

The Wonderful Lesson Regarding Shalom Bayis Learned from Eliezer's Mission HKB"H Matches a Man and a Woman with Conflicting Midos so that They Will Teach Their Offspring Proper Midos

In our parsha, parshas Chayei Sarah, it is worthwhile examining the tefilah proffered by Avraham's servant, Eliezer, to Hashem. He requested that he succeed in finding a suitable mate for Yitzchak, by subjecting her to a unique test of chesed (Bereishis 24, 12):

"וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹקֵי אֲדֹנָי אַבְרָהָם הֲקָרָה נָא לִפְנֵי הַיּוֹם, וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד עִם אֲדֹנָי אַבְרָהָם, הִנֵּה אֲנִכִּי נֹצֵב עַל עֵינַי הַמַּיִם וּבְנוֹת אַנְשֵׁי הָעֵיר יוֹצְאוֹת לְשָׂאֹב מַיִם, וְהִיא הַנְּעִרָה אֲשֶׁר אוֹמֵר אֵלַיהָ, הֲטִי נָא כַּדָּךְ וְאִשְׁתָּהּ, וְאִמְרָהּ שְׂתָהּ וְגַם גְּמֹלֶיךָ אִשְׁקָהּ, אוֹתָהּ הוֹכַחְתָּ לְעִבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק, וְכֵן אֲדַע כִּי עָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עִם אֲדֹנָי."

"And he said, "Hashem, G-d of my master Avraham, may You so arrange it for me this day and do kindness with my master Avraham. Behold, I stand here by the spring of water and the daughters of the townsmen come out to draw water. Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Please tip your jug so I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will even water your camels,' her will You have chosen for Your servant, for Yitzchak; and May I know through her that You have done kindness with my master."

Our master, the Chasam Sofer, explains in Toras Moshe (Chayei Sarah) why Eliezer chose this particular sign. For, only a maiden possessing this degree of chesed would be a mate worthy of Yitzchak. Here is what he writes:

"אוֹתָהּ הוֹכַחְתָּ. פִּירֵשׁ רַש"י, רְאוּיָהּ הִיא לֹו שְׂתָהּ גּוֹמֵלֶת חֶסֶדִים. וַיֵּשׁ לִפְרֵשׁ עַל פִּי מַה שֶּׁפִּירְשׁוּ הַמְפָרְשִׁים עַל פְּסוּק (בְּרֵאשִׁית ב-יח) אֲעָשֶׂה לֹו עֶזֶר כְּנֹגֵדוֹ, שֶׁאִם הָאִשָּׁה הִיא מוֹתַנְגֶּדֶת בְּטַבְעָהּ לְטַבְעוֹ שֶׁל הַבַּעַל עַל יְדֵי זֶה הִיא עֶזְרוֹ, כִּי לֹא טוֹב אִם שְׂנִיָּהִם הֵם וּוְתַרְנִיִּם וּפְזַרְנִים. וְהִנֵּה אַבְרָהָם שֶׁהִיא בְּמִדַּת הַחֶסֶד, הִיתָה שְׂרָה עֵינָהּ צָרָה בְּאוֹרְחִים, יִצְחָק שֶׁהִיא בְּמִדַּת הַדִּין פָּחַד יִצְחָק, טוֹב מְאֹד שֶׁתְּהִיָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ בְּמִדַּת הַחֶסֶד גּוֹמֵלֶת חֶסֶדִים טוֹבִים, וְלִכְךָ אָמַר לְעִבְדְּךָ לְיִצְחָק."

"Her You will have chosen": Rashi explains that she is worthy of him, because she will perform acts of chesed. And we can provide an explanation based on what the commentaries explain regarding the passuk (Bereishis 2, 18): "I will make for him an adversarial helper." If the woman's nature contrasts with the man's nature, in this manner she will be his helper. For, it is not good for them to both be lenient and extravagant. Now, Avraham, who embodied the midah of chesed was balanced by Sarah who was stingy with guests. Yitzchak, who embodied the midah of din, would be benefitted by a wife whose midah was chesed, tending to perform acts of good favor. Therefore, he says, "For Your servant, for Yitzchak."

The Chasam Sofer explains why it is essential that a husband and wife possess contrasting and even opposite character traits. It is not good for them to both be lenient or both be spendthrifts. Therefore, HKB"H created woman to be adversarial—"עֶזֶר"—on purpose; so that she would help her husband by representing a contrasting point-of-view.

Sarah Imeinu is proof of this fact. She embodied the attribute of "din," opposing Avraham's attribute of "chesed." It was her midah of "din" that saved Yitzchak from being corrupted by Yishmael, as it is written (ibid. 21, 10): "וְתֹאמַר לְאַבְרָהָם גֵּרֶשׁ הָאִמָּה" —so she said to Avraham, "Drive out this slave-woman and her son, for the son of that slave-woman shall not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak!" We find that HKB"H concurred with Sarah, as it is written (ibid. 12): "אֵל יִרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ עַל הַנְּעִרָה וְעַל אִמְתְּךָ, כֹּל אֲשֶׁר" —be not distressed over the youth or over your slave-woman; whatever Sarah tells you, heed her

voice. In similar fashion, Rivka softened the “din” of Yitzchak with her midah of “chesed.” She was truly his “עזר כנגדו”.

We find a clear-cut source for the Chasam Sofer’s notion in the Zohar hakadosh (Toldos 137a). It states that Yitzchak represents the strict, unforgiving aspect of “din”—“דינא קשיא”; whereas Rivka Imeinu, imbued with “חוט של חסד”—**a streak of chesed**—represented the more lenient, forgiving aspect of “din”—“דינא רפיא”. This enabled her to soften and mitigate Yitzchak’s harsh form of “din”: “ואי לאו דאיהי רפיא, לא יכיל עלמא למסבל דינא קשיא” —**if not for the fact that she was lenient, the world would not be able to withstand the harsh “din” of Yitzchak.** Yitzchak’s form of “din” was too exacting; the world depended on Rivka to soften and moderate it.

Thus, the Zohar concludes: “כגוונא דא קוב”ה מזווג זווגין בעלמא. —in this manner, HKB”H arranges matches in the world; one tough, representing the harsh, exacting form of “din,” and one soft, representing the lenient form of “din,” in order to rectify everything by mitigating the force of “din” with “chesed.” So, we have clear-cut evidence that HKB”H arranges matches by pairing together two opposites, in order to soften one’s “din” with the other’s “chesed.” This is what is meant by: “אעשה לו עזר כנגדו”.

“Her will You have chosen for Your servant, for Yitzchak”— Rebuke and Opposition to the Midah of Yitzchak

Now, it is apparent that this notion presented by the Chasam Sofer regarding Yitzchak and Rivka agrees amazingly with the sacred words of the Tiferes Shlomo (Toldos). Eliezer chose Rivka as the suitable wife for Yitzchak, because she performed acts of chesed; thus, she would be able to use her chesed to mitigate and balance out Yitzchak’s midah of “din.” This explains why Yitzchak’s initial inclination was to bestow his berachos upon Eisav rather than upon Yaakov. Yaakov only received the berachos, because Rivka intervened and instructed Yaakov to approach his father in a devious manner. Here are his sacred words:

“צריך להתבונן בכוונת יצחק אבינו, שלא היה רצונו תיכף לברך את יעקב רק את עשו. אך הענין, שיצחק היה מפחד לברך את יעקב בכרכת עולם הזה, כי היה ירא לבל יזוז דעתו (דברים לב-טו) וישמן ישורון ויבעט על ידי תאוות העולם הזה, לולי רבקה אמנו שהשכילה בחכמה ובדעת להבין, כי גם טובת עולם הזה מסייע לאדם לעבוד הבורא בהרחבת הדעת. וזה שכתוב בפרשת חיי שרה, והיה

הנערה אשר אומר אליה הטי נא כרך וגו' אותה הוכחת לעבדך ליצחק, פירוש, תהיה הוכחה והתנגדות למדתו של יצחק בחינת הפחד, רק לעורר רחמים וחסדים והשפעות טובות.”

It is crucial that we examine Yitzchak Avinu’s concerns for not wanting to bless Yaakov from the get-go. Yitzchak feared that the blessings of Olam HaZeh would distract Yaakov and have a negative effect upon him, in keeping with the words of the passuk (Devarim 32, 15): **“Yeshurun became fat and kicked,”** i.e. affluence causes people to become lax and even rebellious regarding their service of Hashem. It was only due to Rivka Imeinu’s wisdom and foresight that Yaakov received the berachos. She understood that the riches of this world can assist one in serving Hashem more completely. This applies as well to that which is written in parshas Chayei Sarah: **“Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, ‘Please tip your jug’ . . . her will You have chosen for Your servant, for Yitzchak.”** In other words, she will be the rebuke and opposition to the midah of Yitzchak; it will be her task to elicit mercy and favor and goodwill.

This idea is also evident in the words of the holy master, Sar Shalom of Belz, zy”a, addressing the passuk in this week’s parsha (24, 64): “ותשא רבקה את עיניה ותרא את יצחק ותיפול מעל הגמל, ותאמר אל העבד מי האיש הלזה ההולך בשדה לקראתנו, ויאמר העבד הוא אדוני —and Rivka raised her eyes and she saw Yitzchak; and she let herself down from the camel. And she said to the slave, “Who is that man walking in the field toward us?” And the slave said, “He is my master.” She then took the veil, and she covered herself. The difficulty here is that it is unbecoming and out of character for a righteous woman such as Rivka to inquire about a man walking in the field in this manner.

He resolves this difficulty based on the well-known fact that Yitzchak’s midah is “gevurah”—severity—referred to as the “dread of Yitzchak”—“pachad Yitzchak.” It was necessary for Yitzchak to wait for his appropriate mate until Rivka was born, so that she would be able to soften the severity of his “gevurah” with her “chesed.” Understanding this, Eliezer sought an irrefutable sign indicating that she was suitable for Yitzchak.

Hence, upon seeing Yitzchak for the first time, she was struck by his “gevurah,” “ותיפול מעל הגמל”—literally, “she fell from the camel.” For, she became intensely fearful that his “gevurah” would overwhelm her “chesed.” This prompted her

to inquire: **“Who is that man walking in the field toward us?”** In other words, who is this man approaching me, whose midah of “gevurah” is so intense that he stands in opposition to my midah of “chesed”? Eliezer replied: **“He is my master”**—he is the master of “gevurah”; he has chosen to serve the Almighty with this midah.

Therefore, to mitigate his inherent midah of “din”: **“She then took the veil, and she covered herself.”** The word meaning **“the veil”** --הצעני-- possesses the same numerical value as the word רג, meaning song of joy. She prayed to Hashem that when Yisrael would be in galut, they would soften the impact of the “din” by pouring out their song of joy to HKB”H. The Gemara (Succah 14a) explains this phenomenon as follows: **“למה נמשלה תפלתן של צדיקים כעתר [בראשית כה-כא]: ויעתר יצחק לה”**, לומר לך, מה עתר זה מהפך את התבואה בגורן ממקום למקום, אף תפלתן של צדיקים מהפכת **Why are the prayers of tzaddikim compared to a pitchfork (see Bereishis 25, 21)? Just as a pitchfork turns over the grain and tosses it from one place to another, so, too, the prayers of tzaddikim turn over the attributes of HKB”H from the attribute of anger to the attribute of mercy.**

This explanation is also brought down in the name of the great Rabbi Tzvi of Liska, zy”a, the author of Ach Pri Tevuah. However, he interprets the passuk in a slightly different manner. He sees the word עִמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל צְרִיכִים as an acronym for **צְרִיכִים יִשְׂרָאֵל צְרִיכִים צְרִיכִים—your people Yisrael require a source of income.** Consequently, **“ותתכס”** implies that she covered up all of her transgressions, in keeping with the teaching in the Gemara (Eiruvim 41b) that exile and poverty alter a person’s judgment and cause him to violate the will of his Maker.

Rabbi Chiya’s Custom to Bring His Annoying Wife Presents

I was struck by a wonderful idea. We have learned an important concept from the teachings of the Chasam Sofer, whose source is the Zohar hakadosh. HKB”H chose to create a female companion for man whose nature would conflict with his own. Thus, when HKB”H created the woman, He proclaims: **“אעשה לו עזר כנגדו”**—**I will make for him an adversarial helper.** We find a fascinating account in the Gemara (Yevamos 63a) concerning the Midos of Rabbi Chiya. Even though his wife caused him much grief, he brought her presents on a regular basis:

“רבי חייא הוה קא מצערא ליה דביתהו, כי הוה משכח מידי, צייר ליה בסודריה ומייתי ניהלה. אמר ליה רב, והא קא מצערא ליה למר, אמר ליה, דיינו שמגדלות בנינו ומצילות אותנו מן החטא.”

Rabbi Chiya’s wife would aggravate him constantly. When he found an object that suited her, he would wrap it in a piece of cloth and bring it to her (as a sign of affection). Rav said to him: “But she causes the master much grief! (Why do you bring her gifts?)” He replied: “It is enough that they raise our children and save us from sin.” Rashi explains that they prevent us from having improper thoughts.

Simply understood, we can suggest that Rabbi Chiya intended to teach Rav a vital lesson concerning the midah of “hakaras hatov”—recognizing and appreciating the favors others perform on our behalf. The concept of “hakaras hatov” does not apply solely when the benefactor does us no harm. Yet, even if the person doing something nice for us also cause us distress, it is still incumbent upon us to express our gratitude for the good. Therefore, even though Rabbi Chiya’s wife caused him grief, he bought her presents whenever possible, in order to express his gratitude—as he explained: **“It is enough that they raise our children and save us from sin.”**

We can provide clear-cut proof that this is the correct way to behave from the following passuk (Devarim 23, 8): **“לא תתעב מצרי: כי גר היית בארצו—do not despise the Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land.** Rashi comments: **“Even though they cast your males into the river. What is the reason? Because they were your hosts at a time of pressing need.** Thus, we have convincing proof that although the Egyptians murdered Jewish children, nevertheless we must show them gratitude for hosting us. Rabbi Chiya deduced from this that he was still obliged to express gratitude to his wife despite the fact that she caused him grief.

Man Was Created for the Sole Purpose of Altering His Nature

In my humble opinion, it appears that we can explain the deeper significance of Rabbi Chiya’s exemplary behavior based on a fundamental principle regarding the service of Hashem, which we learn from Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, zy”a, in Tzetl Katan (16):

“האדם לא נברא בעולם רק לשבר את הטבע. לכן יזרז את עצמו לתקן מדותיו בשנת י”ח דוקא כמו שאבאר, כגון מי שנולד בטבע של עקשנות, ישבר את טבעו

מ' יום רצופים, לעשות כל דבר להיפך ממה שיעלה במחשבתו, וכן מי שבטבע עצל ירגיל את עצמו מ' יום רצופים לעשות כל דבר בזריזות... ומשם ואילך מן השמים יעזרוהו להיות מוסיף והולך בשבירת מדות הרעות עד תומם".

Man was created solely to overcome his natural tendencies. Therefore, he should compel himself at the age of eighteen specifically to correct his Midos. To correct negative character traits and to break bad habits, one must act in direct opposition to a particular trait for forty consecutive days. This applies to stubbornness, laziness or even lack of diligence in one's Torah studies. From then on, he will receive divine assistance to complete this task, until all of his negative tendencies are eliminated.

We find a reliable source for this notion in the teachings of the holy Ba'al Shem Tov, zy" a, the founder of Chassidus, citing Rabeinu Saadyah Gaon. This notion is presented in the sefer Ba'al Shem Tov (Bereishis 76) in the name of his loyal pupil, the author of Toldos Yaakov Yosef, in the sefer Tzafnas Paaneiach: **"שמעתי ממורי זלה"ה בשם רבינו סעדיה גאון, כי עיקר בריאת האדם בעולם הזה, "I have heard from my teacher of blessed memory in the name of Rabeinu Saadyah Gaon that the main reason for the creation of man in Olam HaZeh is to break his natural, bad tendencies.**

Similarly, the great luminary, the Gra of Vilna, zy" a, writes explicitly and compellingly in his commentary on Mishlei (Mishlei 4, 14): **"כי מה שהאדם חי הוא, כדי לשבור מה שלא שבר עד הנה: --the reason a person is alive is to break the tendencies he has failed to break until now; therefore, one must always try to improve oneself; if he does not make an effort to improve himself, what is the purpose of his life.** In similar fashion, he writes elsewhere (ibid. 4, 26): **"כל זמן שאין המדות בשלימות, אם עושים קשר בסוף אז כולן נשמרות, ואם לאו כולם אבודות" --so long as one's Midos are not perfected, even those that were part of his nature from birth are not secure; because character-traits resemble a strand of pearls; if a knot is tied at the end of the strand then they are all secured; if not, they are all lost.**

The reason correcting one's Midos is so important—so much so that it was for this purpose that man was created—can be explained based on Rabeinu Chaim Vital's remarks in Shaarei

Kedushah (1, 2) in the name of his teacher, the Arizal. Tikun of the Midos—such as not getting angry or not being arrogant—is not discussed along with the other mitzvos in the Torah, even though our blessed sages compare some of these shortcomings to worshipping avodah zarah. He explains that the reason they are not discussed in the Torah is because they are the source and preparation necessary for the fulfillment of the mitzvos. A person with negative character-traits cannot possibly fulfill the mitzvos. Accordingly, tikun of the Midos supersedes all of the mitzvos outlined in the Torah.

We can now understand why man was created for the sole purpose of breaking bad habits and correcting bad Midos. As we have learned, the mitzvos of the Torah are meaningless and useless if a person does not correct the Midos innate to his animalistic being. Without accomplishing a tikun of the Midos, the intelligent soul--imparted to us from the Almighty above—cannot fulfill any mitzvah in actual deed.

"Hear my son the morals of your father and do not abandon the teachings of your mother"

Now, it is universally accepted that it is the parents' obligation to educate their children to follow in the ways of the Torah and to have proper respect and reverence. The passuk states (Mishlei 1, 8): **"שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תטוש תורת אמך"—hear, my son, the morals of your father and do not abandon the teachings of your mother.** A child who fails to heed his parents can ultimately fall into the category of (Devarim 21, 18): **"כי יהיה "if a man has a wayward and rebellious son, who does not heed the voice of his father and the voice of his mother.**

It should be clear from this discussion that the subject of "tikun haMidos" stands at the top of the list of things that parents are obligated to teach their children. For, without good Midos, there is no sense in teaching a child Torah and mitzvos, seeing as they will not be able to perform them properly. Thus, it should be quite evident that it is crucial that a parent first attend to the tikun of his or her own poor Midos. If they fail to correct their own poor Midos, how can they hope to teach their children how to improve their Midos?! To emphasize this point, let us quote the insightful words of the Gemara (Nidah 62b): **"רבי לא שנה רבי חייא מנא ליה"-- if Rebbe did not teach it, from where does Rabbi Chiya know it?!**

This provides us with a very nice explanation of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk's teaching in Tzetzl Katan cited above: **"Man was only created in order to overcome his natural tendencies; therefore, he should urge himself to correct his Midos at the age of eighteen specifically."** We should endeavor to explain what is so special about the age of eighteen. Yet, according to what we have learned, we can explain what he means based on what we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 5, 21): "בן שמונה עשרה לחופה"—**an eighteen-year-old is ready for marriage.** Now, the purpose of marriage is to produce children and to raise them to observe the Torah: **"Therefore, he should urge himself to correct his Midos at the age of eighteen specifically"**—so that he enters marriage with perfect Midos. By doing so, he will be well equipped to guide his children with regards to the tikun of their Midos.

We should now be elated that we have gained some insight into the intricacy of Hashem's plans. He created woman with character-traits and qualities that oppose her husband's, making her an "עזר כנגדו". Thus, two parents will be forced to overcome the differences in their Midos. In order to live together harmoniously, they will learn to modify their Midos and give in to one another. By doing so, they will set living examples for their children; and their children will learn how to overcome the conflicting Midos ingrained within them.

We can suggest that this is the implication of HKB"H's statement: "לא טוב היות האדם לבדו"-- **it is not good that man be alone.** In other words, it is not good for man to live alone with the Midos rooted within him. As such, he will not be able to be a good example for his children and will not be able to properly teach them how to correct their Midos. Therefore, HKB"H decided: "אעשה לו עזר כנגדו"—to create a mate for man that would be both an "עזר"—a helper—and be "כנגדו"—possess opposite, conflicting traits. This would force them to overcome their differences and serve as viable examples for their children to learn from.

It Is Enough that They Raise Our Children

We can now all appreciate and admire together the greatness of Rabbi Chiya. Even though his wife aggravated him on a regular basis, he continued to buy her gifts that suited her whenever possible. For, he was wise enough to understand that this was HKB"H's divine plan. He arranged for Rabbi Chiya to have such a difficult wife, so that he would work on improving his Midos; he

learned to concede to her and not stand on ceremony and not to get angry at her. In this manner, his children learned from him how to correct their Midos and better serve Hashem.

With this understanding, we can better appreciate the deeper significance of Rabbi Chiya's response to Rav. When asked why he continued to buy gifts for a woman who caused him such grief, he replied: **"It is enough that they raise our children."** Let us provide an interpretation based on our current discussion. He was informing Rav that indeed she caused him much aggravation; but this compelled him to forego his kavod and buy her gifts anyway. By doing so, he was teaching his children a valuable lesson concerning Midos; they saw the importance of passing on one's kavod and yielding for the sake of shalom-bayis. So, indirectly, his wife was raising their children to have good Midos.

In this manner, we can also explain the second quality Rabbi Chiya pointed out regarding his wife: **"They save us from sin."** Aside from the simple meaning of the statement—that having a wife prevented him from entertaining improper thoughts—he was suggesting that by causing him to pass on his kavod and modify his Midos, he merited forgiveness for his sins. For, we have learned in the Gemara (R.H. 17a): "אמר רבא כל המעביר על מדותיו, מעבירין לו על כל פשעיו"—**Rava said: Anyone who relinquishes his rights, the heavenly tribunal relinquishes all his sins for him.** Rashi provides the following clarification: "המעביר על מדותיו, שאינו מדקדק למדוד מדה למצעים אותו, ומניח מדותיו והולך לו... מעבירין לו על כל פשעיו, אין מדת הדין מדקדקת אחריהן, אלא "Relinquishing his rights" means that he does not calculate the exact measure of retribution that those who have done him wrong deserve; he forgoes his kavod and yields . . . such a person is judged leniently by the heavenly court; his transgressions are overlooked; midat hadin does not demand exact punishment but is willing to yield.

The Parents Tikun HaMidos Influences the Children on a Deeper Level

Since we are discussing the great need for parents to work on their Midos for the sake of their children's education, it is worthwhile presenting an elucidation concerning the significance of the passuk (Bereishis 2, 24): "על כן יעזב איש את אביו ואמו ודבק באשתו והיו לכשר אחד"—**therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife and**

they shall become one flesh. Rashi comments: **“The child is formed through the two of them, and there their flesh becomes one.”**

At first glance, we might question the notion that a man should leave his parents in order to cling to his wife. After all, a man is still obligated to observe the mitzvah of “kibud av v’eim”—honoring his parents—even after he gets married. So, in what way is he supposed to leave his father and his mother? Now, we could suggest that this implies that he must leave their home. In truth, it is advantageous for the newlywed couple to live in a separate home for the sake of “shalom-bayis.” Notwithstanding, we find no such halachah anywhere stating that a man must leave his parents home. Furthermore, we must endeavor to explain the reason the Torah gives for a man leaving his father and his mother: **“ודבק באשתו והיו לבשר אחד—so that they should produce children through whom they will become one flesh.”**

It appears that the Torah is teaching us a vital lesson concerning the marriage of a man and a woman; it is teaching us the formula for success regarding the education and upbringing of our children, with regards to both material and spiritual matters. We have already presented the insight of the Chasam Sofer regarding the interpretation of the Almighty’s statement: **“אעשה לו עזר כנגדו”**. HKB”H created woman with Midos that conflict with her husband’s, so that they will strive to improve and correct their respective Midos. By doing so, they will serve as wonderful examples for their children, teaching them to also work on their Midos.

Upon careful analysis, another important point becomes clear. The parents became one flesh in the form of their children. This means that the children inherently possess conflicting character-traits, which they inherited from their two parents. In this respect, it will be very difficult for them to succeed in life. For, whenever they are faced with a decision as to what to do, they will be extremely conflicted. They will be uncertain as to whether to act in accordance with the qualities they inherited from their father or in accordance with the qualities they inherited from their mother. In fact,

David HaMelech alludes to this quandary with his statement (Tehillim 38, 4): **“אין שלום בעצמי מפני חטאתי”—there is no peace in my bones because of my sin.**

Therefore, it is essential that the parents work on improving their Midos beforehand—resolving the conflicts between their opposing Midos. This will illustrate for their children how to reconcile the conflicting Midos that they acquired from their parents—enabling them to succeed in all of their endeavors, whether they are material or spiritual, in order to better serve Hashem with the qualities they acquired from their parents. Regarding this matter, we have learned in the last Mishnah of Torah she’b’al peh (end of Maseches Oktzin): **“לא מצא הקב”ה כלי מחזיק ברכה לישראל אלא השלום, שנאמר (תהלים כט-יא) ה’ עוז לעמו יתן ה’—HKB”H did not find a vessel to hold and preserve blessing for Yisrael other than “shalom,”—as it states: “Hashem will give His nation strength; Hashem will bless His nation with shalom.”**

This illuminates for us the meaning of the passuk: **“על כן יעזב אדם את אביו ואת אמו—therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother.** It doesn’t mean that he should actually leave them, but rather that he should abandon the Midos that he acquired from them, which were part of his nature and which he was accustomed to prior to marrying his wife. The passuk continues: **“ודבק באשתו”—and he shall cling to his wife—**to work on fixing and improving his Midos; he must learn how to adapt to her Midos, which conflict with his, and learn how to live with them harmoniously.

Then the passuk concludes by explaining why it is imperative that he do so: **“והיו לבשר אחד”—**because they are destined to become one flesh through the children they will produce. These children will possess the conflicting qualities of both parents. Therefore, it is crucial that the father abandon the character-traits that he acquired from his father and his mother, in order to join forces and reconcile with the opposing character-traits of his wife. This will enable their children to successfully reconcile the divergent qualities within them and to utilize both sets of character-traits harmoniously in their everyday lives and in their service of Hashem.

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