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[Home](#) > Getting to Know Your Home - 001 Goal of Marriage: Intrinsic Love

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## Getting to Know Your Home - 001 Goal of Marriage: Intrinsic Love

### ***The Deep Perspective On Marriage***

Within the pages of this sefer, we will try, with the help of Hashem, to attempt and understand with more of an inner perspective, the concept of the “Jewish home.”

*“Sof maaseh, b’machshavah techilah”* - “The end of actions, is first with thought.” Therefore, it’s better to understand all of this before you get married. But even if you didn’t, it’s never too late.

It should be clear and simple to the reader that this sefer is not coming to give practical tips. It is giving an inner perspective. We will try to make the concepts practical, but as a rule, *“Each man shall rule in his home”*; first one has to recognize his place, his home, and from understanding that, a person will be able to draw forth practical conclusions from there.

### ***Returning To Our Point of Origin***

It is written, *“B’chochmah yivneh bayis”* - “With wisdom, a home is built.” From learning the “wisdom” of marriage, a person will know how to build a marriage\family.

The word *chacham*, “wise one”, is equal in numerical value in Hebrew to the word *chaim*, life. It is written, *“See the wisdom with the woman whom you love.”*<sup>[1]</sup> The reality of life is based on *chochmah* - “wisdom”; building a home is also built on “wisdom”.

It would seem, then, that it would be enough to just learn what this *chochmah* is, and then one will know how to build a true Jewish home. However, there is more to it than just *chochmah*. Where does *chochmah* come from?

It is written, *“V’hachochmah, m’ayin timatzei”* - “Wisdom, from where(m’ayin)does it come from?”The *possuk* gives the answer: wisdom comes from the source that is called “ayin” (*nothingness*).<sup>[2]</sup> So before we learn about the wisdom of marriage, the *possuk* says we need “ayin” (“nothingness”). What does this mean?

The home is built on certain *chochmah*, but it must be preceded with “ayin.” Without knowing how to draw forth *chochmah* from its deeper source, “ayin”, will be half the picture.

Since *chochmah*\“wisdom” comes from *ayin*\“nothingness”, a certain feeling of “nothingness” must

precede the wisdom. There is a rule that wherever something spiritual begins, that is also where it ends, because “the end is contained in the beginning” somehow.

Thus, a feeling of “nothingness” must be the “beginning” – and “end” – of a home. We will explain what we mean.

Creation is like a circle. Everything in Creation starts out from a beginning point, leaves the beginning, and eventually returns to the beginning point. We can see this from the planets and the stars, which all revolve in a certain orbit. So, too, in marriage, first we leave our beginning point, which is our original state of nothingness, and from there we can reach *chochmah*\wisdom. Then we eventually return to our original state of nothingness.

That is the inner way to view the home.

### ***Ayin*\Torah Vs. *Chochmah*\Human Wisdom**

Chazal said, “*Chochmah b’goyim, taamin*” – If there is wisdom among the nations, believe it; “*Torah b’goyim al taamin*” – If there is Torah among the nations, don’t believe it.”<sup>[3]</sup> If the basis of a Jewish home would be *chochmah*\wisdom alone, then it would be enough to know the *chochmah* of marriage and build a home from that knowledge. However, trying to build a Jewish home based on the wisdom about marriage alone is a gentile approach.

According to the Torah, wisdom has an earlier source to it. All *chochmah* is drawn from a higher source: *ayin*. The *ayin* is the source of the *chochmah* that teaches us how to use the *chochmah*. It is essentially the Torah itself, which guides us. We must be prepared to nullify ourselves to it. Our point of *ayin* is when we nullify ourselves to the wisdom we are learning about.

Thus, the root of wisdom is not in wisdom itself, but in a higher root: the Torah. And of Torah, our Sages said, “*Torah b’goyim, al taamin.*”

### ***Unifying The Disparity of Creation***

Earlier we brought the verse, “*See life with the woman you love.*” The Hebrew word for “love”, *ahavah*, is equal in numerical value to the word *echad*, “one”.

The structure of Creation is that we are all one unit, and then we become separated, and our task is to return to our original, unified state. Before the world, Hashem was One and His Name was One, then He divided His oneness and created *ayin*, nothingness, also called *hiyuli* (matter). This continued to subdivide into further and further divisions. Part of our task as well is to bring in our own ‘divisions’, and thus we have a *mitzvah* to bear children, which creates more and more ‘divisions’ of the original unity. But on the other side of the coin, it is also part of our task to do the opposite: to strive to unify.

Chazal say that since Hashem stopped creating the world, He arranges *zivugim* (marriages).<sup>[4]</sup> This doesn’t simply mean that Hashem is the Matchmaker. It means that He creates *achdus* (unity) through pairing couples together.

The *Midrash* states that a person’s *bashert* (spouse) is announced forty days before he is conceived.<sup>[5]</sup> Why is it announced before he is conceived? Why not afterwards?

The answer to this is to show that there must be a concept of *achdus* already present even before the future couple is split up. All of this splitting by Hashem is done with the agenda of coming back together again one day.

Thus, the depth of Creation (and marriage especially) is to unify that which has become separated. Of marriage, the Torah writes, *“And they shall become one flesh.”* Before a couple gets married, there was an *achdus* (unity) that preceded the marriage – and it is their task is to return themselves to that original *achdus*.

### ***The Purpose of Marriage: Unity***

When a person is getting married, for what purpose is he getting married? The superficial answer that people have is, to become happier. We cannot say that this is totally incorrect, but there is a more inner perspective.

There is always an outer and inner layer to everything in Creation. So it is upon us to understand what the inner reason is in getting married. One should ask himself: *“Why am I getting married?”* In deeper terms – *“Why am I living??”*

The answer is, as we began to explain: so that husband and wife can become unified together. The unity between husband and wife is the main kind of unity that you need to accomplish on this world.

We can also unify with our friends, and we can also unify with anything in Creation. Whatever we come across in life, we can unify with it. But it is nature for a person to look at everything as coincidental, and not to see the inner perspective towards what he comes across. Whatever we encounter, good or bad, can be a way for us to achieve unity.

If something is good, we can connect to it, and if it is bad, we cannot connect to it right now, but in the future, when all evil will be broken and rectified, all will be unified under the unity of Hashem. So in concept, all of Creation is meant to become unified, both the good and the bad. In order for the universe to come to its completion, all must be unified eventually, as it is written, *“And then Hashem will be King over all the earth on that day, Hashem will be One and His Name will be one.”*

What is the purpose of marriage? Besides for a person’s physical and emotional needs (which we will address in the later chapters<sup>[6]</sup>), it is: to reach *achdus*. How does a person reach this *achdus*? Generally speaking, it is through learning the Torah and keeping the mitzvot. Both man and woman have their respective *mitzvot* which generally brings them to achieve *achdus* in Creation. But the goal of marriage is that they strive to reach *achdus* with each other.

In whatever a person does, there is the action he does, and there is the inner perspective behind it from which the action stems from. The act of building the home is to build the home according to how we must build it. But what is the reason that we must build it? It is because we were created for a goal, which is to come to achieve *achdus*. Each person who builds his own home is having a share in that universal *achdus*.

This is the concept of *ayin* – “nothingness”- which we were referring to in the beginning of this chapter. A person needs this *“ayin”*: to come into marriage knowing the reason of why he is getting married. It is to know why we are coming to build a home. *Ayin* is the concept of *echad*, the unity of the universe, to have no divisions.

This is not a novel concept. It is a *posuk*: *“And they shall become one flesh.”*

If a person realizes that building the home is about becoming one with his spouse, to reach *echad* with each other, then this will be the underlying expression that accompanies him throughout his entire marriage. When a person is married for many years, *Baruch Hashem*, he has to look at this as all being an expression of how to unify with his spouse.

Of course, we always have ups and downs in our marriage; successes and failures. But the goal can still be very clear: to reach the unity with each other, to return to their beginning point. In that way, the outlook towards the home is vastly transformed and infused with inner, spiritual meaning.

The goal which they should be heading towards is: oneness. Man is given the task to reveal the oneness of Hashem, first by unifying with other creations and then through the creations unifying with the Creator. How does a person reveal unity within creation? How can each person do it in his own life? One of the main ways to do this is, through the home: *"And they shall become one flesh."*

This is what it means to start from nothingness, leave it, and then return to the nothingness. We were originally one, we became disparate, and it is currently upon us to lead ourselves back to our beginning point, which is that we were all one.

### ***The Three Levels of Love In Marriage***

We will now delve into the ramifications of this concept.

In the words of Chazal, as well as in the works of philosophy [brought by the Rambam], there is an argument about what true love is. Do you love someone who is similar to you, or do you love someone who is different than you?

In actuality, both reasons are true: there is love for similarities\similar attraction (*ahavas hadomeh*), and there is also love for differences\opposite attraction (*ahavas hashoneh*).

However, there is another kind of love, which is deeper than the above two. It is not about loving someone who is similar to you, and it is not about loving someone who is refreshingly different than you. It is to love another person intrinsically (***ahavas etzem***).

Similar attraction or opposite attraction are both due to external factors. A person can love another because he sees similarities between them, or he loves another for being different than him, so he realizes that marrying that person will complete him. But when you love someone for just being who he is, this is not due to any similarities between you, nor is it due to any opposite attraction. It is simply a kind of love that has no rhyme or reason to it.

Thus, there are three kinds of love: to love another when he is different than you (*ahavas hashoneh*), to love another when he is similar to you (*ahavas hadomeh*), and to love another person intrinsically, for no reason (*ahavas etzem*).

The first kind of love, *ahavas hashoneh*, is a logical kind of love: a person can love another who is different than him, because he realizes that unifying with him will improve his deficiencies, so he sees the other like his "missing puzzle piece." The second kind of love, *ahavas hadomeh*, is also logical: you are attracted to each other because you are similar to each other. But the third kind of love, *ahavas etzem*, has no logical reason motivating it. It is to love another person for no reason - just as you love yourself for reason.

It is written [concerning the creation of Chavah], *"For from man this woman was taken, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, thus she is called woman, for from man this one has been taken."* The possuk shows us the three kinds of love in a marriage **(1)** *"Bone of my bone"*; **(2)** *"Flesh of my flesh"* and **(3)** *"For from man this one has been taken."* These three terms are each parallel to the one of the three kinds of love that we spoke of.

"Opposite attraction" is a love based on externalities; you are loving the person for being different than you, so there is still an acknowledgement here of a separation between "you" and the "other." If

the other person is different than you, he\she is [somewhat] your opposite. The differences can of course be a catalyst to unite the two of you together, but the love itself here is still based on external factors, so it is not intrinsic.

Man and woman have opposite natures, as is well-known. There are many ways how we see it. The well-known difference between them is that men work with rational intellect, whereas women are more inclined toward emotion. There are many other differences as well. But the point is always the same: they are natural opposites.

The part of the possuk that says "*For from man, this one was taken*" refers to the love that comes from opposite attraction: man's body was divided into two, forming the creation of woman. Man and woman are like two puzzle pieces that need to come back together. They are not similar to each other; their very difference is what clicks the two pieces together. This is the concept behind the opposite attraction that husband and wife can feel to each other.

The second aspect of marriage is, "*flesh of my flesh*" – similar attraction. When something is similar to me, I feel like it is part of me. However, it is still not yet intrinsically part of me. It is only 'flesh of my flesh' – it is a part that is similar to me, and that allows the two points to unite, but it is still not yet an intrinsic part of me.

But the third kind of love is, "*bone of my bone.*" When Adam said this, he was saying that my love towards Chavah is because "she is *me.*"

It is these three kinds of love which we must become familiar with in marriage: **(1)** *Ahavas HaShoneh* (opposite attraction), in which husband and wife see how they are each different, and their differences complete each other; **(2)** *Ahavas HaDomeh* (similar attraction), in which husband and wife are attracted to each other due to their similarities they discover in each other; **(3)** *Ahavas Etzem* (intrinsic love), which stems from the fact that man can identify his wife as being "one" with him – "*bone of my bone.*"

### **All Three Kinds Of Love In Marriage Must Be Present**

Now we will emphasize the following point which must be clear: These are not three different "options" of how you can love your spouse. You need all three kinds of love, together, in your marriage.

When a person is engaged to become married, he\she will always notice how the other is similar to him\her in certain ways, as well as being different in certain ways. One kind of person will enjoy the fact that he\she is marrying a person with a different nature, because it will feel refreshingly different, whereas the similarities will not seem exciting, because maybe he\she is not looking to marry someone who has the same qualities as himself\herself. Another kind of person will only feel attracted towards similarities, and does not find the differences in the other to be appealing.

The true perspective towards marriage, though, is that there must be both aspects of similar attraction and opposite attraction towards each other; and in addition, they will also need to develop a third kind of love, which is to love the other person on an intrinsic level.

The truth is that nobody can survive marriage if they would only love the other based on being different or similar. Opposite attraction cannot be everything. If a person were to marry someone who is 100% different than him, his marriage simply will not last. (In fact, one of the reasons given for the prohibition in the Torah that one may not cohabit with an animal, is because animal is the total opposite of man, and one cannot bond with something that is totally different than him). There must be aspects of similarity between them, in order for them to bond. It is impossible for one to feel any

mutual closeness with a person who is totally different than him.

The same goes for similar attraction: it is impossible for marriage to thrive on similar attraction alone, when there is no appreciation of differences in the other's personality. Chazal say, "Just as no faces are similar to each other, so are no *de'os* (ways of thinking) similar to each other." No two people are exactly the same; there will always be differences. There is no table or chair that is exactly the same, and surely no two people can ever be the same. (If someone else is the same exact as me, he wouldn't be "him" - he would be "me").

Therefore, either one of these two kinds of love, by themselves, cannot be enough to sustain marriage. A person loves something only when he sees similarity to himself, as well as differences to himself, in it. The only question is in the percentages, but both kinds of love must be present, in order to form a loving connection.

Either of these two kinds of love are both logical kinds of love; there is human gain involved in both of these kinds of love. But they are not intrinsic kinds of love.

Opposite attraction involves our analytical thinking process. In order to love someone who is different than you, you need to understand your opposing viewpoint, which takes some wisdom on your part. (Chazal say that even understanding how a fool thinks takes wisdom to understand, because a fool also has a certain way of thinking, and one has to be wise to know how to understand him.) Similar attraction is pretty obvious, and it doesn't involve any deep thinking. But both opposite attraction and similar attractions are logical kinds of love, which are arrived at using human intellect.

It is written, "*With wisdom, a home is built*" - when one has wisdom, he knows how to love another whether the other is similar or different. However, with wisdom alone, a person won't be able to love another person intrinsically. Why not? To illustrate, imagine we place a painting in front of a person, and the person likes the painting. If we ask him why he likes the painting, he will say, "This painting is about a certain kind of scenery, and I love to see this kind of scenery." Or, if a person says that he likes a certain table, and we ask him, he will say, "Because I love its color." He can identify clearly what exactly he loves about it.

But what about the love that a person has for himself - is there a reason that one can give for it? Why does a person love himself? Can he explain it or give a logical reason for it? There is no logical explanation. We are simply born with a nature to love ourselves. The *sefarim hakedoshim* describe self-love as "love that is above reason and intellect."

With similar attraction or opposite attraction, the love is conditional, because you have some reason of why you love the object of your love. If that reason would vanish, you would no longer love that object. But when you love yourself, you don't love yourself based on any conditions. If someone loves himself based on certain conditions, we all recognize this as a deep emotional issue. An emotionally healthy person loves himself whether he is successful or whether he fails. He might have his highs and lows, joyful times and sad times, but his self-love never changes. He accepts himself as he is, and he loves himself without any specific reason.

When a person feels that he loves his child or his spouse, he might say that it is because he finds them to be enjoyably different than him ["My wife, and my children, are so unique and special - they are everything that I am not. They have all the qualities I wished I had"]. Or, he might say that he finds them to be similar to him ["I see myself in them"]. But there is a deeper kind of love towards a spouse or a child, which cannot be explained: it is a love that has no reason to it!

It is the kind of love which is often concealed from the spouses. We will try to explain about it.

## ***Changing Our Motivations In Marriage***

All of us, when we get married, are not going to get married to a spouse who steps out of a packaged box when we get to the *chuppah*; we cannot get married if we have never seen or spoken to the person whom we are marrying. We do research, we get to know each other, we find what we are happy with, and then we decide to get married.

Whether we get married due to similar attraction or opposite attraction, we are all getting married because we have felt some kind of attraction to the other person. We might feel attracted to his\her physical qualities, or to the emotional or spiritual qualities that we see in the other.

That being the case, the marriage will become conditional, and our love in turn for our spouse will be conditional. If he\she is what I had in mind, then good, and if not - one feels that he has been duped into the marriage. Usually, all of us realize that we made some mistakes about our future spouse, and we see that he\she is not what we imagined. And then we are faced with a dilemma: we feel like we never would have gotten married to this person we married, had we known that he\she is not what exactly what we thought.

Did we get married because we loved the other for just being who he is? We can all answer, absolutely, "No." As proof, if we would get married to another out of an intrinsic love for him\her, we would have married the first person we met without doing any research, because intrinsic love does not depend on personality or looks.

None of us can say that we got married out of an intrinsic love for our spouse. We got married because we found some elements of opposite attraction and some similar attraction, and based upon that, we have built our marriage.

We must know that both of these kinds of love - similar attraction and opposite attraction - are meant to bring us to a greater goal. They are meant to get us motivated to uncover the deeper aspect of marriage - *ahavas etzem*, the intrinsic love.

If a person goes his whole marriage and only knows of either similar attraction or opposite attraction, he has missed the goal of marriage, and the goal of life, as well.

Chazal say, "A person should always study Torah and do mitzvos *shelo lishmah* (not for the sake of Heaven), for from *shelo lishmah* comes *lishmah* (for the sake of Heaven).<sup>[7]</sup> The meaning of *shelo lishmah* is explained as seeking what's comfortable for us. With regards to marriage, the *shelo lishmah* aspect is that we are comfortable marrying someone who is different than us, because it is refreshing. But the *lishmah* aspect of marriage is to arrive at an intrinsic love for the other spouse.

Our *avodah* is always to start with *shelo lishmah* and then we can be lead towards *lishmah*. There is a well-known interpretation of the *Nefesh HaChaim* on this concept, that a person "always" has an element of *shelo lishmah*. (For example, when a person is getting married, he is getting married for some ulterior motive: either because the other is similar, or refreshingly different). But the eventual purpose which the couple must strive for is to reach a kind of love between them that is *lishmah*: to love each other for no reason - *ahavas etzem*.

[Earlier, we mentioned the concept of how man leaves his original point of *ayin* (nothingness) and must eventually return to his point of *ayin*, and now we can see how this manifests in marriage]. Marriage enables a person to leave his original state of *ayin* and then come back to *ayin*: he first leaves himself, by joining with another, and then he returns to his essence, by arriving at oneness with each other.

This, of course, will entail challenging and inner work. To be even more specific, it is the work of a lifetime. This is because the less challenges a person faces in his marriage, the further he actually is from achieving unity with his spouse, and then he is further from reaching the goal of life.

### ***Marriage Is Part Of The Bigger Picture Of Life***

Of course, that does not mean that one should only choose a spouse who will be very challenging to him, so that he can have a better chance at reaching the goal of life. The opposite is true: because you want to get to the goal of life, you need to choose someone whom you will find it easier to bond with so, so that you will have the motivation to work together to the goal of unity. For this reason, you need to feel some similar attraction and opposite attraction towards the person whom you are marrying, to start out with.

There is a well-known story (I don't know if it really happened or not, but this is how the story goes): Once a boy came to ask advice from a Gadol about a prospective *shidduch*. The girl was reputed to have all the qualities in the book. But he had never seen her before, and he knew that Chazal say that it is forbidden for a man to betroth a woman until he sees her, because he might find her to be unattractive. Therefore, he wanted to listen to Chazal, so he went to go take a look at the girl, so that he could see if she was attractive enough for him. He found out that all of the descriptions about her were true, all except for one thing: she had a limp.

He asked the Gadol, "What should I do? Should I marry her even though she has this fault?"

The Gadol said, "Marry her."

He said, "Why? Will all her qualities help me overlook this one fault she has?"

The Gadol said, "No, that is not the reason to marry her."

"So why should I marry her?"

"Because nobody else will marry her."

From the Gadol's response, we can see something that comes close to the concept of intrinsic love. We can't know for sure if it was intrinsic love, because perhaps he is merely performing a kindness in marrying her, but in the end of the day he is being told to get married to her not because she is similar and not because she is refreshingly different.

Practically speaking, most people cannot get married based on this reason, and they wouldn't either be able to get along with their spouse based on this. But the point of the above story illustrates to us what our plan in marriage needs to be. We need to know from what point we are beginning at, and to where we are supposed to return to: we leave *ayin*, then we return to *ayin*.

The point we are supposed to take out from this is that although we already married, we need to look at our marriage as being part of something bigger. Marriage is not just marriage – it is part of the bigger picture of life.

The problem with most people is that they do not see how all the areas of life connect. There is the workplace, there is marriage, there are physical needs to be met, etc. All of these aspects of life are usually seen as separate from each other, and a person usually doesn't see the connection between all of them. But the true perspective for one to have is that all details he comes across in life are really supposed to lead him all to the goal of life. Nothing is happenstance.

If a person views his marriage as being something so major that it must be something else to deal with, he won't succeed in marriage. Marriage is a central aspect of our life, but it is part of a bigger picture; it must not be seen as some other separate part of our life that we need to pay attention to.

To illustrate this concept, let's say a person is listening to a lecture about marriage. He must have the mentality that when he hears about marriage, he is not just hearing about how he can build his private marriage. He must realize that he is hearing about how to view life as a whole; and marriage must be seen as part of that whole.

The truth is that it would be better if boys would be taught guidance for marriage when they are still in yeshivah, before they are married, when they are of age to be married. It needs to be taught to them what their role is as an individual, and how marriage is a part of that.

Thus, marriage should not be seen as some goal unto itself. Marriage is one of the major components of life - which is about leaving *ayin* and then returning to *ayin*.

### ***Dealing with Disappointment In Marriage***

We are always making use of 'similar love' and 'opposite' love each day, and we are also making use of intrinsic love every day. We all love ourselves for no reason [as long as we are emotionally healthy]. But when it comes to how we love others, often we are not making use of this kind of intrinsic love.

Before marriage, a person is already familiar with a love for things that are similar to his tastes or different from what he is used to. For example, each of us is attracted to certain kinds of music, certain kinds of food, and certain kinds of clothing. But when it comes to the idea of having intrinsic love, we only know of it towards ourselves, not towards others. We are used to loving *ourselves* for no reason, not *others*.

What happens when a person gets married? Intrinsic love usually remains towards himself, and he doesn't know how to expand that love towards his spouse. How does he love his spouse? He takes the powers of loving similarity and loving differences and uses those abilities in his love for his spouse.

The result from this is clearly recognizable to all of us: it will mean that the deepest love that spouses know of towards each other - as well as the love for the children - will be based on similar attraction or opposite attraction. If any of these kinds of love lose their appeal - like if he finds the differences in his wife to now be unattractive, or if he realizes that his wife wasn't as similar to him as he thought she would be - he will now find himself in a deeply troubling issue.

If you buy furniture in the store and you come home and realize that it's not what you really wanted, you can return it. In America, usually you can return it as long as you have a receipt. Over here in Israel, there is no policy like that; at best, some stores allow you to return it 14 days within the purchase. If it is 24 days later and you decide you don't like your purchase and you want to return it, it's too late. You're stuck with the piece of furniture that you don't like. You have no choice but to buy a new one. You are disappointed that you wasted money, and that you made a mistake.

With marriage, each of the spouses expects that their spouse will be appealing; they each saw differences in each other that were refreshing, as well as similarities in each other which attracted them. Then when they get married, they notice differences in each other which are not refreshing. Some couples have more differences to deal with in each other than other couples do.

In any case, how can a person deal with the frustrating situation?

A superficial response that a person might have is, "I made a mistake. I have arrived at the wrong 'address'." Some people even react in a more extreme manner – just as they are used to returning an item in the store they didn't like, so do they think that they can give back their spouse. This might happen after two months, after two years, or even after 20 years of being married. He wants to return his "purchase." He talks it over with lawyers about how much it will cost him to get divorced, and if it's worth it or not to stay married and endure an unhappy marriage.

A more inner kind of person will feel: "Had I known how different she is from me, I never would have married her." So he stays with her, and learns how to deal with her personality, and he makes sure not to get into fights with her. This is a better reaction than the first kind of person, and it might even enable him to leave peacefully with her, but with such a mindset, has he reached the goal of marriage?

The issue every person in marriage must face is, if he realizes where he is going in his marriage. If he got married solely due to similar attraction or opposite attraction, he will meet up with disappointment after he is married, realizing that he made certain mistakes. Either he will seek how can get out of the marriage, or, he will stay in his marriage and learn how to survive it. But in either reaction, he will view his decision to marry this spouse as a terrible mistake.

But if a person would be aware that marriage contains three kinds of love – similar attraction, opposite attraction, and intrinsic love – then even when he is met with disappointment in his marriage, he can still love his spouse *intrinsically*.

Intrinsic love is to love the essence of your spouse; the essence of your spouse always remains, because it never changes. Maybe he will still feel that he could have had it easier and that now he will have it harder, but he will still remain with the mentality that will help him reach the goal of marriage.

### ***The Balance Between Purpose and Pleasure***

There is a deep point about people, which is contained in this.

There is no person who gets exactly what they had in mind when they get married. There is no such thing. Some people have it easier and some have it more difficult, and no one has the same situation. But what all marriages have in common is: that it is not at all what we had in mind.

In order to deal with this disappointment, a person has to know the proper perspective towards life, and marriage specifically: we need to acquire a shift of gear, between two different needs we have. We all got married so that we could enjoy our spouse, and we also must be able to deal with challenges.

If we are given a choice before we get married if we want a spouse who will challenge us and make us suffer, or a spouse who will make our life easier, most people would pick the second option. The average person needs enjoyment in life and wishes to avoid suffering. Most people are not on the level of the Sage Rebbi, who prayed for suffering. The average person cannot handle this. We must know that we did get married for some kind of pleasure, and we need it. We must be able to contain in ourselves these two opposing natures.

However, when it comes to the need for enjoyment, some people take this to an extreme and they feel that life is mainly about enjoyment. They view marriage as being something that will further their enjoyment in life. Others are aware that life is about a purpose that is deeper than just enjoyment, and they view enjoyment as rather being a tool that can help them get to the purpose.

Let us emphasize again, that one cannot get to the goal of life without any enjoyment. Nobody can

live like that. Even if a person is very truthful and idealistic, he needs some degree of relaxation and enjoyment in his life.

However, let's take a look at the other extreme. If we come to a person and we tell him, "If you get married, you will enjoy a marriage for the next 50 years that is 100% enjoyable. There is just one catch: there will be no goal at all of your marriage. You will be allowed to just enjoy yourself, for the sake of enjoyment alone. And, you won't even go to Gehinnom for it. It will not affect your reward in Gan Eden either. Just do whatever you wish." Would a person be interested in such a life?

If the answer is "Yes", then this *sefer* is not for him. That person has a mentality that life is about enjoyment alone, and that all goals of his life lead to the goal of enjoyment. He is living totally superficially.

But if a person is deeper, he knows that we have both of these needs. He is very motivated to get to the true purpose of life, but he also knows that he has a physical body, with certain physical needs that require enjoyment. Such a person knows that marriage is about heading towards the goal of life, and he also makes sure to leave some space for relaxation in his life. He is aware that he needs to get to a certain goal in life, and he will seek different tools that can help him get there, which will involve enjoyment. But his purpose is to get to the goal - not the enjoyment.

A person who is mainly seeking enjoyment in life is unable to enter the inner depth of life. It is a childish and imaginary notion for one to think that he can live totally for enjoyment. But if someone seeks the inner goal of life, the goal of his *neshamah* (Divine soul), of the truth that is within him - then he understands that he was born to reach a certain purpose. At the same time, he also understands that he has a physical body which also has its needs, and that it is upon him to learn how to balance his physical needs with his inner needs; that marriage requires both external factors as well as internal factors, in order for it to succeed.

### ***In Summary***

The inner goal of marriage which one needs to strive for is *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love). It is for one to feel, "I got married in order to reveal *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love); not just towards myself, but towards another." And the first person whom you need to extend your sense of intrinsic love for, is your spouse. The husband must extend it first to his wife [before he seeks to extend it to another person], and the wife must first extend it to her husband [before she learns how to extend it to any another person].

The more the external kinds of love dominate in the marriage, the more of an opposition there will be towards revealing *ahavas etzem*. However, as Chazal say, "from acting *shelo lishmah*, comes *lishmah*". So even though we start out acting *shelo lishmah*, by loving our spouse due to either similar or opposite attraction, our underlying intention should be to get to *lishmah*, which is intrinsic love; and then it will be easier to reveal the intrinsic love.

However, if one does not even feel similar or opposite attraction in his family, like if he hates his spouse or child, *chas v'shalom*, then he is very far from *ahavas etzem*.

Thus, Hashem designed us in a way that we need to first get married with external kinds of love, similar attraction and opposite attraction; and they are there to motivate us to get us to reveal intrinsic love. When the external kinds of love are working properly, a person has better tools to help himself reach the goal of intrinsic love. But even if the external kinds of love are losing their appeal, a person can learn to see this as a more difficult path he will need to traverse in order to reach the desired goal of marriage, but never should this situation be seen as a failure on the person's part.

We cannot get by life without certain tools that help us reach our goal. We live in a world in which we need to make use of externalities in order to get to the inner dimension of life. The external kinds of love - similar attraction and opposite attraction - must therefore be seen as tools that can help us reach intrinsic love. But they are tools we use, not a goal unto itself.

We get married because marriage is part of the goal of life; marriage is meant to help us reach *ahavas etzem*, intrinsic love for a spouse, and after that, towards other Jews as well. At first husband and wife need to reveal *ahavas etzem* towards each other, then towards others, and after that, towards the Creator.

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[1] Koheles 9:9

[2] Iyov 28:12

[3] Eichah Rabbah 2:13

[4] Vayikra Rabbah 8:1

[5] Sotah 2a

[6] See Chapters Six through Eleven

[7] Pesachim 50b

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/getting-know-your-home-001-goal-marriage-intrinsic-love>