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**Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha**  
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## Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

### פרשת ויצא

#### THE "LONGEST" POSSUK IN THE TORAH

At the conclusion of last week's *parsha*, we were told that Yitzchok and Rivka had commanded their son Yaakov to go to Padan Aram to take a wife. And so Yaakov dutifully obeyed his parents and left his home to begin his journey; no delays, he left immediately. ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע - And Yaakov left his father's home in Be'er Sheva, וילך חרנה, and he went to Charan. Now that's a very short *possuk*, but actually we know that it took fourteen years to get to the end of that *possuk*. It took Yaakov fourteen years to fulfill his parents' command! That *esnachta* on the word Be'er Sheva, that *trop* that means a stop, was a *very big stop*. The way to read the *possuk* is ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע, and then you wait fourteen years, and then you complete the *possuk*, וילך חרנה, and he went to Charan.

Now the question we should be asking is this. We know that זריזין מקדימין למצוות - people who are energetic in serving Hashem, they do a mitzvah as soon as they can (Pesachim 4a). מצוה - הבא לידך אל תחמיצנה - When the opportunity to do a mitzvah comes your way, don't push it off (Rashi Shemos 12:17). And here's Yaakov, a man full of energy for the service of Hashem, and without any permission he took fourteen years off from the mission that his parents had sent him to fulfill.

## YAAKOV WAS AN “ALTER BACHUR”

And he was no spring chicken either, Yaakov Avinu. He was already a man in his sixties, an *alter bochur*, and he had to get married and start building a family. And yet we see that he “got lost” on the way for fourteen years. Now we know what happened; we know where he went. He made a detour to the Academy of Shem and Ever (Megillah 17a). It sounds wonderful and idealistic, fourteen years in the yeshiva, but actually it's a big question. Because it isn't mentioned that his parents had commanded him to go there. It's not stated anywhere. It merely states that they told him to go to Charan to find a wife. So what was Yaakov doing here, disobeying the will of his parents?

So we'll say as follows: Marriage is a remarkable undertaking, it's not easy. And therefore in order to be a successful husband or wife, you must prepare yourself to become an expert in character and attitudes. The truth is, it's a big question: How could an eighteen year old even *attempt* to get married?! Does he know anything?! Is he ready for such a thing? It's impossible! Only that the answer is he relies on the wisdom of the community. He has a father, a grandfather, he has uncles - everybody is giving him advice. In the olden days, when people still lived normally, an eighteen year old didn't decide what to do; he knew that he was a *bur*, an *am haaretz*. Everyone gave advice, everyone butted in. And you had to listen. So the newly married man had at least some kind of guidance, some *hadracha*.

## YAAKOV AVINU GOES LOOKING FOR ADVICE

But Yaakov Avinu didn't have that. He was getting married without a community. Would he turn to Lavan his conniving father-in-law, for for advice on perfection? Was that the man who would advise him as he made his way through marriage? And it wasn't merely how to talk to a girl, what to say to her. He had to study what to say *all his life* as a husband. He had to study what it means to be a husband, how to be a successful spouse.

By the way, before I continue, I must tell you that I'm speaking to the women as well. Whatever I say for the husband applies to the wife as well. Because we're talking now about the career of two people learning how to live together in harmony,

and both men and women have to be prepared for that career. And really every woman is a little *meshuga*. And every man is *meshuga* as well. So how can two *meshuga'im* live with each other unless they are prepared?!

I'm serious! One wrong word can cause trouble forever and ever. In order to assume the role of a husband or wife you need preparation. A cat can become a husband without preparation, but a Jew has to study and he has to graduate as a certified husband. Because it's such a responsible role that it takes no end of preparation. If he would really put in as much time as he needs he would go to the *chuppah* from the old age home! And therefore Yaakov had to prepare himself as best as he possibly could.

#### THE MESILLAS YESHARIM'S OLD CHIDDUSH

Now, the purpose of life in general, and marriage in particular is the opportunity to achieve perfection - perfection of mind, perfection of character, perfection of ideals and perfection of behavior. It's what the Mesillas Yesharim calls *shleimus*. However, although it was the Mesillas Yesharim who introduced the word *shleimus* to us, the ideal of achieving perfection, of gaining *shleimus*, was something that was introduced on the day that Adam Harishon was created. That was the sole purpose of Adam's life and that remains the sole purpose of our lives today. Perfection is what we're in this world for. And the purpose of getting married is to help you achieve perfection.

And so what better place in the world for the study of this career of *shleimus*, than the city that was founded with the sole purpose of *shleimus*? And that was the city that Shem built, *Ir-Shalem*, the city that housed within its walls the *yeshiva shel Shem v'Ever*. I'll explain that because most of you have never thought about what the Academy of Shem v'Ever was.

#### THE ACADEMY OF PERFECTION

We know that after the *mabul*, Shem settled in Eretz Canaan where he founded the town of *Shaleim*, a place that was to be a model town for serving Hashem. That's why it was called עיר שלם, the city of perfection. Not only שלום, peace; that too, but that was only part of it. עיר שלם means "The City of Perfection"

because it was a city where they would serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu with perfection. You can imagine what type of place it was if that was its name.

And it was in this City of Perfection that this great man established a *yeshiva*, a place to pass down the great ideals, the wisdom of living life successfully. Shem and his son Ever passed down the traditions that had been inherited from Noach, and from the previous generations. There was a great deal of wisdom that had been passed down, and it was to this City of Perfection that the *mevakshei Hashem* turned to receive those great traditions. And it all took place at the Academy of Shem v'Ever. And so you understand already that it was a very remarkable institution, this yeshiva of Shem v'Ever.

#### THE DETOUR WAS KIBBUD AV

And therefore when Yaakov took a detour from his trip to Charan, it wasn't a detour at all. Because even more vital than the career of marriage itself, are the tools for succeeding in this career. And so when Yaakov Avinu was told to get married, he didn't go directly to Charan, like his parents had commanded. He stopped for fourteen years at this yeshiva of Shem and Ever. And the reason he did this was not because he was disobedient, *but because he was so obedient to his parents* - and so, when they commanded him to get married, he understood that preparing himself at Yeshivas Shem v'Ever was included in their command.

Now fourteen years is a long time. And Yaakov didn't waste any of it. You know that for those fourteen years Yaakov never slept on a bed; not even on the floor. When he tired, he would lay his head on his elbows and sleep, that's all. That's what *chazal* tell us (Medrash Rabbah 68:11) And then he would get up and continue studying, and perfecting himself, in preparation for the building of our people.

And therefore if we would be able to study along with Yaakov Avinu - even just a little bit - to prepare for our married lives the way Yaakov prepared for his, that would be a great success for us. It would put us on our feet - in situations where many people today are stumbling.

## LET'S BE REALISTIC

The truth is that some things have to be studied today that weren't needed in the time of Yaakov Avinu; some things didn't have to be taught at Yeshivas Shem v'Ever, because society hadn't been corrupted like it is today. Western culture has introduced so many falsehoods and foolish ideas into the minds of the youth, that if we want to prepare for marriage today we have to study things that Yaakov didn't need.

So before we begin our trip to the Academy of Shem v'Ever to study along with Yaakov, we'll introduce our topic with a fundamental *yesod* of marriage, and that is to *be realistic*. You need to be realistic if you want to have a successful marriage. Don't expect that in your marriage you're going to have a glorious career of high living, of exciting fun, of endless enjoyment. You must be realistic, which means, don't expect that it's going to be always smiles, and all joy. When a *chosson* looks at his *kallah*, he imagines a lifetime in this emotion that he is experiencing now. And the *kallah*, perhaps, also.

## GET READY TO FLY OUT THE WINDOW

But you have to realize that you're marrying a human being, who has certain elements of greatness in him - every person has greatness in him - but you must expect ordinary characteristics too. You must expect that in certain aspects, it will be quite commonplace, nothing glamorous. When you have to live with a person every day, even at first if you had a certain admiration, the superficial expectations fly out of the window. Like the world says, "when you marry, romance flies out of the window." And then you begin to settle down, and you begin seeing things that you didn't expect.

And therefore, anybody who marries looking forward to a life of romance will be bitterly disappointed. Because actually there is no romance in married life. And when people marry for unreal and imaginary concepts they are bound to be disappointed. And that's why many marriages turn out to be unhappy - because it never was going to be what they hoped it would be. The truth is that when people marry they should be ready for hard knocks.

## MARRIAGE IS A ROLLER COASTER

Marriage is like life, and when you enter life, you are going to take it with all its details, with its ups and downs. There is some smooth driving, and sometimes there are crowded highways. And sometimes the road is bumpy and uncomfortable. It's a roller coaster. There will be periods of unhappiness, and times you climb to heights of joy.

There is no such thing as a smooth marriage. The definition of marriage is friction; two personalities, each one with rough edges. And there's no question that there is going to be tests and ordeals ahead. It's very important to keep this in mind because it's a very important principle that many people overlook - be realistic. Don't expect too much. Once a person gets married he must know that he has to accept everything for better or for worse. Whatever you have, that's yours for life, and make the best of it.

And if you accept that, if you're willing to accept that *marriage is not a bowl of cherries*, then you're ready to prepare for marriage along with Yaakov Avinu.

## STUDYING THE PARADIGM OF PERFECTION

Now exactly what Yaakov studied there and everything he accomplished we don't know. I can't tell you *everything* that he studied in that great academy. But we do know that many of the ideals that would later enter into the bloodstream of the *Am Yisroel* were studied there in great detail. The great traditions from Adam and Noach, as well as the fundamentals that had been developed by these great thinkers flourished in this great yeshiva, and they were expanded upon by the students who studied there.

Now, one of the most important subjects that was studied in the *Ir-Shaleim*, the City of *Perfection*, was how to become more and more *perfect*. But because perfection is such a sublime subject with many sections and subsections, man therefore needs a paradigm, a model to emulate. And the best model available would be the most perfect One of all, Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And therefore the basic study, what they pondered most in that academy was the study of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

## YOUR FUNCTION IN THIS WORLD

And that's why one of the outstanding features of Torah, of the Jewish attitude on life, is the great principle of imitation of Hashem. It's stated in one place, קדושים תהיו, you should be holy, כי קדוש אני השם אלוקיכם, because I Hashem your G-d is holy. Which means that you should be perfect *because* I am perfect. Hashem says, "I revealed to you My attributes and My ways in order so that you should emulate them." That's your function in this world, to strive to reflect the perfection of Hashem.

Actually it's an open command in the Torah. It says והלכת בדרכיו, you should walk in His ways. It's a mitzvah to walk in the ways of Hashem. We study what the Torah tells us, and also what we read in the words of the *nevi'im* about the ways of Hashem, and we are expected to follow and imitate those ways. Now we'll see some examples soon; we won't just talk abstractions. I just want to preface the subject with some quotations to show that it is an important Torah attitude. In fact, it's a very big Torah attitude. והלכת בדרכיו - the mitzvah of walking in His ways is of utmost importance in everyday life. "You are expected to emulate My ways in your daily lives," says Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

## A POLITICIAN YOU CAN TRUST

Unfortunately a lot of Jews today never heard of it, even from Jews. It was once famous among the Jewish people, it was the ideal of a Jew to study and emulate the ways of Hashem, and it entered into the bloodstream of our people. Even Josephus wrote about it. "We have a G-d that is perfect," he says, "and therefore our nation follows those attitudes of our perfect G-d." Josephus writes that! It's a remarkable thing that a man like him would write such words! Josephus wasn't a *talmid chochom* at all; he was just a politician. But he was saying something that was well known among the masses - if you want to succeed, if you want to achieve *shleimus*, then walk in His ways; הוי דומה לו - be like Him.

And it's certainly not easy. Hakodosh Boruch Hu's ways are elevated, they are sublime; far above our reach. But according to our abilities, each one of us should strive to climb the ladder and come a little closer to that perfection of Hashem. And that was one of the most fundamental subjects that Yaakov Avinu

studied for fourteen years - the study of the ways, the *middos* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and how to emulate them.

### A BACHELOR IS MARRIED TO HIS LANDLORD

And similarly every husband and every wife should utilize the *middos* of Hashem in order to gain some of the perfection for which they were created. Now I say husband and wife, but the truth is that it applies to your encounters with your neighbors as well. It applies to people you meet in the synagogue, people you encounter in your place of employment and in the street, and your relatives and in-laws. It applies towards your encounters with people in general. So if you're not married don't think that this doesn't apply to you, because you're "married" to the rest of the world anyhow. You're married to your landlord, and you're married to your neighbors, and to your *chaveirim*. And you're not going to get a divorce from this world so soon, because you still intend to be here for some time. And therefore what we're saying here tonight applies to you bachelors as well.

However the relationship between a husband and a wife is more intense and more frequent than any other form of relationship. So although opportunities for perfection are prevalent in our contact with the rest of Mankind as well, a great deal more can be achieved by the contact between a husband and a wife.

### TRANSFORMING A SMALL AVEIRAH TO MISSAS BAIS DIN

Let me explain: You know that when a *mitzvah* is done once, there's a reward for it, but if it's done many times, there's a much bigger reward. הכל לפי רוב המעשה - everything depends on how numerous the number of acts are (Avos 3:15). Not only numerically, but the quality of the mitzvah becomes greater in the eyes of Hashem. So if you do a *mitzvah* many times, even the same *mitzvah*, again and again, the reward is very great.

Now we'll take the opposite scenario because it's true as well. Rabbeinu Yonah says in Shaarai Teshuva that when a man transgresses a *mitzvas asei* a number of times, it becomes so serious, that it's just as *chomur* as *chayveei krisus* and *chayveei missas bais din*! It's only one *mitzvas asei*, but by repeatedly transgressing it,

it becomes just as *chomur* as the worst *aveiros* that are punishable by death!

The smallest of *aveiros* repeated a number of times is like taking thin cords and twisting them together, and then twisting them more together, and finally it becomes a big, heavy rope. That's how serious it is to repeat an *aveira* over and over again. So imagine a man who forgot to say K'rias Shema at the proper time. And it happened a number of times. He knows it's wrong, that he understands. But what he doesn't realize is that it's like he was *mechallel* Shabbos or it's like he killed a human being!

### THERE'S NO OPPORTUNITY LIKE MARRIAGE

Now, what situation presents in the most concrete way to a man or woman the opportunity to repeat again and again, *mitzvos* or *aveiros*? There's nothing like marriage! Because it's constant interactions - the same things repeated over and over again to no end. And that's why succeeding in marriage - succeeding in all of these interactions - is one of the most important opportunities in a person's life.

And so, when looking for the model of how to regard our spouse and how to do it right, we should turn to Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself. Because we find many times in the Tanach and most prominently in Shir Hashirim that the relationship of Hakodosh Boruch Hu to His people Yisroel is compared to the relationship of a *chosson* and a *kallah*, or a husband and a wife. And that *mashal*, that comparison, is not just a poetic expression. It's for a very important purpose. Because the mitzvah of וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדַרְכֵי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל demands that we walk in His ways, and we learn from the way that Hakodosh Boruch Hu deals with His people how a man should deal with his wife and how a wife should regard her husband.

### OUR MODEL FOR LOVE

Now, the most basic and fundamental aspect of Hashem's relationship to the Am Yisroel is His love for us. It's repeated again and again in the Torah, Nevi'im and Kesuvim. אֶהְבֶּתִּי אֶתְכֶם - אמר השם - "I love you" says Hashem to us (Malachi 1:2). And that becomes our model for married life.

There's a special *mitzvah* in the Torah that everybody knows, **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ**, if you're a frum Jew you must love your fellow Jew. And although we're familiar with this *mitzvah* but it's not spoken about enough in the context of a marriage.

The Gemara says (Kiddushin 41a), that when a man is about to marry somebody, he shouldn't do it through an intermediary. He should first go and take a look at his intended, because later, if he didn't see who he was marrying, he might be disappointed, and he wouldn't fulfill the commandment of **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ**. And that means, this *mitzvah*, that you should love your fellow-man applies to your wife just as well as anybody else. And the truth is, it applies much more to your wife.

### YOUR SPOUSE IS JEWISH TOO

Why do I say that? Because what is the function of marriage? It's a function of **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ**. It's one long and continuous test of loving your fellow Jew. You have to love your wife! Your wife is a Jew. Your husband is a Jew. And it's a *chiyuv* to love a Jew. So that's enough of a reason, without anything else.

That's the obligation you assume when you marry, and no matter how you are tried and tested, you should never yield. You have to fight the *yetzer harah* of arrogance, of selfishness, and of trying to vent your feelings on your partner. It should always be your principle to maintain politeness in the house, no matter what. It doesn't mean you're in love romantically, but you're *mechuyav* to love your wife like you love yourself. And she's *mechuyav* to love her husband like she loves herself. Now, whatever that means exactly; loyalty, affection, commitment, it's an obligation that stands behind the whole marriage.

### LOVE, NO MATTER WHAT

And therefore, the command "**וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ**" is one of the most important obligations in married life. And it's made so much more crucial because it's so frequent, the opportunity to fulfill or transgress it is all the time. And so the Jew who wants to serve Hashem, even in a moderate way, must make up his mind that this is going to be a major target of his life's aspiration, to always generate feelings of love for his spouse. When a man gets

married, he must make up his mind that *no matter what*, he's going to love his mate, and she should also have that in mind.

And it's the small things, the constant interactions, that are your opportunities for loving your spouse. It requires constant politeness; just like you feel differently when you're asked to do something with the word "Please," so *you* always should do the same. You say, "Chanaleh, could you please hand me this-and-that." And when your wife hands it to you, you say "thank you."

When his wife comes and says, "Chaim, I need money to buy shoes for the children, please." "Please," she says. She's not begging, but she's going out of her way to always be polite. And when he says, "Here it is," she says, "Thank you." Of course it's all superfluous because that's his job, he has to supply that money, and she's going to bring your supper to you. But by saying "please" and "thank you," you are lubricating the relations of life. And therefore, politeness should always reign supreme in the house. Always do things in a way that demonstrates a certain regard for your mate. Of course, you'll tell me you know all about it, it's *d'varim p'shutim*. You know all about it, but are you *doing* it?

#### HASHEM LOVES SHORT FAT PEOPLE

And I always tell you that one of the most effective ways of achieving this love and loyalty to a spouse, is by saying it with your mouth. **אֶהְבֶּתִי אֶתְכֶם אִמֵּר ה'שָׁם** - "I love you *says Hashem*" (Malachi 1:2) He *says* it! And because Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "I love the Am Yisroel" and therefore you must also say "I love my spouse". You see your husband, a fat, old fellow, waddling in the street, short and fat, so you say, "I love that man." Say it even if you don't mean it at first. You have to work on it. And if you do it, **הַחִיצוֹנוּיִת מְעוֹרֶרֶת אֶת הַפְּנִימִיּוֹת**, little by little, you'll gain that feeling. The fact that he's your husband obligates you to concentrate on him more than on anybody else. Hashem loves fat, short people! If they are Jews, *shomrei Torah*, He loves them intensely; He loves them more than anything in the world. So the fact that he's your husband, and you know his faults more than anyone else doesn't mean that he's deprived of that right. Hashem loves you despite all your faults as well. And He loves your husband as well despite his faults. And therefore you should love

And by the way, a friendly word also remains. A friendly word can be forever. I'm ashamed to tell you this story. I once spoke to a *galach* when I was a little boy. There was some reason, a *galach* spoke to me. I was about twelve years old and the *galach* said to me a little compliment. It was almost nothing but I can't forget it. I even remember his name. And he had a white necktie - I remember exactly the picture before my face. When somebody says a good word to you it's inscribed in you forever.

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him too, and you should say it too. *Halevai* you should love him a fraction of what Hashem loves him!

You see your wife walking in the street, and she just gave you a good tongue lashing when she walked out of the house. You're still angry at her and now you see her heading down the block with the shopping bags. It's a wonderful opportunity. You should still say, "I love that woman, and I'm being *m'kayeim* **וואהבת לרעך כמוך**." You have to work on it, and Hakodosh Boruch Hu will give you reward by awakening a true love in your heart! And you can help her with the bags as well, no harm.

#### A COMPLIMENT FROM REBBETZIN MILLER

And Hashem doesn't merely love, He encourages **יתום ואלמנה יעודד** - "You Hashem give encouragement to the widow and the orphan" (Tehillim 146:9). **מעודד עניים השם** - "Hashem encourages those who are *anavim*, downtrodden." You might not see it all the time but Hashem is always encouraging those who need encouragement - and who doesn't need it? All of the beauty in this world, all

of the enjoyments of life, are Hashem encouraging us, giving us the strength we need to move forward. That's what the world **עודד** comes from, from the word **עוד**, more. Because encouragement gives a man more and more *chiyus*, more and more strength to live a happy life. And when it comes to needing encouragement, there's nobody that's not an *anav*. Everybody needs encouragement. When I go upstairs after the lecture, and the Rebbetzin tells me, "It was a beautiful shiur tonight," I'm filled with energy, with *chiyus*.

And He wants you to emulate His ways and become more and more perfect like Him. So always encourage people! Always

give encouragement. And your wife is right there; and she's willing and ready to hear encouragement from you.

A husband and wife should be a source of consolation to each other. Life is full of troubles; it's hard to be a woman, it's hard to be a wife and a mother. It's not easy. So when a husband comes home and he says a few kind words, it's like balsam on a wound - and what a tremendous mitzvah! Always try to encourage your wife. Tell her how nice she looks, how nice and clean the house is, tell her how good her cooking is, how clean she keeps the children. When your wife cooks a supper and you say "Chanaleh, it's a delicious supper," do you know how encouraging that is?! You might think it's nothing; but you should know that for her, it's everything.

#### DON'T POUR SALT ON THE WOUNDS

Always praise her, always! It costs no money at all, but it's the very best of gifts. Practice praising your wife. Many people don't even think about it at all; it never enters their mind that they have this obligation. It's a *chiyuv* to look for opportunities to encourage and praise your wife as much as possible.

And she should look for opportunities to encourage him. If he's a Kollel man she should praise him, she should make him think that he's a big *lamdan*, in her mind at least. Whatever he is, she thinks he's a star! He should be considered by her an *oived Hashem*. Her words to him should be chosen words, always encouraging him. He comes home from work, he's worn out, he had trouble from competitors, his boss was mean to him, it's not easy to make a living. And so the wife has to encourage him; even a few kind words could be a big *mitzvah*. But suppose she is careless and she lets her tongue wag, and she says things that hurt his feelings; it's salt on the wounds. And the error is not only that they cause *machlokes*, but it's an error in *nitzchiyus* because it's the great error of not walking in the ways of Hashem.

#### THE MOP IN THE CRAZY HOUSE

So let's say you come in from work on *erev Shabbos* and your wife is all discombobulated. The children are running all over the place, the bathtub is overflowing, it's overflowing into the hallway. And she's busy trying to mop the floor at the same

time that she's keeping the children away from the oven. And *chas v'shalom* you come in and you say, "What is this? A crazy house?!" Oh no, that's terrible. It's terrible.

You have to come in and say some nice words. "I see you're working hard to bring in *Shabbos kodesh*. Chanaleh, you can't get a bigger mitzvah than that!" or something like that, words of encouragement. Be like Hakodosh Boruch Hu and encourage her.

And if you don't walk in the footsteps of Hashem, besides for being a failure in this world, you'll also find yourself in a lot of trouble. There was a story like that. A man came into the house and he said "What is this, a crazy house?!" And she did something foolish back. She picked up the mop and she hit him in the face. It didn't end good. There was a *get*; it ended with a *get*. *Ay yah yay*, a tragedy, a tragedy of tragedies. They both did something wrong, they both made a mistake. If he would have walked in the footsteps of Hashem, he would have been מעורר עניים and they'd still be married today. They'd be dancing at their grandchildren's *chasunahs*.

That's why it's so important to watch your words. חכמים הזזהו בדבריכם, *chachomim*, be careful with your words (Avos 1:11). What's the use of learning - you could be a *lamdan*, you could say over a piece of Torah, but you're not a *chochom* unless you are able to fulfill the *tnai* of הזזהו בדבריכם, be careful with your words. And words are very important in marriage.

#### WHO IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Every man should be overflowing with praise for his wife. Always tell her how good she looks. Even when your wife is very old, and she's wrinkled, and she's toothless, make certain you don't acknowledge any change in her appearance. A woman will ask, "Do I have *many* wrinkles?" An old great-grandmother, with a foot in the grave already, looks in the mirror to see if she has another wrinkle. It's important to them. Now, if you're smart enough to say, "You look as nice as you looked when I married you," you're going to get *Olam Habah* for that.

And do you want to know what else is encouraging? All you need to do is fulfill the mishnah in Pirkei Avos. **הוי מקבל את**

כל האדם בשמחה - Greet every person with happiness (Avos 3:16). Every person means even your spouse. Even if you're not happy to see him, act like you're happy. So when your husband comes home, show him not a scowling face, show him a happy face, a friendly face. When you see your wife, show her a friendly face. What's in your heart, let's say if you're worried, you have *da'agas parnassa*, in business or other things, that's none of your business right now - you have to show a face of *simcha*. It's very important. It's a *Mishnah!* A *Mishnah* is more important than a *Se'if* or a *Se'if Koton* of a *peirush* of *Mishnah Brurah*. It's an open *Mishnah* that you have to greet each person with *simcha*. And which person is the most important to you? You know right now who it is!

#### HASHEM SUSTAINS THE SINNER

And when a spouse is careful to always be praising, always encouraging, and always saying good words *no matter what*, that person is emulating the *middah* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. The Tomer Devorah says that. He writes in his *sefer* that one of the *middos* of Hashem that we emulate is *מי-א-ל כמוך*, Who is a G-d like you?! Is there any G-d like You? This teaches that Hakodosh Boruch Hu, although He is a King, He is willing to suffer insolence at the hands of people and He tolerates the impertinence of men towards Him in a way that the mind cannot comprehend; with tremendous toleration. How is that?

Because there is nothing that is concealed from the eyes of Hashem. He sees everything. And He sees as man is sinning against Him. And yet, Hakodosh Boruch Hu doesn't cut off from him His help. Even when a man is raising his arm to commit a sin, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is supplying him with the energy and the dexterity to move his arm. People are sinning all the time against Hashem, *and at the same time that they are sinning against Him, they are also utilizing the gifts that Hakodosh Boruch Hu continues to bestow on them.* Instead of removing from the sinner His aid, He continues to be *mashpia* on them the gift of life, the faculties of mind, and the energy of the body in order that they could continue to sin again.

## EMULATING HASHEM'S WAYS ISN'T SO EASY

Now this is a *middah* that a person should attempt to follow in life and in marriage. That means the *middah* of patience with others. That a person should allow himself to be put to shame to even the most severe degree and yet he shouldn't take away his favors from the one who is being insolent against him. In order to fulfill the mitzvah of **והלכת בדרכיו**, walking in the ways of Hashem, you should aspire to an attitude that whatever a person does to you, you will remain loyal to that person, and you won't change a thing.

And that must be the fundamental principle in our own marriages, in our own homes. Despite what he said to you, you're going to do everything that is necessary. Despite what she said or did to you, you're going to continue being a loyal spouse. You're not going to diminish by a hairsbreadth all the things that a dutiful husband or wife must do.

## NO "STRIKES" AND KEEP THE CIGAR BOX FULL

The *middah* of following in the ways of Hashem requires a Jew, a husband and a wife, that no matter what, everything will continue as before. A wife will never go "on strike" against the husband. A wife should never retaliate by denying the husband privileges. It must all go on without any interruption, no matter what. And the loyal husband performs all of his duties no matter what. He should never retaliate against her by refusing to bring in the money to support the household. He continues to put money in the cigar box where he keeps the cash for his wife to use - no matter what happens he brings the pay home and makes sure to keep that cigar box full for his wife. No matter what happens he does it.

So even though you walked out in the morning smarting from an insult that your wife threw away, when you come back at night "Good evening" you say anyhow and with a smile! And she has the supper ready for you. She didn't know you were going to say "Good evening," but the supper is piping hot on the table waiting for you.

## A SWEET HEART ON ITS OWN IS A GREAT PITY

Now you might say perhaps you're doing all these things already. Perhaps you are good person, a person with a sweet heart, and you are living in such a manner. You're already a loyal spouse without having any admonitions from the Torah about emulating Hashem. Now truthfully it's just your imagination because without some model you won't live a perfect life anyhow. But let's say you do. However there is a great loss in that, a great pity. When people live with idealism, even if they do live a perfect life, it can still be a tragedy. Even though you're acting like Hakodosh Boruch Hu but you're still losing the great benefit of והלכת בדרכיו.

It's not a bad idea to be kind and forgiving for the sake of peace - better to live in peace than to live in quarreling. But that's not enough; Italians can do that too sometimes. Sometimes a wise Irishman will do that too. But it's a pity however that a Jew should do that like an Irishman. A Jew has to do that because of והלכת בדרכיו, thinking expressly that you are walking in Hashem's footsteps. That's a big difference. We are His people and we emulate Him. Because without the thoughts of emulating Hashem, you're just as good as the Irishman who also wants to have *shalom bayis*, peace in his home.

## SHE'S NOT SO "SIMPLE" AFTER ALL

So let's say a husband insulted a wife. Nevertheless she prepares for him a delicious supper and she puts it on the table anyhow. At that moment she's thinking like this: מי א-ל כמותך, "Who is like You Hashem, a מלך נעלב, a King who is put to shame. Hashem, You're a model for me in how I deal with my spouse because at that moment when the sinner sins, You don't cease supplying him with all his needs."

And this "simple" woman in her little old house in Flatbush is doing the same thing that Hakodosh Boruch Hu does - she's supplying her husband with everything notwithstanding what he's done. And she's achieving perfection like nobody's business!

## CLIMBING THE LADDER TO SHAMAYIM

So when a husband and wife live under one roof, they have endless opportunities to fulfill this. If you'll say, "I'm about to do this because I wish to fulfill the ideal of והלכת בדרכיו - I'm going to walk in the ways of Hashem" then you're climbing the ladder of *shleimus*. You're coming closer to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and becoming more *kodosh*. קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני. This is a true teaching, there are no *drashas* here. And it's a great opportunity for perfection because you are mirroring the perfection of Hashem.

But without adding the thought that you're emulating Hakodosh Boruch Hu, then you're losing the greatest of opportunities. Because when you do it with the express intention of walking in the footsteps of Hashem you're fulfilling a great mitzvah, one of the outstanding mitzvos of the Torah. That's the value of thinking about Hakodosh Boruch Hu in connection with everything you do! If you say הנני מוכן ומזומן right now I'm about to fulfill the mitzvah of והלכת בדרכיו, of emulating Hashem, or the mitzvah of קדושים תהיו, you should be holy, כי קדוש אני because I am holy. That person is gaining a very great *mitzvah*, much more than *mezuzah* and *tefillin* and so many other *mitzvos*. And here you are in the same house, week after week, year after year and every day there are so many opportunities between a husband and wife to earn so much merit and so much perfection. If it's done with the intention of emulating Hakodosh Boruch Hu, it's the real *kedusha*.

## NOW HE'S READY FOR THE CHUPPAH

And now we understand why Yaakov's detour of fourteen years, was anything but a detour. It was there that he accomplished this great preparation for his marriage that would produce the Bnei Yisroel. And that's why when Yaakov came out of Shem v'Ever and he finally finished up this possuk, וילך חרנה - He came to Charan, he was full of knowledge that prepared him for his new career as a husband and father of the Am Yisroel.

And in our lives as well, we are all building our own *beis hamikdash* in our own homes, in our own marriages. And just like Yaakov prepared with great intensity for his marriage, if we were wise we would do the same. Now, what we spoke about tonight is only a drop in the bucket of the information a person needs to be successful in marriage; we merely scratched the surface of the the

great ideals and principles that Yaakov studied for fourteen years in Yeshivas Shem v'Ever. But even this drop in the bucket is enough for us to emulate, and by emulating the path of Yaakov, we are walking in the ways of Hashem and fulfilling **והלכת בדרכיו** all the days of our lives, which is the true secret to a successful marriage.

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May we continue growing together,  
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## Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

**Q:**

**Should we teach our children that Hashem loves all Jews or that He loves frum Jews?**

**A:**

You should always tell your children that *Hashem* loves frum Jews. Hashem loves those Jews who are loyal to Him. You should always be saying these words in your home. No question about it. Teach them that Hashem loves frum Jews. "*Oheiv amo Yisroel.*" "*Es amchah Yisroel.*" It is the frum Jews who are *Hashem's* people. This is a very important lesson for your children – and for yourselves as well.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu loves the Jews who are loyal to him. And if you're not loyal to Him then He doesn't love you. And even if it's not your fault because you're a *tinok she'nishba* – still I always quote Rav Chaim Brisker that "*nebach an apikoris is still an apikoris.*"

And by the way, we love the Jews whom Hashem loves. We love the Jews who are loyal to Hashem. And the more of a *tzadik* a person is, the more you have to love him. *Hashem* is "*oihev tzadikim*", so we are *oihev tzadikim*. And therefore it's a great tragedy to see a Jew who is not frum. A great tragedy. And therefore, if you can help bring somebody back to Torah, then you're saving his *neshama* and you're doing him the biggest favor possible.

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