

Parsha Ponders

Sheva Berachos | January 17, 2019 | 11 Shevat 5779

The Week of Sheva Berachos, Day #3 - Tovah¹

אמר רבי תנחום א"ר חנילאי כל אדם שאין לו אשה שרוי...בלא טובה...דכתיב לא טוב היות האדם לבדו
Rabbi Tanchum said in the name of Rabbi Chanilai: Any man who doesn't have a wife lives...without
goodness...as it is written²: "It is not good for Man to be alone"³

As part of the Jewish wedding ceremony⁴, seven blessings known as *sheva berachos* are recited under the chuppah. As well, our Sages tell us⁵ 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 say⁶ that these seven blessings correlate to the seven things⁷ that a man acquires⁸ when he gets married. Our Sages inform us⁹ that until a man gets married, he doesn't have joy, blessing, goodness, Torah, fortification, peace, nor is he a complete Man¹⁰. As such, it would be appropriate during this week to elaborate on each of these seven qualities, and how they relate to marriage.

There's a verse in Psalms which says¹¹ תרעם בשבט ברזל, literally translated as "break them with a steel staff". What's interesting with this verse is the Hebrew word usually associated with "evil", רע, is used in it as a verb. From this verse we see the true translation of רע, which is "break". Using this new translation of רע, which can get insight into its antonym: טוב. *Tovah* is usually translated as "goodness". However, if רע means broken, or separated, then טוב must be related to coming together, or connection.

After the creation of Eve, it says¹² והאדם ידע את אשתו. This verse describes the connection Adam and Eve built between each other. We see from here that דעת, literally knowledge, means connection¹³. דעת is connecting various forms of information that you already know. This verse shows that it is also related to the connection build between husband and wife.

¹ Based on a discussion I had on this topic with Rav Reuven Stone, a close student of Rav Yonasan David shlita, and a longtime *chavrusa* of mine

² Genesis 2:18

³ Yevamos 62b

⁴ Kesubos 7b

⁵ Ibid 7a

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

⁷ 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.)

⁸ 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

⁹ Yevamos 62b, 63a

¹⁰ Nachalas Shiva loc. cit. brings and explains how they correlate: (1) ברכת היין – Blessing (2) שהכל ברא לכבודו – Torah (4) האדם – Adam (5) אשה – Peace (6) שמח תשמח – Joy (7) אשר ברא – Fortification. For some reason he leaves out the third of the *sheva berachos* (ויצר האדם), and it would presumably correlate to the remaining attribute, which is Goodness

¹¹ Psalms 2:8

¹² Genesis 4:1

¹³ Nefesh HaChaim 1:6, in a footnote

If man is by himself, then him and his future wife are two broken pieces, separated. The Zohar says that the Jewish soul is actually one soul, and it is split between two different bodies. This means the couple is broken, such that they are lacking *tovah*. Once they reunite, their soul is reconnected. They can now live with *tovah*, goodness.

Mazel Tov!