

And you shall command Bnei Yisrael and they shall take pure olive oil, crushed, for illumination, to light the eternal light. (27:20)

Yirmiyahu *HaNavi* says: *Zayis raanan yifei pri toar kara Hashem shemeich*. “A flourishing olive tree, a beautiful and shapely fruit Hashem has called Your Name” (*Yirmiyahu* 11:16). What did Yirmiyahu see that catalyzed his comparison of our ancestors to an olive tree? All types of liquids mix with one another, but oil stands by itself. So, too, *Klal Yisrael* does not mix with the non-Jews. As it says, *V’lo sischatein* – “You shall not be married to them.” The **Sfas Emes** explains that oil’s nature prevents it from mixing with water. Hashem has made the unique nature of the Jewish People similar to that of oil. Even when we sully ourselves with sin, we remain distinct from our non-Jewish neighbors. This is supported by the prohibition against intermarriage. The Torah does not just prohibit the act of intermarriage. The prohibition is written in the reflexive form, implying that one cannot bring himself into a union created by the marriage of a Jew and non-Jew. It is not simply forbidden; it cannot work. One will always remain separate. When oil is mixed with water, it will eventually rise to the top. So, too, the Jewish People cannot intermingle with the nations. Pure oil – even when crushed and mixed with its dregs - retains its separate nature.

To put the above into simple perspective, the following will have to suffice. The institution of marriage is a secular term used to describe what is supposed to be a lasting relationship between a man and a woman, in much the same way that the secular world terms it, “tying the knot.” Then there is the Torah perspective of *Kiddushin*, a holy relationship, a bond based upon *kedushah*, a consecration. Jewish marriage is more than a relationship – it is a spiritual union between man, woman and G-d. If the couple brings Hashem into the equation, it becomes a sanctified relationship. The marriage functions not only on a physical level, but it also includes a spiritual component.

In his highly acclaimed manual for marriage, “*The River, the Kettle and the Bird*,” the *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Yeshivas Ner Israel*, **Horav Aharon Feldman, Shlita**, teaches us the three stages of marriage. The initial stage is much like a river which connects two cities, serving as a channel by which merchandise can be shipped from one city to another. It is the bridge that connects the two communities. A couple/ man and woman, begin their marriage with good relations between one another. They remain two separate entities with a bridge/river that allows them to fulfill one another’s needs. In the secular world, this bridge is called love. Perhaps it is love of oneself, because, in truth, this is no more than a business relationship. The two people do not even have a common goal, similar to a business relationship in which each member is out to take care of himself.

The second stage of marriage is like a kettle of water resting on the stove. The fire on the stove and the water in the kettle work together to create boiling water or steam. Each one needs the other. The fire on the stove without the water is static, much like the water in the kettle without the

fire. Water and fire, however, cannot coexist. Thus, the kettle separates them, allowing them to coexist and function in such a manner in which they can achieve the mutual goal of creating boiling water. Likewise, a couple, over time, work together towards achieving a mutual goal. They each have a distinct task; they remain individuals; their goal, however, is mutual and can be realized only when they work together. The kettle has “one over” the river in that the two principals work toward a common goal.

The third stage of marriage – and perhaps the rarest – is likened to a bird. The bird has two ways of propelling itself forward: its legs and its wings. There is a time and place for each to function. At times, the bird needs to walk; then it uses its legs. Other circumstances require the use of its wings. The legs and wings have disparate functions and different goals, but they are both organs of the same body. The wings and legs are always together as part of the same body. Indeed, a bird that is missing either one of these vital organs is blemished. Likewise, in the marriage relationship, husband and wife have varied functions and individual goals, but they are united through matrimony and love as one body. Perfect unity is the goal of a Jewish marriage. This can only be achieved when the spiritual component of marriage is realized.

In his book, “*Perfect Strangers*,” Rabbi Avraham Jacobovitz observes that such marriages are rare. I am not sure that they are rare, but they are certainly unique and clearly ideal. While there are couples who live out their lives in complete harmony – no fights – peace and tranquility reign in their home, they are still not yet wed in the spiritual sense. They are compatible with one another, like the river or the kettle that serve as conduits between two separate communities/entities. Thus, they provide emotional and physical support for one another. Nonetheless, they are not one unit. Their souls are not united. Unless the “Hashem component” is entered into the relationship, the souls will never unite; the marriage will never achieve *kedushah*.

This paper is not a manual for marriage, but rather, it is an exploration of why the matrimonial relationship of a Jew and gentile can never achieve the level of unity required in a Torah-sanctioned marriage. When the foundations of the religions are as different as night and day, when one is compared to oil and the other to water, it just becomes quite impossible to create a symbiotic fusion between the two components.

The *Menorah* is lit from the purest and finest oil, which is derived from the first drops after the olive has been broken open. A second oil is derived after the olive has been crushed and ground. While this second oil is not used for the *Menorah*, it is used for the *Menachos*, Meal-offering. The *Midrash* comments, “Just like the olive... that is harvested and pounded, and then ground and afterwards surrounded with ropes and pressed by rocks, and, after all of this, it gives its oil, so, too, the Jewish People. The gentiles come and pound and drive them from place to place, imprison and place them in chains, surround them with soldiers and afterward, they (the Jews) repent, and Hashem answers them.” A fascinating *Medrash* which is explained by the **Sfas Emes**. The two types of oil are a reference to the Jewish People during two periods in their nascency. The “first drops” – the extra-pure oil, free of dregs and impurities, came when, at *Har Sinai*, *Klal Yisrael* declared, *Naase*

v'Nishmah, "We will hear and we will listen." It was then that they revealed their total commitment to Hashem, their desire to carry out His will. The secondary oil, with its impurities and dregs, symbolizes the Jews, but at a later time – a few weeks later when they descended to the depths of turpitude following the sin of the Golden Calf. Their pure beginning was tainted by sin, just as their pure hearts were blemished by the introduction of the *yetzer hora* into their lives. Yet, Yirmiyahu *HaNavi* called the nation a thriving olive tree – even at their time of sin, at their point of degradation. To find favor in Hashem's eyes, explains the *Sfas Emes*, we must squeeze out the oil from dregs. This can only be executed through *teshuvah*, the process of repentance and return.

The secondary oil was not used in the Sanctuary for the *Menorah*. It lacked sufficient purity. Outside, however, in the Temple Courtyard, it was used as part of the *Menachos*. The Flour-offering was unique in that it was the *Korban* offered by the *ani*, Jew stricken by poverty. An animal or fowl was beyond his meager budget. A flour-offering mixed with the specific quota of oil would suffice. This offering symbolizes a Jew who has lost his way, who has fallen from his initial lofty spiritual perch. Nonetheless, through our connection with the pure oil inherent within the dregs, we retain a ceaseless capacity to raise an eternal light *l'haalos ner tamid* – always. Even during those times that we are lowly, the Jew still has within him a drop of pure oil.