

The Easy & Practical
Guide To A
*Happy
Marriage*



I'm Sure This Book Will Bring Simcha! - Hagaon Harav Shmuel Kamenetsky Shlit"a

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A Word to the *Chassan*

The Rama¹ states that a *chassan* and *kallah* should not live in the same house before they are married, in order that they shouldn't be disgusted with each other.

The Yafeh L'lev adds that meeting too much, even without living in the same house, has caused many broken engagements.

It's very important for a *chassan* not to meet his *kallah* too much during the engagement. When people keep on talking, eventually they run out of sensible things to say; they end up talking about nonsense and making fools of themselves. As the Shevet Mussar² puts it, "The woman should not talk too much so that the man shouldn't end up hating her or wanting to marry someone else."

Calling Your Kallah

Rav Tzvi Kaplan tells his *talmidim* to never call their *kallah* from their *dirah*. I'd like to point out that when people talk on the phone, you can sometimes hear what the *kallah* is saying from ten feet away.

Any issue relating to *arayos* can never be taken lightly, *chas v'shalom*.³ The *Shulchan Aruch*⁴ is very clear: "A person must keep

1. E.H. 55:1.

2. Pg. 189.

3. ועוד יש להזהר שלא להקל ח"ו באיסור עריות שכולן בחזקת נדה הן שהוא בכלל הורג ואל יעבור ויש בו כרת.

שו"ע אבן העזר סימן כ"א סעיף א'—צריך אדם להתרחק מהנשים מאד מאד ואסור לקרוץ בידי או ברגליו ולרמוז בעיניו לאחד מהעריות ואסור לשחוק עמה להקל ראשו כנגדה או להביט ביפיה...והמתכוין לאחד מאלו הדברים מכין אותו מכות מרדות.

שו"ע אבן העזר סימן כ"א סעיף ג'—מותר להסתכל בפנויה לבדקה אם היא יפה שישאנה בין שהיא בתולה או בעולה ולא עוד אלא שראוי לעשות כן אבל לא יסתכל בה דרך זנות ועל זה נאמר ברית כרתי לעיני ומה אתבונן על בתולה.

4. E.H. 21.

extremely distant from women. It is forbidden to make gestures or to wink... It is forbidden to joke and behave with *kalus rosh* or to gaze at her beauty... Any one of these things is punished with *makkas mardus*.

“It is permissible, and in fact appropriate, to look at a girl and consider her beauty when deciding to marry her, but never to gaze at her *derech znus*.”

A *chassan* and *kallah* must also be careful what they talk about. Unfortunately, *chassanim* and *kallos* who talk too much sometimes end up discussing things that should not be spoken about until after the *chasunah*.

Different Stages in Marriage

It's important to remember that while the *Midrash Tanchuma*⁵ says that a person “longs to see himself under the *chuppah* because no other day is ever as dear to him,”⁶ the rest of marriage, while having the potential for tremendous happiness and accomplishment, is more than just parties.

There is a letter from the Steipler in *Orchos Rabbeinu*.⁷ It was addressed to a young lady, but the same *yesod* applies to men and how they will relate to their wives. The Steipler writes: “Many girls push off getting married for years because the prospective *bachur* is not particularly attractive to her or is not exactly what she wants. She must realize that whatever makes the *chassan* seem interesting and special before the *chasunah* will completely disappear soon after the *chasunah*.

“Instead, there will be a bond of affection of a totally different sort, which will come from shared interests in life, and then from happiness in life, i.e., children.”

5. *Ki Sisa* 2.

6. מתאוה לראות עצמו בתוך חופתו לפי שאין לו יום בעולם חביב ממנו שהוא שמח עם אשתו.

7. Vol. 1 p. 278.

The Gemara⁸ states that it was customary to pour wine in front of the *chassan* and *kallah*. Rashi explains that this was for a *siman tov*. The Ben Ish Chai⁹ explains that this was done with wine, not water, to express that their love for each other should be like wine—the older it gets, the better it gets.

8. *Brachos* 50b.

9. *Benayahu* *ibid*.

Preface

Asei lecha rav—“Make for yourself a *rav*.”¹⁰ It’s always important to live by this rule, but it’s especially true when it comes to *shalom bayis*. As it is impossible to agree on everything, it’s crucial to be able to go to a *rav* for help, when necessary. You should go for help together, of course; but even to go by yourself is better than nothing.

There have been many cases where both husband and wife thought that all was lost, yet a qualified and objective third party was able to help them tremendously. The Gemara says, “A prisoner cannot free himself from prison”—meaning, sometimes there are things which can only be done by an outsider.

If you do need help, it’s important to go for help sooner than later. Waiting will only make the problems harder to fix. As Rashi says¹¹ on the words *והחזקת בו*—Don’t ignore him until he falls down and it’s difficult to pick him up; help him as soon as he is having a hard time! Think of a person who is slipping off a donkey; anyone can help him back up, as long as he’s still on the donkey, but once he falls down, even five people can’t pick him back up.”¹²

“But there are few big talmidei chachamim nowadays.”

The Rambam on the above mishnah¹³ says that you should even take someone who is your equal to be your *rav*. Of course, I understand that this may prove to be difficult for you. However, the Rambam takes it one step further, saying that if necessary, you should even be *mekabel* someone smaller than you to be your *rav*.

10. *Avos* 1:6.

11. *Vayikra* 25:35.

12. רש"י על ויקרא כ"ה ל"ה—והחזקת בו—אל תניחנהו שירד ויפול ויהיה קשה להקימו
אלא חזקהו משעת מוטת היד למה זה דומה למשאוי שעל החמור עודהו על החמור
אחד תופס בו ומעמידו נפל לארץ חמשה אין מעמידין אותו.

13. *Avos* 1:6.

This *kuntres* would not be complete without warning of the dangers of getting *shalom bayis* advice from people who don't have Torah-true *hashkafos*; or from well-meaning people who lack practical knowledge of the realities and challenges of *shalom bayis*; or worst of all, people who have no knowledge of either.

Eitzah Hotline

You can get free marriage help from *Eitzah*. This organization has the *haskamah* of Rav Yerucham Olshin *shlit"a*.

410-861-0613

DiscoverTorah@gmail.com

A Soulmate is Not a Roommate

Many *chassanim* think to themselves, "I have no need for *hadrachah* in *shalom bayis*. After all, I've never had any problems with my roommates."

There are three fundamental differences between a wife and a roommate.

- First, the same comment that a roommate might not mind can cause tremendous pain to a wife. As one woman said, "We women would never be able to be *chavrusos*, because when we would start screaming at each other, we would start crying."
- Second, with a roommate there is no need to argue about what to do, because everyone does their own thing. In marriage, however, there are countless decisions to make together.

There are significant issues which come up every so often: whether to buy a house; whether to invest a significant amount of money into fixing up the house; whether to move to another apartment; whether to buy expensive new furniture; whether to the country for the summer; whether you'll go to your in-laws for Shabbos; whether you should invite guests...

There are also countless issues to be negotiated in day-to-day life. What's the right way to handle the kids? Who will wash the dishes

and take out the garbage? (There is often a very clear agreement on that one... It's "your" job to do it.) Who will get up for the baby in the middle of the night? How high should the steam be set? (Often, the wife wants the steam turned higher while the husband wants it turned lower.) And the list is endless.

Some people get discouraged about their *shalom bayis*, thinking, “We fight over so many decisions that even if we manage to resolve a hundred, there will still be so many other issues to fight about!”

However, this is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of where their problems are coming from. In most cases, these couples will admit that they were happily married for the first few months of their marriage. Weren't there dirty dishes to wash then, as well? Why didn't they argue about such things then?

The answer is that in the beginning of their marriage, they were busy making each other happy. Consequently, all the little things didn't bother them. Also, Chazal¹⁴ say, "When our love was strong, we could be together on the tiny, narrow edge of a sword. Now that our love is not strong, a bed of sixty *amos* is not enough for us."

This brings us to the third and most important difference between a wife and a roommate:

- You can get along just fine with a roommate by not doing anything to bother him, even without doing anything positive to make him happy. However, with a wife, you must do what's required to make a wife happy.

(Interestingly, the *gematria* of בית שלום equals דבר טוב לא יבא (ממילא, אלא על ידי עמל ויגיעה).

So how do I ensure that I have good shalom bayis?

The four principles of making a wife happy are **attention**, **appreciation**, **affection**, and **sympathy**. These will be explained in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Usually, if you work hard on fulfilling your obligations to your wife and making your wife happy, the endless arguments about countless little things will magically disappear.

14. *Sanhedrin* 7a.

Even the *issur d'Oraisa* of hurting your wife's feelings through your words, as harmful as it is to the marriage (and to yourself)—is still less harmful than ignoring your wife.

The Gemara¹⁵ says, “If a husband makes a *neder* against his wife, the wife still feels that she can stay married to him; she can believe that he only did this out of anger and that later he'll calm down. If, however, she makes a *neder*, forbidding herself from having *hana'ah* from any particular thing, and he isn't *meifir neder*—then she has the right to say she feels that she needs a *get*, because the fact that he ignores her shows that he hates her.”

A Completion and a New Creation

“Women are a separate nation.”

“*Ezer k'negdo*—‘A helpmate against him.’ If he is lucky, she helps him; if he is unlucky, she is against him.”¹⁶

The Maharal¹⁷ explains: *Zachar* and *nekeivah* (male and female) are absolute opposites.¹⁸ Therefore, she is against him—unless they are *zocheh* to *siyata d'Shmaya*. If, indeed, they are *zocheh* to have Hashem connect them—He Who makes peace between opposites—then they join totally into one unified power,¹⁹ *because* they are opposites.

15. *Kesubos* 71b; see Ran.

16. שבת סב, א-נשים עם בפני עצמן הן.

יבמות סג, א-וא"ר אלעזר מאי דכתיב אעשה לו עזר כנגדו זכה עוזרתו לא זכה כנגדו.

17. *Chiddushei Aggados*.

18. In view of this insight from the Maharal, it's not surprising that *shalom bayis* books often tell you to do the opposite of what you would naturally think of doing.

19. The Maharal (*Drush L'Shabbos Hagadol*) says that the purpose of bringing joy to the *chassan* and *kallah* is to make them totally one. I'd like to point out that “to become one” is a *pasuk*: והיו לבשר באשתו והיו לבשר אחד.

The Meiri (*Kesubos* 17a) says, מצוה לשמח את החתן ואת הכלה כדי לחבבה.

I would like to suggest that the Maharal and the Meiri are not in disagreement. As Rashi says (*Kesubos* 8a, ד"ה משמח חתן וכלה), we make the *brachah* חתן משמח חתן (ד"ה משמח חתן וכלה), we make the *brachah* חתן משמח חתן וכלה to praise Hashem who created שמחה על ידי שמחה חתן משמח חתן וכלה

While the Maharal on this Gemara does not explain why “all opposites join totally when they join,” I think that it can be understood in light of the Maharal’s explanation of the following Gemara:²⁰ אמר רב יהודה אמר רב כל מה שברא הקב”ה בעולמו זכר ונקיבה בראם אף לויתן וכו’. The Maharal explains: Hashem wanted to complete the imperfection of Adam and all of the lower creations (i.e., all living creatures) through the principle of טובים השנים מן האחד, because each one has what the other one lacks—the *zachar* has what the *nekeivah* does not have, and the *nekeivah* has what the *zachar* does not have—which is why the *pasuk* says לעשה לו עזר כנגדו.²¹

The Maharal is saying that everything has its opposite to go with it: There are two sides to every coin, and each side is, by definition, incomplete, as it is only half of the coin. When they join together they join totally, because they each do a perfect job in completing

וחדוה—Rashi is saying that the *simchah* causes them to become attached to each other.

I would like to suggest another reason why the Meiri says למצוה לשמח את החתן ואת הכלה כדי לחבבה. It’s well known that first impressions last forever, which is why a *dayan* is not allowed to listen to the arguments of one litigant today and of the other litigant tomorrow. The Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 381:6) says that a *kallah* who is sitting *shivah* can still use makeup if it’s within thirty days of her *chasunah*. The question is: doesn’t Rabi Akiva say (*Shabbos* 64b) that it’s important for all married women to use makeup, not just newlyweds? The answer is that during the first thirty days after the *chasunah*, he’s still forming his first impressions of her, and whatever impression he forms now will last forever.

So too, in my opinion, it’s a mitzvah to bring joy to the *chassan* in order that his first impression of marriage should be a wonderful experience. (This may be news to the people who go against the Gemara by getting up at *sheva brachos* and making jokes about how terrible marriage is, and the people who go against the Gemara by mocking the *chassan*, making everyone laugh except the *chassan* and *kallah*. These people are forgetting that a marriage is cemented together with wet cement in the beginning.)

20. *Bava Basra* 74.

21. The Maharal (in *Chiddushei Aggados*) explains why the Gemara says (*Yevamos* 62b) that you don’t have *shalom* until you get married. (Perhaps the Maharal is addressing the obvious question of how a *bachur* who is sitting quietly and learning, not bothering anyone, could be described as lacking in *shalom*.) כי הדבר שלם, אשר לא יושלם אין שלום אליו, והאיש יושלם באשה, as long as you are not a שלם, you don’t have שלום.

the missing half, thus creating a complete whole. As the Maharal²² says, Hashem forgives your *aveiros* when you get married because you are a גוף שלם בריה חדשה—*A complete being, a new creation!*

22. Gur Aryeh, Bereishis 36:3.

Chapter 1

Everything People Do Has Some Sort of Logic to It

I. Everyone is Following Some Sort of Logic

Shlomo Hamelech was the wisest of all men—ויחכם מכל אדם. *Chazal* say, cryptically, אפילו מהשוטים—*Even [wiser than] the fools.* The Cheshbon Hanefesh explains (right after his thirteen *perakim*) that everyone has something that makes them tick, some kind of logic by which they operate.²³ The *gadlus* of Shlomo Hamelech was that even for those people who everyone agreed were acting without any logic at all, he was able to figure out what made them tick.

II. “Women are a Separate Nation”

This *kuntres* is based on the principle that while men’s thoughts and actions are based more on logic and less on emotions, women’s thoughts and actions are based more on the very strong emotions that Hashem has given them. (Both men and women work with logic and with emotions; the difference is in the percentages. This

23. The Cheshbon Hanefesh says that the tzaddikim who are straight are much easier to figure out than the crooked *resha'im*. In fact, Rabbeinu Yonah (*Avos* 1:6) says that although people think that tzaddikim are naive and don’t understand the sly and slippery *resha'im*, the truth is that they understand the *resha'im* better than everyone else; they know that no matter how good and innocent the actions of *resha'im* seem to be, you have to keep looking until you discover their hidden, evil intentions.

is the meaning of נשים דעתן קלות, as will be explained at length in chapter 6, #1.)

“Women are a separate nation.”²⁴

It’s a mistake to think dismissively, “Women have these *shtussim*,” because we are all human. Everything people do is for a reason (“I don’t understand why he’s doing that,” simply means, “I’m admitting my ignorance”), and very often the reason is, “I have a *ta’avah* for it,” without any deeper logic.

Here is a person who has \$500 million, and he’s working fifteen hours a day in order to get \$1 billion. Pure logic would say that he is crazy, because he already has more money than he could possibly know what to do with.

“But I want to have a billion dollars,” he explains.

But his spending habits won’t change. He already spends so much time in the office that his expenses are extremely low. The only difference will be another few drops of ink on the papers that he gets from the bank.

Down the block is a fellow who lives on the same standard, based on the support of compassionate relatives—and who spends fifteen hours a day happily “making money,” that is, coloring paper green and writing ‘100 Dollars’ on it. With a big smile, he counts his millions of dollars, without getting high blood pressure every time the stock market goes down a bit.

Pure logic would say that they are both equally crazy, working hard for pieces of paper that won’t affect their standard of living in any way. However, one is a *shoteh* and one is not. Why is that? Because if you have a *meshugass* that Hashem put into normal human beings, then you are normal. But if you have a *meshugass* that normal people don’t have, then you are crazy.

(Incidentally, the desire to own lots of possessions can be seen in children also; in my opinion, that’s why a child will keep insisting that more and more food be put on his plate. They are never convinced with the suggestion, “First finish your plate, and then you’ll get more,” any more than the money-hungry adult will accept

24. *Shabbos* 62a.

the argument, “First spend your \$500 million, and then worry about getting more.” Similarly, kids fight about who will walk through the door first exactly like adults fight over who will get *shlishi*.)

Many human desires are irrational, and men and women each have their own specific *meshugassen*. It’s a major error to think that explaining to someone how his approach is irrational will cause him to change; he will still have the exact same *ta’avah* after your explanation that he had before your explanation. As someone said, “If words could solve people’s problems, the world’s problems would have been solved a long time ago.”

So if you see your wife fulfilling the nature that Hashem put into her by being “into” clothing a lot more than you expected; or by saying, “So-and-so’s neighbor’s cousin had a baby; how much does he weigh?”—don’t think to yourself, “Why would it matter to you how much the baby weighs?” Instead, think about how men get interested in things like how powerful someone’s car engine is, or how accurate America’s cruise missiles are—as if it made a difference to anyone. (And don’t forget that a person is more important than a car or a missile.) This is especially true about clothing, regarding which you are obligated in the *kesubah*—don’t call a mitzvah a “*meshugass*.”

III. No Two People Are the Same

Don’t take all the advice you hear (including this sentence) to be absolute. Different people react differently. כשם שאין פרצופיהם שוות, כך אין דיעותיהן שוות—*Just as no faces are the same, no minds are the same*. I’m not telling you to take every single thing that’s written here as *Torah miSinai*; I’m just asking you to try it for yourself. If it works, it works, and if it doesn’t, it doesn’t.

If you pay attention to these things, you will see for yourself what makes your wife happy. Never say, “I don’t care what you say you want; the book knows better than you how to make a wife happy.” Treat her as an individual, not as a stereotype.

While this *kuntres* speaks about many of the common differences between men and women, there are exceptions to almost every rule.