



## PARSHAT KI TETZE

### “A NEW WIFE”

In this week’s *parshah* the topic of a young husband – the man who takes/betroths “a new wife”<sup>1</sup> – is discussed. From his in-depth analysis of the Talmud, Rabbi Yosef Razin (5618-5636, known as the *Ga’on of Rogachev*) came to the conclusion that from a legal point of view betrothal is a continuous action, spanning the entire time of marriage. In other words, the act of betrothal (like the act of creation) is not a one-time event; rather it occurs at every moment anew. The consequence of legally defining betrothal in this manner is that the husband and wife can both experience a feeling of constant freshness and renewal in their marriage. Every day, the husband can experience that he is taking/betrothing “a new woman.”

Of course legal definitions are only a starting point; to experience the constant renewal requires a constant effort on the part of both the husband and wife, effort that has many aspects to it. Let us here focus on one aspect of this effort.

Most of the difficulties in marriage begin with our tendency to seek only our own ego and its expression instead of honestly trying to search for our partner and who he/she is. When this is the case, the Biblical promise that, “He who finds a woman, finds good,”<sup>2</sup> transforms into, “And I find the woman more bitter than death.”<sup>3</sup> The same phenomenon is recorded in Chassidic teachings regarding our search for God and Godliness. There are people for whom this search is nothing more than self-aggrandizement, a journey to find themselves. About this approach King Solomon wrote, “The fool does not seek understanding, but rather the revelation of his own heart.” True understanding of God and Godly qualities and the ability to manifest them comes from honest contemplation and meditation of God. Understanding gives birth to true and authentic feelings in the heart. Without seeking these, a person grows addicted to those external experiences that provide him with excitement and a good time. The common themes of these experiences is that they feed the heart’s still unrectified imagination and subjective view of reality.

When transposed to married life, the addiction to his self causes a person to dwell on his own need for expression, instead of focusing on his spouse and his or her self and personality. Even in the best possible case, instead of investing in the inner soulful

connection with his spouse, he seeks romance which reflects only an external bond of the heart between the couple. Eventually, the inherent difficulties and harshness of the real world shatter the images and flights of fancy that served as the basis for the relationship. This then causes the individual’s harsh judgments and anger to awaken and the peace in the home is undermined.

In order to replace the external and shallow picture of his spouse and their relationship and to embark on a path of rectification and peace, a person must recognize that to this point he was self-absorbed, seeking only the revelation of his own heart, even though he is convinced that he was seeking true understanding (both of God and his spouse). Only then can he shatter his immature stance and begin to pursue true understanding and sensitivity to his spouse.

The breaking of our self-absorption is symbolized by the breaking of the glass under the *chupah* (wedding canopy). When the glass is broken, both newlyweds should focus on its symbolism and experience a sincere commitment to search for their spouse and his/her needs. (The groom breaks the glass because his need to break his ego in order to relate properly with his wife is greater). The Hebrew word for “glass” (זְכוּכִית) stems from the same root as “to purify” (לְיָבֵד) alluding to the need to purify ourselves from self-absorption.

Moreover, the *gematria* of “glass” (זְכוּכִית) is equivalent to that of “understanding” (תְּבוּנָה).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, when we exercise only the external aspect of our understanding, we come to expect reality to conform to our perception and expectations. The external aspect of understanding is therefore considered the source of harsh judgments resulting in a judgmental attitude towards others who are not willing to adapt to our standards.<sup>5</sup> Of course, in the home, a judgmental attitude shatters the relationship when one member of the couple does not measure up to the other’s standards. Thus, the purpose of breaking the glass under the *chupah* is to extract us out of our immature search for ourselves, to nullify our judgmental attitude, and to connect the bride and groom in an honest effort to find one another in married life.

(Based on *Yayim Mesame’ach* vol. 4, pp. 46-7)

### HASHEM OHEV TZADIKIM – “GOD LOVES TZADIKIM...”

This Tuesday (12<sup>th</sup> of Elul), we will commemorate the *yahrzeit* of Rebbe Simchah Bunim of Pershischa, may his merit protect us and the entire Jewish people.

Rebbe Bunim was one of the greatest *tzadikim* of the universal Chassidic tradition. He lived in the same generation as the Mittler Rebbe of Chabad. Rebbe Bunim was a disciple of the Seer of Lublin (the *Choizeh*), the master of all the great *tzadikim* of Poland. The Seer used to address Rebbe Bunim him as “my sage.”

It came to pass that one of Rebbe Bunim’s students experienced a spiritual fall. He did not lose touch with his fellow students, but he completely lost his former spiritual level. After the night-long study of *Shavu’ot*, he came to Rebbe Bunim and complained that all the other students were rejecting him and keeping their distance from him. Why was everyone against him, he asked.

[The Rebbe later explained that one of the first signs that a person is falling spiritually is that he develops a sense of paranoia. He starts imagining that people are looking at him negatively and are rejecting him. This was the explanation of paranoia in earlier times and is a key psychological insight today too. So, if someone feels that he is being rejected by his friends, it’s probably not true. It is not an objective observation, but fueled by his subjective feelings of descent.]

Rebbe Bunim did not respond immediately to his disciple’s question, but waited until the eve of *Yom Kipur* when he summoned him and said in a heartfelt manner, “I’m not worth anything, and you’re also not worth anything. Let’s do *teshuvah* together.” And that is how he lifted him back up.

The point of this story is that when you want to make a certain moral principle to a Jew, you have to wait for the right moment. Rebbe Bunim waited for just the moment when, with a feeling of solidarity, he proposed that indeed he and his student are not worthy of anything. This is the theme of *Yom Kipur* when each of us pronounces, “I am not worthy” (אֲנִי כְרֵאִי). Since we are equals, we can do *teshuvah* together.

(From the *farbrengen* of 14<sup>th</sup> of Elul, 5767)

### THE REDEMPTION GROWS NEARER...

Maimondes writes that the Mashiach will be a king from the House of David (בֵּית דָּוִד). Since the *gematria* of “David” (דָּוִד) is equal to that of “loving” (אוֹהֵב), the Mashiach will come from a “house of loving” (בֵּית אוֹהֵב)—a loving home—a home full of love between the parents.

An individual who did not grow up in a loving home of love needs the Mashiach who was blessed to receive a full portion of love in his childhood and can reflect this love unto others. By doing so, the Mashiach will add the letter *alef* (א), the first letter of “love” (אַהֲבָה) into the “exile” (גּוֹלָה), transforming it into the “redemption” (גְּאוּלָּה).

(From the *farbrengen* of Lag Ba’omer 5768)

#### Notes:

1. Deuteronomy 24:5.
2. Proverbs 18:22.
3. Ecclesiastes 7:26. As explained in *The Mystery of Marriage* in length, the key is whether a person seeks to find and fulfill his “I” (ego) or seeks to find and fulfill his wife. Both verses were written by King Solomon.
4. Normally, we translate the Hebrew word *בִּינָה* as “understanding”; this word, *תְּבִינָה*, is another form of *בִּינָה*. In Kabbalah, the *partzuf* of *Imma* (the mother principle) is divided into one *בִּינָה* and three *תְּבִינֹת*. In Modern Hebrew, the word *תְּבִינָה* is usually translated as “reason,” in the sense of rational thinking.
5. The word for “understanding” (*תְּבִינָה*) is also cognate to the Modern Hebrew word that also means “standard” (*תְּבִינֵית*).

*Endearing wishes to our dear friends, David Ely Grundland and Shirah Rachel Fink on their engagement. May they merit to build a Chassidische home, full of holiness and love.*