

TREAT HER RIGHT

By Ozer Bergman

Abram said to Sarai, "Please say that you are my *achot* (sister), so that it will go well for me for your sake, and through you I will live" (Genesis 12:13).

For those of us who are new at this, and for those of us who may need a reminder: Our holy Torah is many, many things at one and the same time. So a story about a man and a woman who lived a few thousand years ago in ancient Mesopotamia is a teaching story about many things simultaneously, including: how a husband and wife should relate to each other, how a nation was born, and the foundations of that nation.

Already in Rebbe Nachman's time, marital friction and discord were becoming an issue, even in religious communities. Someone related to Reb Noson a talk he had had with the Rebbe about the fact that it had become more common for relationships between newlyweds to degenerate. This often resulted in separation and occasionally in divorce. The Rebbe commented that this was the work of the Evil One, who tries very hard to ruin the family life of young men in order to trap them in his net and destroy their lives.

Part of the solution to prevent one's relationship from degenerating is to honor and respect one's wife. The Rebbe often stressed the importance of this. He pointed out the (what should be) obvious, that women suffer in pregnancy and childbirth, and then bear the brunt of the burden of childrearing. In accord with our Sages' teachings, "Honor your wives so that you may have wealth" (*Bava Metzia* 59a) and, "It's enough for us that they raise our children" (*Yevamos* 63a), Rebbe Nachman reminded husbands young and old to genuinely sympathize with their wives and sincerely honor and respect them. (Bearing and raising your children isn't the only reason, so even if there aren't any children yet, or it's 20 years since the last one, treat her like royalty!)

In Chassidic thought, husband and wife parallel Torah and *tefilah* (prayer). For the greater part of the post-Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple) era, *tefilah* has been little cherished and insufficiently respected. Prayer, for the most part, has been only for taking care of the body. But she can provide neither food nor clothing on her own. Such a prayer needs Torah. For this reason, it has been the man who has sought a wife, while the woman waited for a suitor because she has no justifiable means with which to assert herself. "Give me Torah so that I may have nice clothing, a full stomach, etc." is not the true path of Jewishness.

But there is another kind of *tefilah*, a *tefilah* based on Torah that you've learned, a prayer that you Torah-walk the Torah-talk. A prayer like this has a wholesome foundation since its sole focus is to put the Torah into practice. A *tefilah* like this *is* Torah! This kind of prayer brings with her her own food, clothing and anything else she may need. This *tefilah* can seek Torah for a husband. This is part of what the prophet means when he says, "For God has created something new in the world: The female courts the man" (Jeremiah 31:22). (Are we already witnessing a partial fulfillment of that prophecy as we see more of such courting, and increased financial independence for women? I would say so.)

In Hebrew, the words for brother (אָח, *ach*) and sister (אָחוּת, *achot*) are related to the word for "one" (אֶחָד, *echad*). Avraham Avinu (our Patriarch) tells Sarah Imeinu (our Matriarch), "Tell them you are my sister"—we are one. "Then it will go well for me for your sake"—*tefilah* will provide for the Torah. "And through you I will live"—Torah will be practiced as it should be. Amen, swiftly and soon, in our lifetime.

*A gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

Based on *Sichot HaRan* (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom) #263-264; *Likutey Halakhos*, Rosh Chodesh 5:22

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SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman said, "One thing I believe—and I know a great deal about this. When a person wants to accomplish something holy, no matter how much effort he has to put into it, how many thoughts have to pass through his mind, and how much he has to do in order to succeed, not a single good thought or deed is ever lost. They are all recorded Above in his favor. How fortunate to be able to overcome all the obstacles and accomplish something worthwhile" (*Tzaddik* #112).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

12:1 Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house

Journey Of A Soul That Wishes To Serve God

Abraham represents the soul of a person who wishes to serve God. Such a person must leave behind his "land" (his materialism), his "birthplace" (his sensual pleasures and depression), and even his "father's house" (his family that tries to stop him from serving God). Freed from those handicaps, he can travel to the Holy Land—to holiness, the place where joy reigns supreme. In that place, "I will make you a great nation" (for you will be able to reveal Godliness even to others), "I will bless you" (for then you will be able to draw and receive all the blessings), "I will make your name great" (your vitality will increase), and "you will become a blessing" (for the blessings will remain with you). Furthermore, by leaving behind your past and embracing spirituality, even though you may later descend to "Egypt" (the challenges and difficulties of life), you will have the fortitude to ascend from there and even take with you many sparks of holiness (LH II, p. 145a).

14:18 Malki-tzedek...was a Kohen of the Supernal One

God Always Comes First

Malki-tzedek is another name for Shem, one of Noah's three sons. He was the king of Jerusalem (Rashi; *Bereishit Rabbah* 43:6).

Our Sages teach that God originally intended to give the priesthood to Shem so that his descendants would perform the Temple service. But because Malki-tzedek blessed Abraham prior to blessing God, he and his descendants lost that privilege (*Nedarim* 32b).

A person should fill his mouth with praise for God. Malki-tzedek's intention in praising Abraham was good, but he should have borne in mind that God always comes first (LM I, 34:7).

15:6 He believed in God, and He considered it as charity.

Faith In God Brings All Our Mitzvot To Perfection

Charity reaches its perfection when one gives it because God commanded him to—even if he is left with little money. Thus, we may read this verse as “He believed in God; the charity that he gave was considered as true charity.”

This is the same concept as refraining from work on Shabbat. One who refrains from working solely because God has forbidden him to, and believes that God will provide, demonstrates his faith in God (LM I, 31:2).

15:14 They will leave with great wealth

Power Of A Pidyon

This refers to *pidyonot* (redemption-money). When a *pidyon* comes to the hands of a tzaddik, it can effect a redemption from suffering and judgments. Thus, the Egyptian wealth that came into the hands of the Jews mitigated the decree of exile from Abraham's time (LH I, p. 238).

17:1 Walk before me and be perfect

Circumcision Is The Mark Of Truth

The foreskin is a blemish (Rashi).

The foreskin represents falsehood; it is a blemish that does not belong where it is and must be removed. Just as the foreskin removes the Godly image from a person, falsehood removes a person from Godliness. Thus, the main means for perfection and attainment of a Godly image is through circumcision, the mark of truth (LH V, p. 190).

17:10 This is My covenant...Every male must be circumcised

How To Make The Most Of Every Day

Milah (circumcision) is exalted, for thirteen covenants were made over it (*Nedarim* 31b).

The number 13 represents the exalted level of Atik, the Keter, which also represents Length of Days and the Thirteen Attributes of Compassion. By performing the *milah*, we draw upon ourselves the sanctity of the Length of Days, or long life. Furthermore, by performing the circumcision, a person can attain a level of transcending time! (LH V, p. 76a). Thus, *milah* is exalted, for these covenants can “lengthen a person's day.” We can add that each person's day seems limited—it is, after all, only twenty-four hours long and contains its own distractions. But by guarding the covenant, one feels a decrease in time's pressure and can make the most out of his day.

KITZUR L”M WEEKLY

17 — “It happened as they emptied their sacks” (Genesis 42:35) (continued)

7. By eating properly—that is, by eating slowly and moderately, not gulping down one's food—the intellect is thereby enhanced and foolishness is suppressed. But when a person eats like a glutton and a drunkard, this strengthens the hold of foolishness over the intellect. Then the light of the tzaddik is thereby obscured for him,

and he is unable to receive fear and love of God from the tzaddik.

8. Through the charity given to true tzaddikim and to the righteous poor, converts are made. This, in turn, rectifies the damage done by eating improperly, and the intellect is thereby brought to perfection and rectified. As a result, a person merits to see the light of the tzaddik and to receive fear and love of God from him.

9. The charity that a person gives to true tzaddikim and to righteous poor people is considered like giving charity to many, many Jewish souls.

10. The charity that a person gives to a true Torah scholar greatly increases and extends the concept of the “clear and tranquil air.” Then, when a person who knows how to speak “Jewish speech”—that is, holy speech—utters his words, they are written and carved out in the air, and they go forth and are heard at a distance. Then these words are written in the books of the gentiles, in whatever script is used in each country. Subsequently, the gentiles find in their own books things that contradict their faith, and consequently, they convert [to Judaism]. Such stories have been told about many proselytes who came to convert in this way, and it is all a result of this phenomenon.



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