



Published on www.bilvavi.net

[Home](#) > Getting to Know Your Home - 010 Pleasure in Marriage

Getting to Know Your Home - 010 Pleasure in Marriage

Pleasure (Oneg) Is Only Found In Serenity (Menuchah)

It is written, “*And a woman shall find serenity with her husband.*”^[1] Marriage between man and woman brings them back to their root, which enables *menuchah* (serenity). The concept of *menuchah* is when something has been returned to its root. Woman was created from the rib of man; when she returns to him, through marriage, she finds *menuchah* with him.

The possuk says that woman finds *menuchah* with her husband, because she has returned to her root, in marrying him. But the same is true for the husband: he cannot have *menuchah* unless he becomes unified with woman. The ‘branch’ finds no rest unless it has been returned to its ‘root’ - but neither can the ‘root’ have rest if it missing its branches. This is because *menuchah* is all about completion. When completion is missing, there cannot be *menuchah*.

The point in time in which we have *menuchah*, as is well-known, is *Shabbos Kodesh*. *Shabbos* is called “*Menuchah*”, but it is also called “*Oneg*,” pleasure. “*And you shall call the Shabbos, oneg (pleasure)*”.^[2]

Menuchah (serenity) is when the ‘branches’ and the ‘root’ of something become connected. *Oneg* (pleasure) is the feeling that results from this connection. When there is no connection, there is no *menuchah*, and then there is no *oneg*.

We will try to expand upon this concept. First we will think into the concept of *menuchah* that we find on *Shabbos Kodesh*, as an example that can help us understand how marital harmony and peace can be achieved in the home.

Complete Unity In Marriage Is Currently Not Possible

Shabbos is the time of *menuchah*, but it is still not a total *menuchah*, because in our times, it is not possible for there to be a complete connection between the ‘roots’ and the ‘branches’. When the full connection can be achieved [in the future], there will be complete *menuchah*. The stronger the connection between the ‘root’ and the ‘branches’, the more *menuchah* there is, and vice versa.

Ever since the sin of Adam, when mankind has been cursed with death, there is no longer a perfect union between the body and the soul. With death, the body returns to the ground, and the soul goes back to its Source.

In the future, when there will be the resurrection of the dead, the soul and body will harmonize, and there will be a complete connection between them. That is when then there will be total *menuchah*. For this reason, the future is known as the “day that is entirely Shabbos, of eternal rest in the World-To-Come.” In our current state, the body and soul cannot harmonize completely. There can be somewhat of a connection between body and soul, but it can never be complete.

The same is true for marriage. Chazal compare the husband to the *neshamah* (the soul) and the wife to the *guf* (the body). Death separates the soul from the body, and so can divorce separate husband and wife from each other, *chas v’shalom*. Since there is always a possibility of divorce, the connection between husband and wife is never complete. If they could be connected completely, there would be no possibility of separation from each other.

Therefore, even when husband and wife know of unity with each other, the unity can never be complete; even when they do unify. This is true both in *Halachic* sense, [which requires times of separation], as well as in a more inner sense. The true level of connection between husband and wife will only be in the future.

Complete Marital Harmony Is Impossible

Chazal say, “There is no *kesubah* (marriage document) that doesn’t involve some disagreement” (Shabbos 130a). The message behind this is that there is no marriage which doesn’t have some fighting involved. There is always some discord that precedes it. This is because there is a rule, “The *kelipah* (shell) comes before the *pri* (fruit) – there is always something difficult which precedes a revelation of greatness.

The amount of fighting between them depends on how much a couple works on themselves, but there is no such thing as a marriage which does not contain any discord. That is the way it has been since the sin of Adam – man and woman, “soul” and “body”, are not able to completely achieve harmony with each other.

Besides for four *tzaddikim* who never sinned, who only died due to the “effect of the Snake” on mankind, the rest of us do not have complete harmony between our body and soul, and usually, it is either body or soul which dominates.

With regards to marriage, there can never be complete union between husband and wife in our times, for we were all affected by the Snake. But that doesn’t mean that the negative effects of the Snake have to entirely dominate the marriage. We might not be able to remove the Snake’s effect on our marriage, but at least we can lessen the discord as much as possible.

On one hand, we want to achieve *achdus* (unity) in our marriage. But we also have to be aware of reality as it is, in the current state of mankind that we are in, in which it is not possible to become totally unified with each other. As long as we have a physical body, we are affected by physicality, which does not allow for complete unity. We can aspire for unity, and we can take steps towards it by trying to direct our actions towards it, but the perfect level of unity cannot be achieved in our current state.

The Wife of Rav

One of the Sages in the Gemara, Rav, would tell his wife to do a certain thing, and she would always do the opposite.^[3] Chazal are not just telling us stories here; there is a deep point contained here.

Just as the body and soul are opposites – they want different things – so do a husband and wife have opposite wills from each other, in which they each want opposite things. Although deep down there is

a point that unifies them together, they also have differing points which pit them against each other.

By telling us of the situation between Rav and his wife, our Sages were coming to tell us that being that we live in a “world of disparity” (*alma d'piruda*), there will always be some discord between the body and the soul, for they are polar opposites. Husband and wife, who are affected by the “world of disparity”, can therefore run into clashes with each other, where each one wants the opposite of the other.

The matter behind this lays in a deep understanding, which is brought in our mystical teachings: “The higher that a spiritual light can reach, the lower of a distance it can fall to”. In simpler terms, the greater a person is, the more difficulty he will encounter, which opposes and challenges his spiritual light.

Rav contained a great spiritual light, so this needed to be opposed, in order for him to achieve his complete rectification. How, indeed, did he rectify it? On one hand, he found the opposition to be a way to connect to her, but at the same time, he must have also come to terms with certain parts in his wife's behavior that he simply could not change. It is those parts of his marriage which made him suffer, which atoned for any sins.

Inevitable Opposition In Marriage

There is no person who does not suffer on this world, as the *Mesillas Yescharim* says. Some are suffering more and some are suffering less, but there is nobody who doesn't suffer. This was all a result of the curse placed upon mankind, ever since the sin of Adam, when death was decreed upon man. Death meant that the body and soul separate; a state in which body and soul cannot harmonize. Thus, there are always oppositions between body and soul, and the tension of these opposing forces is a kind of suffering.

In marriage, the goal is to reach *achdus* (unity). The *avodah* that this implies is that husband and wife need to always strive to increase their *achdus*, but along with this, comes another inevitable part of marriage: there can never be complete *achdus*. There will always be parts of a marriage in which husband and wife are in opposition towards each other, and those oppositions will never change.

Our *avodah* is to try to work out the differences, but at the same time, there will be some opposition which we won't be able to change. When it comes to those situations, it feels like suffering to us, and it is upon us to accept that suffering with love. It is those parts in our marriage which we are not able to solve as we are on This World, in which perfect unity cannot be achieved.

Thus, if a person thinks that he can have a 100% harmonious marriage, he is delusional. There is no such thing! It didn't happen with any of our greatest Rabbis of the past, and it certainly won't happen with us. There can be a percentage of harmony in our marriage, but it can never be complete and perfect.

Just like we know that we cannot live on this world in complete harmony with our body and soul together – being that none of us are Eliyahu or Chanoch, who entered Heaven alive with their physical body – in the same sense, we must know that there is no such thing as reaching absolute unity with our spouse, as we are on This World.

Even if someone says that he fulfills every single of his marriage obligations, this does not mean that he and his wife have reached a level of total unity. Can any husband say that he has never pained his wife? Can any wife say that she has never hurt her husband in some way? Can any couple say that they are totally, completely unified with each other?

Even if a husband and wife fulfill all their obligations with each other (which is quite difficult...), there is so much more about marriage that can still be left unfulfilled. Fulfilling the *halachos* of marriage are just the actions alone, but there is still emotions and deeper layers to our soul which are involved in marriage, which we are never perfect at in. It's not possible for a couple to live together their whole life and never hurt each other – it never happened, and it never will!

This is true about life in general – that nothing is ever perfect – and it is also specifically true about marriage: that there is no marriage which is a perfect bond.[\[4\]](#)

Where Will We Get Our Pleasure From?

As it was mentioned, the purpose of marriage is to arrive at *menuchah* (serenity) with each other. However, in our current state, we are not able to attain total *menuchah*, for *menuchah* will only be fully reached in the future. Thus, in marriage as well, we aren't able to have complete *menuchah* either just from having found our spouse.

For this reason, there is also never complete *oneg* (pleasure), because complete *oneg* is derived from complete *menuchah*, and since we don't have complete *menuchah*, we don't have the source to get complete *oneg*.

If we would have complete *menuchah* in our marriage, we would be on the level of complete *ahavas etzem* (intrinsic love) towards our spouse. Being that this is not the case, we are still involved with the lower levels of love, *ahavas hashoneh* (love for differences) and *ahavas hadomeh* (love for similarities), which, by default, are setting us up for situations in which we will suffer from.

What will a person do when he's feeling a bit down?

Usually, a person looks for some kind of fun experience to calm himself down. One kind of person, when he feels down, will go after good food. Another kind of person will want to get away a bit, another kind of person will turn on the music, and another person will look to chat with someone. Each person has his own way of how he goes after pleasure to fill his emptiness and pain.

We all are looking for *oneg* (pleasure). Pleasure is really found only when there is *menuchah* (serenity), as we said earlier. (In the future, when *menuchah* will be complete, some say that it will be a kind of *oneg*, and some say it will be higher than *oneg*). Being that we do not have total *menuchah* these days, we are not able to get our pleasure from *menuchah*.

We have either two options: either we can find pleasure even in our suffering, such by “rejoicing in suffering” as Chazal say, or, we can get pleasure from an inner source inside ourselves.

However, even when are able to accept suffering with love, there's always a part in us which cannot handle the suffering. Chazal refer to it as “kicking at the suffering”, and this place is present within the lower and unrefined parts of the soul. Therefore, we will still need to get pleasure from somewhere else. We will explain this in simpler terms. If someone's soul is more actively revealed in his life, he knows how to get pleasure from an inner source inside himself; either he can get it from *menuchah*, or he can get it from rejoicing in his very suffering. But if someone's soul is less revealed in his life, or if is barely revealed at all, he can't get pleasure from any of those options. He will seek pleasure from some outside source.

The truth is that there is no one who does not seek pleasure from an outside source. This is because we are not able to get pleasure entirely from *menuchah*.

The Balance Between Physical Pleasure and Inner Pleasure

This presents a very deep problem we face in our life. We have a physical body, which is not satisfied unless it receives pleasure [because it is not able to stay put and just derive pleasure from *menuchah*]. So it must get pleasure from an outside source that comes from This World. The pleasures found on This World are all forms of pleasure for the body.

The issue that this presents to us is: How much pleasure do we need to seek? How much physical pleasure does our body really need?

We cannot live without pleasure, because that is how our soul is designed: we get vitality from pleasure. Our Sages state, "There is no good higher than *oneg* (pleasure)." [5] Our soul will always demand pleasure. The more spiritual a person becomes, the more he will be able to derive pleasure from *menuchah*, and the less spiritual a person is, he needs to get pleasure from various activities and from getting away; he will feel a need to get out there and enjoy the world, where his body will receive pleasure from.

The pursuit of physical pleasure creates a very dangerous situation for the soul. When a person is used to getting pleasure from the physical, he now sees two options in front of him when he gets older and more mature: physical pleasure and spiritual pleasure. He is torn between which one to choose.

If a person realizes that although he is here on This World, his source of vitality and pleasure comes from *menuchah*, then he is connected with his root, the source of his soul. Although he is involved with this world's pleasures, he realizes where true vitality and pleasure comes from: from an inner source, from the spiritual.

But when a person has already tasted of many of the pleasures on This World, he now faces a tough choice. On one hand, he is aware that there are spiritual pleasures, such as *Shabbos Kodesh*, a time to feel *menuchah*. But on the other hand, he is aware that there is another source of pleasure on this world: physical desires. He will find himself battling a difficult struggle. We can all see how difficult it is for those to avoid running after physical pleasure, whether they are in the streets or whether they are in privacy.

We all search for pleasure. If one doesn't search for pleasure, he is emotionally unhealthy. A healthy person will naturally look for pleasure. But when he finds pleasure coming from the outside, he faces a difficult struggle: How much pleasure do I need to get from the spiritual [from *menuchah*], and how much pleasure do I need to get from This World? (This issue is only faced by a person who already knows what spiritual pleasure is, and not by someone who has never uncovered it at all, as we will soon explain).

Chazal say to "eat bread dipped in salt, to drink water in a cistern, and sleep on the ground." [6] The depth of this statement is that our pleasure we receive from This World should only be in small amounts, in a "cistern", which implies in measurement. Chazal did not mean that one should not have pleasure! This cannot be, for the *Mesillas Yesharim* says that man was created for pleasure; and what kind of pleasure? "To bask in the pleasure of *Hashem*", as the *Mesillas Yesharim* finishes. Hashem did not bring us into the world to suffer. Hashem created us in order to bestow His good upon His creations.

How does Hashem bestow good upon us? There are two forms of pleasure which He created (and they are really rooted in one source): there is pleasure derived from *menuchah* (which is the ultimate purpose we were all created for, to connect to our source), and there is also a kind of pleasure which the body seeks, and the body will attempt to seek pleasure so long as it is not connected completely with the soul.

If we could be able to nullify the desire for physical pleasure and dismiss it, then of course, our *avodah* on this world be easy. But Hashem has designed in a way that we need pleasure, and He indeed wants us to have it – the right kind of pleasure, that is. As one of the Sages said, “Break the barrel, but save the wine.” You must have enjoyment, but with proper boundaries.

Discovering Inner Pleasure

In marriage, there is the role of physical pleasure, which we cannot avoid. Hashem has created us in a way that we need pleasure from the physical. (Dovid HaMelech said, “*In iniquity of my father I was born, and in sin my mother conceived me.*” [71]) However, our earlier Rabbis warned of the trap that physical pleasure in marriage can lead to; if a person indulges too much, his pleasure will become like a gravestone on him, burying him underneath it.

We need pleasure, and we all need to get some physical pleasure as well, but it is difficult to know how much we need it. In fact, it is the most difficult issue that we face as we are on This World: What is the proper way to receive pleasure? How much of an amount of physical pleasure do we need?

When we are children, all pleasure we know of is physical. A child will run after a sweet candy, but if we tell him a lofty and deep idea, he’s not interested, and he won’t even bother to listen. He is mainly interested in physical pleasure, and very rarely interested in spiritual pleasure. Of course, he knows how to have spiritual pleasure, but it is not outwardly revealed yet in his life.

When a person gets older and more mature, he begins to identify with the spiritual, and with the more spirituality he tastes, the more he sees that he has uncovered a different source of pleasure. Now he sees that he has a choice between two kinds of pleasure: physical pleasure and spiritual pleasure.

A child does not recognize spiritual pleasure, only physical pleasure. A compliment doesn’t speak that much to a child. A child enjoys food, sweets, and he also enjoys the love and warmth showered upon him, but besides for that, a child does not identify spiritual pleasure. When a person matures, he discovers deeper and subtler kinds of pleasure. He enjoys a scenic view and he has certain tastes in music, which are subtler kinds of pleasure than food. It is possible that his spirituality does not go beyond those things, however.

If a person matures beyond that level, he can reveal an inner world that is within himself, and he can draw forth pleasure from there. If one hasn’t discovered it yet, he will never know of a difficulty in life when it comes to how we get pleasure, because he will only know of materialistic pleasures.

When it comes to knowing how to enjoy physicality, there is none of us who needs guidance in this; it comes natural to us, and we already are in touch with it from the time we are young children. What we need to learn about is how to open up our ability to have pleasure from the spiritual, which comes from within.

Many people, in fact, never get there. Even when they do get there, they do not always see spiritual pleasure as being their main source of pleasure in life. They certainly experience times of spiritual pleasure, but only on a temporary basis.

Physical pleasure is recognizable to all, and it does not need to be explained to us. But spiritual pleasure is a matter which needs to be explained, in order for a person to reach it, as much as he can.

So the first step one needs to do with this is to first recognize that there is an inner world inside himself, in which he can draw forth deep pleasure from.

Revealing Inner Pleasure

Shabbos Kodesh is identified with *oneg*, pleasure. Does everyone enjoy Shabbos? Maybe people are all enjoying the food on Shabbos, but most people do not know what the enjoyment in *Shabbos* is. Why? It is because most people haven't yet revealed their souls, so they aren't able to enjoy Shabbos itself, an enjoyment of the soul.

Shabbos is a time in which it is easier for a person to reveal spiritual pleasure, but it is our soul which ultimately must have that enjoyment; the time of Shabbos alone won't do the trick. As long as a person hasn't revealed either *menuchah* or *oneg* in his soul, he is basically drowning in physical pleasures.

If a person does not know of spiritual pleasure, and he gets married, he is placing himself in a very dangerous situation to his spirituality.

The words here are quite sharp, but it is the truth, and it is reality. When a person gets married and he has never uncovered another source of pleasure in his life other than physical pleasure, he's headed toward disaster in his marriage. He will discover physical pleasure and completely indulge in it, with no other alternative for pleasure, for he has no other source of pleasure in his life other than the physical. He cannot go beyond pleasure of the physical, and it will 'bury' him [spiritually] where he is.

But if a person has revealed a different source of pleasure in his life other than the physical, he gives himself the ability to choose between which of the two kinds of pleasures he will connect himself to, and which of the two kinds of pleasure he will consider less.

As long as a person hasn't yet revealed an enjoyment for spiritual pleasure, he has no other source to receive pleasure from other than from physicality, and if that is his situation, his self-destruction awaits.

It is written, "*And to your husband is your desire, and he will rule over you*".^[8] When a person does not know of spiritual pleasure, and his pleasure is mainly derived from the physical, he is submerged in a world of complete materialism, Heaven forbid. He is trapped there, with nowhere else to run to for pleasure.

In order to be able to survive the spiritual dangers that physical pleasures present, one has to reveal in himself a different source of pleasure, pleasure which comes from inner serenity. When a person is deeply connected to that place inside himself – and if he can go even deeper than that, he can connect to the Source of the soul inside himself, which is the Creator – there, a whole different kind of pleasure is uncovered. It is so high in its quality that it gives the person the ability to avoid getting trapped by physical pleasure, because he will know what the real thing is.

When a person reveals a different source of pleasure in himself other than the physical, he discovers that there are two options in life – a path that leads towards life, and a path that leads towards death. He uncovers a deeper kind of free will, which truly sees the two options of good and evil to choose from. Before uncovering spiritual pleasure, it's as if he had no free will, because he was only aware of evil pleasure, having never known that there was even such a thing as holy pleasure.

Of course, a person always has free will; he can always choose between good and evil. But if a person hasn't seen that there are two options of pleasure to choose between, it is almost definite that he will choose the evil pleasure, because he doesn't know of any another option to get enjoyment from. He might be able to temporarily overcome the urge for indulgence in physical pleasure. The deeper kind of free will, which is reached only when a person uncovers the concept of spiritual pleasure, is for a person to pit physical pleasure against spiritual pleasure, and choose between them.

This first step, then, is a stage of *hachnaah* (subjugation) and *havdalah* (separation) towards the physical pleasures: to disconnect from the previously known source of pleasure that a person was used to. This reveals to a person that there is such a thing as spiritual pleasure, and then comes the stage of *hamtakah* (sweetening).[\[9\]](#)

In simpler terms - when a person opens his ability to derive pleasure from spirituality, it will help him avoid the pursuit of physical pleasure, to large extent. Then comes the true *avodah* - in which it is upon him to learn the balance between these two kinds of pleasure in marriage.

The Way To Derive Constant Pleasure

Most people, though, have not revealed their spiritual source of pleasure, and they view pleasure as an expression of 'getting away' from the hardships of life. There are those who go more extreme than this and they indulge in pleasure all day, imagining that life is all about seeking constant pleasure, but these are people who are not thinking properly. Their entire life is spent in a frivolous pursuit of pleasure.

Most people don't become that extreme, but they are still seeing experiencing pleasure only from vacations and trips and other forms of getting away. Each person has his own tastes when it comes to this. But this is not either a life of real pleasure. Any sensible person is aware that this cannot be real pleasure, for the reality of life does not allow for such a lifestyle to be pursued. We have a family to take care of, a job, and other responsibilities we have, which do not allow for constant vacations and trips. Clearly, then, we cannot spend a whole day in various pursuits of adventure.

The truth is that we are able to have constant pleasure, but not in the same way that most people are thinking of how to get it. [Soon, we will explain how].

Most people are trying to get constant pleasure from the physical, which is impossible to do, if one wants to live a normal life; pleasure is therefore viewed by most people as a way to 'get away' from life. According to that perspective, a person is really not able to have pleasure on a normal day of the year, and in order to have pleasure, he must get away and go on a vacation, where he will recharge his batteries every so often and get his need for pleasure.

In marriage, it is not possible for a person to only have pleasure. How much can one have pleasure already? A few minutes, not more; then life goes on as usual. But the truth is, "Man was not created except to enjoy," as the *Mesillas Yesharim* states. How much pleasure do we need? Two minutes a day, four minutes a day? Twice a week? We need *much* more than that.

When pleasure is derived from physicality alone, there is not that much time to enjoy it. It's over pretty quickly.

The will for pleasure is built into us; when it is not understood, it is perceived as a desire to 'get away' from life and take it easy, but when it is understood, it is seen as something which we need to build our life with. We need to build our life upon a basis that will provide us with *constant* pleasure! (On a deeper note, it is not possible to have constant pleasure; at best, pleasure can be 'constant, yet not constant').

How indeed can we have a constant source of pleasure? It is when we connect to an inner source of pleasure, back and forth, throughout the day. When we are used to inner pleasure more often throughout the day, physical pleasure will look less appealing, when we compare it with inner pleasure.

The first gain from this is that we will gain more self-control over how much we pursue physical

pleasure, and secondly, since we will be pursuing less physical pleasure, our main pleasure will be derived from an inner and spiritual source. Physical pleasure will then have a very small percentage in our life.

The Danger of Pleasure In Marriage

The reality of marriage includes the responsibilities of husband and wife, as we explained earlier; this is one part of marriage. The other part of marriage is the pleasure side to marriage. It is this part of marriage which can be dangerous, when not understood well enough.

The reason for this is because when a person gets used to receiving pleasure from the physical, if he has no other source to draw pleasure from, the pleasure that he gets in his entire life will be derived from physical enjoyment alone. He will live a hedonistic kind of life, which has no inner meaning to it.

Living in such a way prevents a person from having any thoughts of holiness and from having a purified heart. All of his life-giving vitality is being drawn from physical pleasure, and he does not know of anything else pleasurable.

Therefore, in order to counter this problem, one has to develop an inner source of pleasure. In this way, even when he does get pleasure from the physical, the pleasure will only feel minimal, because he identifies with a greater source of pleasure in life. When he is aware that that the basis of pleasure in life comes from a deeper and spiritual source, he will pursue less physical pleasures as a result, for he is mainly drawing his pleasure from the spiritual.

Becoming Aware Of Our Two-Sided Existence

With the help of Hashem, we will now make this concept more practical.

We all know of various difficult tests in life. But the truth is that a real test is when we see how we are tested with two opposing options, and then we really feel how we are being tested. When we see two sides to a situation, we can weigh our options and then decide, and then we really see what we are up against.

Compare this to the following. Someone needs to buy a refrigerator, so he walks into the appliance store, and he asks the salesman for a fridge. He is told that there are several types and that there are many sizes available, and he is shown 20 different refrigerators. He has no idea which one to buy, because he is faced with so many options, and he does not know which is the one that will suit his needs.

So too, when it comes to our own life, we all know that life is full of difficulties. But the truth is that it is only the *tzaddikim* who see the tests. They are the ones who understand the factors that are involved, and it can be very difficult to decide between the options, being that they carefully understand each option. Those who are not *tzaddikim*, by contrast, only see one option in front of them, so they don't feel like they are being tested. A wicked person decides he will do something, and is too lazy to think about the repercussions, so he acts on impulse. It is not only desire for sin which causes people to sin; it is the laziness, of not weighing out the options, which contribute to sin.

There is a statement of Reb Moshe of Kobrin zt"l that if the wicked people would know how enjoyable it is to serve Hashem, they would run after it, no less than how much they pursue physical gratification. Why don't they run after it? It is because they are simply unaware. In order to know how good it is to serve Hashem, one has to indeed work hard at this.

It's easy to say these words, but to recognize them within oneself is a difficult task.

Marriage: A Union Between Two Souls and Two Bodies

A person is comprised of a body and soul; in marriage, the husband is compared to the soul, and the wife is compared to the body.

Most people are more aware of their body than they are of their soul, and therefore they go into marriage largely attuned to the needs of the body alone, with very little awareness of how to supply the needs for their soul.

Without being aware of the soul, a person lives a body-oriented life - towards his life in general, and towards his marriage in particular. It's as if he has no free will, because he is only aware of one side to himself.

When a person gets married, he must be aware that this will be a union of two souls and two bodies coming together. If a person is only aware of physical pleasure when he's getting married, he is unaware of the soul in the equation, and he sees marriage as a union between two bodies alone. His marriage will be entirely about physical needs, and such a marriage is the antithesis of a Jewish marriage; and surely, a person will never get to the inner point of marriage, if he takes that approach.

We need to understand that there is a very fundamental problem we are describing. Marriage is a union of body and soul. If there is a soul brought into the marriage, there can be a 'marriage' - but if not, they are living an animalistic kind of life together, G-d forbid. If two people are married together and there is only emphasis on their physical relationship, this is not that much different between the union of two animals living together, in which there is no 'marriage'. It might be considered a marriage according to *Halacha*, and the wife will have a status of a "married woman" for all regards, but in the inner sense, it's as if they are not married.

It is only when the soul dimension is brought into marriage, that it can be called a 'marriage'. The point of what we said here is that when marriage is missing the soul in the picture, and it is entirely a physical relationship, it is empty and devoid of meaning, and there will be nothing here to build and improve upon.

Marriage: The Middle of the Soul's Development

People search for ways to have a good marriage, but the truth is that many of the problems in marriage did not begin with the marriage. They began long before that.

Compare this to a person waiting on a road where there are no buses, and he keeps waving so that someone will stop for him and give him ride. As soon as a car drives by, he waves his hands to signal that he needs to be picked up, but no one is stopping for him. Even if he were to stand there for days and nights, weeks and months and even years, waving to others that he needs a ride, he might end up standing there forever.

In the same vein, if we wish to get down to the root of marital problems which many people have, we must know that it did not start in the marriage itself. It will be impossible to solve a person's marital issues if we are to focus solely on the problems of the marriage. But if we see the 'package' he came into it with, then we have what to examine and work with.

If a person was living a blissful life before he got married, taking life as it comes, and then when he gets married he looks for advice on how to have a successful marriage - there is no way for him to succeed. In the best possible situation, he will be able to succeed in marriage as much as a good 'business' can succeed; as long as he doesn't lie or do dishonest things, the 'business' will survive. But he will never be able to get to an inner kind of marriage, because he has not brought in the

necessary ingredients to do so.

Marriage incorporates both the soul and the body. The pleasure which one can receive in his marriage is both in the spiritual and in the physical, but if the soul has never been brought into marriage, it can be said that the marriage has never even started. There is then no 'marriage' to improve in, even if he were to try to seek advice on how to improve it.

Marriage is really the middle of one's way. At a certain point of one's way in life, he meets his\her spouse. We don't get married when we are children; we get married at around the age of 20 and on, after we have already built [or at least when we are eligible to build] our personality, having become aware of the deeper sources of pleasure than the physical.

If we come into the marriage with that 'package' (a source of inner pleasure), then a soul connection can be formed in marriage, with our spouse. That will enable us to receive some degree of *menuchah* (serenity) from marriage, which in turn enables us to taste of deep pleasure. When we are receiving pleasure from a deeper and more spiritual source, we will find that we are calmer when it comes to how much we pursue physical pleasure, in a way that it is not overdone.

Becoming Complete - Through Marriage

Chazal said that "A man and woman, if they merit it, the *Shechinah* dwells between them."^[10] Chazal say that a person before he gets married, he is called a *palga d'gufa*, "half a body". Usually, before a person is married, he doesn't even have that 'half' to begin with!

The 'half' which a person has ideally reached before he is married is referring to reaching his own soul, and through marriage, his soul can be completed by joining with his other 'half': the soul of his wife. But if a person hasn't reached his own soul yet before he gets married, he doesn't even have his own 'half'.

Marriage, ideally, is that both husband and wife are each bringing in their own body and soul, and they are now joining together, completing each other. It's clear that each of them is bringing in certain physical possessions. He is bringing in his body, but what about his soul? Is he making sure to bring in his soul as well....?

If they are each bringing in their body and soul into marriage, then each of them will be able to receive pleasure from both body and soul. The spiritual pleasure will be derived from the intrinsic love which they can reach with each other, and their more physical pleasures can be derived from their 'love for similarities' and 'love for differences' which they see in each other.

But if a person has only brought his body into the marriage, the marriage cannot go beyond the level of body; they won't grow together spiritually. They can only grow together when their souls are being brought into the marriage. If they have each entered their souls into the marriage, it is then that the inner, spiritual light of the *Shechinah* can be revealed between them.

^[1] Ruth 1:9

^[2] Yeshayahu 58:13

[3] See Talmud Bavli: Yevamos 63a

[4] Editor's Note: In the next chapter, it will be explained the proper perspective to have towards marital disputes.

[5] Sefer Yetzirah

[6] Avos 6:4

[7] Tehillim 51:7

[8] Beraishis 3:16

[9] This is a concept of the Baal Shem Tov that there are always these three stages in Avodas Hashem. This has been explained at length in *Da Es Atzmecha, Getting To Know Your Self*.

[10] Sotah 17a

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/getting-know-your-home-010-pleasure-marriage>