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[Home](#) > Droshos - Fixing Your Marriage

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A Question For Married Men

The giving of the Torah is termed by our Sages as “a groom going to greet her bride.” Hashem is like the groom, and we are like His bride.

All of us have two marriages – we have a marriage with Hashem, and we each have a marriage with our own spouses. Our marriage with our spouses is a reflection to our marriage with Hashem, which was through the giving of the Torah.

What indeed is the reason that we need to get married? And why is the giving of the Torah called our marriage with Hashem?[\[1\]](#)

We didn’t marry a woman because we thought that she comes from the same *shoresh haneshamah* (soul-root) as us, even if we went to a Kabbalist who tells us that she does. Nor did we mainly marry a woman because she’s interesting, or because she has good *middos*, or because she is physically attractive. Of course, these are all **factors** in considering one’s *shidduch*, but what is the main motivating factor of why a person gets married?

It Doesn’t Make Sense To Get Married!

We will now analyze a very sensitive point. Let’s say a man marries a woman because he finds her very interesting. What will happen by the time he reaches the age of fifty or sixty? He will lose interest in her! People by nature change their interests over time. What was interesting to you at the age of twenty is no longer interesting to you when you are older.

We are asking a big question here. When a person gets married, does he realize how much he is doing, what he is getting into? Does he think about his decision and what it will entail?

Logically, it does not make sense to get married! There are many ways how it can go wrong, and your plans don’t always work out. So why are we getting married when it does not really make sense for us to have a harmonious relationship, with someone who will be living the rest of our life with??

To Really Love Your Spouse

Do we love our child because we find his personality to be interesting to us? If, let’s say, your child does not have a personality that interests you, wouldn’t you still love him? Yes. We love someone who is a part of us, and thus we always love our child, no matter the circumstances.

But do we realize that our **wife** is also part of ourselves? Adam said about his wife, Chavah, "*She is a bone of my bone, a flesh of my flesh.*" A wife is a part of our flesh, a part of our bone. So we see that choosing a wife should not be based on how interesting she is to you. A man must know that the love for his wife shouldn't be dependent on any external factors; it must be an intrinsic kind of love.

Maybe you'll counter that Adam didn't have a choice, because there was only one woman in the world then for him to marry. However, Adam said about her that there are two aspects to his relationship with her: "*flesh of my flesh*" is their external connection ("*basar*"\flesh has the same letter as *shever*, which means to break, because this part of the connection can break), and "*bone of my bone*" is referring to a more inner kind of connection, an unbreakable connection, the same way a father loves his child no matter what.

When a person gets married, at the beginning of the marriage, he goes into it resolving that it will be forever, that it will be a "bone of my bone" relationship, and he is seriously committed to making it work. But as the marriage goes on, a man often loses this initial attitude towards his spouse, and he begins to focus on the "flesh of my flesh" aspect of the relationship.

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After a person gets married, he needs to change his perspective with which he went into marriage with. First, we will explain what the idea of this is - and then we will expand upon it.

Before And After Marriage

A couple married for many years - was the husband the same as when they are newlyweds? No. What about her? She is also not the same anymore. They have both changed dramatically as the marriage goes on. Their views on life change, they are each more mature, they see things very differently now than what they were like when they first got married.

So how can it be that these two very different people got married in the first place? Any sensible person knows that things would not go as planned. So how did he get married in the first place? Where is the logic in this?

Young people usually don't think. Even a very bright and intelligent person cannot explain, logically, why he should get married. Two different people, who have very different goals and perspectives as the years go on, are put together in a marriage. Why do we get married when we know it's so hard to live together in peace and agree with each other? Does it make any sense to anyone here?? And even if you start out getting along, who says that you'll both get along for all your life and that things won't change?

In a scenario where a woman first got married when she was orphaned, and she wanted a husband to father her and be like the replacement father she's looking for, and the husband indeed fills that role for her - then it makes sense that she will appreciate her husband very much and that they will have a great marriage. In every other case, though, where the young woman getting married doesn't need her husband that much to fill in for her emotional needs, why should the marriage work?

We can't fall asleep at night when we are trying to marry off our kids - we're so nervous that our child won't make the same mistake that you did...! So why did you get married in the first place when you had no idea what you were getting into??

Now, if a person is getting married because he wants his wife to change him and help him, that's a different story. But is there anyone who gets married with that intention? If we know for sure that this couple is getting married in order to change themselves, fine; but usually, the couple gets married assuming that everything will work out and go as planned, and they aren't planning on working on themselves and changing. So how does any average couple get married, if it really doesn't make any sense that they will live together in harmony?!

Do You Know Your Wife?

Another point: Is there anyone here who thinks he knows his wife? If not, how did you get married?? It doesn't make any sense that we are married to someone whom we don't know when we have been living with this person for many years. Does anyone think of this before they get married??

I am not asking you these questions for entertainment. From a logical, human perspective, it does not make sense to get married!

From a logical perspective, it makes sense that there a lot of divorces going on today; many people aren't getting married for the right reasons, and usually, a person's plans for his marriage don't work out. Although there are a lot more divorces going on today, it's actually a wonder that **any** of these people aren't divorced! Logically speaking, there should be even more divorces today than the already rising number....

You Didn't Marry The Wrong One

After a man gets married and he finds problems in his marriage, he feels disillusioned, upset at himself for making such a mistake; he feels the horrible feeling of, "I chose the wrong one!!" But the mistake isn't that he chose the wrong one. The mistake is that he never thought about what marriage is and that things won't go as planned; he went into the marriage without anything real thinking beforehand.

So the mistake is not about the **person** whom he chose to marry - there is nothing wrong with the person he married! Rather, the mistake is that he misunderstands what **marriage** was about.

Imagination Exercise: Going Back Into The Past

Imagine yourself going back to the past, before you got married. Would you marry your wife all over again, now that you know what you've lived with your wife for many years and you know what she's all about? Would you still marry your wife?

Really, I'm asking you what you would actually do! Would you perhaps do more research on your future wife and then rethink your decision? Would you try dating someone else...? How would you choose to get married, if you would go back into the past now and get married all over again?

Marriage Isn't Like Working Hard To Make Money

Our Sages said that your wife is destined to you, 40 days before the fetus is formed. We understand that *parnassah* (livelihood) requires you to work for it a while. When you work hard, it makes sense that you will make money; after all, you put hard work into it, so logic dictates that you'll succeed at your job. But marriage doesn't work like that; it's not a logical process.

There's an exception, of course - two of the same type can get married and their marriage will work out beautifully: Two foolish people can get married, because any foolish man can find a foolish woman. But any smart and logical person would not want to marry someone else; it doesn't make any

sense for any logically thinking person to want to get married, when the odds of having a good marriage are so unlikely.

Fixing The Past: Put Emunah Into The Picture

For all that we go through in life, we need **emunah (faith in G-d)**. If someone doesn't have that much *emunah*, maybe he'll survive, but when it comes to marriage, though, he will simply not be able to handle it at all. Marriage requires much more *emunah* than in other areas of life.

Let's return to the first question we asked. Why does a person want to get married? The main reason should be entirely based on your **emunah!** You should go into marriage having *emunah* that this is your destined spouse. That perspective is what you should have towards your future spouse, and that perspective is what you need to carry over into your marriage.

If a person doesn't have strong *emunah* and he gets married, then he has gotten married without any sensibility. He has not thought about it all and he has not acted sensibly.

However, even if a person got married with a degree of *emunah*, it can still happen that he'll get disillusioned soon after he gets married. He realizes that she's way different than what he thought she was, and he might regret his *emunah* and think, "I didn't fathom it would be *this* hard." And if he decides to get divorced so that he can find a better wife, he's making the same mistake all over again. He hasn't yet changed his way of thinking, so there's no reason why he should get it right the second time.

Go Back Into The Past and Strengthen Your Emunah

If you could go back into the past, would you be willing to get married to the wife that you know and recognize, based on complete *emunah*?

If "yes", then that really means that you can deal with your marriage even now. If "no", then perhaps a marriage counselor might help you - but it won't get to the root of the marriage problems. Without being prepared to live with **emunah**, the root of a person's marriage problems will never be solved!

In Conclusion

I hope that you don't think I'm telling this to you simply because I'm a rabbi who was asked to give a *shiur*. It is coming from personal experience with others over the years, and from recognizing what life is about; and these are very deep conclusions of what I've seen. The words here need a lot of personal reflection in order to understand.

There is almost no one today who is willing to get married purely on his *emunah*, and this is really the root of all marriage problems in this generation!

Most people are not developed in their *emunah*, and therefore, people are approaching marriage in the same way they view making a living, as if you mainly have to do "a lot of effort" and also have "a little *emunah*" as a side thing. But it's supposed to be the other way around in marriage: **Marriage is mostly emunah**, with just a little effort besides for that. It's already a recipe for failure when people get married without having solid *emunah*.

Clarify these words here to yourself deeply. (If you want to hear more about this, please come to Eretz Yisrael so that I won't need to come here.) Think about the words here, analyze it well and contemplate them - and then you will see success in your marriage.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

Q1: What does it mean that the Torah is our marriage to Hashem?

A: The Torah is described by our Sages as our “marriage ring” to Hashem. Through having *emunah* in Hashem, they accepted that “ring” and became “betrothed” in marriage to Hashem.

Q2: If marriage can only survive on emunah, how is it that gentiles can get married and stay married (when they clearly don't have emunah)?

A: The divorce rate by the gentiles is 60%^[2], and even the 40% who are married are only married because they'd rather not marry someone else....

Q3: What is the meaning of “Ezer K'Negdo” - That a wife is a helpmate who “opposes” you?

A: We are taught by Chazal that there are two approaches to this. One approach is that it is only if a person merits this, he merits a wife who helps him. Another approach is that a person realizes that even though his wife opposes him, that itself helps him; just like a person realizes that “*I place Hashem is opposite me always*” – that when Hashem is opposite him, Hashem helps him by opposing what a person wants – so can we understand that although one's wife appears to be opposing him, this itself is a help for him; he should nullify himself to the opposition and realize that he needs it in order to become improved.

All challenges are meant to complete us. A **man's** soul is rooted in the element of **water**, and a **woman's** soul is mainly from **fire**, and we know that water and fire oppose each other. Marriage brings these two opposites together; the word *shomayim* (heaven) is a combination of the words *aish* (fire) and *mayim* (water), because in Heaven, opposites can unite in harmony. So too, although a man and woman are of opposite natures, they can still have a harmonious union together, when they live correctly. But without having this essential understanding towards marriage, they fall from the “*shomayim*” and into the *eretz*\earth....

^[1] During the *derashah*, someone said, “We got married to have children.” The Rav responded: “You got married just to have children? *That's the whole reason* you got married? If not for having children, are you saying there is no reason to get married? I will prove to you that you didn't get married just to have children. If that would have been your sole motivation, then you would have married any woman in the world, as long as she can have children. After all, the purpose is for the children...Obviously, then, you didn't get married just to have children. Sure, you wanted children, but that's not the **entire** reason motivating you to get married!”

[2] Editor's Note: This *derasha* was given in 5773 (2013). The divorce rate amongst Gentiles is now exceedinlgy high

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