the problems, and then everything else will fall into place.

When one discovers the root of the problems, he becomes clearer in how to deal with it. When one is aware and clear of his problems, will still have it hard, but at least he will be clear in how to deal with them. But without becoming aware of the root of problems, one cannot be clear, and it is much more difficult. So a large part of the 'problems' in our problems are when we don't see the root of the problem. Don't think about what's going on in the problem – see what caused it, what brought it about.

### *Running Away Vs. Dealing With It*

Now, how do we deal with the root of our problems when we discover it?

Before the wedding, if we ask any *chosson*: “Are you aware that your *kallah* is different than you? Will you be able to manage even though the two of you are a bit different?”

Every *chosson* will answer, “Yes. I know she’s different than me, but I’ll still manage.”

After the wedding, though, the *chosson* finds himself frustrated and bewildered with his wife’s differences! What changed? Didn’t he already know before the wedding that there would be differences?

The answer is something like, “I knew we were different, but I didn’t think we would be *that* different...!”

What a person should do is to know beforehand that there will be differences and that he will **deal** with them, as opposed to expecting that everything will work out. Most divorces taking place today in *Beis Din* are marriages in which they never learned how to deal with the others’ differences. (There are some extreme cases as well besides for this, but usually, it is for this reason).

Without being able to deal with differences, a spouse might even come to *understand* his spouse, but it won’t be enough. He has to actually *deal* with the differences, and it is not enough to merely understand the other’s personality.

Otherwise, a newlywed contemplates divorce, in the hope of seeking a new spouse who will be better. This is usually because the person has no idea about what people are. He doesn’t know that people are complicating, and that we all have differences. He thinks that he married “the wrong one”; he thinks that others merited to marry their real spouse, while he is stuck in *Gehinnom* with the woman he married, so he would like to get out of the marriage.

*Baruch Hashem*, though, we all want to be married only once. Therefore, we must learn how to deal with the differences when they come up. Every time a problem comes up in our marriage, we are learning a new detail about our spouse we never knew about; we are learning more.

Without this awareness, a person regrets he got married and that perhaps he made the wrong choice. If anyone knew when they were getting married about what it would really entail, maybe everyone in the wedding hall would be dancing except for the *chosson* and *kallah* (Not because marriage is a sad thing, but because it’s complicating).

Life is complex. The souls of people are complex. As much as one comes to know himself, there is always more to know. Everything in life is complex and multi-faceted; marriage as well is complex. It is a complex combination of both the husband’s best points and weakest points, as well as the wife’s best points and weakest points.

### *Disappointed Newlyweds*

When a newlywed husband begins to notice a difference between him and his wife that is glaring, he might become so disillusioned and feel, “We are just not for each other.” There are cases of newlyweds who want to get divorced right after the wedding for this reason. They say: “We are just not for each other.” In fact, even people married many years with children contemplate divorce like this.

This really stems from a deeper problem in the person. When a person can’t deal with differences between himself and his wife, it’s really because he never learned how to deal with difficulty in his own life before marriage. It is a sign that he has spent his whole life running away from having to deal with

problems, and that is how he wants his life to be like. His mentality always was, “When there is a problem that I can’t deal with, I run away from it.”

Let’s say a newlywed husband is disappointed with the girl he married, and he’s immediately contemplating divorce, feeling that he’s right, that the woman whom he married is just impossible to deal with. He should ask himself: “Did I ever, for even once in my life, solve my issues I had with any of my own friends...?”

When a person is disappointed with his spouse, he should know that divorce and remarrying to a new spouse will *not* solve his issue. Those who do get divorced are apt to be thinking, “This time I’ll be smart. I will only seek to marry a woman who is very deep and intellectual, unlike my ex-wife, who was not a very smart person.”

This is not the solution. The solution is that the person has to **change his perspective on life**. The new change of perspective is: “When I have a problem, I will learn how to **deal** with it, instead of running away from it.”

### *Dealing With Disappointment*

When a person is in *shidduchim* (dating), he does research as best as he can. He thinks he knows his future spouse well. After the wedding, the spouses find things about each other that they never could have imagined.

We see from this that we cannot rely on even the best research we make. (This is how we must view others as well). *Shidduchim* is all like one big *leitzanus* (mockery). All of the research is painting a picture that does not exist.

You can’t ask a three year old child about his mother, not because he loves her so he would lie, but because he doesn’t understand; so too, when you do your research on a boy or girl and you call his/her friends, none of these friends have any idea what their friend is really like. All you can find about a boy is: what time he gets up in the morning, and if he says *Kerias Shema* according to the *Magen Avraham’s zman* or the *Gra’s zman*. There is no research in *shidduchim* that reveals anything about the person.

In order to know a person, you need to know someone who understands the person, and it is rare to find anyone who understands anyone else.

Rather, the approach we need to have is that we will prepare ourselves to deal with the inevitable differences that we will find in our spouse – *all* of them. Know that whoever you meet is complicating - being that we are all complicating.

When a couple gets married, they often find themselves in a quandary, never having realized that the other would be so different. They see things in each other they never would have imagined – both good and bad. They must be prepared to deal with whatever they will discover in each other.

But when a person is superficial, he says, “No. This *shidduch* is not for me.”

Let me tell you a story. Last week there was a couple in my house with six children – and they are separated. They were both in my apartment, but they kept a distance from each other.

I asked him, “Where are you going for Shabbos?” He said, “I’ll be home.”

I asked him, “And where will she [his wife] be for Shabbos?” He said, “Also home.”

I asked him, “When is the *get* (divorce)?” He said, “Next week.”

*Beis Din* had already told them that they shouldn’t sleep in the same home anymore, because he had decided to get divorced. But he divorced simply because he decided that “she’s not for him” anymore!

This is an example of a person who doesn’t understand, that just because the spouse is different, it doesn’t mean that she is “not for him.” Hashem gave this person a *zivug* (a destined spouse), He gave him six children with her, they had lived together all those years, but one day he decided that they are just not for each other anymore!

I asked him after the divorce how he is doing. He said, “I’m doing great. I’m sleeping at night like a baby. I get up feeling good about myself. Everything is great.” He continued on his life like usual.

I don’t know the other details involved in his story, but I realized that it was simply because he didn’t want to deal with his problems, and that’s why he decided that “she is not for him” anymore.

### *Running Away Vs. Dealing With It*

People are complicating. We change over time. You were not the same person you were 20 years ago. Without this basic mature awareness, a person might seek a new wife, hoping that the new wife will be better.

So the problem is that many people do not know how to deal with problems, and they run away rather than deal with it. It is because people do not understand anything about people. The husband doesn’t know a thing about the woman in front of him, and that’s why he might think of divorcing her.

If it is so hard to understand ourselves, how much harder is it to understand others. You keep learning more things about your spouse as the years go on. Do you look at marriage in the same way you looked at it when you got married? Hopefully, you realize it’s different now. Both of you are more mature than when you first got married. Each person matures in different ways, but a couple married 20 years has a different outlook on their marriage because they have matured.

How many husbands divorced and later they realized they made a mistake! Sometimes it was because they married a second wife and realize that that the first wife was better. But in other cases, he doesn’t even remarry, and as time goes on, he simply becomes more mature and he realizes how much he regrets his divorce. He wishes he could go back in time and act differently in his marriage, with what he knows now.

The first step people do when they run into marital problems is that they go for counseling, but really the first reaction should be to look deeply at oneself and realize that both he and his wife are complicating. Any difficulty in marriage is first solved when we accept that we must deal with all difficulties. (This is besides for having *emunah*; I am speaking of a more basic approach that does not require high spiritual levels). The key lies in being prepared to deal with a problem. Sometimes there is a solution and sometimes there is no solution to a problem. So what we need is to be able to deal a problem, and not run away.

### *Accepting Others Who Are Different*

When a couple notices glaring differences in each other, they should each be prepared to accept that another lives and thinks and feels differently.

We must begin to change our mindset. Others live differently than you. It might seem at first glance like the other has “bad *middos*.” But it is upon you to realize and accept that others live differently than they do. You will also notice that others whom you know are also different than you and are built differently than you. Instead of trying to fix others, try to understand them.

The point here is not to learn how to accept suffering with love. Rather, it is to simply accept that other people are different than you. The root of the solution to marital problems (and in life) is to look deeply into what’s going on.

Let’s sharpen this point. It is nature for a person to think he is right and that others are wrong. But this mentality won’t let a person accept others. There are also other kinds of Jews than us who have different *minhagim*, and it can happen that certain *minhagim* (customs) seem strange to us. But we must learn to accept that others live differently than we do. Look at your spouse as being different than you, not as someone who has bad *middos*.

A person with this inner perspective realizes that each soul is unique and has different mannerisms. A person at first has a hard time accepting this. But when one reaches the acceptance, he begins a new kind of life, a new perspective towards life. This makes it much easier to get along with a spouse.

As long as a person cannot accept that others are different, he will look for advice, but he still remains with the root of the problems, because he has not learned how to deal with challenges. How to do this practically is already the second step. The first step is to be aware – and accept – that they are different. If a couple would have this awareness, much of their problems would never start.

People like to look for practical advice for every problem, but most solutions are not solved with these pieces of advices. Most solutions lie in **changing our perspective**. This does not mean to hear an interesting interpretation or twist. It means that most problems stem from *Hilchos De’os* (knowledge about the wisdom of life). The solutions to our problems in life are contained in our *de’os* - in how we view life – and not in various actions to do.

### *In Conclusion*

I realize that the words here are not of use to many people; this is especially apparent from the fact that you argued with me very strongly as I gave this *shiur*.

But the main point which you can take out from it is that you can’t depend on tips to save your marriage. Life cannot be built on tips that we here about what to do. Our life is built on changing our perspective, to go through an inward change. Without a change of perspective, all the advice and tips don’t help.

Of course, you also need to practically change your actions so that you can see improvement, but that is only a smaller part of the solution. The major part of the solution is always to change your perspective.

I hope that you listened a little to these words. My hope here is that those who are *bnei Torah* here, who exert themselves in Torah study, realize that the solutions to our problem lie in knowing Torah and *de’os*, and not in searching for mere ‘tips of advice’.

*Getting To Know Your Family: Chapter Six**3.6 | The Partnership of Marriage**“Bone of My Bones, Flesh of My Flesh”*

*Chazal* state, “There are three partners in man: His father, his mother, and Hashem.”<sup>160</sup> *Chazal* learn this from the fact that Adam said about his wife, Chavah, “*She is the bone of my bones, and the flesh of my flesh.*” Through the unity of a husband and wife, a partnership is formed in the birth of the child – they are partners with Hashem, Who is creating the child. From this statement of *Chazal*, we learn that husband and wife are a partnership.

There are two kinds of partnership that they can have – either they are “*bone of my bone*” to each other, or they are “*flesh of my flesh*” to each other. The “*bone of my bone*” implies that they are truly connected, while “*flesh of my flesh*” implies that they have a superficial kind of partnership, in that they merely share a physical relationship.

The ideal partnership which husband and wife need to reach with other is the level of “*bone of my bone*” – to become truly connected with each other, and not just to have a superficial kind of connection with each other and simply be physical “partners” in creating the child. Their partnership must extend beyond the physical, beyond the “*flesh of my flesh*” level.

*Becoming Partners*

We know what husband and wife must “not” do – they must not abandon each other. But what must they “do” for each other? They must become **partners**. Every husband and wife must realize how they are partners - to be working together towards a worthy goal.

What is this ‘partnership’ in marriage? Does it mean for a husband to include his wife in what he’s learning about in Koleh? It does not mean to include her in everything. She should live her life as it is, and he should live his life as it is. They cannot be partners in every area of life. Instead, they must have one point in their life in which they are partners in together.

*Clarifying Your Partnership*

If we ask a husband married for a few years, “How are you partners with your wife?” what is the answer? Is it the fact that they raise children and live together in the same home? That is a very superficial answer. You lived with your roommates too in yeshivah and did stuff together. So what exactly is the partnership between husband and wife?

If it is not defined, the partnership can fluctuate, and sometimes there will be less partnership, and sometimes they will have more partnership; either of these situations will be detrimental. Let’s explain what we mean.

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160 *Niddah 30a*

### *The Key To A Successful Marriage: Finding The Partnership*

Many times couples come for counseling, full of complaints on each other. (Before he gives her the *get*, which is called “*sefer kerisos*”, he has *Baruch Hashem* written a full *sefer* of complaints against her). But if they would just know of their partnership and be clear in how they are partners, most of those complaints would fall away; they wouldn't be considered ‘problems’.

If they are clear in how they are partners, and they still have complaints, they have valid complaints. But if they are not clear in their partnership to begin with, then every little issue that comes up in the home will be a reason for discord between them.

One of the Sages, Rav Chiya, had a wife who would constantly pain him. His children felt so sorry for their father that they asked him why he does not divorce her. Rav Chiya responded, “It is enough that she raises our children, and that she saves us from sin.” It is of course not *l'chatchilah* (preferable) for a couple to rely on this alone for their marital peace. But this *Gemara* does reveal to us that when a husband views his wife as a partner, he can handle a difficult marriage. He saw that she raises the children, thus he viewed her as his partner, and that was how his marriage survived.

If husband and wife don't see each other as partners, then the fact that they merely live together in the same home does not create a partnership.

This is the foundation upon which a marriage is built; if it is shaky, the whole marriage will be shaky, and there will be a lot of discord. But if they are clear in how they are partners, even if he gets something different than what he planned, and it's unpleasant, it still won't damage the root of their connection. It will be a lasting partnership.

### *Making A List Of What You Want and Don't Want In Your Partnership*

If a husband takes a pen and paper and writes down the things he would like his wife to be partners with him in, he'll also find that there are areas which he doesn't want her to be partners with him in. For example, some husbands do not want the wife to be involved with the finances of the home, and would not like to be involved with the wife in every monetary decision. But the point is that we all have things which we want partnership with in, and we all have things which we don't want partnership in.

So practically speaking, write the list as if you are now beginning your marriage, not from what you already know about your wife. Write down what you would like from your wife, as if it's the beginning of your marriage.

The list might include:

- 1) “I want her to be partners in helping me get up for *davening*.” (Maybe until the end of *Sheva Berachos* that's what he will want from her...)
- 2) “I want her to get up in the morning to make breakfast so we can eat breakfast together.” Maybe that's what he really wants, and maybe not.
- 3) “I want my wife to walk me to the *Kolel* every morning.” This is probably not something you need her to be “partners” in with you.

Write down the things in which you clearly want her to be your partner. You will discover that a lot of these things have nothing to do with partnership. Don't write down the situation as it is now in the home. Write down what you would like to expect, and what you don't expect, from your spouse.

Some do this and they don't know what to write down; they're not sure if they want partnership with their wife or not. Perhaps a person is not even interested in a partnership with his spouse. For example, some fathers think that they know how to raise their children independently of their wives. We won't get into if this is good or not. But the point is that a person needs to know what he would like to be partners in with his wife, being that *Chazal* tell us that there is a partnership. One must see what partnership he has with his wife, even if there are areas in which he feels he doesn't need her in.

After a person knows what he would like in his partnership, he should now ask himself which areas they have partnership in, and which areas they don't, as well as the areas in-between that are unclear.

What does this accomplish? It helps you become in touch with the reality in your home. In the areas which you would like to see partnership, you might discover that you don't have partnership in. In areas which you don't want partnership in, you might discover that you're making demands even in those areas.

Next, one should down which is **the most important area** of partnership which he would like to have with his wife. This is necessary so that one can be very clear about what exactly he wants from his home.<sup>161</sup>

So one should write down his strongest need in partnership, and then he should write down a practical application of this. What is the clearest thing he recognizes in his marriage in which he sees that he is a partner with his spouse? He might discover that it is not connected with either what he wants in the partnership or with what she wants in the partnership.

Subconsciously, each of them wants something in the partnership, but in our conscious state throughout the day, we might be acting differently and demanding different things. When husband and wife are not clear about what they are partners in, any little issue between them can cause discord. When they are clear, they are able to learn how to pick their fights, because they have identified their priorities in the marriage.<sup>162</sup>

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161 In response to a questioner in middle of the class: "The fact that a husband and wife are each doing their part to raise the children together does not mean that they recognize their partnership. Although Chazal say that husband and wife are partners when it comes to having a child, this is only true for a husband and wife who clearly feel this as a reality, and this is not the situation in today's times. The reality today is that people don't feel the reality as described in Chazal; we have a *nefesh habehaimis* – an animalistic part in our soul, which can only identify with baser emotions – which does not identify with lofty, spiritual concepts. So how indeed can we feel that our spouse is our partner, in a way that even our *nefesh habehaimis* can understand and feel?"

162 In response to a questioner in middle of the class: "The partnership between a husband and wife is not about their various roles which they take care of. Our purpose here in this discussion is also not about discussing who is right when it comes to what, and what the obligations of husband and wife are towards each other. It's very possible, let's say, that the husband is right and his wife is wrong – but that doesn't get us anywhere. Even if a husband is always right and the wife is always wrong, this will do nothing for him except end them up in *Beis Din*, where he will have to deliver her a get.)

What we want to know is: What exactly the partnership is between a husband and wife.

Deep down, in our subconscious, a husband really wants to feel that his wife is his “partner” which *Chazal* speak of. But in order to feel that reality, we need to clarify to ourselves the areas in which we want to be partners with our spouse in.

### *Know Before You Get Married What You Want In Your Home*

What does it mean that for a husband and wife to be ‘partners’?

Everyone before he gets married has aspirations and has a full list of what he would like from his home: Torah learning, fear of Hashem, kindness, emunah, love, etc. Yet, this is still being superficial. These areas will not be enough to create a partnership between husband and wife.

Before a person gets married, he needs to sit with himself and reflect: “What exactly will my wife and I be building together? What kind of partnership are we entering into with each other?”

Again, there is what he wants, what she wants, and the in-between areas. They must discuss with each other what their most important aspect of their partnership is.

For example, there are couples who run a *gemach* (*chessed* organization) together. If they clearly discussed before the wedding that they each love to do *chessed*, then running a *gemach* together will work wonderfully for them, and they will find each other to be partners in helping each other fulfill their goals. They will then feel more unified with each other by the fact that they do *chessed* together. They will run it together smoothly and pleasantly.

But if it is only the husband who has an affinity for *chessed*, and his wife has little or no such interest in this, then running a *gemach* together with his wife will not really work. It won’t be a partnership between them, rather a husband who’s doing his own thing.

Here is a common example of partnership. If a husband considers raising children to be the main partnership he has with his wife, then as long as he is aware that she’s doing that, he will have the key in keeping a successful home. He is aware that raising the children is his most important aspect of his home, so he is aware that as long as she does that, he respects her so much that other issues simply cannot come between them.

Of course, this is not everything there is to the home. But it is the basis in keeping a strong marriage and enables a person to build his marriage from there: to recognize the partnership he has with her.

So one should write down on a paper what is the main thing he needs a partnership in with his wife, something he thinks that will be the key to his marriage.

When Rav Chiya said that it’s enough that a wife raises children and saves a husband from sin, the depth of his statement was that their partnership is solely of these two factors – and nothing else is required for the partnership! She is raising the children, and she saves her husband from sin; there is nothing else she has to do in a marriage, so a husband should not expect anything else of her.

In addition, it is unrealistic in the first place to expect *anything* of a wife other than your partnership with her. Any expectation from your wife is a recipe for unhappiness. It is simply unrealistic for a husband to expect anything from a wife.<sup>163</sup>

### *Acceptance*

Do this with all other areas of life as well: Write down what you would like in your life, what you wish you would have, including your spiritual frustrations. Realize that you are not perfect. Deal with yourself and accept yourself the way you are, even though you have imperfections.

Now see that your wife is not perfect either. You want certain things from yourself which you don't have, such as being smarter or having better memory, yet you don't have those things. So too, your wife is also not perfect, even though you wish she would be different. Just like you learn how to deal with yourself by accepting yourself as you are, so can you learn to accept her the way she is.

You are not perfect, yet you accept yourself as you are, even though you wish you had it better. So too, you can accept your wife the way she is even though she is not perfect and even though you wish she would change.

(And, by the way, you can't change her. Does anyone here think they can change their wife?)

### *Realizing The Partnership*

Therefore, after becoming aware of the reality in their marriage, a husband should clarify to himself how he needs his wife; the specific areas in which he knows that he needs her help with.

It's not about *how* they are partners, rather it is about becoming aware in the first place that she *is* your partner. The fact that a husband knows that he needs his wife when it comes to certain areas is already the key in how he can see her as his partner.

Know the areas in which your wife helps you with, the areas in which you are connected together with. The areas of partnership you have with her are really the points in your marriage which bring you together to connect with each other, and that is essentially the purpose of marriage – to become connected as one.

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*163 In response to a questioner in middle of the class: Even if the wife would only do one of her two roles – if she would only raise the children but she's not protecting you from sin, or if she protects you from sin but she's not doing a good job at raising the children – she is still fulfilling her role, as long as she is helping you with an area that you can't do without her. Of course, it's better if she fulfills both of her roles, but the point is that she is still considered your partner by the fact that she helps you in even one area that you need her in, as long as you consider that area to be very important to you.)*

*So if the husband realizes that it is impossible for him to raise the kids without her help, and she indeed helps him with raising the kids - this alone is enough for her to be considered his "partner". Once he realizes how much she is his partner, all other issues won't be able to come between them, because he has changed how he views her.*

*Marriage: The Path Towards Becoming A Partner With Hashem*

We can be “partners” with Hashem, and so can a couple be partners with each other. It is the purpose of their marriage. All of creation must become partners with Hashem, and in order to get there, one must first develop the basic kind of partnership – in his own home. How exactly they are partners differs in every home.

The point is not what they are partners in; the point is that they be a partnership. The actual partnership is the goal of marriage.

*Getting To Know Your Family: Chapter Seven***3.7 | Soul Perspective In Marriage*****Body and Soul***

In the previous chapter we explained that in every marriage, there are two layers to the relationship; let us try to understand it deeper.

The lower aspect of the relationship, as the Torah writes, is called “*flesh of my flesh*”, which alludes to the physical aspect of the relationship, the “body” part of the marriage. The higher aspect of the relationship is called “*bone of my bones*” and it refers to the spiritual aspect of their relationship, the “soul” in the marriage. Husband and wife are bonded together in two ways – through their body and through their soul.

Thus, the body has its way of connection to another, and the soul has its form of connecting. The body has its perspective, and the soul has its perspective. What is the difference between the body’s perspective and the soul’s perspective? How do we view through the body and how do we view through the soul?

The body’s perspective is: The husband was born on a certain date of the year, in a certain city, and the wife was born on her respective date of birth and place of birth; and they met at a certain point and got married. But the perspective of the soul is about their “spiritual age” – how much they have matured in life.

If we ask a person “When were you born?” what does he answer? The body will answer, “I was born on so and so.” Actually, we were all born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul. The Sages said that Hashem created the world on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul. That is the soul’s perspective.

Of course, you have a birthday and a place you were born in. But you are really much older than that. Although “the years of a man are seventy”, that is only your body’s lifespan. You go on to lives much more than that. That is the soul’s perspective on things [it sees beyond the physical].

We will explain this concept more, but this is the general outline of the concept: our body just sees this physical life we are living in, while the soul sees beyond physical life.

***Gaining A Soul Perspective On Life***

To illustrate further, every day, there are people who die. A person lives, hopefully, to get to his ripe seventies and perhaps further, and then one day, he takes leave of the world, as is the way of the world. His life is over, right?

Now let’s view this with a different perspective. After 70 or 80 years, when an old man is likely to die - is that the end? Or does he continue to exist? He is actually beginning a whole new level of existence!

If we think about it deeply, it’s amazing how people are ignoring this reality. An old man is weak, he needs to be fed and he needs assistance, but when he dies and his soul leaves his body, he is now living a different existence. He has to go through many stages until he can get to his final reward in the

World To Come. He gets escorted by the angel, he first makes a stop by his grave, then he goes to the Heavenly Court – a whole new chapter in his life is awaiting him there.

If one lived a totally “body”-kind of life, then it can be really said of him, “*Baruch Dayan Emes.*” They try to find people who will say nice *hespedim* (eulogies) about him. Then people go on with their life as usual.

If we think simply that our life ends with death, that will mean that even our present life is not being lived correctly.

Obviously, people do not like to think about this, because it’s a bit scary, even very scary. But it’s a reality. Adam HaRishon – is he alive still? No, he is not here anymore. Avraham Avinu – is he alive? No. Are Yitzchok and Yaakov alive? No, they are also not here anymore. What about you and I? Will any of us be here forever? If Moshiach comes in your lifetime, perhaps, because according to one opinion in the Sages, after Moshiach there will be no more death. (The other opinion in the Sages is that even after Moshiach there will be death). All of us will have to leave this place at some point.

The body’s perspective is that we are born on a certain day, and we live this life as it is, unaware of the Next World. The Zohar says that “a person is on this world and thinks that’s it his world, and that he will be here forever”. We all know we are going to the Next World. But most people are not living with that knowledge on a daily basis.

Even when people are by a funeral, they still are pursuing their worldly desires. How many cellphones are ringing in the middle of a funeral? Life just goes on as usual.

We need to acquire the soul’s perspective. One who doesn’t have it only lives the present moment, and never thinks about the past or future. He knows about the past or future, but he is not consciously aware of it. If one has no past or future that he thinks about, he has no present moment either – it can be said of him that he lives totally in a total, blissful imagination.

### *Seeing Beyond The Current Lifetime*

We go through many life experiences, but how much of it do we really experience? The body’s perspective does not offer us perspectives that contain any real experiences, only fantasy-like perceptions.

The Mishnah in *Avos* says, “Know from where you come, and to where you are going, and before Whom you will give an accounting.” This shows us that in order to live correctly in the present, we need to think about past and future.

If someone gets married without ever thinking about past or future, he lives totally in fantasy. Nothing can be built on a fantasy, so the home cannot be built when one lives a fantasy kind of life. It’s like living in a dream – a person wakes up from it and then realizes that he has nothing from it. This is just a *moshol* (parable) of course, but it’s a very true *moshol*.

One who lives without any sense of past or future, is experiencing the present through a fantasy. To illustrate, one cannot come in the middle of a *sugya* and expect to understand it, because he hasn’t seen what came before it.

How many times did your “I” exist? How many lifetimes did you go through? You have been to Gan Eden and back. We have gone through previous lifetimes, so we have each gone through millions of experiences. How many homes have each of us been though? A lot more than the amount of homes

you've gone through than in your current lifetime! We've gone through many lifetimes until the current year of 5774. But most people, even though they know about these concepts, only think about their current life.

Once we gain a perspective of our soul, we begin to see ourselves in a whole different light. Let's return to discussing our topic, marriage: How many times do you get married?

From the body's perspective, this is a ludicrous question; the body's perspective is that if we get married once, we only experience marriage once. But from our soul's perspective, this is not a question. Everything is an experience, and you can keep experiencing something again and again.

One who has a body perspective doesn't care about any of these ideas, even if hears about them. Even if he knows about these concepts, he doesn't think about it, it makes no difference in his life. But one who lives life through a soul perspective lives deeply with these concepts.

Taking this further, the wife and children you have now in your lifetime are not only the wife and children you had. But people like to think that the wife and children they know of is the only wife and children they ever had: "This is my wife. These are my children." (Some people have had more than wife in their lifetime). But this current lifetime you live in is just one part of your story! The wife and children you have now might not even be similar to your soul root. The apartment, the *kolel*, the *chavrusa* were all different in the last lifetime.

The inner perspective on your life is to view your life as a part of your path you are on. For example, if you fly to America and you make a stopover in England, you are aware that England is only part of your journey; you don't consider yourself to be living in England for the little amount of time you are there.

When Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, sin entered mankind, and ever since then we have gone through and passed through many experiences. The word for "sin" is *aveirah*, from the word *avar*, to pass through; ever since the first sin, we have become people who are always passing through, from place to place. But people think that they are here forever wherever they are right now.

This is a perspective of the soul, as it lives in Gan Eden, as it is on its journey here on this world. If we see through the soul's perspective towards life, our whole view will change for the better, including our marriage.

### *Identifying With The Pain of the Newborn*

Here is another example of the concept. When a baby is born, we say "Mazal Tov". We are happy. Why are we happy when a baby is born? Don't *Chazal* say that we were born by force? This baby didn't want to come here! Why are we happy for the baby? This is something to think about!

So when we go to a *bris*, we shouldn't just be happy for the baby; we should identify with the pain of the baby, because he was forced to come down here. He was learning Torah with the angel and then he was forced to come out of the womb. Just like we understand that going to a funeral is about sharing in another's pain – the pain of the deceased – so can we have this soul perspective when it comes to how we view the birth of a newborn, that we need to identify with his pain as well.

These are some examples of having a soul perspective.

### *Weddings Today*

When a person lives life through a bodily perspective and not through a soul perspective, the building of his home will also be built from a “body” perspective.

To illustrate, when he gets engaged (*Baruch Hashem*), he gets wedding gifts, a new wardrobe, an apartment, furniture, home appliances (and today the standard has become that you also need a washing machine, drier, and phones) – and a person thinks that because of this, he has his home set up! This is called “preparing for the wedding”! And then the day of the wedding, a photographer comes and takes pictures of the *chosson* and *kallah* posing together in the streets, and people thinking this is how a wedding is supposed to look like.

In simple words: **this is a totally non-Jewish lifestyle!** Weddings today are like non-Jewish weddings! There are almost no more “Jewish” weddings anymore. It looks totally non-Jewish: the style of the wedding, the music, the photography, everything. This is all a “body”-oriented kind of life!

Entire months are being spent [during the engagement] are spent on wedding preparations that are all about the body, how to gratify the body and make it more presentable and honorable; each to his own. And then he starts his Jewish home which he calls a “*bayis neeman b’Yisrael*” (faithful Jewish home). But it is not in the way that a Jew is supposed to live like. If one wants to have a true Jewish home, it will not happen if he runs his lifestyle and mentalities in life like a non-Jew.

If we take a look at a lot of areas in our life – our clothing, our spending, our phones (even those with a “*hechsher*”), we can see that it’s all built on non-Jewish mentalities.

### *Guidance In Intimacy Matters*

Even worse is much of the guidance today given before marriage about matters of intimacy, which is supposed to be holy; today, it is being drawn from the non-Jewish perspectives towards life. Holiness in a Jewish home cannot be built in this way. Even if it’s also spiced with the words of *Chazal* about these matters and it is then explained with inner meaning, the guidance is entirely based on the non-Jewish approach, which focuses on gratification of the body, nothing to do with the *neshamah*.

In Egypt, they had “bricks and mortar”, which represents materialism. They also had a miracle there that six children were being born at once, because their children were being born with holiness, even though they were under all the “bricks and mortar”. But today, the physicality of marriage has become like the “bricks and mortar” alone, with nothing else involved other than materialism, and this cannot produce children born in holiness.

We need to look at life always through our *neshamah*’s perspective, to life a life of the *neshamah*.

### *Extravagance – A Contradiction To A True Jewish Home*

Weddings today are costing between \$20,000 to \$50,000 dollars. There are people in America making \$200,000 weddings, an event which lasts for one night. Now there are even weddings which go on into the morning. That exile has now come here [to Eretz Yisrael]. People are asked why they spent so much on making a *chasunah*, and the answer is: “It’s only once in my *life* that I get to rejoice like this.” But it’s not one time in a person’s *life* – it’s like a time of *death* to the person!

We need to live life through our *neshamah*, not through our body and then everything will look different. Of course, we are not entirely souls living in Gan Eden. We have a body in us too. But we need to live a life that resembles Gan Eden at least a little bit, and we can.

One who wants to live a ‘body’ kind of life and also have a *bayis ne’eman b’yisrael*, is living a contradiction. It does not go together.

### *The Mature Perspective To Have On Marriage*

We live in this world, which is physical. But we must still have the proper perspective towards life. If one looks at marriage as a union between two souls, how can he live a life in which the soul is not present? A person might think that before he gets married he can live a body kind of life and not have to work on himself to become more spiritual, and that after he gets married he will change and become more spiritual, and that he will begin to feel some *ruchniyus* (spirituality) after he’s finished *Sheva Berachos*. This is the way of life which many people, even those who learn in yeshivah, set up for themselves. It is all a ‘body’ kind of life.

But if you look at life through *neshamah*, you look at everything in your life as stages that you need to go through. All areas of marriage are stages that you need to go through in life.

Rav Dessler zt”l noticed that young people are excited by weddings, while old people are not. It is because young people view the wedding as the most major event of life, so they get all excited about it. But old people have the truer perspective: they have already gone through life, so they look at marriage and realize that it was just another stage in their life. It was not everything and all that there is to life. Young people cannot relate to this.

Today in particular we see a lot of excitement about weddings in young people. People think that the wedding is the “peak” of a person’s life. But it is just the beginning! Life really begins after that! The wedding is rather a stage to go through. A *chosson* during *Sheva Berachos* is called a *melech*, a king. When the wedding is over, the *chosson* stops being a *melech*, and he instead becomes an *eved* (slave)! And he still wants to be a *melech*, even though he has lost his status...He has nothing left of his wedding.

Why? Because he thought that he had reached the apex of life with his wedding. It’s well-known that the wedding is not the highest point of your life. If one marries with the “soul” perspective and not the “body” perspective, he knows that everything he goes through is a stage. It should always be, “*Gam zeh yaavor*” – “This, too, shall pass.” You start out in life as a baby, then you grow up as a child, then you are in yeshivah, then you get married, and after you get married, there are more stages to go through. They are all stages of life. So the wedding should not be viewed as the peak of your life.

In marriages today, can it be said that the husband and wife will be together in Gan Eden...? Many people wish that they won’t be!

When one has the proper view towards what he goes through his life, everything will look different.

### *In Conclusion*

The words here were not just advice. It is a change of mindset, and it is fundamental to all of life. When one has the soul perspective towards life, his marriage will change for the better. Even going to buying a table for the home will feel different, because a person will know clearly why he is buying it.

One who doesn't have a soul perspective towards life will have a very hard time making the transition to the Next World after his life ends. One has to already get used to the soul perspective here on This World. And with that, his whole outlook towards life will change totally.

*Getting To Know Your Family: Chapter Eight***3.8 | Infusing Spirituality Into The Home (Part One)***The Differing Needs of Men and Women*

To summarize thus far, we have explained that husband and wife need to find a point which unites them and work towards reaching it, so that they will feel their partnership. Previously, it was explained that a Jewish home needs to have *ruchniyus* (spirituality) infused in it. It was explained briefly and generally, and now we will explain this in more detail.

Everyone consists of a *guf* (body) and a *neshamah* (Divine soul); we are each a combination of the physical and the spiritual. In a marriage, the husband has a body and soul, and the wife has her body and soul.

All of these four aspects are coming together in marriage and will encounter one another. Just as we can encounter clashes within our own personality, such as the contradiction we face between our body and our soul, so is it possible for the husband's soul to clash with the needs of his wife's soul, and the same is true vice versa.

When a man's motivations on this world are mainly geared toward the physical, then the conversations he has with his wife are [mainly] physically-oriented. When all he talks about with her are physical needs and desires, such a home resembles a non-Jewish home. If all they do is chat, go on walks together, and speak about work and clothing and purchases with each other – then all they speak about with each other is worldly matters, and such a home will be centered around This World. It will not be a true Jewish home; it resembles exactly a non-Jewish home.

However, the other extreme is bad too: if a husband only seeks to build a spiritual relationship with his wife, this will not be enough to sustain their home. A true Jewish home is built on a solid connection between the spouses which involves **both** their body and soul. Husband and wife must be connected with each other both in the physical and well as in the spiritual.

In the previous chapter, we explained the nature of their **physical** connection [that they must not make the mistake of being totally body-oriented, and they must realize that they are souls too]. In this chapter, we will explain the nature of their **spiritual** connection that they must strive for. But we will first emphasize that a "Jewish" home is to live a spiritual kind of life, as opposed to a body-oriented life; each of them must strive to live a spiritual kind of life, as much as they can do.

A true Jewish home is when *ruchniyus* (spirituality) is revealed in it, every day. We will focus here on a certain point about the spiritual connection between husband and wife which is very fundamental.

Man and woman differ in their physical needs, and that all of us know, more or less. But the spiritual differences between man and woman are even more complicating to understand, because *ruchniyus* (spirituality) is harder to understand. The first difference is that a man usually takes more the rational approach whereas women take the more emotional approach.

If both of them are living spiritually, there will also be differences. A man works mainly through his intellect, so he wants to "build" the home sensibly. A woman, though, takes the more emotional path, which means that she doesn't seek to "build" it rationally. She wants a good home of course, but many times she does not know how to "build" it properly to go in the will of Hashem...

That is the rough outline. We will explain the difference now more in detail.

### *The Void of Spirituality In Today's Homes*

Let's take a look at a Jewish home today in which there is an atmosphere of Torah in the home, which is supposed to represent the ideal "Torah home". That's what it's called, but what has it become today? What do the husband and wife do?

The husband gets up in the morning, goes to daven, then he goes to *Kolel* and learns for at least 6-7 hours. All day, he is immersed in *ruchniyus*. The wife is doing whatever she's doing, running the home. She is not immersed in *ruchniyus* during the day like her husband is. A husband is learning Torah all day is living in the *sugyos* (sections of Gemara) that he is learning, but a wife is involved all day with worldly matters, as she takes care of the children, dresses them, and does their laundry. It is all a *mitzvah* that she is doing, but she is still living in the material side of life.

So lives of husband and wife are being experienced very differently. All day he is involved with pursuits of *ruchniyus*, while she is involved all day in the physical responsibilities of life. Let us ask ourselves: Doesn't this create a problem?

Of course, one can simply answer to this that each of them is doing their role: A man has a *mitzvah* to learn Torah, and a woman is not commanded to learn Torah; her task is to run the home and raise the children. If she merits it, she can stay at home with the children and not have to work, and if she doesn't have that luxury, she goes to work. But in the end of the day, a wife lives in the material side of life.

The home might be called a "Torah home", but it can have no Torah in it! The husband lives a life of Torah, and maybe he even says wonderful *Divrei Torah* at the Shabbos table, but what about the wife? She lives in a world in which there is almost no Torah in her life. Her husband's *Divrei Torah* isn't enough to satisfy her need for Torah.

A man merits to learn Torah in the *beis midrash*, so all *Kolel* men all have some *ruchniyus* in their life, more or less. The husband comes home after a long day of learning and now he meets up with his wife. How can they feel connected to each other, when they are each living such different kinds of lives?

Even if the wife *davens* every day and says *Kerias Shema* every day (we don't discuss here if she is obligated or not in this), still, how much *ruchniyus* does she actually feel in her life? Usually, very little. The *ruchniyus* that she feels in her life is coming from the fact that she knows that she's helping her husband live a spiritual life, by taking care of the physical needs of the home and thus enabling him to learn with fewer things on his head; but although she accomplishes this, *she does not actually feel ruchniyus* revealed in her life from just this. She feels only the material side of life that she is involved with during the day.

What results from this? It does produce an ideal Torah home. It is a home with "*Kolel*" in it, and surely the *Kolel* has the Torah in it – but this doesn't help the home. The mere fact that the husband is in *Kolel* and that the wife is a *Kolel* wife, is not enough to infuse *ruchniyus* into the home. And as a result, the husband and wife cannot form a complete bond with each other. He is living a spiritual kind of life, learning most of the day, maybe saying *shiurim*, growing in his *ruchniyus*, while she is not. She finds herself in a very different world than the world that her husband lives in.

### *Idealistic Women*

Until now we only addressed one kind of *frum* woman. But you may have recognized that there is another group of Jewish women who face a whole different problem than this: Girls who didn't learn in the mainstream seminaries, who gained the knowledge of their heritage through seminars that are geared towards *baalei teshuvah*. These girls have acquired an impressive amount of Jewish knowledge, *hashkafah* (ideals), and matters of deep thought.

What happens when these kinds of girls get married? It's hard to understand how this can be a problem, but it is: she is so infused with idealism that she will take upon herself tasks such as finishing the whole *sefer Tehillim*, every day. What about her three children who need to be taken care of? Even if she hears them wailing and crying (and it sounds like *teruah*, *tekiah*, and *shevarim* sounds of a shofar), she waits until they are screaming (when it sounds like a *tekiah gedolah*!) before she gets up from her *Tehillim*. This is because she thinks that it is her obligation to finish the whole *sefer Tehillim* every day!

She has become very spiritual, but her values are misguided, because she cannot pull herself away from spirituality to tend to the home. This is extreme behavior and it is problematic to a home.

We have seen here two different extremes taking place in our times, which are two different ends of the spectrum.

### *What The Husband Must Know*

In a home where there are many children, the husband and wife are more involved with each other as they raise the children together. It is surely the will of Hashem to raise the children and take care of them, and they should help each other. But if this is all that makes them feel a connection to each other, they will not form a spiritual connection through this.

Even if a wife makes sure to *daven* every day and she says *Kerias Shema* with her fullest concentration twice a day – and even if she says it again at night before going to sleep - it won't be enough for her to satisfy her spiritual void. It won't either be enough for her if she listens to her husband's *divrei Torah* every week by the Shabbos table. Even if she listens once a week to a Torah lecture from a prominent Rebbetzin, she will still not feel like it's enough. Maybe this will be enough for her to raise children in the way of Torah, but as far as her own personal life concerns, she feels totally empty from *ruchniyus*.

The husbands should know clearly that this cannot be enough for a Jewish woman to survive spiritually. Taking care of the kids, from morning until night, and being on the phone and talking to friends – is not giving her any *ruchniyus*. She won't be able to build her *ruchniyus* through *shiurim* on the *parasha* that she hears over the phone. It is a life dead from *ruchniyus*; it is not alive. And a husband cannot expect his wife to raise the children correctly if she is lacking *ruchniyus* in her life. It simply will not happen. In many situations, it is indeed very difficult for husband and wife to have a spiritual connection. It takes a lot of hard work. What, then, is the key to living a spiritual life together?

### *The Connecting Point Between Husband and Wife: Pondering Each Day Why We Live*

A husband and wife will need to find a point that connects together in which they feel a sense of partnership, as it was mentioned earlier.

In a Torah home, where an *avreich* learns Torah most of the day, it's still very possible that an entire day goes by in which he doesn't ever think why he is living. He *davens* every day, learns every day, even does *chessed*, helps in the house, and does many other good things, but it's still possible that he never pauses for a moment to think, "What am I living for??"

The question of "What am I living for?" is something that each man and woman need to ask themselves. It is a question that must fill all of our souls, man and woman alike. It is the most fundamental question you can ever ask yourself. Whether one is old or young, he needs to wonder about it.

The issue, of course, is: how exactly we can live with purpose to our life. Each person will have a different answer to the question. One thing is for sure: every person needs to ask him\herself this question. But the question applies to all people.

The true answer to the question is: we are all here on this world for one purpose alone: **to recognize the Creator** in life.

How is it that a husband can think that his wife will feel spiritually satisfied when every day she gets up, davens a little, tidies up the house, does the laundry, bathes the children, cleans out the sink and does all the dishes (and the dishes are piled up the next day again)? It is because he hasn't stopped to think of why he and she are living. He doesn't think that life is about directing ourselves towards recognize the Creator more and more.

Instead, he lives superficially, and his mindset is that that life is simply about "things getting done": the children must be raised properly, they must be neatly dressed and clean, the house should be neat – and that there must be marital peace for this to happen, of course; and other needs he has. Needs, needs, and more needs. And what is the biggest need of all? To have an "*aishes chayil*" ("woman of valor") who will do all of this!

Whether one is a man or woman, the question of "What do I live for?" needs to be asked to oneself, every day. A person must ask himself or herself if he\she is actively striving to recognize the Creator. There is a way to get there for a man, and there is a way to get there for a woman. There is also a point between man and woman which can help them get there, and that is the point that can connect and unite them, through which they can build the home together.

The husband might think that because his life is all about Torah, his wife is the "*kli*" (the receptacle) that holds all of his Torah; so he thinks that she gets her needs in *ruchniyus* from that. But can this provide her with *ruchniyus* in her life...?

Life is not about what "needs to get done". The husband must learn Torah and *daven*, the wife must raise the children and make them happy and cook all the meals, and that is all true, but is *that what life is all about, and nothing else??* Such a life only has "body" in it, with no "soul".

These words sound very harsh to us when we hear them, but what should we do? It's the truth, and it hurts.

### *When A Woman Searches To Fill The Void*

Let's try to understand what has been going on the last couple of years, through an inner perspective, and not through a mere superficial understanding.

In the last couple of years, the Jewish newspapers have been writing articles targeted for women readers, which are about deep thoughts concerning various matters of life. These articles are meant to make a person think about life. And the pen is free in the writer's hand to write in the article whatever she feels like writing.

We must understand how this all started. It has come to the point in which women only remember their *ruchniyus* from being in seminary, and later in life they are in need of more *ruchniyus* because they weren't getting it, so they sought to fill it. They wanted more and more. There are many women today who are searching for life with meaning. They really want to know of what an inner life is. They have good intentions. But they are being misled in the wrong direction.

Where is an inner and meaningful kind life found in? It is found in living with Hashem, through learning the Torah. That is possible for the husband, but what about the wife? When the wife remains in the home and her husband goes off to learn Torah in *Kolel*, she begins to feel that she is missing *ruchniyus* in her own life, and she wants to fill the void. How does she fill it? In today's generation, many women are filling this void with all of the *garbage* reading material out there, gleaned by women writers who are getting all of their material from *non-Jewish sources*.

These are women writers who have studied in all kinds of strange places in the world. A new generation is being produced here, attempting to fill the spiritual void that many Jewish women feel. If the writers were trying to help the readers live a holier life, a life of bonding more with Hashem, that would be wonderful. Instead, all of the articles are pointing in all sorts of directions, to encourage woman to "search" more.

A man can fill his void mostly with Torah. But a woman does not have Torah, so what can she do for her soul? If she is already connected with Hashem, her soul feels alive and satisfied. If she doesn't, she feels a void, and she begins to search, for something else.

About 20 years ago, the women's articles were about keeping a tidy home and cooking. If it would have remained at that, it would have been fine. But now there are entire articles and papers devoted to fill the void that women are feeling. How it is being filled? With the knowledge of [secular] psychology. They are searching for life. But what they really need to do is to search for an inner life that is truly alive.

I hope you understand here what I am trying to tell you. The entire world of women has gone through an overhaul in the last 20 years! There are entire courses today given by "Rabbis" who are "converting" women to secular knowledge. These courses are not teaching *mussar sefarim*. They are not teaching 'Chovos HaLevovos', 'Shaarei Teshuvah' or 'Orchos Tzaddikim'. As a result, the *b'nei Torah* are facing a new generation of wives who have become "scholars" of secular knowledge. This is the reality we face today. (Now they have courses too like this for men...)

Now there are *frum* "Chareidi" publications which are made special for women that are filled with non-Jewish ideas; the writers of these articles are avid readers of secular psychology and they wish to educate *frum* women with this kind of knowledge, and they do so without any sense of shame. This is the new "*hashkafah*" (outlook) that is sweeping through the world of women: to become "educated" with a plethora of secular knowledge towards how we should live life.

### *The Two Difficulties We Face In Building A Spiritual Home*

In summary, to build a spiritual life in the home, the first problem we face with this, as we said, is because a woman is involved with the various responsibilities of life. And in more recent years, an even

deeper problem has surfaced: the wife does have “*ruchniyus*” in her life – and she’s getting it all from non-Jewish sources! She thinks that she is getting *ruchniyus* from this, but it is all pseudo-*ruchniyus*. It feels like she it is filling her void, but it is not actually filling the emptiness that she feels.

What results from this? The home cannot ever be spiritual in this way.

### *The Solution*

What we have to do is to see the home through the lens of the Torah. In order to build a spiritual home, the husband and wife have to learn about life from the words of Chazal (our Sages). If not, and they are getting their viewpoints on life from secular sources, how can they ever hope to build a spiritual home??

To work on this practically is already the next step. Here we are just explaining the basis of what we need.

(With regards to the workforce, where a woman often has to work with gentiles in the same office, this is also problematic. We are in exile, and it is a very deeply profound one, being that we so mixed with gentiles who influence us. The husband must see to it that his wife is working in a place that is not destructive to her values. They need to look for the best possible place for her to work in.)

Both husband and wife need to understand that they must stay away from all secular reading material, and that all of their viewpoints must come only from Torah and Chazal.

People argue that our Sages tell us that “*chochmah b’goyim, taamin*” - “Wisdom is found among the nations”. However, just because there is wisdom found among *goyim*, this does not require a Jew to read their ideas. A Jewish person reading any of the non-Jewish books is endangering himself to think like a non-Jew, and who knows what will become of him? He might become like a non-Jew in the way he thinks and views life, in the process of learning their wisdoms.

If a woman spends a lot of time reading non-Jewish ideas in the magazines and books, even if her husband learns Torah all day, she will be unable to gain from her husband’s Torah wisdom; it’s like they’re speaking different languages. He’ll tell her what he learned in *Mesillas Yesharim* that day, and she tells him back what she read in the paper that day. They will each be in two different worlds that they cannot relate to each other.

The only way for a Jewish woman to have real spirituality in her life is if she takes a few minutes every day to think: “What Do I Live For?” Although it is true that a woman needs to take care of the home and children, as well as cook, clean, and go to work to support the home (if necessary), these are things that “must get done”, but, she also needs to know how to live! It is not enough for her to feel truly alive if she just takes care of the home and the children and she works to bring in money. She must live also!

And what does a Jew live from? A Jew lives from his\her bond with the Creator and with doing His will. It’s not enough to do His will – you have to have a bond with the Creator.

It is not possible in every home to do this, but if they can do so, the husband and wife should ask themselves each day, “Who created me, and for what do I live for?” After that, they should strive to make their lives meet that. The fact that she is busy raising the children, running the home, and goes to work, does not exempt a woman from asking herself this question each day.

So in order to have a spiritual home, a woman's need for knowledge of spirituality must be nursed **only** from the words of our holy Chazal (starting from *Chumash*, all the way down to the later *sefarim*). She must not be reading any non-Jewish books or ideas at all. If she does so, they are able to build a spiritual home. If a woman is reading any non-Jewish material, it is certain that their entire marriage will become shaky from the ideas she's reading about, and they will not be able to enjoy a spiritual relationship with each other.

As we began to mention in these last two chapters, husband and wife are not just married together in the physical sense; they are not merely a union of two bodies. They are souls, two *neshamos* which are meant to become one, and therefore they must connect to their souls. They must form a connection of the soul together with each other.

Husband and wife each have to work to reveal their souls, and in this way, they form a spiritual connection with each other, which is the way that a Jewish home is supposed to look like. Without the spiritual element in their connection, their home does not resemble a true Jewish home.

If it is clear to a woman that she needs to do this and to avoid all secular material, she will find that she can now be enabled to have a spiritual connection with her husband and enjoy the spirituality which her husband tries to impart to her.

Of course, this will not mean that the husband and wife will feel connected to each other in every last aspect of their marriage, but to a very prominent extent, they will feel more connected with each other, on a spiritual level – as long as they find the one point which they are both aiming for in life.

### *In Conclusion*

The words here were brief about the topic. Hopefully, it has served to give you a little thinking of what a true Jewish home should look like,

A Jew lives from feeling connected to Hashem – not just from keeping the Torah and mitzvos. That is where we draw our *chiyus* (vitality) from in life: our bond with the Creator. To work on this concept, every day, think of the purpose of life that we should be living for. Think of the One who created you....

*Getting To Know Your Family: Chapter Nine***3.9 | Infusing Spirituality Into The Home (Part Two)***The Husband's Responsibility*

We are discussing how one can build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael* (a faithful Jewish home). We hope here to explain the matter, with Hashem's help, and then conclude the topic, explaining its fundamental roots.

Adam HaRishon, after the sin, separated from Chavah for 130 years. Why did he separate from her for 130 years? *Chazal* say “*nashim daatan kallah*” – the minds of women are ‘light-headed’. Ever since Chavah listened to the Snake and ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, a woman's power of *daas* (comprehension) has become ‘*kal*’, “lightened” [impaired]. The word *kal* is equal in Hebrew in numerical value to the number 130. Thus, Adam separated from Chavah for 130 years.

Elsewhere, *Chazal* also state that “One who has taught his daughter Torah has taught her foolishness”.<sup>164</sup> These two statements of *Chazal* are interrelated. Because a woman does not possess the full level of *daas*, she is not able to get to the holy kind of *daas* which is capable of plumbing to the Torah's depths.

In the previous chapter, we mentioned that a woman in the home needs spirituality in her own life as part of the equation in building a successful home. There is a difficulty involved in this: a woman does not possess the power of mature *daas*. The husband must therefore provide her with *daas*, as it is he who learns the Torah and nurtures holy *daas* from there.

*What Kinds of Divrei Torah Should You Tell Your Wife?*

A married woman spends her time in the home, while her [*kolel*] husband spends his day in the *beis midrash*. Ideally, the husband must be able draw forth his *chiyus* (vitality) from there and be able to bring it into the home.

But what usually happens? You can have a *kolel avreich* [young married *kolel* man] who learns *Gemara b'iyun* (in-depth) and he can even learn *halachah* too, yet he may not be clear in how to actually live and go about life.

What will happen? He comes home and tells his wife about an argument between Abaye and Rava he is learning about; and how the *Rashba* and *Ritva* differ, and how the *Beis Yosef* decides...

What, indeed, should a husband tell over to his wife?

And by the Shabbos table, for example, what should he tell her? Today, there are many *sefarim* that make it easier to say a *Dvar Torah* by the Shabbos table, in all different ranges: light, heavy, stories, parables, whatever you want. The husband washes and breaks the *challah*, has his fish and salad, and it's as if his next “portion” of the meal is to tell her a *Dvar Torah* on the *parasha*...

And how much time does it take? He says it to her while he's eating the salad and fish. He considers it to be like a part of the meal, but not more than that. *Baruch Hashem* he says *Divrei Torah* by a meal.

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<sup>164</sup> Sotah 20b

He's not saying anything forbidden. *Baruch Hashem*, he merits to sit and learn Torah all day, so he tells over to her what he learns. Maybe he wants her to be smart, so he tells her a piece from sefer *Ketzos HaChoshen*. He realizes that she doesn't understand what he's saying, so what does he tell her then...?

If he feels the house can use some inspiration, he learns *Shemiras HaLashon* with her, and if that doesn't work, he says *Shir HaShirim* with her every day, and if that doesn't work, he adds on saying *Perek Shirah* to the list....

But what is the point of all of this?? The *Dvar Torah* the husband says at the Shabbos table – what is it about? Our body is sustained through the food we eat. How will a husband feed his wife's soul needs if he does not infuse the home with a spiritual atmosphere? **A husband must know how to bring it in to the house!** To do this, he should clarify with himself that life must be spiritual, and then he must clarify that learning *Gemara* alone is not enough to keep him spiritually sustained.

If a person only gets spirituality from his learning, the home might gain from this a little, but it won't be enough for the home so survive spiritually.

Each person needs to sit with himself and clarify to himself, "From what do I get *chiyus* (vitality) from in my life?"

A person might answer to this: "What do you mean? I do everything I'm supposed to do. I learn Torah and do the mitzvos." (If only)." But even if a person would do everything he's supposed to do, the issue is: from where does he get his actual vitality from? It's a totally different question.

One who lives life superficially might learn Torah and do mitzvos, but that won't be enough. One has to know where he gets vitality from in spirituality. Just because a person is learning doesn't mean he gets vitality from it. (He knows that his father got vitality from learning, so also thinks that he gets vitality from it).

If a person doesn't feel vitality from his *ruchniyus*, it's not possible to have true Jewish home. You can't live in a place where you don't get *chiyus* from. So the issue is not what you do, but from where you get your vitality from.

If a person thinks that he gets all his vitality from just learning *Gemara*, he is mistaken. Some have a hard time accepting this fact, but it's the truth. One who gets all his vitality from his learning really has no vitality. As *Chazal* say (Yevamos 109a), "Whoever says "I have nothing except Torah", even the Torah he doesn't have". Learning *Gemara* alone will not be enough to bring spirituality into the home.

One must first clarify where he gets vitality from, and then he must wonder how he can bring it into the home, so that the home can be infused with an inner kind of life.

### *Live What You Know*

In today's times, there are many Torah scholars when it comes to learning *Gemara*, but when it comes to spiritual matters, which are called matters of "*Hilchos De'os*" (knowing how to live life), it is often the wife who is more in touch with these matters than her husband. Girls today go to seminaries, in Israel and in other places, in which they are immersed in internal matters of Avodas Hashem; they often find themselves disappointed when they get married, even if they marry a *Talmid Chochom* (Torah scholar), because they find that when it comes to spiritual matters, they usually know more than their husbands do.

There are even husbands who do not know what to do when it comes to certain issues about life, so he consults with a *Rebbetzin* who will guide him in matters of the home. If the child has a question in his homework, he tells him to go ask the *Rebbetzin*.... This is really not the way it should be. Husbands are supposed to know more than their wives when it comes to spiritual matters as well.

This week I met a *bochur* in *yeshivah* and I told him that I am giving a *shiur* this week on *sefer Derech Hashem* (Way of G-d, by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, a *sefer* which discusses the structure of Judaism). He asked me, "What's that?" He never heard of *sefer Sefer Derech Hashem*!

A *bochur* can know well the *chiddushim* of the *Ketzos HaChoshen*, Reb Shimon Shkop, Reb Chaim, *Avi Ezri* - even *sefer Ayeles HaShachar* he knows - but when asked about *Sefer Derech Hashem*, he didn't know, he has to go look in the yeshiva library to find it! He only knows about the *sefarim* on the shelf in yeshiva, such as *Shaarei Teshuvah* and *Orchos Tzaddikim*, but that's it.

Without going through the important *sefarim* that explain our fundamentals of Torah life, it's not possible for a person to live a true and inner life. Just like a person can't learn *Hilchos Shabbos* or hope to fulfill it if he doesn't learn *Mishna Berurah*, so too it's not possible for a person to live life correctly if he never learned several times *sefer Mesilas Yesharim*, *Derech Hashem*, *Chovos HaLevovos*, *Sefer Nefesh HaChaim Shaar Daled* (and all that is the minimum). One has to go through these *sefarim* well.

If one is not clear about *hashkafah* (Jewish ideals) with himself, he can't become an angel when he comes home. There is no such thing. He lives all day in *sugyos* of *Gemara*, and he cannot impart this into the home. It doesn't give an inner life into the home.

So every person needs to learn the important *sefarim*, and build his *Hilchos De'os* (Jewish ideals) from them. His life must reflect what he learns. It is not about knowing them, but to live them. There must be a map to live life. The outer parts of our life have a map: *halachah* (Jewish law). The inner parts of life have a map too: the *sefarim* that discuss *hashkafah* (Jewish ideals).

We must first see what we are missing with this. It is not enough just to be observant, nor is it enough if a person knows that he lives in order to do Hashem's will, learn the Torah, keep it. That is not enough! People wonder what is missing from such a life. But it's a question if there's anything there at all! A Jewish home is actively full of vitality and spirituality. An inner life needs to be learned, it needs to have clarity, and then one can live it. We can't just live with actions and with what we learn. We must live an inner life. If one has an inner life within himself and he brings it into the home too, it can begin a true kind of life. A Jewish home is for one to bring spirituality into the home. That is the air that must permeate the home. Surely there are also chores to be done in the home, but the *ruach* (atmosphere) of the home must be constant and alive.

I hope you are slowly realizing here that there is another kind of life we can live. These are not ideas or inspiration. It is to build a whole different kind of life, an inner life!

Man and women are different, and they are always different. But the common denominator between them is that their life should be an inner life.

### *Exercises To Think About*

Let's ask a simple question:

Does a person ever think once a day why he is Jewish? *Chazal* say that "one who denies idol worship is called a Jew". That is something to think about when you contemplate what it means to be a Jew.

We need to infuse spirituality into our children as well; we will give an example. Let's say it is Purim, and you want to teach your children what Purim is about, how they can be affected by Purim. You can ask them the following: "What are people doing in Gan Eden on this day?" Think about what they are doing on Purim in Gan Eden! (If a person doesn't care about what's going on in Gan Eden, that shows how far he is from a true life, because the way of life in Gan Eden shows you how true life should look like.) What's going on in Gan Eden on Purim? They are sending *mishloach manos* to each other? They are reading *Megillah*?

*Chazal* say that there are ten expressions of *simcha* (joy). So in Gan Eden, new depths to *simcha* keep being revealed. If one isn't revealing it, he is in Gehinnom! In Gan Eden, there are always new revelations.

The Purim of 5773 is really a totally different Purim than 5772, from a spiritual viewpoint. But with most people, Purim in 5773 is the same Purim as it was in 5772 and in the year before it...

We are comprised of a body and soul, as we live here on this world. Therefore our body misleads us on this world and tricks us from the true reality. In Gan Eden, there is only a soul – the body cannot mislead us there. When the month of Adar comes in Gan Eden, the souls are receiving new depths to Adar and Purim. That is the perspective we need to have to.

What happens when it comes the month of Adar? People are trying new ideas and tricks. Where does this come from? Does it come from Judaism?!

Our *simcha* must not be superficial. When people live superficially, they think they have to do all kinds of funny things during the month of Adar, and they think that this is the will of Hashem and the way of the Torah!

Let's talk very practically now. How would you like to have a real *simcha* this year when it comes the month of Adar? How can you make your family happy? People react to this sheepishly: "What do you want from me? I don't know how to be happy myself. How am I supposed to be happier during the month of Adar?" Instead, people are worrying about the monetary expenses he will have to make for Purim this year...

What is the *simcha* you need to have in Adar? How do you plan to improve your home? You learn Torah, *Baruch Hashem*, but how does your home look? How is the atmosphere there – is it happier during the month Adar? Did anything change since last Adar?

The husband does not have *simcha*; he may know how to learn *Gemara* well, but he doesn't have real and deep *simcha*, he doesn't know what it is. How will his wife be happy? What should she do with her herself - draw pictures of Haman and come up with new ideas this year for Purim? And how will the children be happy? If both the father and mother are not happy in Adar, neither will the children be. They are both busy with various ideas for Purim, borrowing costumes from *gemachim* and wondering who they will send *mishloach manos* to this year, and what theme it will be, and they are both caught up in these superficial kinds of preparations.

The father does not know how to have *simcha*, and the wife is busy enabling her husband to learn Torah, *Baruch Hashem*, and raising the children – so she has no time to develop her happiness. So between the two of them, there is no *simcha* entering the home; neither of them knows what it is or how to develop it. What does the wife remain with from Adar and Purim? Various presents. When it comes Purim, the parents get their happiness from how the children look and how they are acting so funny.

Anyone who lives a more internal kind of life is actually pained from the Purim that we see today. The Purim we see in our times is devoid of inner happiness, and it has become a day of superficial entertainment. It is painful to watch it take place, for anyone who lives a more internal kind of life.

What do people do to attain more *simcha* in Adar? Are people trying to make their homes happier during Adar? If not, how can we call this a true Jewish home, when the atmosphere in it is not deeply meaningful and spiritual? If a wife wonders how there is more *simcha* in Adar, and she asks her husband about this, what can he answer her?

Ask yourself this question: What should you answer your wife when she asks you this question? One should really know what to answer her about this, just as much as when she asks him what the *halacha* is about something in the kitchen.

How can it be that so many people do not know how to practically carry out the words of *Chazal*, who said that there is more *simcha* in Adar? Furthermore, what is the difference between how a Chareidi Jew acts on Purim with how a secular person acts? Because we send *matanos l'evyonim* and we eat a *seudah*? Can we tell a difference? Sadly, there isn't that much of a difference we can recognize, in today's times.

People are asking about how they can make their children feel the happiness of Purim, while the parents themselves don't know how to get to the real, inner happiness of Purim. It is because people are usually used to living superficially. There is no way that real *simcha* will enter the home when they are not living a spiritual kind of life from beforehand. It doesn't suddenly appear during Adar. Yet people wonder why it isn't happening in their homes.

### *Outline of The Solution*

Now we will focus on a positive point.

If a person wants to live a true kind of life, he needs to know how to infuse spirituality and the meaning of Judaism into the home. One firsts need to uncover depth to matters of Judaism within himself - and then he can then impart that knowledge to your children.

### *“Saying” A D’var Torah Vs. Living It*

For example, what kind of *Dvar Torah* should you say to your children on Purim? Will you say a piece from sefer *Manos HaLevi*...? Say something to them that you relate to deeply in yourself, something profound which you connect with. That is what you should convey to them. Give over to your family a deep understanding of something that you have reached within yourself.

Here is an example. Last week was *Parashas Yisro*, which talks about the giving of the Torah. What kind of *Dvar Torah* should one say to his family? To say over a question about what the order of the Ten Commandments was, and just say an answer? Question, answer?

It's more important to give over the essence of the *parsha*. You can instead say to them, “How did standing at *Har Sinai* look like? How did everyone prepare? How did they feel?”

I asked this question to my children. My youngest child said: “They went to get new, white clothing.” An older child said, “They went to the *mikveh*.” My oldest child, who is already a *bar daas*, said, “They did earnest *teshuvah*.”

That is a real *Dvar Torah*: to give over a life of Torah. Surely every *Dvar Torah* you say is true and makes sense, but what is the kind of *Dvar Torah* that you really should you say to your children? The child often reads off the *Divrei Torah* from his papers he comes home with, like a *baal korei*. Is this the Torah that is alive, or is it just nice ideas? Is it just about ‘saying a *Dvar Torah* at the Shabbos table’? A *Dvar Torah* we say at the Shabbos table has to be alive!

Here is another example. You can simply ask questions that train your children to think. This week is *Parashas Mishpatim*, which speaks about the laws of slavery. If a man owes money and he has no money and no items to sell, he may sell his daughter up until a certain age, in order to pay back a loan. Here is what you can ask your children: “If such a thing would happen to you, what would be the first thing you would sell?”

A *Dvar Torah* must not be about just saying nice “ideas”. People are often used to saying a *Dvar Torah* for the sake of just saying “nice ideas”. But when you say a *Dvar Torah*, it needs to be something you live by and which others can live by. Similarly, the words of *sefer Derech Hashem* and the *Maharal* are not “ideas.” Their words are concepts to live by, in the practical sense – at least for those who care about their souls and don’t live just with their body.

### *Depth Vs. Simplicity*

However, another point to mention here is that one cannot either say deep ideas to his wife and children. You can’t even tell her the main lessons you understood from a *shiur*; it cannot be understood. Instead, you have to take the words of what you heard and just say something that can be experienced by another. Take a simple question that makes people think about life in a practical way.

For example, Haman decreed genocide on the generation. Ask your family: “What would you do if you were there? How would you react?”

Hopefully the answer will be “*Teshuvah*.” But there are different understandings to *teshuvah*. The wife will have her own understanding, and each of the children will have their own understanding.

That is how Judaism must be given over to your family! **First** make sure you understand something you are saying and you relate to it deeply and in a real way. **Then**, explain it to your wife in a way she will understand. **Then**, think of how you will explain it to your children.

Without doing this, the home will not gain *ruchniyus*. It will be filled with nice ideas, but it won’t actually affect the family members.

Here is a simple question to ask your family this week: “How do we have more *simcha* during Adar?” There are all kinds of answers. Each person has his own way of how to increase *simcha*.

The truth is that if we take the average twelve-year old child today and we ask him this question, does his answer come close to the words of *Chazal* at all...? A more mature child will answer that it means to have more *ruchniyus*, but he still won’t know what that means, because he only knows about this intellectually – he doesn’t act upon that knowledge.

But at least when you act them the question, you can get them to start thinking.

These are practical words for anyone who wants to live differently than the superficial life today. One who wants to live in a true way needs to feel how real the words of Torah and *Chazal* are, and that the words of Torah and *Chazal* build our life.

We see that everyone else around us does not live this way. But in our home, we can have a different kind of life than the way life is on the outside world.

### *Knowing Why You Are Married*

We will mention one last point in this discussion.

A husband and wife – each of them - must know what they get married for, and they need to have conversations about this from time to time.

Some will say that they got married for the mitzvah of having children; or to work on their *middos* (that's easy to say when everything is fine and dandy, not when one is really tested), and a third person will say, "To have the *Shechinah*." These are all wonderful answers, but we need to be honest with ourselves.

The husband and wife must know **clearly** why we are living and why we need to be married. The reason should be **clear** to both of them. We might have been clear in the past, but then we forget as time goes on; for this reason, we need to review that reason, again and again. And we need to deepen our understanding in that reason, as time goes on. Upon that, a marriage can thrive.

There are many things we can speak about when it comes to how to have a true Jewish home. There are many, many details that are involved in marriage and in the home. But let's be firm on the basis of all the details. If we are not sure about the basis, then all the details will be scattered to us, and on this *Chazal* say "There is no *kesubah* (marriage document) that has no discord."

There are so many things that come up in marriage: "Why is this part of my marriage not good, and why is that part so hard to deal with?" But the root of the problems is when the basis is missing. The basis is: that the husband and wife must both be clear in the direction they are heading in.

Of course, there will still be certain mistakes and failures that they will always make. But the marriage as a whole will be basically successful when they are each clear for what purpose they are married for.

Astoundingly, there are couples married to each other for many years, who still have no goal that they are living together for. They are not actively striving together towards anything in life. They may do many things together and help each other, but they are just taking life as it comes. They raise the children and marry them off, and that is all that connects them together. After the children are all married, what are the husband and wife left with, now that they have each other again? What connects them together? When the grandchildren come to visit? And after that, when one of the spouses has to escort the other to his/her final resting place...The End...?

My hope here is that you have gotten the main message behind these words. The home must become infused with *neshamah* (Divinity), with a central goal of life to actively aspire for and strive for which can be tangibly felt within the atmosphere within the home - as opposed to just knowing the information of the Torah and the mitzvos.

Torah is called *Toras Chaim*, a 'Torah of life', so it must be life to a person; and the same is true with the mitzvos. If Torah and mitzvos are giving life to the person, that is wonderful; if not, then there is no *ruchniyus* in the home that is connecting the family. What connects the spouses with each other, then? The various things they have to deal with each day? Helping the children? Making a *bar mitzvah* and preparing him for his *bar mitzvah*, and other preparations, etc.?

One who knows of *ruchniyus* from his own life in this way and gives over that lifestyle to his home, will live a whole different kind of life.

### *In Conclusion*

I thank you for listening to me until now; there were listeners here who came in the middle of the series and I wasn't sure if they would be able to listen and understand. I hope that the words have helped at least some of you to gain a different outlook towards life, an inner perspective towards life.

The ways to practically help your marriage are different with each person, because every situation is different. But the common denominator between all of our homes is that we all need in it an atmosphere that leads us to an inner kind of life. Hopefully the words here have been understood, and not viewed as ideas or advice, but as an inner way to live life.

May we all have Heavenly assistance in building our homes.



# 4

*More Derashos of the Rav On Marriage*

## 4.1 | *Guidance For Shalom Bayis*

We will try to be brief in this broad subject. Every subject is like a “*sugya*” (section of Gemara) inside another *sugya* – and so is the “*sugya*” of marriage.

It is written, “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife.*” What is the reason for this?

Why does a person look for a *shidduch*? Some people say it’s because there is a *mitzvah* to have children. But that’s not the real reason why people are getting married. Most people aren’t thinking why they want to get married.

The *Mesilas Yesharim* says to always think before doing anything, but when it comes to marriage people don’t think beforehand, just like people don’t think why they are learning Torah or putting on *Tefillin*. People just go along with the flow of life and don’t think into what they do.

When a person goes into something without thinking, he just acts like how he is used to do. He deals with his marriage by getting marriage advice, looking in *sefarim* and hearing *shiurim* on *shalom bayis*. But if a person is more truthful, he will realize that he got married because he didn’t want to remain alone. He didn’t want to become lonely.

If this is the reason a person gets married, a person should realize that while he is looking for his “*palga d’gufa*” – his other half – did he already find himself? When a person is in *shidduchim*, he does a lot of research: if she is a good girl, if she has *Yiras Shomayim* and *middos tovos* – almost in the same way he looks for a *chavrusa*. But did he research **himself** yet? Does he even know who he himself is?

*Yiras Shomayim* or *good middos* isn’t everything. First, a person needs to find himself and know who he himself is.

When a person gets married and realizes that he doesn’t know who his wife is, it is a sign that he doesn’t even recognize his own self. If a person never worked to understand himself before he got married, he gets married and has no understanding of his wife. Just like we understand that a child can’t get married because he is immature and doesn’t recognize his own self, so must we realize that we have to know who we truly are, before we get married. The less we understand ourselves, the more different we feel our wife is from us.

Marriage is not something that you just have to “do” like everything else. Mere advice doesn’t build a person’s marriage. If a person is just going along with the flow of life the same way he was like before he was married – he will look at his wife like another *chavrusa*. And what happens if he doesn’t look his “*chavrusa*”? He will want to switch *chavrusos* at the end of the *zman*...

A person runs away from anyone who isn’t “him.” He will want to run away from his life – just like he runs away from himself, when he doesn’t recognize his own self.

In a marriage, husband and wife have to “*become one flesh*”. They must become one. If a person thinks that his life is only “Torah and doing mitzvos” and that this is all there is to his life, then he will find marriage to be very difficult. When a person is married, he can’t always learn Torah or do *chessed* when he wants to – and he will find marriage to be very bothersome to his various aspirations.

If a person realizes that he has to connect to Hashem by connecting to Creation, he will be able to connect himself to others who are different from him. Hashem wants Creation to become unified – so a person has to connect to differences. He realizes that learning Torah is supposed to connect us to Hashem, and that doing *chessed* for others is not just to have a *gemach* – but to connect with others.

Let's take *chessed* as an example. *Chessed* has to be seen as a tool to connect to Hashem – it is not just so that we should “do” things for other people. The actions of *chessed* we do for others are supposed to connect us to Hashem. There are many *gemachim*, but how much love is going on there? The point of what we are saying is here that people miss the whole point – they fail to realize that everything we do, even *mitzvos*, is only as a means to get close to Hashem. People can learn a lot and do a lot of *chessed* all day, but their hearts are missing, because they don't realize how everything is supposed to be done in order for us to become close to Hashem.

Even if a person did *chessed* with others when he wasn't yet married, did he ever once feel connected with the other person in his heart? Was his heart in it? Did he ever feel truly connected to another person whom he did *chessed* for?

Once I asked someone who was married, “How are you?” He told me, “*Baruch Hashem* – I learn in a certain *Kolel*, and I have a few children...” I said to him, “I asked you how *you* are, not about what you do.”

This is how many people are – they look at the various details of their lives, but they aren't connected to themselves.

This is also why many friends in yeshiva eventually move on in life and forget about each other. I remember two *bochurim* in my yeshiva who has been very close friends with each other. They both got married, and later I met one of them. I asked him how his other friend is doing. He told me, “I don't know – I have no idea whatever happened to him.”

People just go through life, even their relationships, and don't really connect to others – and they enter marriage with the same mindset. They were never really connected to their friends – only superficially. Our relationships with others have to be real. How are we connected with others? Are we really connected to others from our soul, or only superficially? No one has to feel a deep connection to a cashier in a store; but what about your own friends? If a person is learning with a *chavrusa* for half a year already, does he feel any connection to him?

When a person only superficially connects to others, he goes into marriage the same way. He will not be able to have a deep and true connection to his wife. His relationship with Hashem is the same way – it will only be superficial.

The way a person acts with his friends is the way he will treat his wife. If he only had superficial friendships with his friends, he will not have a true connection to his wife. When a person has problems in his marriage, it's not because of his wife. The problems started before marriage – with himself. It shows that something was majorly lacking in his connection with Hashem.

It is written in *Koheles*, “*My son, give your heart to me.*” Just like we are supposed to learn Torah, *daven* and do *mitzvos* from the depths of our heart – to be connected to what we do, with our heart – so are we supposed to get married out of the depths of our heart. Most people don't even know what real love is, and their whole marriage is superficial. When a person gets married, he finds out how superficial he was all this time.

It is all because a person hasn't accessed his true, inner self yet. A person cannot really deal with others when he hasn't really dealt with himself yet.

Most people don't even love themselves the way they should. If a person only feels a love for himself as he's eating pizza, when he's experiencing physical enjoyment, then he doesn't really love himself.

Why did previous generations not have so many *Shalom Bayis* problems? Many answers are given for this. One of the *Gedolim* said that it is because in previous generations, people had more *pnimiyus* (innerness), they were more connected to themselves, so they were able to connect to others with ease.

Marriage is the key to love. If a person gets married because he wants to know what true love is – he will have a successful marriage.

This is why we have to have differences in our marriage. The point of marriage is to reveal the true love from the depth of our hearts, which is only reached through dealing with differences. But if a person just continues to live his own selfish existence, he views differences with his spouse as a nothing but a nuisance in his life.

If we realize that our life is about why we came onto this world and to reveal the depths of our heart, our whole life will change. This is when we realize that the purpose of life is to become unified to all of Creation – to unify with differences – in order to become unified with Hashem.

Many married Kolel men have a complaint that because their wives need them to help around the house, they can't learn as much Torah as they want to. But such a complaint shows that the person doesn't understand that the purpose of marriage is to *achdus*, unity. We unify our existence with Hashem only through first dealing with differences with our spouse, which helps us become more and more unified with our spouse, which helps us realize that the purpose of our existence is to unify with Hashem.

When a person is unaware that the purpose of marriage is this *achdus*, he is bewildered in marriage, because he looks at the “*sugya*” of marriage as a separate *sugya* in his life that he must deal with, unrelated to the purpose of life. But a person who sees marriage as a way to reveal his unity sees marriage as the same “*sugya*” as any other *sugya*; he sees how everything, including marriage, is all one big “*sugya*” – the “*sugya*” of *achdus*, of revealing our unity with Hashem.

Let's give another example that explains the concept of *achdus*. When a person sees problems in his children, he thinks he has to do “*chinuch*” on his child and train him to have good *middos*. He thinks that he has to know the “*sugya*” of *chinuch*...but did he ever work on himself personally before he does *chinuch* with his child? Some people go to a shiur on *chinuch* are told told, “You must express your love for your child.” Why do people have to be told this? Before this, a person has to first reveal his own deep love for his children! There has to first be *achdus* before anything.

The same is true with marriage. If a person's wife insults him, it's not enough for a person to be silent and think, “This is saving me from *Gehinnom*.” This is not all there is to marriage; marriage is supposed to be a powerful tool to reach *achdus*.

Without being aware that the goal of life is to arrive at this universal *achdus*, a person might think that he has many obligations in life: he has to learn Torah; he has to do *chinuch* on his children; he has to engage in *kiruv*...and he also has to have *shalom bayis*. He looks at all of these things as ‘separate’ parts in his life and he doesn't see how they are all supposed to be interconnected. But this is an incorrect attitude. They are all really about one purpose alone: *achdus*.

When a person doesn't have the right attitude toward marriage we are saying, he is not only mistaken, but he will live his entire with something that is majorly missing. He is missing *achdus*; he doesn't know of the relationship between *Klal Yisrael* and Hashem, and he doesn't see how everything is supposed to connect.

Marriage is not merely about taking good advice and understanding its complex wisdom. It is about revealing our *achdus*. It is not just about dealing with differences and learning how to get along with a wife, in the superficial sense. It is all a tool for us to reveal *achdus* in Creation.

Some marital problems need professional help, but if a person has this proper attitude toward marriage, ninety-nine percent of marriages would be fine. Marriage is about revealing the *achdus* from the depths of heart. There do exist some people who have a hard time revealing anything from their heart, because their hearts are hardened. But in most marriages, the way to improve our marriage is by revealing the desire for *achdus*, from one's heart – by understanding that everything we do in life is about revealing the *achdus* in Creation.

Life – and marriage – is about putting our heart into everything we do. Most people are bogged down by life and are just moving along with the flow of life, and their hearts are missing. But if we put our hearts into everything – into our marriage, into our children, into our relationships and into our connection with Hashem – then we will uncover from within ourselves a true, deep love in all that we do, revealing the *achdus* in all of Creation with Hashem.

## 4.2 | *Why Did We Get Married?*

### *A Question For Married Men*

The giving of the Torah is termed by our Sages as “*a groom going to greet her bride.*” Hashem is like the groom, and we are like His bride.

All of thus have two marriages – we have a marriage with Hashem, and we each have a marriage with our own spouses. Our marriage with our spouses is a reflection to our marriage with Hashem, which was through the giving of the Torah.

What indeed is the reason that we need to get married? And why is the giving of the Torah called our marriage with Hashem?<sup>165</sup>

We didn’t marry a woman because we thought that she comes from the same *shoresh haneshamah* (soul-root) as us, even if we went to a Kabbalist who tells us that she does. Nor did we mainly marry a woman because she’s interesting, or because she has good *middos*, or because she is physically attractive. Of course, these are all **factors** in considering one’s *shidduch*, but what is the main motivating factor of why a person gets married?

### *It Doesn’t Make Sense To Get Married!*

We will now analyze a very sensitive point. Let’s say a man marries a woman because he finds her very interesting. What will happen by the time he reaches the age of fifty or sixty? He will lose interest in her! People by nature change their interests over time. What was interesting to you at the age of twenty is no longer interesting to you when you are older.

We are asking a big question here. When a person gets married, does he realize how much he is doing, what he is getting into? Does he think about his decision and what it will entail?

Logically, it does not make sense to get married! There are many ways how it can go wrong, and your plans don’t always work out. So why are we getting married when it does not really make sense for us to have a harmonious relationship, with someone who will be living the rest of our life with??

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<sup>165</sup> During the *derashah*, someone said, “We got married to have children.” The Rav responded: “You got married just to have children? *That’s the whole reason* you got married? If not for having children, are you saying there is no reason to get married...? I will prove to you that you didn’t get married just to have children. If that would have been your sole motivation, then you would have married any woman in the world, as long as she can have children. After all, the purpose is for the children...Obviously, then, you didn’t get married just to have children. Sure, you wanted children, but that’s not the entire reason motivating you to get married!”

### *To Really Love Your Spouse*

Do we love our child because we find his personality to be interesting to us? If, let's say, your child does not have a personality that interests you, wouldn't you still love him? Yes. We love someone who is a part of us, and thus we always love our child, no matter the circumstances.

But do we realize that our **wife** is also part of ourselves? Adam said about his wife, Chavah, "*She is a bone of my bone, a flesh of my flesh.*" A wife is a part of our flesh, a part of our bone. So we see that choosing a wife should not be based on how interesting she is to you. A man must know that the love for his wife shouldn't be dependent on any external factors; it must be an intrinsic kind of love.

Maybe you'll counter that Adam didn't have a choice, because there was only one woman in the world then for him to marry. However, Adam said about her that there are two aspects to his relationship with her: "*flesh of my flesh*" is their external connection ("*basar*"\flesh has the same letter as *shever*, which means to break, because this part of the connection can break), and "*bone of my bone*" is referring to a more inner kind of connection, an unbreakable connection, the same way a father loves his child no matter what.

When a person gets married, at the beginning of the marriage, he goes into it resolving that it will be forever, that it will be a "bone of my bone" relationship, and he is seriously committed to making it work. But as the marriage goes on, a man often loses this initial attitude towards his spouse, and he begins to focus on the "flesh of my flesh" aspect of the relationship.

After a person gets married, he needs to change his perspective with which he went into marriage with. First, we will explain what the idea of this is - and then we will expand upon it.

### *Before And After Marriage*

A couple married for many years – was the husband the same as when they are newlyweds? No. What about her? She is also not the same anymore. They have both changed dramatically as the marriage goes on. Their views on life change, they are each more mature, they see things very differently now than what they were like when they first got married.

So how can it be that these two very different people got married in the first place? Any sensible person knows that things would not go as planned. So how did he get married in the first place? Where is the logic in this?

Young people usually don't think. Even a very bright and intelligent person cannot explain, logically, why he should get married. Two different people, who have very different goals and perspectives as the years go on, are put together in a marriage. Why do we get married when we know it's so hard to live together in peace and agree with each other? Does it make any sense to anyone here?? And even if you start out getting along, who says that you'll both get along for all your life and that things won't change?

In a scenario where a woman first got married when she was orphaned, and she wanted a husband to father her and be like the replacement father she's looking for, and the husband indeed fills that role for her - then it makes sense that she will appreciate her husband very much and that they will have a great

marriage. In every other case, though, where the young woman getting married doesn't need her husband *that* much to fill in for her emotional needs, why should the marriage work?

We can't fall asleep at night when we are trying to marry off our kids – we're so nervous that our child won't make the same mistake that you did...! So why did you get married in the first place when you had no idea what you were getting into??

Now, if a person is getting married because he wants his wife to change him and help him, that's a different story. But is there anyone who gets married with that intention? If we know for sure that this couple is getting married in order to change themselves, fine; but usually, the couple gets married assuming that everything will work out and go as planned, and they aren't planning on working on themselves and changing. So how does any average couple get married, if it really doesn't make any sense that they will live together in harmony?!

### *Do You Know Your Wife?*

Another point: Is there anyone here who thinks he knows his wife? How did you get married to someone whom you did not know? It doesn't make any sense that we are married to someone whom we don't know when we have been living with this person for many years. Does anyone think of this before they get married??

I am not asking you these questions for entertainment. From a logical, human perspective, it does not make sense to get married!

From a logical perspective, it makes sense that there a lot of divorces going on today; many people aren't getting married for the right reasons, and usually, a person's plans for his marriage don't work out. Although there are a lot more divorces going on today, it's actually a wonder that **any** of these people aren't divorced! Logically speaking, there should be even more divorces today than the already rising number....

### *You Didn't Marry The Wrong One*

After a man gets married and he finds problems in his marriage, he feels disillusioned, upset at himself for making such a mistake; he feels the horrible feeling of, "I chose the wrong one!!" But the mistake isn't that he chose the wrong one. The mistake is that he never thought about what marriage is and that things won't go as planned; he went into the marriage without anything real thinking beforehand.

So the mistake is not about the *person* whom he chose to marry – there is nothing wrong with the person he married! Rather, the mistake is that he misunderstands what *marriage* was about.

### *Imagination Exercise: Going Back Into The Past*

Imagine yourself going back to the past, before you got married. Would you marry your wife all over again, now that you know what you've lived with your wife for many years and you know what she's all about? Would you still marry your wife?

Really, I'm asking you what you would actually do! Would you perhaps do more research on your future wife and then rethink your decision? Would you try dating someone else...? How would you choose to get married, if you would go back into the past now and get married all over again?

Our Sages said that your wife is destined to you, 40 days before the fetus is formed. We understand that *parnassah* (livelihood) requires you to work for it a while. When you work hard, it makes sense that you will make money; after all, you put hard work into it, so logic dictates that you'll succeed at your job. But marriage doesn't work like that; it's not a logical process.

There's an exception, of course - two of the same type can get married and their marriage will work out beautifully: Two foolish people can get married, because any foolish man can find a foolish woman. But any smart and logical person would not want to marry someone else; it doesn't make any sense for any logically thinking person to want to get married, when the odds of having a good marriage are so unlikely.

### *Fixing The Past: Put Emunah Into The Picture*

For all that we go through in life, we need **emunah** (faith in G-d). If someone doesn't have that much *emunah*, maybe he'll survive, but when it comes to marriage, though, he will simply not be able to handle it at all. Marriage requires much more *emunah* than in other areas of life.

Let's return to the first question we asked. Why does a person want to get married? The main reason should be entirely based on your **emunah!** You should go into marriage having *emunah* that this is your destined spouse. That perspective is what you should have towards your future spouse, and that perspective is what you need to carry over into your marriage.

If a person doesn't have strong *emunah* and he gets married, then he has gotten married without any sensibility. He has not thought about it all and he has not acted sensibly.

However, even if a person got married with a degree of *emunah*, it can still happen that he'll get disillusioned soon after he gets married. He realizes that she's way different than what he thought she was, and he might regret his *emunah* and think, "I didn't fathom it would be *this* hard." And if he decides to get divorced so that he can find a better wife, he's making the same mistake all over again. He hasn't yet changed his way of thinking, so there's no reason why he should get it right the second time.

### *Go Back Into The Past and Strengthen Your Emunah*

If you could go back into the past, would you be willing to get married to the wife that you know and recognize, based on complete *emunah*?

If "yes", then that really means that you can deal with your marriage even now. If "no", then perhaps a marriage counselor might help you - but it won't get to the root of the marriage problems. Without being prepared to live with **emunah**, the root of a person's marriage problems will never be solved!

*In Conclusion*

I hope that you don't think I'm telling this to you simply because I'm a rabbi who was asked to give a *shiur*. It is coming from personal experience with others over the years, and from recognizing what life is about; and these are very deep conclusions of what I've seen. The words here need a lot of personal reflection in order to understand.

**There is almost no one** today who is willing to get married purely on his *emunah*, and this is really the root of all marriage problems in this generation!

Most people are not developed in their *emunah*, and therefore, people are approaching marriage in the same way they view making a living, as if you mainly have to do "a lot of effort" and also have "a little *emunah*" as a side thing. But it's supposed to be the other way around in marriage: **Marriage is mostly *emunah***, with just a little effort besides for that. It's already a recipe for failure when people get married without having solid *emunah*.

Clarify these words here to yourself deeply. (If you want to hear more about this, please come to Eretz Yisrael so that I won't need to come here.) Think about the words here, analyze it well and contemplate them - and then you will see success in your marriage.

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### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

**Q1: *What does it mean that the Torah is our marriage to Hashem?***

**A:** The Torah is described by our Sages as our "marriage ring" to Hashem. Through having *emunah* in Hashem, they accepted that "ring" and became "betrothed" in marriage to Hashem.

**Q2: *If marriage can only survive on emunah, how is it that gentiles can get married and stay married (when they clearly don't have emunah)?***

**A:** The divorce rate by the gentiles is 60%<sup>166</sup>, and even the 40% who are married are only married because they'd rather not marry someone else....

**Q3: *What is the meaning of "Ezer K'Negdo" – That a wife is a helpmate who "opposes" you?***

**A:** We are taught by Chazal that there are two approaches to this. One approach is that it is only if a person merits this, he merits a wife who helps him. Another approach is that a person realizes that even though his wife opposes him, that itself helps him; just like a person realizes that "*I place Hashem is opposite me always*" – that when Hashem is opposite him, Hashem helps him by opposing what a person wants – so can we understand that although one's wife appears to be opposing him, this itself is a help for him; he should nullify himself to the opposition and realize that he needs it in order to become improved.

All challenges are meant to complete us. A **man's** soul is rooted in the element of **water**, and a **woman's** soul is mainly from **fire**, and we know that water and fire oppose each other. Marriage brings these two opposites together; the word *shomayim* (heaven) is a combination of the words *aish* (fire) and

<sup>166</sup> Editor's Note: This *derasha* was given in 5773 (2013).

*mayim* (water), because in Heaven, opposites can unite in harmony. So too, although a man and woman are of opposite natures, they can still have a harmonious union together, when they live correctly. But without having this essential understanding towards marriage, they fall from the “*shomayim*” and into the *eretz* \earth....

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