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SEFER BEREISHIS - THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION

לע"נ ר' מנחם מענדל בן נחמן ע"ה ור' שלום בן שלמה הלוי ע"ה

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The Marriage Bond

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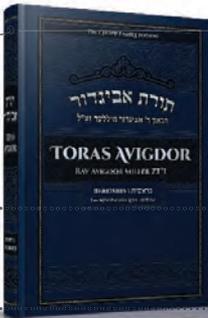


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פרשת בראשית

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Marriage Bond

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Part I. Loyalty in Marriage

Be Clingy

When Hakodosh Boruch Hu created Chava and brought her to Adam, He made a statement that although it doesn't yet apply to everybody here, someday it will: **עַל כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ** – A man will forsake his parents, **וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ** – and cling to his wife. Now, what that means we think we know already – it's just telling us a fact of life; every young man moves out of his home, leaving behind his mother and father, and he begins to build a new home together with his wife. That's the way of the world; if you're going to make something from yourself in *Olam Hazeh*, sooner or later you have to fly the coop and set out on your own.

But to think that this is all that the *possuk* is telling us is a big error because actually it's much more than that. These few words

are intended by Hakodosh Boruch Hu to teach us the foundation of what is a successful marriage: “And he should cling to his wife,” is not a statement of the way of the world – *it’s a program for the married couple.*

It’s a *tzivui* – he must leave his parents and cling to his wife! A husband and wife must cling to each other; that’s the program Hakodosh Boruch Hu set down for all people in the matter of marriage.

No Romance

Now, if we’re going to understand what it means that a husband and wife should make a career of clinging to each other, we have to first make a clean sweep of one gentile ideal that has no place among us – not only because it’s false but more importantly because it undermines the whole career of marriage. And that is the *elil hasheker* of Western culture, the false god of Romance.

Now, I understand that it’s not going to be easy to uproot an ideal that has permeated the literature for a few hundred years but in this place we’re accustomed to talking factually. And the facts are that you have all been bamboozled; actually, there’s no such thing as romantic love. You’ll please be *moichel* me for stepping on your toes but it’s too important to be left unsaid because when people marry for unreal and imaginary concepts they are bound to be disappointed. That’s why for so many people, marriage turns out to be unhappy – because it never was going to be what they were hoping for.

Lower Your Expectations

You can’t expect that it’s going to always be smiles, always joy. You must be prepared for the fact that many aspects of marriage will be quite commonplace; nothing glamorous. Any other idea you have is only a rosy soap bubble. And you know when it bursts? It bursts right after the *chupah*. Like the world says, as soon as you marry, romance flies out of the window.

What happens? People marry and the day after the wedding, when they both begin using the same bathroom, the romance begins to fade. When the *chosson* looked at his *kallah*, he imagined a lifetime

of this emotion that he was experiencing then. And the *kallah*, perhaps, also. But when you have to live with a person every day, even at first if you had a certain admiration, it's not too long before the superficial expectations disappear. You settle down to real living, real marriage, and then you begin seeing things you didn't expect. You're marrying a human being after all, someone who has certain important elements of greatness in him – every person has greatness in him – but you must expect ordinary characteristics, too.

A Clarion Call

At first everybody looks nice and talks nice. But when you get down to living together, it's not so simple. Of course you have to look before you leap; make sure to choose the one you think you'll be able to like. But in most cases she'll be deceived by him and he'll be deceived by her. At first he tells me, "Ah, Rabbi Miller! My *kallah's middos! Ay yah yay*, her *middos* are so special!" Later he discovers what her *middos* really are. I deal with people and I always have this experience; that's how it always is.

The same with her wonderful *chosson*. She imagined him to be Prince Charming but now she calls me on the telephone almost every week about this problem he's making and that problem. She's not so impressed with his *middos* anymore.

That's why it's important to issue a clarion call to all the girls and boys: Do not live in a world of make believe! Don't imagine that marriage is the answer to your quest for happiness! Because you know what's going to happen? You're going to discover it is not. You're going to end up crashing on the rocks of life. And don't say it's not so.

The Primrose Path is Sullied

A man once told me he wanted to marry a certain girl because she was the perfect one; he thought that "together they'll walk hand in hand down the primrose path of life" – which means he's living a *bubbe maaseh!*

Hand in hand?! Each person has their own duties in life. When you get married your wife has her ideas about what to do in the

house, and you have your dreams about the *beis medrash* or your business, or whatever you have to do. Don't think your wife is going to share your ideas, forget about it! *Nashim am bifnei atzman* – *Women are a separate nation*. It means that men are a separate nation too. Don't think your husband is going to think along with you.

How Do We Stick Together?

And therefore we have to explain what it means when the Torah says “*v'davak*”. Because if there's no romance and they're not even going to walk hand in hand, so what kind of *dveikus*, what kind of connection is there in the marriage? What does it mean that you're expected to “leave your father and mother and cling to your spouse”? What is the program for a husband and wife to cling to each other all their lives?

And the answer is like this: **עַל כֵּן יֵעָזֵב אִישׁ אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ וְיִדְבֵק** **בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ** doesn't mean that you fall out of love with your parents and fall in love with your spouse. No such thing! You'll always be *Michabeid* your parents and you'll always love them like you love all *frum* Jews; that will never come to an end. But “you shall cling” means that the focus of your loyalty changes now. You cling to your spouse *by means of loyalty*. And how loyal do you have to be? So loyal that **יֵעָזֵב אִישׁ אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ** – in some respects you'll have to even say goodbye to your parents if you're going to cling to your spouse with true loyalty.

Loyal on Locale

Let's say you married a woman in a different country and you settled there in her hometown. So the halacha is that unless you said *b'feirush* beforehand, “We're marrying on condition that you'll come back to my place,” you're bound to her forever. Let's say he wants to go back to his parents now. His mother is calling him on the phone, “*Shaifeleh*, please move back. I want to see your sweet face again.” Nothing doing! If she says, “Look, you married me here and this is where I want to be,” so it says, **עַל כֵּן יֵעָזֵב אִישׁ** – *he should forsake his father and mother* and he should be with his wife. Such a sacrifice you have to make for your wife!

It's a tremendous thing! This *halacha* is quoted (Even Haezer 75) as an example of how loyal a husband must be to his wife – even more than his loyalty to his parents. Once you are bonded to your wife, it's a bigger bond than the bond to your parents! You can forsake your parents out of necessity, but you can't forsake your wife out of necessity! *Ishto k'gufu* – just like you can't forsake yourself, you can't forsake your wife.

The Most You Can Say

And of course a man should never go and complain to his parents about his wife. Even in jest, he should never say a word to his parents about his marital affairs. If a man complains about his wife to his mother, it's a tremendous sin he's doing; he's breaching the marital contract. The wife too. It's a fatal error for a woman to confide to her parents that her husband mistreated her, that he did this wrong or that wrong. She should never tell her parents anything. Make it your business never to say a word.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of this principle. When it comes to discussing your marriage, never talk to your parents about your marriage. Unless you want to say, "Chaim is an excellent husband." That's the most you can say. Or, "Sarah is a good cook, she's a wonderful *balabustah*." That's all; nothing more. Anything more than that is a breach of the bond of loyalty.

Yom Tov Guests

Here's a man who wants his parents to come for *yomtiv* but his wife is overworked; she says it's too much for her. So her husband must put her first. He can be kind to his parents and explain to them *b'chol minei piyus*, with all kinds of excuses and apologies, but whatever it is, his wife comes first.

Now, if the wife can swallow the hurt, if she's looking for a great *mitzvah* that will help her to be *zoicheh* to *Olam Habo*, then she should tell her husband to invite them. Because *li'fum tzara agra* – "the reward will be according to the distress" and she'll be perfecting her character too. But if she's not willing, then he must obey his wife

and not invite his parents. He has no right to cause her distress by putting his parents first.

And that's what the Torah is stressing: **עַל כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ** – Even your mother and father who you owe your life too; you owe them *everything* – even so, the bond of loyalty to a spouse overrides that. In order to create a successful Torah marriage, “a man must forsake his father and his mother, and of course everyone else, and he must stick to his wife with the glue of loyalty.”

It means that at all times you feel that you are responsible for the welfare and the happiness of your mate. Be ready to go through fire and water for your husband or your wife. It's not a matter of love; it's a matter of duty, of loyalty.

The Proper Attitude

Now, such an attitude can only come when a man and a woman understand that they're not marrying for romance. Instead of marrying for love and 'pie in the sky' dreams, they marry for *avodas Hashem*. They marry for the great institution of matrimony which Hakadosh Boruch Hu commanded them to fulfill.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu created marriage as a most convenient arrangement in life for happiness. You marry to have a wife and a husband – a wife and a husband are an excellent convenience in life. They help out in the struggle for existence. It's very hard to get along in life and you must have a spouse.

You'll excuse me for the comparison – I don't mean the comparison – but you must have a refrigerator in your house. You need lights and you have to have walls and you have to have a ceiling. You need doors. You need a lot of things. And in order to live properly a man must have a wife and a woman must have a husband – they need each other. The companionship, the solace, the assistance; there's no end to the compensations of married life.

And so *v'davak* doesn't mean you have to 'fall in love' with your wife or with your husband; if you're capable of having a certain affection, that's good enough. And then all your life, starting from the day after the wedding, both of you begin practicing that affection

and it's an affection and caring that continues to grow always. It grows into a companionship of nobility and *kedusha* and dedication to each other – and it all grows from the seeds of loyalty. Of course, you'll have to water the seeds with other things too, but it's from the seeds of loyalty that a successful marriage grows.

Part II. Life of Loyalty

Take A Stand

Now, there are many results that come forth from this principle of loyalty – as many details that you have in your day to day life, that's how many details might grow from the seeds of loyalty. At every turn, you'll have the opportunity and the obligation to be loyal. It's the foundation principle of your marriage – no matter what, you stick to your spouse; your spouse comes first!

Loyalty means that sometimes you'll even have to take a stand. Here's a man who sees that one of his parents is interfering in his family life – maybe his mother is opening her mouth about subjects she shouldn't be getting involved in or she's saying things to your wife and causing her distress. So what's the job of the husband? He shouldn't hesitate to step in! That's his duty as a loyal husband; he *must* step in!

And not just to defend his wife by arguing with his mother, back and forth, back and forth. No; *v'davak* means that he says like this: "Mother," he says, "You cannot say such things about my wife!"

It's a most stupid thing for a parent to talk to a child against the child's spouse but even if the parents are so foolish, you have to tell them, "Pa, Ma, stay out of it. Don't talk to me one word against my husband or against my wife! Either you stop talking about that or I won't talk to you anymore. I can talk to you about everything but not about my spouse." Lay down the law and don't be afraid to do it.

Be a Prude

Not only with your parents. Even among relatives, sometimes somebody will make a joke and say, "Jenny is not such a good cook."

You leap to the defense of your wife! “Oh no! My wife is a very good cook.” Whether she is or not, loyalty means that as far as you’re concerned she’s the best cook in the world. And therefore, any time someone says something about your wife, you won’t stand for it. “Stop that!” you tell them, “Stop talking! It’s my wife you’re speaking about!” You should always protect her reputation against people who would like to wag tongues.

Now, many people look down on a spouse who stands up for their mate – they think it’s prudish – but you must know that it’s an admirable expression of the quality of loyalty. Hashem loves you if you do that.

And a wife too, has to stick up for her husband; absolutely. If your husband is a *chazan* and somebody asks, “Is he a good singer?” “Absolutely! My husband is the best *chazan*.” No matter if he’s not; you’re doing your job as a loyal wife. “Your husband is a *melamed*?” “Yes; he’s the best *melamed* in the *cheder*!” If he has a shoe store, then as far as you’re concerned he sells the best shoes.

And, he’s loyal to her; he’s always saying, “My wife is the best cook,” “My wife has the cleanest house,” “My wife tries her best to save money.” On Shabbos, when you’re sitting at the table with guests and you’re prepared to say some remarks on the *sedra*, the number one remark is – in the presence of your guests – “Ah! What delicious *challos*!” Only if she baked the *challah*. If not, find something else to praise. If she made the fish, that’s how you introduce the Shabbos meal: “Ah! What delicious fish Mommy made!”

Good Cooking and Good Looking

And the truth is, her cooking is good! It’s usually *very* good. But the loyal husband makes sure to say it. And not only among others; even when they are alone he stands up for her. Among the details that are included in the principle of *v’davak* is the necessity to encourage and praise each other as much as possible. A husband should always be praising his wife – it’s never enough. A loyal husband will tell his wife from time to time that she’s an *eishes chayil*. Other things too; walk in to the house and say, “How nice and clean your

house is” or, “You’re an expert manager — a good *balabusteh*.” If she cooks a supper for you, never fail to compliment her cooking.

Also be sure to compliment her on her looks. Every man should make his wife think she’s the most beautiful woman. And don’t be stingy; be lavish with your praise. Even when she’s an old lady, she still wants to hear how good she looks. That’s how women are — that’s their nature. An old great-grandmother, with a foot in the grave already, looks in the mirror to see if she has another wrinkle and therefore that’s your business in life, to loyally maintain the imaginary situation that existed at the moment of marriage. 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. If you’re smart you’ll say, “You look as nice as you looked when I married you,” but whatever you do, under no circumstances, should you ever hint that there has been any change in your attitude. You have to maintain the illusion forever. And don’t say it’s foolish; what’s foolish is to ignore the words of Hashem, *v’davak b’ishto*, and to imagine you’ll find other ways, better ways, of achieving success in marriage.

Complimenting the Husband

A wife too should compliment her husband—she should make it her business to find ways to show appreciation to her husband. Your husband is *oseik* in Torah? Praise him for that. Think of different things to say, different ways to praise him. If she sees that he makes a *brachah* with *kavanah* she should praise him. Don’t think it’s nothing; anything he does she should utilize it to practice up her loyalty and strengthen the bond of their marriage.

Don’t think that a husband doesn’t need encouragement. He puts up a facade but actually to go out into this hard, cold world to make a living is a big struggle. He doesn’t walk out in the street and pick dollars off the trees. If he works at a regular job, he has a superior over him, he has other people who are bothering him; it’s a nuisance many times. And still, he grits his teeth together and carries on. The loyal husband is thinking, “No matter how difficult and grueling it

may be, I'm sticking to it because I'm loyal to my wife and this is my responsibility to her."

And therefore when he come home at night and he's worn out – not only physically; he's worn out mentally and emotionally – so you requite that loyalty with kind words of encouragement. The loyal wife lends her husband a sympathetic ear. She also had a difficult day with the children but she could say even just two or three kind words and it would be like a balm, like a salve on his sore spirits. A wife could serve as a physician and a psychologist to her husband; if she would just listen a little bit and give a few words of kind encouragement she's more valuable than the biggest doctors in Manhattan.

Measure Your Words

Same thing when the husband comes home from work and his wife is going crazy; the children have been wild all day, the washing machine broke down, and other things happened, and now her nerves are worn to a frazzle. And now he walks in and she tells him of her troubles, and he says, "Don't be so nervous, you're making a fuss over nothing!" Oh no! That's a fool of a husband! Instead, he could have said, "Oh, that's terrible, but I see that you are doing well anyhow; I see that you're carrying on. I admire the way you are doing things so well; that you can keep the house so clean and nice with so much going on." He says a few words; why not? Does it cost him any money?

Loyalty means that you don't act in the home according to your whims; your words are measured. Get into the habit, before you speak, think, "How can I say this in the way that expresses the most loyalty possible to my wife?" Encouragement and praise are very important elements in a home – it's a way of constantly strengthening the bond of loyalty. And therefore, even when it's difficult, even when it doesn't seem so natural, as much as possible lavish your spouse with kind words.

Chosson Domeh L'Melech

Now, I understand that it's impossible to do that always, but some things are possible even always – the Torah way of marriage

requires constant politeness. Anything you need from your wife, you always say it with words of politeness. “Sarah, will you please hand me this-and-this.”

Of course, the best thing is to get up and hand it to yourself. I don’t like it when the husbands sit at the table and shout to the kitchen, “Bring this, bring that.” Get up and bring it yourself! What are you, a cripple? You have two good feet! Even if you say it politely: “Sarah, a little more sugar, please, a little more of this,” who made you a monarch to sit at the table and give orders?! Get up you lazy fellow and do it yourself!

I knew a man who in the morning, from the synagogue, called up his wife on the pay phone: “Please Sarah, bring me my umbrella.” She was pregnant and it was slippery outside; the sidewalks were icy. When I heard about this, I was amazed at the arrogance! A pregnant wife should go outside on the slippery sidewalks to bring you your umbrella?!

Politeness Reigns

But even if sometimes you have to ask for something, say “please” each time; at least that much. You say to your wife, “Thank you, Chana,” “Please Chana, can I have this spoon?” And when she brings you the spoon, “Thank you Chana. I appreciate it.”

And she loyally does the same: “Chaim, can I please have this?” When his wife needs to buy the children clothing she comes and says, “Chaim, I need money to buy shoes for the children, please.” 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 anyhow. But by saying please and thank you, they are lubricating the relations of life. And therefore, politeness should always reign supreme in the house; always say things in a way that demonstrates a certain regard for your mate.

Honor Thy Other Parent

And parents should show their loyalty in front of their children as well. The children should never see anything, only respect. He should sing his wife’s praises to the children and the mother should

hear. In the presence of the mother talk to your children about what a big *mitzvah* it is to honor their mother. You're doing it, first of all, for your wife to hear; your wife should see that you're trying to build her up. The mother is sitting there and listening; trust me, she won't be angry at you.

The mother should also urge her children, in the presence of the father, "Don't sit in Totty's chair." "Don't contradict your father." Teach it to them constantly, over and over again; don't think it's superfluous. Mothers should teach their children, of all ages, to honor their father.

If you're sitting at the table, and the children want to talk, the mother should say, "Kinderlach, father talks first; father has to talk first;" that's how to talk. The mother has to say that, not the father. And the father should say, "Children; mother talks first." It's so important for the children and most important of all is that you're gaining favor in the eyes of your wife or your husband; when the other party hears you say, "Honor your father," or "Honor your mother," the feeling of loyalty is cemented in place even stronger.

Part III. Loyalty Throughout

Broken Dishes

Now, it's easy to talk about living successfully, about how to be sure to fulfill the command of *v'davak* by defending a spouse and by praising and encouraging and speaking with polite loyalty at all times, but sometimes there are fumbles; in real life sometimes you drop and break the dish. It happens to everyone; there are minor tragedies, minor breakups – and sometimes they're not so minor.

And so we must stress that *v'davak* demands that no matter what happened, you pick up the pieces and put them together. Of course, it's better if you don't drop the dish in the first place but loyalty means that both husband and wife are quick to mend the breach.

Maintain the Routine

And one of the most important ways of glueing the pieces together is by maintaining the routine of married life. The *mitzvah* of *v'davak* means that routine should never be interrupted. Despite what he or she did, you're going to continue being a loyal spouse and not diminish by a hairsbreadth all the things that a dutiful husband or wife must do.

She should continue to prepare meals always, no matter what. And even though she's boiling with indignation, she stands at the gas range preparing the meals; just like the *kohen* stands at the *mizbe'ach* and is *makriv* the *korbon tomid shel shachar* and *tomid shel bein ha'arbayim* every single day no matter what! The *kohen* might be angry at the *kohen gadol*; still, he's loyal to the institution of the *Beis Hamikdash* and he does his duty. That's the model for a loyal wife who remains loyal to the Hashem's institution of marriage no matter what.

No Strikes!

Never, under any conditions, should a wife refuse to go to fulfill her duties as a wife. She makes supper every day and she takes care of his laundry. A wife should never retaliate by denying the husband privileges. She doesn't have to solicit her husband but she must continue the regular routine of life; just like the sun rises and sets every day, a loyal wife never goes on strike.

And the husband too should never ever make a breach in the routine of married life. So even though you walked out in the morning smarting from an insult that your wife threw your way – and it could be you were even foolish enough to replay those words over and over in your head all day long in the office – and now you're so angry that you want to spite her and say, "I'm not eating supper tonight." Never do that! When you come back at night, you say "Good evening;" and you say it with a smile. And you sit down at your regular place, you eat the supper and thank your wife; you should even praise her for her cooking.

The Bank Is Always Open

The loyal husband performs all of his duties no matter what. He's always hustling to bring in *parnasah* to pay the rent and all the bills. He should never retaliate against his wife by refusing to bring in the money to support the household; no matter what happens, he brings the pay home— whether it's regular money or money that she needs for any particular purpose a husband should never refuse because of a peeve to give money to his wife.

Chas v'shalom to say, "This week, I'm not giving you anything." There's no such thing! He continues to put money in the cigar box where he keeps the cash for his wife to use because loyalty means that everything goes on without any interruption no matter what; otherwise he's destroying the *Beis Hamikdash* of marriage. A man and a woman must always remind themselves of what our *parsha* demands "V'davak"! No matter how hurt you are, how angry you feel, you grin and bear it.

The School of Hard Knocks

The truth is that when people marry, they should be ready for hard knocks. It's very important to keep this in mind that there are going to be tests and ordeals ahead. Whether you're already married or you hope to marry one day, you should ponder these words well: There is no such thing as a smooth marriage! Forget about it! The definition of marriage is friction; it's two personalities – each one with rough edges and they're grinding one against the other. And that's exactly how it's supposed to be.

That's why when Hakodosh Boruch Hu was preparing the plan for marriage he said about the first husband, אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ – *I am going to make a help for him, opposite him*. Now, what does it mean, "I am going to make an *eizer*, a help, for a man"? Does it mean I am going to make a 'yes' person? Whatever he says, she'll say yes? Or whatever she says, he'll say yes? Is that called an *eizer*? No! That doesn't help a person. In fact it corrupts the character if you always have nothing but agreement.

Perfecting Your Soul

If your wife is nothing but an echo of your own thoughts, then you are certainly not going to succeed in your ambition to smooth out the rough spots in your nature. It's the same as living alone and "it's not good for man to be alone and therefore I will make for him an eizer k'negdo; somebody who helps him, by being opposite him" (ibid. 2:18). *K'negdo* means that Hakodosh Boruch Hu made sure that they should be very different from each other. And **הַיְצַטְטֵם** means, "I made it that way on purpose," because the refining of one's character is only possible by means of adjusting yourself over and over again to the needs of someone who's different than you.

And therefore, when a husband and wife make it their goal to be entirely devoted to this plan of Hashem of *v'davak* – he's always loyal to her and she to him – little by little, they sandpaper each other's character and they become smoother and smoother. You have to bring many *korbanos* of your own *rotzon* in a marriage; many times you have to yield your own will; many times you have to keep your mouth closed. And it's this constant effort to maintain a perfect loyalty, to harmonize one with the other, that perfects the marriage bond and perfects the *neshama*.

Men Are Meshugeh and Women Are Wild

I spoke to a man recently – he was divorced once and he was thinking now about getting a second divorce because this wife was also troublesome. So I told him that from a man's perspective all women are a little troublesome. *Nashim am bifnei atzman* – *Women are a people to themselves* (Shabbos 62a). It means, women are different than men; they think differently. They have different emotions and needs.

Look, every wife is a little wild. Women are wild. And every man is a little *meshuge* – men are *meshuge*. Wild women and *meshuge* men – it's human nature. And therefore when you marry, don't be surprised or disappointed when you discover that; because all you're doing is discovering human nature.

Success in Life

Certainly a husband and wife will vex each other. A wife or a husband just cannot be perfect. It's impossible! And therefore every man has to expect it and every woman has to expect it because that's what the career of marriage is – it's a career of loyalty that is constantly shaping and polishing the *neshama*.

Now, it doesn't mean that it's a *mitzvah* to be *mosif* – a little bit wild is enough; a little *meshuge* is enough; it's enough friction. But no matter what, men and women both have faults – you'll never find a marriage without friction. And Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "That's My plan; and *af al pi kein*, even so, remain loyal no matter what and you'll become greater and greater. Now only will you live happily, you'll be living successfully. You'll be perfecting your character every day of your life."

The Foundation of Society

Now, you're going to tell me, "Is it really possible to live that way? Is it practical to live with such loyalty?" Well, sometimes you have to take a little salt with this too but that's what the Torah intends when it tells us *v'davak b'ishto*. Clinging means to remain together by means of loyalty – it's the most practical way to succeed at marriage and to succeed in life and therefore you must find ways to make it practical.

Now, if you take a look in the Rambam (*Deios* 7:8), you'll find some very good advice for making it work. He quotes one of the *mitzvos* of the Torah and he says that it's an admonition that is the foundation of human society. **לֹא תִקַּח וְלֹא תִטֹּר** – *You shouldn't take revenge and you shouldn't carry a grudge*. Forgive and forget; that's all!

Forgive and Forget

The interactions among people cannot function properly without this principle and marriage more than anything else is a lifetime of interactions. A husband and wife see each other more than anybody else – it's like interacting with thousands of people; it's constant friction – and therefore the Rambam is teaching us that

success of the couple is when they both learn to forgive and forget. You have to know, anybody who has a good memory is heading straight to the divorce court.

In my dealings over many years with many couples I realized that this is a fundamental principle for a successful marriage. Sometimes a woman will bring up what her husband did twenty years ago, and he'll also remember what she did, and they keep on recounting it through the years – sometimes it even grows in the retelling. A good memory like that is disloyalty – even to remember what happened this morning is a breach in *v'davak*. It's ignoring the *tzivui* of the Torah and it's impossible for a marriage to exist on such a basis. It's only the people who forget, they are the ones who can live successfully.

And therefore, you have to get used to forgiving and forgetting all the time. Even after the worst quarrel, when one side makes the slightest attempt at reconciliation, so the other one should immediately accept and they should wipe out the past and start this minute with a new slate. Even though they were living together for thirty nine years, every day is a new slate. And that way, not only is the marriage a success, but by erasing the old vexations, that's how you erase stains from your *neshamah*.

Greatness of Loyalty

Now, when each spouse is loyal one to the other, when they make use of the ideas we spoke about here, so Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "These are the people whom I favor because they are practicing the great *middah* of *v'davak*, of loyalty."

You know how great is that *middah*? It's so great that it's because of our loyalty that the *Am Yisroel* is the chosen nation. וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבָקִים – *Because we're daveik to Him; because we stick to Him, בְּהִשָּׁם אֶלְקֵיכֶם – that's why you'll be around forever.* It's a covenant, a *bris* that Hashem made with us: "If you're *daveik* in Me, then just as I am forever, then you'll be forever too."

Related Mitzvos

You have to know that *v'davak b'ishto* and the *mitzvah* of *u'vo sidbak* are related words because the attitudes are related. Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "You have to be loyal to Me and included in that loyalty I demand that you should be loyal to your husband and to your wife forever." And just like sometimes it seems that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is dealing us something that we don't like – He's creating some friction in our lives – but our career in this world is to remain loyal to Him no matter what, so too *v'davak b'ishto* requires that a husband and wife be loyal to each other no matter what.

And if they breach that command of *v'davak*, then Hashem says, "Even though you claim to be loyal to Me it's only a show; it's a hollow loyalty. It's by means of fulfilling My will in your day to day interactions with your spouse, that's one of the greatest possible expressions of loyalty to Me in this world."

And that's the commitment you made when you stood under the *chuppah* together; that you're going to push the plow together, plowing the hard earth of *Olam Hazei*. Together means with loyalty – you'll support each other to make a living, to make ends meet, to bring up a family, to be together in illness and in good health, in good times and in other times too.

Happily Ever After

Marriage is like life; when you enter life, you take it with all its details, with all of its ups and downs. It's like a carriage traveling on a rough road; bump-bump! Sometimes it's bumpy, sometimes it's smooth. Sometimes it's easy driving, and sometimes it's crowded highways. There might even be periods of unhappiness *chas v'shalom*, but by means of loyalty you'll also climb to heights of success.

And that's why it's only those who marry for loyalty who succeed in living happily ever after. No matter what happens, through thick and thin, the husband and wife always remember what Hashem told Adam in the beginning: *V'davak!* Cling with perfect loyalty! That's Hakodosh Boruch Hu's program for marriage and it's the only program that works.

He's going to be loyal to his wife forever and she to him, and together they'll walk their children and grandchildren down the aisle to the *chuppah*; and they'll dance at the weddings of their great grandchildren too. All their lives they'll overlook everything and remain loyal to each other.

Actually, it's more than all their lives because we know that even after they leave this world it's forever and ever and ever. The loyal husband and wife leave this world with a good name, and they're buried together, side by side, on *Har Hazeisim*, or in Montefiore cemetery, and they're in *Olam Haboh* side by side too. And because they were *daveik* to each other, just because they were loyally attached to one another all their lives, that's why they'll merit to be *daveik* to the *Shechina* forever and ever.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

One minute a day plus one act a day to fulfill v'davak.

It's one thing to know that the definition of marriage is loyalty but it's another thing to practice it. Every morning this week I will take thirty seconds to think about what act of loyalty I could do during the day for my spouse in order to fulfill the command of Hashem, *v'davak*. And in the evening, I will take another thirty seconds to think about whether I was successful and how I could improve tomorrow.

————— **This week's booklet is based on tapes:** —————

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Do I have to say that extra prayer of forgiving anyone who sinned against me before *kriyas shema* of bedtime?

A:

You're not *mechuyav*, but if you want to do it, it's good business. It's a good business opportunity. Like the Gemara says: נושא עון ועובר על פשע – For whom will Hashem be נושא עון? To whom will Hashem forgive his sins? To the one who is עובר על פשע; the one who is willing to forgive others (Rosh Hashanah 17a). If you forgive those who sinned against you, then Hashem will forgive your sins.

So it pays. If you don't want to, you don't have to say it but it's good business because if you forgive others, Hashem will forgive you. So it pays. It pays to say it.

But you have to mean it. You have to put thought into it. Just to mumble the words because it's in the *siddur*, won't do you any good. You have to think about what you're saying. Think about the neighbor or the co-worker or your wife who wronged you and forgive them. But do you *have to* say it? No. You don't *have to* say it.

TAPE # E-221

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