

Parsha Ponders

Sheva Berachos | January 19, 2019 | 13 Shevat 5779

The Week of Sheva Berachos, Day #5 - Chomah¹

במערכבא אמרי...בלא חומה...דכתיב נקבה תסובב גבר

In the West they say: [Any man who doesn't have a wife lives]...without fortification...as it is written²: "A woman shall go around a man"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.

Our Sages say that a man who doesn't have a wife, lives without a חומה. Literally, this means a wall. What it is referring to is fortification. A man's wife acts like a wall for her husband and her home. The source for this is the verse which says that a woman shall go around a man. Some say¹¹ this is the source for the bride to encircle her groom under the chuppah. She is signifying that she is becoming his fortification. But what does this mean?

Our Sages tell us¹² that the tent of Avraham had three constant miracles: 1) Hashem's Divine Presence, in the form of a cloud, rested over the tent. 2) The Shabbos candles burned from week to week. 3) The challah was constantly fresh. These three miracles correlate to three miracles that occurred in the Temple: 1) Hashem's Divine Presence was there¹³. 2) The western light of the menorah was constantly

¹ Based on a *shiur* heard from Rav Nosson Nussbaum of Yeshivas Ner Yisroel in 5777

² Jeremiah 31:22

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) אדם – Adam (5) אדם יצר את האדם – Peace (6) שמח תשמח – Joy (7) אדם ברא – Fortification. For some reason he leaves out the third of the *sheva berachos* (אדם יוצר), and it would presumably correlate to the remaining attribute, which is Goodness

¹¹ Yoreh Chataim § 69 (by the Rokeach); Rabbi Dosa HaYevani Al HaTorah (brought in Meoros HaRishonim § 81); Igeres HaTiyul Kuntres HaMiluim (from the brother of the Maharal)

¹² Bereishis Rabbah 60:16, brought by Rashi to Genesis 24:67

¹³ Shemos Rabbah 2:2; Midrash Tehillim 11:4; Rashi to Genesis 9:27, based on his understanding of Yoma 10a

shining¹⁴. 3) the showbread was always fresh¹⁵. We are taught that when Avraham's wife Sarah died, these three miracles in the tent stopped. Why should this be? Shouldn't the merit of Avraham be enough for these miracles to continue? What was special about Sarah that only in her merit were there these miracles?

Rav Shneyer Kotler explains that everything with *kedusha*, holiness, needs *mechitzos*, partitions or walls. The Mishnah teaches¹⁶ that there are ten different areas of *kedusha* in the world. It's apparent that as the *kedusha* increases, there are *mechitzos* present. Yerushalayim has *kedusha*, and it is a walled city. The Temple, the Holy of Holies, all had *mechitzos*. The same is true for a home. Although the husband is a main player in the goings on of the home, his wife is meant to act as a *mechitzah*, providing the walls of the home. This fortification means that she keeps negative influences from entering¹⁷.

We see this behavior from our foremothers. Sarah saw that Avraham and Hagar's son Yishmael was a negative influence on the former's son Yitzchak, so she drove him away¹⁸. Yitzchak wanted to bless his wicked son Eisav, but Rivka devised a plan to prevent that from happening¹⁹.

Putting this all together, we see that it's impossible to have *kedusha* in a home without *mechitzos*. They are a prerequisite. Since Sarah was the *mechitzah* for her home with Avraham, when she died, the *kedusha* went with her. Therefore, the miracles that resulted from this *kedusha* stopped.

Let us thank the wives in our lives, who protect us from the dangers from the outside world, drive out negative influences, therefore infusing *kedusha* into our homes.

Mazel Tov!

¹⁴ Yoma 22b

¹⁵ Ibid 21a. See Rashi and Ritva ad. loc.

¹⁶ Keilim 1:6-9

¹⁷ Maharsha to Yevamos *loc. cit.*

¹⁸ Genesis 21:9,10

¹⁹ Ibid 27:5-13