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The Act of Marriage

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In this study I would like to examine marriage and its effects on the people involved. Since the act of marriage involves the organ of a man and the organ of a woman, we will need to examine these two organs in light of the Torah.

The Tanach[[1]](#footnote-1) often compares the relationship of husband and wife to the relationship between HaShem and Israel.

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 62:5*** *For* as *a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and* as *the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy G-d rejoice over thee.*

This suggests that there is much to learn about HaShem by examining the marriage relationship. The first marriage, between Adam and Chava (Eve) in the Garden of Eden, is also the most instructive to teach us about how HaShem intended things to be. Since HaShem does not make mistakes, whatever was in the beginning will be in the end[[2]](#footnote-2):

***Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 1:9*** *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*

# Adam HaRishon

Thus we can learn some very profound things from a study of Adam HaRishon (The first Adam) before Chava was taken out of him.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 1:27*** *So G-d created man in his image, in the image of G-d created he him; male and female created he them.*

There is an explanation that Rashi brings about the state of Adam immediately after his creation. Rashi indicates that initially HaShem created man as a creature with the male and female aspects combined in a single corporate entity. The story in Bereshit (Genesis) 2, of the separation of Chava, is the description of the separation of Adam's male and female aspects into two separate beings capable of facing one another.

What are we to learn from this piece of information? We are to learn that marriage is the context in which a man and a woman attempt to recreate or approximate the perfect male-female union represented by Adam.

Our tradition is adamant that man achieves perfection and completion only through marriage. The Torah tells us:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 5:2*** *Male and female He created them, and He called their name ‘man’.*

From this we learn that the appellation *man* applies fully only when the male and the female are together:

***Yevamot 63a*** *R. Eleazar said: Any man who has no wife is no proper man; for it is said, Male and female created He them and called their name Adam.*

Next, we see in the Hebrew construction that HaShem does something a second time:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 2:7*** *And HaShem G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the Adam became a living soul.*

Thus we read that HaShem breathed into *the Adam* {which is often translated *the man*} the breath of life, it was from the breath of HaShem G-d that caused AGAIN *the Adam* to become a living soul.

HaShem created *the Adam* as both male and female. Torah uses an intentionally ambiguous word, *ohtoh,*[[3]](#footnote-3) *him*, in this pasuk. The spelling of the letters for אתו, *ohtoh* does not always mean *him*. Sometimes the same letters, rearranged, means אות, sign. Thus we can understand that HaShem intended us to understand both meanings. Now we understand that אתו *ohtoh* is meant to mean *him* in this text. Yet the *him* that is intended here is in reference to a future *him* [Adam HaSheni – The second Adam] after Chava was separated from him [Adam]. In other words, the same letters indicate *a sign*. That sign was that at the usage of the word *ohtoh* Adam haRishon (The first) and Chava shared the same body. That body would later be divided. The far future revealed that in Adam HaSheni, Mashiach, the male and female elements would again be rejoined.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 2:21-22*** *And HaShem G-d caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his sides, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the side, which HaShem G-d had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.*

The Midrash on Psalm 139 tells us explicitly about this androgynous creation:

**Midrash Tehillim Psalms 139** V. *You have fashioned me behind and before* (Ps. 139:5). Why is it said *behind and before*? Because at the first, Adam and Eve were created as a single creature with two faces, Adam's face in front, and Eve's in back. As Scripture says: *And the Lord God built into a woman the side (sela`) which He had taken from the man* (Gen. 2:22). Hence it is said *You have fashioned me behind and before.*

According to him who maintained that *sela`* means "face," which of the two faces was in front? It is likely that the face of the male was in front, since it is taught that when they are walking together, a man should not walk behind a woman, even if she is his wife; that if a man encounters a woman at [the entrance to] a [narrow] bridge, he should see to it that she stand aside to let him go first; and that a man who permits himself to follow a woman when they are fording a stream, will have no share in the world-to-come.



R. Eliezer taught: Adam and Eve were created as an androgyne, for it is said *Male-and-female created He them* (Gen. 1:27).

R. Samuel taught: God created man as a single creature with two faces and then split him in two, making a back for each part.

***Ketubot 8a*** *It is written, And God created man in his own image,[[4]](#footnote-4) and it is written, Male and female created He them.[[5]](#footnote-5) How is this [to be understood]? [In this way:] In the beginning it was the intention[[6]](#footnote-6) [of God] to create two [human beings], and in the end [only] one [human being] was created.*

**Rashi on Ketubot 8a** The Holy One, Blessed is He, created two figures in the first man [Adam], one male and one female, joined back to back. One of these was later separated to form the first woman, Eve, as it says: [From the] back and the front You have formed me.[[7]](#footnote-7)

There is a common misconception that Chava was taken from one of Adam’s ribs. The word *Tzehla* {rib / side} never appears anywhere in the Tanach as rib. The only usage for *Tzehla* in Tanach is as *side*. (Most of the other places in Scripture *tzela* refers to a side, such as the side of a building, or the tabernacle – Ex. 26.) Our sages say that the same holds true for this passage. The correct meaning is *side*. Therefore HaShem took from one of his sides. In other words, when HaShem took Chava from *the Adam* He took her from one of his sides. It could not have been one of *his* sides had they shared it. The reference is to his back side, after Chava was separated from him. After the separation it was *his side*. Before the separation, Adam had a front side but no back side. Chava had a front side but no back side. After the separation from *the Adam* both had back sides where they had previously been joined. This process is graphically depicted by the Zohar:

***Zohar Shemot 231a*** *Observe that at the creation of Adam the Holy One, blessed be He, made him male and female together, female behind and male before. Then He sawed them apart and adorned the woman and brought her to Adam; and when they were thus brought face to face, love was multiplied in the world and they brought forth offspring, a thing that was not yet before. But when Adam and his wife sinned and the serpent had intercourse with Eve and injected into her his venom, she bore Cain, whose image was in part derived from on high and in part from the venom of the unclean and low side. Hence it was the serpent who brought death into the world, in that it was his side that was the cause of it.[[8]](#footnote-8)*

The Gemara tells us a little about the process of separating Chava from Adam:

***Sanhedrin 39a*** *The Emperor once said to Rabban Gamaliel: Your God is a thief, for it is written, And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man [Adam] and he slept [and He took one of his ribs etc.] Thereupon his [the Emperor's] daughter said to him: Leave him to me and I will answer him, and [turning to the Emperor] said: ‘Give me a commander.’ ‘Why do you need him?’ asked he. — ‘Thieves visited us last night and robbed us of a silver pitcher, leaving a golden one in its place.’ ‘Would that such visited us every day!’ he exclaimed. ‘Ah!’ she retorted, ‘was it not to Adam's gain that he was deprived of a rib and a wife presented to him in its stead to serve him?’ He replied: ‘This is what I mean: he should have taken it from him openly.’ Said she to him: ‘Let me have a piece of raw meat.’ It was given to her. She placed it under her armpit, then took it out and offered it to him to eat. ‘I find it loathsome,’ he exclaimed. ‘Even so would she [Eve] have been to Adam had she been taken from him openly,’ she retorted.*

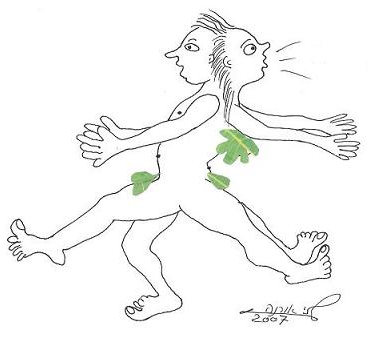
Adam was therefore created as an androgynous creature that contained both male and female aspects. This is a very important understanding that will give us very keen insight into the act of marriage and it’s profound meaning for a man and woman. Adam was created without a backside:

***Chagigah 15a*** *Aher mutilated the shoots. Of him Scripture says: Suffer not thy mouth to bring thy flesh into guilt. What does it refer to? — He saw that permission was granted to Metatron to sit and write down the merits of Israel. Said he: It is taught as a tradition that on high there is no sitting and no emulation, and no back, and no weariness.*

Metaphorically, man symbolizes the soul and woman symbolizes the body.[[9]](#footnote-9)

As an aside: The Luchot (the tablets with the Ten Commandments) which Moshe brought down from Mount Sinai were quite miraculous. Unlike the Hollywood pictures depicting them, the Luchot were a pair of cubes. They were made by HaShem with the letters engraved through to the other side. There was no front, there was no back[[10]](#footnote-10). Although the letters were engraved through to the other side, the writing on the rear face was not reversed! Additionally, the center of letters like the mem n and samek x were miraculously held in place. We have learned elsewhere, in my study on Mashiach, that Torah = Mashiach = Adam HaSheni. Thus we see that even the Luchot accurately depicted the original appearance of Adam HaRishon and that they also accurately depict Adam HaSheni!

One final idea: Consider:

***Tehillim (Psalm) 139:5*** *"Back and front You fashioned me, and laid Your hand upon me."*

This refers to the fact that male and female were created originally as one body, back-to-back (Shocher Tov). The Midrash echoes this thought:

***Midrash Rabbah - Genesis VIII:1*** *AND GOD SAID: LET US MAKE MAN, etc. (I, 26). R. Johanan commenced [his discourse]: Thou hast formed me behind and before, etc. (Ps. CXXXIX, 5). Said R. Johanan: If a man is worthy enough, he enjoys both worlds, for it says, ‘Thou hast formed me for a later [world] and an earlier [world].’ But if not, he will have to render a full account [of his misdeeds], as it is said, And laid Thy hand upon me (ib.). R. Jeremiah b. Leazar said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He created him an hermaphrodite [bi-sexual], for it is said, Male and female created He them and called their name Adam (Gen.V, 2). R. Samuel b. Nahman said: When the Lord created Adam He created him double-faced, then He split him and made him of two backs, one back on this side and one back on the other side. To this it is objected: But it is written, And He took one of his ribs, etc. (Gen. II, 21)? [Mi-zalothaw means] one of his sides, replied he, as you read, And for the second side (zela’) of the tabernacle, etc. (Ex.XXVI 20).*

# Adam in Perfection

Now lets examine the consequence of Adam’s sin by examining the sexual organs as they are depicted in Bereshit (Genesis).

Adam HaRishon was created circumcised, as it says, "G-d created man in His image ..." (Bereshit 2:5)[[11]](#footnote-11).

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh tells us that before Adam sinned, there was no “*orlah* – foreskin.”

Rav Yitzchak said, [Adam] caused his foreskin to be extended [and cover his circumcision]:

***Sanhedrin 38b*** *Rab Judah also said in Rab's name: Adam was a Min, for it is written, And the Lord G-d called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou? i.e., whither has thine heart turned? R. Isaac said: He practiced episplasm: For here it is written, But like man, [Adam] they have transgressed the covenant; whilst elsewhere it is said, He hath broken my covenant, R. Nahman said: He denied G-d. Here it is written, They have transgressed the covenant; whilst elsewhere it is stated, [He hath broken my covenant, and again,] Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord their G-d.*

The profound connection between the growth of the Orlah (foreskin) and the sin of Adam is crucial to understand. For whether we are talking about "Orlat HaLev" (uncircumcised heart), "Orel S'fasaim "(uncircumcised lips), or "Orlah" from a tree (fruits of the third year), the word Orlah always implies a spiritual / physical "barrier" between man and HaShem which has to be removed.

When Adam ate from the tree, he plunged mankind into the world of physicality. By depending upon the physical world to develop himself and his relationship to HaShem, he in fact created a barrier between himself and HaShem. He hardened his heart (Orlat HaLev), he reduced his G-dly power of speech (Orel S'fasaim), he made the tree a barrier (Orlah), and abused his creative potential (symbolized by the Orlah removed by Brit Milah - circumcision).

When Avraham expressed his complete dependence on HaShem for his physical sustenance, he demonstrated his unwavering commitment to live above nature. As a consequence, he was provided with the means to remove all the Orlot that Adam's mistake had brought to mankind. This is the Brit Milah which is performed on the eighth day (eight always symbolizes the spiritual, supernatural realm, as we see through Chanukah as well).

Removing the Orlot, specifically the Orlah of Brit Milah, was an important Tikkun, or corrective measure, after eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Furthermore, Brit Milah represents a commitment to live a moral life.

The Brit Milah, or covenant with HaShem, suggests that a cut into the flesh is a sign of human/divine wholeness. The act of circumcision is the removal of the orlah or foreskin. When used in scripture the word orlah refers to a barrier in the way of a beneficial result. Adam, the first man, was born circumcised which signified his closeness to HaShem. Because Adam's sin was the failure of mankind, the foreskin, symbolizing his new separation from HaShem, became a permanent part of the human body. "Like a sheath holding a sword”, the body is a vessel containing the soul. Just as the contours of a sheath tell much about the contours of the sword within, so the body can reveal much about the condition of the soul.

When Adam had intimacy with HaShem the human body mirrored this condition. When the body had no spiritual barrier it had no orlah, but when Adam's sin caused a barrier between him and HaShem, the human body mirrored this state also.

The fig leaf serves as Adam's foreskin that he later passes on to his descendants. During the time of Abraham the human race still had the spiritual and physical foreskin, but then Abraham proved that man could surmount this sin. HaShem recognized this change in the human race's spiritual essence through Abraham, and so gave him the commandment of circumcision.

In general, the word orlah has the connotation of something that is uncontrolled. The removal of the orlah then symbolizes the idea of control. Through the act of milah one indicates that they can control the pattern of their life. Circumcision is the removal of a defilement or barrier that could restrict spiritual development.

The orlah was a result of Adam’s sin. Yet the temptation that led to the sin is directed at Chava, not at Adam. The snake approached the woman, not the man:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 3:6*** *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

He approached her because she was the one in charge. What to eat or not to eat involves interaction with the outside world and belongs to the realm of the actualization of ideas, the domain of the female. The woman has the potential to bring reality from potential (e.g. a baby). Having weighed and considered, she made her decision and her husband followed her. After all, she was the expert on what to take from the outside world and what to reject, not he. On being confronted by HaShem, his instinctive reaction was to say,

***Bereshit (Genesis) 3:12*** *And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*

In other words, the Torah tells us that had there been no separation between the male and female aspect of man on the spiritual level the sin would not have occurred! As a single entity the balance between the body and the soul would have enabled man to resist the temptation offered by the snake. This is the state that we need to return to. There can be no Tikkun, no correction, until we can reunite with the other half of our soul and the other half of our body. The reuniting is called *The act of marriage*.

# Adam’s House

The act of marriage causes the man and the woman to become one flesh, as we see in the Torah:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 4:1*** *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from HaShem.*

And Adam *knew* Eve. This means that they were united on every possible level until they became "as one flesh." *Knowledge (daat)* is the act of connecting with someone or something, so thoroughly that it bears fruit.

The Torah describes the mitzva of marital intimacy as onah, *a response to her*, implying that a man must attune himself to his wife and her desire for holiness in the marriage.

Adam HaRishon, before he sinned, had skin that was translucent like our finger nails, which incidentally, we remind ourselves of at Havdallah on Motzei Shabbat when we use the light of the fire to view our fingernails. Physical food and physical digestion were unnecessary, for Adam HaRishon, on his pre-sin level, received his life-sustaining Holy Sparks directly from HaShem through creation. Just like Moshe after he came down the mountain with his "glowing"

Furthermore, on such a level, becoming *one flesh* with one's wife was not physically impossible, but easy to do since the skin resembled light more than it did physical and obstructing flesh. Rashi's Peshat of such human unification taking place only through the children is a post-sin consequence, and obviously has many shortcomings.

Moreover, we see that the Jewish mystical tradition describes the union of a couple in marriage as the coming together of two half-souls. The physical union completes the expression of their total bond.

This act of becoming *one flesh*, or *knowing* creates, on a small but physical scale, what will be in the end of days. One could say, crudely, that in the act of marriage, Adam was the delivery system for the penis. What we understand from this is that the essential part of Adam, of man, is that which is inside the woman. Just as a soul is the part that is *inside* the body, the soul is the essential part.

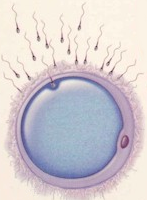
When Jews marry, the woman walks seven times around the man in order to make herself into his house.

Hakham Shimshon Raphael Hirsh states that the Hebrew word for bride, kallah, means *completion* as in: *beyom kallot* *hamishkan*, the day the tabernacle was completed. Thus we see that the Mishkan is a representation of the body of Mashiach. It is feminine and it is the kallah, the bride.

Additionally it is well known that the woman is the undisputed ruler over her house. She determines the colors of the fabrics and the wall coverings. She arranges the furniture, and she chooses where her family is to live. In this she proves that she **IS** the house.

The man dwells in the house in the same way he dwells in the woman during the act of marriage. In fact, if you ask a man where is his favorite place, he will tell you that his favorite place is inside his wife while engaged in the act of marriage. Sex gives him his place. During sex, a man is in his house.

In the same way, the sperm dwells *in* the egg. The egg, from the woman, is the *house* and the sperm, from the man, is the *dweller in the house*, as we can see from the following graphic:



This explanation is all well and good, but what does it mean? The meaning is as profound as you can possibly imagine! Consider the following pasukim:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 3:16*** *Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*

***Romans 8:1-8*** *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Mashiach Yeshua, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Mashiach Yeshua hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, G-d sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against G-d: for it is not subject to the law of G-d, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please* G-d.

This leads us to the following understanding: Adam, as an androgynous being, had a feminine body and a masculine soul. I say that he was androgynous in both body and soul, but, the male dominated the soul and the female dominated the body. In the act of marriage, man becomes the soul and woman becomes the body. This has profound implications!

We find that many mitzvot are commanded solely to the man, while others are the domain of the woman: a husband and wife, our sages explain, embody the two halves of a single soul; the deeds of each contribute to their common soul's fulfillment of both the *masculine* and *feminine* elements of its mission in life.

Consider also that the body of Mashiach is feminine and will be the bride of HaShem. Now we know that Mashiach has a bride too. This means that Mashiach ben David will become the second Adam when he mates with Israel his bride:

***I Corinthians 15:45*** *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

As the first man was androgynous (having the characteristics of both male and female), so the last Adam will be androgynous. This androgynous Adam will then become the bride of HaShem:

***Yehezekel (Ezekiel) 16:3-13*** *And say, Thus saith the Lord HaShem unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. 4 And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. 5 None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. 6 And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. 7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. 8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord HaShem, and thou becamest mine. 9 Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. 10 I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. 11 I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. 12 And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. 13 Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.*

When HaShem marries His bride, she will be His House and He will dwell in her. He will be the soul and she will be the body, so to speak. Thus Hakham Shaul speaks of a progression:

***I Corinthians 11:2-3*** *Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. 3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Mashiach; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Mashiach is HaShem.*

Thus we have Adam (male) and Chava (female), representing men and women, uniting in marriage. These are combined to form Israel which leads to the marriage of Mashiach (male) and Israel (female). The marriage of Mashiach (male) and Israel (female) will create the bride of HaShem, which will unite in the marriage of Mashiach (female) and HaShem (male). So, in the end we will have returned to the beginning: The last Adam walking with HaShem in Gan Eden as husband and wife.[[12]](#footnote-12)

# Giver and Receiver

It is fundamental to the intimate relationship between them, that man is the giver and woman the receiver.

A “mashpia” is one who gives; a “mekabel” is one who receives. In most kabalistic texts, the man is given the title “mashpia” and the woman, “mekabel.” It is clear to see, based on our anatomical make-up, why this is so. A man’s reproductive system is external and “outward,” while the woman’s reproductive system is internal and hidden. The very act of intimacy thus requires the woman to “receive.”

Man and woman were created different from each other. In the reproductive process, HaShem created man as a **giver**, that is to say that he takes his seed and gives it to a woman. From the aspect of procreation on the woman's side, she is a **receiver**. She receives man's seed and she forms it into a living being, a baby. Therefore, in this aspect man is likened to a **giver**, and the woman to a **receiver**.

This comparison can also be made between HaShem and the Jews. In this relationship, HaShem is a **giver**, and the Jewish people the **receiver**, since HaShem gave the Torah to the Jews, and the Jewish people received it. Therefore, the reason why HaShem is referred to as a *He* (male or masculine terminology), is because it is relating to the **giver** aspect which is masculine. Corresponding to this, whenever HaShem is referred to as in the masculine as the giver, the Jewish people are referred to in the feminine since they are the receivers!

# What is seed?

One of the keys to understanding the mystical implications of a man dwelling *in* the woman is the understanding of the meaning of *seed*.

Chazal teach us that seed is merely a small package which contain the memories of the creation that created the seed. This means that if a man can properly control his thoughts[[13]](#footnote-13) when he launches his seed, then he can greatly improve the child he is conceiving! This not an easy thing, but it is much easier that trying to fix up the child after he is born!

**Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 48:15** Rabbi Joseph said: The Egyptians defiled the Israelites and their wives with them. Bedijah, the grandson of Dan, married a wife from his tribe, Shelomith, daughter of Dibri, and in that night the taskmasters of Pharaoh came in unto her, for they slew him and came in unto her, and she conceived and bare a son. In every case the offspring follows the (nature of) the seed: if it be sweet, it will be due to the sweet (seed); if it be bitter, it will be due to the bitter (seed). And when Israel went forth from Egypt, he began to blaspheme and revile the Name of the God of Israel, as it is said, "And the son of the Israelitish woman blasphemed the Name, and cursed" (Lev. 24:11).

# Sin and Atonement

Now that we have an understanding of Adam HaRishon as an androgynous being, we can begin to understand another very profound concept: Man’s sin is removed through various atonements, including Yom HaKippurim, the day of the atonements. A woman’s sin is removed through the atonement of the act of marriage.

When a woman has sex with her husband, she gives him her sins and thereby achieves atonement.

How can this be?

This concept is best understood by seeing the man as the soul and woman as the body. When a person sins, the sin is performed by the body, yet the soul is sullied because the soul caused the body to perform the sinful act. The Talmud illustrates this beautifully:

***Succah 53*** *Antoninus said to Rabbi Judah HaNassi: The body and the soul can each absolve themselves from judgment. The body can say: "It is the soul who has sinned. Why, from the day it left me, I lie like a dumb stone in the grave!" And the soul can say: "It's the body who transgressed. From the day I departed from it, I fly about in the air like a bird!" Said Rabbi Judah: I will tell you a parable. Once there was a king who had a beautiful orchard with splendid figs. He appointed two watchmen for his orchard. One watchman was lame, and the other one was blind. One day the lame man said to the blind man: "I see beautiful figs in the orchard. Come, I will ride on your shoulders, and we'll take them and eat them." So the lame man rode on the shoulders of the blind man, and they took the fruits and ate them. Some time after, the owner of the orchard came and inquired of them, "Where are those beautiful figs?" The lame man replied, "Have I feet to walk with?" The blind man replied, "Have I eyes to see with?" What did the king do? He placed the lame watchman on the shoulders of the blind watchman, and judged them together.*

Hakham Shaul tied the *two* into one so that we could see that they are judged as one[[14]](#footnote-14):

***1 Corinthians 6:16-20*** *Have you not known that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body [with her]? For, says he [Adam] "they shall become one" (Genesis 2:24). 17 And he who is joined to the Master is one in spirit; 18 Flee therefore prostitution; every sin, that a man may commit is without the body, but he who is committing prostitution, against his own body does sin. 19 Have you not known that your body is a sanctuary of the Spirit of Separation in you, which you have from God? and you are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price; glorify, then, G-d in your body and in your spirit, which are G-d's.*

This passage teaches:

1. That a man who has sex with a woman becomes one with her in body and spirit.

2. That said man, must then atone for the sins of the woman he has slept with as when he has become one with her, her sins are now upon him by virtue of becoming one with her.

3. That before a man has sex with a woman he should be aware that there is a price to pay, her sins now become his sins!

4. That therefore, a woman's sins are atoned as far as she is concerned by the act of having sexual relations with a man.

5. That the sexual act brings forgiveness to the woman and a woman who has no regular sex with a man is therefore laden with much guilt and unforgiven sin.

6. That it is a great act of kindness on the part of a man to have regular sex with his wife, as he has to seek forgiveness and atonement not only for his sins but also those of his wife, provided that he has sex regularly with her.

7. Man's relationship to HaShem, therefore, must be constant with Him, since he is responsible not only for his sins but those also of the woman he is having sex with.

8. This principle also touches on the idea that in intimate relationships both goodness and blessings are shared.

Consider also the mashal, example, we have in the atonements of Yom HaKippurim, the day of atonements. In this once a year celebration, the Kohen Gadole, the High Priest, goes into the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins of Israel. Now, the Holy of Holies is a mashal for a bedroom. It is the inner room of The House, the Beit HaMikdash, The House of The Holy One. Intimacy is the primary function of this very private inner room. We learned in our study of the Temple, that the Temple is a physical edifice which represents the feminine body of the Bnei Yisrael, the children of Israel. The Temple represents the bride. The Holy of Holies would, therefore, represent the womb. The blood, with the life in it, would represent the sperm. The cloud of incense would represent the seminal fluid. The repeated trips made by the Kohen Gadole would represent HaShem in the act of marriage, the intimacy which leads to rebirth. The Temple, therefore becomes the place where HaShem dwells. This intimacy results in the atonement of the sins of the bride, the Bene Yisrael.

Thus we see that the body and soul, the man and the woman, are judged only when ***together***.

The soul takes the sins of the body and makes atonement for them. Thus the woman achieves atonement through the act of marriage. The man takes on the sins of his wife, his dwelling/house/body, and makes atonement for the whole man, body and soul.

# The Evil Inclination

There is a sequence of verses in Bereshit 2;16 - 18, where we find the following:

v16: "And the L-rd G-d commanded Man, saying 'You may eat from all the trees of the Garden;' "

v17: " 'But of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil you may not eat, for on the day that you eat from it, you will surely die;' "

v18: "And the L-rd G-d said, 'It is not good that Man should be alone; I will make for him a helper to match him;' "

We see that "trouble" began for Man only after his "helper" was provided to him. Lest the previous sentence be misunderstood, let us immediately examine its meaning.

Somehow, according to the Midrash, Man had been created in a bisexual form. His Evil Inclination, though present, was virtually powerless. The only Torah he needed then was the double prohibition against eating from the *Tree* at the center of the Garden of Eden. All the rest of the Torah was implicit and undifferentiated within these commands.

Once the Original Man became Adam and Chava, Man and Woman, the situation was radically altered. The *Evil Inclination* was ready to assume a powerful position within the psyche of the human being. The Torah was ready to be differentiated into the 613 commands of the Torah, and to be further defined and refined by the Oral Torah.

The message of Parshat Haazinu (Deuteronomy 32:1 - 32:52) is that we, the Jewish people will ultimately succeed in integrating our collective soul through the exercise of our free will through human history.

Thus at the end of days we will make our appearance as an integrated spiritual entity that stretches from one end of existence to the other; thus the source of our collective being can legitimately be described as the point of our collective soul that connects with HaShem. Thus our spiritual wounds suffered through history are all located in the outer extremities of this collective spiritual being. Our internal organs are free and clear of spiritual disease. As this is the case, all our spiritual wounds are shallow and easily healed.

In the ordinary course of our lives we cannot function as integrated souls. HaShem created us to struggle with the evil inclination, to overcome death by conquering this enemy. In this sphere of existence, the spiritual wounds that result from our sins can only be viewed as inner wounds. All of them cut deep and they are all difficult to heal. At this level, the healing power of repentance will only prove effective if it is sufficiently powerful to be able to heal the deepest spiritual trauma. Most of us are unable to generate such powerful medicine through our repentance.

Knowing this, HaShem allowed us to anticipate the future once a year, and allowed us to appear before Him as the integrated spiritual entities that we shall ultimately be. For the song of Moses in Parshat Haazinu teaches us that, collectively, the Jewish people will eventually attain this level of being. As all of us Jews draw our individual life force and spirituality from this collective, which is already visible before HaShem as an integrated spiritual entity, He deemed it just to regard us all in this manner one day a year. When we are seen in this light, the deep spiritual traumas we have inflicted on ourselves by the sins we have committed throughout the year assume the non-threatening aspect of shallow flesh wounds.

The power of our repentance may be inadequate to correct the trauma inflicted on the inner organs vital to spiritual life, but it is more than enough to apply the spiritual bandages that are sufficient to close shallow flesh wounds.

But we must first sing the song of Haazinu to be able to fit ourselves into Yom HaKippurim.

As individuals, we do not necessarily appear at the end of days as integrated souls that connect to HaShem. Who can say whether we will emerge victorious from our private individual battle with the evil inclination? But if we never manage to attain the peak of spiritual height in our individual capacity, we may have no individual spiritual future to draw on. It is only by identifying ourselves as extremities of the Jewish people, drawing our spiritual life force from the Jewish collective that we merit being seen in the present as integrated spiritual beings who stretch to the very highest pinnacles of being. It is only thus that the puny power of our repentance is adequate to heal our gaping spiritual wounds.

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Torah commands us to marry and to have children. Torah clearly encourages the viewpoint that men and women do better, emotionally and spiritually, when married rather than single. In fact, it can be argued that the Torah sees men as having a greater need for the protection and nurturance of marriage than do women. Thus, for men, marriage is not only advised but is an absolute commandment. This is commandment #213 in the Rambam’s listing of the 613 commandments ("mitzvot").

Surely, women's clearer understanding of HaShem‘s will is reflected in her approach to sexuality. She has been granted a natural ability to appreciate marital intimacy as holy and divine. Therefore, the merely physical is often not sufficient for her. In order to function as a total woman, she must feel that intimacy is more than a physical act. It must involve her soul and provide her with deep emotional fulfillment.

The 11th century commentator, Rashi, explains that women have a greater potential for sexual desire than men (Genesis 3:16). This desire is not simply for the physical activity, but for the act of holiness and love described above. This recognition of a woman's sexuality is the cornerstone of the system of values and laws referred to as Taharat HaMishpachah (family purity), the G-dly system governing marital relations.

The conception of sexuality as a holy function requires that it be carried out within the context of guidelines established by HaShem. These guidelines, the *whens* and *when nots* of Taharat HaMishpachah, follow a woman's own natural rhythms and inclinations and reflect her desire for both privacy and individuality, closeness and love.

Taharat HaMishpachah is the secret of Jewish femininity. It provides a couple with a divinely ordained framework showing them how to relate to each other and express and build their love and devotion. On this sturdy foundation, they can construct a superstructure of family and home. The study of these ideas and their application within the context of our lives will help each of us discover insights which are old, for they were given by HaShem on Mount Sinai, but new, for they are continually relevant to our lives as women and as Jews.

# Related Essay

TELL ME RABBI - ENCIRCLING THE GROOM by Rabbi Philip Heilbrunn

It is customary in many communities for the bride to be escorted around the groom under the Chupah either seven or three times. Several meanings, each adding to the significance and relevance of the practice, are ascribed to this custom.

There is a passage in the Prophet Jeremiah (31:21) which describes a future time when relationships between men and women will be reversed "For the Lord will create a new regime in the world - the woman will court the man. The word implies both the concept of courting and also means to go around. There is also a concept of the encircling being symbolic of the bride creating a "wall" around her husband, creating an intimacy and exclusivity within their relationship, "just the two of us, and nobody else.." [as the sixties song goes]. The "wall" serves to protect their relationship and keep outside desires and influences at bay. This concept is alluded to in the Song of Songs (8:11) "I am a wall and my breasts are as towers, then would I be in his eyes as a harbinger of peace". This combines with the assertion in the Talmud (Yevamot 62b) that "whoever lives without a wife, lives without a (protective) wall". Our Rabbis regard the wife as being instrumental in raising her husband's ethical and spiritual level, shielding him from outside temptations. By creating and entering this enclosed intimate area, bride and groom achieve the status of a "couple" within the society, a new family with its own identity, and with its intimacy and independence walled off from the rest of the community.

The commitment of the Bride and Groom to each other and the intimacy and exclusivity of their relationship is also expressed in the verse "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Before marriage, the primary focus of the bride and groom was to their parents. By encircling her husband the bride draws an imaginary line enclosing their relationship shifting the primary focus and commitment to their newly created intimacy, the new centre of their life, while leaving parents, still entitled to love and respect, but outside the circle. The Torah legislates three basic obligations of a husband to his wife - to clothe her, provide for her sustenance and conjugal relations. These are symbolized by those whose custom it is for the bride to make three circuits. Others see the three circuits as representing the three expressions of consecration of G-d to the Jewish people: "And I will consecrate you to me forever; and I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice; and I will consecrate you to me in faithfulness, and know the Lord" (Hosea 2,21-22). This verse is recited by men when winding the straps of the tefillin around their fingers.

In the same way as we consecrate our relationship to HaShem dedicating ourselves to that celestial ideal, here on earth we equally consecrate our life dedicating and committing ourselves to our new partner. The seven circuits evoke a mystical message relating to the seven revolutions of the earth (a revolution of the earth is one day) during Creation. Marriage is seen as a Creative process emulating aspects of G-d's Creation which occurred in seven days. The comparison of marriage to the Creation is also used to explain the groom's aufruff (the shabbat before the wedding). G-d is reputed to looked into the Torah for the plan of the Universe he was about to Create.

Similarly the groom looks into the Torah when he plans the Creation of his new world. By circling him seven times, the bride brings her contribution as and indispensable partner in establishing this 'world'. Each are as hemisphere's, an incomplete world until they combine to establish a unified whole.

# Arrival!

Finally, one can understand that the pleasures of the act of marriage are given by HaShem to encourage a behavior which is tov, beneficial, for all concerned. The climax of this union is a profound sense of arrival. This is the pleasure of the Olam HaBa, the world to come. The pleasure of the Olam HaBa is the sensation of arrival, of being *there*. Thus we would say that the pleasure of sex is a taste of the Olam HaBa!

There is much to be learned by studying the body, as it says in Iyov (Job):

*“In my flesh I see God!”*

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1. An acronym for Torah, Neviim, and Ketuvim, (the law, the prophets, and the writings) the three parts of the so called Old Testament. This is what Yeshua called the Old Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sefer Yetzirah 1:7, Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 46:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bereshit (Genesis) 1:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bereshit (Genesis) 1:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Genesis 5:2: It seems that R. Judah does not ask his question merely from the first five words of Genesis 1:27, and from the first three words of Genesis 5:2, for in that case there would have been no need for him to refer to Genesis 5:2 since he could have asked the question from the last words of Genesis 1:27 ‘male and female he created them’ but his question is from the whole verse 27 in Gen I and from the whole verse 2 in Genesis 5. The meaning of the question should be this: Genesis 1:27 begins by saying that God created man and ends by saying that man was created as male and female. The last words of Genesis 1:27 would thus shew that there were two creations. Genesis 5:2 begins by saying that God created them male and female, and then it says, as He blessed them and called their name Man in the day when they were created. This verse would shew that in the end there was only one creation. In short: Genesis 1:27. begins with one creation and ends with two creations, and Genesis 5:2, begins with two creations and ends with one creation. This, it seems, is the question of Rab Judah. Rab Judah quoted the verses by quoting the first portions of the verse. He really meant to say ‘etc.’ — In ‘Er. 18a and Ber. 61a the name is R. Abbahu. In ‘Er. 18a, in the image of God hath he created man, is quoted from Genesis 1:27. In Ber. 61a, ‘for in the image of God made he man’ (Genesis 9:6) is quoted. This quotation apparently stands for that of Genesis 1:27. Both in ‘Er. 18a and Ber. 61a ‘male and female created He them’ is quoted first. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lit., ‘it went up in the thought’, namely of God. A sense of reverence does not allow Rab Judah to mention ‘God’ after ‘thought’. The meaning of the answer is: At first God intended to create two human beings, man and woman (Genesis 1:27). But in the end only man was created by God, and woman was ‘built’ by God out of man (Genesis 5:2) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Had this verse referred simply to the back and front of the human body it would be superfluous. Furthermore, logic would demand that the front be mentioned first. The psalmist’s point, rather, is that when man was created, he was created manlike both back and front, i.e. with a double face (Ben Yehoyada). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Shabbat 146a, Yevamot 103b Avodah Zarah 22b [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Zohar 1:122b; Rabbeinu Bachya on Bereshit 3:21. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Talmud Yerushalmi Shekalim 6:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Avot d'Rav Nossan 2:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Sefer Yetzirah 1:7, Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 46:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. That the Jew is rooted in G-d's innermost and essential being is indicated further by the designation of the Jewish people as G-d's "children", whose souls originate in His "thought" just as a child stems from his father's brain, as the Alter Rebbe explains presently.] So, too, allegorically speaking, have Jewish souls risen in the [Divine] thought, [*See Bereishit Rabbah 1:4*] [The Jew has his source in Divine "thought" - the innermost level of G-dliness. All other created beings, even angels, are rooted in and created by Divine "speech". Speech is external in comparison with thought], as it is written [*Shmot 4:22.*] [regarding the Jewish nation], "Israel is My firstborn son";[and concerning Jews as individuals], [*Devarim 14:1*] "You are children unto G-d your L-rd." That is to say, [i.e., the significance of the Jew's being called G-d's child is that] just as a child is derived from its father's brain - [his inner and essential being], so too [to use an anthropomorphism] is the soul of every Jew derived from G-d's thought and wisdom. - **Tanya for Monday, 26 Kislev, 5790 - December 3, 2029** [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This section comes from Hakham Dr. Yosef ben Haggai. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)