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It's Difficult to Get Married

["Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah" – Chukat 5769 – translated by R. Blumberg]

It's a mitzvah to get married. It brings great joy to get married. But it's hard to get married. In the state of Israel there are 600,000 single men and women. By the way, unmarried males slightly outnumber the females. A person's finding a match is as difficult as the splitting of the sea, but the sea can be split. Yet for that to happen, you've got to jump into it and not fear. True, there are obstacles along the way. Yet, they can all be solved. Napoleon said: "the word 'impossible' is not part of my lexicon." He was wrong. Yet we say that marriage is always possible, and you can overcome all the obstacles. Let us start with the hardest ones.

A. People with limitations, or other objective, unsolvable problems – All the same, the solution is to marry someone with the same limitations. Technically, this probably makes life hard, but psychologically it makes it easier for them, because two people with the same problem understand each other, listen to each other and help each other.

[The following are organizations that work with such problems]:

1. "Lama Lo" [Why Not?]: For people who suffer from psychological problems. Tel. 026446908. lamalo@walla.co.il
2. Machon Pu'ah. Problems involving genetics or fertility. david@puah.org.il
3. For people with disabilities or physical limitations: anvaris@sde.org.il
4. "Si HaKeshet" [the Height of Contact]: For those who suffer from loneliness and social problems. Tel. 035490243. keshet@bezeqint.net
5. "Love Davke". Physical limitations. www.lovedavka.co.il
6. "Pina Li". For the disabled. www.pinali.co.il

7. "Moadon Hekerut LeNechim" [Meeting Place for the Disabled].
Nechim_date www.geocities.com

8. "Ahava Chiyuvit" [Positive Love]. AID's carriers. www.plove.co.il
Heaven help us.

B. Cheapskates – Don't go to professional matchmakers who take enormous sums up front. Ultimately however, you will have to pay a large sum, 5000 NIS by each side, which is about 10% of the cost of the wedding. And, you do have to pay a handling fee, for example, 100 shekels a month. After all, the matchmaker spends large sums on telephone calls, and he also devotes a lot of time to you. Why should you want people to work for you for free? That's reprehensible.

C. Good Matchmakers – Before you turn to a matchmaker, whether a professional or a volunteer, check out whether he is good or not. 1. Does he seek just only reasonable matches and not unreasonable ones doomed to failure? 2. Does he accompany the couple all along the way, hearing out their difficulties, striving to patch things up? Very often, people going out disqualify each other making quick judgments for no good reason, but if the matchmaker talks to them, he can iron things out.

D. Mystics – Sometimes people check out suitability by comparing the numerical values of their names or by comparing birthdates. All this is nonsense. Some go to fake mystics to "open up constellations that have closed up", or to exorcise people from spells. That is nonsense as well. Some carry out the rectification of souls or the redemption of souls. Obviously, giving charity is always good, but it's better to give it the regular way, and directly to the poor. Going to the graves of the righteous has value too, but it's better to give your money to charity and your time to acts of kindness. Prayers and blessings from rabbis are certainly good, but the spiritual solutions that surpass all else are prayer, repentance and charity.

E. People obsessed with externals – These are boys who are looking only for beautiful girls, slim and not fat, light and not dark, blondes and not brunettes, blue eyes and not brown eyes, and all that other nonsense. "Favor is false and beauty is vain, but the woman who fears G-d is the one who shall be praised" (Mishlei 31:30). In the end, they remain single, without any slim girls or fat girls, light or dark. These are all meaningless externals, insignificant vanities and secondary. They come through the influence of the media rather

than the Torah, which teaches us that the main thing is a good soul, integrity and faithfulness, a good heart and the fear of G-d. You certainly need that the girl should be pleasing, but you don't have to look for stylish beauty.

F. Status Seekers – These people disqualify divorcees and widows. Nonsense. A person is not judged by his previous familial status, but by his worth.

G. Romantics – These people are looking for love at first sight. They want to be emotionally swept away. That is a mistake. You certainly need affection. But the main thing in marriage is contentment and that can always be built together through joint efforts. Always. Emotion can be built together as well.

H. The Testers – At the other extreme are fellows who make their dates undergo quizzes and tests which are the equivalent of KGB interrogations. This flood of details is neither here nor there, for you can never find total suitability. As we know, Heaven judges people according to the majority of their deeds.

I. The Spiritually Picky – A girl who learns in Seminary X will never marry a boy who learns in Yeshiva Y. She'd rather stay single all her life than come anywhere near a boy who actually is destined for a different girl, denies the 13 principles of faith, and much worse.

J. Excessive Self-Love – Here we come to the central problem, excessive self-love. Certainly it's good for a person to love himself, as it says, "Love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18). If so, one should love oneself as well. However, individualism, selfishness and egocentrism are a terrible problem that destroys marriage and is creating hundreds of thousands of unmarried people in this country. As I said, even loving yourself has value, but it's only half the way. You have to transcend it and not look at your mate as someone who is meant to serve your egocentric needs. For what is true love? It's an effort to become one. In Hebrew, ahava [love] has the same numerical value as echad [one]. A couple has to build a new reality that includes them both. They must be an unmarried male and an unmarried female who live together as neighbors. Were that the case, they would be better off living alone. Rather each one's personal unit is dismantled and they become a new form. It's like water. Water is not oxygen and hydrogen coexisting next to each other, but a new synthesis. Quite the contrary, when oxygen and hydrogen are mixed together, one spark is enough to blow them up.

And how is that unity created? Through each spouse learning about the other, through the building up of a relationship. Obviously, such relationship building occurs not just in marriage, but in all the social life of man. Yet what goes for marriage, goes for all other relationships as well. True, a selfish man can have a very pleasant life, but he perceives himself as being separate from a shared existence. He has no sense of belonging. By contrast, love opens up a recognition of totality, of a family unit, the "all" that I am a part of. I therefore seek out how I can contribute to that "all" and to be at one with it. True love is not self-sacrifice, but an awareness of unity, of being one. The constant search for pleasure, pleasantness, momentary amusement through one's spouse diminishes the awareness of the "all", rather than magnifying it. It's like our Jewish devotion to the "klal", the good of the group. The point there is not to think about others all the time and to sacrifice oneself for them, but to expand one's awareness in such a manner that the good of the group is totally relevant to my own welfare. When every individual finds comfort in being part of the group, he won't want to benefit at the expense of any other individual.

By the same token, also inside a person, there has to be a marriage between the various psychological forces, such as intellect and emotion, will and imagination. That same inner balance assists in the balance between the couple. A person must certainly continue to love himself. Whoever does not truly love himself cannot love his fellow man. And whoever doesn't love his fellow man does not love himself. The self-resonance of each individual will remain, but those resonances will die out together. Developing love for the other is not simple and it doesn't happen quickly, it's an adventure. After the desire is sealed with the marriage, begins the prolonged process of unification. The physical unification happens quickly. Not so the lofty unification process, the process of unifying one's intellect and emotion. That takes time. Perhaps without it a couple can have some fun together, but that fun is transient.

Our task is to concentrate our energies on building harmony as a couple. That harmony has enormous power. Through it, one can create and educate an infant and turn it into a person.

I'm not just talking about practical harmony but about emotional, psychological, intellectual and spiritual harmony. It's not just a duty but a fantastic adventure, a marvelous communication challenge. If it isn't, the couple will be disappointed. One will say, "my spouse doesn't fill my needs and expectations." Yet that is a mistake. That's not why you get married. Rather you wed for the sake of that adventure, that full encounter with love and wisdom, with creating a new world from which a new life will be revealed. Altogether, a person must long to be swallowed up in the general good, to be absorbed by God, and marriage is the way that God gave us to follow that path. Some argue bitterly that

marriage is a boring dead end. It's not so. Marriage is the most exciting experience of life. There is no reason why the marvelous romantic side of marriage should disappear after several months. That is a sign that one's marriage has involved only the external parts of the couple's personality.

Yes! Harmony! That's the word! Inner harmony within the person himself, between his various forces, body and soul, intellect and emotion. The harmony of unity between two different and sometimes opposite people.



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