



Getting to Know Your Family - 06 Partnership of Marriage

“Bone of My Bones, Flesh of My Flesh”

Chazal state, “There are three partners in man: His father, his mother, and Hashem.”^[1] Chazal learn this from the fact that Adam said about his wife, Chavah, “*She is the bone of my bones, and the flesh of my flesh.*” Through the unity of a husband and wife, a partnership is formed in the birth of the child - they are partners with Hashem, Who is creating the child. From this statement of Chazal, we learn that husband and wife are a partnership.

There are two kinds of partnership that they can have - either they are “*bone of my bone*” to each other, or they are “*flesh of my flesh*” to each other. The “*bone of my bone*” implies that they are truly connected, while “*flesh of my flesh*” implies that they have a superficial kind of partnership, in that they merely share a physical relationship.

The ideal partnership which husband and wife need to reach with other is the level of “*bone of my bone*” - to become truly connected with each other, and not just to have a superficial kind of connection with each other and simply be physical “partners” in creating the child. Their partnership must extend beyond the physical, beyond the “*flesh of my flesh*” level.

Becoming Partners

We know what husband and wife must “not” do - they must not abandon each other. But what must they “do” for each other? They must become **partners**. Every husband and wife must realize how they are partners - to be working together towards a worthy goal.

What is this ‘partnership’ in marriage? Does it mean for a husband to include his wife in what he’s learning about in Kolel? It does not mean to include her in everything. She should live her life as it is, and he should live his life as it is. They cannot be partners in every area of life. Instead, they must have one point in their life in which they are partners in together.

Clarifying Your Partnership

If we ask a husband married for a few years, “How are you partners with your wife?” what is the answer? Is it the fact that they raise children and live together in the same home? That is a very superficial answer. You lived with your roommates too in yeshivah and did stuff together. So what exactly is the partnership between husband and wife?

If it is not defined, the partnership can fluctuate, and sometimes there will be less partnership, and sometimes they will have more partnership; either of these situations will be detrimental. Let’s explain what we mean.

The Key To A Successful Marriage: Finding The Partnership

Many times couples come for counseling, full of complaints on each other. (Before he gives her the

get, which is called “*sefer kerisos*”, he has *Baruch Hashem* written a full *sefer* of complaints against her). But if they would just know of their partnership and be clear in how they are partners, most of those complaints would fall away; they wouldn’t be considered ‘problems’.

If they are clear in how they are partners, and they still have complaints, they have valid complaints. But if they are not clear in their partnership to begin with, then every little issue that comes up in the home will be a reason for discord between them.

One of the Sages, Rav Chiya, had a wife who would constantly pain him. His children felt so sorry for their father that they asked him why he does not divorce her. Rav Chiya responded, “It is enough that she raises our children, and that she saves us from sin.” It is of course not *l’chatchilah* (preferable) for a couple to rely on this alone for their marital peace. But this Gemara does reveal to us that when a husband views his wife as a partner, he can handle a difficult marriage. He saw that she raises the children, thus he viewed her as his partner, and that was how his marriage survived.

If husband and wife don’t see each other as partners, then the fact that they merely live together in the same home does not create a partnership.

This is the foundation upon which a marriage is built; if it is shaky, the whole marriage will be shaky, and there will be a lot of discord. But if they are clear in how they are partners, even if he gets something different than what he planned, and it’s unpleasant, it still won’t damage the root of their connection. It will be a lasting partnership.

Making A List Of What You Want and Don’t Want In Your Partnership

If a husband takes a pen and paper and writes down the things he would like his wife to be partners with him in, he’ll also find that there are areas which he doesn’t want her to be partners with him in. For example, some husbands do not the wife to be involved with the finances of the home, and would not like to be involved the wife in every monetary decision. But the point is that we all have things which we want partnership with in, and we all have things which we don’t want partnership in.

So practically speaking, write the list as if you are now beginning your marriage, not from what you already know about your wife. Write down what you would like from your wife, as if it’s the beginning of your marriage.

The list might include:

- 1)** “I want her to be partners in helping me get up for *davening*.” (Maybe until the end of *Sheva Berachos* that’s what he will want from her...)
- 2)** “I want her to get up in the morning to make breakfast so we can eat breakfast together.” Maybe that’s what he really wants, and maybe not.
- 3)** “I want my wife to walk me to the *Kolel* every morning.” This is probably not something you need her to be “partners” in with you.

Write down the things in which you clearly want her to be your partner. You will discover that a lot of these things have nothing to do with partnership. Don’t write down the situation as it is now in the home. Write down what you would like to expect, and what you don’t expect, from your spouse.

Some do this and they don’t know what to write down; they’re not sure if they want partnership with their wife or not. Perhaps a person is not even interested in a partnership with his spouse. For example, some fathers think that they know how to raise their children independently of their wives.

We won't get into if this is good or not. But the point is that a person needs to know what he would like to be partners in with his wife, being that Chazal tell us that there is a partnership. One must see what partnership he has with his wife, even if there are areas in which he feels he doesn't need her in.

After a person knows what he would like in his partnership, he should now ask himself which areas they have partnership in, and which areas they don't, as well as the areas in-between that are unclear.

What does this accomplish? It helps you become in touch with the reality in your home. In the areas which you would like to see partnership, you might discover that you don't have partnership in. In areas which you don't want partnership in, you might discover that you're making demands even in those areas.

Next, one should down which is **the most important area** of partnership which he would like to have with his wife. This is necessary so that one can be very clear about what exactly he wants from his home.[\[2\]](#)

So one should write down his strongest need in partnership, and then he should write down a practical application of this. What is the clearest thing he recognizes in his marriage in which he sees that he is a partner with his spouse? He might discover that it is not connected with either what he wants in the partnership or with what she wants in the partnership.

Subconsciously, each of them wants something in the partnership, but in our conscious state throughout the day, we might be acting differently and demanding different things. When husband and wife are not clear about what they are partners in, any little issue between them can cause discord. When they are clear, they are able to learn how to pick their fights, because they have identified their priorities in the marriage.[\[3\]](#)

What we want to know is: What exactly the partnership is between a husband and wife.

Deep down, in our subconscious, a husband really wants to feel that his wife is his "partner" which Chazal speak of. But in order to feel that reality, we need to clarify to ourselves the areas in which we want to be partners with our spouse in.

Know Before You Get Married What You Want In Your Home

What does it mean that for a husband and wife to be 'partners'?

Everyone before he gets married has aspirations and has a full list of what he would like from his home: Torah learning, fear of Hashem, kindness, emunah, love, etc. Yet, this is still being superficial. These areas will not be enough to create a partnership between husband and wife.

Before a person gets married, he needs to sit with himself and reflect: "What exactly will my wife and I be building together? What kind of partnership are we entering into with each other?"

Again, there is what he wants, what she wants, and the in-between areas. They must discuss with each other what their most important aspect of their partnership is.

For example, there are couples who run a *gemach* (*chessed* organization) together. If they clearly discussed before the wedding that they each love to do *chessed*, then running a *gemach* together will work wonderfully for them, and they will find each other to be partners in helping each other fulfill their goals. They will then feel more unified with each other by the fact that they do *chessed* together. They will run it together smoothly and pleasantly.

But if it is only the husband who has an affinity for *chessed*, and his wife has little or no such interest in this, then running a *gemach* together with his wife will not really work. It won't be a partnership between them, rather a husband who's doing his own thing.

Here is a common example of partnership. If a husband considers raising children to be the main partnership he has with his wife, then as long as he is aware that she's doing that, he will have the key in keeping a successful home. He is aware that raising the children is his most important aspect of his home, so he is aware that as long as she does that, he respects her so much that other issues simply cannot come between them.

Of course, this is not everything there is to the home. But it is the basis in keeping a strong marriage and enables a person to build his marriage from there: to recognize the partnership he has with her.

So one should write down on a paper what is the main thing he needs a partnership in with his wife, something he thinks that will be the key to his marriage.

When Rav Chiya said that it's enough that a wife raises children and saves a husband from sin, the depth of his statement was that their partnership is solely of these two factors - and nothing else is required for the partnership! She is raising the children, and she saves her husband from sin; there is nothing else she has to do in a marriage, so a husband should not expect anything else of her.

In addition, it is unrealistic in the first place to expect *anything* of a wife other than your partnership with her. Any expectation from your wife is a recipe for unhappiness. It is simply unrealistic for a husband to expect anything from a wife.[\[4\]](#)

Acceptance

Do this with all other areas of life as well: Write down what you would like in your life, what you wish you would have, including your spiritual frustrations. Realize that you are not perfect. Deal with yourself and accept yourself the way you are, even though you have imperfections.

Now see that your wife is not perfect either. You want certain things from yourself which you don't have, such as being smarter or having better memory, yet you don't have those things. So too, your wife is also not perfect, even though you wish she would be different. Just like you learn how to deal with yourself by accepting yourself as you are, so can you learn to accept her the way she is.

You are not perfect, yet you accept yourself as you are, even though you wish you had it better. So too, you can accept your wife the way she is even though she is not perfect and even though you wish she would change.

(And, by the way, you can't change her. Does anyone here think they can change their wife?)

Realizing The Partnership

Therefore, after becoming aware of the reality in their marriage, a husband should clarify to himself how he needs his wife; the specific areas in which he knows that he needs her help with.

It's not about *how* they are partners, rather it is about becoming aware in the first place that she *is* your partner. The fact that a husband knows that he needs his wife when it comes to certain areas is already the key in how he can see her as his partner.

Know the areas in which your wife helps you with, the areas in which you are connected together with. The areas of partnership you have with her are really the points in your marriage which bring

you together to connect with each other, and that is essentially the purpose of marriage – to become connected as one.

Marriage: The Path Towards Becoming A Partner With Hashem

We can be “partners” with Hashem, and so can a couple be partners with each other. It is the purpose of their marriage. All of creation must become partners with Hashem, and in order to get there, one must first develop the basic kind of partnership – in his own home. How exactly they are partners differs in every home.

The point is not what they are partners in; the point is that they be a partnership. The actual partnership is the goal of marriage.

[1] Niddah 30a

[2] *In response to a questioner in middle of the class: “The fact that a husband and wife are each doing their part to raise the children together does not mean that they recognize their partnership. Although Chazal say that husband and wife are partners when it comes to having a child, this is only true for a husband and wife who clearly feel this as a reality, and this is not the situation in today’s times. The reality today is that people don’t feel the reality as described in Chazal; we have a nefesh habehaimis – an animalistic part in our soul, which can only identify with baser emotions – which does not identify with lofty, spiritual concepts. So how indeed can we feel that our spouse is our partner, in a way that even our nefesh habehaimis can understand and feel?”)*

[3] *In response to a questioner in middle of the class: “The partnership between a husband and wife is not about their various roles which they take care of. Our purpose here in this discussion is also not about discussing who is right when it comes to what, and what the obligations of husband and wife are towards each other. It’s very possible, let’s say, that the husband is right and his wife is wrong – but that doesn’t get us anywhere. Even if a husband is always right and the wife is always wrong, this will do nothing for him except end them up in Beis Din, where he will have to deliver her a get.)*

[4] *In response to a questioner in middle of the class: Even if the wife would only do one of her two roles – if she would only raise the children but she’s not protecting you from sin, or if she protects you from sin but she’s not doing a good job at raising the children – she is still fulfilling her role, as long as she is helping you with an area that you can’t do without her. Of course, it’s better if she fulfills both of her roles, but the point is that she is still considered your partner by the fact that she helps you in even one area that you need her in, as long as you consider that area to be very important to you.)*

So if the husband realizes that it is impossible for him to raise the kids without her help, and she indeed helps him with raising the kids – this alone is enough for her to be considered his “partner”. Once he realizes how much she is his partner, all other issues won’t be able to come between them, because he has changed how he views her.

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