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## Getting to Know Your Home - 002 Revealing Intrinsic Love

### ***Getting To The 'Root' of Marriage, Before We Deal With the 'Branches'***

As it was explained in the previous chapter, there are three kinds of love that exist: *ahavas hashoneh* (love for differences\“opposite attraction”), *ahavas hadomeh* (love for similarities\“similar attraction”) and *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love). The first two kinds of love – similar attraction and opposite attraction – are actually branches of the root kind of love, which is intrinsic love.

Everything in Creation has within it roots and branches. A root is always hidden, while branches are revealed. We can see this even from the physical world – the roots of a tree are always hidden, while the branches are visible.

For this reason, most people only see the “branches” of love, and they never see the “root.” The branches of love are more obvious, whereas the root of love is hidden. Therefore, most people are not involved with the “root” of love - only with the “branches”. As a result, people are missing the source of the love. Even the “branches” of love that they know of will also not be fully reached, when they are missing the root.

In addition to this point, even when people do hear about the “root” kind of love, they tend to think of this as something a bit esoteric, some lofty spiritual idea contained in Heaven, which cannot be made practical. But the truth is that the root kind of love is not a Heavenly matter. It is really planted deep into the “earth” that we stand on.

Compare this to the following: a person would rather stand on top of the “tree” and only partake of the “fruits” that grow on its “branches”, and all he does is pick the “fruits” of the tree, forgetting to plant his “tree” so that it will continue to survive. Perhaps he thinks that the tree will remain on its own, and that he doesn't have to plant it on his own. We all know that this is impossible, for one has to go plant the tree himself.

The lesson is that if we want to gain a clear and true picture of life in general, and the Jewish home specifically, we must touch upon the root of the matter, and from there we can explore the branches. Although we may not understand clearly what the roots of marriage are when we learn about them, being that they are very hidden matters from us, we will be able to understand the roots better when we begin to learn about what the branches are.

Usually, most people, when they seek to improve their homes, want to hear actual advice of “what to do” and “what not to do”, “what to say” and “what not to say”, etc. Although the advice can be

truthful, we must know that those are just the “branches” of marriage, and in fact, they are the very last of the branches. The “branches” can only be strong when they stem from a firm “root”. If we build the root very strong, then even the last of the branches will be firm. But if all we do is emphasize the branches of marriage, like “what to say” and “what not to say”, then we will be missing the root. A home cannot be built when the foundations are not built firmly.

In this chapter, with the help of Hashem, we hope to get to the inner root of marriage. Firstly, we will point out that that it will be hard at first to understand the root, being that we have not seen the branches. However, because it is the root, we cannot skip discussing it.

We will try to explain it, and then we will begin to understand it slowly as we learn about the branches of marriage, which will be discussed later. Understandably, this will require patience on your part. It is our hope, that with Hashem’s help, that these words become clearly understood, by the time we have reached the end of this discussion.

### ***Circumstantial Factors and Intrinsic Factors***

As we mentioned, there are three kinds of love: love for similarities, love for differences, and intrinsic love.

Love for differences works like a puzzle. Two people, who are different from each other, can see how they each complete what the other one doesn’t have, and in this way, they connect with each other. They are like two different puzzle pieces, which can connect together to complete the picture of the puzzle.

With love for similarities, although the two people are similar to each other, they are still not yet one with each other. As we have said previously, there are no two people who are exactly alike, nor are there two people who are totally different.

Intrinsic love for another (*ahavas etzem*) is the absolute kind of love. The word “love” in Hebrew is *ahavah*, which has the same *gematria* (numerical value) in Hebrew as the word “*echad*,” one. We are familiar with love for similarities and love for differences from the various things or people that we have a liking towards, and we are familiar with intrinsic love from the love that we have towards ourselves; as we explained before, it is our *avodah* to extend our intrinsic love for ourselves to include others.

The Vilna Gaon writes of two viewpoints one can have one life: to see the “branches” of a matter, which makes everything seem like happenstance, and to see the “root” of a matter, which reveals the essence of a matter. On a deeper level, this is the difference between Amalek and the Jewish nation. Amalek is the attitude of coincidence, “*mikreh*”, the opposite perspective of the Jewish people, which can see the how nothing is a coincidence, but rather, intrinsic.

When one lives only the branches of life, the branches of life are subject to change, for they are coincidental. The root never changes, however, because it is intrinsic, thus it is not subject to any change.

Thus, there is a way to get to the root of a matter, and this is where the concept of intrinsic love can be developed. The coincidental parts of life are where similar attraction and opposite attraction stem from. The three kinds of love are not to be viewed in the sense of being all part of the same ‘pyramid’. Rather, two of these kinds of love are one kind of system, whereas the third kind of love is works as a different system: similar attraction and opposite attraction are the coincidental factors in life, whereas intrinsic love is from a non-changing, non-circumstantial part of life.

Now we will explain these concepts.

### ***Love Based On External Factors Can Change***

With “opposite attraction”, a person loves something or someone for being different than him, and he finds this difference to be refreshing.

For example, if a person is very quick and energetic, and he is aware that he possesses this quality, he might be in awe of a person who is slow-paced and calmer, because he knows that sometimes he tends to be chaotic, whereas a slower person is always calm. He respects the person who has his opposite personality, and he comes to love that other person who is slower-paced than he. If he marries a spouse who is slow-paced, he feels that this contributes to the development of his personality, and allows him to be able to slow down and think calmly. If he has a child who is slow-paced, he admires the child for his calmness.

However, when he becomes 40 or 50 years older, he is now calmer, and now he doesn't need a slow-paced person in his life to show him how to be calm. In addition, he finds the slowness of his spouse to be burdensome to him, especially now that his spouse is older and even slower-paced than when he married her. Their opposite natures are now magnified, and now he finds her slowness to be a burden upon him, not something to admire.

When he was younger, he had admired her for it, because he was very quick and rash, while she was slow and more methodical, so he enjoyed the difference between him and her, seeing how it completed what he lacked. But now he doesn't need her for that anymore, because he has already learned how to be more methodical. Now, her slowness is just preventing him from doing many things he wishes to do.

Thus, “opposite attraction” at some point will lose its appeal. The variables change, and you stop feeling attracted to the opposite of your personality. So “opposite attraction” is an example of a kind of love that is coincidental. The love might be there when he is 20 years old, but not at the age of 50 or beyond.

Now let's see how “similar attraction” as well can dissipate. Let's say a person has a liking towards a certain thing when he was younger. When he gets older and more mature, he gains a new perspective on life, and even his physical enjoyment changes with this. Now he loves other things than the things he loved when he was younger and more immature.

As an example, all of us can remember things that we loved when we were 15 years old, and by the time we turned 18, we already had less of a liking towards it, and by the time we reach the age of 25 or 30 we didn't even remember that we ever liked it.

Thus, either opposite attraction or similar attraction are both subject to change, for they are coincidental, not intrinsic. So if a person loves his spouse or child for being very different or similar, his love will wane at a certain point. He will feel a strong love for the spouse or child when he is younger, and when his older and some variables of his life change, his love for the spouse or child will lose its fuel. Or, his tastes will change, because since he has changed in the interim, there are different things which attract him.

But intrinsic love never fluctuates. One's love for himself never changes, because it is an innate nature of the soul for a person to love himself, and it is a love that goes above human logic; so if he loves the other on an intrinsic level, the love also will not change.

Similar and opposite attraction are kinds of love that are circumstantial, and even if these kinds of

love can endure in a marriage for 20 years, and even if they remain present until the end of the couple's lives, all of this love is circumstantial; whereas intrinsic love for each other is never-changing.

### ***Oneness In Marriage: Through Loyalty***

Generally, the concept of intrinsic love is also known as *emunah*, "trustfulness". Of Moshe Rabbeinu, Hashem said, "*In all of My house, he is trustworthy.*" We learn from this that the "house" [marriage] is based on being "trustworthy" to each other.

The loyalty of a couple towards each other is not limited to never abandoning each other, as is written in the *kesubah* (marriage document). When they are loyal to each other, it is a result of something deeper between them. The loyalty between them is a perspective which they each have towards their marriage, and that is why they don't leave each other.

Chazal say that a person's *bashert* (destined spouse) is announced forty days before he is conceived<sup>[1]</sup>. The lesson of this is to show that there is a love that must remain unchanged between them, and that is why it is announced before he is even conceived. If it would be announced after a person is conceived, it would imply that he needs to become one with his spouse, but that she is not a part of his intrinsic essence. But she is destined for him already before he is conceived, which shows that she is already a part of him by the time he is conceived; so she is really a part of his essence, rather than another being whom he must annex onto his existence.

That is the root of the love between husband and wife, but it might very well remain in its hidden state, never becoming revealed in the marriage. A couple can live together for 50 or 60 or 60 years, as much as they merit to have long life. There are thousands of situations they go through together which involve the two of them. But if a person is not aware of the 'intrinsic' area in life, he won't be able to reveal it in his home. It has to start outside the marriage - with *oneself* - and then it can be brought into the marriage and further developed.

### ***Emunah: No Such Thing As Coincidence***

Thus, if one wants to reveal the intrinsic love towards his spouse, he will first have to reveal it within himself, towards his own self, so that he can relate to it in the first place. After that he can extend that love into his marriage, being able to love his spouse on an intrinsic level. But if he does not reveal intrinsic love first towards himself, he will not be able to reveal it in his marriage. The reason for this is because one cannot give to another that which he does not possess.

Your intrinsic essence is not something that you 'annex' onto yourself; it is already a part of who you are, even before you have actively revealed it. The intrinsic love for your spouse is not to be understood as something you make into a part of yourself; rather, *your spouse is really a part of you to begin with* - and it is upon you to reveal that perspective.

Our existence is one piece; man is not comprised of different parts. Although our Sages state that the soul has five names - the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah*, and *Yechidah* - these are really all five different perspectives towards the same existence. It is not like a house with five floors, in which each floor is a separate part of the house. Rather, the soul is all one piece. It has five different forms of self-expression, but it is all one piece.

So when we say that the root of life is *emunah* (trustfulness), it means that nothing that happens in our life is due to any circumstance (*mikreh*); everything we go through in life is somehow a part of our essence. (In the future, when Hashem's Name will be one and all of creation will be unified, we will all have the full understanding of this concept.)

## ***Our Inner Contradictions***

When a person understands that everything in our life is really an intrinsic part of our essence, the discovery that will follow with this is, that all contradictions that we know of, are not really 'contradictions'.

As we all know, there is no person who does not have any inner contradictions. This is because no one completely accesses the 'intrinsic' areas of life. So when we speak of living a life of 'intrinsic' concepts, we mean for one to shine the light of this concept upon our life; obviously, we cannot live totally in its perspective.

We can only access it at certain times of our life, and we can try to let it become more manifest in our life on a daily basis, hour to hour; to try to reach the state of absolute oneness (*echad*) with our spouse. In the future, we will be able to reach the total level of intrinsic love, because there will be no more contradictions in life anymore. In the current state we live in, though, we live with inner contradictions.

Most of the marital problems that exist today are not due to clashes between the spouses, but because of the internal contradictions within one of the spouses. For example, one day a spouse will complain about something that is bothering him, and sometime later, he claims that something else bothers him. The spouse asks him, "What changed since the last time? Why did you change your mind?" He has various answers: "Oh, I wasn't really think then", or "I didn't mean what I said when I said it."

In most instances, there are layers in the soul that a person is not aware of, so at a later point, the layer of the soul that he was unaware of will surface, magnifying a different area that now bothers him. This is really where all of the 'differences' between spouses are stemming from: a lack of understanding towards oneself, which results in contradicting needs and desires, causing friction between the spouses.

The reason why a person keeps discovering that different things bother him at different times is because he doesn't recognize himself that well. So the first thing one must become aware of, in order to gain awareness of marriage, is to realize that there are three factors of love in marriage, which are in contradiction with each other: similar attraction, opposite attraction, and intrinsic love.

When a person lacks proper self-recognition towards himself, he becomes confused at himself. For example, he will see in himself tendencies towards sadness and lowliness, which stem from the element of earth in the soul, and he also notices in himself times in which he desires to grow spiritually, which stems from the element of fire in the soul. Other times, he feels down again, and then the cycle repeats itself. This leaves him bewildered, and he wonders what is going on inside of himself. Sometimes the elements in the soul are in contradiction with each other and they clash, and sometimes they are in balance with each other.<sup>[2]</sup> Either way, a person notices many kinds of inner contradictions in himself.

It is easy to identify the contradictions that one notices in himself: Sometimes he feels a certain way, and another time he feels himself pulled in the opposite direction; clearly, he is aware that there are contradictory forces within his personality. It is also easy to recognize the parts of the personality that are similar to each other. One can figure out both of these out by writing down on a piece of paper all of the parts of his personality that he recognizes in himself, and then compare them, seeing which parts of his personality are similar and which parts his personality are in contradiction with each other.

But when it comes to identifying the intrinsic love one has for himself, this is harder to identify in oneself.

### ***Proper Self-Love***

The intrinsic love that one has for himself is found in the subconscious. With most people, it is not revealed in one's conscious state.

For this reason, if the average person would be asked "Do you love yourself?" and he is a refined kind of person, he will probably recoil from being asked such a question. He might say that self-love is a form of selfishness, because one must not be self-absorbed and should only be involved with worrying for others' needs.

He is somewhat correct if he says this, but it is only half the truth. This is because in order to be able really love another person, first, you must develop a proper love for yourself, and then you can give that love to others. Rav Shimon Shkop zt"l said that you love for others can only be achieved when you wear your own "glasses" of proper love for yourself; through those "glasses" you are wearing, you can then love others.<sup>[3]</sup> So before one can love others, he must first have a proper self-love towards himself.

It is obvious to many people that one cannot love others if he doesn't love himself. Nor can he make other people happy if he has no happiness within himself. The reason for this is simple: it is because a person cannot give to another something which he doesn't have.

Rav Shimon Shkop explained, furthermore, that the point of loving other Jews is to reveal that he and I are really "one." In order for a person to reach oneness with another, he first must go through the stage of revealing his own "I" [in a healthy manner], and after there is a properly developed "I", the "I" can then know how to unify with another.

In most cases, the love that a person knows of in his life, in his conscious state, is either "similar attraction" or "opposite attraction." For example, if a person enjoys tasting extreme kinds of foods, such as very spicy food or very sweet kinds of food, or a very salty kind of food, he loves the food the more extreme it is, because he loves the challenge. This is a kind of "opposite attraction". An example of self-love experienced through "similar attraction" would be if a person is emotionally drawn towards something, such as if he enjoys a certain song to listen to, and he feels himself connecting to it when he enjoys it.

But where can we find a revelation of intrinsic love in a person's life? When does a person ever experience it...?

If we think deeply about this, we can see that such a problem does not begin with marriage; it is not a problem that begins with not knowing how to love one's spouse on an intrinsic level. It is a problem that started before marriage, with oneself. If a person enters marriage and the only love he knows of are love for similarities and love of differences, and he no real love for his own self yet - it's as if there was no "I" which married the woman he has taken into marriage. It is only when a person has self-love for himself that he can bestow true love on another.

This concept might sound very strange the first time one hears of it, but it is the truth!

When a person really loves himself in a proper way, he reaches the source of love in himself, and from there he can extend love towards others and unify with them. But if a person only knows of the superficial kinds of love, such as love for similarities and love for differences, then he is not connected to the source of love in himself, and then he has nothing to give to another. Maybe he will be able to

buy gifts for his spouse before Yom Tov and thereby lighten the atmosphere in the home, but he has not reached his inner source of love, so he won't be able to nourish others with it.

Thus, before we explain how one can come to unify with his spouse and reveal a state of oneness with each other, we must first make sure that we reveal a love towards ourselves. Let's explain how we can do this.

### ***How To Awaken True Self-Love***

First, identify the superficial kinds of love you already know of from your life: love for similarities and love for differences.

Start with identifying "love for differences"; first, start with the physical areas, such as which kinds of foods you like and which kinds you don't like. Then continue to the emotional and spiritual areas: identify who your friends are, what sefarim and books you like to learn and read, and the way that you think; and ask yourself if you enjoy hearing another person's view when he argues on you. Do you enjoy hearing the opposite opinion of yours, or not?

The next step is to get to know your "similar attraction" areas. Think about which things you are attracted that are similar to your tastes. Start with physical areas, then the emotional areas, and then the spiritual areas.

After you have identified all of these aspects, now you can proceed to the third stage: identifying your "intrinsic love" of yourself. You will need to set aside time every day in which you are alone, in which you are in quiet surroundings, and concentrate with yourself.

Many times throughout marriage, **a spouse will need time alone to himself/herself, and just sit quietly and to be alone**, so that he/she can do some soul-searching.

Often the spouse will react negatively to this idea of spending time alone in solitude: "So what did we get married for?!" But the answer to this is, because in order for husband and wife to be able to love each other - or to love anyone else, for that matter - there must be times of solitude with oneself, so that one connect to his/her inner source of self-love. Without times of solitude, a person will not have time to reflect on his own self-love, and then he will not be able to extend love to another.

Furthermore, it is emotionally unhealthy for two people to always be together and to never have time alone to themselves. We see this apparent both from the *halachos* of Jewish marriage [which require times of physical separation], as well as from the practical sense, which does not allow a couple to always be together. A husband and wife each have different places they go to every day when they leave the home, which does not allow them to be together.

The inner reason behind this is because our soul needs both times of "alone" as well as times of "connection" with another. We each need to alone to ourselves so that we can connect to the source of love that is within us, as well as times in which we are together with another, so that we can take our love we have reached within ourselves and reveal it outwards towards another.

In addition, the Vilna Gaon taught that if a person wants to truly love his child, he should keep him a distance from him sometimes.

Thus, in order to reveal intrinsic love for another, there must first be intrinsic love towards oneself, and after that, a person can extend the love he has reached, towards another.

However, we must point out that if this is being done out of egoistic concerns, it will only serve to

enhance one's personal ego, and it will not develop his love for another. It will only prove effective if one is developing his self-love because he wants to learn how to give love to another.

### ***The Need For Solitude***

If a person does not awaken his self-love, it can result in terrible feelings of low self-worth, lack of self-esteem, and misconceptions about himself. This all results when the self-love is not accessed. If a person would love himself properly and sensibly, none of these emotional problems would ever be developed.

If all a person loves are things that are to his taste as well as things which challenge his tastes, and he has never focused on how to love himself simply, then he has no source of love within himself. The kinds of love that he knows of are all subject to change, because our tastes change with time; and then the person will be left with no love for anything, which will result in a shaky self-image.

When there is an inner source of love revealed inside a person, it can allow the other external kinds of love to flourish, even when his tastes change. But if there is no source, and he only has the external kinds of love, he has no source to provide him with vitality, and then he will be stuck when he needs it.

We find that all of our great leaders, beginning from our Avos all the way down to the Sages of the Talmud and after that, had two alternating directions in their life. On one hand, they learned together with others; as Chazal say, "Either a friend or death." On the other hand, they had times of being alone, where they could reflect in solitude. If a person were to sit all day with his *chavrusa*, and he never has time alone, he is forfeiting the meaning of life.

We see this already from the first marriage in Creation: Adam and Chavah. When Hashem created Chavah, Adam was put to sleep. So there was a point in time in which both Adam and Chavah were alone.

This is an essential concept, not a side point. We are meant to unite with others, and that is the goal, but unity with others can only happen when our own self is properly developed. So if a person only enjoys being around friends and he is never alone with himself, he has an incorrect approach to life. The desired approach is for a person to have times in which he is with friends, as well times in which he can be alone.

### ***"Alone" Time***

In order for a person to spend time "alone" with himself, we must emphasize that this does not mean to sit alone in a room and read or listen to various pastimes. If a person does that, he is still not being with 'himself'.

Although he is disconnected from others in the social and physical sense, he is still not going within, because he is still connecting outward of himself. Although it can serve to create a calming atmosphere which enables a person to begin entering within, it is not the preferred method of beginning the process. The preferred method is for one to use his "alone" time to live and experience his actual existence. [Of course, this is not the goal, and it is only the means to a greater goal].

### ***Beyond Intrinsic Love: Loyalty In Marriage***

After a person succeeds in revealing self-love within himself, comes the next stage: *emunah*, the trustworthiness and loyalty, that is within a Jewish marriage.

In the *kesubah* (Jewish marriage document), it is written “Do not abandon and do not run away from each other.” A Jewish couple needs to see each other not merely as two separate parts that happen to be living together, but as one unit.

If a couple does not achieve this sense of oneness with each other, they might be able to stay married, but they might also contemplate divorce one day. There is a tractate in the Talmud called *Kiddushin*, which explains the laws of betrothal and marriage - but there is also a tractate called *Gittin*, which explains the laws of divorce. The possibility of divorce exists so long as a couple hasn’t achieved oneness with each other.

But in the ideal Jewish marriage, the marriage reflects the bond of the Jewish people with Hashem, which is inseparable. The relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people are compared to that of a bride and groom. Hashem said, “And I betrothed you, with *emunah* (loyalty).” The betrothal between us and Hashem is forever.

In one of the books of the Prophets, the prophet laments over how the Jewish people feel “like we are a widow”, being that Jerusalem was destroyed and we were exiled. But the Sages explained that we are only “like” a widow, “as if”, but not that we are actually widowed from Hashem. This reflects the ideal Jewish marriage: it must be permanent.

A superficial person will say, “In the end of the day, the possuk says that we are like a widow. A widow can remarry to another person...” But the true perspective is that the Jewish people felt “like” a widow, not that we are actually widowed. This is because from the perspective of *pnimiyus* (the inner, spiritual dimension), it is not possible for the Jewish people to become separate from Hashem.

We see that there are marriages today which do not last. This is because it is often the external kinds of love which dominate; either “similar attraction” or “opposite attraction.” Such love will end at some point, because it is subject to external factors.

In the future, when Hashem’s oneness will be revealed to the world, it will be revealed that all is one unit. It will be revealed to all that just as a person cannot run away from himself, so it is impossible to really run away from the bond of marriage.

Thus, altogether, we have seen how the concept of “intrinsic love” has several applications – love for oneself, love for the Creator, love between spouses, and love for all other people, on an all-inclusive level.

Our bond with the Creator cannot be severed. Although it appears in our current state that it can be severed, it is only “like a widow” - it is as if the “husband” has “died” and that we are left “widowed.” But in the inner dimension of reality, the “husband” has never died. We are rather “abandoned” by our husband, and we appear to be like a “widow”, but in reality, the inner layer of our bond with the Creator still remains. It is intrinsic.

### ***Dealing With Marital Challenges: The Process of Self-Perfection***

Let’s expand upon this concept.

Every person, throughout life, encounters many events which challenge him, as well as events that are not that challenging. We are usually fine when we deal with the small challenges, but it is the ‘challenging’ times which really challenge us. How do we deal with those times?

If a person has already gotten used to the concept of ‘love for differences’ (*ahavas hashoneh*), it will be easier to deal with, if it’s a minimal challenge. But if the challenge is a lot more than we are used

to, we still feel like we cannot deal with it.

Should we just have *emunah* (faith in G-d) and accept that everything is decreed upon us in Heaven? Or should we just think that “all that the Merciful one does is for the good”, as Chazal say? These are both correct reactions, but it still being processed superficially.

It is written, “*It is not good for man to be alone; I will make for him a helpmate, opposite him.*” It is “not good” for a man to be unmarried, because then he lacks connection with another; thus, it is “good” when he is connected with a wife. The simple meaning of this is that an unmarried is in a situation which is “not good”, whereas a married man is in a “good” situation. But the deeper meaning is as follows: “All that the Merciful one does, is for the good” – whatever a person encounters in Creation, is always “good”, because everything that happens to you is really connected with you.

On a deeper note, everything you go through is really shaping your perspective on life.

When a person encounters a situation of suffering (may Hashem save him), usually his first reaction is: “This situation is so not for me to deal with! What did I do to deserve this?!” Maybe he feels that there are evil forces upon him. He tells of his woes to others, and indeed, his suspicions are confirmed: he is told that that there must be an evil “*kelipah*” (husk) that has latched onto him that is causing all the troubles.

But the deeper reason of why we go through suffering and challenges is so that we can acquire a fundamental perspective about life: everything that happens to us is an intrinsic part of our life! (Let us emphasize that such a perspective cannot be accessed all the time. We are simply not able to live all the time from this deep perspective. We live in a world in which the external kinds of love are required. Rather, our point is that instead of remaining only with the external kinds of love, a person should also make use of the intrinsic love.)

Just as our bond with Hashem is intrinsic, so can we view all that happens in our life as an intrinsic part of who we are. It can also be extended to our marriage - all that happens in our marriage is because it is supposed to become an intrinsic part of who we are.

When reacting to marital challenges, a person might remind himself that “*From Hashem, comes woman to man*”, and that his marriage was destined for him already 40 days before conception, as Chazal say; these concepts certainly form the root perspective towards marriage. But it won't help him deal with all the many nitty-gritty issues that come up on a day-to-day basis with his spouse. How does a person deal with a challenging aspect in his marriage?

This is a question about life in general, as well as marriage in particular. How does a person deal with challenges in life, and how does a person deal with challenges in marriage? He needs to be aware that each detail in life he comes across is really an intrinsic part of life.

First, a person needs to come to terms with this concept intellectually, and then he can seek to internalize it in his heart: “This situation is for me. It *is* me. This is what I was designed for.” In this way, all circumstances in life are not seen as ‘circumstances’, but as events which must happen, for they are really intrinsic.

The Gemara recounts that one of the Sages, Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas, needed a source of livelihood, and he sought to change his situation. Hashem sent him a message, “If so, I will have to create you again anew, so that your situation will change.” The deep lesson of this is that one's livelihood is not a situation that is upon a person; it is rather an intrinsic part of his life that is inseparable from the person. This is also the depth behind why “the righteous endear their money”; they are careful with their money because they realize that their money is an intrinsic part of their allotted portion in life.

Thus, whenever a person goes through varying kinds of situations he must deal with, whether pleasant or unpleasant (if it is pleasant, he probably won't feel a need for this perspective, because he is comfortable and he just goes with the flow of the situation), he first needs to deeply realize this perspective: "This was all supposed to happen. It is not something outside of me, rather it is something that is a part of me."

We will repeat, and emphasize, that this perspective is not the sole approach which one should use to deal with his difficult situations in marriage. He will surely have to deal with the differences between himself and his spouse on a practical level, by making use of the external kinds of love. It is just that in order for the external kinds of love to thrive in marriage, a person first needs to develop intrinsic love (with himself and with his spouse).

Living in this way transforms the entire orientation of one's life in general, and his marriage specifically.

There are people who react very strongly to their disappointments in marriage, regretting their decision to marry the person they married and feeling like they made a mistake. A person might conclude that in the long run it was good that he got married, because most of his marriage is okay, with only a smaller percent of his marriage being not okay. He'll also console himself that his marriage wouldn't have been better had he married someone else, because maybe he wouldn't have been able to find a better wife than the one he married.

But we are describing a deeper perspective which one can have towards his marriage: A person has to reach his own root of love, which is the intrinsic love one has for himself, and then extend that love to another, so that he can love his spouse on an intrinsic level. In this way, he is more consciously aware of all the experiences he goes through in his marriage, and he knows in the back of his mind that it is all shaping and building his life.

When this perspective is realized and it is allowed to shine forth upon the soul, a person will receive a deep, calming feeling towards his life and marriage.

### ***Dealing With All Challenges: Through The Power of Emunah***

If one has never felt this concept before we are describing, he won't be able to comprehend it even intellectually, and even if he does, he won't connect with the concept. Someone who is already in touch with the concept, though, recognizes how it provides us with a calming perspective towards life, and that it enables us to feel connected and unified with all that we encounter.

There is not one of us who does not traverse the waves of difficulty; some of us go through more, and some less. There is no one who has a completely calm and serene life in which everything goes as he likes. This does not exist. How do people do with their difficult situations?

One kind of person will take his mind off it, in all kinds of ways. Another kind of person will try to deal with it as best as he can, while another person will escape, by falling into melancholy. But the inner solution to all our anxieties, as we all know, is *emunah*. In deeper terms, *emunah* says that all events a person goes through are an essential part of himself.

Maybe one will hear this and ask: "How that does help me? I am still in a difficult situation." But the answer is that all personal anxiety is only created when you feel challenged and attacked. To illustrate, if a fire touches a person, he yanks his body away from the fire, because it burns; he feels like he has been attacked. If fire wouldn't be seen something that challenges us, we wouldn't be scared of it; but since we see it as a challenge and as something that hurts us, we pull away from it.

In the depths of your soul, there exists a part of you which can see everything in life as one unit. In that place in yourself, there are no oppositions, and there is no pain there. The point of knowing about this concept is not so that we can learn how to avoid pain in our marriage. The point is to gain this perspective towards life in general.

The more we access and reveal the concept of the 'intrinsic' – which is also known in deeper terms as the light of *emunah* – the better we enable ourselves to have a new perspective towards things, and then we are empowered to endure all kinds of difficulties.

Of course, as we said before, it is impossible for a person to live completely in this inner state of unity. But the more a person reveals it and lets it shine, the less he will be pained at the challenging situations of life, and he comes closer to the purpose for which we all came into the world for; and to the purpose of marriage specifically.

### ***Coming From Nothingness, Leaving It, and Returning To Nothingness***

In the previous chapter, we explained that the purpose of marriage is to return to our original state of oneness, which is called *ayin*, "nothingness." This is because it is written, "*With wisdom, a home is built*", and the root of wisdom is the inner source which it comes from, "*ayin*".

The point of *ayin* is one point, and there are no two points in it to allow any opposition. If so, how is it possible for there to be opposition in marriage? It happens because we leave our *ayin*, which is a point (*nekudah*), and we move from the point to become a "line" (*kav*) whether it is a "long line" (*kav aruch*) or a "wide line" (*kav rachav*), thus, as soon as we leave the "one point", there is room for opposition. But if we remain in the "one point", there won't be any opposition, because there is only one possibility, not two.

The Mishnah states, "Know from where you come from." We come from a state of oneness, in which there was no opposition. "Know to where you are going" – we must return to the place where we come from, which is the state of oneness.

Adam was first created alone; this was our state of oneness, for Adam was the only one in the world. Then we left that oneness, when Hashem created Chavah out of Adam's body, for now there were two people in creation. After that, Hashem brought them together, and they were unified again.

The *possuk* says that man and woman shall become "one flesh." Why does it say "one flesh" and not one "bone"? It is because right now, we are after the sin of Adam, so we cannot completely access the level of "bone of my bone", which represents the intrinsic connection between husband and wife. Had Adam not sinned, we would have gone into the eternal Shabbos, and there would have been oneness forever. But we live after the sin, and we are heading towards the era of Moshiach, in which it will once again be revealed the state of oneness, when Hashem's Name will be "one."

We left our point of *echad*, and we are meant to return to *echad*. And before the creation of the world, there was only Hashem; He was one, His Name was one. Hashem created human beings who are disparate from each other, who are given the task to unify with each other and thus reveal the original state of unity.

The main path to achieve that unity is through marriage. The roots of Creation are in man and woman; it is upon us to return to our state of oneness.

How? We can make use of both the inner and external kinds of love. The inner layer of love in marriage is to access our inherent oneness with each other, which is a power deep in the soul; and at the same time, on the external surface of reality, we can use the external kinds of love, which are

love for similarities and love for differences.

When we dig a tunnel from two ends, eventually we can meet in the middle - and with Hashem's help, we can eventually penetrate and reach *echad* on its most absolute level.

### ***In Conclusion***

As we explained in the beginning of this chapter, the words here are only addressing the "roots" of marriage; we have not yet explained the "branches." But now we can understand that all of the "branches" of marriage are really all of the coincidental events that we go through, the day-to-day events and various details that we go through all the time.

When we understand the root - of life in general and marriage especially - then when we arrive at the branches\details that go on in life and in marriage, it is the root that can shed light upon all the details and show us a broader perspective. But when the 'root' is skipped and ignored, the 'branches'\details we encounter will just remain as random 'details' we go through.

When the 'branches' are cut off from their 'root', we are left with 'branches' with no 'root' - we will go through many details in our life without being aware of the root of them, and then we won't know how to properly deal with them.

For this reason, the many branches\details we face in our life are fluctuating, sometimes being easy for us to deal with and sometimes being a challenge. This the meaning of the 'world of exchanges' that depicts This World we live on.

The more we return to the root, to our 'intrinsic' aspect, the more we can see how all that we go through in life is an intrinsic part of who we are. What we will gain from this, firstly, is that it will be easier to deal with physical hardships, such as the many challenges we are family with; our challenges will become illuminated by the knowledge that we got married for a goal, as opposed to seeking comfort and pleasure.

We came onto this world for a purpose, and marriage is one of the great systems in our life which enables us to get there. When we know how to view marriage and how to build it, we use our marriage for the purpose it is meant to be - as a tool to draw ourselves closer to the all-inclusive level of unity.

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[1] Sotah 2a

[2] Refer to "Getting To Know Your Soul"

[3] *Shaarei Yoisher, hakdamah*