



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

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The Tu B'Av Edition Torah Perspectives on Marriage

Building Harmony in the Home

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Marriage by Rabbi Beinush Ginsburg

In Sichot Mussar, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz discusses the question of why Rachel called her first son Yosef. Rashi writes that she could now blame her son for minor infractions in the home. Rav Shmuelevitz explains that she was happy that her husband would now not get upset with her as he would assume that their son was guilty. Our Sages ask, would our great forefather Yaakov who loved Rachel dearly, get upset over such misdemeanors? The Sichos Mussar answers that Rachel valued *shalom bayit* so much that she was overjoyed with the birth of Yosef which would prevent even a slight sense of strife in her home.

When the angels visited Avraham to tell him about the impending birth of Yitzchak, they asked about the whereabouts of Sarah. Chazal say that they wanted Avraham to say she was in the tent in order to endear her to her husband. Rav Shmuelevitz writes that despite decades of a wonderful marriage, the angels went out of their way to ask an extraneous question in order to add to Avraham and Sarah's *shalom bayit*. This proves that even if one is happily married for many years, working on one's marriage should be top priority.

Shalom Bayit is one of the most critical factors in bringing up healthy, well adjusted children to

serve Hashem. Children need a warm, happy home to thrive and grow. Rabbi Orlowek writes that the greatest single factor on how it feels to be home is how parents get along with each other. A loving, caring, home is the best defense against the outside world. If one spouse does not treat the other with respect, it undermines the *chinuch* in the home as the children learn to disrespect their parent.

Middot-good character traits and *simchat hachayim*-joy of life are the main ingredients of *shalom bayit*. A person should strive to be calm, flexible, forgiving, and patient. Rabbi Abraham Twerski explains that the *mezuzah* is placed on the door at an angle as a halachic compromise to satisfy both opinions that hold it should be placed vertically and horizontally. When one walks through the door and glances at the *mezuzah*, it should serve as a reminder to be flexible and compromise for the sake of *Shalom Bayit*.

One should keep in mind that many small disagreements start because husband and wife come from different backgrounds and upbringings. Understanding this and trying to judge favorably can significantly lower tension in the home. Rabbi Orlowek writes that disappointment is the difference between expectation and reality. Practicing the "10 second rule" will

prevent you from automatically reacting negatively. This means saying, "I would like things to be like this but it is ok if things turn out differently."

Rav Dessler writes that *ahavah*-love comes from the root word, "*hav*"-to give. Giving sends waves of love from the giver to the receiver. When you enter marriage with the focus on giving rather than receiving, your chances of succeeding are high. Rabbi Orlowek writes that one should live with the maxim, "If it matters to you it matters to me." Doing things happily for your spouse because it matters to them will surely strengthen your marriage.

Husband and wife should put extra effort into maintaining perfect *shalom bayit* at the Shabbat table. This is mainly where the children see their parents interact and is what they will bring with them when they eventually marry. The Rema writes of an intriguing custom that one should look at the Shabbat candles before beginning the Friday night Kiddush. One of the reasons for Shabbat candles is to increase *Shalom Bayit* in the home. In a sense, this custom is hinting to us that *Shalom Bayit* is connected to Shabbat and is a critical aspect in building a warm Jewish home filled with Torah and Mitzvoth.

Spiritual Elevation of Physical Reality

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Herschel Reichman on the Chassidic Perspective of Marriage

Judaism views marriage as one of the core aspects of Torah living. In fact, the first incident in the Torah involving people was the story of the marriage of Adam and Chava. In addition, the first commandment in the Torah is "*Peru U'revu*"-Be fruitful and multiply.

The highlight of the marriage ceremony, that which captures much of what marriage is, are the *Sheva Brachot*-Seven Blessings, which are recited under the wedding canopy. The first blessing is "*Shehakol bara l'kovdo*"-Who has created everything for His honor. How does this blessing fit with the concept of marriage and why was it placed first?

Torah connects us to our spiritual selves and to Hashem, who is completely spiritual. How do we understand the dichotomy between our

baser instincts and spirituality? How can one who is pursuing the physical pleasures of this world simultaneously develop his spiritual self? In essence, we can ask this very question of marriage. How can marriage which seems so physically oriented be considered one of the greatest mitzvot?

The Shem MiShmuel explains that this is precisely the message of the first blessing under the chuppah, "*Shehakol bara lekovdo*." Hashem created everything in this world for his honor and it is our task to recognize this. Hashem's plan was for us to elevate the sparks of spirituality embedded within nature. It is a challenge to discover spirituality within such mundane acts as eating or drinking. However that is the purpose that Hashem placed us on

this earth.

Marriage is the embodiment of this concept. Its purpose is to bring honor to Hashem by intertwining the physical and spiritual and forming a vessel to elevate the divine sparks. Marriage is also the first primary experience where this melding of polar forces comes to the fore. It cannot be entirely physical as all physical matter naturally disintegrates over time. A Jewish couple recognizes the divine connection inherent in their union. They seek to increase Hashem's honor and see their marriage as an opportunity to develop divine sparks of holiness. A Jewish marriage includes three partners, man, woman, and Hashem. Together they set out to build an eternal edifice to increase the honor of Hashem in this world.

Tu B'Av and the Essence of Marriage

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Tu B'Av by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Ohr Hachaim states that everything in this world has both male and female aspects. The male aspect gives forth and the female aspect receives, builds, and gives birth. People live fragmented lives and then become whole through their interaction with others. Fragmentation is inherently necessary. Hashem is the only being that is completely male without any female element. He does not need to be provided for by anyone. He is the male of the world and all humankind is the female. Man receives and builds in accordance with His will. Hashem is manifested as Chochma-the momentary flash of creative inspiration which is called Abah. Humankind is Binah- containment, as we take that flash and develop it further so that it takes on form and structure. This is called Imah. The combination of Chochma and Binah creates Daat-the unborn child, which is the ability to make moral decisions. The world is a meeting place for Chochma and Binah. Malchut and Tiferet work in tandem with Chochmah and Binah. The trait of Malchut means committing to making something happen on Hashem's terms. This comes

together with Tiferet to create an elusive wholeness.

Tu B'av is an auspicious day to think about marriage and what it truly means. It involves reaching towards that sheleimut of Tiferet and Malchut. This means approaching the dating scene with the attitude of, "I am in this to give and build," instead of, "What can I receive?" A young woman needs to ask herself, "What can I do with my desire to build and with whom can I build?" The young man needs to ask, "Can she receive and build with what I will provide?" There has to be an elevated vision rather than just a desire for pleasure, honor, and filling ones practical needs.

A time of destruction is also a time of rebuilding. In order to achieve actualization as a people we need a period of mourning, of seeing what we are not and what we don't have. The decrease in joy creates a yearning for the redemption. Similarly, one should enter the shidduch process with the recognition that one cannot build by oneself and one cannot give meaningfully if there is no one to receive and build with it. There is a profound yearning for completion. The ultimate marriage is the

combination of chochma, binah, tiferet, and malchut.

One should marry with the goal to make Hashem known in the world and to reveal goodness in each other, the world, and future children. A woman needs to look for a future husband whom she can revere and who will treasure her and provide the goodness with which she can build. A man needs to look for a woman who is credible, committed, and who will respect him and potentially be able to build what he wants to see built.

Tu B'av is meant to be a joyous day. Happiness comes from being able to say, "I am building, not receiving." The most exhilarating moments of a person's life are moments of achievement intertwined with connection. Unity means when both parties stop seeing themselves without the other, when self actualization becomes the actualization of "us". Let us strive to reach this level of supreme joy, selflessness, perfection, and true unity in our marriages.