

## When a man marries a new wife... he shall gladden his wife whom he has married. (24:5)

During the first year of marriage man is exempt from being drafted into the army, because he is supposed to stay home to “gladden his wife.” The Torah writes, *V’sseemach es ishto*, “He shall gladden his wife.” *Rashi* comments, “This *pasuk* is interpreted by **Targum Onkelos** as, *v’yachdei yas itsei*, “he shall gladden his wife,” but one who translates the *pasuk* as, *v’yechdai im itsei*, “he shall gladden with his wife,” is in error because this is not the translation of *v’sseemach*, but rather, of *v’samach*.”

In Rabbi Sholom Smith’s, *A Vort From Rav Pam*, he quotes the *Rosh Yeshivah*, *zl*, who derives a vital homiletic message from *Rashi*. This lesson is probably one of the staples of a successful, harmonious marriage. One must make his wife happy – not seek to make himself happy with her. It is all about the spouse. I might add that the advice applies reciprocally, as well. At times, a young husband will complain that all of the wonderful attributes and character traits which he heard about his wife prior to their marriage seem to have disappeared. They are simply not there, or he has the wrong woman. He – or rather his parents – had made the usual investigation, indeed, vetting her as if she was applying for the position of National Security Advisor. Based on all the wonderful information which they gathered, he had agreed to meet her. Subsequently, after a lengthy dating period of five dates, he had decided to marry her. (Notice how everything is about him.) The girl is some kind of object which his royal highness agreed to marry. Then the friction began. They were married, and, apparently, she is not the same girl he had investigated, dated and married. What happened to her? Still, it is all about him. He is perfect. She is the one who has changed.

*Rav Pam* suggests that the young man has either forgotten or ignored *Rashi*’s message. He is under the misconception that marriage means he should be happy together with his wife. *Rashi* teaches otherwise. In order to have a good marriage, the husband should see to it that his wife is happy. He must make her happy. A happy wife makes for a happy husband. A wife who is treated with dignity and respect will return the compliment many times over. Over time, he will see all the positive information that he had heard concerning his wife to be quite true.

If, however, he enters the marriage as the spoiled child of parents who clearly failed the most elementary parenting class, he will probably expect his wife to cater to his every whim and fancy. If she does not conform, at first his anger will churn to a “slow boil,” consistent with his level of immaturity. Eventually, he will explode with anger, and the marriage will be headed toward disaster. Regardless of a young woman’s background and upbringing, the finest and the best can tolerate just so much. An obtuse husband, who expects everything and contributes little, is not a partner in marriage. Whatever refinement the girl brought into the equation will quickly dissipate under the iron rule of a self-centered husband.

Thus, *Rashi* teaches us that marriage is about making one’s wife happy. His contribution to the

relationship is vital. He must be a *nosein*, giver, not a taker. One who gives will ultimately receive. One who just wants to take and take will eventually have nothing left to take.