



Parshat Vayitzei: Harmonizing Household Harmony

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Rachel called her firstborn son Yosef. She said, "Asaf Hashem et cherpasi." Hashem has gathered in my shame. Rashi brings a midrash that explains that when a woman has no children she has no one to blame for mishaps in the home that cause her embarrassment. What did Rachel really mean?

A Jewish home is like a miniature sanctuary. Anything that can tip the balance of marital harmony must be weighed carefully. Our forefathers and foremothers were very righteous. They were attuned to perfect *shalom bayit* (marital harmony). Therefore, Rachel celebrated the fact that now there would be nothing that would come between her and her husband.

Fire and water can co-exist because they have one common desire, to fulfill Hashem's will. Likewise, a couple with differing temperaments can learn to live harmoniously if Hashem is with them in the marriage.

Rashi rules that a *mezuzah* must be placed vertically while Tosfot rules that it must be placed horizontally. To resolve this disagreement, we place the *mezuzah* at a slant. The *mezuzah* is one of the first things we see upon entering the home and it conveys an important message. You cannot be rigid if you want a secure happy home. You have to learn to bend and compromise.

This is our challenge. We live in a throwaway generation, one that doesn't view selfishness as a vice. It takes hard work to refine our middot, to learn to give in, and to put others before ourselves. The key is to accentuate the positive. People who are treated with respect will seek to make themselves worthy of it.

In Birchat Hashachar we say, "*Hanoten lasechvi binah.*" We thank Hashem not only for our own ability to think, but for every ability of discernment found in this world, even the discernment of the rooster. Although Rachel was so filled with thanks for Yosef, she

remembered to thank Hashem even for the small matter that her *shalom bayit* would now be different. When we are grateful to Hashem, we feel His closeness.

Grey clouds seem ominous but are really a blessing in disguise. They will ultimately give forth life giving rain. Similarly, we must recognize Hashem's goodness even within our struggles. The Ktav Sofer explains that every time Leah gave birth, Rachel was reminded of her childlessness. When she had Yosef, Hashem gathered up all her pain and gave her an extraordinary son commensurate with what she had suffered. She recognized that it was precisely the cherpah, the shame that brought her to greater elevation. Likewise, in Tehilim King David says "*Odcha ki anitani vat'hi li lishua.*" I thank Hashem for the difficulties because it has brought me salvation. Our challenges ultimately lead to the greatest blessings. It is precisely the pain and suffering we face that bring out our true potential.

Partners For Life: Echoes of our Bond With Hashem # 2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The divine aspect of marriage is divided in three stages, *chupah*, *kiddushin*, and *yichud*. Kiddushin literally means to make holy. The bride becomes sanctified to her husband under the *chupah* canopy, which signifies their new home. The third and final stage is *yichud* where they become united as one.

The Torah concept of *kedusha*, holiness, is related to the concept of separation. Hashem is completely different and set apart in an exalted way. He is above everything. In *Kedusha* we say, "*Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh Hashem.*" Hashem is sanctified in three ways: in this world, the next world, and forever.

Since the ultimate separation signifies divinity, the Torah concept of *kedusha* applies to anything related to Hashem. The *beit hamikdash* is called the house of holiness because it is closer to Hashem than any other place in the world. A *sefer Torah* is holy because it is closer to Hashem than any other book in the world. We are called *am kodosh*, the holy nation, because we are closer to Hashem than any other people. This is also

the meaning of *kiddushin*, the first stage of marriage. The groom and bride are a separate entity, different than anyone else in their exalted state. The sanctity of marriage brings them closer to Hashem.

Holiness requires abstinence and Jewish marriage has many restrictions. The bride and groom must understand that much like the *beit hamikdash* or a *Sefer Torah*, they are now dedicated to Hashem. He shares His holiness with them and they must safeguard this closeness in their marriage.

The Gemara says, "*Ish v'isha shalom beineihem shechina sheruya beineihem.*" If there is marital harmony, the Divine Presence rests between a husband and wife. Each of us has a wellspring of untapped holiness reflected in our *Tzelem Elokim* (Divine Image). If marriage is a special elevated connection, the *Tzelem Elokim* gives strength to that bond. When we look at our spouse, we should focus on that holiness, that *Tzelem Elokim*, which is the other half our soul.

The second stage of marriage is the *chupah*, which signifies a house. The bride and groom halachically form a *reshut*, a single unit. The concept of a *bayit* is to shelter its inhabitants. When the couple stands under the *chupah* and create their home, Hashem puts his protection around them. The Torah speaks of three levels of dwelling with Hashem: the courtyard, the house, and the temple. The courtyard is *kedusha*, separation. The house is the *chupah*, a positive relationship. There is strength between husband and wife and Hashem gives it more strength. The temple is *yichud*, when husband and wife come together as one and invite the *Shechina* to be with them.

Marriage is really the meeting of two halves of one soul with Hashem. It is entering under the divine wings of the *chupah* and joining Hashem in a most intimate sublime relationship where one loses oneself entirely in divine *yichud*.

May we merit to encapsulate the essence of *kiddushin*, *chupah*, and *yichud* at every



Chodesh Kislev

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shoshie Nissenbaum

The Bnei Yissachar explains that the month of Kislev is *kas, lamed, vav*, the concealed thirty six. This alludes to the hidden thirty six *tzaddikim* who live in every generation. It also refers to the first thirty six hours in which a great light shone in the world. Kislev's essence is about the *ohr haganuz*, the hidden light.

The commentators explain the connection between Parshat Naso, the sacrifices of the *Nesiim* (tribal leaders) and Parshat Baha'alotcha. Aharon was distraught that he couldn't participate in the sacrifices. Hashem comforted him with the privilege of lighting the menorah.

The midrash Bamidbar Rabba relates a parable of a king who sent word to his beloved friend that he was coming for a visit. When the friend saw all the pomp and honor accompanying the king, he was ashamed by the simple fare he had prepared and he quickly hid it. When the king entered the poor cottage and saw the bare table he wondered about it. When the friend explained, the king said, "I'm not interested in what you own, but

in you." Although Hashem has everything, he tells us, "The little lights of your menorah are more precious to me than all the stars in the sky."

Hashem desires the works of our hands. He wants our *ratzon* (will) and our expression of love for Him as actualized through the Torah and *mitzvot*. Chanuka is about turning Greek darkness into light. A Torah is crafted from the hide of a cow, not such a clean animal. Through an involved process, it becomes a holy Torah. This is the message of Chanuka. Hashem tells us we can light up the world by working hard to refine ourselves.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin says, "A person is commanded to say, the world was created for me." Within each person there are thirty six hidden lights and we are like a *lamed vavnik*, a hidden *tzaddik*. It is up to us to reveal the holiness within ourselves and other people.

All the letters in the word *Yavan* are straight. The Greek mindset was, 'What you see is what you get.' This kind of mentality has seeped into our society and we have to fight against it. A person must ask himself, "Am I the

sum total of my accomplishments or is there a deeper side to me?"

When we add the letter 'hey' to *Yavan* it becomes *yonah* (dove). A dove is always faithful to his mate. When we inject faith into our life, when we remember that there is something more profound, we can begin to reveal the hidden light within us. In Parshat Noach, we read how the dove came back to the ark with an olive branch. Hashem says just as the dove brought light to the world, the Jews will bring light to the world with the olive oil. This refers to the menorah in the *beit hamikdash* and Chanuka. We are the *yonah*. Our *avoda* (mission) in the month of Kislev is to reveal the points of righteousness in ourselves and others.

The sum total of lights on Chanukah is thirty six, which is what the holiday is about. The stories we tell about *lamed vavniks* who appeared so coarse and uncouth aren't just folklore. They teach that within each of us, no matter how far we have fallen, is Kislev, the thirty six hidden lights waiting to be revealed.

Rebbetzin's Perspective I: Class # 15

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

Question:

My husband works a full day and I work half a day running a day care center in my home. Recently my husband joined a night kollel and I am very happy that he is learning. However, I feel stressed out watching other people's kids and my kids all day with no time for myself. I have one child in particular who is very challenging and does not fall asleep easily at night. I wish my husband was home in the evenings to discipline him. I feel guilty suggesting that he leave kollel so I could have a breather. What can you suggest?

Answer:

Nothing happens if a kid doesn't fall asleep right away. Tell him he can read or do some other quiet pursuit as long as he stays in his room and doesn't wake the others. Eventually he'll fall asleep on his own.

As for you, no matter what else you have to scale down, buy simpler food, make do with less clothing, you must designate one night a week as your own. Leave the kids with a babysitter and do something you enjoy. You need time for yourself. Go swimming, visit friends, travel to the Kotel. Spend whatever you need for as long as you need to, so that you have that breathing

space. If none of this is possible, try to prepare for Shabbat on Thursday and leave things done, so you can take a break Friday afternoon. I know women who really couldn't cut things out of their budget who would switch off with each other one afternoon a week, so they could have some time without the kids.

Whatever it costs, make it happen.