

CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

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שבת..... *for Friday night*..... קדש

Friday 5 September 2014 - 10 Elul 5774
Sedra Ki Tetze

NO TEMPORARY MARRIAGE

THE HOPE OF EVERY COUPLE STANDING UNDER THE MARRIAGE CANOPY IS that their marriage will be for life. It is a sacred bond joining their two souls together as one. Through a combination of good will, consideration for the other, respect and appreciation they will create a love together which indeed will be eternal.

However, unfortunately this sometimes does not work. The Sedra¹ this week gives us a number of rules about marriage. Among them are the laws of divorce². It is tragic, but sometimes it is a part of life, and when it has to take place the Torah affirms that this is the right thing to do, and gives the exact rules of how to go about it. An entire tractate of the Talmud is devoted to this subject.

Among the discussions of the Sages comes the question of a temporary marriage. Can a man and woman get married temporarily just for convenience, for example to grant one of them an exit permit from a totalitarian country?

The Sages say that a man may not marry a woman with a hidden intention to divorce her. However, if both of them understand



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and agree that this is the plan from the very beginning, then such a temporary marriage is possible³. Nonetheless, one would only do this in dire circumstances, such as the case above. The concept of marriage is defined at the very beginning of the Torah: a man “cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh”⁴. The very nature of the marriage bond is an expression of the hope that it should be permanent.

If so, asks the Lubavitcher Rebbe, what about the relationship of the Jewish people with G-d? This is compared to marriage. The Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai was the wedding, the Torah itself was the marriage agreement, and when the Jewish people were in the Land of Israel with the Temple in Jerusalem, it was like a healthy and harmonious marital relationship.

Unfortunately, the Jewish people did not keep their side of the marriage contract: they did not keep the laws of the Torah properly, and in particular, they worshipped idols, an act which the Prophets compare to adultery. So the Temple was destroyed and they were sent into Exile. This is like divorce.

The Rebbe asks: How could G-d do this? G-d knew from the beginning that the Jews would not keep the Torah and would serve idols, and that therefore He would have to ‘divorce’ the Jewish people and send them into Exile. This means G-d was entering into a marriage knowing that it would end in divorce. And even though He warned the Jewish people about this possibility - surely this is not the best way to act! Isn’t marriage sacred?

Of course it is. Long ago the prophet Isaiah told us that G-d is not divorcing the Jewish people at all⁵. G-d is with us, and we are with G-d. The fact of Exile is merely a temporary concealment: soon will come the Redemption, and G-d and the Jewish people will openly be together again. The Exile is temporary, G-d’s marriage to the Jewish people is permanent⁶.

1. Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19. 2. Deut. 24:1. 3. Maimonides. Laws of Divorce 10:21, Laws of Forbidden Relationships 21:28. 4. Genesis 2:24. 5. Isaiah 50:1. 6. Based freely on *Likkutei Sichot* vol.34, p.138 ff.

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SEDRA KI TETZE

THE WALLET

Benjy and his older brother David were walking back home from the supermarket, their arms laden with heavy bags.

“Wow, this milk sure weighs a lot,” David puffed.

“Not as much as the mayonnaise,” Benjy retorted.

Suddenly, to Benjy’s surprise, David suddenly dropped all his heavy bags, letting their contents scatter on the pavement, to the dismay of the passers-by.

“Hey kid! Whaddaya think you’re doing?” one man yelled angrily.

“Do you want help to pick it all up?” a woman offered.

David paid them no heed, his eyes fixed on something on the side of the pavement. He walked towards it, as if in a trance.

“David!” Benjy hissed. “Have you lost your mind?”

David ignored him. He picked up the object he was so excited about it and brought it over to Benjy.

“Look Benjy! I found a wallet!” He opened it eagerly. Inside was a large wad of bills. “Look! Now I can buy that bike I wanted! Isn’t this awesome?”

Benjy was just about to agree with his older brother that it was awesome, when he suddenly remembered what his teacher had said this week in the Sedra class.

“If you find a lost object, you have to return it no matter what. Look for clues to see to whom it might belong and give it back to the owner. You may not keep it. That is one of the mitzvot in this week’s Sedra.”

“David,” Benjy said, an urgency in his voice. “You can’t keep this.”

“Sure I can!” David said, laughing. “I just found it, didn’t I?”

“No. That doesn’t mean you can keep it. It says in this week’s Sedra, Ki Tetze, that if you find a lost object, you must return it to its owner. Someone lost this wallet David, and wants it back!”

“I don’t care! I found it and I’m keeping it,” David said stubbornly.

“Imagine if you had lost a wallet,” Benjy told him. “You would want someone to return it to you, right?”

David regarded his younger brother with surprise. “I guess you are right,” he said slowly. “Let me check for clues.” He opened the back pocket of the wallet - and a piece of paper tumbled out.

“Look!” Benjy exclaimed. “It belongs to Mr. Freedman. It even says his address here. Let’s go give it back to him David!”

David picked up the groceries scattered on the pavement and put them back in his bag. “Yeah, let’s go,” he echoed, and seemed to accept the thought of returning the wallet to its rightful owner. In fact, he was thinking that it was good to keep the Mitzvah of returning a lost article, and, if Hashem wanted, he would also eventually get a bike!

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