

You Can Be G-d's Matchmaker

Category: Shemos, Yisro

"Matchmaker, matchmaker" ... What was the role of Moses at Mount Sinai? He was a matchmaker! If you think about it, you can be a Matchmaker too.

"Come To South Africa"

Recently, I officiated at the funeral of an elderly Jew originally from South Africa, who was a gynecologist by profession. He once shared with me that during his lifetime, he helped deliver more than two thousand infants.

This week, his family shared with me that while he was still single, he visited the United States. In New York, he met a prominent Jewish doctor who was highly impressed with his knowledge and offered him a position in his clinic.

Upon learning about this opportunity, his family and friends insisted that he must not let it slip away. At that time, he was already dating the woman who would become his future wife. Determined to seize the chance, he made an international call to her in South Africa, urging her to join him in the States.

In those days, you needed to arrange a transcontinental telephone call through the central switchboard. It was obviously a pretty big deal. When he finally managed to get through, he reached the home of her parents.

Her older sister picked up the phone and he asked to speak with his girl friend, but she was unavailable; she was a teacher, and he had called during school hours. So, he asked to leave a message. She should urgently return the call, because he wanted to discuss a potential relocation to the United States. He told the sister that he wants his girlfriend to come to New York and they would get married there.

The sister promptly responded in a firm tone, "Listen carefully. If you want to marry my sister, you'll have to come back to South Africa!"

And that's exactly what he did.

Moses

This story reminds me of the narrative of the giving of the Torah, which is the focus of this week's Torah portion.

I'm sure you've heard that the relationship between the Jewish people and the Almighty is likened to that of a groom and bride.

So, G-d, desiring to wed the Jewish people, sought a matchmaker - Moses. That's why he encountered G-d at the burning bush, at Mount Sinai, a year before the Israelites' exodus.

The meeting at the burning bush was essentially a Mount Sinai on a small scale. Moses witnessed the burning bush, where the fire consumed the bush yet it remained unscorched. Similarly, at Mount Sinai, the entire revelation occurred through fire. At the burning bush, it was on a smaller scale, while at the giving of the Torah, the entire mountain was ablaze.

He approached the mountain, but then G-d turned to him and said, "Take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). Similarly, at the giving of the Torah, the Almighty cautioned him to warn the Israelites repeatedly not to approach the mountain, as it was the place where the Divine Presence would manifest.

And here comes the most important point: G-d addresses Moses with the words, "*Anochi*, I am the G-d of your father," using the same word with which He opens the Ten Commandments. The difference lies in that at the burning bush He says, "I am the G-d of your father," while at the giving of the Torah, He declares, "I am the L-rd your G-d."

At that point, G-d asks Moses to be the Matchmaker between Him and the Jewish people. He asks him to go to the Jewish people, and tell them that he was sent to take them out of Egypt, to bring them to that very mountain — Sinai, which is named for the *Sneh* (*the burning bush*).

Now, the Matchmaker has a problem. He tells the groom that the bride is going to ask, "What's his name?" The Rebbe explains that this was referring to the burning question, "Where was G-d until now?"

In the end, the groom persuades the matchmaker to present the proposal to the bride. After seven days of deliberation, Moses responds to the Almighty's call and goes to Egypt to propose to the bride.

Indeed, as G-d promised, when he arrived and gathered the elders of Israel, informing them that he was sent by G-d to redeem them, the people believed him and were very happy to hear this.

From here the story of the Exodus from Egypt began. G-d performed great miracles, including the ten plagues, the splitting of the Red Sea, providing manna, heavenly bread, water from the rock, and so on. Then, the moment of the "wedding" arrived.

In truth, there was no other way for this match to be accomplished. If G-d wanted to marry the Jewish people, he would need to leave the heavens, and come down towards us on earth. Until then, spirituality and physicality were disconnected; at the giving of the Torah, a connection was forged between the spiritual and the physical for the very first time. The Almighty Himself had to descend upon Mount Sinai with His glory to give the Torah to the Jewish people.

What changed at Mount Sinai? We all know that a Mezuzah is a holy object - you can't throw it away. It must be buried in a respectful way. But it's really only a piece of parchment made from animal skin. How can a physical object become holy? At Mount Sinai, G-d 'came down the mountain.'" This empowered the Jewish people to sanctify the physical world, to make objects holy.

Only With A Matchmaker

The story is told, of a Rabbi that came to the Rebbe of Ger known as the Sfas Emes, to propose his daughter for marriage to the Rebbe's son. The Rebbe said that he was concerned about a match that came without a matchmaker.

He explained this with a Midrashic story: Before G-d offered the Torah to the Jewish people, He offered it to the nations of the world.

He went to the descendants of Esau and asked, "Will you accept the Torah?" They replied, "What is written in it?" He said, "You shall not murder." They said, "Master of the Universe, our father himself is a murderer." Esau's promise from

Isaac was that he would live by the sword.

“He went to the children of Ammon and Moab and asked them... They said, ‘What is written in it?’ He said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ (But they were born from the incestual relations of Lot and his daughters.)

“He went and found the children of Ishmael and asked them if they would accept the Torah. They replied, ‘What is written in it?’ He said, ‘You shall not steal.’ They said, ‘Master of the Universe, our father was a robber, sitting in the desert and stealing from others.’”

Nobody wanted to accept the Torah.

But when it came to the Jewish people, they responded, ‘We will do and we will listen’ and accepted the Torah.

What changed? When G-d approaches the Jewish people with the offer, he doesn’t approach them directly. He sent them the offer through a Matchmaker. That’s why it was successful.

The Matchmaker Fee

Now, matchmakers receive matchmaking fees. In ancient times, it was customary to give these fees after the wedding. Nowadays, the matchmaker is paid as soon as the couple gets engaged, even if, G-d forbid, the young couple later breaks off the match; the matchmaker still receives their compensation.

I think this concept, of paying the Matchmaker and exactly how to do so, can be derived from the story of G-d and the Jewish people as well.

So how did G-d “pay” Moses for his matchmaking job? There are two suggestions:

One explanation is related to when Moses descended for the second time with the second set of tablets from Mount Sinai, as recounted at the end of Ki Tisa: “Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, his face shone.” Commentators explain that the divine light that illuminated his face was the matchmaking fee for bringing G-d and the Jewish people together.

However, others believe that Moses earned the radiance on his face due to his self-sacrifice for the sake of the people of Israel. When he took a stand and said to the Almighty, “If You forgive them for the sin of the golden calf, good; but if not, erase me from your book” – in this merit, he earned the Divine radiance.

Therefore, others explain that the matchmaking fees were given when G-d told Moses to carve the second tablets (Exodus 34:1). In the first tablets, G-d provided both the stone tablets and the inscriptions on them. However, for the second set, Moses was told that since he broke the tablets, he would have to provide new ones—so he wouldn’t rush to break them. However, there was a silver lining—as Rashi explains, G-d showed him where he could find Sapphire under his tent. He made the tablets from that sapphire, and got to keep the chips. It was enough to make him very wealthy. And that was the matchmaking fee.

In any case, whether it’s the radiance on his face or the leftover of the tablets, both possible matchmaking fees were with the second set of tablets. Why? Because the first tablets were broken, so the match itself was nullified. Only after the second tablets were given, did the match actually take place, and then the matchmaker received the matchmaking fees.

We Are G-d’s Matchmakers

My friends, anyone who facilitates a match between two Jews receives double matchmaking fees—both material and spiritual. The parents pay the material fees for matchmaking, and concurrently, the Almighty pays the spiritual matchmaking fees. When a Jew connects two individuals, and they establish a Jewish household, the Almighty gives that person an incredible blessing for success in everything that he does.

But there is a deeper message here; the matchmaking work of Moses is not over. When we encounter a Jew distant from Judaism, and we influence them to perform a single mitzvah, such as affixing a mezuzah to their home or inspiring a woman to light Shabbat candles, we connect them to the Almighty. When we do that, the Almighty compensates us with both material and spiritual matchmaking fees. It’s a deal you don’t want to miss.