

למודי משה

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the *Chasunah* of Michael
Mosche and Nechoma Selig.

עניני נישואין

טבת תשפ"ד

יוצא לאור על ידי ר' משה הריס



קונטרס זה הוקדש לעילוי נשמת:

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Halachah

Pasukim on Wedding Invitations

Those who merited to receive a wedding invitation from Rav Moshe Feinstein may have noticed that he omits the typical *pasukim* such as *קול ששון וקול שמחה*, from the invitation. R' Moshe (*Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:135*) records: *ואני בעצמי נזהרתי שאף על ההזמנות: "I myself was careful, that on the invitations to my children's weddings, there were no pasukim written, not even the pasuk of קול ששון. It is fitting that everyone act accordingly."*

Basis for Above Ruling

The basis for R' Moshe's ruling is a Gemara in Rosh Hashanah (18b) which records a passage from *Megillas Ta'anis*. The Gemara writes as follows:

בתלתא בתשרי בטילת אדכרתא מן שטרייא שגזרה מלכות יון גזרה שלא להזכיר שם שמים על פיהם וכשגברה מלכות חשמונאי ונצחום התקיבו שיהו מזכירין שם שמים אפילו בשטרות וכך היו כותבים בשנת כך וכך ליוחנן כהן גדול לאל עליון וכששמעו חכמים בדבר אמרו למחר זה פורע את חובו ונמצא שטר מוטל באשפה.

"On the third of Tishrei [there is reason to celebrate] since the rabbis succeeded in convincing everyone to refrain from mentioning Hashem's name in secular documents. The Greek government had decreed that Jews were forbidden to mention Hashem's name and when the Chashmonaim defeated them they decreed to mention Hashem's name even in secular documents. This is how they dated documents: 'In such and such year to Yochanon Kohen Gadol to Keil Elyon. When the Rabbis heard of this practice they said that the next day when one pays his obligation, the document [where Hashem's name appears] will be thrown into the garbage. They annulled the decree, and they made that day a Yom Tov".

Rashi comments that the Rabbis declared the day a Yom Tov because they thought it was a miracle that the people heeded their ruling, despite the fact that it overturned an accepted practice, which was intended to honor Hashem.

Rav Moshe similarly was concerned that wedding invitations will eventually be discarded and that the *pasukim* that appear on them will be degraded. He comments that this is not merely a personal stringency but "it is also proper for everyone to practice". We should note that the Rambam (*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 6:8*) clarifies that not only are we forbidden to disgrace *pasukim* that contain Hashem's name, but all *pasukim*, and even "their commentaries and explanations".

Suggestions to Defend the Common Practice to be Lenient

Despite these rulings, many do include *pasukim* on wedding invitations. The question is, is everyone making a mistake, or is there perhaps something to rely on?

One could suggest that perhaps we rely on the fact that these *pasukim* do not have the status of *kisvei kodesh* [holy books] since they were merely printed and not handwritten. However, this argument is not so compelling, as the *Teshuvos Maharsham* (3:357) writes, that even though, technically speaking, printed books might not be considered books endowed with *kedusha*, nonetheless, it is still degrading to place such things in the garbage.

Possibly, one may defend this practice based on the ruling of Rav Yitzchak Elchonon Spektor (*Teshuvos Ein Yitzchak* O.C. 5:11) and the *Netziv* (*Meishiv Davar* 2:80) who both permit the disposal of printing galleys since they are not printed with intention of endowing them with *kedusha* [holiness], they are designed to be used as a one off and not permanently.

However, the *Tzitz Eliezer* (3:1) has a lengthy *Teshuvah* where he argues on the above *chiddush* and proves from the very Rambam that Rav Yitzchak Elchonon Spektor comes from, the exact opposite. Moreover, galleys are clearly not intended to be preserved for the long term. In fact, the *Netziv* writes “they were created with the intention of destroying them”. Wedding invitations, however, are not necessarily meant to be discarded, and some people retain invitations as a memento.

Rav Dov Brisman’s Defence of the General Practice to be Lenient

Rav Dov Brisman *zt”l* (Rav and Av Beis Din in Philadelphia) presents a compelling defense of the commonly accepted practice in his *Teshuvos Shalmei Chovah* (*Yoreh Deah* 63). Rav Brisman notes other areas where we seem not to treat *pasukim* in the manner preferred by *Chazal*. He focuses on the common practice to recite fragments of *pasukim* such as *ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום הששי*, at the start of Friday night *kiddush* and *יום השבת ויקדשהו*, at the start of Shabbos morning *kiddush*. While many adopt a strict practice not to recite fragments of *pasukim* such as the *Mishnah Berurah* (289:2), nonetheless, the common practice is to be lenient as noted by the *Mishnah Berurah*.

The *Maharam Shick* in his *Teshuvos* (*Orach Chaim* 1:10) defends the common practice by arguing that the intention in these circumstances is not to quote *pasukim* but rather: “To simply inform and publicize that Hashem blessed Shabbos more than the other six days of the week, and that its holiness is permanent and unbreakable. It is like a pronouncement to motivate the one reciting *kiddush* and those who are listening to observe the holiness of Shabbos which is very holy.”

The basis for the *Maharam Shick's* approach is the *Shulchan Aruch's* ruling (*Yoreh Deah* 284:2) regarding the obligation to line the paper on which *pasukim* are written (*sirtut*). The *Shulchan Aruch*, following *Tosfos* (*Gittin* 6b citing Rabbeinu Tam and Rabbeinu Eliyohu) does not require *sirtut* if the *pasukim* are quoted simply for the purpose of *tzachus* [elegant writing]. In such a case one is not quoting *pasukim* per se but rather as a means to express a point using words that appear in the Torah.

Rav Shlomo Kluger (*Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo Orach Chaim* 43) similarly defends the practice to quote fragments of *pasukim* in our *tefillos* and *piyutim* [liturgical poetry such as *selichos* and *kinnos*]. He limits the requirement to cite a complete *pasuk* to those situations where "it appears that one intends to present a *pasuk* from *Tanach*. In such a case one is forbidden to deviate from its arrangement". He proves this assertion from the fact that *Chazal* routinely quote *pasuk* fragments throughout the Gemara when supporting their claims.

Rav Brisman's Analysis of the Maharam Shick's Ruling

Rav Brisman notes that we have a precedent for both writing and pronouncing fragments of *pasukim*. He queries, though, as to the nature of this permission. One possibility is that these fragments are still defined as *pasukim* and retain their holiness, only that it is permitted to write and pronounce these fragments in certain circumstances. Alternatively, it is sometimes permitted to write and pronounce fragments of *pasukim* because in those circumstances the fragments are not defined as *pasukim* at all. The difference between the two possibilities is that if the second approach is correct then one could apply the ruling to allow discarding such fragments, since they do not have the status of *pasukim*.

Rav Brisman supports the second approach by citing the *Rashba* (*Gittin* 6b) who explains Rabbeinu Tam's aforementioned ruling as follows: "This is not considered to be writing a *pasuk*, rather it is ordinary writing using the language of *Mikra* (*Tanach*)". Rav Brisman also notes that Rabbeinu Eliyohu (*Tosfos Sotah* 17b) appears to ascribe to the second approach as well: "There is no concern for writing *pasukim* in our letters without *sirtut* since our intention is not to write a *pasuk* but rather ordinary speech to send regards in the Hebrew language or to write in an elegant manner."

Rav Brisman's Defence of the Common Practice

If the above is correct, then it would come out that fragments of *pasukim* are permitted in certain circumstances since they do not have the *halachic* status of a *pasuk*. Based on this, Rav Brisman writes: "In light of the above, there is room to defend the common practice to cite *pasukim* on wedding invitations. The reason is that only a portion of the *pasukim* are written and it is considered to be ordinary writing using the language of the *Mikra*...The fragments of *pasukim* are cited in the invitation only to announce the event in an elegant manner similar to reciting *על כן ברך את יום השבת ויקדשהו* during Shabbos morning *kiddush*."

Conclusion

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (*Orach Chaim* 345:18), in an entirely different context (defending the use of city-wide *eruvim*), writes, “There is a mitzvah and obligation to defend the practices of the Jewish People”. Rav Brisman has succeeded in doing so in regard to the common practice to quote *pasukim* in wedding invitations. Indeed, even Rav Moshe Feinstein did not outright forbid this practice as he merely wrote that it is “proper” to refrain from citing *pasukim*. One should certainly not cause a fight over this with parents or in-laws as one may rely on Rav Brisman’s lenient approach in order to preserve *sholom bayis*.

Nonetheless, whenever possible one should avoid citing *pasukim* on a wedding invitation in accordance with the opinion of Rav Moshe Feinstein. In addition, when one receives an invitation, it would be preferable not to discard it but rather to treat it as *sheimos* and bury it in a respectful manner, together with the rest of his *sheimos*. Adopting the stricter standards regarding this matter will hopefully deepen one’s respect and reverence for our holy *seforim*.¹

The Aufruf in Halachah and Minhag

The Shabbos before a *choson* gets married is known as the Shabbos Aufruf. *Aufruf* is a Yiddish word that means “to be called up.” On the Shabbos before the wedding (or the last Shabbos a *choson* is in his hometown, if he’s traveling for the wedding), the *choson* is called up to the Torah for an *aliyah*.

The *Shevet Yehudah* offers a deeper meaning for the word *aufruf* — to be called up. We find two seminal times in *Chumash* that Moshe Rabbeinu “was called” by Hashem. At the beginning of *Sefer Vayikra*, the *pasuk* tells us ויקרא אל משה, when Moshe was called to the *azarah*, a place of purity and sanctity. The other was at Har Sinai, when Moshe Rabbeinu ascended the mountain, and Hashem called to him to prepare the people to receive the Torah.

In referring to this Shabbos as the “Shabbos Aufruf,” we are reminded of the times Hashem called Moshe Rabbeinu, moments infused with *kedusha*. This is a message to the *choson*, exhorting him to build a home of holiness and purity on the foundations of Torah values and thoughts.

¹ For more sources, see *Sefer Ginzei HaKodesh* (9:3-8), see also pg. 307 for copy of letter (Sivan 5750) from Gedolei Yisroel warning against printing *pasukim* or parts thereof where there is concern they will come *liday bizoyon* [to disgrace]. See also *Dirshu Mishna Berurah* 154 note 30.

Early Sources

The *minhag* of an *aufruf* goes back to the days of the *Rishonim*, and is mentioned by the Rashba. Until not so long ago, people used to get married on Fridays. On Friday night, people anyway made fancy meals in honor of Shabbos, in order to save money, it was very common to get married on Friday and use the Friday night meal as both the *chasunah seudah* and the Friday night *seudah*. If a *choson* and *kallah* got married on Friday, then the seven days before the *chasunah* started the Shabbos before. Consequently, the Shabbos before the *chasunah* was an exciting Shabbos for the *choson* and he would celebrate. The Rashba (*Mishmeres HaBayis* 7:2) writes: ואני אומר כי מנהגן של ישראל בכל מקום ומקום תורה היא וכל מה שעושין במנהגיהן יסודתן בקדושה ובכל מקומותינו הנהיגו להכין סעודה ושמחה שבת לפני שבת של נשואין - "I say, the customs of Klal Yisroel in all places, are based on the Torah, and everything they do has its sources in *kedusha*, and in all places, the custom was to prepare a feast and rejoice on the Shabbos before the *chasunah*".

The *Magen Avraham* also mentions the *minhag* to have an *aufruf*. In *Hilchos Tisha B'Av*, the *Rema* (551:1) writes, on Shabbos Chazon (the Shabbos before Tisha B'Av) the *minhag* was that people didn't change into Shabbos clothes. However, for someone who was getting married in the upcoming week, it was ok for him to wear Shabbos clothes. The *Magen Avraham* (551:6) brings, that the *Maharil* made a *spinhaltz* [another name for *aufruf*] for his son, and he wore Shabbos clothes.

Singing the *Choson* to *Shul*

Some people have the *minhag* to sing the *choson* to *shul* on his Shabbos *Aufruf*. The above *minhag* is based on *Maseches Sofrim* (20:12): "Shlomo HaMelech saw the power of *gemilas chasodim* [acts of kindness], and he build for Klal Yisroel two entranceways, one was to provide entry for *chasanim* and the other was to provide entry for *aveilum* [mourners]. On Shabbos, the people of Yerushalayim would gather together and go up to Har HaBayis, and would sit by these entranceways to perform *gemilas chasodim* with each other. When the *Beis HaMikdosh* was destroyed, it was established that the *chasanim* and *aveilum* would come to *shul* instead, in order that Klal Yisroel could perform *gemilas chasodim* with each other. The *chesed* performed with *chasanim* was that everyone would praise them and accompany them home."

We see from the above, that the *minhag* was to accompany a *choson*. However, from the *Maseches Sofrim* it seems that the *minhag* was on the way home from *shul*, not on the way to *shul*. It's unclear where the *minhag* to do the other way round came from.

What's the *Heter* to Go to The *Choson's* House Before *Davening Shacharis*?

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 89:2) rules, that before *davening*, it's forbidden to go a friend's house, even if instead of saying "*shalom*" one says "good morning". So why is it

that people go to the house of a *chosan* and pick him up and bring him to *shul*, surely it should be forbidden?

The *Shevet HaKahosi* (6:475) suggests, that since one is going to bring the *chosan* to *shul* there is no concern. On the contrary, the *chosan* is picked up to come to *shul*, and those who pick him up sing praises and songs to Hashem, therefore, there is no concern.

Another answer, mentioned by the *poskim* is, that just like a slave is allowed to go to serve his master before *davening* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 89:18) similarly, since a *chosan* is comparable to a king (and some *achronim* say, this already starts from the Shabbos before the *chasunah*), one is allowed to go and serve him before *davening* (see *Shevet HaKahosi* 6:475 and *Mishnas Yosef* 5:20).

Wishing the Chosan “Mazel Tov” Before Davening

The *Shevet HaLevi* (10:15:1) was asked, if one is allowed to wish “*mazel tov*” to a *chosan* before *davening Shacharis*, and he writes, that seemingly there is no *issue* involved, as the only issue is greeting a friend, if however, one wishes him something else, other than a “good morning” greeting it’s ok.

Aliyah

The *minhag* is that the *chosan* the week before his *chasunah* gets an *aliya*. There is an interesting *Biur Halachah* (136) which lists the hierarchy of *aliyas*, and a *chosan* the week before his *chasunah* is second on the list.

Why Does He Get An Aliyah

The *Pnei Menachem* explains that Yaakov Avinu learned Torah for 14 years prior to his marriage. Torah is the foundation upon which a Jewish person builds his or her future home. In receiving an *aliyah* to the Torah, the *chosan* is reminded that the Torah needs to be the bedrock of his future home.

The *Chiddushei HaRim* adds that when a *chosan* is infused with the *kedusha* [sanctity] of Shabbos, coupled with the *kedusha* of Torah, it’s a protection for him not to become subsumed in a world of physical pleasure, as well as encouragement to live a life of spiritual elevation.

The *Medrash Talpiyos (Anaf Chosan V’kallah)* says that the reason he gets an *aliyah* on the Shabbos before his wedding is because *chosan domeh l’melech* – a *chosan* is compared to a king and a king must have two *sifrei Torah* on him, similarly a *chosan* gets one *aliyah* before and one *aliyah* after his wedding.

Rav Schorr adds that the power of a king comes from the Torah, and the *chosan* needs to take that lesson with him as he enters into marriage.

Rav Shlomo Zalman in *Halichos Shlomo (Moadim 2:251-252)* offers an idea based on the Gemara in *Nedorim*, which says that the reason that the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed was because they did not give the Torah proper *kavod*. The greatest way to give proper *kavod haTorah* is to learn right before an important time in our lives. Therefore, prior to his wedding the *chosan* gets an *aliyah* and starts his *simcha* off with Torah.²

Sifrei Chabad say that it is *siman tov* to raising children who will learn Torah and lift up the world.

Finally, the *Sefer HaMatamim* quoted in *Nitei Gavriel (Hilchos Nisuin)* writes that the reason a *chosan* gets an *aliyah* before and after his wedding is in order that he appreciates the difference between the Torah learned before and after his wedding. The Gemara in *Yevamos (62b)* teaches, that a man who lacks a wife is “without happiness, without blessing, and without Torah.” The maturity that comes with marriage forces a fresh outlook to both the quality and application of one’s Torah studies.

Which Aliyah?

The *minhag* nowadays, is that the *chosan* gets *maftir*. However, a number of *poskim* bring that the *chosan* should actually try and get one of the seven main *aliyas*.

The reason brought down, is that for *maftir* anyone can be called up, even a *kotan* [young child], whereas for the seven main *aliyas* only a *gadol* [adult] may be called up. To demonstrate that the *chosan* is a *gadol* and that his *kiddushin* is binding, there was a *minhag* to specifically give him one of the seven main *aliyos*.

[This reminds me of a joke: One Shabbos in Satmar there was a bar mitzvah boy and a *chosan* in *shul*, and a fight broke out as to which one should get called up first. They went to the Rebbe to ask him who wins, and he said, “whichever one is older”.]

However, the widespread *minhag* is that the *chosan* gets *maftir*. In explaining why the *minhag* changed, the *Tzitz Eliezer (21:20)* writes, the *minhag* is that we sing, throw *pekelach* [packages] etc. and the situation in *shul* gets slightly out of control, and it gets people confused with *krias haTorah*. Consequently, the *minhag* became that we give the *chosan maftir* to save people getting confused in the middle of *krias haTorah*.

Father Should Also Get Aliyah

The *Shaarey Ephraim (2:3)* says that the father of the *chosan* also has a *chiyuv* to get an *aliyah* but he doesn’t take precedence over any other *chiyuv*.

² The *minhag* is that when one has a baby, he gets an *aliyah* in *shul*. Perhaps we can explain using the same idea, that when one has a baby, things are very hectic at home and it’s hard to learn, however, it’s important to connect a *simcha* with Torah, therefore, we give the new father an *aliyah*, to ensure he learns at least some Torah.

A Traveling *Chosan*

We mentioned above “On the Shabbos before the wedding (or the last Shabbos a *chosan* is in his hometown, if he’s traveling for the wedding), the *chosan* is called up to the Torah for an *aliyah*”. The above is actually a *machlokes*, the *Magen Avraham* (282) maintains, that if the *chosan* is traveling he should get called up the week before traveling. However, the *Sha’ar Ephraim* argues, and is of the opinion that there is only a *chiyuv* to call up a *chosan* if he is getting married in the coming week, and not the week of when he leaves for his *chasunah*.

Seemingly, we can bring a *rayah* to the opinion of the *Sha’ar Ephraim*. We mentioned above, that if the Shabbos before the *chasunah* is Shabbos Chazon, then the *chosan* and even his father may wear Shabbos clothes. The question is, why not just make the *aufruf* a week earlier, and avoid any *shailos*? We see that the *aufruf* is supposed to be on the Shabbos immediately preceding the *chasunah*.

Throwing *Peklech* [Bags of Candy]

Finally, we come to perhaps the most popular aspect of the *aufruf*, the throwing of *peklech* at the *chosan*. The Gemara in *Berachos* (50b) discusses the practice of throwing various foodstuffs, such as wheat kernels and seeds, at the *chosan* and *kallah* at the wedding as a sign of good luck and blessing. The fact that this custom appears nowadays at the *aufruf* seems to be an outgrowth of the original *minhag* mentioned in the Gemara.

The *minhag* used to be to throw nuts. The *Nitei Gavriel* (*Nisuin* 2:3 footnote 4) says that the reason is because nuts have a shell, and it symbolizes the *tznius* of *kallah*. He offers a second reason, namely, that *egoz* represents *chet* (because in *gematria* they both equal 18) and the *chosan* is forgiven for his sins, so it is symbolic of throwing away his sins. The *Shem Mishmuel* (*Ki Seitzei*, page 134) writes, that just like when a nut falls in the mud, the inside is still protected because of the shell, so too, when one gets married, it comes with responsibility and dealing with the world of *gashmiyus* [physicality] as a husband must begin to work to ensure he can support his family. Thus, we ensure to give the *chosan* *chizuk* by sending him a message that even though he now will enter the world of the physical as he goes to work, he needs to ensure that his inside remains pure and connected to Hashem’s will.

It is customary to throw almonds. Almonds ripen quickly, and it’s a propitious sign that the couple should be blessed quickly with children.

It is also customary to throw raisins. One reason given, is that they are dried grapes that lack too much moisture. There is a *machlokes* in the Gemara as to what the forbidden fruit that Chavah gave to Adam in Gan Eden was, and one opinion is that it was grapes. Thus, we throw raisins to signify that a man's wife will not lead him into sin as Chavah led Adam, as the object of the sin is represented as being dried out and inferior.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (171:21) mentions the *minhag* of throwing raisins and he says that it's not a good *minhag* as they can get gross and mushy. Nowadays, it's a bit easier as we normally throw the food in a bag, and it's less likely to get ruined.³

Rav Schorr notes that there is another message found in the candy thrown at the *chosan*. From the vantage point of the *chosan*, he feels like he's being pelted with stones. But really, the *pekelach* are full of sweets and good things. The message is clear: All challenges that will be thrown at the young couple have to be seen as coming from a place of Divine Hashgachah and love. This is the bedrock *emunah* the *chosan* and *kallah* need to integrate into their life and into their future home and offspring.

Oops! The *Gabbah's* Glasses Got Broken, Who Has to Pay?

There was a story once, where a *chosan* got called up for his *aliyah*, and the women through sweets down from the *eZRas noshim* at the *chosan*, and one of the sweets went straight towards the *gabbah's* glasses and they got broken. The *gabbah* argued, that the woman who through the sweet must pay and she argued that it was done unintentionally and through *simcha*, therefore, she doesn't need to pay.

R' Yitzchok Zilberstein (*Chasukai Chemed, Yevamos 62*) discusses the above *shailah*, and he writes, that even though we say אדם מועד לעולם – “a person is always liable for his damage”, whether it was done intentionally or accidentally, in this case the woman is exempt, for two reasons:

1) The glasses were broken due to an act of *simchas chosan v'kallah* and just like we find in *Choshen Mishpot* (378:9) that if *bochurim* were riding on animals for *simchas chosan v'kallah* and they caused damage they are exempt, since they were doing it for reasons of *simcha*, the same thing is in our case. Certainly, one should be careful not to cause damage, however, if *bedieved* damage was caused one is exempt.

There is a similar halachah in *Hilchos Purim* (*Orach Chaim 695:2*) that if one damages due to *simchas Purim* he is exempt. The *Mishnah Berurah* writes, specifically if the damage is caused do to *simchas Purim*. On that halachah the *Aruch HaShulchan* (695:10) writes: ועכשיו בעוונותינו הרבים ערבה כל שמחה ואין אנו נוהגים לשמוח כל כך עד שיבוא להיזק ולכן עכשיו לשלם – “Nowadays, we don't rejoice as much, and we don't rejoice to the extent that one causes damage, therefore, if one does do damage he must pay”. However, presumably he is talking about acts of *simcha* which we no longer practice, however, on things we still do, such as throwing *pekelach*, presumably one is still exempt.

³ It's worthwhile checking up the *Mishnah Berurah* inside. It's clear from his words that the *chosan* would get called up for *maftir*.

2) A second argument can be made, to exempt the woman from paying, which is why was the *gabbah* looking towards the *ezras noshim*, especially when sweets were being thrown. He shouldn't have turned around, and the sweets wouldn't have broken the glasses. Since he turned around, it's his fault and therefore he must cover the cost himself.

(The following write-up is based on a halachah write-up written by Torah and Hora'ah)

The Wedding Day – A Day of Atonement

At the end of *Parshas Toldos* we have the *pasuk*: וילך עשו אל ישמעאל ויקח את מחלת בת – “Eisav went to Yishmoel, and he took Mochalas, the daughter of Yishmoel, the son of Avrohom, the sister of Nevayos, in addition to his other wives as a wife.” The woman that Eisav married was really called Bosmas, as we find in the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 36:3): ואת בשמת בת ישמעאל אחות נביות – “Also Bosmas, daughter of Yishmoel, sister of Nevayos.” Her name was not Mochalas; her real name was Bosmas. The Torah only calls her Mochalas to hint that a *chosan* attains *mechila* [pardon] for his transgressions upon marriage (See Rashi to *pasuk* 36:3, who cites this from a Medrash).

The Yerushalmi (*Bikkurim* 3:3) recounts the story of Rav Zeira who was asked to take up a position of authority. Rav Zeira refused the position, but when he overheard a *Tana* repeat the *beraisa* that states that there are three whose sins are atoned for – an ill person, a *chosan*, and one who ascends to a *position* of authority — he agreed to accept the position in order to merit atonement. As support to the above, the Yerushalmi cites the aforementioned *pasuk*.

Below we will discuss the interesting topic of the wedding day acting as a day of atonement. What the connection between marriage and atonement is? Do the *chosan* and *kallah* have to do *teshuvah*, or are their sins revoked regardless? Is the absolving of sins equal for the *chosan* and *kallah*? Are sins atoned for in a second marriage? And more.

Further Sources

So far we have quoted a Medrash and a Yerushalmi, there is a further source for the above found in the *Bavli*. The Gemara in *Yevamos* (63b) teaches: אמר רבי חמא בר חנינא כיון שנשא – “Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said: Once a man marries his iniquities crumble [*mispakekin*], as it is stated: “Whoever finds a wife finds good, and finds [*veyafek*] favor in the eyes of Hashem ” (*Mishlei* 18:22). Rashi explains the term *mispakekin* as a *pekak* – bottle cap or covering. The sins of a *chosan* are “capped” and no longer observable. Seemingly, there is a difference between the Yerushalmi and the Bavli.

The *Rimzei HaRokeyach* (*Parshas Nitzovim*) writes: ומשוש חתן על כלה ישיש עליך אלקיך – “And like the rejoicing of a *chosan* over his *kallah* shall Hashem rejoice over you” (Yeshayah

62:5). *Chosan* (חתן) has the numerical value of 458, *al* (על) = 100, and *kallah* (בלה) = 55. The total numerical value of the three is 613, to hint that because their sins are absolved, the *chosan* and *kallah* are considered to have fulfilled all 613 *mitzvos*.

A Chosan Who Doesn't Do Teshuva

Seemingly, atonement works even without the *chosan's teshuva*. The wicked Eisav was marrying a wicked wife (see Rashi, *Bereishis* 28:9) while continuously plotting to kill Yaakov. Yaakov was then forced to flee, with Eliphaz hot on his heels. Seemingly, this illustrates that a *chosan* is absolved of sin, regardless of his intentions.

Fasting on the Wedding Day

The *Rema* (*Even Ha'Ezer* 61:1; *Orach Chaim* 573:1) mentions a custom for both the *chosan* and *kallah* to fast on their wedding day. Several reasons are given for this: the *Moshav Z'keinim l'Ba'alei HaTosfos* (*Bereishis* 28:9) and the *Tashbetz Kotan* (465) write that the *chosan* fasts on his wedding day because his sins are atoned for on this day. Since it is the *chosan's* personal Yom Kippur he is obligated to fast. This reason also appears in *Mateh Moshe* (Volume 3, *Hachnosas Kallah* chapter 1); *Beis Shmuel* (*Even Ha'Ezer* 61:6); *Biur HaGra* (*Even Ha'Ezer* 61:6) and *Maharam Mintz* (109).

The *Mateh Moshe* adds that this is the reason that some *chasanim* have the custom to wear a *kittel* to the *chuppah* — to remind him of his atonement, as the *pasuk* says: אִם יִהְיוּ חַטָּאֵיכֶם כַּשָּׁנִים כְּשֶׁלֶג יִלְבִּינוּ — “If your sins prove to be like crimson, they will become white as snow...”.

The *Mahari Brunah* (93) highlights an additional aspect: on their wedding day the couple rises to glory and their sins are erased. Therefore, there is room for concern that their sins could prevent their forgiveness because they are not worthy of it. To combat this, they take upon themselves to fast and repent before the *chuppah*. After the *chuppah* they can break their fast immediately and are not required to continue until *tzeis hakochavim* (if the *chuppah* is held during the day). However, the *Beis Shmuel* maintains that as it is similar to Yom Kippur, the fast must be completed, and even if the *chuppah* is held during the day the *chosan* and *kallah* must fast until *tzeis hakochavim*.

The *Shlah* adds (*Sha'ar Ha'osios, Kedushas Hazivug*): “And the *chosan* and *kallah* must purify themselves to the utmost when entering the *chuppah*. Firstly, it is known what *Chazal* write (Yerushalmi, *Bikkurim* 3:3) that Hashem forgives them for all their sins. Therefore, they should repent before their *chuppah* because it has been accepted in all communities to fast. And they should arouse themselves to *teshuva*... and they should take upon themselves from that day onwards to truly serve Hashem and be holy and pure. And it should not be like the custom is in other places, where the couple sits together and plays cards and other things. And after this, they should enter the *chuppah* and *daven* to Hashem

to bring his Shechinah to reside between them as *Chazal* say (*Sotah* 17a): “A man and woman who merit, the *Shechinah* rests between them.”

The Ben Ish Chai writes (Year 1, *Shoftim* 13): “It is the custom for the *chosan* to fast on the day he enters the *chuppah* because one who gets married is forgiven for all his sins and he needs the merit of his fast. In addition, through the fast he will have a broken heart and be open to *teshuva*.”

The above sources show that although a *chosan*'s sins are atoned for, it is only on condition that he does *teshuva*. Therefore, fasting is one of the accepted wedding day customs.

Atonement or Postponement

The *Sdei Chemed* (Volume 6, *Asifas Zkeinim, Ma'areches Chosan V'Kallah*) writes that according to the Yerushalmi and the Medrash who learn this concept from Eisav, it seems that sins are erased irrespective of *teshuva*. However, according to the Gemara it seems that the sins are merely “capped” and not forgiven. Therefore, fasting follows the *Bavli*'s opinion. (It is important to note that the previously indicated *meforshim* quoted the Yerushalmi and Medrash as the source, and not the Gemara.)

The *Sdei Chemed* quotes Rabbi Yeshaya Pinto (*Kesef Nivchar, Chayei Sorah, derush beis*): “When indicating that sins are ‘capped’, the Gemara means that they are sealed, and the *chosan*'s behavior is evaluated. If after his wedding the *chosan* changes his behavior, his past sins are forgiven and considered merits, just as any *ba'al teshuva*. But if the *chosan* continues with his bad behavior, he is punished for his past sins, even those that predate his wedding.”

Following this approach, he explains the Gemara: “‘Whoever finds a wife finds good, and obtains [*veyafek*] the favor of Hashem’ (*Mishlei* 18:22) – if one finds a wife and makes positive changes in his behavior thanks to her, all his past actions will be beloved by Hashem” because his sins became merits.

Then he continues explaining the Gemara:

“In the West, i.e., Eretz Yisroel, when a man married a woman they would say to him as follows: ‘*Motza* or *motzei*?’ In other words, they would ask the *chosan* if the appropriate passage for his wife is the *pasuk* which begins with the word *motza*: ‘Whoever finds [*motza*] a wife finds good’, or whether the more appropriate *pasuk* is the one beginning with the word *motzei*: ‘And I find [*motzei*] more bitter than death the woman’ (*Koheles* 7:26).”

“These words are surely not meant to tease one for his marriage choice. It serves as a hint to the *chosan* to remind him to do *teshuva*, so his sins can turn to merits. Then the appropriate *pasuk* for his marriage will be “Whoever find a wife finds good”. However, one

who does not change his behavior will be caught in the web of previous sins, which are more bitter than death.

“Therefore,” concludes the *Sdei Chemed*, “at his wedding, the *chosan* merits an auspicious time in which his *teshuvah* is accepted more than ever. And if he repents then, his *teshuvah* will be accepted easily, and all his sins will turn to merits and be erased completely as if they never existed.”

Eisav's Teshuva

The link between *teshuvah* and atonement leaves us with a question – how can this concept be learned from Eisav's marriage when it seems Eisav himself didn't do *teshuvah*?

The Medrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 67:13) writes: “‘And Eisav saw that the daughters of Canaan were displeasing to his father.’ Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: ‘He decided to convert. Mochalas – Hashem forgave [*mochal*] him for all his sins. Bosmas – that his mind was perfumed [*hisbasem*].’ Rabbi Elazar said: ‘Had he removed his first wives it would have been a proper *teshuvah*, but he took these women ‘in addition to his previous wives’, a pain atop of pain.’”

This Medrash can be explained in two ways – Rabbi Yehoshua maintains that Eisav did in fact do *teshuvah* and therefore his wife's name indicates atonement. Rabbi Elazar however argues that had he really wanted to do *teshuvah* he would have first divorced his first wives who served idols. From the wording of the *pasuk* “in addition to his previous wives” it is indicated that he merely added additional wives to his first wicked wives.

However, there is another way of explaining this Medrash that there is actually no dispute between the two. Eisav wed with the intention to change his ways and do good. Therefore, he married Bosmas the daughter of Yishmoel. This took place after Yishmoel's death. Yishmoel did *teshuvah* 48 years beforehand, prior to Avrohom's death. Bosmas, who grew up in Yishmoel's house after he had repaired his ways, was intended to serve as a positive influence on Eisav. However, since he married her without divorcing his first wives, instead of helping him change for the better, Bosmas was influenced by his wicked wives and became wicked herself. Her marriage ended up adding fuel to the fire.

The *Netziv* (*Ha'amek Dovar, Bereishis* 28:9) explains that indeed, at the time of his marriage Eisav intended to do *teshuvah* and his sins were atoned for.

Although marriage has the power to help one break away from harmful behaviours and turn over a new leaf, one must take every precaution to ensure that it doesn't end up being a cause for heartache and sin. This is exactly what happened to Eisav, despite his good intentions.

The *Eitz Yosef* (*Ein Yaakov, Bikkurim* 3:43) adds that when he married his first wives, Eisav didn't merit atonement because they were wicked women. Only when he married Bosmas

who was initially pious, did he merit atonement for his sins. Here we learn that Eisav had the opportunity to do *teshuva* and indeed he did. His sins were atoned for, but eventually it all fizzled out and amounted to nothing when he went back to his old ways.

Rabbi Yisroel Yaakov Fischer (*Even Yisroel*, 7:36) explains this differently. He writes that the Gemara (*Megillah* 11a) learns from the words of the *pasuk*: הוּא עִשָׂו – “he is Eisav” that Eisav was himself, with his evil personality — from beginning to end. This *pasuk* teaches us that Eisav never did *teshuva*. The lesson about a *choson’s* atonement is learned from Eisav, to teach us that even the sins of a wicked man who does not do *teshuva* are atoned for at his wedding. (He seems to indicate that the Gemara agrees with Rabbi Elazar’s opinion that Eisav never did *teshuva*.)

The *Orchos Rabbeinu* (Vol. 1, *Shidduchim*, 61) recounts that he heard from the *Kehillos Yaakov* that there are various levels of *teshuva* and atonement. Although Eisav remained a *rosha*, he did achieve a certain level of *hirhur teshuva*, and his atonement was accordingly.

Why Getting Married is a Reason for Sins to be Forgiven?

Why are a *choson’s* sins atoned for? Why is he offered a second chance at his wedding?

The *Prisha* (*Even Ha’Ezer* 1:6) writes: One who gets married is doing Hashem’s will and procreating. Therefore, it is a favorable time and his sins are not seen. This is the meaning of the *pasuk* “He who has found a wife has found good, and has obtained favor from Hashem” (*Mishlei* 18:22).

The *Maharsha* (*Yevamos* 63a) explains that in marrying one is setting up a protection from future sinful actions and thoughts, therefore he is atoned from sin. Similarly, the *Mahari Chaviv* writes that when a person marries in order to protect himself from sin as well as engage in the mitzvah of procreation, he is actively taking steps to be better from now on, and thus his sins are erased. This is also the opinion of the *Aruch HaShulchan* (*Even Ha’Ezer* 1:1).

The *Eshel Avrohom* (*Orach Chaim* 573:1) explains the *pasuk*: “With loving-kindness and truth will iniquity be expiated” (*Mishlei* 16:6). Since the *choson*, in marrying, is working on building the world and obligating himself with supporting his wife and children, his sins are atoned for.

The *K’Sav Sofer* (*Vayishlach*) writes that a woman is called a “*choma*” – wall, because she saves her husband from sin and assists him. In improving his ways after his marriage, a man proves that the reason he sinned before his marriage was only because he was lacking a wife to assist him. Therefore, his sins are absolved.

From all the above it seems that in merit of the mitzvah of marrying, one's sins are forgiven. An additional part of *teshuva* is taking steps to ensure sin won't occur again. In marrying, one is taking just such steps. That itself is a reason for forgiveness.

The *Rash Sirleau* (*Bikkurim* 3:3) writes that a *chosan* is like a newborn child who is not condemned for his past. Similarly, the *Mahari Chaviv* (commentary on *Ein Yaakov*) writes that when a man enters the greatest commitment of his life, selflessly resolving to making his own interests secondary to the welfare of his spouse and the needs of their marriage, he is worthy of being forgiven for the sins he committed in the past, and he is like a new creature.

The *Maharal* (*Chidushei Aggados*, *Yevamos* 62b) explains that a married man is a completely new person — not the same one who sinned.

The *Maharal* continues, explaining that while this reason is true, the main reason runs deeper. A single man is essentially lacking. When he marries, a man fills his lack and becomes whole. This is the meaning of the *Bavli's* statement that his sins are 'capped'. A sin is a deficiency, an incompleteness. When the Gemara writes his sins are 'capped' it is because his deficiency is filled. But the Yerushalmi and Medrash add here an additional aspect — when making himself complete he "...has obtained favor from Hashem" (*Mishlei* 18:22) and his sins disappear.

According to the *Maharal*, the opinions of all three — Yerushalmi, Bavli and Medrash — coincide. When one marries he fills his lack, thereby making himself whole. And when filling his deficiency and making himself whole, he is doing Hashem's will and his sins are forgiven.

The Kallah

Are only the *chosan's* sins atoned for, or are the *kallah's* sins atoned for as well?

The Yerushalmi uses the male pronoun of *לו* — "to him", when speaking of the one whose sins are atoned for upon marriage. But there are other versions that read that Mochalas's sins were atoned for, not Eisav's. (*Rash Sirleu* on Yerushalmi *Bikkurim* 3:3; *Mateh Moshe*, *Hachnosas Kallah* 1:2).

The *Shlah* (*Sha'ar Ha'osios*, *kuf*) and the *Elyah Rabbah* (573:2) agree that both the *chosan* and *kallah's* sins are erased. This explains the prevalent custom in which both the *chosan* and *kallah* fast on their wedding day.

However, the *Eshel Avrohom* (*Orach Chaim* 573:1) writes that we find no source for a *kallah's* atonement, therefore, fasting is unnecessary. However, perhaps her sins are atoned for, since she is now secondary to her husband. As a result, more leniency can be exercised when ruling on a *kallah's* fast than on a *chosan's*.

Second Marriage

The *Elyah Rabbah* (573:2) and Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (*Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo, Orach Chaim* 60) write that atonement occurs at a second marriage just as it does at a first one. Eisav was marrying Bosmas after he already had several wives, and his sins were atoned for nevertheless. The same is true when marrying a widow or divorcee because there is no reason to differentiate between the two.

Brushing Teeth Before the *Chuppah*

The *Yismach Lev* (Vol. 1 pg. 51) cites a story with the *Minchas Yitzchok*. The *Minchas Yitzchok* was asked by a *kallah* if she was allowed to brush her teeth before the *chuppah*, and he ruled that it was ok. Two reasons are given for why the *chosan* and *kallah* fast, one is to ensure that the *chosan* doesn't get drunk, and one is because they have their sins atoned. If we are worried about getting drunk, there is no reason to forbid brushing teeth. And in regard to the reason of it being a day of atonement, we find that if an individual accepts upon himself a fast for *teshuvah* purposes, he is allowed to taste and swallow (*Orach Chaim* 567:3), therefore, we can apply the same thing by a *kallah*, therefore, she may brush her teeth.

The *Shu"t Shraga Meir* (3:103) also rules like the above and adds that the *chosan* is allowed to brush his teeth as well.

Interpersonal Sins

There is a famous story with the Imrei Emes. He was once participating in a *sheva berachos* in Warsaw when someone asked Rabbi Eliezer Dovid, the Radshowitzer Rebbe, about the following Mishnah: "A *chosan* who saw a *nega* [lesion] is not checked during the seven days of celebrations following his wedding" (*Nega'im* 3:2). The Gemara (*Eruchin* 16a) teaches that *negaim* are a result of sin. How can a *chosan* have a *nega* if a *chosan's* sins are forgiven upon his marriage? (Obviously he understood that the *chosan's* atonement encompassed the entire seven-day celebration, not only the time of the *chuppah*).

The Imrei Emes answered that this *kaporah* is no greater than the *kaporah* of Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur does not atone for sins of interpersonal nature, so too the *kaporah* of the wedding day does not atone for sins of interpersonal nature.

A Short *Vort*

We mentioned above that there are three people who are forgiven for their past sins: a convert, a person who ascends to a leadership position, and a person who marries. We mentioned that the third type of person is deduced from the fact that the Torah refers to Bosmas as Mochalas, implying that forgiveness was granted upon the day of her marriage to Eisav. This is the source for the custom of fasting and reciting the "*viduy*" on one's wedding day. The question is, what is the thread which unifies the three individuals who

are granted atonement for their past sins? Why should a person's sins automatically be forgiven?

Rabbi Zweig suggests as follows: In *Parshas Bereishis* (2:18), Rashi teaches that the *pasuk*: *לא טוב היות האדם לבדו*, should not be translated as "It is not good for man to be lonely", rather "It is not beneficial for man to feel self-sufficient". Therefore, Hashem created Chavah. This teaches us that one of the primary functions of marriage is to offer a person the opportunity not to be self-absorbed, but outwardly focused and sensitive to the needs of others.

Similarly, a person ascending to leadership is put in a position in which he must focus upon the needs of the people in his charge. Finally, a convert, who accepts upon himself the six hundred thirteen precepts is, by definition, stating that he will no longer be preoccupied with his own needs and desires, rather his focus will be upon what his Creator expects of him.

The residual effect of sin is that a person becomes preoccupied with self-gratification. These three individuals are being offered the opportunity to extricate themselves from the results of their sins. There is no magic elixir; rather, if they capitalize upon this opportunity and show concern and sensitivity toward others, they can undo the negative effects of their sins.

Understanding What the *Badeken* is All About

The *badeken* is the name given to the ceremony that takes place just before the *chuppah*. At this ceremony the *choson* places a veil over the face of the *kallah*. However, the question is, what exactly does the *bedeken* achieve? Is it a type of *chuppah*? Is it for *tznius* reasons? What happens if the veil is too thin? What happens if the veil is too thick? What exactly is the *machlokes* between *chasidim* and *litvaks*? Read on and be enlightened.

We will see below that there are at least two concepts behind what the *badeken* achieves. But before we get there, it's important to define what exactly *chuppah* is.

What is a *Chuppah*?

Most people when asked what *chuppah* is, are likely to respond that it's a type of canopy under which the *choson* and *kallah* stand, and they get married underneath it. We will see, however, that it's not so simple and there are at least four different opinions as to what *chuppah* is.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Ishus* 10:1) writes: An *arusah* [a woman who has received *kiddushin* i.e. a ring] is forbidden to live with her *choson* until the *choson* brings her into his own home and is *nisyachad* [is alone] with her. The Rambam continues: *וייחד זה הוא הנקרא בניסה* – "this being alone with her, is called bringing her into *chuppah*, and is referred to as *nisuin* in all places". The *Achronim* (*Lechem Mishnah* 10:6,

Drisha, Even HaEzer 1:1) are *medayek* [make an implication] from the Rambam, that both bringing the *kallah* into the *chosan's* own home, and being alone together with her are needed. If there is *yichud* but not in the *chosan's* house, or she is in the *chosan's* house but there is no *yichud*, it's not enough. According to the Rambam, a woman who is a *niddah* can't get married, as *yichud* is needed for *chuppah*, and a *chosan* isn't allowed to be *nisyachad* with a *niddah*.

According to the Rambam, *chuppah* means bringing a *kallah* into one's own home and being *nisyachad* with her. The *Mechaber (Even HaEzer 55:1)* cites the Rambam and rules accordingly.

However, the *Rema* cites a number of different opinions, which understand *chuppah* differently. The first opinion he cites is the opinion of the *Tur* and the *Ran*, who argue on the Rambam and maintain that *chuppah* is simply bringing the *kallah* into the husband's domain, without the need for *yichud*. As long as the *kallah* enters into the *chosan's* domain, even if there is no *yichud*, it's enough to be considered *chuppah*. The *Drisha* points out, that according to this opinion, a *chuppas niddah* [*chuppah* with a woman who is a *niddah*] is perfectly ok.

The *Rema* then cites a third opinion, that *chuppah* refers to the canopy which is spread over the *chosan* and *kallah* under which the *berachos* that take place at the *chuppah* are made (this is the act that most people understand *chuppah* to mean. The *Rema* himself concludes, that this is what people commonly refer to when they say a *chuppah*).

Finally, the *Rema* cites a fourth opinion based on a *Tosfos* in *Yoma* (13b *d.h. lechado*): דחופת בתולה משיצאה בהינמא ואלמנה משנתיהדו – “For a woman who has never been married before, *chuppah* is when a *kallah* goes out wearing a veil. And for a widow, *chuppah* is when she is alone with her *chosan*”.

The Mishnah at the beginning of the second *Perek* of *Kesubos* (15b) discusses a case where a woman is either divorced or widowed and a fight breaks out as to how much money she is entitled to for her *kesubah*. She argues that she is a *besulah* [was never married before] and is therefore entitled to 200 *zuz*, her husband, or his relatives argue that she was married before and therefore she is only entitled to 100 *zuz*. The Mishnah says: אם יש עדים – “If she has witnesses that when she went down to the *chuppah* she was covered with a veil and had her hair uncovered, she is entitled to 200”.

The above Mishnah fits well with *Tosfos* in *Yoma* who understands that for a woman who has never been married before, *chuppah* is when she goes out wearing a veil.

Why the Veil is Referred to as a *Hinuma*

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (55:10) explains why in the Mishnah a veil is referred to as a “*hinuma*”. He writes: וההינמא היא הצעף שעל ראשה משרבב על עיניה ופעמים שמנמנת בתוכו

מתוך שאין עיניה מגולין ולכך נקרא הינומא על שם תנומה – “A *hinuma* is a type of head covering that goes on a woman’s head and covers her eyes. Sometimes she dozes off under it as her eyes are covered. Therefore, it is called a *hinuma* which comes from the expression of ‘sleep’”.

According to the *Rema*’s final explanation, putting the veil over a *kallah*’s face is what constitutes the *chuppah*, not the going into the *chosan*’s domain, not the being alone with the *chosan* and not the fancy canopy on poles.

We Fulfil All Opinions

In short, there are four opinions as to what *chuppah* is: 1) Bringing the *kallah* into the *chosan*’s domain, and being alone with her, 2) Bringing the *kallah* into the *chosan*’s domain, even if they are not alone, 3) The canopy spread out over the *chosan* and *kallah*, 4) The veil.

The *Bach* (*Even HaEzer* 61) writes, that due to doubt we are stringent and try and accomplish all four opinions. This is in fact what we try and do, we have a *badeken*, the *chosan* and *kallah* then walk down to the *chuppah* and stand under a canopy, and then they go into a *cheder yichud*, which is ideally supposed to be owned by the *chosan* (or at least sub-rented).

Being that according to some opinions the *badeken* is considered the *chuppah* it’s crucial that the *chosan* be at the ceremony. The *Bach* writes: ולכן נוהגין במדינות רוסיא להקיף שלא לילך לכסות ראש הכלה בשחרית בלתי החתן עמהם ושהחתן יאחוז בכיסוי עם הרב והחשובים לכסות ראשה – “Therefore, the custom became in Russia to be particular that they wouldn’t place the veil over the *kallah* in the morning without the presence of the *chosan*, and the *chosan* would make sure to hold the veil together with the rov and other important people and cover the *kallah* together with them”.

It seems that they used to perform the *badeken* early in the morning without the presence of the *chosan*. However, being that according to some the *badeken* is the *chuppah*, the *Bach* points out that it’s important that the *chosan* be there.

Even today when the *badeken* is performed at the *chasunah* hall, the *chosan* goes in-between his father and father-in-law and puts the veil over the *kallah*’s face. Since it may be considered the act of *chuppah* the *chosan* must do it.⁴

⁴ However, the *Noda B’Yehudah* (*Hagoas Dogul Mervovah*, *Yoreh Deah* 342) says that since *shluchoi shel adam kemoiso* [an agent is like the person himself], the *chosan* may honor the rov or *mesader kiddushin* to do the *badeken*. In Sanz, this is the *minhag* (see *Darchei Chaim*).

Now We Can Understand the *Birchus Erusin*

Under the *chuppah* we recite a number of *berachos*, one of the *berachos* we recite is the *birchas erusin*. The *nussach* [text] of the *berachah* is: ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר – “Blessed are you Hashem our G-d King of the world, who sanctified us and commanded us against forbidden relationships ... and permitted us to live with those married to us, by performing ***chuppah and kiddushin***”. The obvious question, which the *Rishonim* already ask, is that surely *kiddushin* proceeds *chuppah*, so why do we mention *chuppah* in the *berachah* first?

Based on what we mentioned above, the *Drisha* (65:1) explains that the *nussach* of the *berachah* is very good. Since the *bedaken* is considered the *chuppah*, *chuppah* does in fact proceed the act of *kiddushin*.

The Question of the *Taz*

The *Taz* (65:2) asks on the *Drisha*. In those days, apparently they would have a *badeken* when the *kallah* was still in her father's house, then they would sit down discuss the financial details. The *din* is, if the *choson* is unhappy, he can simply get up and walk away. Asks the *Taz*, if the *badeken* is considered the *chuppah*, then they are already married, so how can the *choson* just walk away? Therefore, says the *Taz*, the *badeken* is not considered *chuppah*, it's merely an act to help prepare for the *chuppah* which will soon take place.

Defense

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (55:10) and *Chelkas Mechokek* (55:9) defend the *Drisha* and explain, that even if the *badeken* is considered *chuppah*, it's not the be all and end all of the *chuppah*. Rather, the *badeken* is the beginning of the *chuppah* process, and once *kiddushin* occurs, then retroactively from the time of the *badeken* the *kallah* is considered to be a *nesuah* [married]. For *chuppah* to take effect, *kiddushin* must happen first, but once the *kiddushin* happens, then retroactively already from the time of the *badeken* she is considered married.

A Big Savior

The fact that the *badeken* is considered *chuppah* according to some opinions, may be a big savior.

A very common occurrence, is that a *chasunah* is called for Monday the 2nd of Shevet at 6:00pm, and the *kesubah* is prepared well in advance and is written out for the 2nd of Shevet. However, as it is with all *chasunah*'s, things were running late and by the time the *chuppah* was ready to take place, it was already 7:30pm, with *shkia* being at 7:00pm. The halachah is that a *kesubah* must be written out for the correct date, if the date is a day early it's a problem of a *shtar mukdam* [a pre-dated document]. In our case, since the *chuppah* only took place at 7:30pm, the *chuppah* is now only taking place on the 3rd of Shevet and the *kesubah* was made out for the 2nd, what should we do, surely it's a *shtar*

mukdam? A number of solutions have been offered, but one of them which is relevant to our discussion, is that since the *badeken* took place on the 2nd of Shevet and the *badeken* is considered *chuppah*, there is no problem of *shtar mukdam*.

Another Reason for the *Badekan*

There is another reason offered to explain what the *badekan* is all about. The *Mechaber* (*Even HaEzer* 31:2) brings that the custom is to perform *kiddushin* using a ring which has no diamonds or fancy stones attached. Sometimes a woman will think that the diamonds and stones are worth much more than they are, and it will come out that the *kiddushin* was carried out under mistaken assumptions and the *kiddushin* won't be valid. The *Rema* adds, that the custom is to ask witnesses under the *chuppah* if the ring is worth a *perutah*, to show that as long as the ring is worth a *perutah* the *kallah* is happy to get married. The *Rema* continues: וגם נוהגין לכסות פני הכלות הצנועות ואינם מקפידות במה מקדש אותן – “the custom is to cover the face of a modest bride, to show that she isn't interested in seeing what the *kiddushin* is being carried out with”. By having her faced covered with a veil, the *kallah* demonstrates that she is not interested with what the *kiddushin* is being carried out with, and she is happy to marry the *chosan* whatever he gives her.

According to this second reason, it should come out that even an *alomonah* [widow] or *gerusha* [divorcee] who is getting a married a second time she should need to wear a veil, yet, we find that the custom is that only a woman getting married for her first time wears a veil?

Although the custom is that an *almonah* and *gerusha* don't wear a veil, there is in fact a *Teshuvah Mahari Otz* which says that under the *chuppah* all *kallah's* should wear a veil, and the only difference between a *kallah* getting married for the first time or second time, is that a *kallah* getting married for the first time wears a veil when she walks down to the *chuppah* as well. This fits well with the aforementioned *Rema*.

How Thick?

Now that we have explained what the *badeken* is all about, the next question that needs to be discussed, is how thick the veil should be. The above seems to be a big *machlokes* [dispute] between *chasidim* and others. *Chasidim* are extremely particular that one shouldn't be able to see the *kallah* and they use very thick veils. Whereas other groups of Yidden aren't as worried and they use a much thinner veil, sometimes even translucent one's. What is this *machlokes* all about?

Chiddush* of the *Mabit

The *Pischei Teshuvah* cites a *Maharit* who cites his father the *Mabit*: “That there was a man who was *mekadesh* a woman whose face was covered over during *kiddushin* and only after the *kiddushin* did the witnesses call her back to check who she was. The *Mabit* ruled that

in such a case we are not worried for *kiddushin* as it is comparable to a case of one getting married without any witnesses.”

The *Mabit* compares this to a *Teshuvah HaRashbah* (1:780) who talks about a case where there were two witnesses standing behind a wall, and they could hear that on the other side of the wall, Reuven was saying to Leah “*haray at mekudeshes li b’esrog zeh*” [behold you are betrothed to me with this *esrog*] and they then saw that Leah was holding the *esrog*. The *Rashbah* rules, that even though they heard what Reuven said, and they even saw Leah holding the *esrog*, since they never actually saw the act of *kiddushin* being carried out, the testimony is nothing.

The *Mabit* says, that the same thing is with a veil, and if the veil is too thick and the witnesses are not able to see the face of the *kallah* at the time of *kiddushin*, even if immediately after the *chuppah* they remove the veil and can see who it is, it doesn’t help, as when the actual *kiddushin* took place the witnesses didn’t know who the *kallah* was.

However, the *Maharit* argues on *Mabit* and maintains that there is no comparison between the two cases. In the case of the *esrog* the witnesses never saw the act of *kiddushin*, in the case of a veil, however, they saw the act of *kiddushin*, they just didn’t know who it was with. Since they saw the actual act of *kiddushin* they can give testimony that Reuven married a woman standing under a veil and such testimony is enough.

The Nesivos’s Proof That Witnesses Don’t Need to See Face of Kallah

The *Nesivos* (*Kehillos Yaakov* 31) argues on the *Mabit* and cites an interesting proof. If Reuven were to get married to a woman who was wearing a thick veil, and then *chas vesholam* immediately afterwards another man would come and live with the *kallah*, would they be able to give testimony that this man has lived with an *eshes ish* and punish him? The *Nesivos* writes, that certainly such a man would receive the punishment fitting for one who lives with an *eshes ish* [married woman]. We see, that as long as *eidim* saw that this woman got married, whether they could see her face or not, she is considered married.

If someone wearing a mask would go around shooting people, would it not be possible to give testimony against such a person? Certainly, one could. We see that even if *eidim* can’t see the face of the person they are giving *eidus* about, as long as afterwards they remove the mask or veil and it’s clear that this is the person, the testimony is valid.

The Maharsham

The *Maharsham* has a *Teshuvah* in which he discusses whether the witnesses need to see the face of the *kallah*. He points out, that even though in one place the *Mabit* writes that the witnesses must be able to see the face of the *kallah*, from another *Mabit* it would seem that there is no need. In another place the *Mabit* writes: If witnesses were to hear from other people at the *chasunah* that under the veil is standing Miriam Goldberg, then even

if during the act of *kiddushin* the witnesses can't see that standing under the veil is in fact Miriam Goldberg, since there are people who can confirm that under the veil is in fact Miriam Goldberg, and she was brought to the *chasunah* hall etc. we can assume that it is in fact her and the *kiddushin* is valid.

In the case of the *esrog* we don't actually know what happened, perhaps the *esrog* was first given to the woman and only then was "*haray at mekudeshes li*" recited, in the case of a veil, however, even if it's very thick, the witnesses are able to see the act of *kiddushin*, and they know who is under the veil, so even if they can't see it's ok.

The *chasidim* rely on the above.

Conduct of the *Gedolim*

Although there may be no need to actually be able to see the face of the *kallah*, it's known that the Brisker Rav was stringent, and he would ensure that the witnesses would see the *kallah's* faces (see *Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* 4:287:13). R' Shach would also check with the witnesses that they have seen the face of the *kallah* (*Mevakshei Torah, Inyonai Nisuin*, vol. 4). Similarly, R' Elyashiv would tell the witnesses to make sure to look at the *kallah's* face when she drinks from cup of wine.

Can the *Chosan* Recite the *Sheva Berachos* or *Birchas Erusin* Himself?

Normally when performing a mitzvah, the person carrying out the mitzvah recites the *berachah*. When it comes to *birchas erusin* and *nisuin*, however, the *minhag* is that someone else recites the *berachos*. Does it have to be like this, or can the *chosan* himself recite the *berachos* if he would wish to do so?

Birchas Erusin

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Even HaEzer* 34) writes: כל המקדש אשה בין ע"י עצמו בין ע"י שליח מברך – "Anyone who marries a woman, whether he does it himself, or with an agent, either he or the agent should recite the *birchas erusin*". The *Rema* however, comments: ויש אומרים דאחר מברך – "Some say, someone else should recite the *berachah*."

A number of reasons have been given to explain the *Rema*:

- 1) The *chosan* shouldn't do it himself, משום דמחזי כיוהרא – "because it looks like he is showing off". (*Maharshal*)
- 2) *Birchas erusin* is a *birchas hashvach*, not a *birchas hamitzvos*, and only by *birchas hamitzvos* do we find that the one performing the mitzvah should recite the *berachah*. (*Drisha* and *Taz*)

3) Another reason mentioned is: כדי שלא לבייש את מי שאינו יכול לברך בעצמו – “In order not to embarrass someone who isn’t able to do it himself”. (The *Prisha, Taz* in the name of the *Maharshah* and the *Beis Shmuel*)

Why Suddenly Now Are We So Worried About Embarrassment?

The question is however, why are we worried about embarrassment by the *birchas erusin* as opposed to all other *birchas hamitzvos*?

One answer given is that *birchas erusin* is different as the *berachah* is longer than a regular *birchas hamitzvos*, being as the *berachah* is longer there is more room for mistakes. (*Ma’aseh Rokeach* to Rambam *Hilchos Ishus* 3:24, cited in *Hagaos V’Heoras on Tur, Even HaEzer siman 34*)

Another answer is, since a *chosan* is *domeh l’melech*, comparable to a king, we are more worried about embarrassing him: ולפי מעלתו תתרבה חרפתו ויותר יתבייש מכלתו על שאינו יודע – ברכות ויש לחוש לפירוד הלבבות וגדול השלום – “The more important he is, the more the embarrassment. Additionally, we are particularly careful that he doesn’t embarrass himself in front of his new wife, who will see that her new husband doesn’t know how to make *berachos*. Keeping peace is very important, therefore, we recite the *berachah* on his behalf”. (Same source as above)

Finally, if we go like the first reasoned mentioned above, of מחזי כיוהרא, that we don’t want the *chosan* to show off. Perhaps we are worried about it here more than other places, as the *chosan* is starting off his new married life, and we want to make it clear right at the beginning, that he shouldn’t feel too highly of himself.

Birchas Nisuin

So far, we have discussed *birchas erusin*, what’s with *birchas nisuin* (the *sheva berachos*)?

The *Chida* in *Shu”t Chaim Sho’al* (2:38:56) writes, that it is unfitting for the *chosan* to recite the *sheva berachos*, as the *berachos* are praise to Hashem, the *chosan* and *kallah*, and Klal Yisroel, therefore, it is fitting that an important person recites the *berachos*. Moreover, since some of the *berachos* pertain to the *chosan* himself, it is unfitting for him to say them, as it is unfitting for one to bless himself. He then cites that the Rambam who got very angry at a particular *chosan* who wanted to recite the *berachos* himself.

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (*Even HaEzer* 62:9) also writes, that even though by *birchas erusin* the Rambam says that it’s ok for the *chosan* to recite it himself, when it comes to *birchas nisuin* it’s clear from the Rambam that someone else should recite the *berachos*: והטעם פשוט דברכת האירוסין הוא כשאר מצוות ועל העושה אותה לברך משא”כ ברכת נישואין שהם ברכות – “The reason is obvious, *birchas erusin* is like all other *mitzvos* where the one who carries out the mitzvah recites the *berachah*. *Birchas*

nisuin however, is a *berachah* for the *chosan* and *kallah*, that they should have success, therefore, it's obvious that someone else should recite the *berachah* for them".

The *Shu"t Maharsham* (1:160) points out, however, that even according to the opinions that maintain that a *chosan* shouldn't recite the *berachah* himself, *bedieved* if he did it helps and the *berachos* don't need to be repeated.

What If There Are A Number of *Chasanim*

The *Sdei Chemed* (vol, 7, pg. 434) cites the *sefer Chinah V'Chisda* who says, that if there are a number of *chasanim*, one of the *chasanim* may recite the *berachos* on behalf of all of the others. He basis his ruling on the Gemara in *Bava Kama* (92a) which teaches: כל המתפלל בעד חבירו והוא צריך לאותו דבר הוא נענה תחילה – "Anyone who prays for someone else, and he is in need of the same thing, he will be answered first". Therefore, since he is reciting the *berachos* on behalf of the others as well, he may recite the *berachos* and on the contrary it is good for him to do so. However, the *Sdei Chemed* argues, and says we don't differentiate and a *chosan* should never recite the *berachos* himself. If, however, the *chosan* is the only one who knows how to make the *berachos*, then he may. (See *Maharam Shif, Gittin 57a*).

The question is, however, it's true that the *berachah* of שמח תשמח is a *berachah* for the *chosan* and *kallah* (as is clear from Rashi, *Kesubos 8a*) but all the other *berachos* aren't specifically related to the *chosan* and *kallah*, so why can't the *chosan* recite all the other *berachos* himself? For those who have the *minhag* not to split the *berachos*, it makes sense, since a *chosan* can't recite one of the *berachos* they have to be given to someone else and since they can't be split he recites all of them. However, for those people who have the *minhag* to split the *berachos*, why can't the *chosan* recite all the other *berachos*? What we must say is, is that we don't want to differentiate between different *berachos*. *Tzorich iyun*, the matter needs more looking into.

Why Don't We Recite *Shehechyanu* Under the *Chuppah*

The *Chinuch* (Mitzvah 552) discusses the mitzvah of getting married. The *Chinuch* writes, "There is mitzvah to acquire a wife in one of three ways. Either with money, a document or with *biah* [relations]". If one wants to live with a certain woman, he can't just live with her as a common law wife (like non-Jews do), one must acquire her by performing *kiddushin* first. The *Chinuch* explains: אם ירצה איש ליקח לו אשה יקנה אותה תחילה בביאה – "If a man wants to get married to a certain woman, he must acquire her first with *biah*".

The *Chinuch* continues to discuss the reason for the above mitzvah, and then he writes: "One who transgresses on the above and lives with a woman without first performing *kiddushin*, violates a *mitzvas aseh* [positive commandment]."

Then the *Chinuch* writes: “*Chazal* obligated that a *berachah* be made when carrying out this mitzvah. Either the one performing *kiddushin* or someone else on his behalf should make a *berachah* and he should answer *amen*... the text of the *berachah* is: 'ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו והבדילנו מן העריות... והתיר לנו את הנשואות על ידי חופה וקידושין – “Blessed are you Hashem our G-d, King of the Universe, who sanctified us with his commandments and separate us from forbidden relationships ... and allowed us to get married through the act of *chuppah* and *kiddushin*.”

Although the above *berachah* is in a different format to most *berachos* we make when performing *mitzvos*, nonetheless, the above is a *birchas hamitzvos*⁵.

We see two things from the above *Chinuch*. Firstly, the *Chinuch* doesn't say that there is a mitzvah to get married, the *Chinuch* simply says, if one decides to get married, he must perform *kiddushin* first. Similar, to what we find by *shechitah*. There is no mitzvah to go around *shechting* [slaughtering] animals, however, if one wants to eat meat he must *shect*. Similarly, there is no mitzvah per say, to get married, however, if one wants to live with a certain woman, he must perform *kiddushin* first.

Secondly, we see, that even though there is no obligation to get married, if one does he fulfils a mitzvah, and a *berachah* should be recited on the mitzvah, like what we find by *shechitah*. There is no mitzvah to *shect*, however, if one wants meat then he is obligated to *shect* an animal, and when doing so he recites a *birchas hamitzvah*.

By many *mitzvos*, we recite *shehechayanu* together with the *birchas hamitzvos*. For example, when we shake *lulav* for the first time on Succos we recite *shehechayanu*. Similarly, when we light *menorah* for the first time we recite *shehechayanu*. One of the most auspicious and happiest occasions of a person's life is his wedding day, and for most people this happens once in a person entire life. Being that we see from the *Chinuch* that if one wants to get married there is a mitzvah and one recites a *birchas hamitzvos*, presumably, like all other *mitzvos*, one would recite *shehechayanu*. Do we? Don't we? And if not, why not?

Chiddush of Maharik

The *Maharik* (*Shoresh* 128) writes that we don't make *shehechayanu* when getting married, as there is no fixed time (*zman kovua*). The fact that getting married is a very happy and auspicious occasion is not enough of a reason to require a *shehechayanu*. According to the *Maharik*, in order to say *shehechayanu* the special occasion has to be fixed to a certain date. For example, on Rosh Hashanah when we blow *shofar* we say

⁵ It's important to note that this statement is a big *machlokes*, and according to some *Rishonim* *birchas erusin* is not a *birchas hamitzvos*, rather, it's a *birchas hasvach*, this is why we mentioned the *Chinuch*, as the *Chinuch* learns it is a *birchas hamitzvos*.

shehechayanu, fulfilling the mitzvah of *shofar* is a very happy occasion which only come once a year, and it comes at a fixed time. Since it comes at a fixed time, we recite *shehechayanu*, getting married, however, has no fixed date and one can get married whenever he once, therefore, we don't recite *shehechayanu*.

There are various different occasions when we recite *shehechayanu*. We recite *shehechayanu* on a new house, on a new fruit, on new vessels etc. and we also recite *shehechayanu* on *mitzvos* which only come from time to time. On a new house, new fruit etc. one can recite *shehechayanu* whenever he gets the item, when it comes to *mitzvos*, however, the *Maharik* maintains, one can only recite *shehechayanu* if it is both a happy occasion and the mitzvah has a fixed time.

Question from *Hilchos Kisuy HaDam*

The *Rema* (*Yoreh Deah* 28:2) says, that when one *shechts* [slaughters] for the first time, he should recite *shehechayanu* on the mitzvah of *kisuy hadam* [covering the blood]. However, one shouldn't recite *shehechayanu* on the mitzvah of *shechitah* as another creature is in pain.

The question is, the mitzvah of *kisuy hadam* is not associated with any specific date on the calendar, since there is not specific date, according to the *Maharik shehechayanu* should not be recited. In fact, the *Shach* (28:5) asks this very question. He brings that we find that when one makes new *tzitzis* the only reason one recites *shehechayanu* is because one has brought a new garment, if one would attach *tzitzis* to an old garment, no *shehechayanu* would be recited. Even though one is doing a new mitzvah, since there is no fixed time one doesn't make *shehechayanu*, only because one has a new garment does he make *shehechayanu*. Then he asks, being that there is no fixed time for the mitzvah of *kisuy hadam*, *shehechayanu* shouldn't be recited.

Sephardim

Sephardim have the *minhag* to make *shehechayanu* under the *chuppah*, however, they are not making *shehechayanu* on the mitzvah of getting married. Sephardim have the *minhag* to wear a *tallis* under the *chuppah*, and they buy a new one in honor of the occasion. When they make *shehechayanu* they are making *shehechayanu* on the new *tallis* - not on getting married, and not on the mitzvah of *tzitzis* - they are making *shehechayanu* on the new garment, which the *tzitzis* are attached to.

Rokeach

So far, we have a *machlokes* if one recites *shehechayanu* on a mitzvah which is not associated with a particular time. The *Maharik* and *Shach* maintain one doesn't, and the *Rema* maintains that one does.

The *Rokeach* sides with the *Rema*. The *Rokeach* (371) writes, when performing a mitzvah for the first time, whether it's time oriented or not, one should recite *shehechyanu*. The *Rokeach* cites proof from a Gemara in *Menachos* (75b). The Gemara says: היה עומד ומקריב – “One who is in Yerusholayim offering up a *korban mincha* [flour offering] for the first time, should recite the *berachah of shehechyanu*”. Offering up a *korban mincha* is not a time-oriented mitzvah, yet we find that one may recite *shehechyanu*. We see from here says the *Rokeach*, that whether a mitzvah is time oriented or not, if one is carrying it out for the first time he should recite *shehechyanu*.

Machlokes Rashi and Tosfos

Although the proof of the *Rokeach* seems very convincing, it is actually subject to a *machlokes* Rashi and *Tosfos*. The Gemara in *Berachos* (37b) teaches the same thing as the Gemara in *Menachos*. Rashi explains the Gemara, that we are talking about someone who hasn't brought a *korban mincha* for a long time. *Tosfos* however, argues and learns, that we are talking about the *kohen* who offers up the *mincha*. *Tosfos* explains, that the *kohanim* were split up into 24 groups and each group would only serve twice a year on specific weeks. Since these *kohanim* had fixed times, they were able to recite *shehechyanu*.

According to *Tosfos*, the only reason the *kohanim* were able to recite *shehechyanu* is because it was in fact a time-oriented mitzvah. The *Rokeach* who brings a proof from the Gemara that one may recite *shehechyanu* even when the mitzvah has no fixed time, obviously learns the Gemara like Rashi. However, we see that the *machlokes Rema* and *Shach*, is actually a *machlokes* between Rashi and *Tosfos*.

R' Shlomo Eiger

R' Shlomo Eiger in his *Gilyon Maharsha* offers another reason for why we don't make the *berachah* of *shehechyanu* under the *chuppah*. He explains, that on a *hechsher* mitzvah, an act which one does to help with the fulfilment of a mitzvah, but is not actually a mitzvah in its own rite, we don't recite *shehechyanu*. The real mitzvah behind getting married is *peru urevu*, and one isn't able to have children without getting married, however, getting married is just a *hechsher* mitzvah, therefore, one doesn't recite *shehechyanu*.

The Opinion of the Ya'avatz

However, the *Ya'avatz* in his *sefer Mor U'Ketziyah* (223) maintains, that one should in fact recite *shehechyanu*. The *Ya'avatz* writes: “One who marries a woman who is fitting and beloved to him, should recite *shehechyanu*. Either due to the fact that he is fulfilling a mitzvah or because it is no worse than not seeing a friend in a long time (where the halachah is, one should recite *shehechyanu*).”

The *Ya'avatz* continues: "If however, she is not fitting for him, and certainly if she comes from bad lineage, or she is not of sterling character (a *prutzah*), or if she simply doesn't find favor in his eyes and he is only marrying because of money, certainly he shouldn't make the *berachah*".⁶

The *Ya'avatz* writes, that if the *shidduch* is a good *shidduch*, then even by the engagement the *berachah* of *shehechayanu* should be recited. It is no worse than a case of hearing exciting news, where the halachah is that one should recite *shehechayanu* straight away.

The *Ya'avatz* cites proof from Eliezer the servant of Avraham who made a *berachah* and thanked Hashem when he found a *shidduch* for Rivka, even before the *shidduch* was closed.

Tevuas Shor

The *Tevuas Shor* (*Yoreh Deah* 28:4) writes, that the reason we don't recite *shehechayanu* is because the woman might not accept *kiddushin* and it will come out that it's a *berachah levatolah* [blessing in vain].

The obvious question on this is, if we are worried about the woman retracting, then why do we make a *birchas erusin*, perhaps she won't accept the *kiddushin* and it will be a *berachah levatolah*?

R' Shlomo Kluger (*Tuv Ta'am V'Da'as*, *Telisa* 98) answers, that most women don't retract, and we can follow *rov* [majority] and assume that she won't retract, and we can recite the *birchas erusin*. However, when it comes to making the *berachah* of *shehechayanu*, the *berachah* has to be made with a heart full of *simcha*. Even though most women don't say no, since deep down the *choson* is worried that the *kallah* may say no, he is not completely happy, since he is not completely happy the *berachah* of *shehechayanu* shouldn't be recited.

Rokeach

The *Rokeach* (371) answers, that since ten people must be present by the *chuppah*, we don't recite *shehechayanu*. The *Gilyonei HaShas* (*Kesubos* 7b) explains, that since the ten people present at the *chuppah* are also rejoicing, getting married is considered something which has a partnership, and on a *simcha* which is joint, one recites *hatov vehameitiv* not *shehechayanu*. Even without the ten people present, surely getting married is a *simcha* that involves two people? Perhaps, since the man acquires the woman, and not the other way round, it's only considered his *simcha*. However, the above is difficult, as at least the *berachah* of *hatov vehameitiv* should be recited.

⁶ It's interesting to know how this would play out halachah *lemaseh*, and how they would determine if *shehechayanu* should be said or not.

Imrei Emes

The *Imrei Emes* (*Likkutim* pg. 98) offers another two answers.

The Gemara writes: דליבא בתובה דלא רמי בה תיגרא - “There is no *kesubah* which doesn’t involve some sort of fight”, since there is an aspect of *tza’ar* [pain] involved behind every wedding, we don’t recite *shehechayanu*.

A second answer he brings, is based on the Gemara in *Kiddushin*. The Gemara (2b) asks, why does it say כי יקח איש אשה – “when a man take a wife”, and the Gemara brings a parable: משל לאדם שאבדה לו אבידה מי חוזר על מי בעל אבידה חוזר על אבידתו – “This can be compared to one who lost an item, who looks for who? The one who lost the item, searches after his lost item.” Since the mitzvah of getting married is like *hashovas aveidah* [returning a lost item], just like when one fulfils the mitzvah of *hashovas aveidah* one doesn’t recite *shehechayanu*, similarly, when one gets married, he doesn’t recite *shehechayanu*.

Novel Approach from the Chasam Sofer

Finally, the *Chasam Sofer* (*Orach Chaim* 55) has a fascinating *Teshuva* where he discusses if one should recite *shehechayanu* under the *chuppah*. He writes, that when one buys a new fruit, a new house, or when a Yom Tov arrives, one recites *shehechayanu* as it’s entirely up to Hashem. When it comes to getting married however, it’s up to the boy and the girl, if the boy and the girl don’t want to get married, Hashem won’t force them to. Ultimately, it’s in the hands of the boy and the girl and they have free will.

He then asks from the famous Gemara which says “40 days before a foetus is created a heavenly voice goes out saying *ploni to ploni*, so-and-so is destined for so-and-so”, i.e. what is with the concept of *bashert*, the concept which says that *shidduchim* are predetermined and all in Hashem’s hand? And he simply says, אין לנו עסק בנסתרות – “we don’t understand the hidden parts of the Torah”, and mentions that the *Arizal* has an alternative explanation in the Gemara.

When it comes to buying a new car, if Hashem wants it to happen it will happen, the car has no free choice. When it comes to getting married however, if the boy and girl are not both happy it won’t happen. Since it’s not entirely up to Hashem, the *berachah* of *shehechayanu* is not recited.

Conclusion

Although under the *chuppah* we recite a *birchas hamitzvos* on the mitzvah of getting married, and getting married is one of the most momentous occasions of one’s life, one

doesn't recite the *berachah* of *shehechyanu*. Sephardim who do recite the *berachah*, are making the *berachah* on their new *tallis*, and not on the mitzvah of getting married.⁷

Smashing the Glass Under the *Chuppah* and Various Other Wedding Related *Zecher L'Churban* Enactments

Although a number of *takonos* were enacted year-round to help ensure that we don't forget about the *churban*, there are a number of *takonos* that were enacted specifically in regard to weddings:

Breaking a Plate at the *Tenoim* (Engagement)

The *minhag* is to break a plate at the *tenoim* as a *zecher l'churban* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 560:9). The breaking should be done by any of the *machutanim* (usually the women). The *minhag* is to break a complete plate (see *Pri Megodim*, M.Z. 4).

Ashes on the Forehead

Before going to the *chuppah*, ashes are placed on the *chosan's* forehead⁸ in the place where the *tefillin* are put and the *chosan* should say *im eshchacheich...* Although some say the custom is to remove the ashes immediately after putting them on, it seems that most people leave the ashes on the *chosan's* forehead. Some say that the *kallah* also gets ashes placed on her forehead (*Ta'amei Haminhagim* page 407). Some people do either the placing of the ashes or the breaking of the glass (see next paragraph), however, the custom of most people is to do both.

Breaking a Glass under the *Chuppah*

One of the most famous *takonos*, which is carried out by virtually all sects of Klal Yisroel, Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Chassidim and even those Yidden that are not the most observant is that the *chosan* smashes a glass under the *chuppah*.

⁷ In closing it's worth mentioning something which R' Ovadia Yosef brings in his *Chazon Ovadia* (*Berachos* pg. 404). He brings that when they asked the *Ohr Shraga* if one should recite *shehechyanu* when getting married, he responded, that they should be asking if one should recite *dayan ho'emes*. It's not clear exactly what the *Ohr Shraga* meant, but perhaps he means, like the *Maharam Alshich* (*Koheles* 3:2) who writes, that when one gets married, we are reminded of death, as the whole purpose of getting married is to ensure the continuation of Klal Yisroel, as people naturally die.

⁸ Rambam *Hilchos Ta'anis* (5:13); *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* (560:2). Someone else places it on his forehead (*Al Pi HaTorah Bereishis* page 559). Some say one should place the ashes in a paper bag due to the honor of the *chosan* (HaRav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l quoted in *Mivakshei Torah* 26: page 391:32).

What Is the Source?

The source for this is a Gemara in Berachos (30b-31b) the Gemara relates: מר בריה דרבינא עבד הלולא לבריה חזנהו לרבנן דהוו קבדחי טובא אייתי כסא דמוקרא בת ארבע מאה זוזי ותבר קמייהו – “Mar the son of Ravina made a wedding for his son, and he saw that the Rabbonim were having too much fun. He took a cup worth 400 zuz (a lot of money) and he smashed it, and things calmed down again.” The Gemara then cites a second similar story.

Tosfos comments: מנאן נהגו לשבר זכוכית בנשואין – “Derived from here is the custom to break a glass at the *chuppah*.”

Five Different Reasons

There are at least five different reasons mentioned by the *poskim* for why we break a glass under the *chuppah*. From *Tosfos* it seems, the reason is to ensure that people don't become too happy and get carried away at the *simcha*. The *Roke'ach* also writes: שבמקום רעדה תהא שם גילה – “in a place where there is great happiness there also has to be fear”. According to the above, breaking a glass under the *chuppah* is nothing to do with *zecher l'churban*, rather, when people have a good time things get out of control and people start becoming lightheaded etc. to keep things under control we break a glass.

The *Rema* in *Hilchos Tisha B'Av* (*Orach Chaim* 560:2) citing the *Kol-Bo* (*Hilchos Tisha B'Av* 62) offers an alternative reason, and says that we break a glass under the *chuppah* because of *zecher l'churban*.⁹

The *Yam Shel Shlomo* (*Kesubos* 1:17) offers a third reason, and says that we break a glass under the *chuppah* to remind us about the breaking of the *Luchos*. When Hashem gave Klal Yisroel the Torah, it was as if Klal Yisroel were getting married to the Ribbono Shel Olam. When a *choson* gets married, we smash a glass to remind us about the *Luchos*.

The *Shlah* (*Torah Shebiksav*, *Shoftim d.h. v'inyan kohan*) cites from the *Rikanti* a fourth reason. When a *choson* and *kallah* get married everyone is very happy, it's a time of tremendous joy. The Sotan doesn't like such things, and tries to be *mekatreig* [make problems]. To pay off the Sotan so to speak (בדי לתת למידת הדין את חלקה), we smash a glass and tell him that “look, we had our *agmas nefesh*, now go away”.

⁹ Although we cited the reason of *Tosfos* (and the *Roke'ach*) which was to stop the *simcha* getting out of control and the reason of the *Kol-Bo* as *zecher l'churban* as two different reasons, it may well be that they are the same reason and that the reason we don't want the *simcha* to get out of control is in fact because of *zecher l'churban*. R' Akiva Eiger in his *hago'as* to the *Shulchan Aruch* commenting on the *Rema* in fact says to look at *Tosfos*, this may very well be his intention. However, the *Roke'ach* doesn't make any mention of *zecher l'churban*, therefore, I feel he is saying a different reason.

The Gemara in Shabbos (130a) says: ליכא כתובה דלא רמו בה תגרא – “there is always some sort of fight when it comes to making a wedding.” The *Shlah* explains, that this is due to the above - it is the Sotan.

Finally, as a small joke in honor of the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah*, perhaps we can say, the *chosan* smashes a glass under the *chuppah* to teach his *kallah* from day one what will happen if she gives him any dishes to wash.

When to Break the Glass

The custom to break a glass under the *chuppah* is mentioned in two places in *Shulchan Aruch*, once in *Hilchos Tisha B'Av* and once in *Hilchos Kiddushin*.

In *Hilchos Tisha B'Av* (*Orach Chaim* 560:2) the *Rema* writes: ויש מקומות שנהגו לשבר כוס – “There are places that have the custom to break a cup during the *chuppah*”.

In *Hilchos Kiddushin* (*Even HaEzer* 65:3) the *Rema* writes: ויש מקומות שנהגו לשבר כוס אחר – “There are places where the custom is to break a cup after the *sheva berachos* and the custom in these cities is in fact that the *chosan* breaks the cup that the ***birchas erusin* was recited on.**”

The order of the proceedings under the *chuppah* is that we recite *hagofen*, *birchas erusin*, then read out the *kesubah*, then recite another *hagofen* and then recite the *sheva berachos* (*birchas nisuin*). The *birchas erusin* and *birchas nisuin* are recited over two different cups of wine. The *Pri Megodim* is *medayek* [makes an implication] from the *Rema* in *Even HaEzer*, that the *chosan* specifically smashes the cup that was used for the *birchas erusin*. From a logistical standpoint it would seem more logical to smash the cup used for the *birchas nisuin*, as that is the cup that has just been used, why do we smash the cup used for *birchas erusin*?

The *Shu"t Maharam Mintz* (109) explains, that the cup used for *nisuin* is the first thing that was used in the new marriage - the cup of *nisuin* is what binds the new *chosan* and *kallah* together, since this is what binds them together, we don't want to break it. We don't want to *chas vesholam* do something which may be hinting that their marriage should break, therefore, we break the cup used for *erusin* instead.

However, the *Pri Megodim* says that the *minhag* is that one doesn't need to specifically break the cup used for *erusin* or *nisuin*, rather any cup is sufficient.

How Expensive Should the Cup Be?

The *Kerem Shlomah* (cited in *Otzar HaPoskim*) writes that one should break an old decrepit glass - not a good quality expensive glass, if one smashes a good quality glass it's *ba'al tashchis*.

Although the *mekor* for the above *din* comes from the aforementioned Gemara in *Berachos* where Mar the son of Ravina broke a glass worth 400 *zuz*, that case was different as the situation was getting out of hand, and the only way to calm things down was to break an expensive glass. In a normal situation, however, to break an expensive glass is *ba'al tashchis*.

However, most *poskim* argue on the above and say that one should use a decent quality glass and one doesn't need to specifically use an old, broken glass. But surely it is *ba'al tashchis*? The *Maharatz Chiyus* answers, if something is destroyed for a purpose there is no issue of *ba'al tashchis*. *Ba'al tashchis* by definition is to destroy something for no good reason, if there is a good reason, then automatically there is no issue of *ba'al tashchis*.

A Mazel Tov Moment or a Zecher L'Churban Moment

The *minhag* of breaking a glass cup under the *chuppah* is as a *zecher l'churban*, and is supposed to remind us of the *churban Beis HaMikdosh*. Sadly, however, nowadays it seems to be the exact opposite – one of the most exciting parts of the *chuppah* is the *chosan* breaking the glass. Immediately after he breaks the glass, instead of thinking about the *churban* everyone bursts into song and dance and wishes each other “*mazel tov*”. I even have a young daughter who when she builds a tower and it falls down says “*mazel tov*”. What is supposed to be a *zecher l'churban* has turned into something which people associate with happiness.

R' Ovadia Yosef (*Yabia Omer, Even HaEzer* 4:9) writes: והן עתה אחסור דרי הן, רבים עתה עם הארץ, שבעת ששוברים הכוס כל הקרואים ממלאים מיהם שחוק בקריאת מזל טוב, והחתן עצמו שעושה זאת בגבורה, לסיים בזה את טכס הנישואין, ממלא פיו שחוק. והפכו כוונת המנהג היפה הזה שנועד לשם עגמת נפש על חורבן בית קדשינו ותפארתינו, ולהעלות את ירושלים על ראש שמחתינו למנהג תפל של – Today's generation has fallen, and the amount of ignorant people has increased, to the point that when the *chosan* breaks the glass everyone shouts out “*mazel tov*” - even the *chosan* himself who breaks the glass to finish off the *nisuin* does it with great strength, courage and light headedness. The intention behind the *minhag* has been turned on its face, and instead of causing people to be upset about the *churban Beis HaMidkosh*, and reminding us of Yerusholayim, it has become a reason to rejoice and a time of light headedness.”

R' Ovadia proceeds to cite the *Sdei Chemed* who says: ואי איישר חילי אבטליניה – “If I would have the strength, I would annul the custom”.

R' Ovadia then concludes that he doesn't want to go as far as to annul the custom, but he suggests something to help fix the problem. He writes that the *maseder kiddushin* [one who takes care of the *kiddushin* proceedings] should tell the *chosan* before he smashes the glass to repeat after him the *pasuk*, לחכי לשוני תשבח ירושלם תשבח ימיני תדבק לשוני לחכי, ואז לאט לאט יבינו הקהל הרקע לשבירת הכוס ולא יעשו מזה מהתלה חוכא: – Then hopefully, slowly, slowly people will be reminded

of the reason for the custom, and it will no longer be a situation of light headedness, and the custom will return to how it used to be.”

To answer up the *minhag* to say *mazel tov*, R' Shamaï Gross *shlita* suggests, that the Gemara in *Ta'anis* (30b) says: כּל המתאבּל על ירוּשלים זוכה ורואה בשמחה – “Anyone who mourns over the loss of Yerusholayim will merit to see it being rebuilt”. When the *chosan* breaks the glass, we are remembering the *churban* and now everyone will be merit to see the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdosh*, this is a great happiness, therefore we say “*mazel tov*”.

The *Madanay Asher* answers: That as long as one hasn't brought up the *churban* the *simcha* is lacking, especially after what the *Yaavatz* writes in his *siddur*, that many people aren't successful with marriage as they don't remember about the *churban*. However, once the *chosan* smashes the glass and remembers about the *churban*, now the *simcha* is complete and his marriage is more likely to be successful, therefore, we wish the *chosan* “*mazel tov*”.

When to Break the Glass

There are different *minhogim* as to when to break the glass, the most common *minhag* is to break it after reciting *sheva berachos* (see *Rema Even HaEzer* 65:3). However, the *minhag* in Yerusholayim is to break the glass after the *birchos erusin*. It is also the custom of Skver, Vishnitz and Munkatch to break the glass after the *birchos erusin* (see *Natei Gavriel Nisuin* 26: footnote 3)

The *sefer Invay HaGefen* suggests, that in places where the *minhag* is to break the glass after *birchas erusin*, then “*mazel tov*” shouldn't be said after breaking the glass. However, in places where the *minhag* is to break the glass after reciting *sheva berachos* which is at the end of the *chuppah*, then *mazel tov* should be recited. The *pasuk* in *Koheles* says: אַל תַּעֲמֵד בַּדְּבַר רָע – “One shouldn't end on a bad note”, for this reason, when we *lein* we always make sure to stop at a good point. Similarly, says the *Invay HaGefen*, if the last thing done under the *chuppah* is the breaking of the glass, then “*mazel tov*” should be recited afterwards as we don't want to end on a bad note.

Be Careful Not to Cause Any Harm

The *Teshuvos HaBach* (62) writes that one should be careful when breaking the glass not to cause anyone any harm. The *Yabia Omer* (*Even HaEzer* 4:9) writes, nowadays we wrap the glass cup in a bag, to make sure the broken shards don't go anywhere and cause harm.

Glass or Earthenware

The *Achronim* mention that the *minhag* is to smash a glass cup and not one made of earthenware. The *Tzofnas Paneach* (*Maharit, Devorim* pg. 196) explains that breaking the glass is *zecher l'churban*, and we want to show that just like a broken glass can be fixed, so to hopefully soon Hashem will rebuild the *Beis HaMikdosh*. Earthenware on the other

hand, can't be fixed and once it's broken that's it (see *Otzar HaPoksिम* at length about glass vs. earthenware).

The Music Ban in Yerusholayim

In 1865 a general ban was issued in Yerusholayim against playing music at weddings¹⁰, and only one instrument may be used¹¹.

The *poskim* discuss if recorded music or electric synthesizers may be used at a wedding in Yerusholayim and the consensus is to be stringent. A *choson* and *kallah* who live outside Yerusholayim and have their wedding in Yerusholayim should not be lenient and have a band without asking a *shailah* first.¹²

Is There Any Issue with Selling the Kiddushin Ring?

Obviously, we hope that the *choson* and *kallah* won't come to such a *shailah*, but if there would be a need, or if perhaps the *kallah* simply wants to update her *kiddushin* ring [the ring used for *kiddushin*] is there any reason not to?

The *Shu"t Maharam Mintz* (96) writes: ובן אמרין: כאלו מכר מזלו, וכן אמרין: דמי שמכר טבעת קידושין הוי כאלו מכר מזלו, וכן אמרין: דהוי כאלו מבטל האהבה והברית שביניהם, וכהאי גוונא ירצו פי המונות, ואין דרך למכור כי אם מדוחק גדול – “One who sells their *kiddushin* ring, is like selling their *mazul* [fortune]. Similarly, they say, that by doing so one is nullifying the love and the covenant between them, therefore, it shouldn't be sold unless there is a big need.”

The *Shu"t Divrei Malkiel* (5:206) offers another reason why *kallah's* don't give away their *kiddushin* ring or swap it. He writes, it's an item that has had a mitzvah done with it, therefore, we try not to give it away.

I saw another reason brought down *b'shem* R' Yitzchok Tzvi Lebovitz *shlita*. He writes, that the Gemara in *Kiddushin* (59a) says: דלא מסמנא מילתא לאדם שימכור ארעתא קמייטא שקנה – “It's not good luck for a person to sell the first piece of land he acquired.” Therefore, since the *kiddushin* ring is the first item in the life of the *choson* and *kallah* it's not a good idea to sell it.

One final reason I saw is based on the *Chinuch*. The *Chinuch* (Mitzvah 552) writes: דנהגו לקדש בטבעת, כדי שתתן אל לבה לעולם שהיא קנויה לאתו האיש ולא תזנה תחתיו ולא תמרוד בו ותתן לו יקר והודו לעולם כעבד לאדוניו, ובכן יהיה שבתם וקמתם בשלום לעולם ויתקיים הישוב ברצון האל שחפץ – “The custom is to get married using a ring, in order that the woman should feel in her heart that she has been acquired by her

¹⁰ *Salmas Chaim* 889 says if one does not keep the *takonah* he will be punished.

¹¹ Refer to *Kovetz Mevakshei Torah* 26: page 392-393:49 quoting the opinion of HaRav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt"l*.

¹² One is allowed to play at a wedding which does not hold of the ban even if he personally does (*Yismach Lev* 1: page 175 quoting the opinion of HaRav Sheinberg).

husband, and she shouldn't live with anyone else, and betray her husband. And she should always honor her husband and be loyal to him, like a slave to a master. Through this they should leave peacefully and happily together. Therefore, we get married using a ring, so that there is a constant reminder." If this is what the ring represents, then certainly it shouldn't be sold.

The Mitzvah of Simchas Chosan V'Kallah

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Even HaEzer* 65:1) writes: מצוה לשמח חתן וכלה ולרקד לפניהם ולומר שהיא נאה וחסודה אפילו אינו נאה - "There is a mitzvah to make a *chosan* and *kallah* happy, and to dance in front of them. And to say that she is a good-looking and pious bride, even if she isn't".

מדבר שקר תרחק

The *Shulchan Aruch* seems to be saying, that one is allowed to lie and say that the *kallah* is good looking even when she isn't, but surely the Torah says, מדבר שקר תרחק – "One should distance himself from lying".

The truth is, the above halachah is a *machlokes* in *Kesubos* (16b-17a) and the *Rishonim* on the Gemara already ask the question. The Gemara asks: "How should one dance before the *kallah*?" i.e. What should one say before her? The opinion of Beis Shamai is that one should praise her for what she is: *A kallah as she is*. Beis Hillel, however, maintain that all *kallah's* should receive the same praise: *A good-looking and pious kallah*.

Beis Shamai explain their position: "The Torah states that one must distance oneself from falsehood." The response of Beis Hillel is in rhetorical form: "According to you, someone who makes a poor purchase from the market—should one praise it in his eyes or degrade it in his eyes?—You should surely praise it!"

The response of Beis Hillel is perhaps convincing, but it does not seem to directly address the question of Beis Shamai. Surely, the Torah teaches that one must distance himself from falsehood?

The *Ritva* explains the answer: "The principle of distancing oneself from falsehood does not apply to anything said for the sake of *shalom* [peace]." We learn from here that any form of appeasement, such as the example given by the Gemara of praising someone's poor acquisition, falls under the category of *shalom*. As the Gemara concludes, *Chazal* derived from here that one should always maintain peaceful harmony with his fellows—even at the expense of speaking a falsehood.

Many *poskim*, however, make no mention of the *Ritva*, and find the teaching of the Gemara difficult—surely one must distance oneself from falsehood? Commenting on the same halachah, the *Chelkas Mechokek*, *Beis Shmuel*, *Prisha*, *Taz* and *Aruch HaShulchan* all

explain that the permission given to deviate from the truth is limited to cases in which the deviation is not explicit, and the words of praise can be interpreted in several ways.

In the case of a *kallah*, we find a source for this approach from *Maseches Kallah* (chap. 10). In response to the question of Beis Shamai, Beis Hillel retort that the *kallah* is indeed beautiful — “Perhaps she is beautiful in her deeds, perhaps beautiful in her genealogy and pious in her ways.” The *Maharal* (*Nesiv Haemes* 2) follows a similar path — “We do not come to praise her for her beauty, rather that there is some virtue in her, for her husband chose to marry her and she found favor in his eyes.”

The *Maharal* explains that the same is true of a purchase. One may praise an acquisition before its buyer, even if the purchase is in fact a poor one, since it has an element of virtue, at least in the eyes of the purchaser himself. To state an absolute falsehood, however, which has no side of truth whatsoever, remains prohibited. This is contrary to the reasoning of the *Ritva* who assumes that if the case falls under the category of *shalom*, it is permissible to say even an outright falsehood.

Source

Assuming the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah* is *de'O'raisa*, which is in itself not so simple, where in the Torah do we find a source for such a mitzvah?

The Rambam (*Hilchos Avel* 14:1) writes: “There is a mitzvah based on the words of the Rabbonon to visit the sick, to comfort those who are mourning, to bury the dead ... similarly, there is a mitzvah to make the *chosan* and *kallah* happy and to help them out with their needs. The above are examples of *gemilas chasodim* [kindness] which one carries out with his body, and there is no limit.” The Rambam then writes: אע"פ שכל מצות – “even though all these *mitzvos* are only based on the words of the Rabbonon, they are included in the mitzvah of ‘*v'ahavta l're'yahcha kamocho*’ [you should love your friend as yourself]”. Just like we all want a lively *chasunah*, similarly, we should do the same thing to others, and we should help ensure that they have a lively *chasunah* too.

According to the above Rambam, it's clear that the source for the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah* is the mitzvah of *v'ahavta l're'yahcha kamocho*. Other *poskim* however, learn that the source is another famous mitzvah, the mitzvah of *v'holachtah bidrochov*, the mitzvah to emulate the ways of the Ribbono Shel Olam. Just like the Ribbono Shel Olam buries the dead (i.e. Moshe Rabbeinu), similarly, we should help bury the dead. Just like the Ribbono Shel Olam clothes the naked (i.e. Adam and Chavah) similarly, we should help cloth the naked. Just like the Ribbono Shel Olam performs lots of kindness, so should we, therefore, we should do our best to help make the *chosan* and *kallah* happy.

May A Talmud Chocham Play A Musical Instrument At A Chasunah?

Besides for the theoretical question of what the source for the mitzvah is, the above *machlokes* may have a practical *nafkah minah* [difference].

The *Chavas Yoir* (205) was asked: צורבא מרבנן חריף ובקי ומתמיד יודע נגן בכמה מיני כלי זמר שאל אם הרשות בידו לנגן בכינור לפני חתן וכלה הן בהליכתן לחופה או במשתה של מצוה חתונה או נימא – “If a *talmud chocham* who is very sharp, knows lot of Torah, is always learning, and amongst his many talents he knows how to play musical instruments, if he is allowed to play a harp in front of a *chosan* and *kallah*, either when they are walking down to the *chuppah* or at the *seudah*. Or perhaps it’s forbidden for a *talmud chocham* to disgrace himself as it is a lack of honor to his Torah?”

The Gemara in *Kiddushin* (32a) famously teaches, that a *talmud chocham* can forgo his *kavod* [honor], however, the above may be worse, as even though a *talmud chocham* may forgo his *kavod*, perhaps he isn’t allowed to something which is a *bizoyan* [a positive act which is degrading].

The *Chavas Yoir* suggests that the above may depend on a *machlokes* [dispute] between the Rambam and the Rosh. The halachah is, that if one finds a lost object, there is a mitzvah of *hashovas aveidah* [to return the item]. However, if one is elderly or is a *talmid chocham* and it’s degrading for him to return such an item (i.e. he finds a ring under a dumpster) he is exempt. What happens if one wants to more than the *din* requires and return the item anyway? The Rambam holds, that if one wants to be stringent and do more than what is required he may. The Rosh however, argues, and maintains, that since the Torah said that such a person is exempt, he isn’t allowed to forgo his *kavod* and be more stringent than what the *din* requires.

The *Chavas Yoir* suggests, that according to the Rambam if a *talmud chocham* is happy to forgo his *kavod* and play a musical instrument at a *chasunah* he may. According to the Rosh however, he wouldn’t be allowed to.

The *Chavas Yoir* then asks on the Rosh from a Gemara in *Kesubos*. The Gemara in *Kesubos* (17a) says that R’ Yehudah bar Ilou would dance in front of a *chosan* and *kallah* and juggle three *hadassim* [myrtles], and the *Chachomim* would say, קא מבסיף לן סבא, i.e. that he is disgracing himself. Surely, we see from here that a *talmid chocham* may be more stringent than the *din* and disgrace himself to perform a mitzvah?

The *Chavas Yoir* answers, the Rosh which holds a *talmud chocham* can’t be *mochel* is only talking about *mitzvos* which are *bein adam lechaveiro* [between man and his friend]. When it comes to *mitzvos* which are *bein adam lemakom* [between man and Hashem], however, then one may be more stringent than what the *din* requires, **and the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v’kallah* is a mitzvah which is *bein adam lemakom* as it is learnt out from *v’holachtah bidrochov*.**

What comes out from the above is, that since the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah* is learnt out from the mitzvah of *v'holachtah bidrochov* which is *bein adam lemakom* a *talmud chocham* may belittle himself in order to fulfil the mitzvah.

According to the Rambam, the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah* is learnt out from *v'ahavta l're'yahcha kamocha* which is the quintessential example of a mitzvah which is *bein adam lechaveiro*, and it would come out, that a *chosan* wouldn't be allowed to belittle himself.¹³

What is the Essence of the Mitzvah?

Normally, when there is a mitzvah of *simcha*, one is required to rejoice with meat and wine. For example, on Yom Tov there is a mitzvah of *simchas* Yom Tov, and the way one does this is by eating meat and wine. The question is, what exactly is the *chiyuv* of *simchas chosan v'kallah*, is the mitzvah that one must provide meat and wine at the *chasunah*, or is it perhaps something else?

The *Teshuvos Be'er Sheva* (50) discusses the above. He writes, it can't be that the obligation is to provide meat and wine, as providing meat and wine is the *chosan's* obligation¹⁴, if so, what is the obligation? He explains, the obligation is to make the *chosan* happy by saying nice words to him. What are the nicest words one can say to a *chosan*? That his *kallah* is, נאה וחסודה – “good-looking and pious”.

The above is implicit in the Gemara as well. The Gemara in *Kesubos* (16b-17a) asks: כיצד הבלה מרקדין לפני הבלה – “How should one dance before the *kallah*?” and instead of answering with which type of dancing one should do, the Gemara answers: בלה נאה וחסודה – “that one should tell the *chosan* that his *kallah* is good-looking and pious”. We see, that the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah* is to say some nice words about the *kallah*, and nothing to do with providing meat and wine.

Similarly, the Gemara in *Berachos* (6b) writes: אגרא דבי הלולי מילי - “the reward one gets for going to a wedding, is the words he says”. Rashi explains: לשמח החתן בדברים – “to make the *chosan* happy, by saying words”. We see that the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah* is to say nice words to the *chosan*.

The *Otzar HaPoskim* (65:3) cites the *Ezer Makodesh* who writes, that this can be carried out in a number of ways. Either by reciting a *berachah* under the *chuppah*, or by being the *maseder kiddushin* [arranging the proceeding under the *chuppah*], or by saying nice things to *chosan* during the *chasunah*, or by *bentching* after the dinner. He also mentions, that an

¹³ However, practically the above isn't such a good *nafka minah*, as the Rambam holds that a *talmud chocham* may be stringent and do more than the *din* requires, and it was only in the Rosh that we had to differentiate between *mitzvos bein adam lechaveiro* and *bein adam lemakom*.

¹⁴ We will expand on this soon.

adam choshuv [important person] can fulfil the mitzvah, by merely going out his way to attend the *chasunah*.

Who Is Obligated to Pay for the *Chasunah Seudah*?

We mentioned in passing, the *Be'er Sheva* who writes that the *chosan* is responsible to pay for the *seudah*. The above is also clear from the *Shulchan Aruch*. The *Shulchan Aruch (Even HaEzer 64:4)* rules, that if the *chosan* doesn't want to make a *seudah*, and the family of the *kallah* want that there should be a *seudah*, we force the *chosan* to arrange a meal fitting for his and her honor.

The Obligation to Have Music at a *Chasunah*

Unfortunately, or fortunately (depending on whose reading) the *minhag* has changed and today it is no longer the *minhag* for the *chosan* to pay. However, there is still one thing which the *chosan* is obligated to pay for, and that is the music. R' Moshe (*Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:112*) writes, that just like the *minhag* used to be that the *kallah* could force the *chosan* to pay for *seudah*, similarly, nowadays, the *kallah* can force the *chosan* to pay for a band.

The obligation to have music at a *chasunah* is very stringent. The *Maharil (Hilchos Eruv Chatzeiros)* discusses a *shailah* which was posed to the *Mahari Segel*. There was a certain town where the non-Jewish Queen had died, and they made an enactment that for an entire year in deference to the Queen, music shouldn't be played. The *Mahari Segel* was asked if a *chasunah* could be made without music, and he responded, "that the *chasunah* shouldn't be made without music, as music is what makes everyone happy at the *chasunah*. If the only way to have music is by making the *chasunah* in a different town, then this is what they should do". We see how important having music at the *chasunah* is.

Moreover, the *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 338:2)* mentions, that some are lenient and allow a non-Jew to play music by a *chuppah* even if the *chuppah* is on Friday and goes into Shabbos. The *Rema* adds, that a non-Jew may even fix the instrument due to the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah*. Again, we see how important having music at a *chasunah* is, and we even allow one to get a non-Jew to play music on Shabbos.

However, it's important to mention that the *Sdei Chemed (Mareches Chosan V'Kallah 13)* writes, that this halachah no longer applies. In those days, everything was done *l'shem shomayim* [for the sake of Heaven], and there was room to be lenient, nowadays, however, if we would allow such a thing, who knows where things would end up.

Using *Ma'aser* Money to Pay for the Band

The *Shevus Ya'akov (2:85)* writes, the *minhag* was that they would pay for the band with *ma'aser* money. According to the *Shevus Ya'akov*, instead of giving *ma'aser* to *tzedakah*, one can save up the money and have a 16-piece band at his *chasunah*.

However, R' Moshe in the aforementioned *Teshuvah* writes that the *Shevus Ya'akov* doesn't make any sense. Even if having music at a *chasunah* is a mitzvah, it's no better off than all other *mitzvos* where the halachah is that one isn't allowed to use *ma'aser* money. The halachah is, that one isn't allowed to use *ma'aser* money to buy *tefillin*, so why should one be able to use *ma'aser* money to pay for music at his *chasunah*?

R' Moshe writes, it must be, that the *Shevus Ya'akov* was talking about a time and place, where the *minhag* would be that the poor people in the town would come to the *chasunah* and sing, and they would get paid for their time and effort according to whatever the people at the *chasunah* decided to give. If they decided to be generous, they would come out with some money, and if everyone decided to be stingy, they could come out with nothing. There was no fixed amount they would get; they would simply turn up and leave with whatever they got. The *Shevus Ya'akov* is talking about such a time and place, and then, and only then, *ma'aser* money may be used.

Nowadays, however, a signed contract is written beforehand, an amount per hour is fixed, an amount per over time hour is fixed etc. etc. and certainly *ma'aser* money may not be used.

Yerusholayim

Although we established that there is an obligation to have music at a *chasunah*, in Yerusholayim this is downplayed, and there is less music than in other places in the world. What is the reason for this?

In 1865 there was a major cholera epidemic in Eretz Yisroel, and hundreds of people died. The Rabbonim at the time were unsure as to what the cause of the epidemic was, so they asked a *shailos chalom*. They found out, that it was because people weren't treating the Kosel HaMaravi [Western Wall] with proper respect. From then on, they enacted that any *chasunah* that takes place in Yerusholayim should only have one musical instrument. Most people just have a set of drums.

The *Maharil Diskin* writes, that if a person would lose a relative he would hold back from playing musical instruments. Since Yerusholayim sits in the shadow of the *Makam HaMikdosh* [place of the Temple], one needs to be in a state of mourning 365 days a year.

Old City

A number of *poskim* maintain that the above *takonah* [enactment] only applies in the Old City. However, in the newer parts of Yerusholayim this *takonah* doesn't apply. However, R' Elyashiv writes, one who is stringent is worthy of blessing.

How Many *Bochurim* Should Attend a *Chasunah*?

The *Tur* (*Even HaEzer* 65) writes: מצוה גדולה לשמח חתן וכלה – “There is a **big** mitzvah to make a *chosan* and *kallah* happy”. However, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Even HaEzer* 65) writes: מצוה לשמח חתן וכלה - “There is a mitzvah to make a *chosan* and *kallah* happy”.

The *Shulchan Aruch* omits the fact that the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah* is a big mitzvah, the question is, why?

The *Bach* explains, that the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah* is considered a big mitzvah, as we find that even though the mitzvah of *talmud* Torah is equivalent to all *mitzvos*, we interrupt *talmud* Torah for *hachnosas kallah*, therefore, it must be that it's a big mitzvah.

However, the *Bach* is very difficult to understand. The halachah is that one is supposed to interrupt *talmud* Torah to perform any mitzvah that can't be carried out by someone else. We even interrupt *talmud* Torah to carry out a mitzvah *derabonon* (see *Megillah* 3a).

We will soon see, that for mitzvah of *hachnosas kallah* there is no limit to how many people should come. Since there is no limit, it is considered a mitzvah which can't be carried out by someone else, where the halachah is that one should interrupt *talmud* Torah. So just because the halachah is that one should stop learning for the mitzvah of *hachnosas kallah*, it's no better than any other mitzvah, where the halachah is the same, if so, why does the *Tur* call it a 'big mitzvah'?

Chazal go out their way to explain how important the mitzvah of *hachnosas kallah* is, they even say (*Berachos* 6b), “One who makes a *chosan* and *kallah* happy, is equivalent to one who offered up a *korban todah* and rebuilt one of the ruins of Yerusholayim”. However, in terms of halachah, it is no different to other *mitzvos*. Perhaps for this reason, the *Shulchan Aruch* omitted the fact that it is a “big mitzvah”.

However, the problem is, the *Beis Yosef* (end of 640) writes: “We can't learn from the *seudas mitzvah* of a *chosan* and *kallah*, to other *seudas mitzvos*, as the mitzvah of *simchas chosan v'kallah* is a **big mitzvah**”.

Perhaps what we have to say is, the *Beis Yosef* (*Mechaber*) agrees to the *Tur*, and the reason he omitted the fact that it is a 'big mitzvah', is in order to keep things short and simple, especially as it makes no difference in halachah. However, in *Hilchos Aveilus* (*Yoreh Deah* 344) the *Shulchan Aruch* copies the *Tur* and writes: “There is a **big mitzvah** to give a *hesped*...”. *Tzorich iyun* [the matter needs more looking into] (see *Sdei Chemed, Mareches Chosan V'Kallah* 12, and *Minchas Asher, Parshas Ki Seitzei* 65).

Interrupting Learning to Fulfil the Mitzvah of *Hachnosas Kallah*

We mentioned above, that one should interrupt learning in order to fulfil the mitzvah of *hachnosas kallah*. This is based on the Gemara in *Kesubos* (17a) which teaches:

הכלה מבטלין תלמוד תורה להוצאת המת ולהכנסת הכלה – “One should interrupt his learning, to take part in a funeral or in the bringing down of the *kallah* to the *chuppah*”.

The question is, is there a limit to how many people need to interrupt their learning? What happens if a *bochur* in *yeshiva* gets married, is there a *chiyuv* for the entire *yeshiva* to attend the *chasunah*?

The Gemara in *Kesubos* continues and says, that one only has to interrupt *talmud* Torah if there are not enough people present, if there are already enough people present, then there is no need. The Gemara then asks, וכמה כל צרכו – “How many people is considered enough?”.

The Gemara then cites a number of opinions as to how many people should attend a *levayah*. One opinion is 12,000 attendees and 6,000 trumpet blowers. Some say the 6,000 trumpet blowers can be part of the 12,000 and some say they can't. Another opinion says, 600,000. The Gemara then continues, that this is regarding a regular person, for one who taught Torah however, there is no limit.

The Gemara doesn't talk about how many people must attend a *chasunah*, the question is why not? The *Shita Mekubetzes* cites a *Likutei Geonim* who writes: מדיהבי שיעורא להוצאת – “From the fact that the Gemara mentions an amount by a *levayah*, and doesn't mention an amount by a *chasunah*, we see that there is no limit”. According to the above, as many people as possible should attend a *chasunah*.

The *Talmiday Rabbein Yonah* cites two *peshotim*. Firstly, he says, the reason the Gemara never said an amount is because it is different for each person, and the amount of people depends on what is appropriate for each *chasunah*. If it's a Rebbishe *chasunah*, then there is no limit, and if it's a simple *chasunah*, perhaps 100 people would be enough.

Then he cites a second *peshat*, that there is no amount, and the more the merrier. The more people there are, the more *simcha* there is.

According to the *Likutei Geonim* and the second *peshat* of *Talmiday Rabbeinu Yonah*, it would seem that if a *bochur* in *yeshiva* gets married, the entire *yeshiva* must attend the *chasunah*. Is this in fact the halachah?

The *Takonah* of R' Shach

The *minhag* in *Yeshivas Ponevitch* used to be, that if a *bochur* would get married, a large amount of *bochurim* would attend the *chasunah*. Whether the *chasunah* was local in Bnei Brak, or it was on the other side of Eretz Yisroel, many *bochurim* would attend. This led to the *bochurim* getting back very late, which meant that not only did they miss evening *seder* they would wake up late for *Shacharis* and the morning *seder* the next day was also heavily

part in a funeral or in the bringing down of the *kallah* to the *chuppah*” only applies if one actually sees the *chuppah* or *levayah* taking place. If one knows about it, but doesn’t actually see it happening, he doesn’t need to interrupt his learning.

The above opinion is the easiest solution to the above problem, as even if an entire *yeshiva* is aware of a *chasunah*, they aren’t obligated to go, as only one who actually sees it must go. However, the *Beis Shmuel* disagrees with the *Chelkas Mechokek* and maintains, that if one knows about a *chasunah* or *levayah* he must attend. Moreover, R’ Moshe (*Igros Moshe* 2:95) says, that even the *Chelkas Mechokek* only said what he said, for people who are busy learning, if one isn’t learning and he knows about a *chasunah*, even if he doesn’t see it, he must go. Therefore, we must come on to what the *Shevet HaLevi* said.

The Obligation for a Chosan and Kallah to Have a Shomer [Guardian] During the Week of Sheva Berachos

The *minhag* is that when a *chosan* goes out on the street during the week of *sheva berachos* he takes a *shomer* with him. What exactly is the *mekor* [source] for doing so?

Source

The *Rema* (*Even HaEzer* 64:1) writes, that a *chosan* during his week of *sheva berachos* is forbidden to go out alone. His source is a *Ran* in *Kesubos* (2a *midafay haRif*) who quotes the *Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer* which says: “A *chosan* is comparable to a king, just like a king doesn’t go out alone, similarly a *chosan* doesn’t go out alone. Just like a king wears special clothes, similarly a *chosan* should wear special clothes...”.

Another source is a Gemara in *Berachos* (54b). The Gemara brings in the name of Rav Yehudah, that there are three people who need guarding, they are, “someone who is ill, a *chosan* and a *kallah*”. Both Rashi and Rabbeinu Yonah learn that the reason they need to be guarded, is to protect them from the Sotan and *mazikim* [demons], as they generally try to attack at times of danger and at times of great *simcha*. The *Magen Avraham* (end of 239) mentions the above.

We see that there are two reasons why a *chosan* shouldn’t go out alone. The *Rema* based on the *Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer* that a *chosan* is like a king, and a second reason based on the Gemara in *Berachos* because of the Sotan and the *mazikim*.

Do a Chosan and Kallah Need a Shomer When At Home?

There is seemingly a big *nafka minah* [practical difference] between the two reasons. According to the *Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer* the reason a *chosan* needs a *shomer* is because it is not *kavod* [respectful] for a king/*chosan* to go out alone on the street. According to this reason, if the *chosan* or *kallah* would be home alone it would be ok, as not having a *shomer* when at home is not a lack of *kavod*. According to the reason the *Magen Avraham* brings however, that a *chosan* needs a *shomer* because the Sotan and *mazikim* try to attack during

a time of increased *simcha*, then whether the *chosan* and *kallah* are at home or they are in the streets, they should need protection. This is *meduyak* [implicit] in the *Magen Avraham*, who simply writes “they need a *shemira*” and doesn’t differentiate between the streets and at home. The *Aruch HaShulchan* (*Even HaEzer* 64:3) also writes, that according to the Gemara in *Berachos* it would seem that even at home the *chosan* and *kallah* need *shemira*, and they should be careful not to leave each other home alone.

Going to *Shul* and Leaving the *Kallah* Home Alone

According to the above, it’s difficult to understand how a *chosan* is able to go to *shul* to *daven* during the week of *sheva berachos*. Even if the *chosan* manages to find a *shomer* to take him to and from *shul*, the *kallah* also needs a *shomer*, so how can she be left home alone?

The *sefer Re’eh Chaim* (pg. 111) writes in the name of the *Shevet HaLevi* that if there are other people living in the same building, if the *kallah* is left home alone during the day it’s ok.

The Gemara in *Shabbos* (151b) seemingly supports the above idea. There is a Gemara in *Shabbos* cited *l’halachah* by the *Magen Avraham* (end of *Orach Chaim* 239) which says that one shouldn’t sleep in a room by himself, yet we see that the common *minhag* is that people do. The *Sha’ar HaTziyon* (239:17) is strict in regard to the above and writes, if one is in a room by himself, even if there are other people in the house, he should make sure to keep the door open. However, the *Sha’ar HaTziyon* himself points out that the *minhag* is to be lenient. Many people are lenient with the above and rent hotel rooms and the like and aren’t worried about sleeping alone. To answer up the *minhag*, we have to say like the *Shu”t Betzel HaChochma* (4:76), who says that in a house where there are people living in other rooms nearby, there is no problem to sleep alone. Similar to what the *Re’eh Chaim* says in regard to a *kallah* being home alone.

Going to *Shul* During *Sheva Berachos* Week¹⁵

According to the Gemara in *Berachos*, that the reason a *chosan* needs a *shomer* is because of *mazikim*, presumably if there are lots of people in the street then there is no need to worry about *mazikim*, as *mazikim* don’t attack when there are lots of people around (see *Pesochim* 110a). However, the *Rema* citing the *Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer* rules that a *chosan* shouldn’t go alone even in the marketplace even though in the marketplace there are plenty people. We see that the *Rema* holds the reason a *chosan* needs a *shomer* is not only

¹⁵ The *Taz* (*Orach Chaim* 131:10) and *Mishnah Berurah* (131:26) both write, that a *chosan* shouldn’t go to *shul* during the week of *sheva berachos*, in order to avoid everyone missing out *tachanun*. However, the *minhag* is that we don’t follow the *Taz* and *Mishnah Berurah* and the *chosan* goes to *shul* and we aren’t worried about *tachanun*. See *Shu”t L’Horas Nosan* 8:96, *Teshuvos V’Hanhagos* 3:52, and *Orchos Rabbeinu* (vol. 3, pg. 210) in the name of the *Chazon Ish*.

because of *mazikin*, but because a *chosan* is comparable to a king, and a king doesn't go around alone. The *Beis Shmuel* (*Even HaEzer* 64:2) citing the *Prisha* and the *Chochmas Adam* (*Klal* 129:11) both bring down, that it is because of the above that the *minhag* became that a *chosan* doesn't go to *shul*. Since a *chosan* needs a *shomer* to take him to and from *shul* and it's difficult to find someone, the *minhag* became not to go.

שלוחי מצוה אינם ניזוקים – One Who Carries Out a Mitzvah Won't Be Harmed

There is a concept in halachah, that, שלוחי מצוה אינם ניזוקים, that if one is busy carrying out a mitzvah he won't be harmed. For example, the *Sha'ar HaTziyon* (239:17) writes, that one shouldn't sleep in a room alone unless he leaves the door open, however, if there is a problem of *yichud*, then one should close the door. Even though by closing the door one will be alone and it's dangerous to sleep alone, due to *mazikim*, since one is doing a mitzvah he won't be harmed. According to the Gemara in *Berachos* that a *chosan* needs a *shomer* because of *mazikim*, it should be ok for him to go to *shul* alone, as surely he is going to do a mitzvah, and we should be able to apply the rule of שלוחי מצוה אינם ניזוקים?

Due to the above, the *Chazon Ish* (*Ma'aseh Ish*, vol. 2, pg. 136) in fact ruled that if a *chosan* is going out to *daven* it is ok for him to go alone. R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichos Shlomo* 1:5:7) was also lenient for a *chosan* to go out to *shul* alone, however, for a slightly different reason. His reasoning was, that nowadays there are lots of people on the street, and *mazikim* don't attack when there are lots of people around.

Practical Difference

The halachah is that a *talmid chocham* shouldn't go out alone at night as we are worried about *mazikim*. The *Pnei Yehoshua* (*Pesochim* 4a) writes, that even if he is going out to do a mitzvah, he still shouldn't go alone. The reason is, even though there is a rule that when one goes out to do a mitzvah, he won't be harmed, when it is a case of שביחא היזקא, damage is very likely, then we don't say the above. *Mazikim* try extra hard to attack *talmiday chachomim*, therefore, we can't apply the rule of שלוחי מצוה אינם ניזוקים. Presumably we can make the same argument by a *chosan*, and say that *mazikim* try extra hard to attack a *chosan*. Accordingly, if the reason a *chosan* may go to *shul* alone is because of שלוחי מצוה אינם ניזוקים then perhaps we can't apply the rule to a *chosan*. If, however, the reason is because there are lots of people on the street, then there is room to be lenient.

However, we already showed that the *Rema* holds that the reason a *chosan* shouldn't go out alone is because he is like a king, therefore, even if we say שלוחי מצוה אינם ניזוקים and that there are lots of people on the street, it won't help, and it would seem that unless a *chosan* can find a *shomer*, he should stay at home.

In *Halichos Shlomo* (1:5:7, *he'orah* 26) it's brought down that R' Shlomo Zalman once met a *chosan* during his week of *sheva berachos* leaving his house to go to *shul*, R' Shlomo Zalman stopped him, and the *chosan* said he couldn't find anyone to take him to *shul*. R'

Shlomo Zalman then waited with him, until he found someone who could be a *shomer*. We see, that even though R' Shlomo Zalman said that since there are lots of people on the street there is room to be lenient, practically one should still try and go with a *shomer*, due to the fact that a *chosan* is like a king. Generally speaking, it shouldn't be too hard to find someone who is on the way to *shul* and is happy to assist.

[A Joke: There was once a young *kallah* who came to *Beis Din* complaining that her husband *davens* all three *tefillos* at home. She complained that it's a *chiyuv* to *daven* in *shul* and her parents and ancestors were all *moser nefesh* to *daven* in *shul*. The *chosan* responded, that during the *sheva berachos* all the *darshanim* said that a Jewish house is a mini-*Beis HaMikdash* and it is a place where the *Shechinah* rests etc. therefore, he thought it's the perfect place to *daven*. The *Beis Din* then had to explain to the *chosan*, that the house is not literally a *Beis HaMikdash*, and we don't slaughter *korbonos* there etc. and we don't *daven* there, it's a *Mikdash Me'at*, mini-*Beis HaMikdash*, but it's not actually a *Beis HaMikdash*.

A Story: Once a father came to the *Beis Yisroel* of Ger, and told him that he has a holy son, and he wants a *berachah* that he should continue to grow up and be something special. The Rebbe asked the father how he knew, and he responded that I see him playing with Lego and making *tefillin* to put on. The Rebbe then told him, "It's true your son may be holy, but you are far from it, you need to make sure to stop *davening* at home, it's rubbing off on your child".]

How Near Should the *Shomer* Be?

It's brought down in the name of the *Chazon Ish* (*Orchos Rabbeinu* vol. 5, pg. 149) that the *shomer* should be standing within four *amos* [cubits] of the *chosan*.

Does *Mechilah* Help?

The *Chelkas Mechokek* (64:2) writes, that even if the *kallah* can be *mochel* on her *chiyuv simcha*, the *chosan* still needs a *shomer*, as a *chosan* is like a king.

If Two *Chasanim* Are Walking Together, Do They Need a *Shomer*?

R' Shama'i Gross in his *Shu"t Shevet HaKahosi* (4:316) discusses the above *shailah*. He writes that according to the *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* that the reason a *chosan* needs a *shomer* is because he is like a king, then presumably even if he is with another *chosan* he should need a *shomer* as two kings wouldn't go around without any guards. However, he concludes that just like a *chosan* and *kallah* can go around without a *shomer*, similarly two *chasanim* can go around without any *shomer*.

Rav Gamliel Rabinovitz in his *sefer Gam Ani Odcha* (2:71) points out, that according to the possibility that that two *chasanim* would need a *shomer*, then presumably each one would need a *shomer*. Just like two kings would each bring their own *shomer*, similarly, each

chosan should need his own *shomer*. However, R' Shamai Gross writes, that even if they wouldn't be able to guard each other, they would only need one *shomer*, as even though a *chosan* is compared to a king, he's not literally like a king.

Can A Young Child Be A *Shomer*?

If the reason a *chosan* needs a *shomer* is because he is like a king, then presumably a young child wouldn't help, as a king doesn't go around with a child as a guard. If, however, the reason is to protect the *chosan* from *mazikim*, then certainly a child should help, as we never find that when it comes to *mazikim* a child doesn't help?

The *sefer Kotan V'Hilchoisov* (vol. 1, pg. 19, question 32) brings that he asked the above to R' Chaim Kanievsky, and he also asked if it makes a difference if it's a boy or a girl, and R' Chaim responded that it makes no difference and both a young boy and young girl helps.

HaRav Shmuel Ya'akov Landau *shlita* cites an interesting *rayah* to the above. The Mishnah in *Tomid* (1:1) teaches: בית אבטינס ובית הניצוץ הרובים היו שומרים שם – “That for Beis Avtinias and Beis HaNitzois, *rubim* were the guardians”. The *Mefaresh* explains, *rubim* refers to young children who haven't yet reached 13 and were not yet fit to perform *avodah*- these children would act as guardians. If they were suitable for guarding the *Beis HaMikdash*, then certainly they should be suitable for guarding a *chosan* and *kallah*.

When Does the *Chiyuv* to Have A *Shomer* Start?

The *Bikkuray Ya'akov* in *Hilchos Shemini Atzeres* (669:3) cites the *Kneses HaGedolah* who cites HaRav Kapsoli, that if there is a *chosan* in *shul* on Simchas Torah he may be called up as the *chosan Torah*, as a *chosan* is likened to a king. However, he must be someone who is learned and has *yiras Shomayim*. The question is, how can there be a *chosan* on Simchas Torah, the halachah is, that one isn't allowed to get married on *Chol HaMoed*? The *Kneses HaGedolah* answers that we are talking about someone who took his divorced wife back. However, the *Elyah Rabbah* answers, that we are talking about a regular *chosan*, and a *chosan* before he gets married is also considered like a king. However, the *Elyah Rabbah* doesn't mention how long before the *chasunah* this applies. The *Bikkuray Ya'akov* suggests, that perhaps during the week of the *chasunah* he is already considered like a king. According to this, from the *motzei* Shabbos before the *chasunah* the *chosan* would need a *shomer*. The *sefer Eidus L'Yisroel* also says that it starts from the week of the *chasunah*, and it is well known that this is what R' Shach held. This is also what R' Shlomo Zalman (*Halichos Shlomo* 1:5 *he'orah* 26) held.

However, the *Shevet HaLevi* (9:274) was asked about the above and he responded, it's clear from the *Rishonim* and the *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* that a *chosan* is only comparable to a king from the *chuppah* and on, or at least from the day of the *chuppah*. Even according to the Gemara in *Berachos* that a *chosan* needs *shemirah* because of *mazikim* it's also *poshut* [obvious] that it only applies from the *chasunah* and on. Although there are those

that are stringent from the time the *chosan* gets called up for his *aufruf* and on, there is no proof for this, and it never used to be like this. It's brought down that the *Chazon Ish* and *Steipler* (*Orchos Rabbeinu* vol. 5 pg. 32) were lenient, and that the Brisker Rav was lenient even on the day of the *chuppah*. Practically, one should follow his family *minhag*.

The Prohibition for a Choson to Work During the Week of Sheva

Berachos

Below, we will talk about the prohibition for a *choson* to work during the week of *sheva berachos*, if *mechilah* from the *kallah* helps, may a *choson* write *chiddushei Torah*? Must a *choson* reduce the amount he normally learns? Should a *choson* recite ויהי נועם on the *motzei Shabbos* before his *chasunah*? And more.

ויהי נועם

It's well known that a *choson* isn't supposed to work during his week of *sheva berachos*, however, what exactly is the status of this prohibition. An important *nafka minah* [practical difference] is whether a *choson* should recite ויהי נועם on *motzei Shabbos* the week before his *chasunah*. The *Rema* (295) writes that when Yom Tov falls in the middle of the upcoming week, we omit ויהי נועם on *motzei Shabbos*. The *Mishnah Berurah* (s.k. 3) explains that in ויהי נועם we say, ומעשה ידינו כוננה עלינו ומעשה ידינו כוננהו - "The work of our hands establish for us; the work of our hands establish it", therefore, we need that the upcoming week is a week where one is able to work. The source for the *Mishnah Berurah* is the *Tur*. The *Tur* writes that since we mention, ומעשה ידינו - "the work of our hands", twice, we need a week where there are six working days. The *Prisha* explains, one ומעשה ידינו refers to the work of the *meleches haMishkon*, and the other refers to the work that we do during the six days of the week. Since ומעשה ידינו refers to the six days of the week where one works, if in the upcoming week there is a Yom Tov and one won't be able to work all six days then ויהי נועם is omitted.

The *Drisha* explains slightly differently, he explains that the week is split into two halves: Sunday, Monday and Tuesday are connected to the past Shabbos, and Wednesday, Thursday and Friday are connected to upcoming Shabbos (see *Pesochim* 106a). We *daven* for our ומעשה ידינו twice, once for the work we do on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, and once for the work we do on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. If there is a Yom Tov in the upcoming week, we aren't able to work during both parts of the week, therefore, we omit the *tefillah* of ויהי נועם.

Source for Prohibition for Choson to Work

The Rambam (*Hilchos Ishus* 10:12) writes: "Chazal established, that anyone who marries a maiden should rejoice with her for seven days. He shouldn't be busy with work, or in the marketplace, he should eat, drink and rejoice." The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Even HaEzer* 64:1) rules accordingly and says writes: "One who marries a maiden is required to rejoice with

her for seven days. He shouldn't go to work, and he shouldn't be busy in the marketplace, rather, he should eat, drink, and rejoice with his new wife". The *Rema* adds: A *chosan* is forbidden to work and is forbidden to go out alone in the marketplace". The question is, what is the *Rema* adding, he seems to just be repeating the *Mechaber*?

The *Chelkas Mechokek* and *Beis Shmuel* both explain, the *Rema* is coming to be *mechadesh* [teach us], that even though the *Mechaber* says that a *chosan* shouldn't work, it's a special enactment made for the benefit of the *kallah* and if she wants, she can be *mochel* [forgo]. On that the *Rema* adds, even if the *kallah* is *mochel* on her rejoicing, that only helps in regard to the *chosan* having to eat and drink with her, however, in regards to work and to going out alone to the market place, even if she is *mochel* it doesn't help. The *din* is *chosan domeh l'melech*, that a *chosan* is similar to a king, therefore, even if the *kallah* lets him go to work he isn't allowed to.

May A Chosan Work to Save Himself a Loss, and Does Mechila Help?

Due to the aforementioned *chiddush*, that the reason a *chosan* isn't allowed to work is because of *chosan domeh l'melech* and that even if the *kallah* is *mochel* he still can't work, the *Shu"t Dovev Meishorim* (3:47) writes, the prohibition to work is only in public. The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Sanhedrin* 25:4): "Once a person is appointed as a *parnes* over the *tzibbur* it is forbidden for him to work in front of three people, in order that he doesn't degrade himself". The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Choshen Mishpot* 8:4) rules accordingly. Just like a *parnes* shouldn't work in public, certainly a *chosan* who is supposed to be treated like a king shouldn't work in public. However, if the *kallah* is *mochel* and the *chosan* works in private (especially in a case of a financial loss) then he would be allowed to work. In regards to the *chiyuv simcha*, his wife is *mochel* and in regards to *chosan domeh l'melech*, that's only in public, not in private.

However, the *Chazon Ish* (*Even HaEzer* 64:7) rules more leniently and allows the *chosan* to even work in public. The *Chazon Ish* understands that the prohibition for a *chosan* to work is no more severe than the prohibition against working on *Chol HaMoed*, therefore, just like on *Chol HaMoed* when there is a situation of *dovar ha'oveid* [a financial loss] one may work, similarly, a *chosan* may work. The *Chazon Ish* cites a *Tosfos* in *Kesubos* (4a d.h. *avel*) where it's clear, that the prohibition for a *chosan* to work is even more lenient than the prohibition to work on *Chol HaMoed*.

According to the *Dovev Meishorim*, even though in *Hilchos Melochim* we don't find any prohibition for a king to work, it can't be that a king should be worse off than a *parnes*, where both the Rambam and *Shulchan Aruch* rule that he may not work in public. Accordingly, even for a *dovar ha'oveid* there would be no *heter* to work in public. According to the *Chazon Ish*, however, who maintains that we treat the week of *sheva berachos* like *Chol HaMoed*, just like on *Chol HaMoed* where the halachah is that in a case of *dovar ha'oveid* one may work in public, so may a *chosan*.

The *Shu"t Beis Dovid* (Yoreh Deah 177 – cited in *Otzar HaPoskim, Even HaEzer* 64) was asked whether a *chosan* may work in a case of *dovar ha'oveid* and he proves from the *Beis Yosef* (*Even HaEzer* 64) that a *chosan* isn't allowed to work because he is comparable to a king. The question is, why does he need to come on to fact that *chosan* is like a king, surely the fact that it's a *regel* [like a Yom Tov] is enough of a reason to exempt him from work? What we have to say is, if the *issur* to work would be because it is like a *regel*, then in a case of *dovar ha'oveid* he would be allowed to work, like on *Chol HaMoed*, therefore, he needed to come on to the fact that a *chosan* is like a king, and consequently, even *dovar ha'oveid* is forbidden (this is also how the Ben Ish Chai, *Shoftim*, Year 1, 16 rules).

The *Beis Dovid* seems to learn that a *chosan* has the stringencies of both *Chol HaMoed* and of a king, therefore, he is forbidden to do anything a king can't do, as well as anything that is forbidden on *Chol HaMoed*. However, the *Shu"t Minchas Elozor* (2:57) argues and maintains, that in regard to *dovar ha'oveid* there is room for leniency. This is also how the *Minchas Pitim* (*Even HaEzer* 64) takes on.

The Brisker Rav's Approach

There is a third approach found in the *poskim* to explain why a *chosan* is forbidden to work. Which is that it is a Yom Tov and a time of rejoicing for him as well as for the *kallah*. With this idea, the Brisker Rav answers up a contradiction in the Rambam (see *Teshuvos V'Hanagos* 1:754). According to this approach, *mechila* from the *kallah* certainly won't help, as the prohibition to work is for his benefit, not only hers.

May a Chosan Write During the Week of Sheva Berachos?

According to the *Dovev Meishorim*, a *chosan* may certainly write during his *sheva berachos* week. Just like a *parnes* may write, similarly a *chosan* may write. According to the *Chazon Ish*, however, that the week of *sheva berachos* is like *Chol HaMoed*, perhaps there is room to be stringent. In fact, it is mentioned in the name of the *Chazon Ish* that he ruled that a *chosan* shouldn't write during his week of *sheva berachos* (see *Mo'adim U'Zemanim* 7:154).

HaRav Yisroel Veltz (וועלץ), Av Beis Din of Budapest, cites an interesting proof that one may be lenient with writing during the week of *sheva berachos*. R' Akiva Eiger in one of his most famous *Teshuvos*, in which he discusses whether one may fulfil the mitzvah of *sefiras ha'omer* with writing writes: **אם כי איני כדאי ששלה לי ובפרט להשיב בימים אלו אשר עוד יום יום – באים פנים חדשות** חכמי ונבדי העיר וקשה להשמיט מעט ליקח מועד עכ"ז לבל השיב ריקם ויהי מה – "Although I am unworthy to receive such a letter, especially during these days **where lots of new faces** of important *talmiday chochomim* are coming to town, and it's difficult for me not to take a break, I can't not reply with something." (N.B. this *Teshuva* was written by R' Akiva Eiger to his uncle during his *sheva berachos*, when he was just 16). We see that R' Akiva Eiger was writing during his week of *sheva berachos*.

However, the above is not such a good proof, as one is allowed to write *chiddushei Torah* on *Chol HaMoed*, as is clear from the *Shulchan Aruch* (545:9). See *Mishnah Berurah* (s.k. 47) who cites that the *Bach* wrote his commentary to *Choshen Mishpot* on *Chol HaMoed* (see also *Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer* 12:73 about what he writes in regard to the above *rayah*).

Practically, certainly if the reason a *chosan* is prohibited from working is because he is like a king he may write, however, even if it is because it is like *Chol HaMoed* for him, on *Chol HaMoed* one may write *chiddushei Torah*, and *igeres shlomim* [greetings]. See also *Shu"t Shevet HaLevi* (8:282) who rules that one may be lenient with *chiddushei Torah*, and *igeres shlomim*. He adds, even according to those who hold a *chosan* shouldn't work because it's a time of *simcha* for him, there is certainly room to be lenient to write a few small things here and there, however, to spend all day writing that he should refrain from.

Learning *Beiyun* [In Depth] During *Sheva Berachos* week

The *Shiyurei Berachah* (64) and *Shu"t Chaim Sho'al* (2:38, ois 60) write that if the *chosan* is a *talmid chocham* and is used to learning in great depth, during the week of *sheva berachos* he should refrain from doing so in order not to take away *simcha* from the *kallah*.

The *Shevet HaLevi* cites the above and comments, that it's true that if the *chosan* is heavily involved in his learning he won't be able to give proper attention to the *kallah*, however, we see with our own eyes that many *kallah's* who marry *talmiday chachomim* are more than happy for their husbands to learn, especially if they learn at home and bring the pleasant sound of Torah to their home, and there is still time during other parts of the day to rejoice together. On the contrary, פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב, the words of Torah bring love and *simcha* to the marriage. Obviously, however, הכל בדעת והכל בתבונה – "it has to be done with the correct perspective".

[See *Teshuvos V'Hanagos* 1:754, who he mentions that R' Mordechai Progmantsky during his week of *sheva berachos* asked forgiveness from his wife, and sat and learn for many hours. He held, that if the wife is *mochel*, then he is absolved from his obligation. And in regard to his own obligation of *simcha*, פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב, and for him there is no greater *simcha* than learning Torah.]

What Type of Work Is Forbidden

The *Shu"t Sheilas Ya'avatz* (2:185) writes, that since the *dinim* of a *chosan* are similar to the *dinim* of *Chol HaMoed* and certainly are not as stringent as the *dinim* of Yom Tov, a *chosan* is allowed to perform activities even if they are not related to *ochel nefesh* [food preparation]. However, he shouldn't perform strenuous activities. Based on the above, R' Elyashiv (cited in *Beis Chasanim* 14:12) ruled that during the week of *sheva berachos* a *chosan* may deposit money he received from wedding presents in the bank. Similarly, he may buy furniture and other various item that he needs to help set up his new home.

ויהי נועם

The *Mishnah Berurah* (295:3) writes, that when Purim and *erev* Pesach fall in the middle of the week, since they are not proper Yomim Tovim, we don't omit ויהי נועם on the *motzei* Shabbos beforehand. Similarly, on *motzei* Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh, even though there is a *minhag* that women refrain from carrying out certain activities, since it's not a proper Yom Tov, ויהי נועם is recited. We see, that unless there is a clear cut *issur* to work in the week to come, ויהי נועם is recited and we mention ויעשה ידיו כעשה ימינו and we mention ויעשה ידיו כעשה ימינו. Therefore, the same thing should apply to a *chosan*, and even though there is an *issur* for him to work, since it is not the same *issur* as on Yom Tov, he should recite ויהי נועם like normal.

The *L'Horas Nossan* (13:119) has a *Teshuvah* in which he discusses the above and he writes that a *chosan* should recite ויהי נועם as a *chosan* also needs the *berachah* of ויעשה ידיו כעשה ימינו. כוננה עלינו ומעשה ידיו כוננהו. The *Pischei Teshuva* (*Even HaEzer* 64:1) writes, that if a *chosan* owns a shop together with a partner, the partner may keep the shop open during the week of *sheva berachos*, unlike an *avel*, where the halachah is that the shop must be closed. Since others may work for him, and bring in money etc. he is subject to the *berachah* of ויעשה ידיו כעשה ימינו and should therefore recite ויהי נועם.

He concludes his *Teshuvah* with some *divrei aggadah*, based on something the *Tur* writes. The *Tur* (295) writes, the custom is to recite ויהי נועם on *motzei* Shabbos as it is a *mizmor* which contains the *berachah* which Moshe Rabbeinu gave to Klal Yisroel at the time they finished the completion of the *Mishkan*, like Rashi writes in *Parshas Pikudei* (39:43) Moshe gave them a *berachah*, "May it be Hashem's will that He rest his Shechinah on your handiwork". Since a *chosan* and *kallah* during the week of *sheva berachos* are setting up a new home, one in which we hope will be a place for the Shechinah to rest, as it says in *Sotah* (17a) "If man and woman are *zoche* the Shechinah rests in their midst" and during the *hakomas hamishkon* [setting up of the *Mishkon*] Moshe blessed Klal Yisroel, ויהי נועם, it is certainly fitting that the *chosan* should mention this *berachah*, so that he merit that his house be like a mini *Mishkon* and a place fit for the Shechinah to rest.

At the end of *Halichos Shlomah* (*Tefillah*) there is a letter from R' Avrohom Dov Auerbach in which he writes: שאינו מאמין שאביו אמר שחתן לא יאמר ויהי נועם במוצאי שבת שלפני החתונה – "I don't believe that my father ever said that a *chosan* should omit ויהי נועם on the *motzei* Shabbos before his *chasuna*"¹⁶.

(Based on a *Teshuvah* written by R' Yom Tov Sanger, in his *Madanay Yom Tov*)

¹⁶ He adds: כוננה עלינו ומעשה ידיו כוננהו. לומר ומעשה ידיו כוננהו.

The Requirement of *Panim Chadashos* at *Sheva Berachos* and Various Other Select *Sheva Berachos Halachos*

The Gemara in *Kesubos* (7b) teaches: מברכין ברכת חתנים כל שבעה - “*Sheva berachos* are recited with a *minyán* all seven days”. However, Rav Yehudah adds: והוא שבאו פנים חדשות – “On condition that there are *panim chadashos*.” The Gemara (8a) explains that at the first meal *sheva berachos* are always recited, but at the remaining meals, their recitation—except for the final *berachah*, which is always recited—is contingent on the presence of *panim chadashos*.

Tosfos explains the basic definition of *panim chadashos*: “*Panim chadashos* must be people who bring extra joy.” According to *Tosfos*, the principle of *panim chadashos* is that their presence causes extra joy.

This explanation is likewise given by the Rosh (*Kesubos* 1:13), who adds that *panim chadashos* are people who have not eaten yet at one of the wedding feasts, even if they were present at the *chuppah*. According to this opinion, the additional joy depends on the presence of *panim chadashos* at the meal (though it is possible that they don’t actually have to eat; see *Bach, Even Ha’Ezer* 62), and *panim chadashos* are therefore people who had hitherto not been present at a wedding meal.

Based on this definition, it follows that *panim chadashos* are specifically “important people, for whom the food and drink at a meal is augmented” (*Bach; Aruch HaShulchan* 62:26). As the *Bach* adds (see also *Beis Shmuel* 62:10), there is no need for an actual increase in the quantity or quality of the food, but only that the people should be worthy of such an increase.

Joy of the *Chosan*

Whereas *Tosfos* underscores the joy of the wedding feast, the Ramban and the Ran emphasize the joy that is brought to the *chosan*, for which the *berachos* were enacted (Ran on *Rif* 2a).

According to these *Rishonim*, it is not imperative to make the *berachos* during the meal (an opinion mentioned by the Rosh), and they can also be recited before the wedding feast, as is clear from *Maseches Sofrim* (19:11). The Ran (3a) explains that people used to gather at the *chosan’s* house in the morning and the evening to cheer up and make the *chosan* happy, and *berachos* would be recited even without a meal.

Predictably, the above-mentioned Rosh (for whom the joy of *panim chadashos* relates to the meal) frowns on this practice, citing Rav Hai that the custom is “unworthy.”

According to the other *Rishonim*, however, there is no need for the *panim chadashos* to participate in the meal. As the Ran writes: “Provided the *panim chadashos* come and are present, even if they do not eat, *sheva berachos* are recited.” Furthermore, it follows that

somebody who has already participated in the joy of the wedding cannot qualify as *panim chadashos*, even if he had not yet participated in a celebratory feast (*Rashba, Kesubos 7b*).

It also emerges that there is no need for *panim chadashos* that are especially important or honored people (for whom extra food is served), and the main point is that the *panim chadashos* bring joy to the *chosan* and *kallah* (*Beis Shmuel 62:10*). It is better, according to this opinion, to have *panim chadashos* who know the *chosan* personally, and whose presence bring him (and/or the *kallah*) subjective joy, rather than to have an objectively “important” person who does not bring the *chosan* joy.

The Rambam’s Opinion

A third definition of *panim chadashos* emerges from the rulings of the Rambam.

The *Tosfos Rid (Kesubos 7b)* writes that *panim chadashos* are those “who have not yet heard the *berachos*.” The emphasis on hearing the *berachos* indicates that attendees at the wedding celebrations have an obligation of reciting (or hearing, which is considered reciting) the *berachos*. When *panim chadashos* are present—individuals who have not yet fulfilled their obligation—*sheva berachos* are recited on their account, so that they, too, will fulfil their duty to recite the *berachos*.

This rationale is implied by the Rambam (*Hilchos Berachos 2:10*), who writes that in the presence of *panim chadashos* (who have not yet heard the *berachos*) *sheva berachos* are recited “on their behalf.” According to the Rambam, it seems that the principle of *panim chadashos* is fulfilled by the presence of those who have not yet been party to reciting the *berachos*, and for whom the *berachos* are therefore recited now.

The simple understanding seems to be that anyone who attends a wedding feast or *sheva berachos* has an obligation upon himself to recite *sheva berachos*, however, the *Aruch HaShulchan* points out that it doesn’t make sense to say such a thing, as surely the *berachos* are for the *chosan* and *kallah* and not the guests. Therefore, the *Aruch HaShulchan* (62:24) explains that *sheva berachos* are *berachos* meant to bless the newlywed couple, and each person is obligated to give his *berachos* to the *chosan* and *kallah*. When somebody who has not yet given his *berachos* is present, the *berachos* are recited again (so the *panim chadashos* can hear the *berachos*, and thereby fulfil their obligation).

The Special Nature of Shabbos

In line with his definition, the Rambam makes no distinction between Shabbos and the rest of the week. If the concept of *panim chadashos* refers to people who have not yet fulfilled their obligation to recite the *berachos*, it follows that the day of Shabbos cannot serve as an “alternative” to *panim chadashos*.

Tosfos, however, who explains that *sheva berachos* are made on account of the extra joy from the *panim chadashos*, cites the Medrash that the day of Shabbos is considered *panim chadashos*. *Tosfos* explains, that even though there must also be an increase of food and celebration, “here, too, there is an increase in celebration and feasting in honor of the Shabbos.” The Rosh writes similarly that “it is the way to increase in joy and portions on Shabbos.”

According to the Ramban and the Ran, who explain that the *berachos* are not related to the meal but rather to the personal joy of the *chosan* and *kallah*, the virtue of Shabbos is explained differently: “But on Friday and Shabbos, because the *chosan* comes out of *shul*, and the *kallah* is taken out of her room and they enter the *chuppah*, the *berachos* are recited before the meal, for this is an intense celebration and the people make them very happy” (Ramban, *Kesubos* 8a). The *berachos*, as noted above, are not on account of the augmented feast, but for the joy of the *chosan*.

The Ramban then adds that *sheva berachos* are recited even on the day of Shabbos (and not only on Friday night), because “there is certainly somebody present who was not there yesterday.” Alternatively, the Ramban (and others) explains that the presence of *panim chadashos* causes a full day of joy, which includes the night and the day that follows.

A practical implication of the dispute concerns the third Shabbos meal. According to *Tosfos* and the Rosh, it stands to reason that *sheva berachos* are not recited at *se’udas shlishis* [the third Shabbos meal], because the special nature of Shabbos meals is generally limited to the first two meals (Ateres Paz, cited in *Otzar HaPoskim* p. 73). According to the Ran and the Ramban, however, the joy of *panim chadashos* perhaps applies to the entire day, and *sheva berachos* could perhaps be recited even at the last meal.

Which Opinion Do We Rule Like?

All three opinions are mentioned by the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rema* (*Even Ha’Ezer* 62).

The *Shulchan Aruch* (62:7) cites the ruling of the Rambam, and adds, as a second opinion, the ruling of the Rosh: “Some say that even if they were present at the *chuppah* and heard the *berachos*, if until now they did not eat at a meal, they are considered *panim chadashos* and *sheva berachos* are recited after *birchas hamazon*.” The *Shulchan Aruch* adds that this is the common custom, adding (62:8), that *panim chadashos* refers to people for whom the celebration is augmented.

The *Rema* adds the opinion of the Ran and the Ramban: “Some say that if there are *panim chadashos*, even if they do not eat there, the *berachos* are recited night and day.”

The practical ramification of *se’udah shlishis* is mentioned in the following halachah (62:8), where the *Shulchan Aruch* rules: “Some say that Shabbos and Yom Tov are considered as *panim chadashos*, but only in the night and day meals, and not in the third meal. This is

the common custom.” This ruling is in line with the reasoning of the Rosh, as ruled by the *Shulchan Aruch* in the previous halachah.

The *Rema*, however, adds that the custom is to recite the *berachos* even during *se’udah shlishis*: “Nowadays, the custom in our places is to recite *sheva berachos* even in the third meal.” As the *Aruch HaShulchan* (62:29-30) notes, this ruling follows the opinion of the Ran and the Ramban, which the *Rema* quotes in the previous halachah.

It is noteworthy that the *Rema* mentions alternative reasons for why *sheva berachos* are recited even during *se’udah shlishis*. One possible reason is that new guests are invited, and another is that special *droshas* are given during this meal, and the *droshas* are considered a substitute for *panim chadashos*.

The *Aruch HaShulchan* points out that in his time, no new guests were customarily invited, and nobody gave special *droshas*, yet the custom remained to recite *sheva berachos*. The reason he suggests for this is that extra and new foods are served during the meal; where this is not the case, one should ensure that there is some Torah shared at the meal, which will bring some extra joy.

Late Finish

There is some doubt concerning reciting *sheva berachos* when the third meal runs into the night of the eighth day after the wedding. The *Shaarei Teshuva* (188:7) writes that when a weekday meal runs into the night of the eighth day, the *berachos* are not recited. However, for the case of Shabbos, some *poskim* rule that the *berachos* are recited even into the night, due to *tosefes Shabbos*, and that we follow the beginning of the meal (as we do concerning the recitation of *retzei* in *bentching*; see *Shu”t Shevet HaLevi* 1:39). Yet, the common custom is to refrain from reciting *sheva berachos* when the meal continues into the night.

Rav Elyashiv, *zt”l*, ruled that on the seventh day of *sheva berachos*, the *sheva berachos* should not be recited past sunset. Rav Elyashiv once related that the Klausenberger Rebbe invited him to the last *sheva berachos* meal being made in honor of his daughter (who married Rav Dov Weiss). He was to be honored with one of the *sheva berachos*. Rav Elyashiv politely declined, explaining that presumably the *sheva berachos* will be recited way after sunset in accordance with the *chassidische* custom that *halachic* nighttime occurs 72 minutes after sunset. Rav Elyashiv felt that according to his custom, *sheva berachos* recited after sunset would be considered blessings in vain. The Klausenberger Rebbe assured him that the *sheva berachos* would conclude before sunset, and then Rav Elyashiv graciously accepted the invitation. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zt”l*, ruled that (at least) in New York, *sheva berachos* may be recited on the 7th day until 40 minutes after sunset.

There is also a *machlokes* if Shabbos was the *panim chadashos* and the meal continued until after Shabbos, if *sheva berachos* may be recited. The *Levush* (end of *Orach Chaim*,

minhogim 30) maintains that just like *retzei* is recited, so is *sheva berachos*. The *Shu"t Hisororus Teshuvah* (2:99) also rules that *sheva berachos* are recited, as he says we go after when the meal started, and because of *tosefes Shabbos*. However, R' Shlomo Kluger (*Shenos Chaim* 105, and in *Shu"t Eleph Lecha Shlomo, Even HaEzer* 108) holds that *sheva berachos* should not be recited. In regards to *retzei* we go after beginning of meal, but in regards to *sheva berachos* there are opinions that they may be recited even without a *seudah*, so even though we do make them after a *seudah*, since many opinions hold they are not really connected to the *seudah*, we can't say that we go after when the *seudah* started. This is also the opinion of the *Shu"t Zokein Aharon* (181), and *Sova Semochos* (1:16).

The Status of Women and Children

According to the Rambam, as explained above, it follows that a child cannot be considered *panim chadashos*. A child is not obligated to recite the *berachos*—as the Rambam notes (*Hilchos Berachos* 2:9), the *berachah* is not made by a child under *barmitzvah*—and therefore his presence cannot justify their recitation. This will apparently apply even to women, though the Rambam is not explicit (however, he mentions slaves together with children, who generally have the same *halachic* status as women).

It is possible that this is the rationale behind the ruling of the *Ritva* (*Kesubos* 7b) who writes that a woman cannot be considered *panim chadashos*, "because only somebody who can join the *minyán* of *birchas chasanim* (*sheva berachos*) qualifies as *panim chadashos*." However, the rulings of the *Ritva* (concerning *sheva berachos* on Shabbos, as noted above) do not concur with the opinion of the Rambam, so it seems the *Ritva* is referring to a different principle.

According to the opinion of *Tosfos* and the *Rosh*, it follows that women and children can be considered *panim chadashos*, provided their presence is a cause for extra celebration. Of course, this is rare for a child, but certainly possible for a woman (see *Kehillas Yaakov, Kesubos* no. 6).

Although the ruling of the *Ritva* is cited by a number of authorities (see *Pischei Teshuvah* 62:14, and *Otzar HaPoskim*), the *Chasam Sofer* (*Kesubos* 7b, *d.h. bemakheilos*) rules that women and children can act as *panim chadashos*. This matter is disputed by contemporary authorities (see *Otzar HaPoskim; Yismach Lev* no. 339).

Some Additional Halachos

- **Defining *panim chadashos*:** The custom is that even somebody who was present at the *chuppah*, yet was not present for the meal, qualifies (in later *sheva berachos* occasions) as *panim chadashos* (*Shulchan Aruch* 62:7). Although some write that one should be stringent in this matter where possible, the *Ezer*

MiKodesh (62:8) writes that since this is the custom, one should not be stringent in this.

- **Important people:** Rav Shraya Devlisky (*Sova Semachos* Chap. 1, note 36) writes that the custom is not to be particular about the presence of “important” *panim chadashos*, for whom we bring special additions to the meal, and to rely on any new participant. He adds, however, in the name of the *Chazon Ish*, that one should try to be particular in this matter. See also *Teshuvos Vehanhagos* (Vol. 2, no. 645), who suggests a reason for the customary leniency in this matter.
- **Defining an important person:** In defining who is considered an “important person,” Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv *zt”l* has ruled that this is defined as somebody who would be served special food as a guest.
- **Does a waiter/charity collector qualify:** Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt”l* ruled that a waiter, who is asked to sit down at the end of the meal, does not qualify as a *panim chadashos*. In this ruling he cited an anecdote concerning the *Chazon Ish*, who was once present at a *sheva berachos* meal in which no *panim chadashos* participated. When a pauper knocked on the door, the *Chazon Ish* ruled that he cannot serve as *panim chadashos*, because his presence will not warrant increased festivity at the meal. Later, when Rav Yaakov Neiman, a noted Rosh Yeshiva, knocked on the door, the *Chazon Ish* said that after his arrival, *sheva berachos* may certainly be recited.
- **Participation of *panim chadashos* in the meal:** According to many *poskim*, there is no need for the *panim chadashos* to actually participate in the meal (*Rema* 62:7; *Chelkas Mechokek* 11; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 149:5). However, some write that based on the opinion of *Tosfos* and the Rosh, one should ensure that the *panim chadashos* participate in the meal (*Maharit Tzalfon* 71).
- **Presence at *sheva berachos*:** The *panim chadashos* should be present at the time of making the *berachos* - certainly if they were not present during the meal (*Chelkas Mechokek* 62:11). Some rule that if the *panim chadashos* are not present at the time of the *sheva berachos*, the *berachos* cannot be recited (*Shu”t Shenos Chaim* 105). This is obviously the case according to the Rambam (who maintains that the *berachos* are recited to discharge the obligation of the *panim chadashos*).
- **The *panim chadashos* doesn’t need to be there from the beginning:** It’s important to mention that if one only realized halfway through the *seudah* that there is no *panim chadashos*, a *panim chadashos* may be invited later on, and he should partake in the continuation of the *seudah*.
- **Hotel or restaurant *sheva berachos*** - If a *chosan* and *kallah* are eating a meal in a hotel or restaurant, and most people are not there for the *simcha*, can *sheva berachos* be recited? Rav Moshe Feinstein said they may be recited if it is made clear that the meal is in honor of the *chosan* and *kallah*. For example, the *chosan* and *kallah* should sit together at a head table. The *Sova Semachos* suggests that in

this scenario, a special food should be added to the meal in honor of the *chosan* and *kallah*.

(The above write-up is based on halachah write-ups written by R' Yehoshua Pfeffer, R' Yom Tov Sanger and Rabbi Avrohom Sebwow)

Leaving Sheva Berachos Early

A very common *shailah* that occurs, is that one is sitting at a *sheva berachos* which just seems to be going on and on and on, and one doesn't have time to stay until the end. Is one allowed to leave before hearing the *sheva berachos*?

The above *shailah* is applicable by a *chasuna* as well, may one leave before *sheva berachos* or does one have to stay until the end?

The truth is, besides for when one makes a *chasunah* for his children or is attending his own *chasunah*, very few people stay until the end, is this *halachically* permissible?

If by leaving one will cause that there won't be a *minyan* or that there won't be any *panim chadoshos*, then it's very difficult to say that one may leave early, however, assuming there will be a *minyan* for *bentching* and that there will be a *panim chadoshos*, is it ok to leave early?

Tzitz Eliezer

The *Tzitz Eliezer* (11:84) has a *Teshuva* in which he deals with the above. The title of the *Teshuva* is: "אי מותר בסעודת נשואין לברך ברהמ"ז בשלשה ולכת לפני שמיעת שבע ברכות – "Is one allowed to leave a *chasunah seudah* early, *bentch* with three people, and leave before hearing *sheva berachos*".

The *Tzitz Eliezer* cites the *Minchos Yitzchok* (2:43) who writes, that if one has a compelling reason as to why he needs to leave early, then he may leave before *sheva berachos*. The *Minchas Yitzchok* maintains, that the *chiyuv* to recite *sheva berachos* only starts when *bentching* starts. Washing and eating doesn't obligate *sheva berachos*, what obligates *sheva berachos* is *birchas hamazon*, therefore, as long as one leaves before *bentching* starts, he was never obligated in *sheva berachos*, therefore, it's ok to leave early.

The *Minchos Yitzchok* also points out, that by *zimmun* we find in *Shas* and *poskim* that one shouldn't leave early, yet when it comes to *sheva berachos* we don't find such a thing, therefore, it seems that there is nothing wrong.

The *Tzitz Eliezer* cites a compelling proof to the above. R' Shlomo Kluger (*HaEleph Lecho Shlomo, Even HaEzer* 107) has a *Teshuva* where he discusses what the halachah is if *sheva berachos* on the last day finishes after *shkia*. Should *sheva berachos* be recited or not? Do we go after when the meal started like by *retsei* and *yaleh veyovoi*, or do we go after when it finishes?

R' Shlomo Kluger writes, that by *retsei* and *yaleh veyovoi* as soon as one eats bread he is obligated to *bentch*, therefore, we go after when one ate bread. By *sheva berachos*, however, the *chiyuv* only kicks in when one starts to *bentch*, and since *bentching* only started after *shkia*, *sheva berachos* shouldn't be recited.¹⁷

It's clear from the above, that the *chiyuv* to recite *sheva berachos* only starts by *birchas hamazon*, therefore, the *Tzitz Eliezer* sides with the *Minchos Yitzchok* and says, that as long as one leaves before the start of *birchas hamazon* there is no problem.

Mahari Shteif

The *Tzitz Eliezer* then quotes the *Shu"t Mahari Shteif* who mentions a different *svora* [logic] as to why it's ok to leave before *sheva berachos*. He says, that the *chiyuv* to recite *sheva berachos* isn't a *chiyuv* incumbent on every *yochid* [individual] who attends the *sheva berachos* rather: הטילו החיוב על המסובין שישתדלו שיהיה כאן מי שיברך אותן השבע ברכות כדי לשמח חתן וכלה – "Chazal placed a general obligation on all those at the meal that they should do their best to make sure *sheva berachos* are recited, in order to make the *chosan* and *kallah* happy". Therefore, as long as one knows that *sheva berachos* will be recited, there is nothing wrong with leaving early.

What About Zimmun?

Even if in regard to *sheva berachos* there is nothing wrong with leaving early, but what about *zimmun*?

R' Shraya Devlisky in his *Sova Semochos* deals with the above and brings a number of solutions: 1) He should join the meal without eating bread or a quantity of cake/crackers that would require one to *bentch*. 2) If that doesn't work, one should wash and start eating before others and finish and *bentch* before they finish their meal. 3) If the first two options are unavailable, one can rely on the opinion that when one starts the meal, one can have in mind not to *halachically* join with the others in the meal. (Rav Moshe mentions this idea.) 4) If one ate bread, started with everyone else, and didn't have in mind not to *halachically* join the others, one should at least finish eating before the others and *bentch* before them. If the first four options did not work out, and he really must leave before the recitation of the *sheva berachos*, he can *bentch* with a *zimmun* of three people and depart without *sheva berachos*.

However, the above should only be done in pressing circumstances, and ideally one should try and stay until the end.

¹⁷ משום דברהמ"ז אקרקפתא דפת מונח ותיכף כשאכל פת ביום נתחייב בברהמ"ז וכו' אבל שבע ברכות של חתן לא חל עליו חיוב רק בשעה זו שמברך ברהמ"ז.

How Can We Recite the *Berachah* of, שהשמחה במעונו, At a *Chasunah*, Surely There is Great Pain for the Parents Who Have to Spend So Much?

The Gemara in *Kesubos* (8a) says, that by a *bris milah* we don't recite the *berachah* of שהשמחה במעונו, since there is lots of pain for the child. We see, that if during a *simcha* one of the participating parties experiences pain, we don't recite שהשמחה במעונו. If so, surely by most *chasunah's* we should omit the *berachah* of שהשמחה במעונו, as the parents of the *chosan* and *kallah* have to spend lots of money and are presumably not in the happiest of moods?

Below are a number of answers:

1) R' Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l* answers, that the above *din* is only true if one of the main *ba'alay simcha* are in pain. By a *bris*, the child is the main focus of the *bris*, therefore, we don't recite שהשמחה במעונו. By a *chasunah* however, the main focus is on the *chosan* and *kallah* and they are happy as they don't have to spend the money, therefore, we recite the *berachah* of שהשמחה במעונו.

2) A second answer R' Chaim offers, is, that by a *bris milah* there is no possibility for there not to be pain, the whole idea of the *bris* is to cause pain to the child. Since the mitzvah by its very nature involves pain, *Chazal* never instituted for the *berachah* of שהשמחה במעונו to be recited. By a *chasunah*, however, there doesn't have to be pain involved, in fact, many times a *chosan* and *kallah* get married and the parents are able to afford the costs.

3) R' Shamaï Gross *shlita* answers, that an older person is able to overcome his emotions, and at least during the *chasunah* he is able to be happy and enjoy himself. A young child however, isn't, therefore, by a *bris* we don't recite שהשמחה במעונו and by a *chasunah* we do.

4) The *Madanay Asher* answers, that by a *bris milah* the child experiences lots of pain, and he has zero *simcha* as he doesn't understand that he is fulfilling a mitzvah. By a *chasunah*, however, even if the parents are unhappy about spending so much money, they are still very happy, as *boruch Hashem* they are *zoche* to be marrying off their child, therefore, it's ok for them to recite שהשמחה במעונו.

5) Another answer perhaps we can suggest is, that when a baby cries at the *bris*, everyone present feels the pain. By a *chasunah*, however, the people present don't feel the pain of the people spending money on the *chasunah*. Since it is only the parents and not everyone at the *simcha*, we recite the *berachah* of שהשמחה במעונו.

The *Mahari* (*Parshas Chayei Sorah*) offers a beautiful *peshat* in the Gemara in *Eruvin* (54a). The Gemara says: האי עלמא כבי הילולא דמיא – “This world is like a *chasunah* hall”. By a *chasunah*, the *tzibbur* comes and eats and drinks and has a good time, however, the

mechutonim who pay for everything don't really enjoy themselves, as they are worried about the spending. The same thing is with *Oilam Hazeh*, the body derives benefit, however, the *neshoma* doesn't.

Understanding the *Minhag* Not to Wear a *Tallis* Until After the *Chasunah*

The common *minhag*, especially amongst Ashkenazim is that *bochurim* don't wear a *tallis* until they get married.

What Is The Source?

The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 8:3) cites a source from the Gemara in *Kiddushin* (29b): משתבח ליה רב חסדא לרב הונא בדרב המנונא דאדם גדול הוא א"ל כשיבא לידך הביאהו לידי כי אתא Rav Chisda would sing Rav Hamnuna's praises to Rav Huna, and would say he was an *adam gadol*. Rav Huna said, when he next comes to you, bring him to me. When he finally came, he saw that he wasn't covered with a cloth, Rav Huna asked why, and he said the reason I'm not covered is because I am not married".

The *Tashbatz Kotan* (*ois* 464) cites support from the order of *pasukim* in *Parshas Ki Seitzei*. The Torah puts the *pasuk* of גדילים תעשה לך - the *pasuk* which talks about *tzitzis*, next to the *pasuk* of כי יקה איש אשה - the *pasuk* which talks about getting married. The *Tashbatz* says: - "From here there is support to *minhag* Ashkenaz, who hold that one shouldn't wear a *tallis* before getting married."

The *Maharil* (*Minhogim, Hilchos Nisuin*) says a similar thing: בארץ מולדתי ברינוס נוהגין שגם נערים גדולים אין מתעטפין בציצית עד שנושאים אשה וסמכה להא דכתיב גדילים תעשה לך וסמך ליה כי - "In my birth land, Reinus, the custom is that boys don't wear a *tallis* until they get married. Support can be brought from the order of the *pasukim*, where we find that the *pasuk* of גדילים תעשה לך is next to the *pasuk* of כי יקה איש אשה."

Why Not?

We showed above that there is proof that one shouldn't wear a *tallis* until he gets married, the question is, however, why not?

The *Divrei Yatziv* dedicates a *Teshuvah* (*Orach Chaim* 44) to discuss the above and offers a number of answers:

1) The mitzvah of *tzitzis* hints to the 613 *mitzvos*, like it says in the *pasuk*: וראיתם אותם וזכרתם: - "You shall see them and remember all the *mitzvos* of Hashem and fulfil them". Rashi explains that the *gematria* [numerical value] of the word *tzitzis* together with eight strings and five knots equals 613. *Tosfos* in *Berachos* (18a) writes that

he heard from Anshei Lutr that we take *tzitzis* off a dead person, as the *gematria* of *tzitzis*, together with the 8 strings and five knots equals 613, and if a dead person wears *tzitzis* it looks like he is saying that he keeps the entire Torah which is a lie. *Tosfos* argues, because even when one is alive he is unable to keep the entire Torah. The *Divrei Yatziv* says, however, that at least in regard to the mitzvah of *peru urevu*, about which the Gemara in *Yevomos* (62b) says: שרוי בלא תורה – “Anyone who dwells without a wife, is like dwelling without Torah”, we don’t want someone who isn’t fulfilling this mitzvah of *peru urevu* to wear *tzitzis*. Not wearing *tzitzis*, gives one a constant reminder that he needs to get married, and this will hopefully encourage him to do so.

2) The Gemara in *Menachos* (43b) teaches: כל הזריז במצוה זו זוכה ומקבל פני שכינה – “Anyone who is particular in this mitzvah (of *tzitzis*) will merit to see the Shechinah”. There is also a Gemara in *Sotah* (17a) which teaches: איש ואשה זכו שכינה ביניהם – “If man and woman are *zoche* the Shechinah will rest in their midst”. We withhold the mitzvah of *tallis* from a *bochur* which in turn withholds the Shechinah, to give a subtle hint to the *bochur* that he should get married and bring down the Shechinah. Additionally, we withhold the mitzvah of *tallis* so that he feels embarrassed and feels encouraged to get married. (See *Teshuvah* inside for further answers).

Why Does a Chosan Specifically the Day After His Chasunah Dress up Like an Arab?

The *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 8) writes: כעטיפת הגאונים פירשו עטיפתו וסדר עטיפתו פירשו הגאונים כעטיפת – “One should wrap himself in a *tallis* whilst standing. The Geonim explain that one should wrap himself similar to the way that the Arabs do. This means that one should wrap himself properly” (see *Tur* for a second opinion). According to the above, that one should wrap himself with a *tallis* like an Arab (כעטיפת ישמעאלים), it comes out that the day after the *chasunah*, when the *chosan* puts on his *tallis* for the first time, he dresses up like an Arab. What is the logic to say that the *chosan* on the first day after his *chasunah* should dress up like the lowest people in the world?

The *Madanay Asher* explains as follows: A *chosan* during his first *Shacharis* after the *chasunah* has lots of things to *daven* for. He needs to *daven* for *sholam bayis*, for children, *parnosa* etc. etc. Generally speaking, when a person asks for money from a *gevir* [rich person] he needs to bring letters from various rabbonim to show that he is a worthy cause. From the Gemara in *Yevamos* (62b) it’s clear that before one gets married, he is שרוי בלא תורה ובלא כלום – “he has neither Torah nor anything else”, if so, what is the *chosan* thinking when he asks for so much, what merit does he have? For this reason, they established that the *chosan* should wrap himself with a *tallis* like an Arab, or like Yishomel to be precise.

The Gemara in *Rosh Hashanah* (16b) writes in regard to Yishomel: אמר רבי יצחק אין דנין את האדם אלא לפי מעשיו של אותה שעה שנאמר בישמעאל כי שמע אלקים אל קול הנער באשר הוא שם – “Reb Yitzchok said, we judge a person according to his deeds at this time, like we find by

Yishmoel, 'Hashem listened to the voice of the lad, according to where he was at that point'. Rashi explains, that the *malochim* said to the Ribbono Shel Olam, מי שעתיד זרעו - "Does the one who in the future is going to make your children die from thirst really deserved to be saved with a well?" and Hashem answered back, 'now he is a *tzaddik*, and I judge based on now'.

We see from Yishmoel, that Hashem judges based on the present, therefore, the *chosan* dresses up like Yishmoel, as if to say: I am no worse than Yishmoel, and if Yishmoel got answered based on now, I should also be. A *chosan* on the day of his *chuppah* is forgiven for his sins, so right at the start of his new life the *chosan* dresses up like Yishmoel and says to the Ribbono Shel Olam, so to speak, "Now I am pure, please judge me as I am now, and answer my *tefillos*".

Perhaps we can take this idea a bit further and explain why we dress up like Yishmoel every single morning when we put on a *tallis*. When a person wakes up in the morning, he wants to start over again, and regrets what he did the previous day. So, we dress up like Yishmoel and say "Just like Yishmoel was answered because at that point in time he was good, please Hashem answer my *tefillos* as well. Even though in the past I haven't been too good, and perhaps in the future I won't be too good either, at least now I am doing ok, please answer me based on now." To hammer into a person the concept of באשר הוא שם – "A person is judged based on now", *Chazal* enacted that when we put on a *tallis* at the beginning of *davening* we dress up like Yishmoel who personifies the lesson of באשר הוא שם.

Divergent Family *Minhogim* Between Husband and Wife

The obligation to abide by the *halachic* practices and customs of our parents is best illustrated by the following Gemara (*Pesochim* 50b):

בני ביישן נהוג דלא הוו אזלין מצור לצידון במעלי שבתא אתו בנייהו קמיה דרבי יוחנן אמרו לו אבהתינן אפשר להו אנן לא אפשר לן אמר להו כבר קיבלו אבותיכם עליהם שנאמר שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תטוש תורת אמך.

The Bnei Byshan did not travel from Tzur to Sidon on Friday to avoid detracting from their Shabbos preparations. Their children posed the following question to Rav Yochanan: "Our fathers were able to abide by this stringent practice because they were wealthy. We, however, find it economically cumbersome to abide by this stringency. Are we obligated to maintain their practice?" Rav Yochanan answered that they must follow their fathers' customs, as the pasuk in Mishlei (1:8) teaches, "Listen, my son, to the teachings of your father, and do not abandon the Torah of your mother."

There are many *minhogim* [customs] practiced that we may have inherited from our ancestors. For example, on Pesach these might include *kitniyos* or *gebrokts*, depending on one's origins. On Succos, does one sit in the *succah* on Shemini Atzeres. Does one wait for the time of Rabbeinu Tam on *motzei* Shabbos. How long must one wait in-between eating

meat and milk. The question is, what do a newly married couple do when they are faced with conflicting *minhogim*? Does the husband keep his, and the wife keep hers? Does the wife have to change and keep her husband's *minhogim*? Does it make a difference which *minhogim* we are talking about? Read on and found out what the *poskim* say about the above matter.

Earliest *Teshuva* on the Topic

There is only one *Teshuva* on this topic that was published before the twentieth century, as in those days people rarely married someone who lived far away from them. Hence, there was little likelihood of divergent family customs between husband and wife. The development of modern means of transportation and the mass movements of the past century facilitated marriages between Jews of different backgrounds. Therefore, many twentieth century *poskim* address this issue.

The *Tashbatz* (3:179), a major *posek* in the 15th century wrote the classic *Teshuva* on this matter. He presents two reasons why the wife should adopt her husband's *minhogim*. Firstly, it would be highly disruptive if both the husband and the wife were to maintain their respective conflicting family practices. For example, if the husband is Sephardic and the wife Ashkenazic, the husband would eat *kitniyos* on Pesach and the wife would not. It is difficult for husband and wife to abide by two different standards of *kashrus*. Secondly, the *Tashbatz* invokes the Talmudic principle of אשתו בגופו (see Sanhedrin 28b). The Gemara considers husband and wife as one person. Hence, the Gemara states that one is disqualified from testifying about his wife's relatives just as one is disqualified from testifying about his own relatives. The *Tashbatz* invokes this principle to teach that the wife should adopt her husband's family traditions, since after all, they are considered the same person.

The *Tashbatz* adds, that even after the husband dies, the wife should continue practicing her husband's family *minhogim* if the couple has children and she has not remarried. The *Tashbatz* bases this assertion on the Torah's law regarding the eligibility of a woman whose father is not a *kohen* to eat *terumah* (*Vayikra* 22:11-13). If her husband is a *kohen*, she may eat *terumah* even after his death if the couple had children and she has not remarried.

Current Day *Poskim*

Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim* 1:158), Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Yabia Omer* 5:37), and Rav Gedalia Felder (*Yesodei Yeshurun* 6:239-240) all rule that the wife must adopt the *halachic* customs of her husband. They cite the following principle as the basis for their ruling: The *Mishnah Berurah* (468:19, see also *Biur Halachah* 468:4 *d.h. Haholech*) rules that if one permanently relocates to a community whose *halachic* practices differ from the community that he left, he should adopt the new community's customs. This rule applies whether the new communities customs are stricter or more lenient than the

community he came from. These *poskim* argue that halachah views a woman who marries as moving to a new community i.e. her husband's home.

Rav Moshe quotes a number of *pasukim* that demonstrate that the Torah views marriage as a woman moving into her husband's home. For example, regarding divorce the Torah (*Devorim* 24:1) describes the husband as sending his wife from his home. Accordingly, the wife must accept the customs of her husband's family. Rav Ovadia and Rav Felder bring the *Tashbatz* as a precedent for their ruling.

Common practice reflects the rulings of Rav Moshe, Rav Ovadia, and Rav Felder, that wives accept the family traditions of their husbands.

Rav Ovadia Yosef's Major Limitation

Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Ohr Torah* Iyar 5761) imposes a major limitation on the rule that the wife must adopt her husband's *halachic* practices. He writes that this rule only applies to practices that her husband's family has practiced for generations, such as *kitniyos* or *gebrokt*. However, the wife is not obligated to adopt the stringent practices that her husband accepted upon himself.

A common practical application of this ruling is that if the husband accepts upon himself to avoid relying on communal *eruvim*, the wife is not bound to follow this stringency. Similarly, if the husband accepts the stringency to observe Shabbos according to Rabbeinu Tam's standards of assessing when night-time begins, she does not have to abide by this stringency.

Rav Yehuda Henkin

Rav Yehuda Henkin discusses whether there is any flexibility regarding the practice of wives adopting husband's rulings. In his *Shailos U'Teshuvos Bnei Banim* (3:29) he writes that although the common practice is for wives to accept their husband's family practices, there is some room for flexibility.

Rav Henkin acknowledges that common practice is to follow Rav Moshe's, Rav Ovadia's, and Rav Felder's rulings. However, Rav Henkin challenges the fundamental assumption of their ruling. They assume that the Torah believes that, metaphysically speaking, a wife moves into the home of her husband. Rav Henkin, though, notes the dispute between Rabbeinu Tam and the Maharam MiRuttenberg regarding when husband and wife come from different places whether a wife must move to the husband's town or vice versa (see *Tur* and *Beis Yosef Even HaEzer* 75). The *Rema* (75:1) and *Beis Shmuel (Even HaEzer* 75:7) rule that the halachah accepts Rabbeinu Tam's ruling that the husband must move to the

wife's town. If the husband must move to the wife's town, observes Rav Henkin, then he should be required to observe the local *minhogim* - those of his wife's family.

Rav Henkin also asserts that *Devorim* 24:1 does not constitute a *halachic* norm that the marital home belongs to the husband in a metaphysical sense. It could be that the Torah merely reflects the sociological norm of the time that the marital home belonged to the husband, and upon divorce he sent her from his home. Rav Henkin argues that the Torah does not preclude the joint ownership by husband and wife of the marital home both in an economic and metaphysical sense.

Rav Henkin concludes that we should not abandon the accepted practice for wives to follow their husbands' family traditions. However, he rules that a wife may continue to follow her family's traditions regarding a matter that does not impinge on her relationship with her husband and does not impose a hardship on her. Rav Henkin requires that she stipulate with her *choson* before the marriage that she wants to continue to practice her own family's traditions.

Three Other Rulings

Rav Henkin wrote in an unpublished *Teshuvah*, that if the husband is a convert or a *ba'al teshuva* and the wife's family has an unbroken chain of *halachic* observance, the husband may adopt his wife's family traditions. He writes, though, that it might be more appropriate for the husband to follow the prevalent traditions of the community to which he belongs. Rav Henkin advises that the husband should seek the guidance of his Rov in choosing the most appropriate approach to this issue.

Rav Chaim David Halevi (1924-1998) Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisroel (*Techumin* 6:84) writes that in a marriage where the wife is *halachically* observant and the husband is not, the family should practice the wife's family's traditions. Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg also agreed with this ruling.

It seems common practice for women to practice certain aspects of *Hilchos Niddah* in accordance with her mother's family traditions. This refers to matters that do not directly impinge on the husband. An example is whether the wife should immerse twice or three times in the *mikvah*. The same would seem to be with regard to lighting Shabbos candles where the wife will usually follow what her mother did as to how many lights to kindle.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, a wife should follow her husband's family traditions. Nevertheless, there are certain limited circumstances where she may continue to follow her practices from home. *Geirim* and *ba'alei teshuva* and their children should consult their Rov regarding which *minhogim* they should follow.

Derush

Why Did Adam Have to Be Put to Sleep When Hashem Arranged His Shidduch?

In *Parshas Bereishis* (2:21) we learn about the first *shidduch* that ever happened, the *shidduch* of Adam and Chava. The *pasuk* writes: ויפל ה' אלקים תרדמה על האדם ויקח אחת – מצלעתיו ויסגור בשר תחתנה – “Hashem made Adam fall into a deep sleep, he then took one of his ribs (and made Chava from it) and then closed up the skin”. Why did Adam need to be put to sleep? Why couldn't Hashem bring Adam his *zivug* [partner] whilst he was still awake?

The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (39a) brings an interesting question which was asked by a certain *kofer* [non-believer] to Rabbon Gamliel. He was asked, “Hashem your G-d is a thief as it says, ‘Hashem put Adam to sleep and then took one of his ribs’, why didn't he take it when Adam was awake?” Rabbon Gamliel then asked the *kofer* to bring him a raw piece of meat, he took it and heated it up under some hot ashes, and then gave it to the *kofer* to eat and he refused saying it was disgusting (as he saw it being prepared). Rabbon Gamliel answered, that it was the same for Adam, it would have been disgusting for him to see how his wife was being created, therefore, Hashem put him to sleep.

However, the *Be'er Mayim Chaim* asks, that the above is not enough of a reason, as the Gemara in *Sotah* (47a) teaches, that there are three things which Hashem makes favourable in people's eyes, and one of them is a wife to her husband. If Hashem makes a woman favourable in the eyes of her husband, surely he could make it that Adam wouldn't be disgusted by seeing Chava's creation.

The *Chizkuni* answers, that Hashem had pity on Adam HaRishon, and didn't want him to experience pain, therefore, he put him to sleep. The *Seforno* answers similarly, that Hashem didn't want Adam to get scared and to be in pain.

The *Abarbanel* answers: שתביאהו שמחה פתאומית ויהיה כמוצא מציאה טובה שתגל נפשו בבואה – אליו בהיסח דעת – “So that there would be a sudden excitement, like one who finds an exciting item when he wasn't expecting it”.

The *Toldos Yitzchok* answers: That the reason Hashem put Adam to sleep, was to teach us, that a person must be calm at home and act as if he is sleeping, and he shouldn't get angry with his wife and children when they do things that upset him.

The *Tiferes Yonason* answers: That when a person sleeps his *neshoma* goes up to Shomayim and experiences a type of *nevuah* [prophecy]. Like the *Zohar* writes: ויפל ה' – תרדימה זהו בבואה – “Hashem put him into a sleep – this is *nevuah*”. At that point Hashem created a woman, and since a woman was created at that point, she has a *binah yeseirah*

[deeper level of understanding]. This is *pshat* in the *drosha* of Chazal: ויבן ה' את הצלע בינה – “Hashem built the rib, *binah yeseirah* was given to a woman” (see *Tiferes Yonason* inside for another answer).

The *Madanay Asher* answers, that perhaps the reason Adam was put to sleep is to teach that a person shouldn't think that *shidduchim* come based on *hishtadlus*. On the contrary, we see that the first *shidduch* came whilst Adam was sleeping. Just like this is how the first *shidduch* happened, the same is with all *shidduchim*.

[Based on the above, perhaps we can understand why older unmarried *bochurim* sleep a lot. We see that sleeping is a *segulah* for *shidduchim*, therefore, just like Adam slept, they try and copy.] (*Madanay Asher*)

Why Are We Not Worried About *Zugos* [Pairs] When it Comes to Getting Married?

There is a well-known Gemara in *Pesochim* (109b) which discusses the danger of doing things in pairs. At a *sheva berachos* for a son of my Rosh Yeshiva, R' Tzvi Kaplan *shlita*, I heard one of the *darshonim* ask why we aren't worried about this when it comes to a *chosan* and *kallah*. At the time I thought it was a joke question, but since then I have seen that the *Iyun Ya'akov* actually asks the question.

Below are a number of answers:

1) The Gemara in *Sotah* (17a) teaches: איש ואשה זכו שכינה שרויה בניהם – “If a husband and wife are meritorious, the Shechinah will rest in their midst” When a husband and wife act the way they should, the Shechinah rests in their midst. Consequently, when they get married there is actually three people not two, therefore, there is no problem of *zugos*. (*Iyun Ya'akov*)

The Gemara in *Kesubos* (17a) says: רב שמואל בר יצחק מרקד אתלת – “Rav Shmuel bar Yitzchok would dance with three”. Rashi explains, he would dance with three *hadasim* [myrtles]. The *Maharsha* asks, that the Gemara should have said בתלת – “with three”, not אתלת – “on three”. According to the above, we can explain, that Rav Shmuel bar Yitzchok wouldn't dance at every *chasunah* – he would only dance at a *chasunah* which brought with it *hashro'as* Shechinah. I.e. he would only dance אתלת, at a *chasunah* where there was three, the *chosan*, *kallah* and the Shechinah. (This *peshat* I saw brought down from R' Yitzchok Shmuel Shvartz in *Madanay Asher*)

Based on the above we can understand the *Chazal* which says: דאם לא זכו אש אוכלתן – “that if they aren't meritorious, they will be consumed by fire”. Since the only reason there is no problem of *zugos* is because the Shechinah rests amongst them, if they get into fights, they cause the Shechinah to leave, and then there is in fact a problem of *zugos*.

2) The *Zohar* (*Parshas Vayikra*) says, that before a *chosan* and *kallah* get married they are *“two halves of a whole”* – פלג גופא – (והיו לבשר אחד), once they get married they become one. According to the *Zohar*, when a *chosan* and *kallah* get married they become one, since they are one, there is no problem of *zugos*. (*Iyun Ya'akov*)

3) R' Shamai Gross *shlita* answers, that *zugos* is a problem when one person uses two items. Here, however, the husband uses his wife, and she uses him. Each one uses the other, however, both husband and wife are only using one item.

According to the above, for one man to have two wives would be problematic. R' Gross suggests, that perhaps it is for this very reason that Rabbeinu Gershom enacted that a man shouldn't marry two women.

4) The Gemara in *Pesochim* (110b) which discusses *zugos* concludes: למאן דלא מקפיד אינו – “if one is not particular about *zugos* then he won't be harmed”. Therefore, when it comes to marriage, as long as each partner isn't so *makpid* [particular] about what the other one does, there will be no issue of *zugos*. (*Madanay Asher*)

Why Is a Good *Shidduch* Compared to a Vine as Opposed to Some Other Tree?

The Gemara in *Pesochim* (49a) says: לעולם ימכור אדם כל מה שיש לו וישא בת תלמידי חכמים – “A person should sell all he has, so that he can marry off his son to the daughter of a *talmud chocham*, and his daughter to a *talmid chocham*, this can be compared to the branch of a vine being mixed with the branch of another vine.”

The *Maharsha* asks, why a good *shidduch* is compared to a vine, as opposed to some other tree. See there for what he answers.

Another question is, we *daven*: עוד ישמע בערי יהודה קול ששון וקול שמחה קול חתן וקול בלה – “It shall be heard in the city of Yehudah, the voice of happiness, the voice of *simcha*, the voice of the *chosan* and the voice of the *kallah*”. The question is, to *daven* for the voice of happiness and the voice of *simcha* makes senses, but what are we *davening* for when we *daven* for קול חתן וקול בלה, do the *chosan* and *kallah* have some special voice?

After we put *tefillin* on each morning, we say: וארשתוך לי לעולם – “you shall be forever betrothed to me”. The *Chasam Sofer* already asks, why are we *davening* that we stay betrothed to the Ribbono Shel Olam. Betrothal is a short-term thing, surely we want to move on to the *nisuin* [marriage], so what are we *davening* for?

Normally, when one gets married, he is very grateful to the Ribbono Shel Olam, and is extremely happy. It's well known that the son of the *Divrei Chaim* (R' Garelitz) once met a *chosan* during his week of *sheva berachos*, and the *chosan* was walking around as if he owned the world, so he said to him “I don't belong to you, remove me from your list”. The

truth is, this is the way it should be, and ideally the *chosan* should keep this up, and it should continue to increase. However, very often the longer one is married, the further removed he becomes from this *simcha*. With this idea, we can answer all the above questions.

Wine has a unique nature, one which can't be found by any other liquids and foods. By all other foods, the older the food is, the worse the food becomes. Wine is an exception, and the older it becomes the better. Therefore, we bless the *chosan* and *kallah*, that just like by wine, the older it gets the better it becomes, similarly, we hope that the older the *shidduch* gets, the better the marriage becomes. We give them a *berachah* that they should continue to be happier and happier with each other, and life in general. That's why we compare them to a vine, as opposed to some other tree.

This also helps answer our second question. When a *chosan* speaks to his *kallah* during the week of *sheva berachos*, or when he speaks to his *shver* [father-in-law], he speaks softly and pleasantly, and speaks with the upmost respect. However, as time goes on, and the week of *sheva berachos* starts to fade away, he can already be heard from the other room. Therefore, we *daven* that his voice should stay sweet and soft and last like this forever. This is what we are referring to when we say, קול חתן וקול כלה.

This also helps answer our third question. When we *daven*, וארשתיה לי לעולם, we are asking that we should be happy and content just like when a *chosan* and *kallah* get engaged. Just like at the beginning their *simcha* is fresh, we hope to have the same relationship with the Ribbono Shel Olam.

Some answer, that the reason a good *shidduch* is compared to a vine is because vines lean on one another, just like vines lean on each other, similarly, we hope that the *chosan* and *kallah* will follow in the ways of the *Avos* and *Imohos* and not search out new ways.

With this we can explain the Gemara in *Berachos* (6b). The Gemara writes: דהמשמח חתן – “One who makes a *chosan* happy, says R' Nachman bar Yitzchok, is as if he has rebuilt one of the destroyed buildings in Yerusholayim”. The question is, why doesn't the Gemara say: כאילו בנה בית מפואר בירושלים – “it's as if he built a beautiful new building in Yerusholayim”? The answer is, a *chosan* already has the foundations, he already has what he learnt from his father and ancestors, he merely continues to build on what is already built. (*Madanay Asher*)

Understanding the *Berachah* We Give at the *Badeken*

ויברכו את רבקה ויאמרו אחתנו את היי לאלפי רבבה ויירש זרעך את שער שנאוי

They blessed Rivkah and said to her, “Our sister, may you come to be thousands of myriads, and may your offspring inherit the gate of its foes.” (*Bereishis* 24:60)

With these words, we bless our daughters before they walk down to the *chuppah*. Of all the magnificent quotations in the Torah, why do we quote Lavan *harasha* at this auspicious time?

In truth, when saying, “May your offspring inherit the gate of its foes,” Lavan was giving a heartfelt and selfless *berachah*, as he was blessing his sister that her offspring should overcome their enemies, namely his own descendants. Though the success of Rivkah and her children signified Lavan’s failure, he still gave the blessing. This was an example of a blessing that is completely for the good of the recipient. Not only did he receive nothing in return, the *berachah* was actually to his and his children’s detriment.

Such a blessing is the ultimate *berachah*. Such altruism and selflessness become the perfect message for a young couple with which to begin their marriage, to live a life where one is there for the other one, no matter what.

The greatness of this type of *berachah* can be seen from a novel understanding of the words of Chazal (*Bava Kama* 92a): “*Kol hamevakeish rachamim al chaveiro ve’hu tzarich le’oso davar hu ne’eneh techillah* — Anyone who asks for mercy on behalf of his friend, and he is in need of the same thing, will be answered first.” A seeming example of this would be: If I need a *shidduch*, and you do, too, and I put aside my needs to focus on yours, Hashem will answer my *tefillos* first: I will be blessed with a *shidduch* even before you, the one I was *davening* for. This has led people to make an agreement with one another: “You *daven* for me, and I’ll *daven* for you.” Yet it seems as if the *tefillos* on behalf of the other in this case are not 100% selfless.

There is, however, another way to understand this Chazal. “*Kol hamevakeish rachamim al chaveiro ve’hu tzarich le’oso davar*” can be speaking about a time in which my friend and I need the same exact thing and therefore are in competition for the item I am praying for. Thus, by *davening* for him, I am jeopardizing my chances of success. For example, were I to *daven* for the success of my competitor in business, then I will lose business as a result of his success. Yet that is precisely when Chazal say, “*Hu ne’eneh techillah*,” that the one *davening* for his friend will be answered first. If I am willing to concern myself with another person’s needs even when they are at odds with my own, such a *tefillah* does not go unanswered and the great concern for another rebounds, with my needs being met first. Again, from altruism comes the greatest of blessings.

Based on a *vort* from Rav Simcha Bunim Sofer (*Shaarei Simchah, Vayeira*), we can explain this further. In *Parshas Vayeira*, we read how Sarah was taken by Avimelech and as a result, Avimelech and his household were stricken with an ailment in which all their orifices were blocked. Avraham *davened* that Hashem heal Avimelech and his household of their ailment, and they were healed. Immediately afterward, the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 21:1) tells us: “*VaHashem pakad es Sarah* — Hashem had remembered Sarah,” and she became pregnant. To explain the juxtaposition, Rashi cites the Gemara (*Bava Kama* 92a) mentioned above, which teaches us that anyone who asks for mercy on behalf of his friend, and he is in need of the same thing, will be answered first. Just as Avraham *davened* that Avimelech’s illness should be reversed and he should be able to bear children, he, too, was able to bear children and his wife became pregnant. And as the Gemara tells us, Avraham was

answered first, since Hashem had already remembered Sarah even before He healed Avimelech.

If we think about it, Avraham's *tefillos* were detrimental to his own needs. As Rashi tells us (25:19), the *leitzanei hador* [scoffers of the generation] argued that it was Avimelech, not Avraham, who fathered this child. After all, Sarah had been with Avraham for decades, sans child, and shortly after one night of captivity, she became pregnant. This led HaKodosh Boruch Hu to make Yitzchak in the spitting image of Avraham, silencing for good any of these scoffers. (See Rashi 21:2.)

To avoid the problem altogether, the most logical thing would have been for Avraham to refrain from *davening* on Avimelech's behalf. If Avimelech was still unable to bear children, then the scoffers could not have claimed that it was he who fathered Yitzchak. Yet Avraham nonetheless *davened* for Avimelech, which enabled him to father a child and allowed for the *leitzanei hador* to cast their aspersions upon Avraham.

In this case, Avraham *davened* for Avimelech, even though "*Hu tzarich le'oso davar,*" he was in need of that very matter — that Avimelech remain ill; it was in his best interests that Avimelech's troubles remain unresolved. If a person has such *gevurah*, to help another when he stands to be harmed, that deserves Hashem's blessing and the person's *tefillos* are answered first.

Living a life of selflessness does not go unnoticed and unrewarded; it ensures that Hashem's benevolence quickly finds its way back. What better message can we give our children at the time of their marriage!

This helps explain why these *pasukim* are *leined* on Rosh Hashanah, while we are engaged in our personal *tefillos* for a successful year. In *Yalkut Yehudah (Vayeira, fn 4)*, Rav Yehudah Leib Ginzburg suggests that these *pasukim* remind us not to focus only on ourselves even while concerned about our own judgment. Self-absorption, even in the pursuit of a legitimate need, can lessen the efficacy of our *tefillos*. On the other hand, when we truly look out for one another, and even *daven* for them, Hashem will look out for us. This is especially true to remember in regard to others who have wronged us. Rav Ginzburg then cites the *Tanchuma Yashan*, where it says that when we have mercy on others and forgive their indiscretions, Hashem will have mercy on us.

If we emulate Avraham and forgive the wrongs of others and go so far as to *daven* for them, those *tefillos* will put us on the path to earn His forgiveness and a greater acceptance of our *tefillos*. (R' Avraham Bukspan)

A Novel Interpretation Into Why We Get Married Under the Stars

The *pasuk* in the beginning of *Sefer Shemos* says: "And these are the names of the children of Yisroel who came to Mitzrayim with Yaakov, each man came with his household."

(*Shemos* 1:1) The Torah then proceeds to again list the names of the *shevotim*. Rashi comments: “Even though we already heard the names of the twelve *shevotim* during their lifetime, the Torah repeats and lists them again after their death – to show us how dear they are to the Ribbono Shel Olam, for they are compared to the stars who are brought out and brought back in by count and by name, as it is written: ‘He brings forth their legions by number, He calls to each of them by name.’” (*Yeshaya* 40:26) This is incredible. There are billions of stars, and they all seem the same to us. But to the Ribbono Shel Olam, each one is dear and special. When something is dear and special, you call it by its name. Similarly, Rashi here says that Klal Yisroel are like the *kochavim* – they too are dear to the Ribbono Shel Olam, and therefore he calls each of them by name.

I saw a comment from Rav Leib Bakst, *zt”l*: Why are the *kochavim* so dear to the Ribbono Shel Olam? Rav Bakst points out that the reason the *kochavim* were created in the first place was to mollify the moon. The famous Rashi in *Parshas Bereishis* relates that originally the Ribbono Shel Olam created the sun and the moon to be of equal size, each with an independent source of light. The moon came to the Ribbono Shel Olam with the complaint that “Two kings cannot share the same crown.” The Ribbono Shel Olam agreed with this argument and commanded the moon to reduce its size and forgo its independent power of illumination. *Chazal* say that to appease the feelings of the moon for this downgrade in stature, the Ribbono Shel Olam created all the stars in the universe to accompany the moon at night, and to make the moon feel better.

Rav Leib Bakst says “Something or someone that makes another person or thing feel better is dear to the Ribbono Shel Olam. The Ribbono Shel Olam loves sensitivity and loves entities that make others feel better. That is why Klal Yisroel are comparable to the stars – because they also make people feel better.”

I once heard *al pi derush* [homiletically] at an *aufruf*: The *Rema* writes (*Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer* 61) “There are those who suggest making the *chuppah* under the sky.” There is a *minhag* Yisroel that people should get married under the sky. That is why *chuppahs* are typically held outdoors or under the skylight of a building. The *Rema* adds that this is a *siman tov* [fortuitous sign] that their seed will be like the stars in Heaven. The popular understanding of this *Rema* is that the symbolism of holding the *chuppah* under the stars is that it should be a *segulah* for having many children (“as numerous as the stars in Heaven”). This, no doubt, is the simple *pshat* of the *Rema*. But I once heard *al pi derush* that the symbolism is something else: Your children should be “like the stars” means your children should be the type of people who are sensitive to others and that go out of their way to appease others and make them feel better – as was the original purpose of the stars in Heaven, to make the moon feel better. (R’ Avraham Bukspan)

A New Understanding Behind the Minhag of The Choson Breaking a Glass Under the Chuppah

There is a universal Jewish custom that the *choson* breaks a glass under the *chuppah*. The conventional reason is that this is *zecher l'churban* – a commemoration of destruction of the *Beis HaMikdosh*. Anytime we celebrate a *simcha*, we must remember the *churban haBayis*, and that no *simcha* is complete while the *Beis HaMikdosh* and Yerusholayim remain desolate. Therefore, the *choson* breaks the glass, “*zecher l'churban*.”

One of the Geonim offers a different reason for breaking a glass under the *chuppah*: It is to remind us that Moshe Rabbeinu broke the *luchos* [tablets].

At first glance, this does not seem to make any sense. Why is it that a *choson* or *kallah* under their *chuppah* need to remember that Moshe broke the *luchos*? What message is contained in that historical event that must be commemorated at every Jewish wedding?

R' Frand explains: It is because the breaking of the *luchos*, and more specifically, the strength it took for Moshe to take that action, represents one of the great keys for success in any marriage.

At the end of the Torah, when the Ribbono Shel Olam records the *hesped* [epitaph] of Moshe Rabbeinu, He writes, “And by all the strong hand and awesome power that Moshe performed before the eyes of all Yisroel” (*Devorim* 34:12). Here the Ribbono Shel Olam is giving Moshe's *hesped*. What were his greatest accomplishments? Rashi elaborates on the points mentioned, one by one:

“And by all the strong hand”: For he received with his hands the Torah engraved on the *luchos*.

“And for all the awesome power”: The miracles and acts of might which took place in the great, awesome wilderness.

The crowning glory, the last item that the Ribbono Shel Olam says about Moshe Rabbeinu is...

“Before the eyes of all Yisroel.” Rashi interprets: That his heart inspired him to break the *luchos* before their eyes, as it says, “And I smashed them before your eyes.”

Why was the breaking of the *luchos* Moshe's greatest act?

The answer is that it took tremendous strength of character for Moshe to break the *luchos*. It is the nature of humans that when we invest in something, and put our hearts and souls into something, it becomes so dear to us that we rarely, if ever, want to walk away from that accomplishment. That is the way we are. Once we become invested in an item or a project, we do not want to abandon it. The last thing a person ever wants to do

is to admit that he was wrong, and to walk away from something in which he has invested a great deal of time and effort.

This explains why in different eras we have seen generals fighting wars despite the fact that it had already become obvious to everyone around them that the war was a losing endeavor. Yet they persisted in pursuing the battle. Why is that? Why is it that it took so long for the generals to realize that they were not fighting the Vietnam War in the way that it should be fought? Once they became invested in the war and in a particular strategy for victory, it became part of them. It was very difficult to say out loud, "Guess what? I made a mistake. It is time to walk away from this."

We read in the *Haftorah for Parshas Zachor* how Shaul HaMelech was instructed, in no uncertain terms, to kill out everyone from Amalek; men, women, and children — including animals. When Shaul came back from the battle, the first words out of his mouth were, "I have fulfilled the Word of Hashem" (Shmuel I 15:13). When Shmuel asked him: "How can you say that? It is not true!" What does the King say again? "...Because I have hearkened to the Voice of Hashem..." (Shmuel I 15:20). How can he say that? He was told explicitly what he was supposed to do, and now Shmuel calls him on the carpet for not following instructions, and yet he still claims to have "hearkened to the Voice of Hashem." The answer is, because he became invested in the project. It became him. It is hard for a person to say, "I am sorry. I made a mistake. You are right and I am wrong."

There was a book written about an incident that happened during World War II. It is the story of "The Bridge Over the River Kwai". The Japanese had a prisoner camp located on the River Kwai in what today is Burma. The Japanese, as part of their war effort, wanted to build a bridge between Burma and another place which would have given them strategic military advantage. This prison camp contained an entire battalion of captured British soldiers. The Japanese wanted these prisoners to build a railroad bridge over the River Kwai. The British soldiers, particular their Lieutenant Colonel who was the head of the brigade, refused. "We are not going to build a bridge to help the Japanese in their war effort."

To cut a long story short, after a while the British soldiers and their commanding officer agreed to build this bridge. Not only did they agree to build the bridge, it became this man's life preoccupation to build the bridge right! "The Japanese don't know how to build a bridge. They picked the wrong spot on the river to build the bridge. We are going to show them! We British know how to do things right!"

So they went about this amazing feat of engineering to build a bridge over the River Kwai, to the extent that this Lieutenant Colonel became obsessed with building this magnificent bridge over the River Kwai. Someone escaped from the prison, went to the British command and told them what was happening with their imprisoned soldiers. The British military headquarters set up a commando team to mine the bridge and blow it up.

They mined the bridge and waited for “opening day” when the first train was supposed to cross the bridge filled with Japanese dignitaries. The Lieutenant Colonel was waiting expectantly for the first train to come when everyone would be able to see his masterpiece. However, the level of the river sank, and he noticed that the bridge was wired. He understood what was going to happen and he made frantic efforts to cut the wires so that the British commanders would not be able to blow up the bridge that the Japanese needed for their war effort!

What happened to this fellow? He was part of the allies. The British plan to blow up the bridge might hasten the end of the war. It might save lives of allied soldiers. What was he thinking? Was he crazy? Why would he prefer saving his bridge over saving the lives of his fellow British soldiers?

He became so obsessed with his bridge that he lost sight of what was really going on. In the end, the British shot their own Lieutenant Colonel and blew up the bridge. What happened to this fellow? He became preoccupied with the bridge to the extent that nothing else really mattered.

Moshe Rabbeinu spent literally forty days and forty nights on the mountain — drinking no water and consuming no food. He exhibited tremendous self-sacrifice to receive the *luchos*. But when he came down from the mountain and he saw Klal Yisroel dancing around the *eigel hazahav* [golden calf], he said “Guess what? This is not for them.” He did not rationalize, and he did not procrastinate. It was now necessary for these *luchos* to be broken. It took a tremendous amount of strength of character for Moshe to say “I’m walking away from this.”

One of the most difficult things for a husband to do in a marriage — after having long argued a certain issue with his wife — is to walk away and say, “You know, maybe she’s right.”

Many newlyweds start their marriage and say about themselves, “we are literally two peas in a pod; we think the same way about everything. We have no disagreements, etc., etc.” Then, two weeks after the marriage, he wants the window open she wants the window closed, and the list goes on and on as to how differently they view life. These are just the small things...

A marriage requires a person to sometimes say, “Guess what? You know, maybe I’m wrong. Maybe her way of looking at this is in fact the more correct way.” That is very difficult. The prime example of this is Moshe Rabbeinu, who broke the *luchos*. In spite of the fact that he put his heart and soul into something, he was prepared to reverse course and write off his exertion and his investment.

This is why we break a glass under the *chuppah*. We break the glass to remind us that Moshe broke the *luchos*. It is the ultimate reminder that sometimes it is necessary to

step back from deep investment in a certain project or position, and say, “Guess what? I am not right.” In the case of marriage, this represents having the strength of character to say, “Maybe I am wrong, and she is right.”

The Importance of Keeping a Marriage Fresh, Even at Age 99

In *Parsha Vayera* we learn about the *hachnosas orchim* of Avraham Avinu, and how Hashem sent three *malachim* dressed as Arabs to Avraham and he served them a gourmet meal. After Avraham served the meal, they inquired about the whereabouts of his wife Sorah, and Avraham responded that she was in the tent. Rashi notes that the *malochim* certainly knew where Sorah was, but they nevertheless asked in order to give themselves an opportunity to praise her modesty, thereby endearing her to her husband.

In his *kuntres* [booklet] *Ma’amarei Hadracha L’Chassanim* (pg. 27), Rav Shlomo Wolbe questions the conduct of the *malachim*. It is customary to dance before the *kallah* and praise her when speaking at a *sheva berachos* to raise her up in her new husband’s eyes and cement the bond between them. At this point, Avraham was 99 and Sorah was 89, and they had already been married for many years. By now, Avraham certainly recognized Sorah’s greatness, and if not, nothing their guests said would help. Why did the *malochim* need to accent her modesty to further lift her up in Avraham’s eyes?

Rav Wolbe answers that the *malochim* were teaching Avraham – and us – that increasing endearment and deepening the relationship between a husband and wife must continue throughout the couple’s entire married life. Marriage is not a one-time event that takes place at the wedding, but an ongoing dynamic process whose greatest enemy is routine. If the connection between Avraham and Sorah, who had been married for decades, still needed strengthening and renewal, how much more must we strive to constantly develop our feelings of appreciation and respect for our spouses.

As a contemporary illustration of this idea, Rav Yisrocher Frand recounts that an American named Rabbi Dovid Hershowitz went to study in the Mir *yeshiva* in Europe in the 1930s, after which he returned to the United States. Several decades later, he traveled to Eretz Yisroel, where his itinerary included a visit to Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, his old friend from *yeshiva*. They both enjoyed the reunion, and after they spoke for a while, Rav Chaim invited Rabbi Hershowitz to join him for lunch.

As they entered his apartment, Rav Chaim asked his wife, “What’s for lunch today?” The Rebbetzin responded that she was serving chicken and rice. When the illustrious Rosh Yeshiva sat down at the table, he devoured all the food on his plate and remarked that the spices his wife used to make the food were especially delicious. He then asked for more food and promptly finished off another portion, again complimenting his wife’s exceptional culinary talents. Rav Hershowitz was shocked by what he had observed. After the Rebbetzin left the room, he respectfully asked his host, “In Europe, the only thing you cared about was your Torah learning, to the extent that we had to remind you to eat. Even when

you ate, we had to remind you to *bentch* because you forgot that you ate. How could it be that so many years later you now clean your plate multiple times and discuss recipes with your wife!?”

Rav Chaim responded, “I invest tremendous time and effort into the *shiurim* I give. I know how deep and profound they are, but when a young *bochur* comes up after a *shiur* and tells me how much he enjoyed it, it still makes me feel good. Even though he could not have possibly grasped all the intricacies I discussed, it is human nature to feel uplifted when receiving a sincere compliment.

“This lunch is my Rebbetzin’s *shiur*, and she works hard to ensure that I am well-fed and nourished. Just like the *bochur* who comes over after my *shiur*, I eat everything she serves me with gusto, not because I have become a glutton, but to make her feel good that her ‘*shiur*’ was well-received.” Even though this story took place when Rav Chaim had been married for several decades, he understood the lesson of the *malochim* and worked to make sure that his wife felt cherished every day of their married life. (R’ Ozer Alport)

Putting The “Snap Crackle and Pop” Into One's Marriage Relationship

In *Parshas Ki Seitzei* we have the mitzvah of *shonah rishonah*. The *pasuk* writes: נקי יהיה לביתו שנה אחת ושמח את אשתו – “He shall be free to go home and make his wife happy (*v'seemach es ishto*) for one year” (*Devorim* 24:5).

Rashi comments on the words "*v'seemach es ishto*" by citing the Aramaic Targum: "*v'yachdee yas itsei*". Rashi explains that anyone who translates the *pasuk* to mean "*v'yachdee IM itsei*" is making a mistake. The two versions of Aramaic translation quoted by Rashi hinge around the interpretation of the Hebrew word "*es*". "*V'seemach ES ishto*" could mean "You should MAKE your wife happy" or it could mean "You should be happy WITH your wife." Rashi says the former translation is correct and the latter translation is erroneous. Rashi supports his position by stating that the meaning of the '*piel*' grammatical form of the word *v'seemach* is to make someone else happy. Had the meaning been "you should rejoice WITH your wife," the expression would have appeared as "*v'sAmach es*" not "*v'sEEmach es*".

However, the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel quotes the very translation that Rashi rejects as erroneous. Yonasan ben Uziel was a *Tanna*! How can Rashi imply that a *Tanna* does not know how to properly translate a *pasuk* in *Chumash*?

The *Shemen HaTov* offers a beautiful interpretation to resolve this difficulty. Certainly, the meaning of the *pasuk* is -- as Rashi says -- that the husband must try to make his wife happy. But if one's intent in marriage is to make the other partner happy then they will ultimately find happiness together. A marriage only works when each party is trying to make the other one happy. When each person tries to make the other one happy, they will wind up both

being happy. On the other hand, if one approaches marriage from the perspective “What is in it for me?” then no one will be happy.

This interpretation of the *Shemen HaTov* could shed light on the universally expressed blessing when a child is born that the parent’s merit to bring the child to Torah, to the *chuppah*, and to *ma’asim tovim* [good deeds].

The sequence of this blessing is often questioned. Why do *ma’asim tovim* appear last in the list? It sounds from this wish like good deeds only begin after one is married. Is that the case?

I once heard the following explanation: When one is single and he goes shopping for breakfast, he walks down the cereal aisle to make his selection. He thinks to himself, “What kind of cereal do I like? Cheerios. What about Rice Crispies? I can’t stand Rice Crispies.” He buys himself a box of Cheerios every single week.

Then he gets married and goes shopping for the family. The first week he brings home Cheerios. His wife tells him “I hate Cheerios. I like Rice Crispies.” If he can afford it, then fine, he buys two boxes -- one of Cheerios and one of Rice Crispies and everyone is happy. But what if he cannot afford it? He will have to make a choice. He goes to the store and looks at the cereal aisle and asks himself “What should I buy? Should I buy Cheerios or should I buy Rice Crispies?”

The *pasuk* in this week’s *parsha* cries out to him: *V’Seemach es Ishto*. “I am going to buy Rice Crispies!” After marriage, even the act of buying cereal -- which until the time one gets married was just a mundane shopping chore -- now becomes an act of *chessed*. The mundane act of shopping is turned into a *ma’aseh mitzvah* (an action with religious nuance). Therefore, we understand: First Torah; then *chuppah*; and after that even buying cereal will fall into the category of *ma’asim tovim*. (R’ Frand)

A Marriage That Starts With ‘Self’ Will Be Self-Destructing

In *Parshas Ki Seitzei* we learn about the laws of divorce. The Torah states: *כי יקח איש אשה ובעלה והיה אם לא תמצא חן בעיניו כי מצא בה ערות דבר וכתב לה ספר כריתת ונתן בידה ושלחה מביתו - “If a man takes a wife and has relations with her and it comes to pass that she does not find favor in his eyes, he finds an unseemly matter in her. He shall write her a divorce document, place it in her hand and send her out of his house” (Devorim 24:1).*

This *pasuk* would seemingly have the same meaning if it were written exactly as is, except without the word “*u’ba-alah*” [and has relations with her]. It seems unnecessary, and also uncharacteristic for the Torah to use this expression.

The Torah’s style is normally one of extreme modesty and refinement. The Gemara says that the *Chumash* hesitates at even using the expression “impure animal” (*behemah temeah*). The Torah “wastes” 8 letters, so to speak, to use the expression “the animal that

is not pure” rather than writing the less refined expression “impure animal” (*Pesochim* 3a). Given this sensitivity for using clean and refined language, why did the Torah find it necessary to add the detail “and has relations with her” to the section dealing with marriage that ends in divorce?

One of the answers that may be given is that the Torah wishes to indicate, perhaps, why the ‘*get*’ [divorce] came about. Perhaps the parties went into the marriage seeking self-gratification. “If a man will marry a woman and live with her...” This should not be the “*shalom aleichem*” (opening greeting) to a chapter of marriage. The Torah is trying to hint that marriages that begin with people focusing on their own self-satisfaction and gratification are marriages that are not destined to be long-lasting.

Marriages are successful when two people enter a marriage knowing that they must worry about the ‘We’ rather than the ‘Me’. When they are fixated on the ‘Me’ rather than the ‘We’, the marriage has problems. There is no greater laboratory for ‘*tikun hamiddos*’ [strengthening of personality traits] than marriage and family life.

When a person is single, he or she can get away with being selfish and self-centred. When that person marries, he or she can no longer get away with such personality defects. It just won’t work. The change in personality might come ‘kicking and screaming’, but if the marriage is going to succeed the change must take place. If the first word in the marriage is “*u’ba-alah,*” the marriage will not succeed.

R’ Frand relates a comment he heard from Rabbi Dr. A. Twerski. Rabbi Twerski pointed out that of all the *berachos* recited at a Jewish marriage and during the “week of *sheva berachos*” there is one *berachah* that stands out as apparently not directly related to marriage. The very first *berachah* of the *sheva berachos* is “Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, who has created everything for His glory” (*shehakol barah l’chvodo*). The *choson* is not mentioned. The *kallah* is not mentioned. Marriage is not mentioned. What is the connection between this *berachah* and the ceremony at hand?

Rabbi Twerski answers that this *berachah* is placed first because this is what a Jewish marriage should be all about. If a husband and wife understand from the get-go, from the *chuppah*, that he should not be in it for himself and she should not be in it for herself, but rather that all is created for the glory of Heaven, then all will be well with this marriage.

Good brings good for the honor of Heaven and bad brings bad for the honor of Heaven. *Choson* and *kallah*, and husband and wife, should always have this measuring stick in front of them throughout their marriage. It simplifies many of the complexities of marriage and many of life’s difficult decisions. This is the most powerful lesson we can teach the *choson* and *kallah* under the *chuppah*.

Rabbi Twerski illustrated this idea with two beautiful stories. The first story is something that I think we can all relate to. The second story is so powerful that I — for one — cannot directly relate to it.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky was at a wedding and needed a ride back to Monsey. A single fellow was asked if he would mind driving Rav Yaakov home. The fellow jumped at the opportunity. When he offered the Rosh Yeshiva a ride, Rav Yaakov asked him if he would mind first showing him his car. When Rav Yaakov was taken to the car to look at it, he opened the back door and climbed in, to sit in the back seat. A few moments later he emerged from the car, closed the back door, and told the young man he would be happy to go to Monsey with him.

He explained that his wife would also be accompanying them, and he had to be certain that the back seat would be comfortable for her, before accepting the ride. He was not checking whether he would get to ride home in a Cadillac or a Mercedes. He wanted to make sure the back seat was comfortable enough for his Rebbetzin.

The other incident involved Rabbi Twerski's father [Rabbi Yaakov Yisroel Twerski, Rebbe of Hornistaiple-Milwaukee]. Two months before the senior Rabbi Twerski died, he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He called in his son, Rabbi Abraham Twerski (who is also a medical doctor) to discuss his situation. The senior Rabbi Twerski had been a *rov* for over 50 years. He had visited many patients, and he knew exactly what his prognosis was with such a diagnosis.

He told his son, "They want to give me chemotherapy. It is not going to work, is it?" The son, based on his medical knowledge, confirmed his father's prediction. The father then added, "I am going to suffer terribly from the chemotherapy." The son nodded. The father then said, "It is really not worthwhile for me to do it. It is not going to help. It is only going to cause me pain and suffering. I believe the wise decision is not to have the chemotherapy." The son confirmed his father's analysis and he told his father that the decision was up to him (his father).

While they were having this conversation, Rabbi Twerski's Rebbetzin was in the hall talking to the attending physician. She asked him if the chemotherapy would help her husband and he told her that his estimate was that the chemotherapy might add a couple months to his life. She said, "If he will live a couple of months longer, then we want it. If he will live a couple of days longer, we want it!"

She came in and told her husband that the doctor said the chemotherapy would help and it would give him a couple more months. She said, "I want you to have the chemotherapy." She then walked out of the room.

The older Rabbi told his son, "We both know that this is not going to help. We both know that this is not going to give me another two months and we both know that it will cause

me added pain and suffering. But if I do not take it, she will feel guilty for the rest of her life. Therefore, I will take it so she won't feel bad." He took the chemotherapy and he suffered from it. But he did it for his Rebbetzin - to spare her from guilt and to spare her the typical anguish of survivors ("had only I insisted... he may have had extra time in this world").

To have such selflessness at that time in one's life is a level of spirituality at which we can only marvel and ask, "When will my actions reach the actions of my forefathers?" (R' Frand)

A True Friend

There is a *pasuk* in *Parshas Mishpotim* which says as follows: וכי יגוף שור איש את שור רעהו - "If the ox of a man will gore his fellow man's ox and it dies they will sell the live ox and split its value and also the dead (ox) shall be split" (*Shemos* 21:35).

The expression at the beginning of this *pasuk*, וכי יגוף שור איש את שור רעהו, is normally translated "When a man's ox will gore his friend's ox". However, the Ibn Ezra quotes an interpretation from a certain 'Ben Zuta' who offers an alternate translation. Ben Zuta claims that the words "*shor re'eyhu*" mean the "fellow ox" of the ox who is doing the goring. It is not to be translated as "the ox of his friend" as we commonly translate but rather "the ox gores his friend" – another ox!

The Ibn Ezra minces no words in dismissing the interpretation of Ben Zuta. In his inimitable style he writes "the ox has no 'friend' other than Ben Zuta himself!" In other words, anyone who says such an interpretation is a worthy companion to an ox and has no place in the *beis hamedrash*.

The concept of friendship and the concept of "*re'ayah*" [friend] as in "*v'ahavta l're'yahcha kamocha*" [you should love your friend as yourself], only applies to human beings. Friendship is an emotional relationship that reflects an aspect of humanity. Animals can have companions and they can even have mates. But the whole concept of friendship is not applicable to them. Therefore, the Ibn Ezra dismisses the interpretation of Ben Zuta: Do not talk about "friends of animals" – there is no such thing.

Rav Hutner, *zt"l*, makes the following very interesting observation: The word "*re'ya*," which is one of several ways of saying "friend" in Hebrew comes from the same root as the word "*teruah*" as in "It shall be a day of *teruah* [blasting] for you" (*Bamidbar* 29:1) (referring to Rosh Hashanah). The *Targum Unkelos* on this *pasuk* translates "*yom teruah*" as "*yom yevava*". "*Yom yevava*" means a day of moaning, or a day of broken up cries.

That is why the main thrust of the *shofar* sound is the "*shevorim*" (the broken wailing sound). There is a question in halachah as to whether the true *shevorim* is the 3 short sounds we call *shevorim* or the series of shorter blasts that we call *teruah* or a combination

of both, but whatever its nature, the “*shevorim*” is the essence of the *shofar* blowing. The single blast sound (*tekiah*) that proceeds and follows the “*shevorim*” merely provides a frame, so to speak, to highlight the essence of the *shofar* sound – the sobbing cry of *shevorim*.

Thus, the etymology of *teruah*, sharing the same root as *re’yus* [friendship] has the connotation of breaking something up. Rav Hutner says that is why a friend is called *re’yah* – the purpose of a friend is to “break you up” and to “give you chastisement”. A true friend should stop us in our tracks and give us a kick in the back, when necessary. A friend is not the type of person who always pats us on the back and tells us how great we are, always condoning whatever we do. The purpose of a friend (*re’yah*), as is the purpose of *teruah* (*shofar* blast), is to tell us – sometimes – “you don’t know what you are talking about!”

Obviously, there has to be an overall positive relationship. Someone who is always critical will not remain a friend for very long. A person needs to have a modicum of trust and confidence in someone before he is prepared to hear criticism from him. But the fellow who always slaps us on the back and tells us how great we are is likewise not a true friend. A true friend must be able to stop us and sometimes be able to break us.

In one of the blessings of *sheva berachos*, we refer to the newlywed couple as being “*re’yim ahuvim*” [loving friends]. There is a message behind this expression. In order for a *chosan-kallah* / husband-wife to be “loving friends,” they need to have the capacity to be able to say to each other “this is not the way to do it; this is not the way to act”. Obviously, a relationship in which this is the entire basis of their interaction is not going to fly. But – if one is deserving of it – the type of wife a person will find will be one who will be a “*re’yah ahuva*” in the full sense of the word “*re’yah*”.

This is why no ox ever had a “*re’yah*”. No ox will ever tell its companion ox “It is not right to eat like that” or “You are eating too much” or “You are eating too fast.” A true friend needs to do that.

Similarly, the *Netziv* says on the *pasuk*: עֵר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ - “A helpmate, opposite him” (*Bereishis* 2:18) that sometimes in order for a person to be a helper (*ezer*), the person needs to be an opponent (*k’negdo*). It should not just be “Honey, you’re great” and “Honey, you are always right.” Sometimes it must be “Honey, you are an idiot!” This is a true instance of “*re’yim ahuvim*”.

May we all merit having such true friendship between ourselves and our companions and between ourselves and our spouses. (R’ Frand)

In *Parshas Vayeishev* we have the story of Yehuda and Tamar. Before having relations with Tamar, Yehuda promised to send her a young goat from his flock as payment. Tamar

insisted that he leave three valuable personal items with her as collateral, which she would return upon receipt of her compensation. Yehuda then sent a goat with his friend Chirah the Adullamite to give to Tamar as promised and retrieve his deposit, but he was unable to find her. After unsuccessfully asking others about her whereabouts, Chirah returned to Yehuda, who decided to let Tamar keep his items to avoid the humiliation that would result if his actions became publicized through further inquiries.

Although none of us would ever find ourselves in Yehuda's situation, if we try to put ourselves in his shoes, we would expect him to deliver the payment himself rather than approaching a friend for assistance, which would necessitate explaining to him the indelicate circumstances behind the request. No matter how close a person feels to someone else, he will not feel comfortable informing him that he consorted with a harlot and needs help recovering his pledge. Why wasn't Yehuda afraid to tell Chirah what he had done?

Rav Shimon Schwab notes that the Torah stresses that Yehuda sent the goat with רעהו העדלמי – “his friend the Adullamite”. The Torah is revealing to us that the definition of a true friend is somebody to whom we can confess our most embarrassing moments and greatest mistakes without fear of being judged and condemned.

The Mishnah (*Avos* 1:6) advises, “Acquire a friend for yourself.” In his commentary on this Mishnah, the Rambam writes that a person should seek a confidant that he can completely trust and from whom he does not need to hide any part of himself. He should feel safe sharing his entire life with his friend, both the good and the bad, without worrying that he will divulge his secrets or stop being his friend. Indeed, the Biblical word for a friend (רע) can also mean evil, hinting that a real friend is one to whom we can disclose our flaws and failures knowing that he will continue to be there for us.

Extending this concept to marriage, the fifth blessing recited during *sheva berachos* begins: מקדם – “Grant abundant joy to the beloved companions as You gladdened Your creation (Adam) in the Garden of Eden of old.” Why do we specifically describe the *choson* and *kallah* as רעים האהובים? We are giving them a *berachah* that they should become רעים in the sense that they can tell each other their foibles and failures like Yehuda and Chirah, knowing that they will be accepted and respected through thick and thin, as true friends do for one another. (R' Ozer Alport)

Never Hold a Grudge

(The following has been adapted from the sefer “Beloved Companions” by Rav Yisroel Pesach Feinhandler, zt”l.)

In *Parshas Kedoshim* we have the *pasuk*: ולא תטר את בני עמך ואהבת לרעך כמוך - “You shall not take revenge, nor shall you retain animosity against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (*Vayikra* 19:18).

Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Grodna took care of the needs of all the poor and unfortunate people in his city. He used to personally visit all the city's hotels to solicit funds for the poor from the guests, and he also collected money from the permanent dwellers of the city.

Once, he knocked on the door of a hotel room in which a lawyer from Grodna was conversing with a high government official from St. Petersburg, who happened to be Jewish. When the lawyer opened the door and saw Rabbi Nachum standing there, he understood that he had come to collect money, and said to him angrily, "I do not have time for you. Please go away."

But Rabbi Nachum was persistent and would not leave. He told the man, "All I want is a donation for the poor people in this town." But the lawyer angrily slammed the door in the rabbi's face.

Because someone had witnessed this incident, word quickly spread throughout the city that the *tzaddik* Rabbi Nachum had been insulted by an arrogant lawyer, and people were furious with him for daring to insult someone whom everyone honored and respected. Rabbi Nachum did not ask for an apology and did not discuss the incident with anyone, and after a while the matter seemed to have been forgotten.

Sometime later, the lawyer was taken to court and accused of a serious crime, which would have severe consequences for him. The case against him was so strong, that there seemed to be no hope for an acquittal. However, he thought that his last chance might be to appeal to an influential official from St. Petersburg to try to arrange some way out for him by using his connections. And so, he travelled to St. Petersburg and went immediately to the official's villa, hoping to meet with him before he left for his ministry.

The lawyer gave a message to the guard stationed outside the official's residence, saying that an old friend had arrived and requests an audience with the official. The guard returned a few minutes later with the message that the official was busy and had no time to see him.

"Did you tell him it was me?" asked the lawyer.

"I surely did," answered the guard.

The astonished lawyer could not understand this. He thought, "How could this person whom I have known for many years not agree to see me?" He then gave a coin to the guard and asked him to find out what the problem was. But the guard returned with the same answer, that the official had no time for him.

"Try again this evening when His Excellency comes home from the ministry, and I will remind him that you are here to see him," suggested the guard.

The lawyer agreed and returned that evening, but to no avail. He received the same reply, that the official did not have time for him. The lawyer then returned to his hotel room in despair. He knew that without the official's help, he did not stand a chance of being acquitted in his forthcoming trial. Finally, he decided that the only option left to him was to come again the next morning and try to catch the official as he was leaving his house on his way to the ministry. Perhaps if I beg him to help me, he will have mercy, he thought, now quite desperate.

Early the next morning, he intercepted the official as he was leaving his house. The desperate man removed his hat, bowed very low, and in a pleading voice called out to the official, "Greetings, my old friend!" But the official still did not take any notice of him; he simply got into his waiting coach and departed.

Now the lawyer saw clearly that the official was deliberately turning his back on him. But what could he do? He simply could not leave St. Petersburg without seeking this man's help, since his trial was soon, and he knew that without his help he would be doomed. He had no other choice but to find an opportunity to fall at the official's feet and plead with tears for mercy.

And so that evening he went back to the official's villa and did just that. Finally, the official revealed to the distraught lawyer why he had refused to see him.

"Just as you once dared to close the door on our revered Rabbi Nachum, so do you deserve that the door should be closed on you too," said the official. The lawyer tried to justify himself, but the official interrupted him saying, "I will not listen to any excuses. The only thing that you can do if you want any help from me is to go back to Grodna and beg Rabbi Nachum to forgive you for having been so disrespectful to him. I will not consider seeing you again until you bring me a note from him saying he has forgiven you for your sin. Without that note, you have no chance of seeing me, and the door will be closed to you. The reason is the same one you gave Rabbi Nachum to get rid of him, 'I do not have time for you.' Now you can see how it feels to have that used against you..."

Despondent, the lawyer left St. Petersburg and travelled the long distance to Grodna in Lithuania, hoping to obtain the note that he needed. Rabbi Nachum, a pillar of kindness and mercy, received him warmly, and when he heard his request, he forgave him with all his heart, and immediately sat down to write the note. In the note he wrote, "I was never insulted or hurt by what the lawyer did, and after it was over, I never gave the matter a moment's thought."

With the note, the lawyer quickly returned to Petersburg, and this time he was received by the official promptly and with courtesy, as in the old days. The official used his considerable influence and pulled the strings needed, so that the lawyer was acquitted. (*K'tzes HaShemesh BiGvuraso*, p 164)

Forgiveness is a Crucial Ingredient in a Good Marriage

Forgiving is extremely important in marriage too. Since we are all only human, we all make mistakes. One must never hold a grudge against one's spouse but should always forgive, just as Rabbi Nachum was quick to forgive and held no grudge against the arrogant lawyer. Always try to put yourself in your spouse's place. Would you like someone to always remind you of your old mistakes, or would you prefer being forgiven for what you have done? Treat your spouse as you would want to be treated yourself.

It is a selfish and arrogant character trait not to be forgiving towards others. Our Sages say that there are three character traits that distinguish the Jews from others: they are bashful, they are full of pity for others, and they do kindness (*Yevamos* 79a).

When you forgive your spouse, you are exercising all three of these positive Jewish character traits. You are bashful, since you know that you also make mistakes and are ashamed to hold a grudge when you yourself are not perfect. You have pity, since you realize that it hurts your spouse when you do not forgive. And you are kind to your spouse when you overlook his/her shortcomings.

Besides that, imagine the tremendous reward you will receive for forgiving: all of your own sins will be forgiven. A person who is married may find that his spouse is constantly making mistakes. He therefore has numerous opportunities to forgive and gain that tremendous reward of having all his sins forgiven. Every time we perceive a fault in our spouses we should really rejoice, for this means that we have been given another opportunity to forgive and have all our sins forgiven.

Being married provides us with a constant test of character. Your patience, humility, and capacity for kindness are constantly being tested. The more successful we are in passing the test, the greater will be our reward in the World to Come and the greater will be our chances of having a wonderful marriage. (R' Eliezer Parkoff)

Every Day Should Be in Your Eyes as If It Were A New Experience

In *Parshas Shoftim*, the Torah introduces us to the concept of a Jewish Monarchy. "When you come to the land that Hashem your G-d gives you, and possess it and settle in it, and you will say 'I will set a king over myself, like all the nations that are around me.'" (*Devorim* 17:14). The Torah says, "Yes you are allowed to establish a monarchy. It is a mitzvah to have a king." However, there are restrictions: He may not have an excessive number of wives. He may not have too many horses. He should not take too much silver and gold for himself. And there are also positive commandments: "And it shall be when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah in a scroll from before the Kohanim, the Levites" (*Devorim* 17:18). Every Jew must write a *Sefer* Torah. The king needs to write a second *Sefer* Torah which he keeps with himself at all times.

The Torah introduces the mitzvah to write this (second) *Sefer Torah* with the expression “And it shall be when he sits (*k’shivto*) on the throne of his kingdom.” The Medrash in Esther Rabbah makes a very interesting comment. There are two ways of saying “And when he will sit on his throne.” It could say “*v’haya k’shivto*” or it could say “*v’haya b’shivto*.” The Medrash makes a distinction regarding the implications of each term. By the nations of the world, the *pasuk* says, “*k’sheves haMelech Achashverosh al kisei malchuso...*” (Esther 1:2) using a letter “*chaf*” as the prefix. However, when we speak about Jewish kings in the Book of *Shoftim* (11:26), the *pasuk* says “*b’sheves Yisroel...*” using the letter “*beis*” as the prefix. The Gemara explains the distinction: By the nations of the world, the “*chaf*” is used because their monarchies are not permanent. By kings of the Jewish nation, as long as there was a Klal Yisroel, the monarchy remained. Therefore, the prefix “*beis*” is used, which has a connotation of a permanent monarchy.

If that is the case, this *pasuk* in *Parshas Shoftim* presents a problem. It is speaking about a Jewish king and yet it uses the prefix “*chaf*” – *v’haya k’shivto al kisei mamlachto*! This seems to violate the rule mentioned in Esther Rabbah.

I saw a thought in the name of the Gerrer Rebbe, the *Chiddushei HaRim*, and I saw a similar thought in the name of the *Techeiles Mordechai* from Rav Sholom Mordechai HaKohen Schwadron (the Brizhaner Rav). The reason the Torah uses the expression “And it will be *k’shivto...*” here is because the Torah is speaking about the initial ascension of the Jewish king onto his throne. Normally, when a king first assumes his throne, he is all inspired and “pumped” to do good for the people. He wants to make sure the people are taken care of. He wants to make sure to improve the economy. He wants to make sure that human rights are preserved in his country. All the sincere and idealistic ideas of good government are always present when one starts something. Every president starts his administration with these grand ideas and grand plans to provide “a chicken in every pot and two cars in every garage and universal health care” etc., etc., etc.

Those plans are made “*v’haya k’shivto...*” (when he first ascends the throne). But we all know that with the passage of time, it rapidly becomes “same old, same old.” People become jaded; they become turned off; they get cynical. People sort of devolve into a run of the mill, go-through-the-motions type of administration.

The challenge always is for a king to maintain throughout his monarchy that same feeling of freshness, enthusiasm, and humility that he had the day he sat on the throne for the first time. This is what the Torah wants to hint at here, says the Brizhaner Rav. All the plans and good intentions that a king has when he assumes the throne (*k’shivto al kisei malchuso*) should remain with him for the rest of his reign.

This idea is a very beautiful *vort* to say at a *sheva berachos*. At a *sheva berachos*, the *chosan* and *kallah* are in their first week of marriage. They are so sensitive and so caring and so loving towards each other. They each have the greatest of intentions to make this a perfect

marriage. But unfortunately, as we know, like with everything else in life – things do not remain the way they were at the start of an endeavour. Honeymoons are called honeymoons because they only last for a certain amount of time, unfortunately.

A *chosan* is compared to a king. That enthusiasm and that idealism and that commitment to be a good husband and to take care of the spouse and to respect and honor her should remain constant throughout the marriage as it was “*k’shivto...*” when he first ascended to the role of a *chosan*(who is compared to a king).”

Rav Pam once offered a beautiful thought. We say “*v’erastich lee l’olam*” (Hoshea 2:21) (And I will betroth you to me forever). *Erusin* [betrothal] is a temporary stage. It is the period between *kiddushin* [*halachic* engagement] and *nisuin* [*halachic* marriage]. In Talmudic times, it lasted for 6 to 12 months, but it was always meant to be a temporary situation. So what then, asked Rav Pam, does the *pasuk* mean when it says, “I will betroth you to me forever”? If it is forever it is not *eirusin* and if it is *eirusin* it is not forever?

Rav Pam said the same type of concept. When someone goes ahead and makes *eirusin*, he has all the good intentions and the love and compassion in the world, but it is only “*eirusin*” – a temporary stage. However, that type of “I will betroth you to me” should really be forever. (R’ Frand)

Beginnings Are Critical at Every Stage of Life

In *Parshas Ki Seitzei* we learn about the *yefas toar*, then we learn “If a man has two wives – one he loves and one he hates...” he is not allowed to switch the first-born status (for inheritance purposes) from his true first born, the son of the “hated wife” to the younger brother, the first-born son of the “beloved wife.” The true first born is the one who must receive the “double portion” of inheritance.

Following this, the third set of laws we learn in *Parshas Ki Seitzei* is that of the *ben sorer u’moreh* [the wayward and rebellious son]. Already at a very young age (right after *bar mitzvah*), he begins acting in a way that will lead to a life of corruption and aggression. The Torah decrees that it is preferable to put him to death “when he is still innocent” (of the future crimes he is destined to commit) rather than execute him later when he will already be deserving of the death penalty.

Rashi says the sequence of these three sets of laws – the beautiful captive woman, the beloved and hated wives, and the wayward and rebellious son – teach a homiletic lesson: If someone marries the *yefas toar* because he became infatuated with her, he will eventually have two wives (his original wife and the one he found in the battlefield). Eventually, he will come to hate the second wife. Furthermore, once he has such a wife (that he should not have taken in the first place) he will have a child from her and the child will be a trouble maker. He will become a *ben sorer u’moreh*.

The *Shem Mi'Shmuel* makes a very interesting observation. Why does the Torah put the halachah that the first born gets a double portion here? Even if the Torah wants to tell us that one who marries a *yefas toar* will eventually hate her, why should the Torah insert the unrelated rule that a *bechor* gets *pi-shnayim* [a double portion of inheritance] here? There is an entire section in the Torah at the end of *Sefer Bamidbar* describing all the laws of inheritance. The law that a first born gets a double portion should be placed there. It seems incongruous to mention it here between the laws of *yefas toar* and that of *ben sorer u'moreh*. It does not relate to the flow of the narrative.

The *Shem Mi'Shmuel* writes that the Torah is trying to tell us a very important lesson – beginnings are very very important. Beginnings set the tone. He asks – why is it that the first-born gets double? Being a first born, after all, is merely an accident of birth. What did he do? Why should he get double the portion of his father's estate over and above the rest of his brothers? The *Shem Mi'Shmuel* answers that it is because the *bechor* casts an influence over the entire family. The children that come after the first-born are influenced by him. Therefore, the *bechor* gets double because he set the tone for the entire family.

For example, R' Frand relates that R' Ruderman married a woman named Feiga Kramer. Her father, Rav Sheftel Kramer, had five daughters. One of them was Rebbetzen Ruderman, one was Rebbetzen Neuberger, one was Rebbetzen Heiman, one was Rebbetzen Skaist, and one was Mrs. Lewin. There were five daughters, no sons. But the *bechora*, the first-born was Rebbetzen Ruderman. Family legend has it that her father told her – you need to marry a *talmid chochom*, because the type of person you marry will set the standard for your other sisters as well. Admittedly she married a very big *talmid chochom* and all the other sisters – perhaps they did not marry *talmiday chachomim* of R' Ruderman's calibre, but they were all very distinguished individuals, all *talmiday chachomim*.

How did that happen? The oldest sister set the standard. She set the bar, which the other sisters measured against. She did it because she was the first born. Firstborns have this effect.

Thus, the *Shem Mi'Shmuel* points out that the Torah is trying to tell us over here that the *bechor* gets *pi shnayim* because beginnings have an effect on all that comes later.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin says that the entire period of time when it is possible for a boy to become a *ben sorer u'moreh* is only three months. (That – among other reasons – is why it is so hard to meet the conditions under which such a punishment could ever be carried out.) The whole chapter addresses a 13-year-old child for only the first 3 months after his *bar mitzvah*. Yet, the Torah is already concerned that the child is acting out, he is stealing, he shows gluttonous behavior, etc. Why is this so serious? It is because when a child is that age – *bar mitzvah* – how he acts in that beginning stage of his life as a mature adult sets the pattern and has a tremendous influence on what the rest of his life will be

like as well. That is why it is very important that the tone be set in this “*bar mitzvah year*.” Like any structure, the foundation is critical. Any building is only as strong as its yesod [foundation]. The first months after bar mitzvah are critically important.

And – *m’inyan l’inyan b’oso inyan* – the first year of marriage is very important as well because how a family begins, how it starts out and where it starts out and how it is built can have an effect for years and years to come. That is why the Torah provides a draft deferment to a newlywed and sends him home to his wife, free of communal duties, during the first year of his marriage – to gladden the heart of his wife. The first year is the foundation of the marriage.

The *seforim* say “All beginnings are difficult” (*kol hascholos kashos*). Simply, this means that it is hard to start a new project. But on a deeper level, it means beginnings are “*kashos*” because it is essential that they be executed correctly. You need to do it right at the beginning of any endeavor. How things are done initially sets the tone for all that follows.

That is why Rosh Hashanah and Aseres Yemei Teshuvah are such critical periods. It is the beginning. Beginnings have a lasting effect on that which comes after them. For this reason, the Torah writes the *parsha* of *bechor* and right after that the *parsha* of *ben sorer u’moreh*. The Torah is telegraphing to us the importance of the beginnings at every stage of life. (R’ Frand)

Eizer Kenegdo

In *Parshas Chayei Sarah* we learn all about Eliezer’s search to find a wife for Yitzchok. In his search for a wife for Yitzchak Avinu, he focuses on finding a girl that excels in the trait of kindness. On a simple level, this teaches us the importance of such a trait in a spouse, yet the commentaries suggest that Eliezer understood that the wife of Yitzchak in particular had to stand out in the trait of kindness.

The *Chasam Sofer* explains this based on the idea that a wife is an ‘*eizer kenegdo*’ for her husband. He writes that some commentaries explain that a wife can help her husband by being different to him in character, and that it is not ideal if they are too similar. For example, if both of them are *vatranim* then they would not balance each other out. He then cites the examples of Avraham and Sarah and Yitzchak and Rivka: Avraham excelled in the trait of *chessed* whereas Sarah was characterized by the trait of *din*. Yitzchak also excelled in *din*, whereas Rivka shone in the trait of *chessed*. This is why Eliezer *davke* [specifically] looked for the trait of *chessed* in a wife of Yitzchak, in order to complement and at times, temper, his trait of *din*.

In what way do we see from the Torah that these wives complement their spouses? One glaring example with regard to Sarah is when there was a risk that Yishmoel would negatively influence Yitzchak. Sarah told Avraham to throw Yishmoel out of their home,

but Avraham was very reluctant to do so. Hashem then told Avraham that Sarah was correct and that Avraham should listen to her. In this episode, Avraham's trait of *chessed* was tempered by Sarah's *din*.

It is more difficult to find an application of the '*eizer kenegdo*' aspect of the relationship between Yitzchak and Rivka, largely because there are very few instances of their communication in the Torah. Nevertheless, the *Tiferes Shlomo* does find an example. As an introduction to understanding his point, the *middah* of *din* implies boundaries and a fear of sin that causes a person to avoid unnecessary *nisyonos*. In contrast, the *middah* of *chessed* implies overflowing, and the desire to use everything for the good.

Rav Dessler zt"l writes that Yitzchak's *middah* of *din* meant that he had a natural internal focus and fear of sin, and this caused him to refrain for a long time from coming out into the world to teach the world about Hashem. It also meant that he feared that material wealth would pose a great test to a person and therefore should be avoided. Based on this idea, the *Tiferes Shlomo* explains why Yitzchak did not initially want to bestow the *berachos* on Yaakov Avinu. Those blessings are primarily materialistic and Yitzchak feared that such involvement in the physical world would adversely affect Yaakov spiritually. Therefore, he wanted to protect Yaakov from such a *nisayon* by not blessing him with physical abundance.

However, Rivka who had the *middah* of *chessed*, recognized that physical bounty could be used to enhance one's *avodas* Hashem in various ways. Consequently, she recognized that Yaakov could use the bounty of the blessings for the good. In this way, Rivka's trait of overflowing *chessed* tempered Yitzchak's trait of cautious *din* in a positive manner.

One aspect of this idea is that a significant purpose of marriage is to help a person work on those character traits that do not come naturally to him. When one's spouse is different in a certain area, it can often require the other spouse to go against his or her nature in order to maintain *shalom bayis*.

For example, if one spouse is particularly tidy and the other one is not, then both will need to adapt to the other person in certain ways: The tidy one may have to work on being a bit more tolerant of mess, whereas the less tidy one may have to go against his nature and clear up when he would not normally feel the need to do so.

It is important to note that this idea of marriage being about working on oneself goes against the secular attitude that a 'perfect' spouse is the one who fits seamlessly with you and there is no need to work on oneself at all to improve the relationship. Of course, no such thing exists, and this attitude surely is a contributory factor to the high divorce rate in the secular world. Even though the Torah clearly rejects this approach, it can creep into a person's outlook when looking for a spouse, and when in an actual marriage. The *Chasam Sofer's* observation on this week's *parsha* reminds us that the perfect *eizer kenegdo* is not the same as us, rather is often very different and in that way, complements us and enables us to grow in our lives and in our marriages. (R' Yehonosan Gefen)

Rav Shimon Sofer, a grandson of the *Chasam Sofer*, says a *vort* in *Parshas Chayei Sorah* which brings out the same idea:

In *Parshas Chayei Sorah*, after Eliezer recounts his interactions with Rivkah and requests permission to take her to marry his master's son Yitzchok, Lavan and Besuel respond: *בַּיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּים אֵלֶּיךָ רַע אִם טוֹב* – “and they say, that this episode came from Hashem, and we cannot speak negatively or positively about this potential *shidduch* [match]”. Their refusal to voice an opinion is difficult to understand. If they were opposed to the marriage, they should have argued that it was a bad idea, and if they supported the match, they should have responded with their endorsement. *Shidduchim* is an area in which it is exceedingly rare for people not to have any opinion.

Rav Shimon Sofer, explains that when people are looking for a suitable marriage partner, they typically believe that a potential spouse must be like them for their marriage to be harmonious and successful. However, the Torah (*Bereishis* 2:20) describes the ideal wife as an *עֶזְרָא כְּנֶגְדּוֹ* – “helpmate opposite her husband”. Many times, it is not in our best interest to marry somebody who is too similar to us, and spouses benefit when they are different from one another and capable of compensating for each other's shortcomings.

For example, Rav Sofer writes that people have widely varying approaches to spending money. If a spendthrift marries somebody with the same attitude toward money, they will quickly go bankrupt. Similarly, if a miserly person marries a spouse who is equally tightfisted, they will save a lot of money for the future but will be incapable of enjoying the present. To prevent these scenarios from occurring, Hashem specifically arranges *shidduchim* in which the couple have different backgrounds, styles, and personalities so that they will be able to compromise and reach a healthy balance.

Rav Sofer adds that this concept is not limited to a person's attitude toward money, and for the same reason, Hashem often pairs intense people with more laid-back spouses and strict disciplinarians with those who have a more relaxed philosophy about raising children, as it is the synthesis of their disparate approaches that creates a healthy harmony in the home.

Rav Sofer suggests that Lavan and Besuel's lack of opinion regarding the proposed *shidduch* between Rivkah and Yitzchok was due to this concept. By telling us that they were unable to speak negatively or positively regarding the match, the Torah is hinting to us that when it comes to *shidduchim*, what we view as desirable may in fact be problematic, while the traits that we view as unacceptable deal breakers may in reality be in our best interest. (R' Ozer Alport)

Opposites Attract

The creation of man was no simple feat. In fact, Hashem seems to be disappointed with his less-than-perfect creation. He looks at Adam and declares, "It is not good for man to be alone I will create an *ezer k'negdo*." The word *ezer* means helper, and the word *k'negdo* takes on various explanations, each defining the role of woman in completing and perfecting creation.

Simply put, the word *k'negdo* means opposite him. It can even mean against him. Rashi quotes the Gemara that explains that there is no middle ground in relationships. If one merits than the spouse is a helper; and if one does not merit, then the spouse is a *k'negdo*, against him.

Though the word *k'negdo* may mean opposite him, it need not mean a negative connotation. Opposite him, however, defines a relationship. One cannot be opposite of no one. Why, then, does the Torah define this helper in such interesting terms? Why would it not have sufficed to call the new spouse a helper and leave it at that?

A therapist once related a fascinating story that reflects upon the strange state of affairs in some households.

A couple came to him for counselling in their predicament.

"My husband is only interested in the baseball playoffs! All he's interested in is that stupid baseball! Yankees, Shmankees! That's all he wants to do each night."

"That problem," thought the doctor, "is not so unique. It occurs pretty often in households across the country."

He was expecting to hear the husband defend himself with lines like, "it's only once a year," or only when New York is in the playoffs."

He didn't. In response the husband put his hands on his hips and faced-off.

"And what about her? All she wants to watch are the evening sitcoms and serials! They are meaningless fantasies!

The therapist pondered this modern-day struggle and offered his suggestion. "I see that your interests in televised entertainment are quite polarized. But I think there is a simple solution."

He smiled broadly and with the confidence of responding with Solomonic wisdom he continued. "You are quite an affluent couple, and," he added, "you have a large home. Why don't you just buy an additional TV set, and each of you watch your desires in different rooms!"

The therapist's smile faded as the couple stared at him in horror. "DIFFERENT ROOMS??" they shrieked in unison. "How can we watch in different rooms? That's the time we spend together!"

Through its contrasting definitions of a spouse's capacity, the Torah does more than warn us of problems. It explains what the best helper is. The appropriate helper and mate is not one who spends his or her time in a different world with different interests and no concern for the other's. Rather, it is one who stand opposite the spouse and faces him. The shared enjoyment of each other's company, the companionship of *k'negdo*, should outweigh a set of four eyes glued to an event in the distance. The Torah wants two sets of eyes facing each other. Sometimes in agreement, sometimes in disagreement as long as they are *k'negdo*, opposite the other. (R' Mordechai Kamenetzky)

Marriage and the Royal Family

The *Machzor Vitri* comments that there is custom unique to *chasanim*. During the week following the wedding, the *chosan* should not go to *shul* to *daven*. Rather, he should *daven* at home. The reason given for this custom is the *chosan* will often have difficulty finding people to accompany him to and from *shul*, and he should not go alone. Therefore, the *chosan* should just *daven* at home.

Why is it necessary to provide a *chosan* with accompaniment? The *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* writes that "*chosan domeh l'melech*," a *chosan* is similar to a king. Just as a king does not go out alone, so too a *chosan* should not go out alone. Just as we must accord respect to a king, and assure that he always travels with an entourage, so too must we do the same for a *chosan*.

What is it exactly that causes a *chosan* to attain a status of royalty? Why, just because a person gets married, it he accorded respect that is due to kings?

In *Tehillim*, Dovid HaMelech writes (26:4) "One thing I asked of G-d, that I shall seek - that I dwell in the house of G-d all the days of my life..." The *Yalkut Shimoni* explains the request of Dovid HaMelech. The *Yalkut* writes that Dovid HaMelech was asking for royalty. This explanation does not easily fit in with the context of the entire passage. Dovid HaMelech asked to sit in the house of G-d all the days of his life. How is this asking for royalty? Is the royal palace the "house of G-d?" Furthermore, asking G-d for royalty is not in accordance with Dovid HaMelech's personality and stature. First, he was a king. Second, Dovid HaMelech was known for his desire to study Torah, even waking up late at night so he could study the holy words of Torah. Why, then, would he request royalty, which, if granted, would bring with it distraction from Torah study, and honor, wealth, and prestige, status symbols for which the Sages did not crave?

The answer lies in a Gemara in *Gittin* (62a). The Gemara asks: Who are the true kings? The Rabbonon who study Torah, are called kings. Why? Because through the study of Torah,

they merit the crown of Torah. Dovid HaMelech was not asking for the royalty that comes through being a monarch of a country. He was asking G-d for the royalty that results through one becoming the emissary of G-d, which comes through immersion in Torah study. Dovid HaMelech greatly wanted another royalty, the royalty that would afford him the opportunity to sit in the house of G-d all the days of his life. It is this royalty, as the *Yalkut Shimoni* writes, mentioned in Dovid HaMelech's request in *Tehillim*.

The Gemara teaches (*Yevamos* 62b) that any man who does not have a wife exists without happiness, blessing, and without Torah. It is possible to understand why a person might not be happy about being single, or might feel not blessed because he is not married. However, there are many people who clearly do learn Torah when they are single. How can we understand that a person is without Torah because he is single?

Rav Ovadia Yosef explains that there are different levels of Torah study. There is a principle that when a person could be engaged in Torah study, and that person instead pursues other matters, he is engaged in "Bittul Torah," "the wasting of Torah-study time." Rav Ovadia extends this principle. "Bittul Torah" also applies when a person is learning Torah, but could learn Torah with greater depth and/or intensity, and is not doing so. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 30b) writes that the Shechinah does not rest upon man through gloom. Happiness is needed to have the Shechinah rest upon man. If a person is not married, according to the Gemara, he is without happiness. If he is without happiness, he will not merit to have the Shechinah rest upon him and bless his efforts. As the individual does not have the benefit of the Shechinah resting upon him and blessing his efforts, the Torah study done by this individual is on a lower level than the study that could be accomplished by him if he had the assistance of the Shechinah. Therefore, the individual who is not married and does not have happiness, does not have Torah, either.

When a man weds, he is blessed with a happiness that he has not experienced before. Because he has reached this level of happiness, the level of his Torah study reaches heights previously unattained. He is now in the realm of those who are dedicated to G-d's service and study of Torah. He has now, because of the joy of getting married, joined the ranks of royalty. Only now, because of his new status, can we call the *chosan* a king - a member of G-d's extensive royal family. Because the *chosan* experiences a new dimension of joy, and hence reaches a new plateau in his Torah study, he now becomes comparable to a king, and is therefore accorded the respect due to a king.

The caveat, the *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* points out, is that a *chosan* is only comparable to a king. He is not a true king. While it is true that a *chosan*, upon getting married, experiences a joy like one never before felt, after the seven days of feasting that follows the wedding, the joy can wane. The level of Torah study that almost automatically came to the *chosan* upon his marriage can drop. How can the *chosan* maintain his royal status? By keeping happy, by maintaining a pleasant atmosphere in the house. With happiness comes the company of the Shechinah. G-d's presence will bless the new couple, and specifically the

Torah study conducted in that household. If a new couple can keep the happiness they experience during the first week they are married with them always, their reign as queen and king will continue indefinitely. (R' Yehudah Prero)

A Vort from R' Moshe Feinstein Which Every Married Couple Must Know

After Amalek attacked the Jewish people in Refidim, Hashem swore that He would fight a battle against them in every generation until they are ultimately defeated and completely obliterated, ויאמר כי יד על כס י-ה מלחמה לה' בעמלק מדר דר. This *pasuk* uses a shortened form of the Hebrew word for throne כס and the 2 lettered Name of Hashem י-ה rather than the full Name. Rashi (17:16) explains that the abbreviated forms indicate that the Name and Throne of Hashem are diminished so long as Amalek still exists.

With this in mind asks Reb Moshe Feinstein, the Gemara in *Sotah* (17a) seems at first perplexing. The Gemara says that Hashem placed the letter 'yud' in the Hebrew word for man – איש, and the letter 'hei' in the word for woman – אשה, so that the name of Hashem (*yud* and *hei*) would be formed upon their union in marriage. If Hashem desired that the union of husband and wife be graced with His Name, why would he choose the incomplete two-letter name as the signature of His Presence?

The answer is that while it is true the Hashem graces each Jewish couple with His Name, He provides only a foundation, upon which the couple must build to make a true Jewish home. Whilst essential, Hashem's contribution is only a beginning. It is only the good work of the young couple that can complete the Name that is present in their home. If they succeed in doing so then true the true blessing will surely follow – בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את – שמי אבוא אליך וברכתך. – “Any place that you mention my name, I will come and bless you”.

It is interesting to note that the name of Hashem formed by the union of husband and wife is not a product of the letters 'aleph' and 'shin' which they have in common. It is formed from the letters 'yud' and 'hei' which they do not have in common. *Hashra'as HaShechinah*, the resting of the *Shechinah* in a Jewish home stems from harmony – the dynamic harmonizing of their differing emotions and thought processes and perspectives.

The *Aruch HaShulchan* in his introduction (found at beginning of *Choshen Mishpot*, which was the first volume he published) writes: וזהו עיקר – תפארת השיר בשהקולות משונים זה מזה – הנעימות – “The splendour of music is when the voices/sounds are different from each other and that is the essence of its beauty.”

What is the point of Reb Moshe's *vort*? It says that a nice peaceful house is good but that's only a beginning and that the people need to do more. *Avodas* Hashem never ends. One has to build on a good foundation. Is he providing any insight here or telling us anything we did not already know?

Reb Moshe never said platitudes! His mind worked on many levels and careful attention to what he wrote and said revealed some of that thought process. Here, Reb Moshe chose to emphasize the positive aspect of his observation – that if a person builds on the gift Hashem granted, then *berachah* will surely come to the house. But, he is teaching another implicit lesson here and it's not a comfortable one. The lesson is that a person who fails to take advantage of an opportunity, a person who rests on his laurels, a person who has achieved but can achieve more and fails to do so because he is lazy, that man is the brother of Amalek! Whether passively diminishing by failing to do Hashem's work, or actively diminishing by doing wicked things – the result is the same. This person is guilty of the same diminution of the Name of Hashem as Amalek. This is expressed in *Mishlei* (18:9) גם מתרפה במלאכתו אח הוא לבעל משחית - "Also he who slackens in his work is a brother to the destroyer".

The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes on this *pasuk*: עשה רע בקום עשה רע כי הנה העצל אף על פי שאינו עושה רע בקום עשה רע כי הנה הוא מביא את הרעה עליו בשב ועל תעשה שלו ואמר גם מתרפה במלאכתו אח הוא לבעל משחית כי אף על פי שאינו המשחית העושה את הרעה בידיו לא תחשב שהוא רחוק ממנו אלא אחיו הוא ובן גילו הוא - "The lazy man, although not actively evil, produces evil through his very inactivity. It says: 'Also he who slackens in his work is a brother to the destroyer'. Though he is not the destroyer who commits the evil with his own hands, let him not think he is far-removed from him – he is his blood-brother."

So, Reb Moshe's *vort*, properly understood, has a very strong message. A couple might say, our home is so pleasant and holy why look outwards? Why get involved in things outside of the house? A person might say, "look what I have achieved! I've accomplished enough, I can relax, let others do the work." These people need to know WHO is really talking. That is the Amalek in our sub-conscious mind talking. When you start thinking that way, remember that the mitzvah of *mechiyas* Amalek, the mitzvah of restoring the Name and Throne of Hashem, doesn't always involve taking a weapon in hand and physically doing battle.

The Proper Outlook on Marriage

In *Parshas Chayei Sorah* we learn about how after Avraham eulogizes Sorah and mourns her loss, he proceeds to obtain a burial plot for her. The Mishnah (*Kiddushin* 2a) teaches that one of the three methods by which a woman can be betrothed is giving her money. The Gemara derives this from the shared use of the word קח – acquire – in the Torah's discussion of marriage and in Avraham's purchase of the burial plot.

Just as the phrase קח ממני – take the money from me – that Avraham said to Ephron refers to acquiring an item through the transfer of money, so too the mitzvah of marriage, which is described as (*Devorim* 24:1) כי יקח איש אשה – when a man takes a woman – can also be affected by giving money to the woman. Why does the Torah specifically use the narrative

of Avraham's efforts to acquire a burial plot for Sorah to teach us a law governing marriage, and what lesson is it intended to teach us?

Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter beautifully suggests that this was done intentionally in order to teach us the proper outlook on marriage, and on relationships in general. Even though Sorah was no longer alive and was incapable of ever giving him Avraham any additional benefits or pleasure, he was still willing to spend an exorbitant amount of money in order to secure an appropriate final resting place for his beloved wife. Avraham's willingness to do so demonstrates that his relationship with Sorah was not motivated by the pursuit of his own pleasure and happiness, but rather on how he could give to his wife and help her.

In deriving one of the laws defining the conception of a marriage from this episode, the Torah is teaching us the proper outlook on marriage, namely that the very essence of the relationship is intended to be one that is focused on giving to and sharing with one's spouse, rather than a selfish focus on fulfilling one's own desires. Entering into marriage, or any other relationship, with this Torah perspective is a proven recipe for improving our *middos* and enriching our bonds with others. (R' Ozer Alport)

The Characteristics of a Successful Relationship

In *Parshas Vayetztei* the Torah tells us of the birth of Yaakov's children, and the reasons for the names they received. His first six sons were born from Leah, whom he loved less than his second wife, Rochel, and the names Leah chose for her first three sons express her longing for Ya'akov's love. Leah named her first son "Reuven" because "*ra'a Hashem be-onyi*" – "The Lord has seen my torment" and thus gave her a son so that Yaakov would love her (29:32). The name of her second son, "Shimon," signifies that "*shama Hashem ki senu'a anokhi*" – "...the Lord heard that I am despised" (29:33). And the name of her third son, "Levi," expresses that with the birth of a third child "*yilaveh ishi eliai*" – "my husband will attach himself to me" (29:34).

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch observes that unlike these three names, the name of Leah's fourth son, Yehuda, is not associated with Leah's relationship with Yaakov. The name "Yehuda" is simply an expression of gratitude – "*Ha-pa'am odeh es Hashem*" ("This time, I shall thank the Lord" – 29:35), without any reference to Leah's desire to earn Yaakov's love. On this basis, Rav Hirsch asserts that after the birth of Leah's third son, Levi, she felt that her relationship with Yaakov had finally reached the level of closeness that should characterize a marriage. After each of the first two births, although Leah noticed a marked improvement in Yaakov's attitude towards her after, and a less pronounced difference between his relationship to her and his relationship to Rochel, but only after Levi's birth did Leah sense that, in Rav Hirsch's words, "the difference had quite disappeared," and that "the purest, truest loving relationship between husband and wife was established." Therefore, when Leah's fourth child was born, she no longer needed to celebrate any enhancement of Yaakov's affection towards her, and so she simply

expressed her general feelings of gratitude to the Ribbono Shel Olam. (It should be noted, though, that after the birth of Leah's sixth Zevulun, she again spoke of her relationship to Yaakov, exclaiming, "*Ha-pa'am yizbeleini ish*" (30:20). This would certainly appear to indicate that this issue continued weighing on Leah's mind even later.)

In light of this, Rav Hirsch asserts that the name "Levi" – more specifically, Leah's response to Levi's birth which formed the basis of his name – encapsulates the "purest, truest loving relationship between husband and wife." The name "Levi" (לוי) stems from the term "*yilaveh*," (ילוה). Leah's anticipation of Yaakov "attaching" himself to her. Rav Hirsch suggests a link between the root "ל-ו-ה" in reference to "attachment" (as in the common word לווה, which means "escort"), and the use of this root to mean "borrow." The relationship signified by this term, Rav Hirsch explains, is the "attachment of two persons where each one of them feels themselves the *loveh*, the debtor of the other...that they owe their happiness and whole life to the other." The highest-level relationship is achieved when the parties see themselves as indebted to one another, as opposed to feeling owed by one another. When the two parties focus on their perceived entitlements, on what they can and should be receiving from the other, disappointment and tension are all but inevitable. A successful relationship is one signified by the name "Levi," characterized by a mutual sense of indebtedness, with each party seeking to please the other. This is thus the name given to Levi, whose birth heralded, in Leah's mind, the attainment of the complete marital bond that she sought to build with Yaakov.

Making Space for Others – A Prerequisite for Hashro'as HaShechinah

Parshas Tzav begins with the mitzvah of *terumas hadeshen*, the daily removal of ashes from the *mizbayach* by the officiating *kohen*. This work was the first ritual performed in the *Beis HaMikdosh* each day, in the early morning hours, before the offering of any sacrifices, the kindling of the *menorah* and the offering of incense.

A number of different ideas have been proposed to explain the underlying significance of this mitzvah. The fact that the daily regimen in the *Beis HaMikdosh* began with this ritual indicated to many writers that in addition to the obvious purpose of maintaining cleanliness, the *avodah* of *terumas hadeshen* also conveys a deeper message. Most commonly, perhaps, it has been suggested that the Torah sought to humble the *kohen* by requiring him to perform simple, undignified custodial work as he begins his day of service in the *Beis HaMikdosh*. (Another oft-quoted approach is given by Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch, in his Torah commentary.)

Rav Meir Goldwicht however, suggested that the act of removing ashes symbolizes the primary prerequisite to *hashro'as haShechinah*, the resting of the divine presence among Bnei Yisroel, which many consider the main objective of the *Beis HaMikdosh*. Removing ashes involved making space, clearing away an area on the surface of the *mizbayach*. In order for the Shechinah to be present among the Jewish people, and in any

given individual's life, they, or he, must clear away space for the Shechinah. Rav Goldwicht illustrates this point by drawing a compelling analogy to human relationships, particularly marriage. Marriage means bringing somebody else into one's life, which necessarily means making space for somebody else, lowering one's personal expectations and demands so that he can share his life with another person.

For good reason, *Chazal* commented that the Shechinah resides in the home of a harmonious marriage. If the husband and wife have mastered the art of "making space," of allowing themselves less so that they can give to one another, then they can also live spiritual lives, lives devoted to *avodas Hashem*.

The *avodah* [service] in the *Beis HaMikdosh* began with *siluk hadeshen*, removing the ashes from the *mizbayach*, in order to symbolize the centrality of "*siluk*" in the experience of *hashro'as haShechinah*. The Ribbono Shel Olam cannot enter our lives if we do not make space for Him.

Rav Goldwicht further suggested that this theme may underlie the Mishnah's famous comment (*Avos* 5:5) that during the times of the *Beis HaMikdosh*, "*omdim tzefufim umishtachavim revachim*" – the people in the courtyard of the *Beis HaMikdosh* would "stand crowded but bow comfortably." The plain meaning is that despite the crowded conditions in the courtyard of the *Beis HaMikdosh* when the nation visited the *Beis HaMikdosh*, they miraculously had enough room to comfortably bow on the ground. Additionally, however, this miracle might allude to the theme of "making space" described above. When people crowd in the *Beis HaMikdosh*, and they are prepared to confine themselves to a cramped space in consideration of others, then "*mishtachavim revachim*" – everyone is able to serve the Ribbono Shel Olam properly. The more we train ourselves to demand less for ourselves and offer more to others, the more meaningfully we can bring the Shechinah into our lives and commit ourselves to sincere, lifelong *avodas Hashem*. (Rav Meir Goldwicht)

How Can Litvaks with Chassidic Wives Have Shalom Bayis? "Let Them Eat Cake"

The custom of Jews from *Chassidic* communities is to eat *mezonos*, cake or cookies, on Shabbos morning after *kiddush*. [Gift stores in Borough Park sell "*challah covers*" that are embroidered with the blessing for cake (*borei minei mezonos*) rather than bread (*hamotzi*), for use during the Shabbos morning *kiddush*.] The Shabbos morning custom of Jews originating from Lithuanian and German communities is to start the meal with the blessing of *hamotzi* on bread, immediately after *kiddush*.

Rabbi Pesach Diskind a grandson of Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky once related the following:

One Shabbos morning when he was a guest by his grandfather, he noticed that after *kiddush*, Reb Yaakov's Rebbetzin [wife] served cake to Reb Yaakov and he made a *borei minei mezonos*. Afterwards, they went to wash for the meal.

Rabbi Diskin knew that his grandfather was not a *chossid*. He was, in fact, a dyed-in-the-wool *Litvak*. Rabbi Diskin asked his grandfather from where he picked up the custom to have *mezonos* after *kiddush*. Reb Yaakov explained the origin of this custom to his grandson. Rav Yaakov, who had lost his first wife, was now married to his "*zivug sheni*" [his second wife]. Reb Yaakov's second wife came from *Chassidic* background. Both her father and her first husband were from *Chassidic* backgrounds. She was accustomed to having *mezonos* with Shabbos morning *kiddush*. If he would not have *mezonos* after *kiddush*, she would feel something was lacking in the *kiddush*.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky was 70 years old when he married his second wife. That means that for 50 years he made *kiddush* in the morning without *mezonos*.

How many of us would change after doing something for fifty years, and for what? "Because with my wife, this is how *kiddush* is made".

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky changed. To Reb Yaakov, it was worth changing a 50-year-old practice for *shalom bayis* — for the feelings of his wife. This should serve as an insightful lesson for all of us.

Understanding Why It's Important to Wait Until After the Wedding to Spend Quality Time Together

We say in the final one of the *sheva berachos*: אשר ברא ששון ושמחה חתו וכלה גילה רנה דיצה: "Who created joy and gladness, *chosan* and *kallah*, mirth, glad song, pleasure, delight, love, brotherhood, peace and companionship." Why do the words *chosan v'kallah* precede all of the wonderful, varied expressions of joy?

Rav Shmuel HaLevi Vosner, *zt"l*, explains that the unique love, harmony and sense of brotherhood that reigns in a marriage, is a spiritual blessing from Hashem which He grants to the young couple following their commencement of life as husband and wife. Prior to their marriage, however, this blessing is not relevant. In fact, the mere idea that two people from different backgrounds and families, at times from different geographical environments, proclivities and temperaments, should meld together as one, to live in harmony and to build a future together is, in and of itself, a phenomenon that is difficult to understand. Indeed, the *Rema* (*Even HaEzer* 55:1) discourages relationships prior to marriage, since the young man and woman, being from different backgrounds, quite possibly will not see eye to eye, a situation which could escalate into discord.

Rav Vosner was a proponent of minimizing meetings between *chosan* and *kallah* – before and after their engagement. His position was not based upon a *minhag chassidus*, extreme

religious sentiment, but for practical reasons. Once the young couple has married, Hashem provides them with His unique blessing. Thus, the words, *chosan v'kallah*, precede the joy, etc., because these blessings take root only after their marriage. This is why the Torah writes, "He shall be free for his home for one year." For only after the wedding will the blessings of joy, pleasure, delight, etc., reign in their home. It is during this year that the Heavenly blessings take effect.

A *bochur* came to R' Shach, *zt"l*, to present a number of doubts that had surfaced in his mind concerning a girl that he had been seeing. The Rosh Yeshivah listened to each one of the young man's questions and responded to them, thus clarifying any doubts that existed in his mind. As the young man was about to leave, Rav Shach said, "Listen to my advice: once you become engaged, limit your encounters with your *kallah*." The young man asked the Rosh Yeshivah the obvious question: "Why?" "Let me explain," Rav Shach began. "Every person has deficiencies. No one is perfect. When a person notes the imperfections of his future spouse, it will bother him/her. Once the marriage takes place, however, Hashem's blessing of *sasson v'simchah, chassan v'kallah*, occurs to the point that when there is a "creation" called *chassan v'kallah*, no imperfections will defray their union. This blessing, however, occurs only after the wedding – not before. Thus, it is best to wait until after the wedding to spend quality time together."

The Danger of Shidduch Pictures

In *Parshas Lech Lecha*, the Torah relates how due to a famine in Canaan, Avraham and Sorah decided to travel to Egypt. As they approached the border between the two countries, Avraham saw Sorah's reflection in a river and became aware of her beauty, and he feared that the Egyptians would kill him in order to marry her. Why was he unfamiliar with his wife's appearance until this incident? Rashi explains that Avraham never looked at Sorah due to his high level of personal modesty, and he was therefore oblivious to her good looks.

The *Maharsha (Bava Basra 16a)* points out that this is difficult to understand, as the Gemara (*Kiddushin 41a*) forbids a man to marry a woman until he has looked at her to ensure that she will find favor in his eyes. Since the Gemara (*Yoma 28b*) says Avraham observed the entire Torah even though it had not yet been given, how was he permitted to marry Sorah without ever seeing her?

Rav Mordechai Jofen suggests that Avraham certainly fulfilled the Gemara's requirement to look at Sorah before their wedding, and he knew she was attractive. If so, why was Avraham suddenly scared of the Egyptians when he was not concerned at the time they set out on their journey? Rav Jofen explains that although Avraham recognized Sorah's pulchritude at the time of their marriage, he thought that it emanated from her sublime purity. Thus, he was not worried about the Egyptians wanting to take Sorah away from him

because he assumed they would view her through their crude physical lenses, which would prevent them from discerning her true inner splendor.

As they approached the border, Avraham noticed Sorah's reflection in the water, which only mirrors the external and cannot capture spiritual charm. When Avraham observed that his wife's appeal remained unchanged when displayed in the water, he realized that she also possessed great physical beauty and therefore grew concerned that the Egyptians would seek to take her for themselves.

Extending this insight, Rav Jofen adds that when people who are dating insist upon seeing a picture of a prospective *shidduch*, they are doing themselves a disservice. Many young men and women radiate an inner spiritual purity when seen in real life, but like the water, the camera is incapable of capturing this appeal. This often leads to people rejecting potentially suitable marriage partners to whom they could have felt attracted if they had only given themselves the opportunity to meet them in real life instead of emulating the Egyptians by focusing solely on external appearances.

Along these lines, the Tchebiner Rav once told a yeshiva *bochur* about a young woman he believed would be a good match for the boy. As they were discussing her many strengths and talents, the *bochur* asked if he could see a photo of the girl before making a final decision about meeting her. Overhearing their conversation from the kitchen, the Tchebiner Rebbetzin demonstrated her sharp wit as she chided the *bochur* for the inappropriate request by calling out *לא יעשה בן במקומו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה*. In this *pasuk*, Lavan justified his decision to switch his daughters by telling Yaakov that the local custom was that a younger daughter cannot get married before her older sister.

Reading the *pasuk* in the Rebbetzin's Polish dialect, it can be reinterpreted to mean, "Our custom is that we do not give a picture (she pronounced the word for picture – צורה – the same as the word for younger daughter – צעירה) before you meet the girl (the word for a young woman – בחורה – is pronounced like the word for older daughter – בכירה)," a clever rebuke that provides a potent and relevant message in light of the recent trend toward soliciting photographs of potential *shidduchim* and evaluating prospective spouses through superficial lenses. (R' Ozer Alport)

The Key to Great Relationships

In *Parshas Chayei Sorah* we learn all about Yitzchok Avinu's *shidduch*. Avraham's loyal servant, Eliezer, arrives in Aram Naharaim in search of a wife for Yitzchok. He *davens* to Hashem to help him find a suitable wife for Yitzchok. He even asks Hashem for a sign, requesting that the right candidate treat him with great kindness. The *meforshim* note that Eliezer wanted Yitzchok's wife to excel in kindness. Why was this attribute so important?

The *Maharal* provides us with the key to answering this question. After Rivkah proves herself fitting for Yitzchok, Eliezer showers her with gifts: "a golden nose ring, its weight a

beka, and two bracelets for her arms, ten gold shekels their weight” (*Bereishis* 24:22). Rashi reveals the depths of these gifts. The *beka* alluded to the future mitzvah of giving half a shekel (*machatzis hashekel*), in which the Torah instructs the Jewish people to give “a *beka* per head,” a *beka* being half the weight of a shekel. The two bracelets alluded to the two *Luchos* given at Sinai, and the ten gold shekels hinted at the *Aseres HaDibros*. The *Maharal* explains that Eliezer was alluding to the three pillars of the world: Torah, service of G-d, and kindness. The *beka* represented kindness, because the mitzvah of giving half a shekel involves giving. The nose ring suggested the pleasant smell of the *korbonos* with which we serve Hashem in the *Beis HaMikdosh*. And the two bracelets/tablets of course referred to Torah.

Eliezer was hinting to Rivkah, the *Maharal* continues, that since she excelled in one of the three pillars, kindness (*chesed*), she would also merit the other two. Her connection to Avodas Hashem would be through marriage to Yitzchok, who epitomized that trait, and her connection to Torah would be through her son, Yaakov, who represents Torah. The *Maharal* explains that kindness is the foundation of all other virtues. Accordingly, by excelling in this one pillar, Rivkah merited them all. We now understand why kindness was so important to Eliezer. He recognized it as the root of all goodness, so Yitzchok’s wife had to abound in it. The *Maharal* makes a similar point in *Parshas Lech Lecha*, where Hashem promises that Avraham’s name will conclude the first blessing in *shemoneh esrei*. Why Avraham rather than Yitzchok or Yaakov? The *Maharal* explains that Avraham’s trait of *chesed* encompasses the traits of Yitzchok and Yaakov.

The idea that kindness is the root of all other virtues is strongly supported by the Gemara in which a prospective convert asks Hillel to teach him the Torah “on one foot.” Hillel answers him, “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your friend. This is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary.” The *meforshim* understand that Hillel was teaching this non-Jew the mitzvah of “love your neighbor as yourself,” which encompasses all the interpersonal *mitzvos*. Yet how did this precept encapsulate all the other *mitzvos*, those between us and Hashem? The *Chazon Ish* explains that Hillel was teaching the convert a profound lesson. A self-centred person is locked in his own way of thinking and viewing the world. He cannot relate to others’ views, and he does not even try. Such a person cannot live the Torah. One who cannot relate even to those around him cannot truly relate to Hashem. Hillel was impressing upon the non-Jew that only by stepping out of one’s selfish world can he begin to accept the Torah.

The *Chazon Ish’s* explanation helps us understand how kindness lies at the root of seeing the truth of the Torah. A kind person can step out of his own world and appreciate the needs and thoughts of others. Therefore, he can also step out of his own biases and shift his outlook to conform with that of the Torah. We see this idea in the Torah’s focus on Avraham’s *chesed*. Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits points out that *Chazal* portray Avraham’s incredible thirst for truth, but the Torah mentions only his kindness. For Avraham’s ability

to find the truth sprang from his *chesed*. His very selflessness brought him to the truth. Since his *chesed* lay at the root of his greatness, the Torah stressed that aspect of his personality as opposed to the intellectual honesty that came as a result. Yitzchok's inner strength and Avodas Hashem also stemmed from *chesed*. His self-sacrifice emanated from his desire to do Hashem's will, to "give" to Him.

Even Hashem's judgment arises out of His kindness. Hashem created a world of judgment—in which we have to measure up—lest we receive His countless gifts to us as "bread of shame," a "free lunch" we do not deserve. A person feels far less satisfaction when he receives something without having worked for it. Only by earning it through his own efforts does he really enjoy it. Thus, even Hashem's judgment derives from His desire to bestow *chesed* on his creations.

We have seen many sources indicating that kindness is the essence of goodness. This is why Eliezer focused on finding this trait in Yitzchok's wife. In a similar vein, one renowned scholar recalled that when his daughters were dating, he would often be told about the brilliance of their prospective husbands. He would respond that their intellect was far less important to him than how they would treat his daughters.

Chesed is essential in all relationships, especially marriage. By working on giving, a person will immeasurably enhance his marriage. If one remains ensconced in his own world, he will be unable to understand and meet his spouse's needs. This insularity seems to plague many marriages. In contrast, when one strives to relate to his spouse, their bonds will only strengthen.

May we all merit marriages filled with kindness. (R' Yehonasan Gefen)

Soup Opera

Love. It is a word that is supposed to explain the feelings that bind two individuals, parent and child, man and wife, G-d and His creations. The love between a man and his wife is the constant symbol used in Shlomo HaMelech's Shir Hashirim [Song of Songs] to declare the unshakable love G-d has for His nation.

But divorce is also a fact of life and in *Parshas Ki Seitzei* the Torah, albeit very succinctly, discusses the method of divorce. It also tells us why marriages end. "It will be if she does not find favor in his eyes for he found in her an *ervas davar* then he may write a divorce" (*Devorim* 24:1). The Mishnah in *Gittin* discusses the meaning of *ervas davar* in different ways. Beis Shammai, who is known for a strict opinion in most matters says that divorce should only occur over a matter of immorality. Beis Hillel says, that divorce is permitted "even if she burns his soup." And Rabbi Akiva, whose devotion and gratitude to his wife is legendary, says that "even if he finds a nicer woman, (he may divorce)."

It is most difficult to understand the Mishnah. It seems to go against the grain of every teaching. How do Beis Hillel, those who spoke of loving peace and pursuing peace say that one may get divorce over burned soup? Rabbi Akiva once pointed to his wife in front of 24,000 *talmidim* and announced, "Whatever I have and whatever you have, it is all due to her." How could he say that one could get divorced if he found a more lovely woman? It seems preposterous!

Rabbi Binyomin Kamenetzky once related a wonderful story: Reb Dovid was happily married to his dear and loving wife, Chayka, for nearly half a century. Her sudden death cast him into a terrible depression for which there was almost no cure. His son and daughter-in-law, Roizy, graciously invited him to stay at their home and share everything with them. Reb Dovid's daughter-in-law, cooked every meal for him but Reb Dovid was never pleased. No matter how deliciously prepared the meals were, he would sigh and mutter to himself, loud enough for his son to hear, "this was not the way Momma made the soup."

Roizy poured through her mother-in-law's old recipe books and tried to re-create the delicious taste for which her father-in-law longed. But Reb Dovid was still not pleased.

One day, while the soup was on the fire, Reb Dovid's grandchild fell outside. In her haste to get to the child, Roizy almost dropped in the entire pepper shaker. In addition, by the time the child was washed and bandaged, the soup was totally burned!

There was nothing for Reb Dovid's daughter to do but serve the severely spiced, burnt soup.

She stood in agony as her elderly father-in-law brought the soup to his lips. This time he would probably more than mumble a complaint. But it was not to be. A wide smile broke across Reb Dovid's face. "Delicious my dear daughter," said Reb Dovid with a tear in his eye. "Absolutely delicious! This is exactly how Momma made the soup!"

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, in his *sefer Emes L'Yaakov* explains the Mishnah in an amazing fashion: it is giving us a sign, when a marriage is disrepair. If a man tastes burnt soup that his loving wife cooked and he is repulsed, then he is missing the love that the Torah requires. Rabbi Akiva, who was separated from his wife for 24 years while he studied Torah, declared that if a man finds a woman whom he thinks is better, then his marriage needs scrutiny! Because a person must think that there is nothing tastier than what his wife prepared, and that there is no one more beautiful than the woman he married.

Reb Aryeh Levin, the Tzadik of Yerusholayim, once entered a doctor's office with his wife and spoke on behalf of both of them. "Her leg hurts us," he said.

The Mishnah is not defining how to get divorced. That is easy. It is teaching us an attitude that defines love. Because love is a lot more than not having to say I'm sorry. It's always believing that the soup is delicious. Even if it's burnt. (R' Mordechai Kamenetzky)

The Secret to a Successful Marriage

The back-and-forth between Hashem and Bilaam in the beginning of *Parshas Balak* is difficult to comprehend. Initially, when Balak's representatives came to invite Bilaam to curse the Jews, Hashem told Bilaam in no uncertain terms (*Bamidbar 22:12*): לא תלך עמהם – “do not go with them”. Bilaam refused, and Balak responded by sending higher ranking officials. Hashem relented and explicitly permitted Bilaam to go with them, which he did the following morning. Curiously, the next *pasuk* relates that Hashem was angry with Bilaam for going. Why did Hashem change His initial position, and why did He get upset when Bilaam followed His instructions?

The Vilna Gaon brilliantly explains that there are two Hebrew words that mean “with them” – אתם and עמהם. The word עמהם is used when the subject is identical to the others, while אתם is appropriate when the subject is similar, but not identical, to the others.

Applying this distinction to Bilaam, Balak's agents wanted him to go with them in kindred spirit, united in their plan to curse the Jewish nation. Not surprisingly, Hashem replied: לא תלך עמהם – you may not go together with them, if your motives are identical to theirs. When Hashem subsequently appeared to relent, it was with one critical condition: קום לך אתם – you may travel with them, but only if you are not united with them in your intentions. Hashem permitted Bilaam to say only what He would command him to say. Bilaam, with his intense hatred for the Jews, refused to accept this subtle but crucial distinction. The Torah records that וילך עם שרי מואב - Bilaam went and joined with them in their mission, and it was precisely at that moment that Hashem got angry at Bilaam's refusal to follow His directions.

Using this dichotomy, we may resolve another difficulty. After repeatedly obstructing the path of Bilaam's donkey, the angel gave him permission to travel with Balak's officers. Rashi comments (22:35): בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך בה מוליכין אותו - a person is led in the direction in which he wishes to go. In this case, Bilaam was given permission to go with Balak's agents to curse the Jews. Why didn't Rashi make this comment previously when Hashem allowed Bilaam to go with them?

The Vilna Gaon explains that Hashem permitted Bilaam to walk with them but not to be united with them in their wicked intentions. After blocking his way, the angel said to Bilaam לך עם האנשים, giving him permission for the first time to join them in their diabolical scheme. It was precisely at this point that Rashi noted that he was permitted to travel on the path that he truly desired.

With this *peshat* of the Gaon we can shed light on a well-known story brought in *Pirkei Avos* (6:9). Rebbi Yosi ben Kisma was once travelling we he met someone who wished to encourage him to come and live in his town to be the Rov in that place. Huge financial incentives were offered but Rebbi Yosi declined with the excuse: תורה במקום תורה – “I am only prepared to live in a place of Torah”. The question is, why could he not have taken the money and made a Yeshiva, Kollel and turned the place into the *makom* Torah that he desired? What did Rebi Yosi discern from the man’s behavior that made him realize that it was a non-starter?

Reb Moshe Kupetz *zt”l* was *medayek* the request of this individual - שתדור עמנו במקומו – “that you should have the same desires and intentions as us”. That is, you will be the Rov but we will tell you what to do and how to run the show! Obviously, this was not to be desired.

The last *berachah* of the *sheva berachos* concludes: משמח החתן עם הכלה – “the *choson* shall rejoice with the *kallah*”. When is their true *simcha* in a marriage? When the *choson* and *kallah* have the same *sheifos* [desires], then and only then are they truly ‘together’. (*Ovi Mori Shlita*)

Why A Choson Is Referred to as Eidim

Chazal (*Bava Basra* 16b) *darshen* from the *pasuk*: וה' ברך את אברהם בכל – “Hashem blessed Avraham with everything” in *Parshas Chayei Sorah*, שלא היתה לו בת – “That Avraham never had a daughter”.

The Ramban and *Kesav Sofer* both ask, why is it that when one doesn’t have a daughter he is considered to be blessed with everything?

Perhaps we can answer, that generally speaking people save up money to marry off their children. However, marrying off a son is much cheaper, as generally speaking it is the *kallah’s* side that has to spend money on buying a *dira* for the new couple. Therefore, *Chazal darshen*, וה' ברך את אברהם בכל – How could it be that Avraham still had any money left? It must be says the Gemara, -שלא היתה לו בת, that he never had a daughter, therefore, he managed to keep his savings.

With this perhaps we can also answer something which I’m sure has bothered you for many years. A *choson* is often referred to as the *eidim*, the question is, why he is he referred to as *eidim* in the plural which means witnesses, surely he should be referred to as an *eid*, in the singular?

Peshat is, עד אחד אינו יכול להוציא ממון – “a single witness is not believed when it comes to matters of extracting money”. However, there is one case where even a single person is able to extract money – that is a *choson* from his father-in-law. Since he is able to extract money, we refer to him as *eidim* in the plural. (*Madanay Asher*)

עוד ישמע בערי יהודה קול ששון וקול שמחה קול חתן וקול בלה