

Teaching *from* Zion

"...for out of Zion shall come forth Torah
and the word of the Lord from
Jerusalem." – Isaiah 2:3

LOVE & MARRIAGE

*"Faith, hope and love
abide, and the greatest of
these is love."*

1 Corinthians 13:13



Netivyah נתיביה
Teaching from Zion

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About Netivyah

Netivyah in Hebrew means "the Way of the Lord." "The Way" was one of the names by which the early community of believers was known in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament). Paul says, "I worship the God of our fathers in accordance with the Way (which they call a sect). I continue to believe everything that accords with the Torah and everything written in the Prophets." (Acts 24:14 CJB). As followers of "the Way," we believe in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We try to be faithful to God's law (the Torah) and to the rest of Scripture—the Prophets and the Writings. We believe that the Messiah promised in God's word is Yeshua (Jesus), the one who "saves His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

More Information: www.netivyah.org

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News from Netivyah

At Netivyah we continue to teach God's word, show the love of Messiah to people in Jerusalem, and teach via the internet around the world. Hamotzi Food Distribution Center continues to provide food for Jerusalem families.

We are proud and grateful for the ability to help so many Israeli Messianic students to obtain higher education and become productive members of Yeshua's body in Israel. Higher education in Israel is costly, and most Israeli young people go to college after serving in the IDF, so they have to support themselves while studying. Many students work in coffee shops and restaurants with flexible hours and shifts to allow them to combine work with study. During the pandemic shutdowns and quarantines, students found themselves without work. It was especially hard for freshmen, since they had not worked before and were not eligible for government support. Our scholarship became especially critical to so many. One of them, Hilah, a young Ethiopian Jewish student from a small town in the South, is studying to become a social worker. She has it in her heart to help the weakest and the most vulnerable members of her community. She is a strong believer and is active in her home congregation. She told me that without our scholarship, it would be very hard for her to continue with her studies. Thank you for enabling us to bless so many in Israel!

As the challenges of the Covid pandemic continue to affect us, we use different means of media to encourage our brothers and sisters around the world. In the last year, we were able to publish Teaching from Zion magazine more frequently, providing our readers with unique teachings and insights into our faith, life, and society.

Speaking of society, the last TFZ issue dealt with the way Modernism affects our lives and the swift changes that society is facing today. Often, these changes have no real roots in our culture but are shaking the founding blocks of our communities, inflicting possible damage to the core aspects of our families and lives.

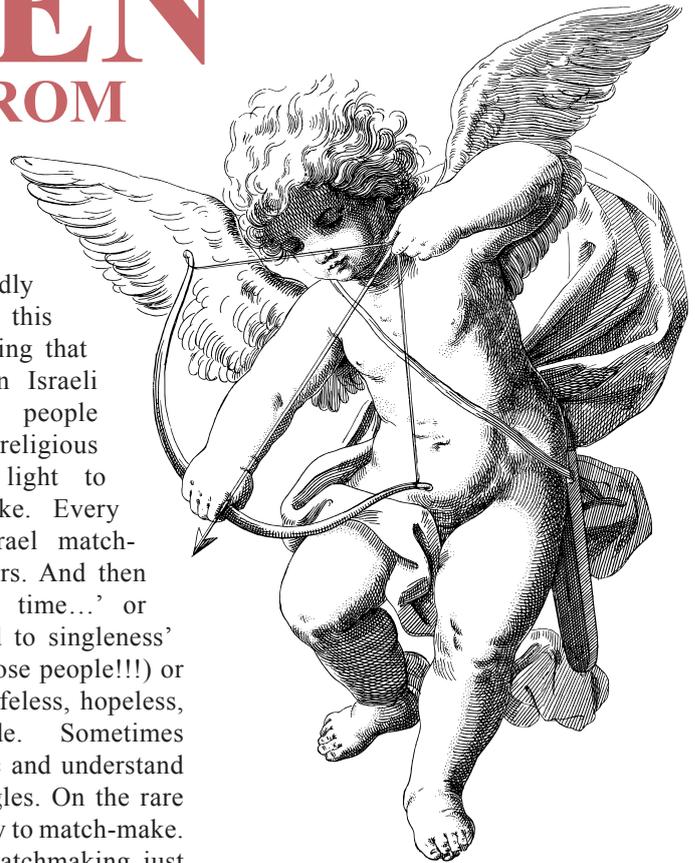
The most important building block of any society is family. Good supportive families are essential for stability and prosperity, yet it is often presented by the media as a burden to personal development. We decided to dedicate our next magazine to Love and Marriage – the foundation of every family.

Blessings to you and your loved ones,

Hannah Kovner and the Netivyah staff

A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THE COMMUNITY



Many consider the choice of a marriage partner to be one of the most important decisions a person will make in life. And yet, in many ‘modern’ cultures, this hugely important, life changing decision is left almost entirely up to the individual. Sadly, the divorce rate among believers is higher than necessary due in part, I believe, to the hands-off approach which is often taken within the community. In this article, I will discuss the practice of matchmaking—both within observant Jewish culture and the Bible. Further, I will advocate for a more engaged approach to helping single people connect with each other through community involvement. Is there a more proactive, helpful approach that the believing community could adopt?

Left on their own

When we have strong feelings about a person or thing, it is difficult to remain objective and discern the will of God. When the Body of Messiah leaves young people to find their own partner, we abdicate our responsibility to support and protect our members. More mature single adults in the believing community also need that support. Though they may be better equipped to avoid some of the pitfalls, they also need help expanding the search and feeling included. The lack of support can be very hurtful for them. An acquaintance who is

still looking for a godly spouse expressed it this way, “There’s one thing that drives me insane: In Israeli society, the secular people match-make. The religious people, from dati light to Orthodox, match-make. Every single person in Israel match-makes except believers. And then it’s like, ‘In God’s time...’ or ‘Maybe you’re called to singleness’ (I want to SHOOT those people!!!) or some other useless, lifeless, hopeless, soul-sucking attitude. Sometimes people are empathetic and understand what it’s like for singles. On the rare occasion, people do try to match-make. But on the whole, matchmaking just isn’t part of the Messianic culture.”

Marriage was originally God’s idea. After all, He is the one who said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18). Indeed, some would even assert that God was the first Matchmaker. We read in Genesis chapter two that God formed woman out of man and brought her to Adam. As Derek Prince wisely said, “The decision that the man was to marry proceeded from God, not from the man.” In his seminal book on Jewish marriage, *Made in Heaven*, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan points out that marriage and family are foundational elements in building strong, enduring societies—the best means for passing on Biblical

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values to the next generation. He says, “The family bond and its relationships are sanctified. Marriage and the family are integral parts of the divine plan.”

In Jewish tradition, the accepted ideal has always been to marry and raise up a family. The Talmud (Yevamoth 62b) clearly states that, “He who spends his days without a wife, has no joy, no blessing, no good.” One of the most common reasons is the Torah commandment to “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” in Genesis 1:28. But another verse that is commonly cited is Isaiah 45:18 which states that God formed the earth “to be inhabited”. The Word also says, “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD” (Proverbs 31:10). “A man’s greatest treasure is his wife—she is a gift from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22). Throughout scripture, it is clear that God highly values marriage and family. We, as the Body of Messiah, need to take it seriously and help to facilitate strong marriages and families.

Matchmaking

Simply put, matchmaking is proactively helping two well-suited single people know about each other and their mutual desire to be married. Both young adults and more mature single people are helped through this process. When a match is made, it is called a “shiddukh” in Hebrew and modern Jewish parlance. Interestingly, the word is derived from the Aramaic word “shadakh,” which means ‘to rest’ or ‘to experience tranquility.’ The person who helps to facilitate the Shiddukh is known as the shadkhan and can be a relative, friend, or professional matchmaker.

In observant Jewish communities, matchmaking is a common practice.

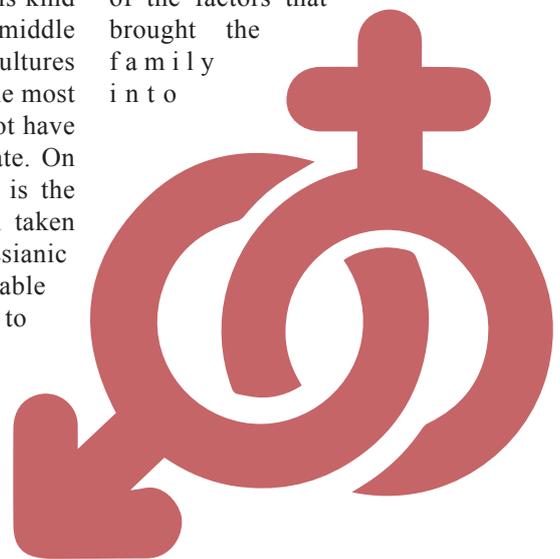
Typically, a single young man or woman will let their parents know that they are ready to start looking for a spouse. The family will let their friends and extended family know so that these can help to think about other single people who have expressed an interest in being married. Many factors are considered when evaluating a potential match such as family background and level of observance. If a potential match is found, then the families set up a first meeting for the couple in a discreet, public place. Care is taken to ensure that if the match does not work out, neither person needs to feel embarrassed. It is typical to see couples, dressed in their best, sitting together in a park or the lobby of a nice hotel. On a first ‘date’, they focus on getting to know each other. If there is mutual interest, then follow-up dates are set up. Both people know that the other is intent on finding a marriage partner, so it is common to discuss values, life goals, etc. at an early stage. It is not about going to the movies or ‘hanging out.’ The intention is to get acquainted without any physical contact.

Matchmaking needs to be done with the consent of the single person when they express readiness. I see this kind of matchmaking as a healthy middle ground. On one hand some cultures utilize arranged marriages. In the most extreme forms, the couple do not have a say in the choice of their mate. On the other end of the spectrum is the completely hands-off approach taken by many in the Christian/Messianic world which leaves finding a suitable marriage partner completely up to the young person.

Rabbi Kaplan highlights the historical and cyclical nature of this matchmaking process. “He knows that she is special.

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And she knows that he is unique. Of all the people in the world, they realize that they are meant for each other. It is as if it has been set up since the time of creation. And in a sense, it was. Behind every couple that meets, there is a chain of events that stretches back through the eons. If we trace the chain to its very beginning, we find that it actually does go back to creation.” How did they meet? Who was involved? Example: He is introduced to her by a friend of the family. But how did the family come to know this person? All of the factors that brought the family into



Indeed, the sages tell us that everyone has a partner preordained for them forty days before conception (popularly known as one's beshert).



contact with the friend must be taken into account. Let's say that the parents knew this friend in school. Why did they go to that particular school? What attracted them to that student, and what kept the friendship going over the years? And how did the girl become known to the family friend? We make many choices in life that affect later options and choices. For instance, perhaps the grandparents, two generations early, chose to move to a new city and settle in a certain neighborhood. That is how the parent's generation ended up at the school and met the friend. And this particular couple deciding to marry will affect the future generations that come from their union. It is an ongoing cycle of connections and choices.

There is a well-established factor in finding a mate known as propinquity—the physical or psychological closeness between people. You are much more likely to meet someone who lives close to you. This can be physical closeness or a shared ethnic or religious connection. In the Body of Messiah, we can use this propinquity to help people know and interact with others of similar faith and values, but it takes intention. Helping people know about a suitable marriage partner, even in a faraway place, is a huge good deed. Even though they were not in close proximity physically, through their family and social network, they are close in other perhaps more important ways.

Once the couple is married, the shadkhan is typically given a sizable cash gift from the families as a practical way to say, “thank you.” This practice also helps to reinforce the continuation of this process which is seen as invaluable to maintaining a strong and stable community.

Finding “The One”

Our culture today, at least in the West, places so much emphasis on finding “the one”—usually meant as the one who will make you the happiest. Is there such a thing as “The One”? In Jewish tradition, there is a concept called Beshert. Though it can refer to any fortuitous event (“I missed the appointment, but it must have been beshert, because the doctor that I finally met with helped me so much.”), it is most often used to mean a soulmate—the one person whom an individual is divinely destined to marry. Indeed, the sages tell us that everyone has a partner preordained for them forty days before conception (popularly known as one's beshert). However, it doesn't mean that finding or sustaining a marriage relationship is easy. Beshert doesn't mean that the person is perfect. Rather, marrying each other will help these two individuals to best carry out their God-given purposes in life. It may be the partners' shortcomings that help them overcome their own selfishness and develop the character necessary to fulfill their life mission.

Tradition and experience also tell us that marriage takes commitment and hard work. Whether there is one (and only one) person that each person is destined to marry is debatable. Might it also be that we find someone who is compatible and then make them “the one” through open dialogue and covenant faithfulness?

When you think about how to best find “true love”, would you rather look to Hollywood or God's Word? Hollywood often strongly gives the impression that two people “fall in love”. In some magical experience, a man and a woman look into each other's eyes and there is immediate “chemistry”

between them. Then the expectation is reinforced that this mystical bond will last a lifetime. In reality, a lot goes into two people building a lasting relationship that will stand the test of time and life's challenges. It takes serious commitment to stick with it and continue to work things out. Certain factors can significantly help to ensure that the couple's relationship will not collapse. These include shared faith and values, common interests, and support from family and friends. Research clearly shows that people who take their faith seriously and are actively involved in a faith community are far less likely to divorce.

Matchmaking in the Bible

Matchmaking has a long tradition within Jewish culture dating back to at least the second century C.E. This is not surprising since there are many examples of matchmaking in scripture and God's hand can often be seen in the events, such as earlier when we mentioned God creating the woman and bringing her to the first man in the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 24, Abraham in his old age sends his most trusted servant back to his homeland to find a wife for his beloved son, Isaac. He makes him swear that he will not take a wife for Isaac from among the local Canaanites. The servant asks what he should do if the young lady from Abraham's extended family refuses to return with him to marry Isaac. Should he then take Isaac back to the land that Abraham had left? And Abraham is adamant that he should not take Isaac out of Canaan since the LORD had promised it to Abraham and his descendants. He further assured the servant that God would send His angel before him to help make his journey successful. When the servant arrived at his destination it was no coincidence

that Rebekah was the first maiden to arrive at the well before he even finished his prayer.

Isaac follows the example of Abraham his father. He calls Jacob and says, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother" (Gen. 28:1-2). Again, it is no coincidence that Rachel is the first family member that Jacob meets when he arrives at the well in Haran. Abraham and Isaac must have seen the values of the local Canaanite tribes and known instinctively that marrying sons into them would make it nearly impossible to follow in the ways that God had directed them.

Also consider the story of Ruth. It is not a stretch to say that God led Ruth to the field belonging to Boaz, the kinsman redeemer. She had a desire to help find food for herself and Naomi, so she requested, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor" (Ruth 2:2). Naomi consented, and we read that Ruth set out. She saw some reapers harvesting, and the text says, "she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz." After she found favor in his eyes, it was Naomi who then wisely instructed Ruth to go to Boaz and make herself known. As a foreigner, Ruth would not have known either the family ties or the Biblical injunction to raise up offspring for a near male relative who dies. As an older and wiser woman, from within the culture, Naomi helped Ruth know how to properly navigate the matchmaking process.

Other examples include Esther when she was presented to King Xerxes, and he was intrigued (Esther 2); Zipporah

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was given to Moses after he rescued her and her sisters from the shepherds at the well (Exodus 2:16-21); and Gomer (a prostitute) was given to Hosea to marry as an example (Hosea 1:2-3). Scripture makes it clear that God highly values marriage and family.

Conclusion

When it comes to marriage and family, there is much within the Bible and Jewish tradition that is commendable. Matchmaking, done properly, is definitely one of those areas that the believing community can and should emulate and utilize much more frequently. Why not take a few minutes right now to think about people you know who are currently looking for suitable marriage partners. Prayerfully consider who you know that might make a good shiddukh for them. Then mention that person to your single acquaintance, or go further and facilitate a way for them to informally meet in a group setting. As we all take this concept of matchmaking to heart and apply it, our single members will be blessed, and the believing community will be strengthened.

OVER 40 YEARS OF MARRIAGE TO THE SAME PERSON?!

By Randi and Howard Bass

Oh yes, we applaud those long marriages and look admiringly at the faces that are reflecting, hopefully, some wisdom of life and living as well as love. “What is it?”, some ask. “What is your secret? What has kept you together all these years in a world so fraught with going your own way when the going gets tough? Is it just because you like each other and the going wasn’t that terribly, unbearably tough for you?” If one could peer into my inner-soul closet, they would find a well-read newspaper article, entitled “Marriage Survives Due to Death in the Family”. The date of that article would change every day, always indicating today’s date.

I will share a little background. When we got married, neither of us was actually a “believer”. (Well, we believed that there must be a God). Surprisingly, entering the new life in the Lord happened rather soon after our wedding, following a series of undeniable God-directions, pushing, and prodding that led to revelation, all of which quickly led to us to a safe crash-landing in Israel. New marriage, new country, new language, new people, and finally a church? Well, at that time it was a sort of a house-group of dear people

but each very different from the other! It was amusing and alarming all at the same time! We had to have an abiding faith without fear to go forward in our life, in our beginning marriage, and know that we had immigrated into the “Kingdom of God”, not just the country of Israel. So, imagine a paragraph, in that “article” I mentioned, all about living in a new place called the Kingdom of God, and to do that with any semblance of order you must die to yourself so that you can live fruitfully with God and your spouse in

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Love and marriage is a commitment of absolute trust towards one another to help each other through to the end where we receive the inheritance of eternal life together with the Lord.

marriage, so he/she won't run away!

This truth is in the verse, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). There are many other places in the New Testament that reiterate this truth.

As my husband writes, "Love is not necessarily a rational thing, but marriage is a definite choice to be made. Not in all cultures is that choice made freely by the two primary persons involved, but in every case, love is a definite choice.

Something "clicks" when two people sense that, "Ahhh, I have met the right person!", even if there may be a few question marks. Knowing in advance all about the other person, or how they will react in a certain situation, with us or without us, especially in a crisis, is just not possible. Nonetheless, in God's wisdom, marriage is meant to be a covenant, an agreement in which both parties fully commit to the other for life, however long that might be.

We both knew that a marriage covenant was something that, even as unbelievers, we believed in. We took our vows seriously. No, we didn't have any premarital counseling, but we do recommend that route. We soon discovered that it takes the "fear of God" (accountability to Him) to persevere and not break that covenant. In other words, far more is necessary than that beginning "love" to keep going

A wise man receives instruction and even likes to be corrected—yes, this is part of dying yet surviving. Hearing from the Lord, walking in the Spirit, and persevering in godliness leads to the slow process of surely, maturely dying to self to avoid a lot of misery!

in love, trust, and respect, no matter how wonderful Mr. Wonderful appeared in his marriage suit. Oh, there's that headline again about dying to survive and to thrive. Two people becoming a union, a male and female walking together in marriage, does not happen on its own. It's not about just being nice or not getting into arguments or even having common goals! A wise man receives instruction and even likes to be corrected—yes, this is part of dying yet surviving. Hearing from the Lord, walking in the Spirit, and persevering in godliness leads to the slow process of surely, maturely dying to self to avoid a lot of misery!

What's love got to do with it? My expressive husband writes: "Love is faithful. Giving up of oneself so that the other feels safe, secure, respected, and loved is what happens in a godly marriage. Ideally, there is affection and devotion and a gladness for being one another's. This is what the lover of our souls, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah,

desires from us because that is who He is to each of us. He is the ONLY one who does not need to be forgiven. Forgiveness is something that may not always be spoken and cannot be demanded, but it must become an integral part of our being."

God is so practical, so true to Himself, in instructing us to forgive. We can be so irritated or so very hurt, so right, before we pursue asking for forgiveness and giving forgiveness. So, communicate, discuss, and argue (without being argumentative) with your mate, but in the end, forgive.

We are very thankful that as over thirty-somethings, we were able to have and raise four children. This is where knowing that "these are God's children and you are in the Kingdom with them not just in your own family" is sobering, inspiring, and tiring! You don't have to even be parents to know how this period of raising kids can just sort of drive you

crazy year after year, even in model families (that we looked at in awe)! Only with our third child did we finally have a car.

Let the driving begin: driving them, driving others, paying for this new "member" of our family (the car), hauling stuff for children's Shabbat classes, being employed, hosting guests, hosting hostile grandfather (asking, 'Why do you live in Israel, anyway?'), music lessons, money pressure, always seeming to be late picking up everyone, forgetting to put on shoes going to car.... what day is it?...get out of my way!

This is where taking time to sit together as a family is so fruitful. Daddy leading a Bible time calms the week. Listening to our children did not always come naturally. It is helpful to try to read about and try to understand stages of child and teen development. Being a parent is being present, knowing what rules are for and what they are not for. Admitting a

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few faults to your children helps them to ponder their own character.

Catching your criticalness is just as important as making sure they have chores to do. Praising them for specific actions or achievements (not just for “being a good boy”) leads them to be more conscious (which is good for the comatose teen years). Let your children realize that they are called to be in His Kingdom for themselves. Your believing guests are in His Kingdom; they learn how big His world is, how different His people are from each other yet held together by faith in the One. We live by faith in His Kingdom with the fear of God, humility, enthusiasm, and hope, and they experience (without realizing it until later) that their parents are dying to themselves. Yeshua died so that we can have life, and we have life through repentance and faith, forgiveness of sins, knowing and believing that He overcame death. We don’t impart

religion to our children; we impart the life of the Messiah Yeshua.

Again, dear husband shares, “Love and marriage is a commitment of absolute trust towards one another to help each other through to the end where we receive the inheritance of eternal life together with the Lord, (even though the marriage relationship with our spouse, as we know it now, will no longer be).”

Yes, we are in this together, and God our Father, planned that we, created in His image, are to become one. As we pursue Him, it happens. But paradoxically, it happens, rather naturally, as we give up our own territory and believe and pursue His purposes for us. And so, we say together: “This is love and marriage: to help each one be, not only what God created us for, but more so, whom He redeemed us to be.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Married in April 1980 in Richmond, Virginia, Howard and Randi came to Israel in September of 1981 without knowing a soul in Israel and without any congregation or organization behind them. It was just a “call” they responded to immediately after salvation experience. By February 1982 they settled into an immigration center in Beer Sheva and have remained in Beer Sheva until present. Howard studied Political Science at Emory University in Atlanta but ended up working for two Israeli industrial engineering companies for 17 years. Randi has an MVA from Virginia Commonwealth University and taught papermaking and then English in the Israeli school system and teacher’s college. Their four children, now all married, grew up in Beer Sheva and survived the local school system, plus IDF, pretty well. The “tribe” has now increased to include five grandchildren. Without any plan of becoming a pastor, Howard now pastors, since year 2000, the local Nachalat Yeshua (Yeshua’s Inheritance) Kehila (congregation) which meets in the Old City section of Beer Sheva.

I CALL YOU FRIENDS

By Elhanan ben-Avraham

“Abraham believed God.... and he was called the Friend of God” (Jacob 2:23)

“I no longer call you servants...Instead, I have called you friends” (John 15:15)

These words spoken by the Messiah to his disciples were uttered at the celebration of Passover in Jerusalem. The central memorial of that festival is the remembering of Israel’s exodus from Egypt where a nation of slaves became a nation of free men and women. The long-standing Passover tradition is the singing of *avadim hayinu* (‘we were slaves’) ‘but now we are free’. It is in that context that Yeshua spoke those revolutionary words in Hebrew, the word for ‘servants’ being *avadim*, the same word for slaves. Thus, a closer translation would be, ‘No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.’

The Hebrew word for friends is *haverim*, from the singular *haver*, the root word meaning to be closely connected. It is written of Abraham, the father of all Israel and of the faithful, as well as of Ishmael, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God’ (James 2:23). The town in which Abraham and Sarah his wife are buried (as well as his sons Isaac and Israel, and their wives) is called Hebron (Hebrew: *Hevron*), and in Arabic *Al-Khalil*, both meaning ‘the friend’, after Abraham, the great friend of God. Thus, the allusion of Yeshua’s

pronouncement at the Passover was to that relationship that Abraham had with God as a friend. Yeshua’s work and mission was to restore that personal relationship between men and God as it was with Abraham. They would no longer be slaves to sin and thus enemies of God, or slaves even to God, but would now become close friends with God and to each other. That is the central message of the Gospel.

whether it is genuine or simply an act. A real friend is one who knows just how bad you can be and also how good. But patience, respect, love, and very often forgiveness are applied in maintaining that friendship (which includes marriage). That is the essential recipe given to the disciples of the Messiah who said to them, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Though sometimes easier said



Artwork by Elhanan ben-Avraham

What is a friend? A friend is one with whom we have a close and deep relationship of trust, love, and loyalty. A friend is one you can count on, who gives you the benefit of the doubt, often overlooking shortcomings. It also may be said that it is a long and lasting relationship which normally entails at times even misunderstandings and disagreements as do most long and close relationships. And it is often crisis that reveals the nature of a friendship,

than done, that is the intended universal objective of the Gospel.

At that same Passover, the Messiah said also, ‘Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ (John 15:13), which he would certainly do for not only his disciples the following day in crucifixion, but for all humankind that would trust in his kindness and grace who will call him Friend.

A friend is one with whom we have a close and deep relationship of trust, love, and loyalty. A friend is one you can count on, who gives you the benefit of the doubt, often overlooking shortcomings.

There is nothing quite so precious as old and true friends. They are like an old wool hunting shirt that has kept you warm in the blowing winds of winter and adversity—full of memories. They are also like your old faithful hunting dog that saw you miss the shot and spew obscenity and looked the other way and never brought it up again. Old friends are folks you have trusted and continue to trust because they have proven trustworthy, for without trust there cannot be friendship, or real love. Your real friends know your strengths and also your weaknesses, having weathered some good and bad times together and who love you despite both, appreciating you for who and what you are, not for what you should be or are not yet.

I have been blessed with a score of real old friends, several as long as seventy years so far, nearly twice the time my firstborn son has been alive. My business partner and I have known each other that long—since five years old—and have worked together successfully for nearly forty without a written agreement or even a handshake—just trust. Other long-time friends share a

very different political and even spiritual understanding from myself, and we have wrestled quite heatedly, but giving each other the benefit of the doubt, we continue tolerating, respecting, and loving one another as friends.

Old friends are those you may not speak with for years at a time, but when you reconnect, you pick up right where you left off without a hesitation in the conversation. They are folks who can be counted on to cover your back in a struggle, even if you may not be completely right. Those real friends, even when you aren't thinking of them, are like stars in your skies, that if one should disappear your night would be darker for lack of their light. My wife is my old friend at forty years so far, being through thick and thin, sick and sin, sharing memories and still laughing and in love, most of the time. My golden retriever is my loving friend at all times, day and night, never disappointing (and would expect to see in Heaven). Some people I have offered friendship, but they were either unwilling, unable, or unworthy. And the worst of pains is a trusted friend who has betrayed trust, which is irreparable as a broken spinal



Artwork by Elhanan ben-Avraham

cord. I have been the true friend to my children since they were born, though it may take time for them to understand that.

My big brother is my oldest of old living friends, who has known me since I was born seventy-five years ago, even before I knew him. And the LORD is the most amazing and faithful of old friends, also loving for who I am currently, not for what I should be, but never giving up on urging me forward toward that better goal. He said, “I call you friends,” and that is what counts in the end and beyond. Old friendship is perhaps the highest goal attainable for humanity, with our fellow creatures and with God—a treasure which may not be bought with money. May the communion we take, instituted on Passover eve, be not a mere ceremony, but be among friends indeed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elhanan ben-Avraham, born in 1945, is a professional artist, poet, writer, father of two, and grandfather of four, and he has been living in Israel since 1979. He has served in the IDF, taught the Bible internationally, published five illustrated books of poetry, painted two large Biblical murals in public buildings in Jerusalem, and most recently produced THE JERUSALEM ILLUSTRATED BIBLE, among many other works. He and his wife live in a quiet village in the Mountains of Judah.

ISH & ISHA

GOD'S PATTERN FOR MARRIAGE

By D'vorah Berkowitz

There is a Creator, and we are created. It would be wisdom for us the creation to understand that we are from the Creator Himself. We invite you, the reader, to begin your explorations of who you are within your marriage from within this first foundational thought.

To discover marriage as the Creator created it to be, we must discover the male and the female that we are. We must ask some very important questions. To ask these questions, we begin with the text of the creation of ish (איש) and isha (אשה), the man and the woman.

The Lord God formed ha adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became nephesh chayya. Genesis 2:7

This Hebrew term that tells us the creation that we are, what does it mean?

— nephesh is a life in the wholeness of that life, chayya alive/living. The term is very important to understand for us to then explore the creation that we are.

To understand who we are as husband and wife, we begin by understanding the creation that the Creator created us male and female to be husband and wife. Our Creator is telling us that He created ha adam to be a life living exactly as that life is created to live—living according to created design in the wholeness of that design.

Then we read that He put ha adam to sleep to bring his “face-to-face companion” out

What does our Creator mean in telling ish and isha that they are a true “no separation”? Do we have the courage to explore this reality?

1. nefesh (נפש) — Historical linguistic fact: Before the 300's bce, nephesh (נפש) was never translated soul. It was after the Greeks forced assimilation in Israel that the word nephesh eventually was translated soul. The concept of a soul has its origin of compartmentalizing body soul and spirit from within the Hellenistic world view verses the Hebrew knowing oneself as a living being, as a life breathing the breath of God.

The word woman (ishah, אִשָּׁה) is the female version of man, אִישׁ. The woman is made from the very essence of man.

from his own body (Genesis 2:21-24). The Creator positions the two “face to face” and declares them to be echad—declares them to be a true “no separation” (echad).

What does our Creator mean in telling ish and isha that they are a true “no separation”? Do we have the courage to explore this reality? What will it mean for how I allow God to take me on such a journey together with my wife or with my husband? How tightly do I hold onto my own imaginations of how I define myself?

“I will make for him a helper as one who is ezer knegdo” (עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ). “I will make for him a helper as one who is in front of him.” Genesis 2:18

To say that this helper is opposite him is a position of “in front of him” which is then a position of face to face. The isha was inside ha adam and now isha will be face to face with the ish. They share one life and by creation are a true “no separation”. When the ish opened his eyes and saw her for the first time in Genesis 2:23, he said, “עֵצָם מֵעֵצָמִי...” “bone of my bones” or “essence of my essence.”

Furthermore, “Then Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ishah, for she was taken out of ish.’” The word woman (ishah, אִשָּׁה) is the female version of man, אִישׁ. The woman is made from the very essence of man. They then share the same



2. In Hebrew we have 2 words for one: yachid (יָחִיד) and echad (אֶחָד). While there is some overlap of meaning, yachid is usually a singular one and echad is often a composite unity to be understood as a true one.
3. Rosh (רֹאשׁ) means source, such as the source of a body of water. In English we say “head waters” to refer to where the source of the water is.

created essence. She is “essence of my essence”. The phrase *עצם מעצמי* (“essence of my essence”) carries the meaning of “same”. When the ish sees (truly sees) his isha, she is a mirror for him.

Let us carry this concept a little further. He is her source (*rosh*, רֹאשׁ) and she is his mirror. The two of them together are positioned face to face by our Father, our Creator. In this reality we can explore all that is the same in who we are as ish and isha. In living that reality, we discover what male is and what female is that is same created essence. And in living that reality, we will begin to discover what the Creator created that is unique to male and what is unique to female and how that blends together in a true “no separation” to share one life.

When a man and a woman join together in marriage, Genesis 2:24 tells us what happens. A more literal translation of this verse would be: “For this reason an ish

[man] leaves his father and his mother and cleaves with ishto [his wife] and they become basar echad [one flesh].” From this passage we can see that they return to being one body, one life — the way they were when God created man and took woman from him. When husband and wife know this — deeply and truly know this — their experience together is very different from couples who do not yet know this reality of truth.

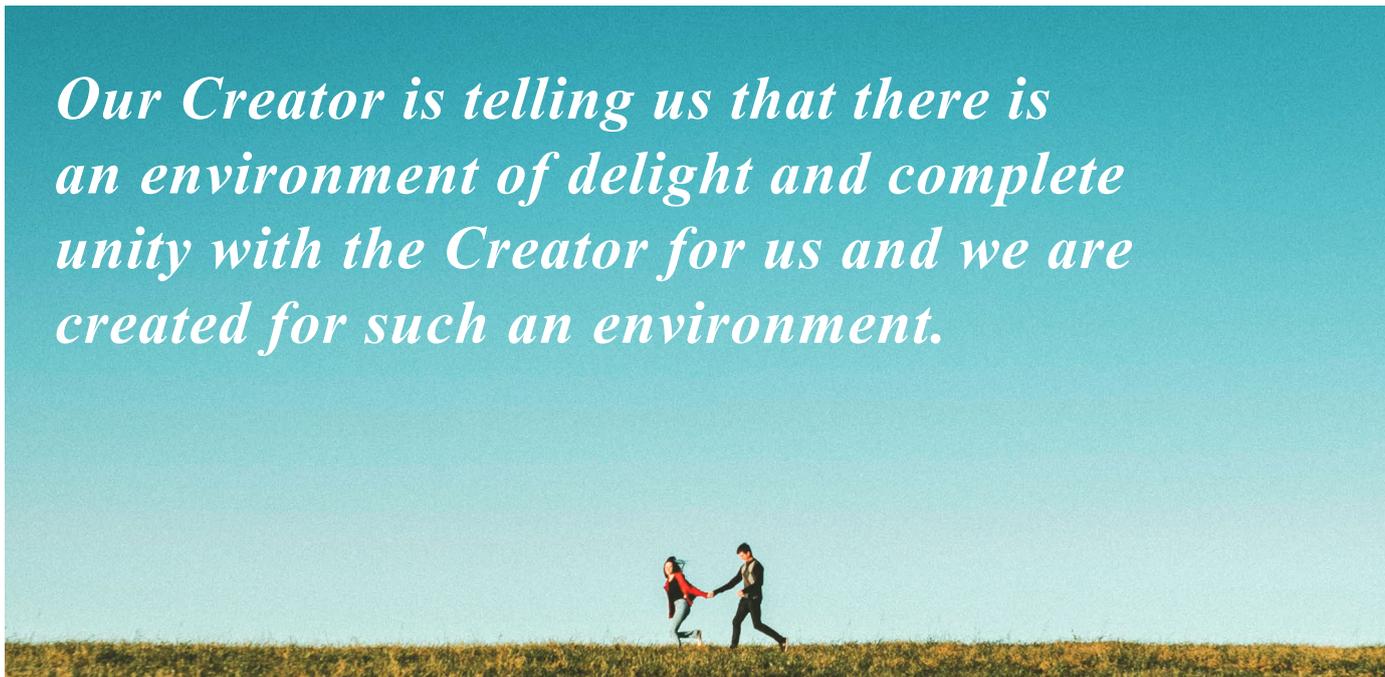
The barrage of problems that married couples face and experience comes from not knowing the truth about who they are—not knowing the creation that they are. Once we know the creation that we are by the mouth of our Creator Himself (His Word) then together we can take the journey of being transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) according to the truths of being the ish and isha that our Creator created. With renewed minds together we will find ourselves free to live as we were created

to live in the marriage that He created marriage to be. “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Marriage counseling that teaches how to deal with symptoms will leave the couple still dealing with feelings that are coming from created essence and not know where what they are experiencing is coming from. Why? Because the couple does not know their own created essence. We are a creation created to live from our created essence—living according to created design in the wholeness of that design. In this, we find ourselves experiencing what it is to be fully alive!

Every little boy and every little girl will grow up in the society in which they are born. Each society has its definitions of what it is to be male and what it is to be female. What happens when these definitions do not match our created essence, but our minds are formed believing these definitions put

Our Creator is telling us that there is an environment of delight and complete unity with the Creator for us and we are created for such an environment.



4. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (halot), 105.

5. See, for example the entry for *ose* from several Hebrew lexicons, such as *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Jenni and Westermann), 1182.

It is not the nucleus or the DNA of the cell that causes the change, but the cell wall that responds to your environment. This is because we are nephesh chayah, a life in wholeness.

forth by our society? What will we then experience? What will we then experience as a couple? These questions certainly spark much discussion for the Body of Messiah to consider. There is much for the Body of Messiah to begin to discuss within this question. If a couple has never explored from God's Word what our Creator says about the male that He created and the female that He created, then what we grew up with will be what we assume. What we believe will then create the environment of our marriage and the environment of our marriage becomes the environment that our children will grow up in. Is the environment of our home the same as the beliefs of the society that we live in? Or are we permitting the home environment to be conformed to the Word of God? Moreover, what about the environment of our believing community?

Let us return now to descriptions we can glean from Bereshit about the ish and ishah relationship. As we do so, we can see another concept that needs consideration is the reality that we are created for delight. We see this in Genesis 2:8 where we read, "And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden [b'eden] in the east, and there He placed the man whom He had formed," ויטע יהוה אלהים גן בעדן, "מקדם וישם שם את האדם אשר יצר"

While this is a good translation, it is not the only rendering possible. Let us look at this verse a little closer. First, instead of transliterating the Hebrew word "Eden," we can translate it as "delight." The preposition ב before 'eden shows us that it is either a place, "in delight" or a means, "by delight." Second, rather than rendering the Hebrew word "kedem" (קדם) as "east", as many translations do, we should translate it as "before the first." With a preposition mem (מ) before it we see a time indicator: "before the first, from the very beginning." Of course, as we know, only God Himself existed from that time.

Let us put Genesis 2:8 together like this: The Lord God planted a garden in delight or by delight from the very first, from the very beginning. It is there that God put the man whom He had created in real time and space in history. Do we see what this is saying? Adam and then Eve were created in complete delight with their Creator.

Our Creator is telling us that there is an environment of delight and complete unity with the Creator for us and we are created for such an environment. We are also a creation of five senses. These five senses put us into our environment and bring our environment literally to within us. It is very important for a couple to find out what is known of how the five senses work by the Creator's design within the wholeness of nephesh chayah within

the Garden He created—the environment that we are created for is delight for all five senses, and we share that delight in a face-to-face relationship, both of us equally in the delight that we share within the environment that we share.

As a couple, sit and think together about the environment in which we are created to exist. Together we create our home and together we are the environment of our home. Each of us is an environment for the other and for our children. Together we are our children's environment. The environment that we are will come from the mind that we have. The mind that we have comes from what we expose ourselves to and what we think about. Research being done today is showing how much environment affects us. The new field of epigenetics is changing how we understand heredity. Heredity is classically known as depending on genetics, and our genetic code which is transferred from parent to offspring through reproductive cells. But now it is known that there is also acquired heredity, which is the inheritance of traits acquired during life upon exposure to the environment and life experiences. This form of inheritance depends on the epigenome, which are factors around the DNA sequence that regulate DNA activity.

For those of us who are born again, we are now a new creation! When we find the purity of anything.

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Therefore, in exploring what God created marriage to be, we must seek to know our purity within our five senses. This happens only in a mind of purity.

The DNA within the nucleus of each cell carries the blueprint of tov, but it is the environment to which every cell will conform. If you change the environment, you produce cells that will respond to the changes. It is not the nucleus or the DNA of the cell that causes the change, but the cell wall that responds to your environment. This is because we are nephesh chayah, a life in wholeness. The health of our wholeness includes who we are on a cellular level. The environment that we are for one another creates changes in our DNA, because for each cell, the cell wall responds to our environment. We suggest that we take a careful look within the questions that we need to ask ourselves. Our whole-being health and that of our children depends upon it by the design of The Creator Himself.

Because the environment that we create is so closely linked to the thoughts of our mind, it would be wisdom to learn what we can about the created design of the neural networks that make up the mind that we live from.

We have created a place to explore the design of our Creator in how He created the brain to serve the creation He created us to be. More about this can be found in Sitting Room 2 of the MBT Academy (Modular Biblical Training Academy) designed as a place on the internet to explore Timeless Torah Truths. (www.TorahTruths.com)

MBT Academy
Modular Biblical Training Academy



WWW.TORAHTRUTHS.COM

There is so much to talk about within The Body of Messiah, based upon what our Creator tells us in Bereshit. We are created for delight and to be a delight—to Him and to one another! We are a creation created to be an environment of delight for our children to flourish within and to be free to be the creation they are in all their brilliance. Home environments and other environments of our children make all the difference in each child being free to grow within the brilliance and creativity with which they were born. There is so much to explore about this also!

Genesis chapter 1 presents to us the Days of Creation. At the completion of each part of creation, the Creator looks at what He created, and it is exactly what He intended. Therefore, He then says: “It is Tov” (טוב). By this first use of the word tov, we understand the way that God uses the word “tov”. When something is

what it is created to be, it is tov. When something is not what it is created to be, it is then not tov. Now, notice in the text that when God creates ha’adam (the man), He does not yet say it is tov. But, when ha’adam is inhabiting his environment the way he is created to inhabit it, the Creator says it is tov! (Genesis 1:21)

We are created to be a delight and created for delight (Genesis 2:8). We are created for the delight of purity—everything God created in the purity of that creation. For those of us who are born again, we are now a new creation! When we find the purity of anything, it will match our newly birthed created essence, and we will experience delight. Therefore, in exploring what God created marriage to be, we must seek to know our purity within our five senses. This happens only in a mind of purity. Most of us will enter marriage with any level of a mind filled with impurity. The true delight we are created to live is found only in the purity of the pure. All manner of delight, as God created delight, exists within purity! Each couple can explore the delight that exists within purity. Children who grow up within the life of their parents living such delight will know a more accurate face of the Creator.

What does all of this tell us about our Creator and His intentions in Creation?

God had a good reason to give the

The true delight we are created to live is found only in the purity of the pure.

The Song of all Songs is made up of approximately 27 love poems, and the majority of these love poems are in the voice of the woman in her love for her “ish” (אִישׁ).



biblical book of love poems the name “Song of Songs”. The Song of all Songs is made up of approximately 27 love poems, and the majority of these love poems are in the voice of the woman in her love for her “ish” (אִישׁ). Let us not miss our Creator’s intention for the home environment of intimacy and delight in face-to-face relationships—for each family willing to discover His intention. In our cultures, have we missed the truth about what is meaningful in life? Have we missed the role of environment in humanity reaching full potential in the many faceted brilliances inherent within who all of us are as the creation of such a Creator?

Our Creator wrote His Word in ways to lead us to ask questions—questions that lead us to discoveries which we are created to find. Will we choose to explore God’s Word learning how to let it say what it says? The male that He created is male. But do we know what that male is? The female that God created is female. But do we know what that female is? Or do we only know the definitions we have from whatever culture in which we grew up? Are we aware of the culture that we are in today and to which one we are conforming? How will we explore marriage as the delight that He created marriage to be if we do not yet know what the male He created is and do not yet know what the female that He created is. What if we do not even know the new-creation humanity that we are? Do we know that the finished work of Messiah on the tree actually restored us to being the original humanity that He created through new birth?

Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” Do we know that the finished work of Messiah on the tree also returned

us to inside God? As a couple, do we explore our relationship based upon who we are now as restored humanity and returned together living from inside our Creator? Do we know in our moment-by-moment living that we are seated now in Heavenly realms to walk here together from there? Or do we live daily life from the mind of who we once were and are no longer—a mind conformed to a world we once lived in but should not conform to? If we are not being transformed together by the renewing of our mind, we will face marital problems like anyone else.

We are inviting you, the reader, to explore your questions about marriage from a new starting point:

He is nephesh chayya — a life living

She is nephesh chayya — a life living

In marriage we become ish and islah (man and woman), and basar echad (one flesh sharing one life) living in “face-to-face” relationship.

This is the essence that the Creator created in us. Until we seek to know this life together as a couple, we will still experience a sense of something very deep missing.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

D’vorah studied Social Work at West Chester State University and Philadelphia Biblical University in America, and then attended Rodef Torah School of Jewish Studies. Presently, she is a Learning Environment Consultant and CEO of Table Talk Torah Truths which provides practical aids to living God’s Word in practical, life-changing ways. She is also an instructor with Torah Resources International. She and her husband have been working Internationally for over 21 years and have written over 10 books. They moved to Israel 30 years ago and have four grown children and seven grandchildren.

LOVE & MARRIAGE

IS LIKE A TWO-WHEEL CARRIAGE

By Joseph Shulam

The LORD's creation on the sixth day and one of the last stages of his creation was man, Adam. The name Adam comes from the Hebrew root of Adamah, Earth or Land! This creature was not created with the other animals nor in the same pattern as they were created. This Adam was created in a totally different pattern from all the rest of the animal world. Although there is much similarity between Adam and the gorgeous mammals like the noble cat family, the lions, tigers, leopards, cheetahs, and the interesting and very diverse family of the primates (the monkeys) that has so many characteristics like the humans, yet Adam was created after a consultation with someone that was right next to the Father of all who created everything alone. The creation of Adam was very special. Someone was standing next to God the Father and He said: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26, NKJV). In the creation of Adam, there was cooperation, consultation, and partnership between the FATHER of ALL and some ONE who is in His likeness and in His nature. In other words, Man's creation was a joint venture between God and someone that has the same nature and the same likeness. You could say

that this creature called Adam that was formed from the mud of the Earth was the handiwork of God who had a divine nature like the God who formed him and created this "Adam". God doesn't make mistakes. When Adam was formed and placed in the Garden that God created, Adam was perfect, and he should have been perfectly happy being alone in the Garden with all the wonderful trees and plenty of water. The Lord God Himself could walk in the Garden in the cool of the evening like He did in chapter three after Adam and Eve sinned and were hiding, and He pretended to be looking for him.

With this wonderful Garden and the wonderful state of creation, yet there was not full fellowship with the Almighty Creator of the world. Something was not right in the Garden! "And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'"

(Genesis 2:18, NKJV). "It is not good that man should be alone!" God formed for Adam a helper that is equal to him. Genesis 2:20 makes this very important statement that we must not ignore, "But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him."

"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and

The future of all the generations of humanity depends on this very paradigm, man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, the female, and they together will become something new; the two will become ONE FLESH!



*“Happy is the man who finds
a true friend, and far happier
is he who finds that true
friend in his wife.”*

Franz Schubert

He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’” (Genesis 2:21–23, NKJV)

The consideration of the Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe for Adam’s loneliness was the reason why the LORD God of all made and formed the woman

from the rib of Adam. This is also the reason that the first song in the Bible is here in Genesis 2:23, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man.” The next verse gives us the paradigm of the order and the relationship between Adam and Eve and the future families that will be formed by this couple. “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24, NKJV). There is no room for misunderstanding in this story and

in the Genesis text. The future of all the generations of humanity depends on this very paradigm, man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, the female, and they together will become something new; the two will become ONE FLESH!

The twentieth century was probably the bloodiest century in the history of mankind. The inventions of the industrial revolution—the steam engine, the internal combustion engine that enabled cars and tanks and airplanes to



“A great marriage is not when the ‘perfect couple’ comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences.”
—Dave Meurer

be built in order to wage war and destroy whole cities—have destroyed more human lives than in any other century of human history. There were at least 108,000,000 human lives killed in the wars of the 20th century.

However, in my opinion, the much bigger damage to humanity with much longer-lasting effects of this damage in the 20th century is the destruction and degradation of the human family. You see, dear brothers and friends, the creation of the world and the placing of Adam as the crown of God’s Creation and as the manager of God’s economy in this brave new world that was created by the Almighty God in six days was incomplete without woman. It was God the Father of all who observed that it is not good for man to be alone and that man needs a comparable, compatible, helper, and partner—a woman! This molecule made from two atoms, the man and the woman, is

the building block of humanity and the carrier of the history of the world, from the Garden of Eden to the end of history as it is described in the Isaiah 60 and in the book of Revelation. The family of a man and a woman is that molecule that creates the future of mankind. Without this molecule working, compatible with each other and making children, fruited in the love between these God-designed, bonded-together creatures, humanity would cease to exist in just a few centuries or less.

This holy bond, this God designed relationship, the Family, that can reproduce and create subsequent generations of humans is in real danger of suffering extinction in a few short generations. Today already, some men go looking for surrogate mothers in Brazil, India, or other countries, and pay much money to just have an artificial relationship paid for with money to have a child that ultimately is not really his,

because the DNA will be from a strange and anonymous woman who will not raise this baby and will not breast feed his baby. As this child grows, he will never know the love of his real mother. What will this child have to say in school when he is asked to bring his mother? Will he say, sorry, I have two fathers!

The family is made from two humans created by God to be compatible and comparable and different in some ways yet of the same rights and value while diverse in function—yes, a man and a woman. This is what the designer and engineer who planned and created this world intended when He made a man and a woman, a male and female. He, the Creator, designed it this way for all the humans and also for the whole mammal family in nature. We, the humans, are not the only male and females in what we call Earth.

We all must be happy and grateful that the majority of the world is still following by nature the LORD's pattern of a family being of the marriage of one man and one woman. A male and a female come together to live and build a family and make children that have their DNA and their looks who will be raised with love from both a father and a mother who love each other and care for each other and share their lives. Their children will continue to do the same and sustain the human race.

This was just the introduction. Now we

can discuss a good marriage! Someone once said, "A good marriage is one where each partner secretly suspects that they got the better deal." Here are some sayings from wise people who talk about marriage:

"By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you will be happy. If you get a bad one, you will be a philosopher." — Socrates

"What counts in making a happy marriage is not so much how compatible you are but how you deal with incompatibility." —Leo Tolstoy

"Marriage is a risk; I think it's a great and glorious risk, as long as you embark on the adventure in the same spirit." — Cate Blanchett

"Marriage is an alliance entered into by a man who can't sleep with the window shut and a woman who can't sleep with the window open." —George Bernard Shaw

"To keep your marriage brimming with love in the loving cup, whenever you're wrong, admit it; Whenever you're right, shut up." —Ogden Nash

"Marriage has no guarantees. If that's what you're looking for, go live with a car battery." —Erma Bombeck

"Marriage is our last, best chance to grow up." —Joseph Barth

"For you and I are past our dancing days." —William Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*

"Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee, and when I love thee not, chaos is come again." — William Shakespeare, in *Othello*

"Happy is the man who finds a true friend, and far happier is he who finds that true friend in his wife." —Franz Schubert

"In marriage do thou be wise: prefer the person before money, virtue before beauty, the mind before the body, then thou hast a wife, a friend, a companion, a second self." —William Penn

"Chains do not hold a marriage together. It is threads, hundreds of tiny threads, which sew people together through the years." —Simone Signoret

"Sensual pleasures have the fleeting brilliance of a comet; a happy marriage has the tranquility of a lovely sunset." —Ann Landers [I would add also a beautiful sunrise works, too!]

"I love being married. It's so great to find that one special person you want to annoy for the rest of your life." —Rita Rudner

"A great marriage is not when the 'perfect couple' comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy

Giving and receiving love is one of those issues that changes over time in a marriage. The physical love is one of those issues between a husband and wife that needs constant care and nursing.

their differences.” —Dave Meurer

Here are some notes that I have used in pre-marriage counseling. These notes are somewhat tedious issues, however, these tedious issues are land mines that ought to be neutered as early as possible in all marriages—important issues which, if treated right, would enrich a marriage and make it able to cope with the difficulties and challenges of any marriage. Relationship with the family of your spouse is one of those landmines that is virtually unavoidable in any marriage.

Your relationship with your spouse’s parents and family may be one of the most significant relationships in your marriage. It is important at the

4. What relationship do you think you have with your mothers-in-law? What relationship do you want?

5. Do you look at your in-laws as a help or an obstacle especially in your upcoming or current marriage?

6. How will the two sets of in-laws relate to each other in celebrations or in sad moments and what do you and your spouse do to ameliorate any problems between your family and the other in-laws?

7. I believe it is wise, if you wish from time to time, to write a personal letter or personal card to your in-laws. It is very important, especially if you live far from the family, to write an informative and

relationship will know that people express and receive love in different ways. One may be “physical touch” and like to express his love with touch, hugs, and physical warmth, while the other solves problems—and both offer these qualities in favor of the relationship. Now wouldn’t it be good to understand what your partner’s love style is?

Your love language:

You need to know what words of approval, appreciation, or encouragement work best with your spouse. For example, does your spouse like nicknames, words of sexual affection, and affectionate names related to sex? Or is your partner more puritan and doesn’t enjoy names related to physical affection?

There needs to be an expression of support for each other beyond talking, sex, and providing financial security for the family.

beginning of your marriage and in the first years of marriage to understand these relationships and what blessings or difficulties you and your spouse may have over your families. Here are the tools to avoid problem issues related to families:

1. List some traits of your spouse’s parents that you really like. Mark for yourself why you like these traits.

2. What involvement do you expect and/or want from your spouse and family? Do you like over-involvement (closeness) more than under-involvement (distance) in general (or vice versa)?

3. How do you feel about your spouse’s relationship with his or her parents?

supporting note to your own family and to your spouse’s family. You must not write to one side without also writing to the other side, because eventually they will share with each other if they receive a letter, and if the other side doesn’t receive anything from you, they might feel bad. A letter to both sides is different and, in some ways, even better and more important than a phone call! A written note is an entirely different animal and an encouragement even from an electronic contact!

Giving and receiving love is one of those issues that changes over time in a marriage. The physical love is one of those issues between a husband and wife that needs constant care and nursing.

Anyone who has been in an intimate

Love for your spouse needs to be actions like helping a wife or husband at home, in matters related to life at work, or issues that are important to the husband or wife. It is never enough to take out the garbage once or twice per week.

Each party in the family has hobbies and personal interests. These interests need support and a show of interest by the other side. Showing support for your partner in marriage beyond the marriage issues is of immense importance for a good marriage. There needs to be an expression of support for each other beyond talking, sex, and providing financial security for the family. Marriage will become a boring thing if it is limited only to taking care of the regular issues of the family.



Marriage will become a boring thing if it is limited only to taking care of the regular issues of the family.

- Quality time spent together is a daily must.
- Physical contact: there are times when the other partner is uncomfortable with sex and being intimate. Please consider and learn to know the spouse and respect the other party's wishes.
- Giving and receiving gifts: do not miss the opportunity to give gifts on birthdays, anniversaries, and in times of success of your partner, like receiving certificates of success and graduation. But always consider the financial situation of the family and do so always in a reasonable framework so as not to overdo it and at a price that will not cause inconvenience to the other party.
- How do you feel about public affection? Are there any important "rules" regarding

our public affection that I need to know?

- You need to learn in what ways do you like to receive love and affection best? In what ways does your partner like to receive affection and love best?

After a few months of marriage, you may find that there are many more decisions and details that need to be worked on together to resolve. Therefore, you must learn to communicate effectively with each other. The right time to approach each other with problems or issues is important. The right place to approach issues is also important, especially for young families who are used to communicating from electronic screens. You have to learn these things from each other and from your experience, or else you can also ask and discuss these questions. Married couples soon after

the marriage will be changing a lot of things, and you must be aware of the processes that happen after the marriage. Preparing in advance for these changes can eliminate many of the stresses that may arise.

How would you like your spouse to tell you and show you that you are valued? What's the best way, place and time for your spouse to share criticism of you or suggest things that you ought to change or improve? What is most aggravating in your current marriage? How would you prefer your spouse to ask for money to buy something that is needed or desired? When do you feel your partner is listening to you and is interested in what you have to say?

During arguments you will allow your partner to talk without interruption.

“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.”

– Lao Tzu

During arguments look into your partner’s eyes. Do your best not to start or continue to argue in the car while driving; it is a bad and dangerous practice! During arguments asks questions and make comments that are not dogmatic or judgmental, and especially don’t mention the family. Keep the arguments between yourselves.

When you are hurt by something your partner said or did, do you:

- Withdraw from your partner and leave the room?
- Do you say or do something that will hurt him or her?
- Do you get so angry with your partner that you lose your temper and use violence?
- Do you pretend everything is fine?
- Do you get into a “mood” and stop communication all together?

Money and the use of money in the

family is always an issue of possible conflict. Money and financial planning can cause a lot of stress in marital relationships. According to some studies, this is a consistently difficult area for the newlyweds and one of the major problems throughout marital history. Money habits in the first years of marriage can last throughout the history of the marriage. Hence the questions about “money and professional expectations” need to be discussed and agreed upon as early as possible in every marriage, and it is never too late to open these issues and agree on protocol and the use of money.

It is very important to agree who will manage your family’s finances? Who ‘should’ be the treasurer and accountant of the family?

Decide, for example, what amount a purchase can be without having to discuss it with your partner first. Making financial decisions before the issue comes up is a good way to avoid problems. So, estimate your combined annual income after tax, and then decide how much would you allocate, on an annual basis, to the following?

- Rent, mortgage, housewares and furniture, regular expenses like food, entertainment, and vacations. Making budgets is a healthy thing to do in these days of computerized life like young couples live today. Nothing is written on stone, and there can always be surprises and adjustments in the budget, but sailing in the ocean of life in our modern world without an anchor is unwise!
- It is also important to schedule vacations and be ready and willing to change the location or activities of vacations between what you want to do and what your spouse would like to.
- Household operating expenses

(including Internet, cables, etc.)

- Clothing, swimsuits, and apparel
- Electrical appliances, furniture, key household items
- Vehicle (insurance, gas, maintenance) and / or transportation
- Entertainment (including videos, movies, fun food, etc.)
- Recreation (skiing, cycling, golf, etc.)
- Insurance like life insurance and of course car insurance ought to be known and communicated between the family members.
- Tithing or giving to the synagogue or church is also an issue that ought to be agreed upon between the husband and the wife.

The last but not the least of these land mines in marriage is a clear understanding of the spiritual and the religious freedoms and traditions in your family and in your homes.

This article will end with some more quotes about marriage that I like for two reasons: I like the people who said these words, and every good and wise instruction is worth knowing, remembering, and putting to practice!

“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.” – Lao Tzu

“We’re all a little weird. And life is a little weird. And when we find someone whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and fall into mutually satisfying weirdness, and call it love—true love.” – Robert Fulghum, True Love

“Let there be spaces in your togetherness, and let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another, but make not a bond of love: Let it be rather a moving sea between the shores of your souls.”

– Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet



“Love is like a beautiful flower which I may not touch, but whose fragrance makes the garden a place of delight just the same.” – Helen Keller

“What greater thing is there for two human souls, than to feel that they are joined for life—to strength each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in silent unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting?” – George Eliot

“We loved with a love that was more than love.” – Edgar Allan Poe

“Every heart sings a song, incomplete, until another heart whispers back. Those who wish to sing always find a song. At the touch of a lover, everyone becomes a poet.” – Plato

“When you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible.” – When Harry Met Sally

“I’m selfish, impatient, and a little insecure. I make mistakes, I am out of control and at times hard to handle. But if you can’t handle me at my worst, then

you sure as hell don’t deserve me at my best.” – Marilyn Monroe

“Love doesn’t just sit there, like a stone; it has to be made, like bread; remade all the time, made new.” – Ursula K. Le Guin, The Lathe of Heaven

“Let there be spaces in your togetherness, and let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another, but make not a bond of love: Let it be rather a moving sea between the shores of your souls.” – Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Shulam was born in Sofia, Bulgaria on March 24, 1946 to a Sephardic Jewish Family. In 1948, his family immigrated to Israel just before the establishment of the State. While in high school, he was introduced to the New Testament and immediately identified with the person of Yeshua. In 1981, Joseph and the small fellowship that was started in his house established one of the first official non-profit organizations of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua in Israel – Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry. Joseph has lectured extensively and has assisted in encouraging disciples around the world. He and his wife Marcia have two children and two grandchildren.

LOVE IS A VERB

By Elhanan ben-Avraham



“For God so loved the world that He gave...”

Love as a noun is a mere abstract concept, a stagnant pond of wishful thinking.

When love becomes a verb, it achieves its potential, living meaning. People perish for lack of the latter, for love unexpressed is not love at all. Love must find a dynamic language that may be understood by the beloved.

God is a communicator, an Artist expressing His glory in the Creation. We, as His creation, are given the ability to express—especially as His instruments—His will and His love in this world. This is the mystery of the Messiah, through whom God’s love is expressed in its fullest and purest sense, for He is the invisible made visible in a personal love that persists and prevails through time and tempest full of forgiveness.

Expressed love seeks only its own, a reciprocal expression of love in return, the tragedy being when it is unrequited. When that expressed love from the Creator is personally experienced and felt, it is then possible to keep that foundational commandment to “love YHVH your God with all your heart,” for it is then mutual and not a mere religious abstraction or idea. Love then becomes action and not mere words, as the Messiah who loved us first said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15).

Love is also a threshing instrument, separating the wheat from the chaff, exposing and making naked and vulnerable the grain. Love may sting at encountering its counterfeit of untruth. It reveals the authenticity of relationship, whether it is only a protected noun for the sake of show or doctrine, or a vitally expressed reality in word and deed. Love expressed is the reality by which a disciple of the Messiah may be discerned, without which knowledge or prophecy or mystic revelation is a mere clanging of cymbals and symbols.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elhanan ben-Avraham, born in 1945, is a professional artist, poet, writer, father of two, and grandfather of four, and he has been living in Israel since 1979. He has served in the IDF, taught the Bible internationally, published five illustrated books of poetry, painted two large Biblical murals in public buildings in Jerusalem, and most recently produced THE JERUSALEM ILLUSTRATED BIBLE, among many other works. He and his wife live in a quiet village in the Mountains of Judah.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE?

By Jeanne and Ron Miterko
September 11, 2021

Before we can comment on any contributions to a successful marriage, we need to define “a successful marriage”. Certainly success, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. We can most likely agree however, that this is one of those things that falls into the category of “you will know it when you see it”. There are a few indicators that jump out in identifying success: a large number of anniversaries for instance, or a convergence of thoughts about certain subjects. Couples have been described as looking alike and or sounding alike. This makes sense given the amount of time the two people spend together. But is this success?

Perhaps there is a lot more to take into consideration before a successful marriage is defined. God created us all as individuals. We are all wired differently depending not only on genetics, but a plethora of factors, such as socioeconomic, parenting, community, faith, education, traumatic experiences, age, etc. We bring all this to our marriage relationship. All these factors shape our expectations and our responses in relating to a spouse. We become extremely vulnerable by laying bare who we really are to our spouse.

In realizing that a large part of

togetherness is sharing vulnerability, it is reasonable to ask; does vulnerability lend itself to fear? For most, it certainly does. How much can we share about how we really think and feel on touchy subjects without provoking judgement, rejection, criticism, and the like. We fear that our feelings will get hurt, or we will be rejected for who we are or what we’ve been through and believe. The spirit of fear can easily come in to kill, steal, and destroy any close relationship—especially that of husband or wife.

A successful marriage must be able to allow vulnerability. Relationships are built on sharing vulnerability along with every other aspect of life. At the same time, couples must be aware and vigilant in preventing an opportunity for fear to worm its way in and work toward division. But how can we accomplish this?

Yeshua! As is usually the case, the answer lies with Him. If Yeshua is at the center of our marriage relationship, then we have what we need to be successful. “If anyone acknowledges that Yeshua is Ben Elohim, God abides in him and he abides in God...God is Love...There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:15-18, TLV). Therefore, we can share our vulnerability and have no fear

A successful marriage must be able to allow vulnerability. Relationships are built on sharing vulnerability along with every other aspect of life.

of being judged, criticized, controlled, abandoned, rejected, or shamed.

If we are truly given over to Yeshua, all our foibles have also been given over to Him. We know who we are, and we know how to love. “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Another important aspect that helps define a successful marriage relationship

We as individuals, by putting on love, can give our spouse the space they need, and if they don't think, act, or feel exactly like you, it's okay even if it doesn't make any sense. This is the bond of perfect harmony.



involves forgiveness. Rav Shaul advised the Colossians, “Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves in tender compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience—bearing with one another and forgiving each other, if anyone has a grievance against one another. Just as the Lord pardoned you, so also you must pardon others. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfect harmony.” (Colossians 3:12-14, TLV).

As stated above, no two people think, feel, or act exactly the same way. How often have you heard of relationships that ended badly because one party believed they could “change” the other person in some meaningful way. This

belief that your way is superior to any other way allows the spirit of control an opportunity to come in and do a lot of damage to an otherwise good relationship. To protect and promote a healthy marriage relationship, the party desiring a change in the other person needs to realize an important fact. Namely, that the changing needs to go in the other direction. We ourselves need to change first.

The way to overcome the spirit of control is by giving and taking graciously. This is the “bearing one with another and forgiving each other” about which Rav Shaul speaks to the community in Colossians. Applied on a marital level, this sound advice wipes away the feeling

of needing to change your spouse to be something he/she is not. The concept of block logic may be helpful here. This is the Eastern mindset of holding conflicting ideas and concepts in tension together. There can be many right answers—it’s okay if things don’t seem to make sense. As opposed to linear thinking that is logical wherein everything lines up to only one right answer. We as individuals, by putting on love, can give our spouse the space they need, and if they don’t think, act, or feel exactly like you, it’s okay even if it doesn’t make any sense. This is the bond of perfect harmony.

What else might contribute to the bond of perfect harmony? Rav Shaul explains to the Ephesians, “Therefore I, as a

prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you were called—with complete humility and gentleness, with patience, putting up with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:1-2). This verse says a lot about relationships. First, we are to give everything that we are over to the Lord—to be His prisoner. If one truly gets to this level of spiritual maturity, then everything in the world is seen through the eyes of Messiah Yeshua. We take on His character in relating to others, including our spouse.

complete humility and gentleness, with patience, putting up with one another in love. Relationships are never easy; Paul knew that. It is really hard to “put up” with another. A successful marriage is the result of learning well who we are, why we are here and practicing putting up with each other in love.

Digging a little deeper into understanding our true identity and why that is vital in a successful marriage, let’s look at Psalm 112. I love reading this psalm over all the men in my life on Erev Shabbat.

4 Light shines in the darkness for the upright.

Gracious, compassionate, and just is he.

5 Good comes to a man who is gracious and lends.

He will order his affairs with fairness.

6 Surely, he will never be shaken.

The righteous are remembered forever.

Scriptures make it clear that no lasting relationship can exist without a formal covenant.



Rav Shaul continues, explaining that we are to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we were called. There is a responsibility here to understand what our calling is. This is important because if we are not sure who we are or what purpose we serve, how can we relate well to other people, especially to a spouse? Do we really know our true identity or the specific calling the Lord has on our lives? If we know how much we are loved by the Father, we can walk in a manner worthy of our calling. Loving ourselves because He first loved us is a prerequisite to being able to love another person. A successful marriage requires us to pursue these truths.

Finally, Rav Shaul tells us to walk with

Blessed is the Righteous Man

Psalm 112

1 Halleluyah! Happy is the man who fears Adonai,

who delights greatly in His mitzvot.

2 His offspring will be mighty in the land.

The generation of the upright will be blessed.

3 Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.

7 He is not afraid of bad news—

his heart is steadfast, trusting in Adonai.

8 His heart is secure; he will not fear— until he gazes on his foes.

9 He gives freely to the poor.

His righteousness endures forever.

His horn is lifted high in honor.

10 The wicked will see it and be indignant.

He will gnash with his teeth and waste away.

The desire of the wicked will perish. (TLV)

Who would not be in love with a man that behaved in accordance with all the wonderful attributes found in Psalm 112? This dovetails beautifully with Rav Shaul's exhortations found in his letter to the Ephesians.

"Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Messiah also loved us and gave Himself up for us as an offering and sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma." (Ephesians 5:1-2, TLV)

When Husbands are able to truly take on the nature of Messiah Yeshua, leaving the old self behind, embracing their real identity, then wives and the rest of their household are blessed beyond measure. All goes well for the relationship that is grounded in the character of the Lord as outlined in Psalm 112 and demonstrated through Messiah Yeshua. The more we take on the Lord's nature, the easier it is to relate to each other in love, joy, and peace. Where these dynamics are at work in a marriage relationship, Ephesians 5:21 can better be understood.

"Also submit yourselves to one another out of reverence for Messiah—wives to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as Messiah also is head of His community—Himself the Savior of the body." (Ephesians 5:21-23, TLV)

It is okay, even a blessing, if a righteous man is head of his wife. God's character radiates between husband and wife and flows out to the rest of the family and into the community; it's pretty much

guaranteed. When we encounter a couple with the above dynamics in place, right there is a successful marriage! "You will know it when you see it."

May we flip the question and ask what does not contribute to a successful marriage? The answer is obvious: Just about everything! The dangers of falling short of our marital intentions are manifest, and we are mostly unprepared to deal with them when operating in the natural world. Moreover, "New Age norms" have demeaned and are trying to destroy the very idea of marriage.

The components of a successful marriage are rooted (among many other things) in practicing kindness, selflessness, and devotion, but the secret of a successful lasting marriage may lie in the marriage union itself. As we see in Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh."

Implicit in the wedding vows is written the concept of covenantal relationship, or commitment, between husband and wife. Scriptures make it clear that no lasting relationship can exist without a formal covenant. "The Lord confides in those who fear Him, and He makes his covenant known to them" (Psalm 25:14). The covenantal relationship between God and man or man and wife are central themes in the Bible and represent a sanctity of relationship which can not be abrogated. The covenantal promises made by God to the Israelites were conditional upon their faithfulness and trust, the very concepts which govern marital vows.

The bonds which define the marriage

It may be that nothing of lasting significance exists between God and man without a covenant.

covenant and the necessity of both parties' adherence to that vow cannot be overstated. In the Ten Commandments, adultery is cited not once but twice: 1) Thou shall not commit adultery, and 2) thou shall not covet (your neighbor's wife, servant, ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor).

It may be that nothing of lasting significance exists between God and man without a covenant. The new covenant presaged in Jeremiah is very clear: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Without covenant, man is susceptible to the vagaries of his heart, to the world, and to the evil one. Understanding of covenant and the sacred bond it cultivates with God and with our spouse contains the key to success.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeanne and Ron Miterko have been married for 34 years. They are long time attendees of the congregation "Simchat Yisrael" in West Haven, Connecticut. They have two sons and a cute dog named Scooby Doo.



REBEKAH:

TO FIND A MATCH, FIND YOURSELF A WELL

The Personality of Rebekah

From the 20th century onwards, many details of the personality of human beings have been revealed through science. Based on genetics, much can be understood about our colours (skin, eyes, hair), our form (beauty, shape, length, strength), and even our behaviour (speech, attitude, sense). Factually, the first few years are determinative on the development of the brain and emotions as to foster attachment, security, and love often through physical touch, breastfeeding, and comforting.

Researching a character from a (lively) text is not the same as modern day physical examinations, however, trying to picture the ancient society with families and clans living together in a traditional, nomadic, and agricultural way will help us to look further into the text. And as there is much development seen of personhood during the first 25 years of life nowadays, so there was in ancient societies' development of individuals, as character is formed! We will analyse hence the personality of Rebekah and what we can learn from her matchmaker.

What Were her Family Roots (Leading up to the Match)?

About Bethuel her father, not much is written, other than that he grew up with seven other brothers. This means Rebekah grew up with seven uncles and another four through the concubine of her father (Genesis 22:23, 24). Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel, an Aramean of Paddan-aram which lies between the rivers, Tigris and Euphrates (28:2, 5).

She might have been the oldest and/or only daughter as she alone is mentioned as the begotten of her father in 22:23. The only brother she has, explicitly mentioned, is Laban (25:20). Though there is an allusion to more than one brother (וְשִׁלְחוּ אֶת-רֵבְקָה אֶחָתָם ... אֶחָתָנוּ, 24:59-60). From other stories in Genesis, we may make the inference that she has been weaned, cherished, and surely protected by the male-figures in the family (21:8, 22:23, 24:16, 60, 34:7).

Her mother's name is unknown, in contrast to Milcah her grandmother, daughter of Abraham's brother Haran and sister of Lot. We can neither be sure whether she is from the same tribal family

as Milcah was. Mom is introduced in the narrative as having received jewellery (24:53). She had her own house (לְבֵיתָהּ) just as her father had his place (-בֵּית-אָבִיהָ) presumably just as both Sarah and Abraham had a tent of their own (12:8, 18:6, 24:23, 28, 67).

She certainly grew up in a wealthy household (רַב עֲמֻנָה) as she had her own nurse (מְנַקֶּתָהּ), as well as young maidens (וְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ), who came with her (24:25, 59, 61). She draws water, which does remind us of Rachel in chapter 29 (וְרָחֵל הָיָה עִם-הַצֹּאֵן אֲשֶׁר לְאֶבְיָהָ כִּי רָעָה הָיָה). And if Laban had sheep, then most likely her grandfather had sheep as well! So, my supposition is that Rebekah was likewise shepherding flocks. All this might be important information for the groom – as you do not only marry the bride but also her family, at least in the ancient days!

How Quickly can you get Engaged? – All you Need is Someone Willing!

The first sentence mentioning Rebekah by name is “behold, Rebekah came out” (24:15). Pay heed when and how she appears on the “Biblical stage”! She is unusual, as is her birth, being mentioned

ⁱ “The prevailing consensus from large epidemiological studies posits that early exclusive breastfeeding is associated with improved measures of IQ and cognitive functioning in later childhood and adolescence. Prior morphometric brain imaging studies support these findings, revealing increased white matter and sub-cortical gray matter volume, and parietal lobe cortical thickness, associated with IQ, in adolescents who were breastfed as infants compared to those who were exclusively formula-fed” [Breastfeeding and early white matter development]. On neuro-development: “[C]ortical maturation are the first to describe and characterize cortical change between the ages of 2 and 6, and provide insight on an important and vulnerable period of neuro development” [Quantifying cortical development in typically developing toddlers and young children].

“Although the many therapeutic benefits of touch have become increasingly clear – benefits such as decreases in stress and anxiety and their behavioural and biochemical manifestations, and the positive effects that touch has on growth, brain waves, breathing, heart rate, even the immune system – we still have touch taboos ...” [Touch].

ⁱⁱ It is suspicious that we know the name of Rebekah's nurse, Deborah (35:8), but not her mother's name. Targum Jonathan translated ‘nurse’ into pedagogue (פִּדְיוֹנָתָא), in the Aramaic tongue a ‘teacher’. But she would more realistically be nurse as in the simple meaning, maybe so, nurse of Rebekah's children (Exodus 2:7).

in chapter 23. For is there any other Biblical example of the birth of a baby girl?

Rebekah is one of the “daughters (וּבָנוֹת) of the men of the city”, specifically the daughter of Bethuel. She is not only a young woman (הַיְנָעָר) but still a virgin too (בְּתוּלָה) and exceedingly beautiful of course. The text refers furthermore to her as a woman (אִשָּׁה) which makes it difficult for exegetes to guess her age (24:4, 44). Her skills of drawing water, her conversation with the servant and with family members, and her own radical decision to leave her father’s house is enough ground to reckon her as a grown-up but not fully mature.

Quite comical is how she addresses the servant of Abraham (24:12); she greets him formally as ‘my lord’ (אֲדֹנָי), And thus undoubtedly shows high esteem to this helper of God, Eliezer (15:2, 24:2), thus far, an otherwise complete stranger to her.

She is willing! Afterall, lowering the jar is one thing, but watering 10 camels is another. This is pointed out by many commentators, because her drawing possibly over 1000 liters of water is worth mentioning! She is persistent to do everything in her might (לְשִׁתָּהּ, עַד אִם-כִּלּוֹ), and perseveres until all have drunken enough (וַיִּהְיֶה, כְּפֹאֶשֶׁר כִּלּוֹ הַגְּמִלִים לְשִׁתוֹת). Till this moment, the servant observes her and waits to see “whether YHWH had made his journey prosperous” (24:21).

This also shows that she can and will make independent choices and execute her plan, as we see later when her opinion is asked whether to go with ‘this man’. She has a voice and a choice (24:8). All this reads without hesitation on her part. Rebekah is willing! Being capable of the work described above gives credit to the hypothesis that she was grown up and likely in the business of her family, in that of shepherding as nomadic tribes often do. Moreover, she is rather interdependent. On the one hand in this patriarchal society, she is by herself at the well and independently working on behalf of her family and travellers. On the other hand, she has authority figures over her: of course her father, but more evidently, her mother and brother take this role (24:50, 55). She depends on their approval and is therefore interdependent. This is actually, in the development of an individual human being, the highest state of personhood.

The higher authority in her family is also obvious; the angel of God has prepared a way for Abraham to reach his own kind, for a future wife to his son. This has become so evident for the servant and for Rebekah’s family that nothing else must be said about it: “The thing proceedeth from YHWH; we cannot speak unto thee bad or good” (24:50).

From verse eight (וְאִם-לֹא תֵאָבֶדָה הָאִשָּׁה) and the earlier harbinger (“it was told to Abraham”), Abraham might have been thinking exactly of this particular brother’s granddaughter (22:20, 23, 41).

It is indeed initiated by the father and not just a choice between two individuals, rather an important happening between two families.

She is ready to hit the road and not to tarry, in agreement with the servant (24:58). The servant is focused on the task and request a speedy send-off (שְׁלִחָהּ) back to his master. And as the LORD’s blessing is upon it, so Rebekah is blessed (אֶת הָיְי לְאֵלֶי רִבְקָה; וַיִּרְשׁ וַרְעָה, אֶת שְׁעַר שְׁנָאִיו).

David Guzik, writes about her, as to summarize chapter 24: “The covering with a veil signified chastity, modesty, and submission. This is how Rebekah wants to meet her bridegroom”. Lastly, she is loved, (וַיֶּאֱהָבָהּ) which must have deeply impressed this young bride.

Such willingness for a life-long commitment – in your own land or some unknown land – on the basis of love is indeed still the recipe for a healthy and long-lasting familial-bond.

The Gist of the Story in a Nutshell

It is sometimes said that Christians ask for a sign from God to have the right match, yet Jews search themselves for a capable woman that is a suitable match. It is therefore fascinating to see both aspects come together in this story. Not only servants in our communities but even the LORD Himself is in the business of matchmaking. And that should encourage us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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iii Seder Olam gives several numbers on Rebekah’s age, 3, 4, 10 (Jasher 24:40) and 14, at the time of the marriage. That she is 3 years old can be deduced from the Scriptures based on the assumption that Akeidah Yitzhak happened at the age of 37, the same year Rebekah supposedly was born. Age 14 stems from Sifrei Devarim, p. 357.

iv “The commentaries note that this quick move of lowering her jug was to secure a sense of modesty. Instead of a man sipping from a jug resting on her shoulder close to her face, she created a distance, so he would be drinking at an arm’s length away from her” [Chabad Article, Rebecca and the Camel, Esther Vilenkin].

v Speiser notes: “A composite agreement of this kind (in the region of Haran – reflecting authentic usage) would embody the following specifications: (a) The principles in the case. (b) Nature of (sister-ship) transaction. (c) Details of payment. (d) The girl’s declaration of concurrence. (e) Penalty clause.” ... “The only thing, then, that is missing is the penalty clause, which would surely be out of place in a literary transcript” (pp. 184, 185, 212).

vi Stephen R. Covey introduced the Maturity Continuum model for Highly Effective People. “The model describes the three habits necessary to achieve what Covey calls the private victory, which is the shift from dependence to independence, and three habits which comprise the public victory, which is the elevation of a person beyond independence into interdependence. ... Transformative leaders must have the tenacity to lead, as they were once led, and the humility to serve, as they were once served.” The Ghannad Group, all rights reserved, 2016 copyright.

vii It is inspiring that Rebekah is entrusted to the care of the servant and his men, until she meets her bridegroom.

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