

## And the man called his wife's name Chavah, because she had become the mother of all the living. (3:20)

One *mitzvah* – that is all Adam *HaRishon* had to observe. Hashem had commanded him not to eat from the *Eitz Hadaas*, Tree of Knowledge. It should have been easy to observe this one single *mitzvah*. Apparently, nothing is as simple as it seems. We have no idea of the guile of the serpent, nor can we perceive the pleasing nature of Adam. His wife had fallen under the serpent's spell, and Adam deferred to his wife. Everything is relative. We can neither fathom the spiritual plateau of primordial man and woman, nor can we appreciate the depth of evil and craft which comprised the serpent's character. In any event, these three were punished, with the serpent the first to receive its due. The punishments were unusual in their severity, changing the conditions of life for man as he wades through life's currents in his attempt to achieve closeness with Hashem. Mankind was meted the severest punishment. No one would escape his mortality. We all must meet the *Malach HaMaves*, Angel of Death.

Clearly, after this episode, the *shalom bayis*, marital harmony, factor in Adam's house must have been stretched to the limit – or so one would think. It is, therefore, strange that following the sin and their expulsion from *Gan Eden*, Adam gave his wife her name, Chavah, "because she had become the mother of all the living." This has to be the least expected name that Chavah could receive. Why does the Torah write about Chavah's naming immediately following the punishment for eating from the *Eitz Hadaas*?

In his volume, *A Short Vort*, Rabbi Sholom Smith quotes **Horav Avraham Pam, zl**, who offers an insightful lesson to be derived from here. The *Rosh Yeshivah* focuses on the preservation of *shalom bayis*, marital harmony, as Adam's goal in his choice of names for Chavah. Discord results from negativity. Adam sought to overlook Chavah's mistake, thus circumventing a blowup in their marital relationship.

Let us digest this idea. Chavah did not just make an error. Her blunder could not just be corrected. She had just caused the greatest disaster known to mankind. As a consequence of Chavah's actions, death was decreed on mankind. This is not a blunder – this is a calamity of epic proportion! Can one imagine the anger that should have been seething within Adam? Words cannot describe the effects of this sin. Yet, we do not find Adam losing it. We do not find him lashing out at Chavah for her complicity. While he did, indeed, shift the blame for his own participation in the sin onto his own wife, he did not bring his complaints "home." On the contrary, he probably comforted Chavah by giving her a name which accentuated her positive contribution to mankind: "True, you were the cause of death, but, without you, there would be no life. You are the mother of all mankind."

It is so easy to underscore the negative, to harp over a spouse's mistake, to reprove and poke fun. Finding the silver lining in Chavah's life was a task for Adam – which he successfully completed. This is why the Torah tells of Chavah's naming at this point. We are being taught how one must

react to a spouse's mistake. Do not totally ignore it – but certainly do not magnify it! There will always be a time to “revisit” the situation and address it from a rational, constructive vantage point.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that concentrating on the positive contribution a spouse makes to the marriage is the greatest *segulah*, recipe for harmony. Indeed, *Rav Pam* explains that this is why the Torah immediately writes that Hashem fashioned garments of skin for Adam and Chavah. Since Adam covered up the “shame” associated with his wife's shortcoming, Hashem covered up their shame with clothing.

Veritably, the above is obvious. If one wants to maintain a harmonious relationship, he will focus on the positive and eschew any negativity in his relationship with his spouse. Yet, couples still fight, and, when one of them “blows it” and makes a mistake, the other one just does not stop harping about it. Why? How does one prevent what is sadly so common? I think it is all about ego. An individual who feels the need to put down a spouse when something goes wrong is a very insecure person. Clearly, in every marriage there are differences of opinion between husband and wife, but, through a concerted effort on the part of both participants, the issues can be amicably resolved. The problem is that some people do not like to lose.

An individual who thinks of his own ego first and foremost is missing the primary ingredient essential for a happy marriage. There should be no place for egos between husband and wife. They are supposed to be one unit. In addition, one who is prone to dissension demonstrates a lack of caring for his children. A child growing up in a home where discord is predominant may end up feeling insecure. Children are the primary casualties of a contentious marriage. Consistent with this idea, it has well been said that “the greatest gift that you can give your children is the love that you give your wife.”

Having explained that Adam *HaRishon* was a special man who went out of his way to overlook his wife's sin, it is hard to accept that he would blame her for his own eating of the forbidden. When Hashem confronted Adam, the immediate response was finger pointing at *ha'ishah asher nosata imadi*, “the woman whom You gave to be with me – she gave me of the tree and I ate” (Ibid. 3:12). Indeed, *Rashi* calls Adam a *kafui tov*, ingrate, for intimating that Hashem is the One who gave him the woman, and look what happened! How do we understand Adam blaming Chavah – yet giving her such a commendatory name that reflects her most positive function in life?

I think that actually Adam was not blaming Chavah in a bad way, but rather, attempting to present what had occurred in the most constructive manner. Adam emphatically says, *ho'ishah asher nosata imadi* – “the woman whom You gave to be with me.” What Chavah did was an honest mistake on her part. The fact that she shared her fruit with me was because *nosata imadi*, “You gave her to be with me.” The first person she thought of was me. Chavah acted like the perfect wife. She shared, immediately thinking of her husband when she obtained a tasty fruit. While Adam was inadvertently laying blame on Chavah, he was also commending her as being the perfect wife.