

## **And it will be that she will not find favor in his eyes... and he wrote her a bill of divorce... and sent her from his house. (24:1)**

At the end of *Meseches Gittin*, the *Talmud* states: "One who divorces his first wife – even the *Mizbayach*, Altar, sheds tears over this." Why do *Chazal* underscore the *Mizbayach* as the object that weeps? Why not the Heavens, the oceans, the trees – indeed, everything in the world? Why specifically the Altar? *Horav Avraham Benuchovski, zl*, explains this based upon the meaning of Hashem's declaration (prior to the creation of Chavah): *Lo tov hayos ha'adam levado. E'eseh lo eizar k'negdo*, "It is not *tov*, good, that man is alone. I will make for him an *eizar*, helpmate, opposite him" (*Bereishis* 2:18) "for him." The commentators, each in his own way, have offered meaningful explanations for this seminal *pasuk*, which defines the *raison d'être* for marriage, and, hence, the foundation and principles upon which a good marriage should stand.

The simple explanation is based upon need. If a man would be alone, who would address his needs? Obviously, such an explanation will not garner much spousal support. A wife is a partner/companion for life – not a servant.

The *Kli Yakar* maintains that the Torah is teaching us a powerful lesson concerning the meaning of *tov*, good. A person who is alone – to whom is he good? Even if he senses himself to be a good, caring person, this is wonderful, but if he is alone, how will this goodness and caring manifest itself? Therefore, Hashem created an *eizar k'negdo*, a helpmate standing opposite him, to determine exactly for whom he cares. Where is his goodness directed: toward his spouse; or toward himself?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* cites the *Rambam* (*Hilchos Ishus* 15:19), who is very definitive in spelling out (what the *Rosh Yeshivah* derives as) seven *klalim*, principles of marriage. *Rambam* writes: "Our sages have instructed us that a man should honor his wife more than himself and love her equal to himself (apparently there is little question concerning how much a person loves himself). He should spend money for her food; he should not allow fear to reign in his house; he should speak pleasantly to her; and he should not be a depressed or angry (bitter) person. If he sticks to this, he should have a good marriage. [This, of course, does not negate the wife's role in maintaining marital harmony. A shrew can have a deleterious effect on a marriage – regardless how good, patient and loving the husband may be.]

In sum: *Rambam* enumerates seven principles: 1) *Kavod*, honor, must supersede even that what he wants, expects and demands for himself. 2) *Regesh*, sensitivity, feeling of love for his spouse, at least equal to that of himself. 3) Spend money; do not be picayune with regard to your wife. 4) Do not sow fear in the home; a wife should not fear her husband. 5) Speak softly and pleasantly. 6) Do not be depressed and bitter. 7) Do not be an angry person.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* observes that each and every one of these principles is a rule which applies to relationships between two people. A person who lives alone, a hermit, or someone on an island has nothing to worry about, because he has no one whom he might offend, no one to honor, no one to whom to be sensitive. There is only one object in this world that gives and gives and never takes anything in return. The *Mizbayach*. Heaven produces rain from moisture which seed the clouds; the earth produces its crops once it receives rain. A tree produces fruit once it is irrigated. The *Mizbayach* served as the place where the offerings were brought. It gives, but does not receive anything for itself. The blood that is sprayed, and the incense that is burnt on it is not for it, but rather, for the purpose of the *korbanos*, offerings.

When the *Mizbayach* “hears” that a Jew divorced his first wife, the *Mizbayach* is saddened and becomes morose to the point of expressing emotion. Why? The *Mizbayach* declares, “Had he (the husband) looked at me, it never would have come to a *get*, divorce.” The *Mizbayach* cries because, unlike anything else, it knows the feeling of being alone, of giving and giving and not receiving anything in return. One who divorces obviously has reached such a low point in his marital relationship that it is better not to have *tov*, to be alone. That is a reason for crying.