

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 244

Va'era | Building a Home: Two Worlds, One Journey



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

...∞ PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL ∞...

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Parshat Va'era

Between Exodus and Marriage

It was Friday night, 2:00 a.m. In the kitchen, between the refrigerator and the hotplate, the rabbi sat and learned. Despite being exhausted and worn out from the week's toil, he was not willing to forgo these hours of study. In these hours, the spiritual light of Shabbat shines with full force and intensity, and its sweetness and tranquility pervade every limb and fiber of one's being.

The rabbi sat and learned with melody, passion, and enthusiasm, as is fitting for nighttime learning—just as it is said: *"Who gives forth songs in the night"* (Job 35:10).

In the course of his studies he reached the words of the holy Gemara (Bava Batra 110a): "Rava

said: 'When a man marries a woman, he must investigate her brothers, as it is stated: *And Aaron took Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, the sister of Nachshon, to be his wife* (Exodus 6:23).' From the fact that it says '*daughter of Aminadav*', do we not know that she was '*the sister of Nachshon*' (after all, elsewhere it is written "*Nachshon, son of Aminadav*")? What does the verse teach us by saying '*the sister of Nachshon*'? From here [we learn] that when a man marries a woman, he must check her brothers. It was taught: 'Most children are similar to the mother's brothers.'"¹

The rabbi was already familiar with these words of our Sages. But since this verse appears in



Wellsprings of Wisdom

1. The righteous Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, of saintly memory, wrote (*Yalkut Levi Yitzchak al haTorah*, Part IV, p. 166):

Aaron represents the quality of kindness, and likewise, his wife, Elisheva, the daughter of Aminadav, was from the side of kindness. Aaron

Parshat Va'era - The True Purpose of The Proposed Match

Parashat Va'era, the Torah portion that would be read in the synagogue just a few hours later, he decided to open the parasha and learn the verse once again.

His eyes quickly skimmed the parasha, and soon, his keen mind divided the Torah portion into two themes:

The first part – deals with G-d's command to Moses: "Go speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land" (Exodus 6:11).

The second part – deals with the first seven plagues that came upon Egypt: blood, frogs, lice, wild beasts, pestilence, boils, and hail...

The True Purpose of The Proposed Match

We begin with a story (*Besod Avadecha* Part 9, p. 143):

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and Elisheva had four sons born to them: Elazar and Itamar, Nadav and Avihu.

Nadav and Avihu were from the side of Gevurot (severity). The Gemara, therefore, answers the question:

And it is between these two parts—between Moses' mission to Pharaoh and the seven plagues—that this verse appears and notes Aaron's marriage to Elisheva.

The rabbi looked again at the structure of the parasha, and the question popped into his mind: Why, in the middle of the progression of the Exodus from Egypt, is this detail noted? What is the connection between the marital union of Aaron and Elisheva and the process of the Jews' redemption from Egypt?

In search of an answer to this resounding question, the booklet before you was written...

Rabbi Elazar Lifshitz—a man of means, righteousness, and

How could gevurot be born from kindness?

To which it answers: most children resemble the mother's brothers. And Nachshon, Elisheva's brother, was from the side of gevurah (see there further on the subject).

Parshat Va'era - The True Purpose of The Proposed Match

outstanding Torah erudition—was counted among the foremost leaders of the illustrious Pietrikov community. At his table, Torah and wealth sat side by side; he lived beneath the twin canopies of wisdom and prosperity.

When the time came to seek an appropriate groom for his daughter, Rabbi Elazar would not consider anyone who fell short of the very highest standard: the young man had to be both a first-rank Torah scholar in his own right and the scion of a distinguished family. Finding a candidate perfect in every virtue was no easy task, yet Rabbi Elazar was prepared to exhaust every avenue until his wish was fulfilled.

After an extended search marked by careful scrutiny and inquiry, word reached him of an extraordinary prodigy, Rabbi Yosef Horowitz, famed for razor-sharp intellect and encyclopedic knowledge. He was the son of the celebrated gaon Rabbi Azriel Horowitz, Av Beit Din of Lublin, universally known as the “Rosh HaBarzel” (“Head of

Iron”). The glowing reports—soaring testimonials to the young man’s brilliance—stirred Rabbi Elazar’s soul; if every detail proved true, he vowed to spare no expense on the dowry and to secure this wonder-youth as his son-in-law.

For so delicate a mission, Rabbi Elazar needed an agent of impeccable judgment. He chose Rabbi David Bromberg—the renowned son-in-law of Rabbi Klonymus Kalman Epstein, author of *Ma'or VaShemesh*—himself a brilliant scholar and the pride of Pietrikov. Rabbi Elazar offered him a generous fee to travel to Lublin, test the young man in Talmud, observe his character, and, if satisfied, conclude an engagement and commit to the dowry in Rabbi Elazar’s name.

Convincing Rabbi David to abandon his beloved study hall was no simple matter; even the large sum on offer could not allure a mind so devoted to Torah. Ultimately, the entreaties of Pietrikov’s finest scholars prevailed, and Rabbi David

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reluctantly agreed. He packed a modest bundle, boarded the carriage Rabbi Elazar provided, and set out for Lublin with a letter of authorization empowering him to finalize every detail of the match.

Rabbi David received great honor in the house of Rabbi Azriel. The prospect of joining that illustrious family by marriage had already excited many of the generation's leading figures. After several days of uninterrupted scholarly dialogue with the prodigious son, Rabbi David's doubts were laid entirely to rest: this was indeed the match Rabbi Elazar had dreamed of. The depth, acumen, and expansive knowledge he witnessed marked the young man as a rare *ben aliyah* who could rarely be found.

Certain of G-d's favor, Rabbi David produced his authorization letter, declared his readiness to sign an engagement contract with all financial commitments, and the ceremony was concluded amid rejoicing.

News spread swiftly; throngs poured in with *mazal tov* blessings. Because it was Thursday, Rabbi Azriel insisted that his honored guest remain through Shabbat so they could celebrate together—an invitation Rabbi David gladly accepted.

On Sunday, taking leave of his host, Rabbi David resolved to visit another towering figure in Lublin: the holy Chozeb, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak, renowned throughout the Jewish world. Though closely connected to great Chassidic masters—including his own father-in-law—Rabbi David had not yet tasted the essence of Chassidut, and the opportunity could not be squandered. Out of deference to Rabbi Azriel, who was not aligned with Chassidic ways, he had delayed the visit; now, freed from that constraint, he

went to see the Chozeb.

Entering the tzaddik's inner chamber, Rabbi David offered greetings, which were warmly returned. The Chozeb asked, "What brings you to Lublin?" Embarrassed, Rabbi David fell

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silent—he preferred not to reveal that he had come from Rabbi Azriel's house. Seeing his reticence, the Chozeh spoke:

"When a person travels on a mission, and it ultimately fails, the journey is never in vain; it means Heaven meant him for something else."

Proof of this principle may be drawn from King Saul: when he went out to search for the lost donkeys of his father Kish and did not find them, he reached the city where Samuel the Prophet resided and said, "Behold now, there is a man of G-d in this city ... come, let us go there; perhaps he will tell us the way upon which we have been going" (I Samuel 9:6).

At first glance, he should have said, "the way we should go," for he wished to know where to turn next in order to locate the donkeys—so why does the verse read, "the way upon which we have been going"?

Rather, when Saul saw that he had walked and walked, yet his efforts had borne no fruit—for

he had not found the donkeys he sought—he grasped that Heaven must surely have assigned him a different purpose for which he had traveled that entire path and this was what he wished to learn from the Prophet: for what purpose, after all, was the road upon which we have walked until now?

Indeed, as events proved, that journey was undertaken in order for him to receive the kingship!"

Rabbi David was puzzled; after all, his mission had succeeded splendidly. He accepted the tzaddik's blessing, departed, and alighted his carriage for the return trip.

On the road, the Jewish coachman—one of Rabbi Elazar's servants—remarked, "I am amazed, Rabbi David, that you chose a crippled groom for our master." Rabbi David's eyes widened. "What nonsense! I spent a week with him; he is free of the slightest flaw." Offended, he spoke no more until he arrived in Pietrikov.

Meanwhile, two wayfarers lodged at Rabbi Elazar's table and casually mentioned they hailed from Lublin. Excited, the host asked about Rabbi Azriel and then his son, Yosef. They replied, "His sharpness surpasses even his father's—ah, if only he weren't crippled, he would be flawless!"

The words struck Rabbi Elazar like a blow. Convinced his envoy had failed, he awaited Rabbi David's return with a heavy heart. Soon afterward, Rabbi David arrived, jubilantly waving the signed engagement contract and proclaiming, "*Mazal Tov!*"

Rabbi Elazar, trembling, cried, "How could you bring me a lame groom?" Before Rabbi David could defend himself, the coachman interjected, "Did I not tell you so?" No explanation availed: Rabbi Elazar dispatched the contract back to Lublin that very day, declaring the match void on grounds of error, and quickly

arranged a different engagement to avoid public embarrassment.

Not many days passed before the truth surfaced beyond doubt: the young Rabbi Yosef had never been crippled. A trifling illusion shared by three individuals had unwittingly fulfilled Heaven's decree, and what was done could not be undone.

Only now did Rabbi David grasp the Chozeh's cryptic words. "Since my original mission was nullified, Heaven must have had another purpose," he reasoned. The thought tormented him until clarity dawned: "It is obvious—my entire trip was orchestrated so I might behold the Chozeh and recognize his greatness." Resolute, he set out once more for Lublin, and from that day forward, Rabbi David was counted among the faithful disciples who sheltered under the holy Chozeh's radiant light.

Everything is Divinely Orchestrated

Upon pondering this story, we must ask: There is nothing

that happens without a purpose, and with every step a person

Parshat Va'era - Everything is Divinely Orchestrated

takes, he must find the will of *hashgacha elyonah* (*Divine Providence*). As such, what is the purpose of this lengthy exile that we are in? For what reason are we striding for thousands of years among mountains of pain and quarries of sorrow?"

Before we try to explain a little, we must clarify one very important point:

A person must recognize his place. A person must remember that he is a created being and that he is, after all, sent into this world only to carry out the mission that the Creator of the world assigned to him!

A human being is nothing but an agent—a mere emissary. When his mission is over, *G-d* will return him to his place on high!

It follows, then, that this world does not belong to man! This world belongs to the Master of the Universe. If so, why should a person be upset about a world that isn't his? After all, everything will be as *G-d*, blessed be *He*—the Owner of the world—wants!

True, we are *obligated* to share in the suffering of the Shechinah (the Divine Presence) and the suffering of Israel and to plead and beg *Him*, blessed be *He*, that judgments be sweetened and visible mercies be bestowed upon the people of Israel as a whole and upon each and every Jew in particular. However, all that notwithstanding, a person must know:

He must not disturb his peace of mind over things that are yet to come. He must trust in *G-d* that everything is for the good and that *He* will run His world as *He* wishes, and be happy and calm in the present situation. Why should a person be upset about tomorrow?

As the Gemara declares (Yevamot 63b):

"Do not worry about tomorrow's trouble, for you do not know what a day will bring. Tomorrow may come, and man will no longer be here, and he is worried about a world that is not his."

Moreover, a person must know that everything is in the hands of Heaven and all worries are unnecessary. It is a pity to fret about a world that isn't his. There is a *Manhig HaBirah* (a "Captain of the ship") who does with His world as He pleases and desires. A person must not interfere or entangle

himself in matters that do not concern him.² A Jew should do what is incumbent upon him (within normal bounds) and let G-d do what is His to do!"

After this introduction, we will proceed to explain *what this lengthy exile is all about*. But first, let us define the time period that we are discussing...

From Engagement to Marriage

We share an excerpt from a talk by the kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburg *Shlita (Be'ita Achishena*, p. 206):

The central timeline on which the people of Israel move is bounded by two endpoints: the Exodus from Egypt and the future Redemption. The formation of the people of Israel takes place in the Exodus from Egypt, and the ultimate purpose of the history of the people of

Israel is the future Redemption. In this context, G-d is designated as the Redeemer: "*It shall no longer be said: As G-d lives, who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt; but rather: As G-d lives, who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had driven them*" (Jeremiah 16:14–15).

In the first redemption, when the Jewish people were

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2. The holy Rabbi Aaron Roth, of saintly memory, in his work *Shomer Emunim* (Part II), wrote an essay entitled "Tzahali VeRoni" ("Exult and Rejoice"). This essay, spanning 14 chapters, explains how it is possible to unify two seemingly

contradictory attitudes: on the one hand, the need to participate in the suffering of the Jewish people, and on the other hand, to simultaneously be in a state of joy with the faith that "everything that G-d does – all is for the good"...

redeemed from Egypt, G-d used four expressions of redemption, which appear in two verses in our parasha:

"Therefore say to the children of Israel: I am G-d, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt, and I will save you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a G-d, and you shall know that I am G-d your L-rd who brings you out from under the burdens of Egypt" (Exodus 6:6-7).

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3. G-d could have redeemed the people of Israel from Egypt in an instant, yet He deliberately chose a slow, step-by-step deliverance so the people's souls could absorb and adjust to freedom. Similarly, the period just before redemption is marked by an even deeper darkness and concealment than the exile itself—like the darkest moment before dawn.

The Jerusalem Talmud illustrates this with Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Shimon in the Arbel Valley: the night grew darkest just before the first rays of morning appeared. In much the same way that labor pains

Rabbeinu Ovadia Sforno, of saintly memory, explains (*ibid.*):

"I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt" – from the day the plagues begin, the servitude will cease.

"I will save you" – On the day of your exodus, when you will leave their territory.

"I will redeem you" – By the drowning of the Egyptians in the Sea... for after the slave-masters died, they were no longer fugitive slaves.

"I will take you to Me for a people" – At the revelation of Mount Sinai.³

peak immediately before birth, Israel's suffering will intensify most right before the final redemption breaks into light.

In this context, the gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Shraga Gross told a story about a Seder Night that was held in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp:

"If the days, in general, passed with difficulty, in depression and in utter misery for the Jews—who had been consigned to slave labor that crushed the entire body, soul, and spirit—how much more so the holidays and festivals.

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“Yet despite all that, G-d planted here and there spiritual heroes, holy and uplifted people, who in the midst of the darkness and gloom instilled in their broken brethren a spirit of strength and encouragement, a spirit of sublime courage.

“Among these holy ones was Rabbi Yisrael Shapira, of blessed memory, the Rebbe of Bluzhov, who, along with his brethren, was exiled to the Bergen-Belsen death camp.

“It happened on Nissan, 5704 (1944). On the eve of the holy festival of Passover, in a remote corner of one of the barracks, the Rebbe conducted the Seder. There was no pillow for leaning; there was no set table; there was no 'shank bone, egg, or haroset.' But there was a potato and a beet and even a few crumbs of matzah. The "measure of maror" (bitter herbs) overshadowed all else—a more than adequate measure by all opinions.

“Among those seated were a small number of children and a few older people. The Bluzhover Rebbe told those present the story of the Exodus from Egypt and all that is related to it—the miracles and wonders that G-d did for our forefathers on this night.

“One of the children recited the Four Questions (Mah Nishtanah), and a stream of tears poured from the eyes of all who were present—they remembered days of old, the times they had sat at the Seder as free people, like princes, all reclining, the atmosphere of

the festival steeped in holiness and purity. And now—here they were sitting on the ground in accursed conditions...

“When the little one finished the Four Questions, the Bluzhover Rebbe repeated them, and he offered an interpretation to the listeners, a new interpretation:

“Why is this night different from all other nights? – Exile is like night: dark and somber. Why is this exile different, worse, than all the other exiles of Israel?”

And he went on to interpret: ‘On all other nights we eat leavened bread and matzah – for in all the exiles, we had times of rising and times of falling (chametz dough rises while matzah remains flat). Yet on this night, we eat only matzah – but in this exile, we are only in a lowly, downtrodden state.

“The Bluzhover Rebbe continued in this vein: “On this night, we eat only bitter herbs...; On this night, we all recline” – we currently lie on the ground. We are unable to stand upright or raise our heads.

“What is the reason? Why? On account of what?

“The Bluzhover Rebbe lifted his eyes to heaven and said: Know, dear children. Every night, before the dawn breaks, the darkness intensifies. After our eyes have darkened so greatly, we are assured that we are close to the complete Redemption.

“This matter is alluded to by the author of the Haggadah when he says: “Avadim hayinu...” – The word *avadim* (slaves) is

It is evident from Sforno's holy words that the four expressions of redemption are four *stages* in the process of the Exodus from Egypt: the cessation of the slavery, the departure from the land of Egypt, the splitting of the Sea, and the giving of the Torah.

The completion of the redemption process from Egypt was at Mount Sinai. There, the bond was formed between G-d and the people of Israel—an

eternal bond, a bond that can never be severed!

There, so to speak, G-d entered into a betrothal covenant with His people Israel, as it is said: *"I will betroth you to Me forever, and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice and with kindness and with mercy. And I will betroth you to Me with faithfulness, and you shall know G-d"* (Hosea 2:21–22).⁴

Wellsprings of Wisdom

an acronym: "David ben Yishai avdecha Mashichecha" ("David son of Jesse, Your servant, Your anointed one"). Our righteous Mashiach is already standing just behind our wall. This is the ultimate reason for the difficulty and intensity of our current exile.'

"The words of the Bluzhover Rebbe touched the hearts of the youth, strengthened their crushed hearts, and encouraged their spirits, in the very midst of the Vigil Night (leil shimurim) on foreign soil" (Chaim SheYesh Bahem – The Passover Haggadah, p. 295).

4. Thus, can we understand the blessing that we recite at the time of betrothal (*Ketubot* 7b):

"Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who sanctified us with

His commandments, and commanded us concerning the forbidden relations, and forbade betrothed women to us, but permitted women who are married to us through *chuppah* and *kiddushin*. Blessed are You, G-d, who sanctifies Israel by means of *chuppah* and *kiddushin*."

The Maharshal writes as follows (*Yam Shel Shlomo*, on *Ketubot*, ch. 1, sec. 17):

"Who sanctifies Israel by means of *chuppah* and *kiddushin*' – At the time of the Giving of the Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, betrothed Israel with the Torah—as it is [written] *morasha* ("heritage"), read not *morasha* but *me'orasah* ("betrothed"; *Berachot* 57a) —for [there was] a cloud on the mountain like a *chuppah*, and Israel attained that sanctity."

G-d is the groom, and Knesset Yisrael (the Congregation of Israel) is the bride. In this betrothal, they swore to each other that they would never abandon one another!⁵

Likewise, the future Redemption for which we yearn is also expressed in four expressions of redemption that the prophet Yechezkel (Ezekiel) foretold: *“I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land, and I will shepherd them on the mountains of Israel by the streams and in all the settlements of the land”* (Ezekiel 34:13).

It will be in this final Redemption when, as it were, the

marriage between *G-d* and the people of Israel will take place, as it is said: *“For your Maker is your husband; G-d of Hosts is His name, and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; the G-d of the whole earth He shall be called”* (Isaiah 54:5).

It is also said: *“And it shall come to pass on that day, says G-d, that you will call [Me] ‘my Husband’ and will no longer call Me ‘my Master’”* (Hosea 2:18).

As such, in order to understand what is happening with us in our current exile, we must contemplate the process that occurs between the betrothal and the marriage....⁶

Let us start from the beginning...

••• Wellsprings of Wisdom •••

5. In the words of the Midrash (*Yalkut Shim'on*, Ki Tavo, remez 938): “We have already sworn to our *G-d* that we will not exchange Him for another *G-d*... and just as we have sworn to Him, so too, He has sworn to us that He will not exchange us for another nation”...

6. According to Torah law, there are two stages in the marital bond. The first stage is called “erusin” or

“kiddushin” (betrothal), and the second stage is called “nissuin” (marriage).

Today, we use the term “erusin” to mean an agreement to marry (engagement). However, the true meaning of erusin is the formation of a real bond by which the woman is considered married (with respect to most matters): she cannot marry another man; if another man has relations with her, it is considered adultery, and they are liable to the death penalty.

Adam and Eve—Unique Creations

In six days, *G-d* created the world. On the first day, He created the heavens, the earth, and light. On the second day, *G-d* separated between the waters above (in the firmament) and the waters below (in the seas), thereby creating the expanses of sky and ocean.

On the third day, *G-d* commanded the earth, and it brought forth grass and vegetation. On the fourth day—He created the hosts of the heavens: the sun, the moon, and the stars.

On the fifth day, He created the birds and the fish, the

creatures of the sky and sea. And on the sixth day – He created the animals and beasts that live on land.

We do not know how many individual creatures were created of each kind, and we do not know how many they were in number, but it is clear that at the time of creation, there were at least two of each species.

Finally, after all of the other creatures were created, *G-d* began the creation of the final creature – the human being.

At midday on the sixth day of Creation, Man stood up on

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In addition, the betrothal bond is only dissolved by a *get* (divorce document) or the husband's death. However, during the betrothal stage the couple is still forbidden to each other (they may not yet live together as husband and wife).

Nowadays, the Jewish people practice betrothal (*kiddushin*) with a ring as 'money or something of monetary value.'

The second stage of the marital bond, which completes it, is called "nissuin" (marriage). The nissuin is then done by

means of the "chuppah" (the wedding canopy ceremony).

In earlier times, the period of betrothal lasted a significant amount of time—generally, about a year. After performing the betrothal, the bride would return to her father's house and remain there until the chuppah (the marriage ceremony).

In later times, it became customary to perform the betrothal and the marriage together at the wedding ceremony, as is done today.

his feet and began to observe his surroundings. To his surprise, he discovered that every creature had a mate, every creature had others of its kind – only he was alone.

He wondered: Why? Why is it that all of the animals were created with a mate—male and female—yet

I was created solitary?

The holy Torah answers this: *“And G-d the L-rd said: It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper opposite him (ezer k’negdo)”* (Genesis 2:18).

There is a fundamental and essential difference between Man and his wife and all of the other living creatures and their mates. The difference is summed up by the verse that describes the Woman as: “a helper opposite him” (*ezer k’negdo*!).

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7. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, of blessed memory, wrote as follows (in his work *“Le’Chatanim”* – “To Grooms”):

“A man who is involved in acts of kindness with a multitude of people—lending and giving, visiting the sick, comforting

To explain: We do not demand of animals that they have a dependence on one another; we do not demand of them an emotional attachment and bond. Animals were created apart in one act—something which made a true union between them impossible. Concepts such as love, desire, companionship, and expressing feelings for one another do not exist among them.

All of this, as stated, stems from the fact that *G-d* created them from the very start, completely separate from one another.

But from the human being, *G-d* demands that he elevate himself above the predatory animalistic traits within him and become a *mensch* (a true human being)—a primary measure of which is *shalom bayit* (*marital harmony*)!¹⁷

mourners, celebrating with groom and bride, etc.—will surely rejoice on his final day when his time comes, for he has many merits in acts of kindness.

But he must know faithfully: in Heaven, they examine how he behaved with his

Parshat Va'era - The Feeling of Lack: Key to Unity

Since *G-d* willed that man and his wife should not be separate in their essence, He therefore created the human being *alone*, and from within him He formed the entirety of the woman's existence and her entire world.

As it is said: "And Adam said: 'This time, it is bone of

my bones and flesh of my flesh; this shall be called Woman (ishah), since from man (ish) was she taken'" (Genesis 2:23).

It is in this way that their ultimate purpose can be achieved – true and complete unity!

However, that is still not enough; *G-d* introduced another element...

The Feeling of Lack: Key to Unity

When Adam stood up on his feet, he looked around and noticed that every animal had a mate, yet he alone had no mate... He tried to imagine a mate who would suit him and meet his needs, but he found none.

This situation caused Adam to have a sense of *lack*. This feeling was an intentional device created by the Creator, blessed be He, in order to generate within him an internal, genuine need for a

mate. Out of that feeling of lack in Adam, the Blessed One, blessed be He, brought forth a new creation called "Woman"...

The Creator, blessed be He, wanted to create a truly whole reality of marital bond—a bond of the *deepest unity* between a man and his wife. To that end, He created Man alone so that he would feel the pain of absence, and He instilled in him a longing and

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wife. If he was kind to her all of his days—fortunate is he, and it will be good for him. But if he angered and neglected her—if at home he was angry and strict, without mercy,

without kindness, and did not share in the burden—this will determine his judgment. None of his acts of kindness that he did for others will be remembered!"

yearning to live in a reality of togetherness, partnership, communication, joy, love, and attachment.

It is then, out of their yearning for completeness, that Man and Woman are brought together, as it is stated: “*And G-d the L-rd caused a deep sleep to fall upon Man, and he slept. And He took one of his ribs and closed the flesh in its place*” (Genesis 2:21).

Not only was the first woman in the world created from Man’s very self—from his flesh, bone, and innermost being—but every single woman is united with her

husband’s flesh, bone, and innermost being. Therefore, she longs for him as if he were one of her own limbs, and she requires and yearns for his leadership.

Thus, a married couple is not merely two separate entities who live together in partnership, but they are rather one entity in the truest sense of the term! The more they deny and ignore this awareness, the more they will lose; the more they understand and internalize this awareness, the more they will succeed, and their lives will prosper—until they become a fount of perpetual joy.

Differences that Create Wholeness

As noted, on the sixth day of Creation, a one-time and extremely unique event occurred: Adam and Chava were married on the very same day of their creation!

However, of course, for their descendants—all of mankind—this is not the case. Many long years pass until a man and a woman marry and establish their home together.

The reason for this is that there are fundamental differences between a man and a woman, which could prevent them from achieving true unity. Therefore, *G-d* arranged things such that in their younger years, they each walk along their own path of life until they reach the emotional maturity necessary for establishing a home.

Parshat Va'era - Differences that Create Wholeness

To enumerate a few of these key differences:

Difference 1: Man was created as a *"leader,"* whereas the woman was created as a *"follower."* By her very nature, a woman needs to be led. In other words, a woman needs her husband to be a strong leader, a man with a backbone and an upright bearing on whom she can rely.

A man needs to be given his "place" and be allowed to express his identity and leadership in the home. Of course, this also means that he must be honored and afforded the respect due to him.

Difference 2: Man's primary place of authority is in the realm of intellect and reason,

known in Chassidic teaching as *chochmah, binah, and da'at* (ח"ב"ד). Conversely, the woman's primary place is in the realm of the heart and emotions, known in Chassidic teaching as *chesed, gevurah, tiferet* (ח"ג"ת).

Accordingly, it is the husband's role to be responsible for filling and satisfying his wife's emotional needs—both by ensuring that she constantly feels loved and desired by her husband and by making certain she knows well that her husband loves, accepts, and appreciates her as she is, for who she is, without any preconditions or demands for change.⁸

Difference 3: Man is, by nature, akin to a *"minister of the exterior,"* while the woman is

Wellsprings of Wisdom

8. A Jewish home must be run as follows:

The intellectual leadership of the home should be exercised by the man, and the emotional leadership should be exercised by the woman. However, in homes where the wife provides the weight of logic and reason, and the husband provides the weight of emotions, the home is unstable and liable to collapse, Heaven forbid.

A couple who wishes to succeed together in a happy life and to raise upright, blessed, and radiant children must be very careful to each have their proper place: the man with the role of intellect and reason and the woman with proper emotion.

Likewise, the proper approach must also be applied toward the children: the mother should "shower" them with

Parshat Va'era - Differences that Create Wholeness

akin to a “*minister of the interior*.” The woman’s natural place is in the inner sanctum of her home, as the verse says: “*Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the innermost parts of your house*” (Psalms 128:3). If a woman constantly desires to leave her home, it is a clear sign of an unhealthy state in the management of her home and her own soul—a sign that she is living with a great void, and she is not reaching her true self or her full potential at all.

G-d, blessed be He, created her with a modest and private nature—“*All glorious is the princess within [her chamber]*”

positive emotions and empathy, etc., in every matter, while the father should, in his way, maintain a perspective of reason.

9. Although it is often inevitable that a woman must bear with her husband the yoke of the home and the livelihood—it is clear that this is not her role. He obligated himself in the ketubah to ten things: “...*and I will sustain, support, and provide [for you]...*” etc., whereas she did not obligate herself in reciprocation in the ketubah; rather, she shares the burden with him out of a

(Psalms 45:14). If a woman’s sole desire is to go out and be seen among people, this is a clear sign of an inner deficiency and the beginning of personal ruin.⁹

Difference 4: By nature, a man tends more toward the spiritual, whereas a woman, by her nature, tends more toward the physical. G-d created them in this manner so that the woman can take upon herself the yoke of managing the household’s daily affairs and caring for the children without any other distractions.

Conversely, the man—since his primary task in this world is involvement in the wisdom of the

∞ *Wellsprings of Wisdom* ∞

feeling of partnership and belonging, and out of love between them.

This is one of the great distortions created by the Haskalah (the so-called ‘Enlightenment’): emphasizing the importance of a woman building a career for herself and disconnecting her from her personal world—turning her essence, which involves modesty and discreetness, and her respected status into someone preoccupied day and night with external matters that do not belong to her...

Parshat Va'era - Differences that Create Wholeness

holy Torah—will inevitably feel pangs of conscience if he is drawn too much into household duties, for his place is none other than in the confines of the Beit Midrash! That is to say, while both of them may be capable of being in either setting (both the home and the Beit Midrash), the woman feels more naturally comfortable at home—where she attains a sense of fulfillment for her soul and a sense of well-being. Man can be at home and even be happy at home, but he will attain fulfillment for his soul and a sense of wholeness in the Beit Midrash, where he most fittingly belongs and where he fulfills the reason why he was created.

Difference 5: Man's body is by nature less dependent on material needs. By contrast, the woman has more physical needs. The husband is obligated to take her needs into account and be extremely sensitive to provide for them in a timely manner and with goodwill.

One example: among the most important needs of a

woman's soul is the need for jewelry. The husband commits in the *ketubah*: "*I will nourish, sustain, and support [you].*" "Support" here refers, among other things, to jewelry.

Similarly, a woman has a strong need for privacy and a space of her own. This in no way diminishes her love and emotional closeness to her parents and immediate family; she does not carve out a quiet, private corner for herself to distance herself from them, but rather to grant herself mental peace and tranquility. If, G-d forbid, this need is not met, the stability of the home may be in real danger.

It is clear, then, that those people who go to live with their parents—in order to save money for a house—are severely damaging the privacy of their home, which is the base and foundation for the entire home.

One must remember: it is a great mitzvah to live at one's parents' home until marriage—it is necessary, and a sacred duty, to

live with them. But after marriage (—not a moment before), a new chapter of life begins: "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*" (Genesis 2:24). The previous chapter-singlehood-is completed, and the new chapter of marriage begins.

Difference 6: A woman's soul yearns to hear words of appreciation and compliments from her husband, and every man is obligated to show proper appreciation to his wife.

It must be emphasized: a husband's appreciation is the inner life-force of his wife's soul—like fuel to a vehicle; without it, functioning is impossible, and living is nearly impossible. Thus, a husband who does not offer verbal appreciation to his wife is acting with cruelty. A husband's appreciation for his wife is akin to watering a tree: one cannot expect the tree to grow and bear fruit without a proper system of irrigation. Every

woman is deserving of endless appreciation; there are infinite virtues and praises with which to elevate and commend her.

Difference 7: It is easier for a man to be punctual about time than it is for a woman. One must be aware that punctuality is not necessarily a woman's strong suit. One may plan to leave at a certain time with his wife, but when the time arrives, she will still not be ready...

Simply knowing this may be the cure—once *a husband understands this, he will know not to get upset with her about timeliness and can be patient with his wife.*

To summarize this passage:

G-d created man and woman in a special manner and form, endowing them with distinctive qualities that differ utterly from one another.

To each of them, the Almighty assigned an individual role, yet their single, shared purpose is to complete one another.

Parshat Va'era - An Everlasting Betrothal

The Holy One, blessed be He, pairs every man with the wife suited to him in accordance with the root of his soul and the particular configuration of his traits, and this is decreed even before his formation in his mother's womb, as stated in the Gemara (Sotah 2a): Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rav, "Forty days before the formation of the fetus a heavenly

voice goes forth and proclaims, 'The daughter of So-and-so is destined for So-and-so,' etc."

A person attains wholeness only when he is married to his wife and when they each invest their mind and heart in one another!

And now, let us consider the time and process that occurs between engagement and marriage...

An Everlasting Betrothal

Let us revisit what we wrote earlier:

In the process of forming the bond between *G-d* and the people of Israel, there were three main stages: the event at Mount Sinai, the interim period, and the Messianic Era.

At the event of Mount Sinai, we merited a bond equivalent to a betrothal; in the Messianic Era, we will merit a bond equivalent to a marriage, and the period in between corresponds

to the bond that exists between betrothal and marriage.

If we understand the inner meaning of the connection that takes place between betrothal and marriage, we can understand why the people of Israel have undergone what they have undergone in the past few millennia.

To explain:¹⁰

Before a couple decides to become betrothed (by means of a ring), there is as yet no connection

binding them. But after they become betrothed, they become bound together, and that bond creates the woman's status as belonging to her husband and her being forbidden to others.

Then, after the act of betrothal, the period of waiting begins.

Prior to betrothal, there is no true bond, but even after betrothal, the bride still does not have a complete connection to her groom—and their union is still forbidden. She only knows generally of his existence, not intimately, and that knowledge causes in her a state of “*ratzo*” (*yearning*) and “*klot hanefesh*” (*pining of the soul*) toward the groom, with anticipation to know him and receive inner influence from him. Only through marriage does the bride merit to know the essence of her groom and to receive inner influence from him. This brings her “*shov*”—back into reality—to implement and manifest (in her home, her children, and even beyond) the qualities and desires of her husband.

Since the betrothal period is characterized by yearning and longing, we are commanded to preserve in spirit (even after marriage) the state of betrothal. As it is said: “*I will betroth you to Me forever*” (Hosea 2:21). The perpetual desire—the constant longing born of the feeling that there still remains a distance between the bride and groom, that they have not yet merited to see the full essence of each other—is the “fuel” that drives married life. The ever-present yearning that rises from the bride toward her groom grants her a special and everlasting charm in his eyes, and behold, she is: “*a loving doe and a graceful gazelle*” (Proverbs 5:19)—beloved by her husband always, as at the first moment...

But it is the transition from kiddushin (betrothal) to nissuin (marriage) that enables the couple to actualize that which is latent within them and to fulfill together their mission in the world.

In summary, the effect of the betrothal is to create a spiritual bond between the woman and

Parshat Va'era - An Everlasting Betrothal

her husband—a bond that produces an inner desire and pining of the soul...

Now, all matters of the revealed Torah flow and emanate from the inner (hidden) Torah; the same is true in our case, too. The inner meaning of “*the woman is acquired by her husband*” is the union of the Holy One, blessed be He, with Knesset Yisrael, the Jewish people—which is accomplished through three methods (paralleling the three halachic methods of ‘acquisition’: money, documentation, and intimacy).

Just as in the betrothal between a man and a woman, there are two aspects—the woman's belonging to her husband and consequently her being forbidden to others—so too these two aspects exist in the betrothal between the Holy One, blessed be He, and Israel.

However, in order to merit and reach the stage of marriage—the stage of redemption when “*Your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, and your eyes will behold your Teacher*” (Isaiah 30:20)—we

must undergo a refinement of our physicality. And for this purpose—for the sake of the “marriage”—G-d gave Israel the Torah and the commandments, and He put us through various trials and tribulations, all only in order to benefit us! As it is said: “*For I know the thoughts that I think concerning you, says G-d, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope*” (Jeremiah 29:11).

The rabbi (our narrator from the opening story) rose excitedly from his place and began pacing the kitchen. “Now I understand why, in the middle of the process of redemption from Egypt, the Torah noted the wedding of Aaron and Elisheva.

“After all, the four expressions of redemption are one continuous redemption process, which begins with the plague of blood and ends with the betrothal event between G-d and Israel.

“And this mission was placed upon two holy men: Moses and Aaron. They could not bring about the general *kiddushin* (betrothal) so

Parshat Va'era - An Everlasting Betrothal

long as they themselves, in their personal lives, were not on that level—of marriage. Therefore, the Torah pauses in the middle of the redemption process and notes: *Aaron married Elisheva!* Only then could the redemption process truly begin—a process which started with the plague of blood.

“Let us conclude with the words of the holy Zohar (Shemini 38b): Rabbi Elazar opened and said: “*And Aaron took Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, the sister of Nachshon, to be his wife*” (Exodus 6:23). ‘*And Aaron took*’—everything was as it ought to be, everything in the

manner it is above. Come and see: Batsheva was destined for David from the day the world was created; Elisheva was destined for Aaron from the day the world was created.

“What is the difference between one and the other? In truth, they shared one and the same soul. But there, [with David,] it was for judgment; and here, [with Aaron,] for mercy. When she joined with David—it was for judgment, to wage wars and spill blood. Here, with Aaron—it was for peace, for joy, for brightness of countenance, for blessing...”



Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. One of the fundamental and essential differences that exist in the union between Man and his wife, versus all other living creatures, lies in the nature of their bond. We do not expect animals to have dependence on one another; we do not expect them to have an emotional bond. But from a man and his wife, it is expected that there be love, companionship, partnership, cooperation, and a sense of belonging.

2. Between a man and his wife, there are several differences.

The first difference is: man was created as a "leader," whereas woman was created as a "follower." Therefore, by her nature, the woman needs to be led and for her husband to be a leader and a figure of strength—a man with a backbone and upright posture whom she can lean on with "closed eyes." On the other hand, the man needs to be given his "place" to be allowed to express his identity and leadership in the home. Of course, he must also be honored and afforded the respect due to him.

3. The second difference: while man's primary sphere and dominion is in the level of intellect and reason, the woman's primary sphere and

dominion is in the level of the heart and emotions.

4. The third difference: man is akin to a "minister of the exterior," but the woman is compared to the "minister of the interior." Therefore, the woman's natural place is in the inner part of her home. Thus, if a woman constantly desires to escape from her home, it is a clear sign of an unhealthy state in the management of her home and her own soul—a sign that she is greatly lacking and not reaching her true self or her true identity at all.

5. The fourth difference: by nature, a man tends more toward the spiritual, whereas by nature, a woman tends more toward the physical. G-d created them in this manner so that the woman can take upon herself the yoke of caring for her home and children—the daily running of the household—without any other distractions.

6. The fifth difference: man is by nature less materially dependent. By contrast, a woman is more dependent and has more physical needs. Therefore, a man is obligated to consider his wife's various needs and to be extremely sensitive to provide for them in a timely manner and with joy.

Parshat Va'era - Summary and Practical Conclusions

7. The sixth difference: a woman longs to hear words of appreciation and compliments from her husband. Therefore, a man is obligated to shower his wife with abundant appreciation for her many efforts.
8. The seventh difference: It is often easier for a man to be precise with

time due to the fewer family and home constraints placed upon him. Whereas this often is not the case for a woman. Punctuality may not be a woman's strong suit. Simply knowing this fact is the remedy, as it helps one be patient and understanding.

Shabbat Shalom!





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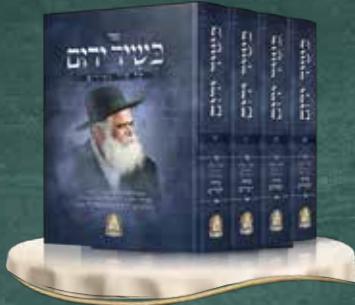
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Shabbat Times Va'era

28th of Tevet, 5786

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	4:36 pm	5:40 pm	6:08 pm
Miami	5:34 pm	6:30 pm	7:05 pm
Los Angeles	4:51 pm	5:49 pm	6:22 pm
Montreal	4:21 pm	5:28 pm	5:52 pm
Toronto	4:50 pm	5:55 pm	6:21 pm
London	4:04 pm	5:20 pm	5:36 pm
Jerusalem	4:43 pm	5:35 pm	6:07 pm
Tel Aviv	4:39 pm	5:31 pm	6:03 pm
Haifa	4:37 pm	5:32 pm	6:03 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:41 pm	5:36 pm	6:08 pm

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From the Words of
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

An am ha'aretz - an unlearned person - who at most knows how to recite Tehillim (Psalms), but whose heart is full of joy, surely, surely the Shechinah rests upon the head of that man whose heart is wholesome and pure.



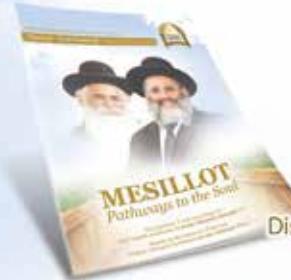
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