

Politics & Mysticism in the Weekly Torah Portion

Parshat (Portion) Hayei Sarah

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This week...

- * ***Choosing THE proper marriage partner.***
- * ***Wise directives for a long lasting, happy marriage.***
- * ***The Kabbalah of the Sefirot as the guide for a balanced psychological state.***
- * ***The 3 C's of a Successful Marriage***

Note: *The material covered in this essay is covered in much more depth in my e-book entitled, **Advice for Understanding the Male & Female Psyches.***

It is available in our KosherTorah.com online store, e-book section.

Shalom & welcome all.

This week's Torah portion is called Hayei Sarah (Genesis 23:1-25:18).

In this weeks Torah portion we read the story of the efforts made by Abraham, through his proxy Eliezer, to find a fitting wife for his son Isaac. This story serves us as a great example as to what is fitting and right for what one should look for in a marriage partner.

Marriage today is all too easy, and as is common knowledge, so too is divorce. Granted, not all marriages can be made to work. But, the proper way to make a successful marriage, and to avoid all the pain and sufferings of unnecessary divorces is to pursue courtship with clear intent, and to commit to marriage as a lasting relationship. These need to be explained.

First, we must address the reason, why and how we chose a marriage partner. Let me start off to clearly say that love is not enough of a reason for two people to wed, and emotional love is not enough to keep a wedded couple together. Every married couple who have stayed together over decades knows this to be true. Unfortunately, it is the young, misguided and foolish that do not understand the meaning and sacrifice of commitment. I will discuss more about commitment as we proceed.

Before we discuss how a marriage lasts, let's discuss what to look for in a marriage partner. If one's first criteria in a marriage partner is that one's appearance, then the chances are that the one with such shallow expectations is a rather shallow, self-centered individual. One whose major concern is appearance thinks of only how things will look, how he/she will look with so-and-so at their side. This attitude indicates that such an individual, who seeks appearances primarily, is him/herself terrible marriage material. Such a shallow person is essentially married to him/herself, and to think that another individual will be able to fit into his/her life easily, and permanently, is a fantasy and illusion. The person who thinks first about appearances is not a fitting partner and should be summarily dismissed from consideration for being a partner in marriage.

Granted, most of us want to look good, both for ourselves and for our significant other. There is nothing wrong with this. A person should concern themselves with their appearance, but with emphasis on health and strength, not on sex appeal and/or sluttishness. When appearances take priority over other more significant, important matters is when a terrible problem exists. Such a problem cannot be addressed within the context of a marriage because the problem of shallowness is not a problem caused by the marriage, it is a personal problem caused by the individual.

Learn this lesson well. It takes two mentally healthy individuals to have one healthy marriage relationship. There is no way around this, and it is true in every occasion. Before one can be a good partner in a marriage, one must first be a good, mentally healthy, human being. This qualification alone is what makes one a prime candidate for a good and healthy marriage.

When Eliezer acted as proxy for Abraham to find a wife for Issac, he was instructed to return to Abraham's family in Haran. Yet, in those days, when extended families were rather large, there could have literally been a dozen or more maidens to chose from. How then could Eliezer know whom to chose? What criteria should he use to judge? Should he look for the most beautiful of women? And if so, in a society where women regularly were dressed head to toe, and with a veil, there was nothing physical that he could ever look at.

So, what criteria did Eliezer chose to judge by? The Biblical narrative clearly shows that what Eliezer was looking for was a woman of valor, one who was defined by her actions of courtesy, kindness and righteousness. Eliezer knew that a gal with these traits can't be all that bad. Instead, she would be all that good, indeed, such a gal would be the best!

Instead of a gal more interested in her appearance, Eliezer sought the chosen bride who would be identified by her moral character and caring nature. Eliezer recognized, and thus the Biblical narrative records for us, an eternal lesson in how we are each to chose a marriage partner, be it a husband or a wife.

The gal Eliezer found was Rebecca. Eliezer believed her right for Isaac not only because of his prayer to God, but, like I said, because of how she acted. There he was, a stranger and a traveler. Eliezer turned to God in prayer.

"And he said, 'O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, please cause to happen to me today, and perform loving kindness with my master, Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the water fountain, and the daughters of the people of the city are coming out to draw water. And it will be, [that] the maiden to whom I will say, 'Lower your pitcher and I will drink,' and she will say, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels,' her have You designated for Your servant, for Isaac, and through her may I know that You have performed loving kindness with my master."

Now the maiden was of very comely appearance, a virgin, and no man had been intimate with her, and she went down to the fountain, and she filled her pitcher and went up. And the servant ran toward her, and he said, "Please let me sip a little water from your pitcher." And she said, "Drink, my lord." And she hastened and lowered her pitcher to her hand, and she gave him to drink. And she finished giving him to drink, and she said, "I will also draw for your camels, until they will have finished drinking." And she hastened, and she emptied her

pitcher into the trough, and she ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels. And the man was astonished at her, standing silent.” (Genesis 24:12-14, 16-21)

Eliezer saw in Rebecca's behavior hints to her internal state of balance with the Divine universal pattern called the Ten Sefirot. Let me explain.

When we look at the teachings of the Kabbalah, we find prominently taught the lessons about the Divine levels of manifestation in creation called the Ten Sefirot. These forces of nature are said to correspond to, and be the sources of, the internal human “image” of intuition, intellect, emotion and physicality.

These forces of nature/sefirot are often pushed into a state of imbalance due to the improper expressions of human intuition, intellect, emotion or actions. Proper alignment of natural forces in nature are said to reflect the proper alignment of psychic forces within the individual human being. In other words, when we are properly aligned within ourselves, we then are properly calibrated with the universe. Such a state is called being blessed.

In such a state, the natural harmony between the universe at large and the particular individual enables that individual to become a channel and conduit for the energies of the universe, with YHWH as their source. Therefore, proper human alignment with the universal forces of energy is called in the Bible, “the image of God” within each of each, the “image” in which we were all created.

Align with the sefirot, and one aligns with the universe. Align with the sefirot and one aligns with the internal “image of God.” Align with the sefirot and one finds true inner contentment, balance, and psychological peace of mind. These, in turn, lead one to lead a proper, balanced life. This is how good character is properly acquired and good and righteous deeds naturally performed.

One does not need knowledge of the doctrines of the sefirot to accomplish all this. Indeed, the theoretical discussion of these concepts essentially thwarts one from actually understanding them. If these universal forces are inside of each of us, then to try to learn about them from some external source, like a book, is contradictory to their very nature.

In order to align with the internal pattern of the sefirot, and to embrace the “image of God” within each of us, the individual must turn within, using intuition as the guide to know and understand the intellect, one's emotions, and thus to properly guide one's actions. One can either do this instinctively and intuitively, or not. Those who can and do are great people. Those who cannot have not yet achieved such natural greatness.

When choosing a marriage partner for Isaac, Eliezer knew what to look for. He himself was a man aligned with the universal forces and his own inner sefirot, even though we can say with certainty that he never heard the word sefirot or ever contemplated their theoretical meanings. Eliezer was naturally and intuitively aligned, and therefore, he knew to look for, and how to recognize another human soul, just as properly aligned and balanced. Recognition would be through said one's behavior, words and deeds. That is how he recognized Rebecca.

Isaac was being trained by Abraham to be a spiritually balanced and healthy individual. Isaac was accustomed, like his father, to spend time in meditative contemplation to explore the mysteries of life and existence. Like his father and mother, Isaac was raised to know business, responsibility, kindness and hospitality. Isaac would need a wife who could be in his life, just what his mom Sarah was in the life of his dad Abraham.

Isaac could have any slave girl or concubine that he may wish for whatever physical desires that he may wish to fulfill. But a wife is far, far more than just an object for a husband's sexual desire. A wife is a full partner in all aspects of life. She is as much in charge of the family as is the husband. Even in patriarchal societies, we see just how much this was so with regards to Sarah.

It will be expected in the House of Abraham, that Isaac's wife fulfill the role of matriarch, even as did mother-in-law Sarah. To find a woman of this caliber Abraham knew that he would have to go back to his original extended family. As the old saying goes, "fruit does not fall far from the tree." If Abraham's family produced one "Sarah," then it can very well produce another.

This is wise and good advice that one should always look for a marriage partner first amongst those who share common background. Cultural gaps often cause misunderstandings between individuals. Such misunderstandings can hurt any relationship, especially a marriage, where husband and wife must learn to act together as one. While some cultural gaps can be overcome, many times, they are not. In the end, one partner usually assimilates into the cultural background of the other. In most cases, it is the husband who absorbs the cultural background of the wife. We see this was true even in Biblical times, with regards to King Solomon. It was because of his tolerance of the foreign cultures of his wives that led him to become weak in his own commitment to God. Not for naught then did Abraham want to make sure that Isaac married a good-ole "home-girl" and not some, as we say in these parts, "furener" (foreigner).

The secret to any good and successful marriage is what I call the "3Cs," which are commitment, compromise and compassion.

Just remember this, your spouse is first and foremost another fellow human being, and you have made a commitment, to yourself, to honor and provide for that fellow human being. The commitment in marriage is not about the spouse, it is about ourselves. The commitment in marriage is not just to our spouse, it is to ourselves. We live up to our marriage commitment because this is what a responsible human being does. He/she keeps his/her word, keeps his/her commitment.

A marriage must be understood to be a life-long commitment. It is not a temporary affair built upon fleeting emotions, all too often misinterpreted as love.

Love is not what one feels. Love is what one does.

Love at the beginning of a marriage may be felt emotionally, but as time marches by, real love grows, not in the emotions, but in the deeds. As life experiences are shared together, a bond of "one for all, and all for one" grows. Family becomes everything. It is the ultimate concern.

One's spouse is one's life, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, until death do us part. Although these words are not part of any Jewish marriage ceremony, the sentiment should be a part of every marriage!

When taking a spouse, one is not taking an appendage, an addition to merely compliment oneself. Such a mentality can destroy a marriage, even before it begins. A commitment between two human beings must transcend sexuality, gender, and roles. Once married, each spouse must be and must do what is necessary, and not only what is expected of him/her.

The marriage commitment is this: what can I do today (and everyday) to make the life of my spouse better. How may I be of service. Yes! Marriage is about service. It is about how one treats the other. Marriage is not about you acquiring a servant. Marriage is about you becoming a servant. Love is not expressed by how you feel, it is expressed by what you do.

A woman may be momentarily thrilled with some flowers and chocolates, but she will be thrilled much deeper and longer, knowing that the bills get payed, that her husband is sincerely concerned about her welfare, and that he does whatever it takes to take care of her needs and the needs of the household.

Commitment: "one for all, all for one." This must be every family's motto! I am a member of this family, but I am not its whole. This family is a closed circle. I am a part of this circle, but I am not its whole. Just as a circle has no beginning or end, top or bottom, so too does this family act together as a whole.

Granted, we each have our individual roles and obligations, but if and when circumstances might dictate, the circle must roll, and roles and obligations might have to change, either temporarily or permanently. Families understand this, tolerate this and stick together, because the family motto is "one for all and all for one."

Life is always about change. Those individuals who cling too strongly to any one thing may be broken and torn asunder, if and when that thing is blown away in the wind. Here, I am speaking about anything external to the family.

When we begin a marriage, our minds are attached to so many ideas, preconceived notions, and perceptions of what we believe to be right and wrong, and good and bad. We are so convinced that we know what it means to be the proper spouse. But one can never know what this means! One can never know what it means to be the proper spouse simply because its mere definition changes and evolves on a daily basis.

We can never allow ourselves to be locked into mental prisons of ideas, concepts and theories. Instead we must be firmly grounded in the reality of day-to-day affairs. We must recognize that the only thing that is permanent is change! Change is fluid and continual, and therefore, only with compromise can it ever be properly embraced. As life changes so too does a marriage. If one is alive, and flows along with life, moving at its pace and keeping up with its shifting currents, then one has what it takes to apply this attitude also at home, with one's spouse, and go with the flow. This is compromise.

Granted, not all compromise is good, and not everything should be compromised. There are times when one must stand one's ground on the important issues and demand change, from one's spouse, from one's self, and even sometimes from the world itself, and even from God. I cannot outline any parameters for this, simply because they are as wide as life itself, and everyone's individual circumstances is different from everyone else.

Compassion is not something we feel, it is something we do. Sometimes we do not feel like being compassionate. But feelings do not play into this! We do what we must because (whatever "it" is), it must be done. Helping another, especially the other whom each of us has specifically committed ourselves to help, is something expected from us, not only by our spouses, but also by ourselves.

I have long repeated the words of an old 60's rock n'roll song. "If you can't be with the one you love, then love the one your with."

Be kind to the fellow human being who shares your home, your life and your family. Seek the welfare of that fellow human being. Remember, like you, that fellow human being is flawed and has problems that go on and on, as does life itself. We are all, in the end, just mere mortal human beings and if we recognize our mortality and limitations, then we can actually assist and support one another in making each other to be a better human being. This is how love needs to be expressed.

Love takes abuse everyday. Everyday, we abuse and are abused. I guess that this too is part of life. But daily abuse is only tolerable in small amounts. We may not always speak in the nicest tones of voice. We may not always act as nicely and courteously as we can. But we can always be mindful of these things and remind ourselves that each of us can do better. And we should do better! Why? Because to do any less, lessens us each as an individual. As human beings we must each live up to a code of honor of what it means to be rightfully and properly human, even as our Creator has designed us in accordance to the "Divine Image" of the Ten Sefirot within us.

The Sefirot are an excellent psychological model for the development of moral character. And the source of all human compassion is strong moral character. When the individual is a mentally healthy and emotionally strong human being, then such a one naturally becomes a great spouse.

So, like in any circle, we have come back around to the beginning here at the end. We see how Eliezer, proxy of Abraham chose proper character as the right criteria to look for in a marriage partner. I pray that I have given you my reader much to think about, and I pray much more to do.

I confess that due to brevity, I have left out so much that needs to be said. But sometimes, words are not necessary. Sometimes instead of words, we need deeds. There is a time for silence and a time for words. My time for words is now ended. Your time for deeds has now come.

And this conclude my weekly Torah portion lesson in politics and mysticism.

Any comments? Please send them to me at kosher Torah1@yahoo.com