

1.8 | Taking and Giving In Marriage

The Purpose of Giving and Taking: “And They Shall Become One”

In this chapter, we will learn, with the help of Hashem, about the concepts of ‘giving’ and ‘taking’ that exist in marriage.

However, first, we need to know clearly what the goal of this is. What is the purpose of the roles of ‘giving’ and ‘taking’, in a Jewish home?

The purpose of the Jewish home, as we have at length in the past, is as the *posuk* says, “*Therefore, a man shall abandon his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*” Above that level is to “become one” – to become intrinsically one, which is above the “flesh” aspect of the relationship.

This concept is apparent in any aspect that takes place in the Jewish home, without exception. If it is not revealed in the marriage, this does not mean that it must have no place in their marriage. It does, and it just hasn’t been revealed yet.

Taking and giving, in marriage, are not a goal unto themselves. They exist for a greater purpose: to reveal how “*They shall become one flesh.*”

It is simple to understand that taking is not meant just so that we can take. It is harder to understand, though, why giving is not a goal unto itself. But when we look deeply, we will see that both taking and giving exist for a greater purpose: to form unity between them.

Let’s explain this a bit and then learn about the depth behind this matter.

Three Kinds of Giving

Chazal said, “One who gives a gift to his friend, must notify him [about it].”¹ *Rashi* says that there are two reasons for this.

The first reason is, “This is a way of respect, for he might be ashamed to receive, and in this way, he will acquiesce, and not be ashamed.” The one receiving the gift might feel like he is receiving *tzedakah* (charity) and be ashamed to receive it, but if he knows that it’s coming from his friend, he understands that it is his friend sending him a gift.

1 *Shabbos 10b*

The second reason that *Rashi* says is, “If he places it in the other’s house without the other’s knowledge, he must let him know about it, that it is coming from him, so that his friend can come to love him.” When one knows one who gave him the gift, he will be able to love the person who gave it to him.

We learn a *halachah* from this *Gemara*: when you give a gift to another, you need to inform the person that it is coming from you, because by letting him know that it is coming from you, a bond can be formed between giver and recipient.

In contrast, elsewhere the *Gemara* says that when it comes to the *mitzvah* of giving *tzedakah* (charity), it is preferable to give it anonymously: the giver should know to where it is being given to, and the recipient should not know from whom he is getting it from².

If so, there are two kinds of giving, which are very different from each other: the giving of a gift (*matanah*), which is accompanied with informing the receiver who is giving it, so that there can be a bond formed between the two of them; and the giving of *tzedakah*/charity, in which it is preferable if both the giver and the recipient do not know each other.

The simple difference between *matanah* and *tzedakah* is that with *matanah*, there is no reason why the recipient should not know from whom he is getting it from; to the contrary, it is better if he knows, because then he can be grateful to the one who gave it to him, and a bond between them will then be formed. With *tzedakah*, the recipient would be ashamed if the recipient knows who he is; this is the reason that that he shouldn’t know who the giver is.

With *tzedakah*, why shouldn’t the giver know to whom he is giving to? It is so that he shouldn’t think that the recipient is obligated to him somehow now that he has received *tzedakah* from him. This is unlike the case of a gift, in which the giver did not give it out of any sense of obligation, but because he wanted to form a bond with the recipient.

That is the simple difference between giving charity and giving a gift.

On Purim, we find a synthesis of these two levels together: *matanos l’evyonim*, gifts to the poor, in which we are obligated to give a “gift”, as opposed to an obligation to give it as charity. It is for the sake of forming a bond with the poor, through giving a gift.

If so, there are altogether three kinds of giving:

- 1) Giving a gift, in which the giver must let the recipient know who he is,
- 2) Giving charity, in which it is better if they not know to whom it is being given and who is receiving it;
- 3) Giving gifts to the poor, which is the *mitzvah* of *matanos l’evyonim* on Purim, in which a “gift”, not charity, is given to the needy.

The question that arises is as follows. Being that *matanos l’evyonim* is a gift, why isn’t there a *halachah* that the giver must inform the recipient that he is giving it to him?

There is a deep point contained in this matter, and we will try to explain.

Why Giving and Taking Cannot Be Everything

Chazal state that “a good wife is a good gift to her husband.”³ This is linked with another statement of *Chazal*: “It is forbidden for a man to betroth a woman if he has not seen her.”⁴ The connection between the two statements is because since the wife is a “gift” to her husband, he must recognize her, so that there can be a deep bond between them.

Earlier, we have explained that there are three kinds of love: love for differences, love for similarities, and intrinsic love. Based upon what we have learned about those concepts, let us now ponder the statement of *Chazal* that “One who gifts to his friend must let him know about it”, which is for the purpose of fostering love between giver and recipient. What kind of love is this talking about? Is it aiming to form a love for differences, a love for similarities, or to form an intrinsic love?

From a superficial viewpoint, it seems at first glance that it has nothing to do with intrinsic love. It is meant to form a love for differences. If he wouldn't give the gift, there would be less love, and when he gives the gift, there is more love. This cannot be intrinsic love for the recipient. Sometimes, the giver and recipient can come to feel intrinsic love towards each other, but since this is a love that ultimately came about through an act of giving and receiving, it is a conditional kind of love.

On a deeper note, it is actually a love for similarities, [from the viewpoint of the recipient], because he wanted something, and he got it through his giver, thus he loves the giver for fulfilling what he lacks [and he comes to feel a mutual love for his giver].

We have explained that either love for differences or love for similarities cannot become the basis of our life. *Chazal* said, “Ever since there has been an increase of those who receive gifts, days have lessened and years [of life] have been decreased, for it is written, “*He who hates gifts, will live.*”⁵

[There is a well-known concept that] Man is called the “giver”, and the woman is called the “receiver”. If marriage does not go beyond the give-and-take relationship that is present in it, it cannot survive properly. When one receives his entire life, this will lessen his longevity of life, as the *possuk* says.

Of course, this does mean to imply in any way that the give-and-take aspect of marriage is a totally bad thing. It would be impossible to look at it that way, for giving and taking is part of daily life in marriage, and this is the inevitable reality. Rather, what we mean to point out here is that when giving and taking is all there is to a marriage, such a marriage cannot sustain. “*He who hates*

3 *Yevamos* 63b

4 *Kiddushin* 41a

5 *Sotah* 47b

gifts, will live.” Both receiving and giving, alone, cannot enable a marriage to thrive. The receiver loses longevity of life, and the giver is the catalyst which enables that decrease of life in the receiver.

Thus, the depth of the marital bond cannot be based on giving and taking alone. If it would be the basis, then the love between husband and wife would fluctuate, based on how much they are giving to and getting, from each other. Giving and taking in marriage usually results in “love for similarities” between each other, and sometimes it can form a “love for differences” (from a subtle perspective), but it surely does not create an intrinsic love between them.

The Intrinsic Bond Between The Jewish People and Hashem

In order to understand these words fully, let us reflect on the root of every ‘bride’ and ‘groom’: the Jewish people and Hashem, whose relationship is compared to that of a marital bond. From analyzing it, we can learn about the nature of the bond between husband and wife.

Who is the ultimate ‘Giver’? The Creator of the world. We are all receiving from Him. He is perfect, He is not lacking for a thing, so He does not receive from us anything. We, His creations, are created full of things that we lack, and it is He who sustains all of us. Hashem is the giver, and we are the receivers.

Are we able to see our Giver? The *possuk* says, “*No man can see me and live.*”⁶ Nobody has ever seen the Creator. We believe in His existence, and there are some who merit to feel His existence in the depths of their heart, but it is impossible to see Him.

When *Chazal* said that “One who gives a gift to his friend must let him know about it,” so that love will be increase between them – let us think: How can love be increased between the ‘Giver’ – Hashem – and His creations, who are His recipients?

The *possuk* says [when we stood by *Har Sinai*], “*Face to face Hashem spoke with them.*”⁷ The love between the Hashem and the Jewish people is to see Him “face to face”, *panim b’panim*. When love is incomplete, it is only “face to back”, *panim b’achor*, or worse, when it is “back to back”, *achor b’achor* – the “giver” is not seen. When Hashem said, “*And you shall see My back, but My face cannot be seen,*”⁸ this was referring to the lower kind of bond, in which love is incomplete, when it is not *panim b’panim* and it is rather *panim b’achor*. The true kind of bond is when it is called *panim b’panim*, “face to face”.

On one hand, we find that when Hashem spoke to us at *Har Sinai*, He spoke to us face-to-face. Elsewhere, the *possuk* says that “*For you shall not see any image.*” Thus, there are two layers to our bond with our Giver: there is a higher aspect in the bond, which is the “face-to-face” aspect, and there is the lower aspect in the bond, which is “*You shall not see.*”

6 *Shemos* 33:20

7 *Devarim* 5:4

8 *Shemos* 33:23

What does it mean that “*Face to face Hashem spoke with them*”, though, if it is impossible to see Hashem? The depth of the matter is, as follows. “Face to face” with Hashem does not mean that we can actually understand the essence of Hashem. All we can know about Him is how He conducts things, and that is how we identify Him and relate to Him.

In our relationship with Hashem, there are different “faces” – sometimes we are shown an illuminating “Face”, and sometimes we are shown a “laughing” Face, etc. But all of these terminologies are not describing His actual essence. The essence of Hashem cannot be seen. It is His ways, however, which we can see; on its highest level, it is called “face to face.”

Compare this to a child who has never seen his father. His father lives in a different country, and there are no ways to communicate with each other. For various reasons, the father is not able to come see his son. But the father can send his son letters, or he can send him money, and show signs of concern for his son. The child sees the ways which how his father is relating towards him, but he doesn't see his father's face.

So too, seeing Hashem *'panim b'panim'* means that all we can see is His ways of how He relates to us, but we cannot see Hashem Himself in His full glory.

When a person lives only with “love for similarities”, and along with this he also has “love for differences” – which indeed gives him the ability to contain the tension of two opposites – then his bond with Hashem will be limited to a give-and-take relationship with Hashem. He will feel “face to face” with Hashem only when he feels that he is receiving from Hashem. But when he is suffering, he feels like he is not getting from Hashem, and then his bond with Hashem is greatly weakened. He only wants to get along with Hashem when Hashem is relating to him as “face to face”, when he feels the *he'aras panim* (illuminating countenance) of Hashem; but when is in a time of *hester panim* (concealment) of Hashem, there is no more bond, because there is no more “face.”

But when a person has a deeper bond with Hashem, a bond in which he doesn't have to feel “face to face” with Hashem always – he can get along with Hashem even when he cannot see His “face” – this represents the level of intrinsic love, which is not based on anything he receives.

Chazal said that ever since there has been an increase of those who receive gifts, days have been lessened and years have been shortened. The meaning of this can now be understood on a deeper level: If a person's bond with another is based on how much he receives from the other, then it will depend on if he is receiving or not. When he receives, he feels close to the giver, but when he doesn't receive, he no longer feels a bond. His entire life is based on circumstances, which will not be able to keep him going. It is only intrinsic love, which does not depend on give-and-take, that can enable a bond to last.

We have seen a little about the root of this concept: the relationship between a giver and a receiver. Now we will see how this concept affects us on a broader scale: in all our interpersonal relationships as well.

Giving and Taking Are But A Path That Leads To A Greater Goal

Let's examine the nature of the love that one has for himself. Is this love based on receiving something? No. It is to love oneself, intrinsically. A person loves himself simply because this is who he is. In marriage, husband and wife are meant to become one, as the *possuk* says, "And they shall become one." How do they reach oneness with each other? Earlier⁹, we explained that they can start with ulterior motivations for the sake of arriving at the pure motivations: they can use the love for similarities and the love for differences that they feel towards each other, as a tool to awaken themselves to reach an intrinsic love between them.

Love in marriage cannot last if it based on the give-and-take aspect in the marriage. Rather, it is the [intrinsic] love itself which is the only thing that can build the basis of their marriage. Soon we will explain how, but first we need to simply absorb this concept, that the giving and taking in marriage is but a path, a bridge, that leads to a greater goal. The goal is to reach the intrinsic level of their bond, which goes beyond give-and-take.

We may be familiar with the concept that "man is the giver, and woman is the receiver" in marriage, but this is only scratching the surface. There is a more inner aspect to the bond of marriage. The giving and taking that is present in marriage is on the external layer of the marriage, but the inner layer is to be "one" with each other. In the inner layer, there is no giver and receiver. The giving and receiving are just a path that leads to a greater and more inner goal. Now, we will reflect, on how the acts of giving and taking can indeed lead to the intrinsic love in marriage.

The Limits of Giving

With every couple, there is giving and receiving between them. Let's think about what it means to give and what it means to receive. Does a giver always give, and does a receiver always receive? No. It doesn't work like that always.

Imagine a husband who has the softest heart in the world, who is a very giving person. How much can he give already? There are limits to how good his heart can be. Even if there would be a person would have an unlimitedly good heart, he still wouldn't be able to give all the time, because there is not always someone who can receive what he has to give.

For example, a husband might have a desire 100% to buy his wife a \$2,000 piece of jewelry in honor of Yom Tov, but he doesn't have the money. Rabbi Akiva told his wife that if he becomes wealthy, he will buy her a "Jerusalem of gold", but for the time being, he was not able to give it to her then. They were so poor that they slept on mats of straw.

So first of all, the goodness of our heart has its limits; we do not contain in ourselves an endless kind of love. Even when we have love in our hearts, we cannot always actualize it. Besides for the fact

9 At the end of Chapter One

that a receiver cannot always get what he wants, the giver cannot either give all that he wishes he could give.

Thus, in every marriage, there is a bond they have based on give-and-take, but there are also times where give-and-take will not be possible. The deeper understanding is that there is also a part of the bond in which one of them cannot receive and the other cannot give. Now we will analyze more deeply each of these two aspects in marriage.

Receiving In Marriage

The lower aspect of the give-and-take aspect in marriage is, understandably, the ‘receiving’ aspect of it. [When a person is only receiving from the other, this puts him in an obvious disadvantage in the relationship: his entire bond with the giver will be based on receiving, so if he doesn’t receive, he stops feeling close to the giver.]

However, even if the receiver is not giving anything back in return, we can still say that this allows for some unity between giver and receiver. We find that there is a certain connection formed between giver and receiver; the giving unifies them together. It is like a bribe, which is called *shochad*. The *Gemara* says that *shochad* is from the word *chad*, one, because the one who is bribed feels like he has become ‘one’ with whom he is involved with, and that is why he is swayed to find favor in him.

So even though the receiver is losing longevity with the more he receives [as we brought before from the *possuk*], there is still some degree of unity that is formed between him and the giver. Of course, it is a very superficial kind of unity, but we can’t say that it is not unity at all.

In fact, even if it would be a case in which the giver is always giving and he never receives anything in return from the receiver, there is still a bond. *Chazal* state that a dog receives from its owner but does not give back anything to its owner¹⁰, yet there is still a connection that an owner of a dog feels to his dog, even though he has only given to the dog and received nothing from it.

So there is some kind of a connection that will exist between giver and receiver, even when the receiver is 100% a receiver, giving nothing in return. However, it is obviously the lowest form of connection that exists. Why? Because all it does is enhance the ego. It creates some kind of bond, but it blows up the ego of the receiver. It causes the receiver to be entirely concerned for himself, totally consumed by his own needs and nobody else’s. The one who comes to give this kind of person what he needs is certainly going to feel some kind of connection with this receiver, so the entire connection is being enabled by the fact that the receiver is totally concerned for himself.

So we have seen how the receiver enables a connection between himself and the giver, even though he is not giving back anything. (When it comes down to practical life, though, this is usually

¹⁰ *Nedarim 24a*

not going to happen, because there is almost no one who can stand it if they are entirely giving to somebody and they get nothing back in return.)

How The Ego Is Present Even In Giving

The deeper aspect of the give-and-take of marriage is obviously the giving aspect. It seems that the giver in marriage is the perfect level; after all, he keeps giving and giving. There are many people who have good hearts and they have come to a deep recognition that life is not just about taking from others, and that it is about giving to others. Therefore, their aspiration in life is to give and give, all the time, as much as possible.

This nature that can exist in a person – the nature to be entirely giving – is not necessarily a trait that is acquired by people who are very intellectually gifted, or through amassing much knowledge about life. It is not either connected with the root [of the soul], or even the “trunk” [of the soul], for that matter. It is a nature which is even present in gentiles. In any place you go to in the world, you will always be able to find good-hearted people who love to give.

[On a deeper note, however, there is a difference between Jewish giving and non-Jewish giving. Non-Jewish giving can be compared to the case that the *Gemara* brings in which a person says, “I will give charity, so that my son can live.”]

Giving seems to be an entirely altruistic act, which is far removed from any traces of the ego. The proof to this seems to be from the fact that there are people who sacrifice much of their lives and are willing to suffer, just so that they can be able to give to others. Giving seems to be something that always transcends the human ego. When people give selflessly, they feel like they are giving of their own self, to another. The *Gemara* says that stealing another’s money is tantamount to stealing his soul¹¹; the reason behind this is because a person feels like his possessions are a part of himself.

So when a person gives money or something he owns to another person, he is really giving away a part of himself, and that is how there is a bond formed between giver and receiver.

Thus, giving money to another does not just mean that there is physical money being given away to another. It feels like he is giving of his own soul to another. We find the concept of giving one’s soul with Rachel Imeinu: when she gave birth to Binyamin, she died from her pains in labor, and the *sefarim hakedoshim* explain that she gave all up her soul to Binyamin, so Binyamin took it, and that was how her soul left her.

So there are different levels of giving, which come from the soul. The deepest level of giving is when a person gives his own soul to another. But even when one is giving up parts of himself to another and not his entire self, there is still a bond formed between giver and receiver, because the giver is giving away parts of himself to the receiver; the giver feels that a part of himself is in the receiver now, and that is why he feels close to him.

11 *Bava Kamma 119a*

Obviously, giving forms a much stronger bond, than the receiver does. However, there is still a drawback to the connection that is formed from giving. If we look deeply into the root of the matter, we can ask: Why does a person give? Most people will say that giving makes them feel good about themselves. Let's ask the following question: Is there anyone who is prepared to give, if he would only suffer as a result? If we would tell a person "Give a person some of your money, and in exchange, you will be put into a cage", would he agree?

Let's take it further: If we ask a person, "Will you give to your friend, even if you wouldn't feel good about yourself that you gave?" would he agree? Would any person just give *for the sake of giving alone*, even if he gets no good feeling out of it?

'Lishmah': Giving When There Is No Personal Gain

The answer to this is that there is a deep place in our soul which is capable of giving totally for the sake of giving, even when we receive nothing in return. It is possible for a person to give *lishmah*, for the sake of Hashem, such as when the Jewish people were commanded to donate to the *Mishkan*, and they were told to do it "for the sake of My Name." When giving *lishmah*, there is no reason that is motivating me to give. It is a kind of giving that goes above logical understanding.

The kind of giving which we are often familiar with is self-focused. People are usually giving so that they can something back in return; and they want immediate reciprocation. If not that, they will want to receive something in the near future from the receiver, or at least to get some kind of good feeling from it. Most of the acts of giving which we see are usually done with some ulterior agenda.

Thus, we have seen how even giving is not always selfless. The ego is still involved with giving. There is a *possuk*, "*I stand between Hashem and between you,*"¹² and the *Sfas Emes* interprets this on a deeper level: the "I" in a person is what separates between oneself and his Creator, and it is also what separates one from another. So it is not only the receiver's ego which is getting in the way of a bond between them. It is the ego present in the giver which is also preventing a real bond. As long as the act of giving is not completely altruistic, it erects a barrier in between receiver and giver.

That being the case, not only is it impossible for a relationship to survive based on taking alone, but even giving alone cannot be enough, because the giver also wants to feel good about what he is doing, and this is already a trace of ego which will prevent a true bond from happening between giver and receiver. Of course, it is necessary to give and take. But the acts of giving and taking are only a path that must lead to a greater goal, and they are not a goal unto themselves.

Giving usually stems from love for similarities. People give to those whom they feel a mutual connection with. It can also come from love for differences, because there are people who are more

12 *Devarim* 5:5

inclined to give only towards those whom they have compassion on, for being so different than them. This is a very common occurrence that we see going on.

But there is a higher and deeper kind of giving which we need to bring forth from ourselves: to give for the sake of giving. We will explain more about this power.

Love That Goes Beyond Physical and Emotional Attraction

The essence of something has no form which we can define. Intrinsic love has no form it takes on; whereas love for similarities and love for differences always take on a certain form. When we reflect into this a little bit, we can see it clearly. It is simple.

Why does there exist an intrinsic level of love, which is not dependent on giving? It is because such love does not depend on any form. When something has a form to it, it can either be a catalyst for love for similarities or love for differences. For this reason, love for similarities and love for differences are dependent on external factors, so if the factors change, the love goes away with this. The love depends on a certain 'form'. When the 'form' changes, the love changes. In contrast, intrinsic love is not dependent on any form, and that is why it lasts forever.

There are different kinds of 'forms' – physical and emotional. When a person loves his wife based on how she looks or because she has money, he loves her physical form. If he loves her because he feels emotionally attracted to her, because he likes how she thinks, or he likes her personality or her middos, this is a deeper kind of attraction, but it is still love based on some 'form.'

A 'form' can be physical, or it can be spiritual. Examples of a physical form are being attracted to looks, weight, money, etc. Examples of a more spiritual form are: being attracted to character, personality, intelligence, etc. These are all 'forms'.

When love for a spouse is based on her physical looks or on personality traits, this will be either love for similarities or love for differences. It will be love based on some 'form'. But if their love is based on a more inner dimension – when it is based on loving the other just as you love yourself – then such love is not subject to change, just as your actual "I" never changes. We love ourselves not because of our personalities, because even if our personality would change, we would still love ourselves. This is intrinsic love – the kind of love that has no 'form' to it.

Gifts To The Poor, On Purim: Revealing Intrinsic Love

We can now understand better what we discussed in the beginning of this chapter. *Chazal* said that when one gives a gift to his friend, he needs to inform him, so that a bond can be formed between them. This is a kind of bond which is dependent on a certain 'form': the gift which is being given. The love that is formed from such giving is based on a 'form'.

But there is another kind of giving: *tzedakah*, in which it is preferable if the giver and recipient do not know who is giving and who is receiving. It seems that *tzedakah* is not meant to increase love, for it is mainly about providing another's needs, so that another can survive. However, the Baal Shem Tov revealed that when it comes to all other *mitzvos*, one has to do them with some intention of *lishmah*, even amidst his intentions of *shelo lishmah*; but when it comes the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, even if it is given entirely *shelo lishmah*, the *mitzvah* has been fulfilled, because in the end of the day, the poor person has gotten what he needs.

Thus, there is a kind of giving which is about me forming a bond with my recipient, and there is a kind of giving in which I am not giving because I want to form a bond with him: I am giving to him solely so that he can get what he needs, even if we never form a bond. The second kind of giving is the depth that lies behind *tzedakah*.

However, there is also a third kind of giving, which is a synthesis of the aforementioned two levels: *Matanos L'Evyonim*, gifts to the poor, which we give on Purim. Let us think into what lays deep within this *mitzvah*.

When it comes to the *mitzvah* of *Mishloach Manos* on Purim, in which we give presents to our friends, there, it makes sense to let the recipient know that we are giving it, because the point of this *mitzvah* is to increase brotherliness and friendship amongst ourselves. [In contrast, the *mitzvah* of *Matanos L'Evyonim*, giving to the poor on Purim, does not require the giver to inform the recipient that he is giving it]. From a deep perspective, *Matanos L'Evyonim* is not a separate *mitzvah* from *Mishloach Manos*; [it is really the inner purpose of *Mishloach Manos*.] Its purpose is to reveal a sense of oneness with each other on Purim. As Haman said about us, "There is one nation...."

The purpose of *Matanos L'Evyonim* is to reach a love for all Jews with the "intrinsic" kind of love. From that perception, one is meant to give *Matanos L'Evyonim*.

Mishloach Manos, though, is about revealing the lower kinds of love [which are also necessary]: love for similarities (and perhaps love for differences, as well); whereas *Matanos L'Evyonim* is about revealing intrinsic love for others.

The miracle on Purim happened because we were "one nation." Haman wanted to destroy us, thinking he could succeed, due to the fact that we were all concentrated into one unit, so he thought he could easily obliterate us. In the end, it was the very fact that we are "one nation" which saved us.

The *mitzvah* of *matanos l'evyonim* is not included in the regular *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* that we are commanded with throughout the year. During the year, *tzedakah* cannot be fulfilled in the fashion of *matanos l'evyonim*. This is not only because of the rule that "*mitzvos* are not fulfilled in bundles", but because they are two entirely different kinds of giving.

Matanos L'evyonim and *Mishloach Manos*, both *mitzvos* of giving on Purim, are two different aspects of forming a bond with others. *Mishloach Manos* is like the concept of "One who gives a gift to his friend, must let him know about it" – it is about forming a bond with another, and it is a bond which takes on a certain 'form'. In contrast, *Matanos L'evyonim* is about revealing the intrinsic

level of love towards others, for it does not depend on who receives it; as long as it is given. It is about becoming “one nation” – that at our root, we are all unified.

Within our nation, there are of course many people whom we have a hard time tolerating. We see people who have good *middos*, but we also know people with bad *middos*. We know people who say things that we find pleasant to hear, but we also hear people say things which we cannot stomach. Indeed, this is the reality we live with each day. But while it is true that we cannot tolerate certain people, we need to be able to reveal love to even those people.

This is what lies behind *Matanos L'Evyonim*.

The Three Levels of Giving

As we said previously, usually when a person gives a gift, he is not interested in giving something which is of no use. He will usually give something that the receiver needs, something he is missing.

On a broader scale, all of Creation is lacking. Hashem created the world in a way that we are all lacking, and that we need Him. But for what purpose did Hashem make it that way? Is it so that we should have to need Him, so that He will complete what we lack? No. The reason why we are always lacking is because this can serve to form a bond between us, the receiver, with our Giver: Hashem. Let's explain this.

There are three powers of giving in our soul [as we mentioned]:

- 1) There is giving a gift, in which the purpose is to create love between giver and recipient.
- 2) There is giving *tzedakah*/charity, which is to give to one who is lacking; here, the purpose is to give, even if a bond of love is not formed between giver and recipient. For example, you are walking in the street and you see a pauper, and you give him some money, even though you have no idea who he is. You might not ever see him again for the rest of your life. Even so, you give to him, because you have compassion on him. This is not about love; it is out of compassion (although on a deeper note, compassion is rooted in the emotion of love).
- 3) A third kind of giving is the level in between the above two levels: The fact that another is lacking is what can enable me to bond with him, by giving to him. Thus, the fact that a person is missing something is not simply because his lacking needs to be filled by another. If that would be the reason, it would be *tzedakah*. Rather, the reason why he lacks something is because it can act as a catalyst that will enable unity between giver and recipient.

Moving From Shelo Lishmah To Lishmah

As we explained, it is not possible in reality for a person to only have intrinsic love. We are affected by various external layers in our being, being that we are human and physical, which demands some kind of superficiality in order for us to survive. However, if we take the other extreme – if we base all of our love on love for similarities or on love for differences – this is not either feasible. In fact, it is impossible.

If a person says “If so, I will only have entirely pure motivations in my love, and I will only love my spouse on an intrinsic level”, this is basically denying his physical body, which cannot be done. One day we will hopefully merit to only live through our souls with no body, when the day of the resurrection comes, with the help of Hashem; but for now, we cannot live that way.

We are bound to some physicality, so we must start with *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motivations), with the hope of arriving at *lishmah* (pure motivations). The *lishmah* aspect in marriage is intrinsic love for our spouse, and the *shelo lishmah* aspect is the love we have towards our spouse based on the give-and-take in marriage. They are interrelated. From *shelo lishmah*, we can be lead to *lishmah*.

The external layer (*shelo lishmah*) can always be a tool to help us get to the inner layer (*lishmah*); just as the body is a tool that holds our soul, although it is the complete opposite of the soul. (This is the depth of the true “wonder” of body and soul which [we mention in the blessing of *Asher Yotzar*]).

There is a theme running throughout all of Creation, that opposites unite. The body and the soul are opposites, yet they are united. *Shelo lishmah* and *lishmah* are total opposites of each other, but the rule is that “from *shelo lishmah*, comes *lishmah*.” How can *shelo lishmah* unite with *lishmah*? It is when a person reveals some motivation for *lishmah* amidst even *shelo lishmah*.

With regards to our subject – revealing intrinsic love in marriage – it is when we realize that giving to our spouse can lead us to reveal intrinsic love for our spouse. In this way, the fact that our spouse is missing something is the very catalyst that can bring the giver to awaken his intrinsic love for his spouse. But if the fact that our spouse lacks something is simply seen as an opportunity to give and to fill in what our spouse is lacking in - then even if we give and give to our spouse, it will never bring us to reveal intrinsic love.

Incorporating ‘Lishmah’ Into Marriage

In marriage, and when it comes to raising the children, there is always give-and-take. Each of the family members will always be lacking in certain areas. The children are totally dependent on their parents to give them all that they lack.

When people are superficial, they give because “What else can I do? I have no choice. I got married, I have obligations that it says in the *Kesubah*; it will be impossible to function if I don’t give to them.” When a person is deeper, he will give to his family what they need because he enjoys giving. But what is the purpose that all of this giving is supposed to lead to?

If giving is seen as giving and nothing more than that, we will never reach the purpose of giving! But if we view giving to our spouse as an opportunity to reveal the root of why we give – a kind of giving that stems from our essence – then, the intrinsic level of the bond can shine forth.

Spouses are giving and taking from each other on a daily basis. They will always be missing certain things, whether it is bigger needs such as medical issues, or whether it is smaller needs such as asking for a cup of water. Marriage is an inevitable situation of give-and-take. What is being asked of us is, if we are able to be in touch with the depth behind all of this. What is the reason why we need to give, and what is the reason that we are forced to receive?

Taking, by itself, is clearly a negative trait, as we explained before. However, even giving, when it is just viewed as a desire to give, is not either the purpose. The point of the entire system of give-and-take is meant to give the spouses the tools that will enable themselves to reach intrinsic love towards each other.

This is a matter which needs to be worked on. Usually, a person will give only in a situation where he sees that other person is extremely lacking in something. For example, if a father sees that the child has torn his shoes, he will buy him shoes, because he doesn't want his child to get wet in the rain. Or, he will simply feel times in which his heart has become more opened, and he feels like giving much more, during those times of elation.

Clearly, neither situation can be the epitome of giving. The point is not to give only when there is a pressing need for it. Nor is giving meant solely for times in which one greatly feels like doing so [because that would mean a very limited amount of giving]. We are supposed to give more often throughout the day.

How? We can give a simple example. Let's say either the husband or wife wants to buy a present for the spouse, and it costs 200 shekel. He/she is doing so out of feeling a need to give. It would be recommended to spend a little more of the intended amount; for example, be willing to spend another 20 shekel. What is the purpose of this? It is so that you can add on a little extra amount in your giving to go for the sake of giving alone, and not for the sake of buying a present. The little amount of "giving to give" is meant to reveal intrinsic love; it is the point of *lishmah* which you can reveal in the act of giving.

Of course, do not overdo this; don't spend double the amount of what you were planning to give, or even close to that amount. We are not on such a selfless level. The point is to do something small that is purely for the sake of giving.

Another example: Let's say a wife wants to buy something for the house, and she asks her husband for some money [we are talking about a home in which the husband is in charge of financial affairs]. Let's say, for example, that she asks him for 530 shekel to spend. He should give her a little more than what she asked for. In this way, he is not only giving her what she lacks, but he's also giving her just for the sake of giving.

The point, again, is not to overdo this and give her a lot more money than she asks for. It is rather that in addition to providing for the basic emotional needs of a spouse, it should be coming

from your love; and in addition, make sure to add on a little bit which is purely for the sake of giving. Just give a little bit from yourself, with no motivation of gaining.

But in order to do this act, one has to be aware of the essence of giving in the first place. Giving must be done with this deep awareness, as you are giving. It doesn't come from the mere external act of giving.

Thus, we need to reach all three layers of giving. The first level of giving is to give when someone else lacks something; this is understandable to all. The second level of giving is to give out of love; this is also understandable to anyone, and each person tries to do this, more or less. But the third level of giving is a deeper kind of giving that not all people are aware of. It is to give from our very essence; to give *lishmah*. It can be something small, as long as it is stemming from the depth of the soul.

Altruistic Giving

There is a deep point contained within this concept.

Usually, we are acting from a place in ourselves that is detached from emotion, or from a place that expresses emotion. The third level of giving we have been describing might sound like a kind of giving that is detached from emotion, being that it is not about forming love. That would be true only for someone who has never experienced it.

Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam, in *Sefer HaMaspik*, writes of a deep point in the soul which is above the point of emotion. When a person worries about himself, this is not an emotion, but an inner sense that stems from his very self. So too, when a person gives to another, he can give of himself to another, which is a deeper kind of giving than when he gives out of emotion for another.

Hashem gives to us unconditionally, unlike people, who only give when they are in the mood. There are couples who have to wait for their spouse to be in the right mood, in order to ask for something they really want. This is the situation when there is no intrinsic level of giving in marriage, and the giving does not go beyond love for similarities and love for differences.

But there is a kind of giving which can come from one's very essence. Whenever we give, we need to get used to doing a little bit extra in the giving that will be purely for the sake of giving from our essence. It can be a small amount of money, or a small act, that expresses this kind of giving. It is to give with the mindset that "I am giving, just for the sake of giving."

A great example of this kind of giving is brought in the words of the Rambam, and soon we will try to make this practical in day-to-day life. If, for example, a person has 1000 shekel and he wants to give it to *tzedakah*, he has two choices – either he can give it all of it to one needy person, which will surely help him, or he can 1 shekel to a thousand needy people. Which is better?

Logic would dictate that it is better to give all 1000 shekel to one person, because that is helping him, whereas giving 1 shekel to a thousand people does not help even one of them. However, the

Rambam says that it's better to give 1 shekel to each of the 1000 people! What is the reasoning of this? It is a deep point, and we will try to explain it and make it practical with regards to the home.

Earlier, we brought an example of a wife who asks her husband for 530 shekel. If he gives her 700 shekel, that shows that he is giving to her out of a deeper kind of giving. She needs 530, so he is giving her the 530 in order to give her what she needs, and in addition to that, he is also giving her another 170 shekel. When he gives her another 170 shekel, which is a substantial amount, he is giving it to her because he knows that she can do something with the money. This added amount shows his love for her.

If he would give her 1 more shekel than what she asked for, though, this would seem pointless, because there is nothing she can do with 1 shekel. However, although it does not help her, there is a deep reason why he should give her that extra shekel. It is so that he can learn how to give from his essence, to just give for the sake of giving.

With giving an extra 170 shekel, he is giving it to her because he thinks she can use the money, so it doesn't reveal the selfless kind of giving. It reveals love in his giving, but it doesn't reveal the power of giving for the sake of giving, which is deeper than giving out of love.

Thus, giving her that 1 extra shekel, although it does not help her at all, can get him used to the idea of giving just for the sake of giving, even when it is not needed, and even when it does not cause more love. There is no expression of love in giving her an extra shekel, because it has almost no value. But it has a much deeper value: it represents the idea of giving from your essence.

The Depth Behind Giving and Taking In Marriage

This does not mean to imply that there is no point in the simple give-and-take aspect of marriage. The point is not for a husband to leave a present for his spouse and sign a different name than his on the box so that his wife won't find out that it is him who is giving it.

Rather, what we are getting at is that a person needs to reveal a point in his soul in which he gives altruistically, for the sake of giving something. When a person gives and he does not know whom he is giving to, and neither does the receiver know who is giving it to him, this is like *tzedakah*. The external aspect of *tzedakah* is to give anonymously, so that the recipient won't be ashamed; but the deeper aspect in *tzedakah* is to get used to giving, for the sake of giving.

If I give to another because I feel that the other person needs what I am giving him, this is like *tzedakah*. If I feel that I am giving a gift, the whole purpose has been defeated, because the whole purpose of giving a gift is to form a bond, and here the giver and receiver do not know that they are giving and receiving from each other. If so, what is the purpose in giving *matanos l'evyonim*?

In every act of giving, there is always an aspect of "One who gives a gift to his friend, must let him know about it." This is the "*shelo lishmah*" aspect in the soul which is always present; the more a person gives with the proper mindset we have described, this is the ideal situation. It is the natural

way which we can use to foster a sense of brotherliness and friendship with others; and in marriage as well.

But beyond this level, is the inner kind of giving: to give to another even when the recipient has no idea who is giving it to him, and he thinks he is receiving a gift! This is the deep concept that lays behind the give-and-take aspect that is so common in marriage. The inner perspective which husband and wife need to have towards giving is, to understand, that even the external acts of giving can be used as a tool, to bring us to the intrinsic love for our spouse – which is independent of the give-and-take.

The Roles of Being a Giver and Receiver

In the beginning of this chapter, it was explained that there is a love that is formed through receiving from another, and there is love formed through giving to another. When it comes to day-to-day life in marriage, each of the spouses is always giving and receiving. Sometimes, we are leaning towards one direction over the other, but we are never totally self-centered, nor are we totally giving. We are always cycling back and forth between giving and receiving.

Why is it this way? From a superficial perspective, it is because if spouses do not give to each other and they do not receive from each other, the home would not be able to survive. But the deeper reason why it has to be this way is because we are always switching back forth between the two modes, and that is how we are designed. Sometimes, we are even giving and taking at the same moment. Our marriage is purposely designed that way, so that our love will not be limited to just giving or just receiving; as we have explained, neither of these alone can fulfill the purpose of marriage.

If the purpose of marriage was to reach the love that we feel from giving, that would mean that all we should do in marriage is to just give, give, and give; and that taking is nothing but a selfish aspect of man. Being that marriage makes us always give and receive, it must be that giving is not the purpose.

To understand it deeper, as we explained before, a person cannot always give, nor should he always receive. Many times, we want to give, and we find that we cannot. What is the reason for this? The external reason is because we simply do not have what to give, in such situations. But what is the reason that Creation is designed like this?

It is because if the purpose of everything is giving, we would have to always be giving, and then we would find that we cannot always give. “More than the calf wants to nurse, the cow wants to feed.” The giver actually wants to give more than what the receiver wants.

Why is it this way? It is because we are supposed to come to the understanding that the purpose is not giving. Giving is but a tool which enables us to reach the intrinsic level of love, for our spouse.

In summary: in whatever we need to do *externally* in our marriage, it is upon us to uncover the depth of it – to reveal the *essence* that is behind it.