

Chapter 3 - Hashem and the Jewish People - Bride and Groom

Hashem "Arranges Matches"

Until now, we have stated that the central point of life, the root, the principle, and purpose of all of one's life - whether in this world or the next - is *emunah*. "Chavakuk came and placed them on one foundation: "the righteous one lives by his faith."

We went further and explained at length that there are two aspects: *emunah* of the intellect, which is the awareness of concepts, and *emunah* in the heart. The essence of *emunah* in the heart, as we explained, is the recognition that Hashem is a definite existing Being, and that the heart must feel that He is part of the person, so that the Jew likewise feels he is bound with Hashem.

We will now continue with this topic. There is a well-known incident found in the Midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 8:1): "A Roman matron asked R' Yosi ben Chalafta, 'How long did it take for Hashem to create the world?' He said, 'Six days.' She asked, 'And what has He been doing since then?' He answered, 'He arranges matches; this one's former wife will marry this man, this one's daughter will marry that man.'"

Certainly, this cannot be taken literally. The commentators have asked, "How long does it take to arrange matches? How, then, can He be spending all day on this?"

We will try to explain the matter, and we will see how it relates to each individual, and how it is a basic issue for each and every Jew.

First, we will consider the first people, Adam and Chavah, and then, we will understand the matches that Hashem arranges. Initially, Adam was created alone, without a partner. After that, it says (*Bereishis* 2:20), "And Adam named all the animals, the birds, and the wild animals of the field, but he found no helpmate for himself." Rashi there comments: "Hashem first brought them to Adam as male and female. Adam said, 'Each of them has a partner, yet I have no partner.' Immediately, Hashem placed a deep sleep upon Adam and he slept, and He took one of his sides and closed it up with flesh. Hashem then fashioned the side which he had removed from Adam into a woman."

That is to say, the partner of Adam came from a part of Adam himself. Before she was separated from him, she was a part of him. Then, there was a separation, Hashem fashioned her, and "He brought her to Adam."

From this original match in history, we learn that a match is not merely a connection of two separate things, but the discovery of part of one's self. *Chazal* have thus said that a man is "half a body" (*Zohar* 3:7b). This is based on the literal reading of the

Torah, and it likewise says there, "the woman you have given with me," meaning that she is part of the man's being.

From contemplating the example of a physical match, we can begin to understand the matches that Hashem arranges every day.

Simplistically, it sounds like Hashem is busy arranging marriages between men and women. When we think more deeply, though, an entirely different message appears. It is not merely matches between people that Hashem arranges. Throughout the words of *Chazal*, the Jewish people are referred to as the wife and bride of Hashem. At the Revelation at Sinai, Hashem went out to greet His people Yisrael as a groom goes forth to greet his bride (*Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 40). The Jewish people, is, so to speak, the spouse of Hashem, and Hashem is all day drawing the people toward Himself!

It says (*Devarim 4:39*), "And you shall know today and settle in your heart that Hashem is the G-d in the Heavens above and on the earth below; there is no other." What is meant by, "And you shall know today (*veyadata*)"? *Yediah* ("knowledge") refers to connection. This refers to the connection between a person and his Creator.

There is an Inherent Connection between the Bride and Groom

Upon reflection, we will see that the matter is simple and clear, but as simple and clear as it is, it is even more hidden from people.

Imagine a young man in the prime of his youth. He has reached the age of eighteen, and *Chazal* have said (*Avos 5:21*), "Eighteen is the age for marriage." (One who is learning Torah may wait a few more years.) The time has arrived for this man to find his partner. Now, a *shadchan* (matchmaker) approaches him and suggests a *shidduch* (potential marriage partner). "Well?" he asks, "Who is she? How old is she? What are her good qualities? What is she like?" "No, no!" responds the *shadchan*. "I have a very special suggestion for you!" "What is the suggestion?" he asks. "I have an idea," he responds, "and I think you should marry it and build your home with it."

Our young man would understand that such a *shadchan* is mentally ill, speaking senseless words. He might treat him with dignity, because he is created in "the image of God," as are all people, but he will totally ignore the content of his words, because they are senseless and illogical. (In a deeper sense, there is such a thing as connection with an idea, but here is not the place for that.)

We understand well in this example from the material world that we may know

ideas, but a marriage partner is more than a mere idea. It is a real entity! Of course, one must mentally notice the good qualities of the spouse, and it is a *mitzvah* to praise the bride in the presence of the groom, but if there are only praises and the groom doesn't actually get anyone tangible, nothing will come from the match! There will be no wedding canopy, no marriage, and the young man will have no one to marry.

In the material life, when it comes to "It is not good for a man to be alone" (*Bereishis* 2:18), a person realizes that he needs a real partner, a human that can be touched and felt, a personality with whom one can share life's experiences, toward whom one can have feelings of pleasantness, closeness, and friendship.

It is known that all of *Shir HaShirim* is a parable, and the corresponding theme is the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people. Just as in the parable, it is clear that information is not enough to make a marriage, and with praises and an awareness of qualities alone one does not attain a life's companion, so it is with our relationship to Hashem.

However, it is clear that in the corresponding theme, in which Hashem is the groom and the Jewish community is the bride, it cannot be taken literally. A person knows in his brain and thought that there is a Creator. This is a wondrous piece of information, the foundation and basis of life. He praises Hashem in the prayers daily, saying, "the King glorified with praises" and "my honor (soul) shall praise You," but all this derives only from an intellectual knowledge that there is a Creator. There is no way to perceive Him as one would perceive a physical partner. Hashem is concealed and hidden from people, but the person knows that there is a hidden Being Whom he praises and Whose greatness he recognizes. He knows that Hashem has no body or any corporeal qualities. Nonetheless, once one has attained a sense of Hashem in his heart, he should relate to Him like a marriage partner, so to speak.

The Deceit of the Yetzer Hara

In fact, the *yetzer hara* always tries to deceive people, and he does his job well, in line with his Divinely-decreed responsibility.

He plants a thought in the mind that the aforementioned parable is not at all like its corresponding theme. In the physical example above, it is clear that one must find a tangible partner, but how can one imagine that he will find Hashem? Hashem is hidden from all the living, He has no bodily attributes, and so in this sense, there is no comparison between the parable and its message. Accordingly, the person sets this aspect aside, and begins to serve Hashem with this principle in mind: we cannot perceive G-d, we must only be his servants, pray to Him, thank Him, recognize His

existence and His Providence, and so on. Of course, it is true that we must do these things.

The problem is that the *yetzer hara* pulls out the basic point of the connection between the Jew and Hashem - between the Groom, the Creator, and the bride, the Jewish people - and when this foundation of life is missing, which is the essential understanding of life, one is liable to build for himself "towers suspended in the air."

With the Discernment of the Soul, One can Sense the Creator

This must be such a clearly understood concept that even a child could understand it. Of course, a child cannot understand the same way as an adult would, but even he should know that mere information, as clear as it is, is nothing like the experience of the thing.

To illustrate the concept, let us imagine that on the night of Pesach, a boy steals the Afikomen *matzah*, as is customary, and asks his father to buy him a bicycle in exchange for the *matzah*. The father responds, "I consent, but since we cannot buy it on the holiday, let's wait until after the holiday, and then, I will buy you the bicycle."

After the holiday, the boy turns to his father, and reminds him of his promise. The father says, "Listen. The bike weighs this much, looks like that, and one rides it in such and such a way," and thus, he praises and describes to the boy the promised bike, day after day, week after week. The following year, he is still praising the bike.

His son, though, does not give up and demands, "Father, you promised! Please keep your promise! You must buy the bike!"

No child will be satisfied with stories, information, and praises. He knows full well that a bike is a tangible thing that one rides on and plays with.

In every area of life one encounters, it is clear to a person that one who deals with unreal entities is delusional, and the more one lives with delusions, the harder it is to live with him. Yet, when we come to the most basic and simple point of life, to *emunah*, the knowledge of the Creator, the *yetzer hara* succeeds in forming a concept that this matter is different from everything else: there is a Creator, but (*chas veshalom*) it is impossible to sense Him (because He is like an unreal entity)!

If a person will start being realistic, and know that the true Reality is Hashem, he will understand that we are not requesting from him things that are beyond the ability of human intellect. We want him to recognize, envision, grasp, and understand that the existence of Hashem is much more real and palpable than all other entities that

exist!

Of course, the tools for sensing physical things and the tools for sensing Hashem are different, as we discussed above at length. Physical entities can be seen, smelled, and touched, while Hashem is only felt in the heart and soul. But yet, there must be a recognition that just as in the material world, everyone has the ability to touch, feel, and sense, so too, when the inner soul discerns, one is able to sense Hashem just as much, and even more!

This awareness must lead a person to the realization that the life with which he is familiar is not the one which Hashem wants him to live! A Jew is used to learning, *davening*, and performing the *mitzvos*, but he must check if he tries to sense the spiritual just as he senses the material!

Gan Eden - A Real Entity, Not Just an Idea

We will add a story that might clarify the matter a little. We all believe, as did our parents, that there is a Creator. He is true, and His Torah is true, and all His words are true. He promised us in His holy Torah that there is reward for fulfilling the *mitzvos*. *Chazal* have explained that the main reward is not here in this world, but "today to perform them, and tomorrow to receive their reward" (*Eruvin 22a*). The future reward is *Gan Eden* (Paradise), the days of *Moshiach*, the World to Come, and all the eternal worlds.

Consider this simple point: In this world, when one gets enjoyment, he knows that it is enjoyment. Imagine that after many years - depending on the amount decreed by Hashem - the person leaves this world and reaches the Heavenly court. They weigh his merits and sins, and with the help of Hashem, they declare that he is righteous!

What joy! He is all ready to enter *Gan Eden*! He was waiting for this his whole life. He worked a lot, did many *mitzvos*, and always longed to reach *Gan Eden*. Thank G-d, his dream is about to become a reality. (Understandably, in this example, the person has not been serving Hashem with the highest possible motives.)

He asks the angels, "Where is *Gan Eden*? Where will they take me?" Then, the angels explain to him, "*Gan Eden* is not exactly what you had in mind. When you were in that world, did you feel *Gan Eden* with your hands? Certainly not, because it cannot be felt there. Rather, you believed in it. Well, you should know that the *Gan Eden* you knew about is only a concept, not more. The intellectual awareness that there is such a thing as *Gan Eden* is itself *Gan Eden*."

If they would say such a thing to a person, this is how he would respond: "I have left

the world of falsehood, but I have not yet arrived in the world of truth. I don't know where exactly I am, but this can certainly not be called "the world of truth."

Why? Because if *Chazal* tell us that there is a *Gan Eden*, it must be a real entity. There is a real place in which the soul delights. (Although the higher *Gan Eden* is a place where the soul attains spiritual perceptions, that only describes the soul's type of delight, yet it is a definite place.)

It is simple and clear that *Gan Eden* is not just some piece of information; it is a real perceptible entity. Although we cannot sense that entity, that is only because we lack the spiritual tools for feeling such things. Yet every single person with sound faith believes clearly that *Gan Eden* is a place with delight as perceptible as the delight of this world. What exactly does the delight look like and what is its form? We don't know, but we do know one thing. When a person leaves this world, and he is found meritorious in his judgment, he enters a real and perceptible place called "*Gan Eden*"!

Essentially, this is the meaning of the verse (*Devarim* 4:4), "And you, who cleave to Hashem, your G-d, are all alive today." Likewise, the Ramchal explains the matter of *Gan Eden* at length in *Mesillas Yesharim* (ch. 1), and says, "The true perfection is only attachment to Hashem."

If so, just as with the matter of *Gan Eden*, it is clear to us that it is a real and perceptible entity, and that one who is found meritorious will enter it and partake of the delights bestowed there, so precisely should the existence of Hashem be perceptible and clear to the soul!

Furthermore, the Ramchal writes that even now, in this world, a person must cleave to his Creator. We learn from this that even here, in this world, one can sense Hashem as an absolutely real Being!

Hence, the matter which is apparently simple to all - the faith that there is a Creator - is not only a matter of intellectual knowledge, but a real perceptible world. Just as this world, and the world in the days of *Mashiach*, and *Gan Eden* can be personally experienced, so are "closeness to Hashem is good for me" and "a person is only created to delight in Hashem and benefit from the radiance of his Presence" absolute realities. In fact, they are more real than anything else.

One must contemplate these ideas. He must note what he has thought and understood until today, and what he understands from now on. If the Torah he has learned and the prayers he has prayed until today have not brought him to the state of feeling in his heart that Hashem is a real perceptible entity Whom it is pleasant to live with and cleave to, his Torah and *mitzvos* were only in the mind, but

the heart was not functioning properly.

It is important to emphasize that we still have not touched the issue of how exactly to achieve all this. We have only clarified one point: what is the purpose, the true kind of existence that is incumbent upon us.

Still before embarking on the practical work, each person must take these words and review them again and again, contemplating and fixing them in the mind, until they gradually enter the heart, cleave to one's inner recesses, and generate a deep yearning to serve Hashem perfectly.