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We will try to be brief in this broad subject. Every subject is like a *sugya* inside another *sugya* - and so is the *sugya* of marriage.

It is written, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife." What is the reason for this?

Why does a person look for a *shidduch*? Some people say it's because there is a *mitzvah* to have children. But that's not the real reason why people are getting married.

Most people aren't thinking why they want to get married. The *Mesilas Yesharim* says to always think before doing anything, but when it comes to marriage people don't think beforehand, just like people don't think why they are learning Torah or putting on Tefillin. People just go along with the flow of life and don't think into what they do.

When a person goes into something without thinking, he just acts like how he is used to do. He deals with his marriage by getting marriage advice, looking in sefarim and hearing *shiurim* on *Shalom Bayis*. But why? If a person is truthful, he will realize that he got married because he didn't want to remain alone. He didn't want to become lonely. If this is the reason a person gets married, a person should realize that while he is looking for his *palga d'gufa* - his other half - did he already find himself?

When a person is in *shidduchim*, he does a lot of research: if she is a good girl, if she has *Yiras Shomayim* and *middos tovos* - almost in the same way he looks for a *chavrusa*. But did he research **himself** yet? Does he even know who he himself is?

Yiras Shomayim or *good middos* isn't everything. First, a person needs to find himself and know who

he himself is.

When a person gets married and realizes that he doesn't know who his wife is, it is a sign that he doesn't even recognize his own self.

If a person never worked to understand himself before he got married, he gets married and has no understanding of his wife. Just like we understand that a child can't get married because he is immature and doesn't recognize his own self, so must we realize that we have to know who we truly are, before we get married. The less we understand ourselves, the more different we feel our wife is from us.

Marriage is not something that you just have to do like everything else. Mere advice doesn't build a person's marriage. If a person is just going along with the flow of life the same way he was like before he was married – he will look at his wife like another *chavrusa*. And what happens if he doesn't look his "*chavrusa*"? He will want to switch *chavrusos* at the end of the *zman*...

A person runs away from anyone who isn't "him." He will want to run away from his life – just like he runs away from himself, when he doesn't recognize his own self.

In a marriage, husband and wife have to "become one flesh". They must become one. If a person thinks that his life is only "Torah and doing mitzvos" – and that is all there is to his life – then marriage will be very difficult for him. When a person is married, he can't always learn Torah or do *chessed* when he wants to – and he will find marriage will be very.

If a person realizes that he has to connect to Hashem by connecting to Creation, he will be able to connect himself to others who are different from him. Hashem wants Creation to become unified – so a person has to connect to differences. He realizes that learning Torah is supposed to connect us to Hashem, and that doing *chessed* for others is not just to have a *gemach* – but to connect with others.

Let's take *Chessed* as an example. *Chessed* has to be a tool to connect to Hashem – it is not just so that we should "do" things for other people. The actions of *Chessed* we do for others are supposed to connect us to Hashem. There are many *gemachim*, but how much love is going on there? The point of what we are saying is here that people miss the whole point – they fail to realize that everything we do, even mitzvos, is only as a means to get close to Hashem. People can learn a lot and do a lot of *chessed* all day, but their hearts are missing, because they don't realize how everything is supposed to be done in order for us to become close to Hashem.

Even if a person did chessed with others when he wasn't yet married, did he ever once feel connected with the other person in his heart? Was his heart in it? Did he ever feel truly connected to another person whom he did *chessed* for?

One time I asked someone who was married, "How are you?"

He told me, "Baruch Hashem - I learn in a certain Kolel, and I have a few children..."

I said to him, "I asked you how **you** are."

This is how many people are - they look at the various details of their lives, but they aren't connected to themselves.

This is why many friends in yeshiva eventually move on in life and forget about each other. I one time remember two *bochurim* in my yeshiva who were very close friends with each other. They both got married, and later I met one of them. I asked him how his other friend is doing. He told me, "I don't know - I have no idea whatever happened to him."

People just go through life, even their relationships, and don't really connect to others - and they enter marriage with the same mindset. They were never really connected to their friends - only superficially. Our relationships with others have to be real. How are we connected with others? Are we really connected to others from our soul, or only superficially? No one has to feel a deep connection to a cashier in a store; but what about your own friends? If a person is learning with a chavrusa for half a year already, does he feel any connection to him?

When a person only superficially connects to others, he goes into marriage the same way. He will not be able to have a deep and true connection to his wife. His relationship with Hashem is the same way - it is only superficial. The way a person acts with his friends is the way he will treat his wife. If he only had superficial friendships with his friends, he will not have a true connection to his wife.

When a person has problems in his marriage, it's not because of his wife. The problems started before marriage - with himself. It shows that something was majorly lacking in his connection with Hashem.

It is written in Koheles, "*My son, give your heart to me.*" Just like we are supposed to learn Torah, daven and do mitzvos from the depths of our heart - to be connected to what we do, with our heart - so are we supposed to get married out of the depths of our heart. Most people don't even know what

real love is, and their whole marriage is superficial. When a person gets married, he finds out how superficial he was all this time.

It is all because a person hasn't accessed his true, inner self yet. A person cannot really deal with others when he hasn't really dealt with himself yet.

Most people don't even love themselves the way they should. If a person feels a love for himself when he eats pizza - he doesn't love himself.

Why did previous generations not have so many *Shalom Bayis* problems? Many answers are given for this. One of the *Gedolim* said that it is because in previous generations, people had more *pnimiyus*; they were more connected to themselves, so they were able to connect to others with ease.

Marriage is the key to love. If a person gets married because he wants to know what true love is - he will have a successful marriage.

This is why we have to have differences in our marriage. The point of marriage is to reveal the true love from the depth of our hearts, which is only reached through dealing with differences. But if a person just continues to live his own selfish existence, he views differences with his spouse as a bother.

If we realize that our life is about why we came onto this world and to reveal the depths of our heart, our whole life will change. This is when we realize that the purpose of life is to become unified to all of Creation - to unify with differences - in order to become unified with Hashem.

Many *yungerleit* complain that because their wives need them to help around the house and they can't learn. But such a complaint shows that the person doesn't understand that the purpose of marriage is to cause unity, to unify with Hashem by dealing with differences. He looks at the "sugya" of marriage as a separate sugya in his life that he must deal with...But a person who sees marriage as a way to reveal his unity sees marriage as the same "sugya" as any other sugya; he sees how everything, including marriage, is all one big sugya - the sugya of *achdus*, revealing our unity with Hashem.

Let's give another example that explains the concept of *achdus*. When a person sees problems in his children, he thinks he has to do "*chinuch*" on his child and train him to have good middos. He thinks that he has to know the "sugya" of *chinuch*...but did he ever work on himself personally before he does *chinuch* with his child?

Some people go to a shiur on *chinuch* are told told, "You must express your love for your child." Why do people have to be told this? Before this, a person has to first reveal his own deep love for his children. There has to first be *achdus* before anything.

The same is true with marriage. If a person's wife insults him, it's not enough for a person to be silent and think, "This is saving me from Gehinnom." This is not all there is to marriage; marriage is supposed to be a powerful tool to reach *achdus*.

Without *achdus*, a person thinks he has to learn, do *chinuch*, do *kiruv*...and have *shalom bayis*. He looks at all of these things as separate parts in his life. But this is an incorrect attitude; really, they are all one thing - *achdus*.

When a person doesn't have the right attitude toward marriage we are saying, he is not only mistaken, but his whole life is seriously lacking. He is missing *achdus*; he doesn't know of the relationship between Klal Yisrael and Hashem, and he doesn't see how everything is supposed to connect.

Marriage is not about advice and wisdom. It is about revealing our *achdus*. It is not just about dealing with differences and learning how to get along with a wife. It is a tool for us to reveal *achdus* in Creation.

Some marital problems need professional help, but if a person has this proper attitude toward marriage, ninety-nine percent of marriages would be fine. Marriage is about revealing the *achdus* from the depths of heart. There do exist people who have a hard time revealing anything from their heart, because their hearts are hardened. But in most marriages, the way to improve our marriage is by revealing the *achdus* from our heart - by understanding that everything we do in life is about revealing the *achdus* in Creation.

Life - and marriage - is about putting our heart into everything we do. Most people are bogged down by life and are just moving along with the flow of life, and their hearts are missing. But if we put our hearts into everything - into our marriage, into our children, into our relationships and into our connection with Hashem - then we will uncover from within ourselves a true, deep love in all that we do, revealing the *achdus* in all of Creation with Hashem.

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