

# Parsha Ponders

Sheva Berachos | January 15, 2019 | 9 Shevat 5779

## The Week of Sheva Berachos, Day #1 - Simcha<sup>1</sup>

אמר רבי תנחום א"ר חנילאי כל אדם שאין לו אשה שרוי בלא שמחה...דכתוב ושמחת אתה וביתך  
Rabbi Tanchum said in the name of Rabbi Chanilai: Any man who doesn't have a wife lives without joy...as it is written<sup>2</sup>: "You shall rejoice, you and your household"<sup>3</sup>

As part of the Jewish wedding ceremony<sup>4</sup>, seven blessings known as *sheva berachos* are recited under the chuppah. As well, our Sages tell us<sup>5</sup> that once a couple gets married, they are to spend the first week of their marriage rejoicing. During these seven days, the *sheva berachos* are again recited, at the end of a festive meal. Some say<sup>6</sup> that these seven blessings correlate to the seven things<sup>7</sup> that a man acquires<sup>8</sup> when he gets married. Our Sages inform us<sup>9</sup> that until a man gets married, he doesn't have joy, blessing, goodness, Torah, fortification, peace, nor is he a complete Man<sup>10</sup>. As such, it would be appropriate during this week to elaborate on each of these seven qualities, and how they relate to marriage.

The Torah proscribes<sup>11</sup> a *mitzvah* on a man when he gets married<sup>12</sup> to be ושימח את אשתו. Rashi explains<sup>13</sup> that this means a husband is obligated to make his new wife happy. He says don't misunderstand the verse to be commanding a husband to be happy *with* his wife, as that is grammatically incorrect. However, some<sup>14</sup> do in fact explain the verse to be saying that the *mitzvah* is that a husband should be happy *with* his wife, and not that he should *make* her happy. Which one is it?

One explanation<sup>15</sup> is that both can be true. What Rashi says is true, that the main *mitzvah* is to make one's wife happy. However, the other interpretation is explaining the one true means to fulfill this

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Yoatzei Shalom § 4 by Rav Shragi Neuberger from Yeshivas Ner Yisroel

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 14:26

<sup>3</sup> Yevamos 62b

<sup>4</sup> Kesubos 7b

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 7a

<sup>6</sup> Nachalas Shiva 12:4:3. See also Levush Even HaEzer 61:1 and Shnei Luchos HaBris Sha'ar HaOsios § קדושת הזיווג § 384-386

<sup>7</sup> Nachalas Shiva loc. cit. points out that Bereishis Rabbah 17:2 counts more than seven (it adds helpmate, atonement, life, and that he stops diminishing the Divine form), but the Tur Even HaEzer § 1 only lists these seven (although he replaces joy with "a living place", see Beis Yosef ad. loc.)

<sup>8</sup> Interesting to note that according to the Rambam (Mishneh Torah Hilchos Ishus 12:1,2), when a couple gets married, besides the husband's three biblical obligations towards his wife (Cf. Ramban to Exodus 21:10), the Rabbis enacted **seven** additional obligations upon the husband

<sup>9</sup> Yevamos 62b, 63a

<sup>10</sup> Nachalas Shiva loc. cit. brings and explains how they correlate: (1) ברכת היין – Blessing (2) שהכל ברא לכבודו – Torah (4) – Fortification. For some reason he leaves out the third of the *sheva berachos* (איצר האדם), and it would presumably correlate to the remaining attribute, which is Goodness

<sup>11</sup> Deuteronomy 24:5

<sup>12</sup> The Torah right before this says אחת שנה לביתו יהיה, which sounds like this *mitzvah* only applies for the first year of marriage. Indeed, this is the opinion of most authorities. However, Semak § 285, based on Pesachim 72b, holds that this *mitzvah* applies throughout their entire marriage (see Nishmas Adam to Chayei Adam 147:1)

<sup>13</sup> Ad. loc. Targum Onkelos ad. loc. seems to concur

<sup>14</sup> Targum "Yonasan" ad. loc. See also Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvos Aseh § 214 and the *mitzvah* headings to Mishneh Torah Hilchos Melachim § 18 which sound pretty explicitly like Targum "Yonasan"

<sup>15</sup> Rav Aharon Cohen zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Chevron suggested this explanation

*mitzvah*. The only way for a man to truly make his wife happy is if he himself is happy. That's what it means to be happy *with* her, that it shouldn't be an act. If the husband himself isn't happy, then any gestures or methods he tries to make her happy will fall short<sup>16</sup>. She will sense that he doesn't mean it.

We see then that by getting married, it's not necessarily a promise that the husband will have joy in his life, rather it becomes his life's work. He has to find ways to become joyous so that he can share that joy with his wife. Thankfully, having Shira Elana as my wife, with G-d's help I don't think it will be too hard to have joy in our lives.

However, *baruch Hashem*, we have benefited from a tremendous aid to fulfilling this *mitzvah* of living joyously together. Our Sages enacted<sup>17</sup> the *mitzvah* of being *משמח חתן וכלה*, making the bride and groom happy. This is fulfilled by attending the wedding, as well as participating in the week of *sheva berachos*. Part of the purpose of this *mitzvah* is<sup>18</sup> to create an atmosphere of *שמחה* in the lives of the bride and groom, as they start their lives together. Starting off in this atmosphere makes it much easier to continue in this spirit throughout the rest of our marriage. I'd like to thank all those who were able to participate in the wedding and beyond. It means so much to us.

Mazel Tov!

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<sup>16</sup> Rav Shragi provides "Rashi" to Taanis 22a s.v. בדוחי as a support for this idea. The *gemarra* there says that two clowns were destined for the World to Come. "Rashi" there explains that they are happy and make other people happy. Why did "Rashi" add in that they themselves were happy? It must be because otherwise they wouldn't have been successful at making others happy

<sup>17</sup> See Kesubos 16b, 17a and Mishneh Torah Hilchos Avel 14:1

<sup>18</sup> Rav Chaim Friedlander, in his introduction to Veyadata Ki Shalom Ohalecha p. 7f