

Marriage is not a Union, it's a Reunion

How were Adam and Eve really created, and why? The unspoken truth about human beings.

“Have A Good Day.”

This common wish exists in numerous languages, and I would like to suggest that its source is in this week's Torah portion. Today, we began reading the Torah from the very beginning, and in the very first chapter, the Torah describes the six days of creation.

On the first day, we read that “G-d saw that the light is good” — from the very beginning, G-d saw goodness in the world. On the third day of creation, it says that “it was good” two times, and the days that follow were good as well. On the 6th day, it went a step further — G-d saw that it was “very good.” Clearly, the whole first week was amazing.

The first time that we read about something being *not* good is in Chapter 2: “And G-d said, it is not good for the person to be alone.” The first ‘not good’ thing in creation was loneliness.

In truth, loneliness doesn't just mean being physically alone in the world. We all know that one could be among many people and still feel utterly alone. On that note, let me share with you a story:

Just A Few Kilometers Away

A young girl grew up in Poland in the 1950s. One day, when she was 16 years old, her cousin revealed to her that she was adopted. She ran home and asked her mother if it was true, and her mother nodded — it was true — but refused to say anything else. This girl was so shocked that she ran away from home. After a month, she decided to return — but the incident was never spoken about again.

In 1957, she met a young man and they decided to marry. To sign the marriage papers, she was asked to bring a birth certificate — but her mother said that there was none. “I took you from the orphanage when you were 4 years old — and they didn’t give me any documentation.” They reached out to the orphanage, but the staff of the orphanage apologized and said that a fire had destroyed their entire archive.

She realized that she was about to get married, while she did not know her name, her birthday, or who her real parents were. Either way, her sister-in-law — who worked in the municipality — arranged a birth certificate. They decided on an estimated birthday of October 1939, and they put in names of parents. What names do you think they chose? Adam and Eve. For a last name, she wrote “new-person” (in the Polish equivalent).

Life moved on. They married, she gave birth to a daughter, her husband tragically died at a young age, and she raised the daughter herself. In time, she was blessed with two grandchildren as well.

However, she always felt alone and she used to say that she

was a daughter of no one. Her parents had abandoned her, and she had no information about her roots. She didn't know who she was.

This terrible feeling was passed on to her daughter. When a doctor would ask her about her family's medical history, she would only know about her mother's — everything else was a black hole. When her granddaughters would make a family tree in school, their mother's side would have almost no branches.

When her 79th birthday approached, her granddaughters decided to buy her a gift — a 23andMe DNA test. The grandmother laughed at the proposal; “How could a bit of spit find the relatives after 80 years,” she asked incredulously.

But in the end of 2021, her granddaughters visited her in Poland and convinced her to spit into the pipe. On January 1st 2022, the granddaughter received a message on the app of 23andMe: her grandmother was Jewish Ashkenazi.

That wasn't all. She pressed on the section about relatives and discovered that there was a woman who shared 50% of her grandmother's DNA. In other words, they were both born from the same mother. Her grandmother had a sister.

She immediately called her grandmother. “Are you sitting on a chair?”

“Why,” her grandmother became frightened. “Who died?”

They told her that she was Jewish and that she had a sister. When they opened the file of the sister, her picture showed up

and they both began crying — the two sisters looked identical. There was no doubting the comparison.

They immediately messaged the sister's account. The account was also ran by the woman's granddaughter, who had opened the account in 2015 and had already given up on finding new relatives. She had opened the app many times over those years only to find no new information. And suddenly she gets a message — your grandmother has a sister...

As it turns out, the sister was also raised just a few kilometers away in Poland. Her parents told her that on August 27th, 1942, at 5:00 in the morning, her father woke up to the sound of a baby crying outside the window. When he went outside to investigate, he discovered a box with a tiny baby, and a note which included her name and birthday — February 1st, 1942.

They brought her to an orphanage, and after the war was over, they adopted her and raised her. She knew nothing of the matter until she was 15 years old and discovered her birth certificate, which had a different last name. Her mother (who was German) was very upset when she realized her discovery, and was never willing to talk about it, until her dying day.

And that's how matters remained for 80 years.

Today, these two sisters, both in their 80s, have a new perspective on life. They used to think that they were abandoned — but now they recognize that their parents gave them the greatest gift: the gift of life.

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The Conflicting Stories

In this week's Torah portion, we read about the creation of Adam and Eve. But like everything in Judaism, the creation story is not that simple.

In Chapter 1, the Torah says: "And G-d created the man in His image, He created him in the image of G-d. He created them male and female." From this verse, it seems that they were both created at the same time. There's no indication otherwise.

But in Chapter 2, the Torah returns to the story and says it a bit differently: "And G-d said, it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helpmate opposite him." G-d put the man to sleep, took one of his sides (*tzela*) and fashioned the woman.

What's going on over here? Didn't Chapter 1 just tell us that G-d created them both together?

Rashi explains that G-d first created one "double-sided person," and then, afterwards, he split them into two (1:27). Adam and Eve were like Siamese twins, back to back so they couldn't see each other — and they were lonely. Therefore, G-d said, "It is not good for the man to be alone," and put them to sleep to divide them into two. Then, when Adam met Eve for the first time, he was overjoyed. "A bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh..." He finally had a partner.

But what's the meaning of the story? If Adam and Eve were destined to be separate, why did G-d create them as one? If they were supposed to be one, why did G-d agree to split them?

What exactly is going on here?

Human Couples

Commentators point out that the answer lies in the distinction between animals and human beings. All animals mate to procreate — but that's exactly it. They only mate in order to procreate. They don't live together, they don't go out to the movies together, and they don't grow old together.

G-d wanted us to be different. He wanted us to understand that our spouse is a part of ourselves. It's not something transactional — it's our second half.

There was a rabbi, Rabbi Aryeh Levin, who was famous for his kindness and his keen ability to empathize with others. They say that he once visited the doctor with his wife and told the doctor, "My wife's foot is hurting us." In his mind, they were one.

This idea, that a couple is really one person, is not only true physically. Rather, the physical connection during creation is because that is how it is in a spiritual sense as well.

Not Equal, One

One of the famous complaints about Judaism is that it seems to treat the genders differently. Why are there different mitzvahs for different genders? Why do men put on tefilin and women light Shabbat candles? Why don't we all observe Judaism in an equal fashion? Let there be equality!

The Rebbe once cited an amazing teaching of the Arizal:

“When a male does a mitzvah, there’s no longer a need for females to do it. Because she was already included in her spouse’s observance. This is why our sages said: your wife is like a part of your own body.”

How exactly does that work? The Rebbe pointed to the kabbalistic teaching that just as a husband and wife are two halves of one body, they are also two halves of one soul. When G-d sends the soul down into the world, he splits it into two — half going into the boy’s body, and half into the girl’s. When the right time comes, G-d brings them together and they fulfill their purpose. They both complete each other — in observing Judaism and in all other matters as well.

In other words, the fact that Adam and Eve were created in one body teaches us that a couple is one unit, one soul, and they fulfill that mission together.

“And that,” the Rebbe concluded, “is why weddings are such a great celebration...”

We all know that weddings have a unique, electric quality to them. No other celebration can compare. Why is that the case? The Rebbe says that it is because two halves of a soul, who spent their entire lives apart, in different neighborhoods, different communities and perhaps even across the world, have come together and found each other by Divine providence. It’s not a new union, it is a re-union. The two sides have finally come back together. That’s why it’s such a great celebration.

The Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya that the entire Jewish people are like one body, and one soul. We are all brothers, emanating

from the same father. Therefore, when we meet another Jew, we should celebrate with him as if we met a long lost-brother after 80 years. Because we are all part of one whole.