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[Home](#) > Getting to Know Your Home - 007 The Emotional Connection Foundation

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Actions, Emotions and Thoughts

The human personality is comprised of three dimensions: actions, emotions, and thoughts. The realm of actions is limited. If a person wants to take something, he can only extend his arm as far as it will reach. When the daughter of Pharaoh stretched out her arm to take the basket which held Moshe *Rabbeinu*, the arm extended miraculously.^[2] In the natural course of things, however, the reach of the arm is limited.

This is true of all our limbs. A person can walk for days, weeks and months, but the distance that each step can achieve will always remain limited.

The emotions, however, are unlimited. A person can be on one side of the world and his friend on the other side, and yet, they can still love each other immensely. The distance between them doesn't detract from their love.

Their love may weaken because they don't see each other for long periods of time, but the love itself isn't affected because of the distance.

A person has the potential to love another who is physically distant from him; he can even love a person who has left this hemisphere and is in outer space. Astronauts on the moon can still be immensely in love with their families back on earth. Sometimes the love even increases because of the distance, because they miss and yearn for one another more.

When a close relative (like a father, son, or spouse) leaves the world, even though the soul rises to heaven, the love between them still remains. There is a concept that the deceased are forgotten after a twelve month period passes, but this refers to forgetting some of the pain and sorrow. The love remains forever. Therefore, a husband and wife reunite in heaven (if they are worthy) because the love and relationship between them is eternal.

Emotions are not hindered by location or distance

The dimension of thought goes even further than that of emotion. A person's thoughts are not bound to the place where he is. On the contrary, the Baal Shem Tov taught that a person is where his thoughts are.^[3] When a person thinks about a distant place, he is, in essence, there.

There is an added dimension to thoughts which doesn't exist in the realm of emotions (and certainly doesn't exist by the dimension of actions). The emotions relate to things which exist. A person cannot love something which doesn't exist, even if it seems real in his imagination. In the realm of thoughts, however, a person can think and connect to things and concepts which do not physically exist.

Marriage Creates the Broader Dimension

Where do these ideas lead us to? We discussed at length in the previous chapter that we must consider emotions to be a reality. What is the importance of this perception? The main benefit of this outlook will be felt in the depths of the relationship. The couple cannot unite and become one by actions alone; they need the emotions to unite them. But there is a deeper significance as well.

All things seek to return to their origin. A person is created from the *Ein Sof* (the infinite Creator) Baruch Hu, and therefore every person's ultimate perfection and purpose is to return to eternity. The soul naturally yearns and constantly desires to break through all the barriers and to reach the higher levels in order to come closer to our original source, to the *Ein Sof*.

We see this development and progression occurring in the physical realm as well. When a child is born, he has very limited abilities. He can move his eyes and mouth, but he cannot walk or move around on his own. He is entirely dependent upon others during this stage.

As the child matures, his limitations begin to lessen, and he is able to move around on his own. He still cannot walk with wide strides as an adult does, but he is constantly maturing and growing and his limitations are slowly diminishing. The limitations of his mind are also lessening as he grows older. His mind is maturing and developing together with the growth of his entire being.

The institution of marriage is the vehicle which enables a person to broaden his scope, to leave behind the limitations and barriers which confine him, and to enter a broader dimension. Through marriage a person can reach his primary goal, to return and unite with the perfectly endless and boundless; to the *Ein Sof*.

"G-d returns individuals to their home. He frees them from their bondage."^[4] Every person is in bondage. The bondage is his limitations. The literal translation of bondage refers to a person who is placed in a tiny cell of four by four cubits and his captors tell him that this will be his existence for the future. "Walk around the cell," they tell him. When he is finally released, he is a free man. He was previously bound and limited and now his dimensions and possibilities have broadened greatly.

Before a person marries he is also in bondage, in a certain sense, because he is living in the confines and limitations of this world. Marriage enables him to connect to the realm of emotions, to enter into dimensions which are not limited by time and place.

The World of Emotions - Breaking through Boundaries

Based upon these ideas, we can understand why it is imperative to view emotions as reality.

If a person will only consider the material matter of this world to be real and emotions as unreal, then he will never be able to surpass his barriers and limitations. His hands cannot reach longer than their natural length, his feet cannot walk quicker than their natural, limited abilities, and he will not be able to pass any boundaries which are placed before him because he is not connected to the realms which reach beyond the scope of time and place.

This mistaken understanding, essentially restricts him from attaining a broader perspective where there are far fewer limitations.

So, to assess emotions as reality is to broaden one's potential and to escape the confinement which limits him. The dimension of emotions (which commences with the emotion of love), enables us to break through the physical boundaries that we are aware of.

Indeed, Chazal tell us:[\[5\]](#) "Love pushes [aside] the flesh." In other words, it annuls the physical boundaries of our natural flesh and blood limitations.

Physically, a person cannot unite with someone who is living in a different location than he is. But on an emotional plane it is possible, because the emotions break through barriers, and through the emotions a person can connect to anyone, regardless of where they are.

The Misunderstood Physical Dimension Breakthrough

Until approximately a hundred years ago, man was very limited in the physical realm of the world. His accomplishments were acknowledged not much further than the specific place where he lived. With the great advancements in science and technology, it is now possible for a person to do something in one place and the results will be seen in a distant land. Automobiles, trains and aircraft have all substantially lessened the distance between cities and countries. A missile is launched in one country, and within a few moments it lands in a different country, thousands of miles away. The primary example of this phenomenon is the internet. A person can sit in his home and immediately affect the entire world.

Where does all this come from? Concealed in this phenomenon is a very profound concept which is regularly misunderstood.

The source of the breakthrough of physical barriers which is occurring in our generation is not from the physical realm of this world. The physical dimensions of the world have remained the same. It is impossible for a person to do something here and its effects to be felt somewhere else. That is the opposite of the nature of physicality. Rather, the breakthrough of the physical boundaries which we see in our generation is derived from the emotions, which have the strength to break through all barriers. When the emotions shine and influence the physical, they infuse the physical realm with the potential to stretch beyond its boundaries, and this is the purpose of creation.

If it weren't for the miracle which occurred, the daughter of Pharaoh wouldn't have been able to extend her arm past its actual, physical length. How did it happen that her arm extend so far?

In the presence of love, "the flesh is pushed to the side." In other words, the emotions have the ability to overcome the limitations of the physical boundaries and to extend beyond.

The emotion of love needs to shine and influence the physical (obviously in a holy manner; not as it often happens today, that the love is used for unsacred purposes). Let us understand the depth of this concept.

The physical essence of the world will always remain the same. Places and things are limited entities and it is impossible to break through their physical boundaries. The outstanding breakthroughs that we are witnessing in our generation is not the physical world breaking through its known borders, rather it is the world of the emotions and the intellect influencing the physical realm.

If a person considers only the physical and material aspects of life to be real, and the emotions as unreal, then he will remain and be confined within the limitations of this world. However, if he will see this world together with his emotions, with the understanding that his emotions are a reality, and even more so, that his mind and intelligence are a reality, then this person will not be limited by the boundaries and barriers of physicality. This person will be able to reach and discover his inner self.

The Way to Breakthrough and Attain Genuine Love

We discussed earlier that there are three types of love: love based on opposites, love based on similarities, and genuine love. Opposite and similarity love have their limited boundaries. Just as there are limitations and barriers of time and place in the physical world, there are barriers in the soul. These limited forms of love, therefore will also have their boundaries and impassable borders. Genuine love, on the other hand, has no obstructions. It is a reality that can never be limited.

How does one break through all boundaries and attain genuine love? As long as a person will view the physical world as a finite reality and the emotions as fleeting and unreal, he will never be able to attain genuine love. This can be compared to a person who ties his arms in iron chains, and then tries to move them. As long as his arms are tied, he cannot move them.

The iron chains represent the understanding and assumption that this world is a finite reality; to remove the iron chains is to realize that the emotions and even more so, the intellect, are a true reality. To attain this perception is to fundamentally enter into a different world. This person will discover limitless dimensions which will extend to the physical realm as well. As Chazal say:^[6] "Love changes the rules," and, "Love pushes the flesh aside." In other words, he will discover that the barriers of the physical are annulled.

Emotions - The Foundation of Marriage

Marriage, as we all know, is more than just a partnership whose purpose is to divide and share life's chores and obligations together. Marriage is also more than merely a physical relationship. Marriage is based upon the emotions. The emotional aspect of marriage should not be understood as a coincidental addition to the marriage; rather the emotional connection is the genuine and true essence of the marriage.

There is a concept that actions influence the heart. Therefore, when a person does acts of kindness for his fellow man, he will automatically begin to truly care for and love the person whom he is benefiting. But it will not be the actions which will become the foundation of marriage. The foundation will be the love and caring which will develop between them as a result of the actions. It is also true that when they are married they will share responsibilities together, but once again, that is a consequence of marriage. Their joint ventures are not the essence of marriage.

What is the true essence of marriage? It is an emotional connection. "*Sameach tisamach reim ahuvim*, Rejoice, the friends, the lovers."

"*Harei at mekudeshes li b'taba'as zu...* (behold you are married to me with this ring...)." *Mekudeshes*, literally translated, means to become separated. Through marriage the woman becomes separated from the entire world and she becomes united with her husband, primarily on the level of their emotions. The emotions are the beginning and essential part of their union. Afterwards, they will unite on a physical plane as well. The foundation and reality of the marriage remains: "*Sameach tisamach reim ahuvim.*"

Although it is obvious to all of us that marriage is more than just a physical union - it is an emotional union as well - people often confuse the importance of the two, and they view marriage in the exact opposite manner than its reality. They see marriage as primarily a union of the physical, which also has some emotional facets. The opposite is the truth. According to *halachah*, if the emotional facet is missing, the physical connection is also prohibited. The emotional factor is the primary and central aspect of the relationship.

"Rejoice the friends, the lovers, as You made [Adam and Chava] happy in the Garden of Eden." There

wasn't a physical relationship in the Garden of Eden, because physicality, as we know it today, did not exist yet. The relationship of Adam and Chava was also not a joint partnership to share chores together. The relationship of Adam and Chava was built on the level of the spirit, on the level of emotion.

When we request that the *chosson* and *kallah* should rejoice together with the same joy which existed in Eden, we are essentially asking that their joy and unity should take place on the level of their emotions. Just like in the Garden of Eden, where the marriage relationship was a connection of their emotions – it wasn't physical, and it wasn't a partnership – so too, we request that the *chosson* and *kallah* should now also unite in this way. Even though we are living in the era after the sin and banishment of Adam *Harishon* from the Garden of Eden, and where there are physical dimensions as well, they should not be considered the foundation and primary aspect of marriage. Marriage should be built upon the emotions.

A wife washes the dishes, does the laundry and other household chores. If she would not do those chores, the home would be unlivable. Yet, no one would assume that those chores are the foundation of the marriage. A maid could also do those jobs.

Our primary objective in marriage is to build a faithful Jewish home which is based upon emotions. On a deeper level, we want to create a marriage which brings us back to the era prior to the sin and banishment of Adam and Chava.

When Adam was banished from Eden, he wasn't only banished from the physical garden where he lived; his banishment altered his entire existence. When he left Eden, Adam ended his dimension of being a soul, of being an emotional being, and he became instead a physical entity. His banishment from the Garden of Eden was essentially his transformation from being a soul into becoming a superficial reality.

Man changed, and his perception changed. Before the sin, man considered his emotions to be the true reality, and the emotions were clothed within a physical world. After the sin, man viewed the physical aspects of the world to be the true reality, and the emotions as an added, secondary dimension to the real world.

Therefore, the importance of understanding that the emotions are a reality is not an added aspect of the home – it is the purpose of the home!

In Our Generation, the Emotional Connection has almost Ceased to Exist

We are presently living in a world where the majority of people have forgotten about these concepts. We are living in a world where deeds are viewed as primary, while a great majority of people choose not to deal with the emotions. They erect a barrier in their soul that prevents them from experiencing emotions. Sometimes when we speak with someone we wonder whether he is really a person. Maybe he is only a recording? It is unclear!

This is the popular attitude which is prevalent in our generation. People want to occupy themselves solely with concepts that are physical and tangible. Although there are some aspects of emotion in marriage they are usually not manifest on a daily basis. Often, however, there aren't any emotions at all. In their day to day existence they focus upon their material aspects of life, while their emotions are almost non-existent.

A person can work for his employer for five or ten years, and not necessarily create an emotional bond with him. The moment another employer will offer him a slightly higher wage, he will immediately transfer his loyalty. They do not have an emotional connection. There was a job, there

was a paycheck, there was *parnassah*, but beyond that, "It has been very pleasurable, but now I'm going somewhere else."

Both the worker and the employer understand that there is absolutely nothing wrong with this behavior. Why? Because they weren't sharing an emotional relationship with one another; their relationship was purely business. That is where their relationship began and that is where it ended.

In Do Not "Hide" Your Emotions

In the *kesubah* (marriage document) the couple obligate themselves: "*V'al yavrichu v'al yalimu, lo zeh m'zu v'lo zu m'zeh*, They shall not escape and they shall not hide from each other."

What is the meaning of this obligation? A superficial explanation is that the husband should not buy something without telling his wife, and the wife should not go somewhere without telling her husband. This is a correct understanding of the obligation, but what is its inner dimension? What does it mean that they shall not escape nor hide anything from each other?

We will explain this with a simple analogy: Someone has expensive jewelry in his house, but he is afraid of theft, so he hides the jewelry under the floor tiles of his home. This is one form of hiding. He knows that he has something precious – he doesn't want other people to see it, so he hides it.

But along with the hidden jewelry, there is also dirt under the tiles. Can we say that the dirt is also hidden inside his house, under the tiles? Obviously not, because this is the way the home was built; there are tiles and beneath them there's earth.

This analogy teaches us that when something is concealed, it can be considered either intentionally hidden, or its presence is coincidental, without an intentional plan to hide it.

What are we referring to?

In a worker/employer relationship, if the worker does not relay pertinent information that is related to his job to his boss, we would consider this to be improper. We would say that he is concealing information that must be shared with his employer. But if the worker doesn't tell his employer his personal feelings and emotions, no one would say that this is improper. He never obligated himself to share his emotions with his employer, and therefore he has a right to his privacy.

In marriage, the obligation "*V'al yavrichu v'al yalimu, lo zeh m'zu v'lo zu m'zeh*" does not only mean that they must share with one another their worldly chores and obligations. Concealing such matters can be considered concealing in a business relationship as well, but in marriage there exists a totally different dimension of concealment. If the couple will hide their inner emotions from one another, they are concealing in the way that the *kesubah* is referring to, and therefore acting improperly in the marriage.

If marriage would be solely a joint partnership to share chores and obligations together, or if marriage would be a physical entity and the emotions only a side dimension of the marriage, then it wouldn't be considered concealing to hide and refrain from sharing one's emotions with his spouse. It wouldn't even be considered wrong, because the primary issues of the marriage would still exist. If the emotions are not considered the primary aspect of the marriage, then to conceal them wouldn't be considered hiding important and relevant information.

This can be compared to someone who owns a property together with another person. Must he tell his partner about his other financial investments and how they are doing? Of course not. They must have complete transparency in the areas where they are partners; there they must be open with one

another up to the smallest detail, but neither of them is obligated to offer any information regarding their investments which they are not partners. That is their personal business.

But marriage is not a business partnership and it is not a physical connection; marriage is a connection and relationship of the emotions. Therefore, to hide his emotions from his spouse can be considered a breach in their agreement, or even more, as invalidating the foundation of their marriage.

Marriage Built Upon a Firm Foundation

There is a deep concept which is concealed here, and it needs to be well understood.

If the couple does not consider their emotions to be real and one of them hides information about his emotions, it is as if he is not hiding anything at all. If a person becomes angry, must he hang up signs all over town so everyone will know? It is sufficient that he has to deal with the matter on his own. The matter isn't anyone else's business. (Unless he hurt someone in his anger, and he must ask forgiveness, etc.)

Marriage is built completely upon emotions – not the superficial emotions that pass quickly and have neither a foundation nor a continuation. On those flimsy emotions one cannot truly build his home. A person cannot build a home upon wind, only upon solid ground. Rather, the marriage is built upon a firm foundation of true and deep love.

But, if one were to view even those emotions as just a lot of “wind,” as something that blows away and doesn't have any stability, then indeed, he will not be able to build his marriage upon it. However, if he views his emotions as a reality, then the emotions become the solid ground upon which he can safely and successfully build his home.

When a person thinks that only the physical is real, he will not be able to build his home upon emotions alone. It would be like a home which cannot withstand even the slightest earthquake tremor. Any change in the weather can destroy this home. But if the foundation of the emotions is strong and firm, then it is possible to build upon it a true Jewish home.

The Foundation Point: Genuine Love

These ideas are in essence the difference between love based on opposites and love based on similarities, contrasts with genuine love.

Love based on opposites or similarities cannot be considered stable. As we discussed above, every person is subject to change, and therefore their differences and their similarities can also change. This is true in regards to both the husband and the wife. One or both of them can change and turn the entire relationship upside down. So these forms of love do not have stability. The only love that has stability is genuine love, and only upon genuine love can one build his home.

An emotional relationship which is built solely upon unstable emotions will collapse with the smallest tremor from an earthquake. It is preferable to avoid building such a home at all, because it is dangerous. But when a person builds the marriage upon genuine love, then the marriage is built upon a foundation which will never change. The ground is secure and sound and can withstand earthquakes and all troubles. It is the perfect land to build the emotions of the home upon.

Why do people disregard their emotions, refusing to trust and to build upon them? It is because the emotions which they are familiar with are usually based on unstable forms of love that they know from home and with their friends outside the home. Therefore people do not invest energy and trust

in the emotions, because the emotions do not seem like they have any future or continuation. Investing in them seems like a waste of effort.

The Love Which Doesn't Change Has to be Revealed

As we discussed, love based on opposites or similarities are unstable forms of love. The only love which is stable is genuine love. Which of these types of love should be more pronounced in the marriage and which love should be less seen?

A person cannot express all of his feelings. For example, if for a moment someone felt a negative feeling towards his fellow man, he should not rush to tell him. There would be no gain from that.

When a person marries, he naturally has a lot of expectations that he hopes to be fulfilled by his spouse. If he doesn't expect or want anything from his spouse he is either on a very high spiritual level or he simply gave up hope and doesn't desire anything anymore. A regular, normal person, however, will have some amount of expectations that he hopes his spouse will fulfill.

Let's say he has a list of ten things that he hopes to find in his spouse, but once he is married he discovers that three of the ten expectations are lacking. He will be upset. But if he will see that nine of his ten expectations are fulfilled, and only one aspect is missing, he may feel some amount of disappointment in his heart, but he will realize that he should ignore it and continue onward with his life. This is an example of the kind of flexibility that a person needs in life, which we discussed earlier.

No one has a perfect home, where everything flows exactly the way he wants. When a marriage is based on unstable forms of love, it changes all the time, and therefore it is impossible for things to go smoothly. There is no area of life which flows perfectly. There will always be something which isn't perfect and easy.

If there is genuine love and the main foundation of the marriage is revealed and prominent, then the changes which occur here and there are bearable. But if the genuine love is concealed then one of two things will happen: either he will escape the world of emotions and concentrate solely upon the world of actions, because he cannot tolerate the constant changes and instabilities which are occurring in his life, or he will learn to live with all those changes, but his home becomes an unbearable place to live.

Every one of us is affected by the things that happen to us. The only difference between people is to what extent they are affected, and in what way. But a person cannot tolerate every change which occurs to him. Sometimes the changes are internal, and sometimes they are external, but either way he cannot connect and deal with every single small disturbance which occurs to him. It is simply impossible.

So what should he do?

He should concentrate upon the genuine connection that exists within the marriage relationship, because it will always be there and it will never change. By connecting himself to the stable and eternal love, he will be able to manage and overlook all difficulties which may come.

We don't mean to say that a person should be occupied from early morning until late at night with his emotions. Definitely not! Rather, we are advising that he should build his emotions primarily upon the true connection, genuine love.

For example, if something is disturbing him about his spouse, and it is ruining the emotional relationship that exists between them, then he should take out some quiet time to clarify for himself

the purpose of the relationship.

Why do I love my spouse? Is my love dependent upon a particular action? Will our entire foundation collapse if they don't do this or that? Or is there a deeper dimension of love in our marriage?

If a person merits finding this deep place of truth in his soul, then whenever he or she is upset about something in their spouse, he can immediately concentrate on and discover once again the genuine point of love that is in their marriage. The disappointing issues will not be so important to them anymore, and sometimes they will go away entirely.

It is impossible to fix every fissure in their relationship. Even if they would build the necessary bridges (which in a practical sense means that they both compromise a little bit here and there) there will always remain some issues which will not be to his liking. It is true that some people are naturally more apt to compromising, but even they will have some areas where they feel deprived. It never happens that everything flows exactly as they would like.

What should a person do so that these issues do not shake the foundation of the home?

If he hasn't discovered the genuine love that exists in the marriage, he will never be able to build the home upon the foundation of emotions, because every difficulty would shake up his entire marriage. However, if he will discover the genuine love within himself, then these difficulties will not uproot and destroy his home.

Building the Foundation Before Trouble Begins

The time to reveal the 'genuine love' in the marriage is when things are tranquil in the home, not during turbulent times, when the problems abound. It is impossible to support the foundation of a building during an earthquake, and likewise, when a thirty floor apartment building is on fire, that is not the time for the fire department to purchase another fire engine. These things need to have been done prior to the calamity.

If the foundations were built properly beforehand, then when the fire or earthquake occur it is possible to deal with it with the tools which were prepared in advance for these types of calamities. But it is very hard to deal with a problem after it has begun.

Most couples who go to marriage counselors do so after their homes have already fallen apart. But if a person is wise, he will build his house the right way the first time around. If subsequently some cracks will be discovered, they will be tolerable, because he built the structure in a way that it would be easy to fix the cracks when they occur.

It is impossible, when a problem arises, to begin to search for the genuine love to reestablish and balance their marriage if its foundation was built on unstable forms of love. The husband cannot suddenly say: "No, this issue doesn't really make a difference to me because my love for her is genuine, regardless." It won't work, because he never acquired the 'genuine love' beforehand. During the turbulent times, it is impossible to access those tranquil inner dimensions.

The inner, tranquil dimension can only be accessed when a person is calm and relaxed and everything is going well. That is the time to build and develop the genuine love. Thinking about it and discussing it occasionally will help him reach the place of genuine love, which will be revealed in his actions as well.

Partnership Built upon Genuine Love

Jewish marriage is built upon emotions which come from genuine love. (On a sublime level, genuine love is a reality which reaches beyond emotions.)

When a person builds his marriage upon the eternal form of love, then even the types of loves based on 'opposites' and 'similarities' are automatically enhanced. That is still not a reason to extensively exploit that love, but when the genuine love is existent, the other forms of love will also be more revealed.

Why?

When a person lives in a solely physical or partnership-type relationship, then the realms of emotions are entirely concealed. When the marriage is built upon unstable forms of love, the communication between the couple is uncomfortable and restrained. When the marriage is built upon genuine love, however, it is built upon healthy emotions. It is perfectly erected, and the love based on opposites or similarities can be brought to some extent into the picture.

This can be compared to a person who leaves his home in the morning and returns late at night, and then tells his wife the things that happened to him during the day. He doesn't repeat every detail because he would need ten hours in order to repeat everything that happened to him in the last ten hours. Instead he tells her the basic outline, the important and outstanding points of interest that occurred to him during the day.

Similarly, in regards to the emotions, it is impossible to become a perfect partner to his spouse with all of his emotions. (In any case, nobody is aware of all the delicate realms of their emotions that exist inside of them). Rather, they can share their emotions with one another on a general level, built upon their genuine love.

Requests Emanating From a Union

Let's summarize these ideas in order to clarify them:

The home is built upon the concept of "*reim ahuvim*, the loving friends"; upon a foundation of stable, perfect, and unchanging emotions.

Everyone has natural tendencies towards the more unstable types of love, so these emotions will automatically exist towards his spouse as well. But these types of love cannot be the focal point of their marriage. Only on rare occasions can extreme expressions of love based on opposites and similarities be utilized in order to build their home.

They are emotions which need to be revealed occasionally, according to their need. The things which disturb someone in their marriage cannot be ignored forever. They must be revealed and dealt with, but only to the proper extent, and only when it is clear to both of them that the 'genuine love' is existent and revealed. At that time, when he hears from his spouse the points she wants corrected, (when the requests are reasonable) it will be heard like a request which is emanating from both of them together; from a united entity.

Let us explain: When people disagree and fight, even if one of them is right and the other one is wrong (although that is rarely the case), and the one who is right is asking something from the other person, is this request coming from a point of unity or a point of discord?

For example, Reuven stole an object from Shimon, and Shimon brings Reuven to the *beis din* to retrieve his stolen object. Is Shimon correct? Certainly! But, is his demand that Reuven return the stolen object to him emanating from a feeling of love towards his fellow man? Obviously not! His

demands are emanating from anger, discord and complaint.

When a person demands and requests something, he is not trying to enhance the love between them. He wants only to retrieve his stolen object. And even if he will get it back, there will probably never be love between them.

It is different, however, in relation to marriage. In marriage, the reason people want change is because they want to improve their love. We are all just people. We are not angels who are able to accept everything that happens to us. Perhaps there are a few unique people in the world who are able to tolerate almost everything that their spouse does to them, regardless of what, when, where and how, and they hardly ever ask their spouse to change their behavior. But most people are not on that level, and they sometimes ask their spouse to change something. There is nothing wrong with this, as long as the request is made at the right time and in the right way.

Sometimes a person requests something from his spouse when his genuine love is weak, and at that moment, the only love that he feels is the love based on opposites or similarities. When that is the case, the issue which is disturbing him and that he is asking improvement over, has already shaken the foundation and harmony of their marriage. The reason he is asking for change is because he feels that the love is lacking in the marriage and he wants to rebuild the love.

Even if the spouse will accept his request and agrees to change, it is still uncertain whether that will recreate the love and harmony in the marriage. The love and harmony of the marriage has already been affected, and it is harder to correct it. This is not the ideal way for love to be built.

Ideally, when the spouse asks that something superficial be improved in the marriage, it must be absolutely understood that true and genuine love exists between them at all times. Only afterwards should any requests for change be made. Genuine love should not prevent them from trying to make their lives easier and more comfortable.

Inner Improvement

To reach this level, one must dig deeply into his soul to understand where his requests are coming from. This is much easier said than done. Everyone has the capacity to love superficially. If someone would try to deny it, it would be like a person who denies having a head, hands and feet, claiming, "I am only a soul." He's imagining things. We are all dressed in a human body. Even if a person has attained genuine love, he cannot claim that he is entirely unaffected by the more superficial forms of love.

If a couple will try to build the home solely upon superficial forms of love, it may be better if they wouldn't include emotions in their marriage at all. However, when the marriage is built correctly, upon firm foundations, and there are also elements of superficial love, this home will endure, because this is the way Hashem created us. Love based on opposites and similarity adds the dimension of "*shelo l'shmah*" the imperfect dimension of the soul, to the marriage.

However, as the *Michtav Me'Elياهو* explains,[\[7\]](#) there has to be a spark of *l'shmah* (pure intentions) within the *shelo l'shmah* (not proper intentions). [\[8\]](#)

A person can try to improve the superficial areas of the relationship (carefully, at the right times and to the right extent) on the condition that the genuine love will also be acknowledged. If the essential love is concealed somewhere deep within the soul, he should wait before he requests improvement. He must first dig deeply into his soul and access the genuine love, and then he can try to improve aspects of the superficial love. Only then should he begin to discuss improvement and changes.

Sometimes a person is tested with anger, or with other difficult tests, and he reacts improperly. But failing a test in anger is no reason for him to lose hope. Rather it should encourage him to step forward and onward. The most important thing is that he understands what is the correct way to build the marriage, and then to work slowly but surely to attain it.

A relationship between husband and wife can be compared to two feet. Unlike the hands that can function on their own without the other, the two feet must work together. Alone, he can barely hop.

Marriage is not merely a relationship where people share chores and actions together. It is a binding of emotions, which contains some practical actions and obligations which arise as a result of their relationship.

Most couples that we see have a relationship based upon a partnership of chores and obligations, and not based upon emotions. A minority of marriages are built upon the stable and true emotions of genuine love. The marriages which fail were usually built upon superficial emotions and lacked stability.

When we set out towards building a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael* G-d willing, we must build the marriage upon the foundation of genuine love, and then to add the more superficial aspects of love. Even then, there must be at least a minimum amount of genuine love included within them. A partnership of deeds and actions will be included as well, as together they build a Jewish home.

[1] Adapted from chapter seven of the author's Hebrew sefer *Da Es Baischa*

[2] Shemos 2:5

[3] see Degel Machane Efrayim, Shemos 2:23

[4] Tehillim 68:7

[5] Baba Metzia 84a

[6] Sanhedrin 105b

[7] In the chapter entitled "No Reward in This World"

[8] Nazir 23b