

It is not good that man be alone. (2:18)

This most telling *pasuk* defines the role of a wife in one's life, ie, *tov*, good. When one is alone, he is missing that ingredient that transforms his life to "good." The commentators, each in his own inimitable manner, offer their understanding of the word *tov* and how it affects – and is realized in – marriage. Years ago, I was privy to a conversation between a *gadol*, Torah giant, and a distinguished lay leader. The lay leader was sitting *shivah*, mourning the untimely passing of his wife, and the *Rosh Yeshivah*, who had sadly undergone a similar tragedy a few year earlier, was speaking. The *Rosh Yeshivah* remarked that outside of losing his life's companion, he particularly felt the loss at the end of a day, when he would sit down with his wife and discuss his day's experiences, the ups and downs. When he was on a speaking trip, he would return to his hotel room and immediately call his wife and share with her his speech and the responses to it. In short, he no longer had anyone with whom to talk, to share, who was interested in his success. He felt that without someone to share his joy and sadness, his life was incomplete, his joy was diminished, almost to the point that it did not pertain to him.

Hearing this, my perspective on *tov* changed from (the definition) "good" to "happy" (*tovasi bal alecha*); "I have no claim to your benefit" (*Tehillim* 16:2) and "being purposeful" (*tuv taam v'daas lamdeini*; "Teach me good reasoning and knowledge," (*Tehillim* 119:66). Regardless of the definition we apply, the Torah teaches us that *levado*, being alone (different from loneliness), being for oneself, is *lo tov*.