

When a man marries a new wife... he shall be free for his home for one year, and he shall gladden his wife. (24:5)

In one of the *sheva brachos*, seven nuptial blessings, we recite the following: *Asher bara sasson v'simchah, chassan v'kallah, gilah, rinah, ditzah, v'chedvah, ahavah, v'achavah, v'shalom v'reius*; "Who created joy and gladness, groom and bride, mirth, glad song, pleasure, delight, love, brotherhood, peace and companionship." Why do the words *chassan v'kallah*, groom and bride, precede all of the wonderful, varied expressions of joy? *Horav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner, zl*, explains that the unique love, harmony and sense of brotherhood that reigns in a marriage, is a spiritual blessing from Hashem which He grants to the young couple following their commencement of life as husband and wife. Prior to their marriage, however, this blessing is not relevant. In fact, the mere idea that two people from different backgrounds and families, at times from different geographical environments, proclivities and temperaments, should meld together as one, to live in harmony and to build a future together is, in and of itself, a phenomenon that is difficult to understand. Indeed, the *Rama (Even HaEzer 55:1)* discourages relationships prior to marriage, since the young man and woman, being from different backgrounds, quite possibly will not see eye to eye, a situation which could escalate into discord. *Rav Wosner* was a proponent of minimizing meetings between *chassan and kallah* – before and after their engagement. His position was not based upon a *minhag Chassidus*, extreme religious sentiment, but for practical reasons.

Once the young couple has married, Hashem provides them with His unique blessing. Thus, the words, *chassan v'kallah*, precede the joy etc., because these blessings take root only after their marriage. This is why the Torah writes, "He shall be free for his home for one year." For only after the wedding will the blessings of joy, pleasure, delight, etc. reign in their home. It is during this year that the Heavenly blessings take effect.

A *bachur* came to *Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl*, to present a number of doubts that had surfaced in his mind concerning a girl that he had been seeing. The *Rosh Yeshivah* listened to each one of the young man's questions and responded to them, thus clarifying any doubts that existed in his mind. As the young man was about to leave, *Rav Shach* said, "Listen to my advice: once you become engaged, limit your encounters with your *kallah*." The young man asked the *Rosh Yeshivah* the obvious question: "Why?"

"Let me explain," *Rav Shach* began. "Every person has deficiencies. No one is perfect. When a person notes the imperfections of his future spouse, it will bother him/her. Once the marriage takes place, however, Hashem's blessing of *sasson v'simchah, chassan v'kallah*, occurs to the point that when there is a "creation" called *chassan v'kallah*, no imperfections will defray their union. This blessing, however, occurs only after the wedding – not before. Thus, it is best to wait until after the wedding to spend quality time together."