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GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT KI TETZE

The Better End

"When a man takes [in marriage] a woman and consummates with her" (Deut. 24:1).

An entire tractate [1] is dedicated towards the discussion of marriage, one of its primary foundations being the aforementioned verse. Never missing the subtle nuances, our Sages expound upon the interesting terminology of "taking" in reference to marrying and form a *gezeira shava* – a bridge between two of the same expressions in different contexts that serves to link and apply details from one to the other. Noting another unusual context of "taking" – where Avraham "took" (i.e. purchased) a plot of land from Ephron in which to bury Sarah – our Sages derive a key halacha in marriage. Namely: *just as Avraham's purchase was with money, so must a man marry a woman with money (e.g. a ring).* [2]

In Talmudic literature this is typical but in thought this may appear strange, somewhat derogatory even. How can a holy union such as marriage even be compared in the slightest to something as mundane as a real estate transaction? How are we to make sense of this mind-boggling connection?

R' Yehoshua Zitron once shared a beautiful insight. If we really analyze the story, the transaction between Avraham and Ephron was no ordinary sale. Ephron, having been stuck with a piece of desert, had been astonished at Avraham's overly generous offer. "400 pieces of silver?? For this dusty cave in the desert??" he thought. There was no question in his mind that he was getting the better end of this million dollar dream deal.

Avraham, on the other hand, couldn't disagree more. "400 silver pieces? That's all??" he reasoned. "What a bargain for this priceless cave which houses the bodies of Adam and Chava!!" He had no doubt in his mind that he was receiving the greater advantage of the deal.

The lesson couldn't be more potent. In linking marriage to this sale, the Torah is supplying a valuable outlook for both newlyweds. The *chatan* and *kallah* should each feel that they are so lucky to have gotten the better end of the deal. "My wife? She's absolutely phenomenal." "My husband? He's spectacular." And hopefully, if they each carry this feeling through the honeymoon and into everyday life even as the years go by, the stage is set for a truly happy, successful, and harmonious marriage.

Double Standards

For those who play basketball, have you ever run into that one guy who's all gear and no game? He shows up decked out like an NBA starter — three headbands, matching wristbands, compression sleeves, and sneakers so clean they could be in a store display. But the moment the ball's in play, it's all air-balls, fumbled passes, and missed layups. He's quick to call fouls on the lightest contact, yet when the tables turn and the bump comes his way, he throws up his arms in protest, indignant at the very idea that he could be fouled.

Towards the end of the Parsha, the Torah discusses the importance of remaining honest in business. "לא יהיה בכיסך אבן ואבן גדולה וקטנה" – you shall not have in your pouch alternate weights (lit. 'a stone and a stone'), larger and smaller" (Deut. 25:13).

On the surface, this verse is a call against cheating others monetarily using fraudulent measuring stones. On a deeper level, however, the *pasuk* is communicating far more. A person should not hold double standards — one "larger measuring stone" for others and a "smaller stone" for himself. A husband cannot expect his wife to always be attentive and supportive while he himself collapses on the couch after work, offering her no time or attention. Likewise, one should not be overly strict with others while excusing their own lapses whenever they're having a bad day. "אבן ואבן" calls upon us to be consistent — extending patience, understanding, and generosity to others, especially in the very moments we most wish to claim it for ourselves.

When it comes to our relationship with Hashem, too, this verse offers timeless wisdom. For some reason, we seem to know exactly how to pour our hearts out in prayer when we need something. Whether it's for *parnasa*, health, or another personal request, people will read the entire Tehillim, travel to the graves of tzaddikim, and even make the journey to the Western Wall. Yet, when it comes to "Modim" — the part dedicated to thanking Hashem — it often becomes much shorter, almost an afterthought. The Zohar teaches that the word "כיס" (pocket or pouch) can also refer to a person's mouth. In this light, "לא יהיה בכיסך אבן ואבן" can be understood as a warning not to keep "different-sized stones" in our mouths — that is, not to let our words of gratitude be smaller than our words of request. Our "thank you's" should be just as long, heartfelt, and sincere as our pleas for help, because a relationship built only on requests is no relationship at all. When our gratitude matches our petitions, we keep our "stones" equal in size and in doing so, we honor Hashem and train ourselves to notice and cherish the blessings that were there all along.

(Based on a d'var Torah shared by R' Shlomo Farhi)

[1] Masechet Kiddushin

[2] In the Gemara this exposition is famously known as קיחה קיחה משדוה עפרון

"A mentor doesn't need to be an angel. just a human being who truly cares."