

It is not good that man be alone, I will make him a helper corresponding to him. (2:18)

Eizer k'negdo is translated as – “a helper corresponding to him.” *K'negdo* usually means opposite him. How is this reconciled? *Chazal* teach: *Zacha – naasis lo eizer; lo zachah – k'negdo*, “If the man is worthy, the woman will be a helper; if he is not worthy, she will be against him.” The ideal marriage is not necessarily one of total agreement in all matters. Obviously, a good relationship has to allow for a difference of opinion. By their basic nature and temperament, man and woman are different; thus, they might have discrepant or differing views on various subjects. It is the wife's responsibility to oppose her husband when he acts without thinking (or if his thinking is without *seichel*, common sense). She should help him to focus and achieve the proper course by helping him to navigate between various obstacles. She does this by suggesting, questioning, even criticizing (constructively), never by putting him down. As a result, there are times when a wife's greatest contribution to a marriage is her being “against” her husband. In order to follow the course, it is often necessary to steer off course.

Rashi emphasizes that one who is unworthy will have a wife that will be against him to the point of battling against him. Clearly, this represents a bad marriage. The **Brisker Rav, zl**, interprets the *pasuk* differently. He says that the *lo tov hayos ha'adam levado* – “It is not good that man be alone” applies to both aspects of *eizer k'negdo*, *zachah* and *lo zachah*. In other words, even when one is unworthy and is married to a woman who is constantly critical of him, whose perspective vis-à-vis her husband comes across as jaundiced to the point that she is battling with him – he is still better off than being alone! To be alone is worse than to be married to a woman who personifies *k'negdo* – opposite him.

Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl, supports this with an exposition of the *Baal HaTurim*. When Hashem admonished Adam for eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, Tree of Knowledge, Adam responded, “The woman whom You gave to be with me – she gave me of the tree and I ate” (ibid 3:12). *Rashi* writes that Adam's response was an act of *kafui tov*, ingratitude. It was as if he were saying to Hashem, “You gave me the woman. It is not my fault. Had I not had her, I would not have sinned.” It is as if Adam were placing the blame at Hashem's door. This is the height of ingratitude. The *Baal HaTurim*, however, writes, “She gave me of the tree,” she hit me with the wood/tree. She forced me to eat. The *pasuk* does not say, “She gave me of the fruit”; rather, it says, “She gave me of the tree.” This implies that she hit him with the tree until he agreed to eat! If so, what element of *kefiyas tov*, ingratitude, can there be? It is not as if Adam ate willingly. He was forced to eat! This teaches, posits *Rav Eliyahu Baruch*, that, even if one's wife beats him, he is still better off than being alone. It is still considered under the purview of *lo tov* – it is not good (to be alone).

The venerable *Maggid* of Yerushalayim, **Horav BenTzion Yadler, zl**, asks to identify the justification for the idea that “the woman whom You gave me – she gave me of the tree and I ate.”

If his wife would have fed him poison, would he have eaten it? How does one listen to his wife when she presents him with prohibited food? According to the *Baal HaTurim*, it was no simple act of “presenting.” She beat him into eating it. How do we understand Adam’s reply according to the “conventional” *p’shat*, interpretation, that she simply gave it to him?

The *Maggid* explains this with an enlightening analogy. A top student of a prestigious *yeshivah* married the *Rosh Yeshivah*’s daughter. Shortly after their marriage, the young man questioned his wife concerning the kosher preparation of meat (i.e., Was it washed and salted properly?) and concerning the fruits and vegetables (i.e., Were they tithed according to *halachah*?). Slightly indignant, his wife replied, “Whatever *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven you have, you received through my father (as *Rosh Yeshivah* and your primary *rebbe*, he inspired you); now, you are going to question the *frumkeit*, religious observance, of his daughter?”

Regarding the definition of the word *tov*, good, we find an anomaly in the commentary of *Targum Onkelos*. For *lo tov*, *Onkelos* writes *lo takin*, it is not correct, proper; it is not the way it should be. *Takin* has a different connotation than *tov*. Why does he alter the definition?

Concerning the sixth day of Creation, the Torah writes, “And G-d saw all that He had made; and behold it was very good” (Ibid 1:31). There *Onkelos* defines *tov meod*, very good, as *takin lachada*, meaning, “It was very perfect.” For the rest of Creation, when the word *tov* is used, he writes *tav*. This question is asked by *Ramban*, who explains that *Onkelos* wrote this definition by design. The word *tov* (regarding the sixth day) must mean much more than “good.” The sixth day was the culmination of Creation; hence, on this day “good” was much more than a description of Creation. Rather, it was an affirmation that it was exceedingly perfect in its arrangement. The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, was now included in Creation. With its creation the world was not perfect, since evil is necessary to preserve good. One must overcome evil, thus making adherence to good that much more laudable. Thus, *Onkelos* interprets *tov* as being more than good; it is perfect.

With the idea in mind that *takin/tov* implies the perfection of something, the achievement of *shleimus*, harmony, suitability, perfection, *Rav Eliyahu Baruch* suggests that concerning marriage, *Onkelos* used *takin* to teach that *tov*, good, in marriage attains perfection when each partner completes the other. Whatever deficiency one might find in one’s spouse, it will be filled by the other. Together, they are completely suitable, perfect. *Onkelos* thus interprets *lo tov* as *lo takin*; a man alone is imperfect. Good is insufficient. It must be perfect.